SCHOOL-HOUSE:
ADDITIONS AND RENOVATIONS
TO WHITE CALF COLLEGIATE;
LEBRET, SASKATCHEWAN

by

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ABSTRACT

White Calf Collegiate is a former residential school in Lebret, Saskatchewan that offers junior and secondary academic programs and accommodation for 220 students of First Nations ancestry. The thesis explores the possibility of interventions that resist the normalizing structures imposed by the architecture of the institution while using them to its’ advantage. The thesis project accepts the former residential school as the ground on which a new architecture is inscribed. Fundamental to the thesis is a belief that minor cultures best resist marginalization, not by operating in strict opposition to, but upon and within the major culture.

The existing institution relies on a hierarchical and rational separation of spaces. These spaces are inflected inwards, clearly distinguishing the occupants relationships to one another, and their relationship to the surrounding landscape and to the greater community. A number of reorientations - physical and programmatic - are proposed. These reorientations were developed in relation to the physical site and ideas of movement through the landscape. As well, they acknowledge traditional relationships between edge and centre that are evident in Cree ceremonies and encampments. Significantly the domestic and heterotropic nature of the program is accented. The effect of these reorientations is to reestablish a relationship of the building to its’ immediate site, and the social relationship of the students to one another and to the greater community.

Fundamentally, there is a turning of what were once boundaries and limits, into in-between spaces and edges. Porch spaces mediate between inside and outside, and between private and public domains. The central corridors are replaced by inhabitable halls linking living rooms which in turn open onto verandas.
The envelope boundaries that once clearly established an inside and an outside become permeable membranes linking the building to its additions. The existing institution is both literally and figuratively undermined but only to the extent that it can be reclaimed. Its general order remains visible but no longer dominates.
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