WHEN STATES DESIGN:
Making Space on Native Reserves

By: Mary Subedar
M.Arch., The University of Manitoba, 1989
B.E.S., The University of Manitoba, 1985

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(GEOGRAPHY)

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
July 15, 2005.

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Making Space on Native Reserves

Chemawin Reserve, Manitoba, Canada

Mary Subedar
July 15/2005
Abstract

Canada's reserve system has reconfigured Aboriginal life in terms dictated by the state. This has been particularly true of reserve architecture. It has flattened Aboriginal architectures into a single repetitive form and has permanently altered the context and nature of Aboriginal life. This thesis examines only a few reserves in Manitoba, but they are broadly representative of all others in the province and, indeed, across the country.

It comprises three essays about the physical properties of reserves and their modern systems of production. The first describes the tangible physical human landscapes of reserves: the buildings, their arrangements in space, the patterns of circulation that connect them and the land uses that surround them. It reveals isolated and strangled settlement patterns, severed from the context that would ensure their sustenance, and at more intimate scales, random layouts of ready-made foreign forms.

Although these problems have been widely acknowledged, they continue to be replicated. Another essay records a state driven design process for a new reserve. The process is restricted by the provincial government's control of resources, by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs's bureaucratic methods, by profit-seeking consultants, and by the status of Aboriginal people as wards of the state. Together these factors subordinatethe interests of Aboriginal communities.

A third essay discusses the transformation of reserve house production from a process of local creation to government provision. Aboriginal people, now with substantial borrowing power, are consumers of large-scale government housing schemes that serve a growing industry of building product and service providers. The trend promotes an architecture that is dependent on outside knowledge, drives many communities into debt, and forfeits the empowering capacity of local building traditions.

These essays describe a system of reserve production that Aboriginal people neither own nor control, is inordinately expensive, and solves virtually none of the problems of reserve life. Yet without options, most Aboriginal people comply. Government bureaucrats adhere to illogical planning guidelines. Consultants market inappropriate design and technology to communities facing few alternatives, and the provinces control resource access, denying reserves an economic base. The system results in a familiar pattern of subversive reserve space.
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of communities and individuals to whom I am indebted and who overlooked their well warranted suspicions of researchers to talk to me. The Wawayseecappo, Roseau River, Grand Rapids, Chemawawin, Brokenhead, Hollow Water, Keeseekowenin, and Dakota Tipi reserves granted me the privilege to peer into their territories armed with a camera, and local housing councilors shared the knowledge of issues facing their communities. The people of Hollow Water, in particular, allowed my participation in local events and welcomed me into their homes. These include; Chief Larry Barker, Ferlin Barker, Gary Raven, Marcel Hardisty, Norbert Hardisty, Danny and Marianne Monias, Yvonne Barker, Lorraine Monias, Kathy Bjork, Ian Bushie, Patsy Monias, Alice Bushie, Henry and Isabel Phillips, Valde Seymour (from Seymourville) and other community members that I have surely overlooked. Ray and Louise Raven, with whom I resided, I especially thank for the many enlightening conversations about reserve housing and buildings we shared.

Chief Andrew Colomb, and Headman John Colomb of the Marcel Colomb First Nation enabled my “sitting at the table” to observe a government planning process firsthand. They opened the door to the closed and bureaucratic processes described in chapter 3 that otherwise would have been entirely out of my reach. I relied heavily on John, a leader and storyteller who unselfishly shared valuable stories about the tent village history, origins of the new reserve, and his own remarkable life. The band status information was embellished by Ray Bayer. Elder Dominique Hart, of the Mathias Colomb First Nation, provided critical background regarding Aboriginal occupation and lifestyle prior to the arrival of Sherritt Gordon Mining in Lynn Lake, and Brad Stoneman from the Northwest Development Corporation in Lynn Lake informed me of current development issues in the region.

A number of past and present Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) employees, who wish not to be named, have discussed INAC policy off the record and procedure, and Doug Kirwood, INAC’s regional planner during the 1980s provided much of the information pertaining to INAC’s short-lived planning division. I am grateful to two INAC Information Access officers who stuck their necks out by simply providing data on INAC capital spending. Seventeen local architectural firms willingly participated in surveys and interviews providing insights into reserve planning and its interface with the construction industry from their unique perspective. Assistance
with illustrations and maps was provided expeditiously by Simon Haxby from Manitoba Hydro and Norma Kohl and Janice Land from Natural Resources Canada. Bev Phillips copy edited the manuscript in the last minute.

I have been privileged to work under the direction of four highly distinguished scholars, Dr. Cole Harris, Dr. Geraldine Pratt, Dr. Richard Vedan and Dr. John Borrows. This thesis was shaped by all of their intellectual contributions. Gerry and Cole helped formulate the "whole" which I often could not see. They continuously challenged my assumptions, and they gave many half-baked ideas both depth and organization. I am especially grateful to Cole Harris, the committee chair, for granting me a place in the UBC Geography Department, for his skilful and repeated editing of my rough text, for his endless fortitude, for his own writing that I have admired and used as reference, and for his belief in this work. He is, by far, the most supportive teacher I have ever met.

My husband Knut, a professional architect and composer, encouraged me to begin this writing, and without him not a page would have surfaced. Knut was my continual sounding board against which almost every idea was thrown, was my main reference for the concepts on architecture in chapter 2, and patiently endured the project's excessive and intolerable delays. He is owed most dearly.

Mary
One can always recognize an Aboriginal reserve in Canada. Wherever they are encountered they are indistinguishable, lacking attributes that might mark one from another. I often wondered about these repetitive properties and what they say about Aboriginal life in Canada. Spaces are conversant, whispering meanings. If one were to read reserves or listen to their spatial testimony one might discern something of what it means to live in Aboriginal shoes.

Reading reserves unravels the special status of Aboriginal people and a way of life that exists alongside Canadian settler society. Most notably, engraved in Aboriginal space is an overbearing relationship with the state. Reserves arose from the treaty-making process intended to detach an indigenous population clashing with settler expansion and industrial development from most of its land. Between 1850 and 1930 many treaties between indigenous people and Canada surrendered vast tracts of Aboriginal land. Over an old geography was lain a pattern of minuscule, bounded patches on which Native people would live. Sustenance was largely irrelevant. Reserve life was considered a transitional phase between savagery and civilization — a phase that would be shortened by missionaries and residential schooling.

Together, reserves formed a comprehensive organizational system, without which state management of elusive bands was nearly impossible. Reserves made visible, reshuffled, remapped, and generally gave order to formerly diffuse, roving populations that controlled large territories. A numerical registration system further fixed the organization of people in space. The Indian Register accounted for all those considered “Indian” by the state, linked people to bands,

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1 I use the term “Aboriginal” and “First Nation” interchangeably to mean the indigenous peoples of Canada and I use the term “Indian” (now considered derogatory) only when referring to a distinct political entity created by the state of Canada.

2 Treaties were agreements between Aboriginal people and Canada as a means towards Aboriginal land surrender. They were crucial to the spread of empire in that they "freed" land for settlement by European immigrants and "freed" resources for development.

3 Many writers have illustrated this process of containment and appeasement. See Tough, As Their Natural Resources Fail... Harris, Making Native Space, Tobias, “Protection, Civilization... Policy.”

4 The reserve system was fundamental to Canada’s Aboriginal policy of civilization and assimilation. It “…was conceived as a social laboratory, where the Indian could be prepared for coping with the European...the Euro-Canadian would serve as an example of what the Indian would become, and the existence of a [bordering] town, it was thought, would attract the Indian from the reserve and into the non-Indian community.” Tobias, “Protection, Civilization...Policy” 29-30. See also Petitpas, Seving the Ties...Prairies 212 and Weaver, Making Canadian Indian Policy...for more.

5 The 1850 colonial government of Canada began lists of individuals it recognized as members of a band and these people were registered as Indians each with treaty numbers. State legislation known as the Indian Act arose at that time defining who was to be considered Indian, band membership and laws that governed the lives of Indian people. The Act remains today and “Indian” still refers to persons registered in accordance to its guidelines. In 1951 all lists of Indians kept by the state were consolidated to form an Indian Register which today is maintained by the government Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.
bands to treaties and treaties to mathematical land allotments. People were essentially assigned to place, in the process initiating over one hundred years of Native management.

Reserves supplanted a multiplicity of precolonial architectures. Canadian reserve communities represent fifty-two nations, or cultural groups, and more than fifty languages, yet they are essentially homogeneous. Repetition and monotony sprang from methods of production as a centralized bureaucracy mapped and regulated reserve development. Black Elk, a renowned Sioux medicine man born in 1863, predicted these spatial consequences. "You shall live in small gray houses in a barren land..." he told his people. Black Elk lived to see the spatial reorganization of the Sioux, narrating it to poet John Neirhardt in 1930. "All our people now were settling down in square gray houses, scattered here and there across the hungry land, and around them the Wasichus [Lakota reference to Europeans] had drawn a line to keep them in." They were going to pen us up and make us like Wasichus." For Black Elk facelessness and containment were the formal manifestations of a marginalized lifestyle that would transform his people.

Reserves have endured. They house 60 percent of Canada’s Registered Indian population – approximately half a million people in 633 reserve communities – and although rare, new reserve communities still occasionally emerge. And their forms, remote and concealed from Euro-Canadian life, bear a striking resemblance to those described by Black Elk. The reproduction of Native space in modern times amidst overwhelming evidence that the pattern has failed reflects a great deal about Aboriginal/state relations in Canada. I will speak of these relations.

I use three essays to describe aspects of contemporary reserve space and in so doing, to reflect on Canadian Aboriginality. In particular, I have focused on various methods of spatial

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6 See Nabokov and Easton, Native American Architecture, and Arnold Koerte, Toward The Design...Forms for a description of the wide variety of precolonial Aboriginal architectures in North America.
7 See Neirhardt, Black Elk Speaks. Black Elk is considered one of the greatest holy men of North America. He was born in Wyoming and made his home on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. His life spanned the U.S. - Sioux wars including the battle at Wounded Knee in South Dakota one of the last major battles of the U.S. wars against indigenous people. His words have application in Canada, as Canada’s policies of establishing bounded tracts of land for indigenous people were similar to those across the U.S. border. The border was also a colonial construct unreal to migrating bands in southern Canada and the northern U.S. who often shared ancestry.
8 John Neirhardt, Black Elk Speaks 1932, 10.
9 Ibid., 214.
10 Ibid., 146.
11 Community numbers were derived from the Assembly of First Nations. Population data is according to the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Canadian Polar Commission Performance Report for the period ending March 31, 2003. The entire Aboriginal reserve population is elusive. The data represents only the registered Indian population and does not include non-registered people who call themselves Aboriginal.
production. Native space and its production reveal forces that generally constrain Aboriginal life. Put another way, a description of reserves and their making manifests the qualities of a much broader socioeconomic context within which Aboriginal people live – a bounded, institutionalized space dominated by the state.
Housing and infrastructure supply have consumed almost all the public debate surrounding reserves, overshadowing considerations of reserve space and its production. Architectural education and practice is particularly silent about Aboriginal architecture\(^{12}\) except as nostalgic forms severed from the realities of reserve life. The discourse is further strangled by the highly inaccessible and bureaucratic arena of government reserve planning and by the scarcity of Aboriginal architects. The planning and design literature is correspondingly meager.

Much of the literature on North American Aboriginal architecture comprises ethnographic accounts of traditional structures before the establishment of reserves. It describes forms such as the teepee, wigwam, longhouse and earthen lodge, which have survived in small numbers thanks to special ceremonies, museums, and ecotourism. The most comprehensive description I have found is Nabokov and Easton's *Native American Architecture*\(^{13}\). Most Aboriginal ethnographies, such as Mandelbaum's *The Plains Cree*, contain short discussions of precolonial indigenous building types.\(^ {14}\)

There is also a literature dealing with new, monumental structures, particularly educational buildings that reveal new initiatives to represent culture. Carol Krinsky's *Contemporary Native American Architecture*\(^{15}\) is an excellent example. A variety of architectural journals since the late 1980s, notably the *Canadian Architect*, have been quick to document the rise of monumental Aboriginal structures. These are mainly visually striking examples that seek to generate symbols and do not typify reserve space.\(^ {16}\)

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) have produced a sizable literature dealing with housing condition, administration, policy and financing on reserves. Numerous studies appearing in the 1980s revealed the backlogs, overcrowding and extreme physical limitations of reserve housing. Such

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\(^{12}\) I use the term "architecture" broadly to mean spatial form, organization and articulation at varying scales. It therefore denotes buildings, building arrangements, pathways, perimeters and landscape manipulation.

\(^{13}\) Nabokov and Easton, *Native American Architecture*. See also Arnold Koerte, *Toward The Design...Forms*.

\(^{14}\) Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree...Study*.

\(^{15}\) Krinsky, *Contemporary Native American Architecture*.

\(^{16}\) See for example, Graft, "Seabird Island School," Weder, "Native Intelligence," Stewart, "Designing for Canada's Native Population."
studies range from examinations of mold and infrastructure failures to broader reports of Canadian reserve living conditions. Two sources from the 1990s, *The Health Effects Of Housing And Community Infrastructure On Canadian Indian Reserve Communities* by T. Kue Young et al. and *Gathering Strength: Report Of The Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples*, offer good overviews of reserve housing.\(^\text{17}\)

INAC and CMHC have occasionally generated self-critical reports of reserve housing policies. INAC’s *Laying the Foundations of a New ON-Reserve Housing Program Discussion Paper 1990*, for example, cites a lack of Aboriginal control, inadequate supply, poor quality, high costs, rising band debt, lack of security of tenure, and insufficient economic and employment benefits as the main on-reserve housing challenges.

Housing administration, financing and research have tied both CMHC and INAC to housing design, and catalogues of approved designs are published regularly to satisfy departmental funding approvals for new projects.\(^\text{18}\) Consulting firms such as Sure-West Consulting have also produced catalogues of house designs from which Aboriginal communities can choose, offering designs of bungalow and bi-level homes that match CMHC and INAC’s approved house plans.\(^\text{19}\)

Both departments have also produced design recipes to answer a more conceptual Aboriginal-housing problem: that government house design may be ill suited to the needs of Aboriginal people. *Introducing the Crofter House* and *Shelter House* are among several pamphlet-style publications since the 1980s that aim to improve the government-approved house with a new and universal Aboriginal house design.\(^\text{20}\) David Reich’s *Design Criteria for Native Housing in Canada*\(^\text{21}\) is a series of design steps written for the non-Aboriginal designer to improve reserve housing. It is a useful set of instructions for northern design that occasionally mentions Aboriginal people’s needs, if in highly generalized terms. Other CMHC sources investigate improvements to Aboriginal housing through alternative building technologies. *Sharing Successes in Native Housing*:

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\(^\text{18}\) For example, Canada, *Rural and Native...House Plans, House Designs*.

\(^\text{19}\) Sure-West Consulting Services, *Home Plans for First Nations*.

\(^\text{20}\) Canada, *Introducing the Crofter...Design*.

\(^\text{21}\) Reich, *Design Criteria...Canada*. 

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Highlights of the CMHC Housing Awards Symposium in Aboriginal Housing is a congratulatory description of the corporation's sporadic reserve housing experiments such as the “healthy house,” the “EcoNomad” strawbale construction, and insulated structural panels.\(^{22}\)

The search for improved design is evidence of a long-standing acknowledgment of problems with the design of reserve housing. In fact, the sociocultural and geographic inappropriateness of reserve housing is mentioned throughout the literature. Arnold Koerte's *Toward the Design of Shelter Forms in the North*, for example, studies the ingenuity and variety of indigenous shelter in Canada's North prior to colonization, set against the recent wide distribution of the southern suburban bungalow.\(^{23}\) In his view

> “The diversity of native shelter forms is a reflection of the considerable differences in life style and culture between native peoples, of the wide range of environmental variations contained in the term ‘North’ and the varying degree to which man chooses to respond to them... However, the white man's approach to the settlement of North America has often been questionable. He generally brought with him shelter forms that had evolved in a culture and environment entirely different from that used in Canada's northland... The numerous suburban bungalows spread indiscriminately over Canada's North give testimony to his failure to recognize that he cannot simply transplant dwelling types from one environment to another. (This is entirely aside from the fact that many of these dwelling types are far from suitable even for ‘southern’ suburban areas where they were designed for use originally.)”\(^{24}\)

While such references to the poor cultural and geographic fit of reserve housing are numerous, few studies have been dedicated to these issues. In 1971, Thomas and Thompson's brief *Eskimo Housing As Planned Culture Change* first questioned the government house design among the Inuit.\(^{25}\) Shkilnyk's 1985 pivotal book, *A Poison Stronger Than Love: The Destruction Of An Ojibway Community*, uses the relocation of the Grassy Narrows band to link community design to social disintegration. Shkilnyk describes how the imposition of a reserve community plan paralleled the destruction of a way of life.\(^{26}\) Shaham Deirmenjian's *Planning For Communities In The North* and J.C Simon et al.'s *A Culturally Sensitive Approach to Planning and Design with Native Canadians* are both arguments for incorporating cultural values in the planning of Aboriginal communities by

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\(^{22}\) Canada, *Sharing Success Awards Symposium*. See also Green, *Building Communities...Sustainable Housing*, and Canada, *Self-Build Housing...Saskatchewan.*

\(^{23}\) Koerte, *Toward The Design ...Forms.*


\(^{25}\) Thomas and Thompson, *Eskimo Housing...Change.*

\(^{26}\) Shkilnyk, *A Poison Stronger...Ojibway Community*
highlighting differences in worldviews. Cultural Approaches to Native Canadian Housing by Ghader Afshari-Mirak analyzes the culture/planning conflicts in four Cree communities of Quebec, and finally, Pin Mathews Architects’ Planning Study of Native Northern Communities describes the historical settlement influences of church, government and kinship patterns on community form and organization in four Dene communities. All of these works address the ethnocentrism of externally generated Aboriginal space in Canada and its result, a collision of lifestyle and built form.

A handful of community planning articles since the 1980s in journals such as Plan Canada have agreed. Jackie Wolfe’s “Approaches to Planning in Native Canadian Communities...” provides an overview of the historic policy context from which contemporary Aboriginal communities emerged and identifies value conflicts continuing to plague the community planning process.

C. Stevens and J. Acland’s “Building Sovereignty: The Architectural Sources of Oujé-Bougoumou” is the only description of a community design success story that I have found, and is representative of the process advocated in the planning and design literature. Fitting with the architectural journal publications, Stevens and Acland stress the importance of design in the process of identity construction. They go farther, however, linking spatial production to the assertion of sovereignty. For the first time, community form is conceived as a vehicle for both representation and empowerment.

In short, many significant problems of reserve space have been documented: its deplorable physical conditions, its cultural and geographic gaps and its inattention to Native views during planning and designing.

My study adds to this literature in several ways. First, it describes contemporary reserves, particularly the everyday forms such as housing, band offices, community halls, schools, recreational centers and landscapes that mark reserve space. Most previous descriptions have been piecemeal and focused on housing. I have aimed to render a more holistic picture of reserve

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27 Deirmenjian and Jones, Planning For Communities...Territories, Simon et al. A Culturally Sensitive Approach...Canadians. The Simon study outlines the differences in Ojibway and western worldviews such as concepts of space/time that could inform the planning of communities.
28 Ghader, Cultural Approaches To...Housing.
29 Pin Mathews Architects, Planning Study...Communities. The “Dene” are the indigenous inhabitants of the western sub-arctic also known by the linguistic label “Athapaskan.”
31 Stevens and Acland, “Building Sovereignty...Oujé-Bougoumou.”
space by venturing beyond the individual house to the settlement. I have also tried to move reserve
description from the demographic and the numerical to the close and tangible. Secondly, while
many fundamental problems of reserve space have been identified in the literature, planning faults
repeat themselves. The literature lacks a description of the real socioeconomic and political forces
that encourage this repetition, namely Aboriginal disempowerment, the bureaucratic methods of
government, market interests, Canadian myths and local attitudes. I have tried to explore some of
these on-the-ground forces that continue to limit the development of reserve space.

It is often assumed that any writing related to Aboriginal people is automatically about
culture. This study is not. I have largely accepted the problems of cultural inappropriateness of
reserve design identified by others, including Native people themselves. As Dr. Bill Woodworth, an
architect and Hotinonshon:ni\textsuperscript{32} traditionalist from Toronto, states:

For me, the central pressing need is to have planners, heritage professionals and architects
recognize and formally acknowledge the culture from which all their work is grounded. There is a
profound ignoring of the cultural traditions and patterns that are Native, that is, from this place.
What I see is the imposition of European architecture and planning forms that don’t fit in this
landscape, are out of step with the Native traditions. In my experience, ugly cities, bad design and
plans come from confusion, imposition of foreign perspectives and ideas that have no home here,
that will never be rooted in this place.\textsuperscript{33}

Woodworth’s ideas are held by many. I agree, and have not attempted to repeat this position.
Instead this study is a more general commentary about spatial production by non-Aboriginals. It is
less about Aboriginal people and culture than it is on the nature of spaces that result when states
design.

\textsuperscript{32} Hotinonshon:ni is the name the people formerly referred to as Iroquois give themselves.

\textsuperscript{33} Peters, “Aboriginal Perspectives...Aboriginal Practitioners.”
Thesis structure

I begin with three fledgling conversations. Chapter 2 is written as an observer encountering and reflecting on reserve architecture. It frames the following two chapters, which explore the forces behind the forms. Chapter 2 is an introspective musing about reserve architecture and is largely descriptive. It attempts to identify a pattern of building that is characteristic of Manitoba reserve communities.

The observations for this chapter emerged slowly. Over a number of years I have visited more than fifteen reserves in different parts of the province and have recently photographed eight in southern Manitoba for the purpose of this study. I do not, however, refer to the entire sample of reserves to make my points. Nor does the writing reveal the many trips made to collect the data. Instead, the chapter is written as a one-day reconnaissance of a single reserve. It collapses the data into a single encounter.

The structure is employed for several reasons. That one reserve can represent them all is a point the chapter makes, and so a description of one place seemed fitting. I chose the Hollow Water reserve for its ease of access but could have easily chosen any other. Their forms are interchangeable. Moreover, buildings and places are experienced through movement or a sequence of "frames," and a total sense of a place results from a cumulative set of these frames. Places are not mere collections of isolated buildings and spaces. They are the sum of these elements together. Short of filming a movie of people living in a place, I know of no better way of describing places than writing as though traveling through them. This overall impression is the point of chapter 2. Lastly, I felt the accessibility of narrative as a textual form far outweighed the need to reflect my research method.

Many of the ideas that I use to assess and observe reserve space are derived from my own architectural education, practice and teaching over a period of fourteen years. Architecture, which is primarily a practice as opposed to a research profession, involves foundational ideas that emerge from designing and building buildings, as opposed to consuming literature (which explains why architectural theory is a thinly covered subject). 34 Many of the concepts pertaining to space,

34 Western architecture emerged as a “profession” taught in schools with the introduction of the Beaux Arts School in France in the 1880s. At this time the state began credentialing architects. The profession was formerly propagated through the training of pupil by “master” builders in practice. While architectural education moved to schools it still remains
use and form used in this chapter come from this apprenticeship-type process of sharing and discovering information.

An analysis of a planning process for a new reserve follows in chapter 3. The Black Sturgeon Reserve landed on the drawing boards of government bureaucrats in 1998 and, as I was within earshot, I grasped the opportunity to observe the process firsthand. Again, a single community example is used, partly by necessity. Very few new reserve communities are built in Canada. The process is rare. A single example seemed adequate for two reasons. Although sixty-two First Nations bands with varying cultures and vast regional differences reside in Manitoba, they interface uniformly with the Crown through its centralized Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The Crown's directives, policy, guidelines, processes and underlying attitudes are intended to apply evenly to all bands. Therefore examining the design of one Aboriginal community reveals forces affecting others. Moreover, building a community is always a significant act.

Chapter 4 moves to the design of reserve housing, the main constituent of Black Sturgeon and of other reserves. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is a Crown corporation that is largely responsible for current on-reserve housing design. The information for this short chapter was collected from two CMHC conferences dedicated to on-reserve housing issues and from interviews with Aboriginal people.

Chapters 3 and 4 both describe a design climate and unravel design attitudes among the decision-making groups: the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada (INAC), Public Works (PWGSC), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), design consultants, and First Nations themselves. They illustrate the context of ideas and attitudes that influence the current form and structure of reserve communities.

The texture, fabric and tone of the chapters differ for one reason. While they all concern architecture, the chapters deal with very different types of information. Following my own approach to architectural design, I allowed the subject matter or content to guide the form of the writing.

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concentrated in the studio instruction intended to mimic practice (although many practitioners say it is an imperfect process that does not prepare students for the real world of practice). And although architectural education has moved to schools it has not evolved with a strong research orientation. See Stevens, The Favored Circle for a critique on architectural education.

35 Quebec's Oujé-Bougoumou community 1991-95, and Manitoba's Panguissi reserve 1988, are two rare and recent examples.
My background

This thesis emerged from a personal desire to understand reserve space. Transplanted from the West Indies to the Moose Lake Reserve in 1968, my early Canadian life was on the edge of the reserve world. Much later, architectural education, practice and teaching raised questions about communities, and I revisited the early Canadian experiences that had left indelible marks. In 1994, while teaching in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba, I presented the idea of developing a course around Aboriginal communities that might better prepare future graduates and generate linkages between the design school and Aboriginal communities. In retrospect, the lack of interest with which the idea was met was fortunate. It encouraged me to enter a doctoral program to pursue the subject.

I enrolled at the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia where I gained useful insights into western planning models. One year later I transferred to the Department of Geography, a move that vastly enriched an exclusionary architectural education. Geography introduced post-colonial and feminist dialogues that altered my way of looking at spaces. They became multidimensional political constructs. They became inhabited. Geography also curtailed my tendency towards an omnipotent style of looking and writing that characterizes much of the architectural literature.

The essays are personal stories written from both architectural and geographical vantage points. Both are privileged and safe positions that have enabled writing even when they complicated my relations with people. My architectural education with its western lens was relied on heavily as a point of departure and was one from which I could not escape.

Stories have endless perspectives and can be manipulated to suit many goals. During my writing about Black Sturgeon, for instance, I was told that a band member believed it is “their story” and should be told by “their people”. I thought about who owns such stories and who has a right to tell them for whom and for what ends, reflections arousing occasional pangs that ground the writing to a halt. Remembering, however, that this thesis is less about Aboriginal people than it is about western systems of design was a reason enough to continue.
Method

The research for chapters 2 and 3 relied mostly on human informants, creating an unruly and unpredictable research process that illuminated, by its very limits, the nature of the information. Chapter two is an architectural description of a place, and its primary limitation was the inability of people to speak about architecture. This problem is multifaceted and warrants some discussion.

Because I spend a lot of time thinking about buildings and spaces, I am always surprised at how difficult it is, generally, to elicit architectural criticism from people. Despite the permanence of buildings, they generate little public debate. Public discussion about architecture almost invariably focuses on buildings that are high profile, controversial, large, and mostly public. One could not have a radio call-in show about architecture as one might have about sports, entertainment, or politics. When there is discussion about buildings, it is generally about appearance, politics or cost. It is not about how buildings actually work to serve people and it is almost never about space. Conversation about, and criticism of, architecture is found in certain narrowly focused architectural literature written to a small professional group (e.g. Assemblage, Forbes Magazine, Architectural Digest, Traditional Buildings and Settlements Review, newspaper editorials).

This is not to say that people do not see what is wrong or right with buildings, and do not attempt to improve them, which is itself an act of criticism, but rather, that buildings are not thought about, contemplated, theorized and generalized about. This makes discussion difficult. There are various reasons for this lack of thinking about and criticism of buildings.

When a place becomes familiar it loses visibility, and buildings easily continue their lives unseen. The streets that we traverse daily, for instance, can be navigated without noticing their aligning forms. People also have a short attention span when it comes to buildings. If their existence is noted at all, they become imperceptible over time. A person from the Chemawawin reserve in Manitoba was astonished when I observed that almost all houses in Chemawawin were varying shades of brown, almost indistinguishable from the surrounding earth. (Chemawawin is a rock pile, inhospitable even to grass.)

A naturalization process also occurs with buildings. Buildings become environmental facts, like weather, and people easily accept and endure them. Once it is constructed, people often forget that their built environment was designed, that decisions were made that could have been different,
and that it is changeable. Built environments become first invisible and then naturalized, and eventually are accepted as unchangeable facts.

People do not consider buildings to have any significant effect on them. They certainly do not reflect that “this house is an assimilationist, colonial tool that is inhibiting my practice of culture”. Neither do they notice the subtle ways that building design affects their movements and interactions. Buildings and space are easily deemed “benign,” and therefore not worth contemplation. I once taught a Hong Kong student who criticized the largeness of North American homes. He complained he rarely saw his family and was lonely living in Canadian houses. It takes this type of architectural cultural shock, being suddenly jolted by buildings, for people to “feel” them and become critical of their design.

The terms “architecture” and “design” are also problematic. What is architecture? And what is the practice of architecture? People do not define architecture as the ordinary built world around them. They do not consider that they are practicing architecture when they renovate their kitchen. They do not see architecture in their kitchens at all. Architecture is more removed, more mythical, and relegated to those in the know – architects experienced in the design of monumental, visually glaring buildings. When I asked people on reserve about their architecture they would respond “what architecture?” as though they did not have any. When I stated that I was researching reserve architecture, an assumption was made that I referred to high-profile, monumental buildings. Square, simple buildings do not constitute architecture. Ordinary, everyday, utilitarian buildings do not have architecture. Housing is not architecture. And landscape manipulation and design are certainly not architecture.

These categories of architecture versus non-architecture stem firstly from a common premise that architecture is a solid rather than a void, and secondly, that it is how a thing looks rather than how it works. Architecture is the form and appearance of a thing. And a building must have an extraordinary form and appearance to “have architecture.” It must stand out and be different from the rest of the “undesigned” environment. I have found these to be common conceptions. So by their very definition as non-architecture, the everyday utilitarian environment and its spaces are relegated to an insignificant place, requiring no design, analysis or discussion. It was, therefore, highly problematic to use the term “architecture,” and I found it wise to avoid it when talking with people about reserve spaces and buildings.
Whether a building was culturally appropriate was a particularly challenging question. I found that standard western architectural forms, buildings that follow very specific concepts embedded in western lifestyle, were not seen as cultural constructs at all. Their planning and design were viewed as noncultural or "neutral," blinding people's ability to acknowledge a building's effects. When I asked whether a new school building responded to a community's cultural needs its Aboriginal principal replied: "We did not want a cultural school. We wanted a neutral school. You will find no drumming or regalia here!" She described a recently built school with western organizational features: cellular classrooms built along a hall, minimal windows, fortress-like construction, and desks that orient frontward. People often overlooked that western forms are consciously designed and encourage specific types of living. Similarly, forms that are prevalent or commonplace, forms that do not stand out and do not "wear culture on their sleeves," were easily deemed universal, acultural, and benign.

The difficulty in speaking about architecture is not isolated to Aboriginal people living on reserve, but the reserve context intensifies the problem. A mere generation past, many Aboriginal groups of Manitoba were seminomadic. People knew collectively what and how to build. Building was an unselfconscious act not so much talked about as practiced and building information was handed down primarily through practice. Criticism occurred in building and rebuilding as opposed to speaking. Speaking about buildings is new in the world of nomads, as is the idea of architecture as an intellectualized process done by others.

Discussions of reserve housing with on-reserve people had particularly extreme limits that arose from local conditions. A three-bedroom bungalow is sometimes home for sixteen persons. Plastic replaces window glazing, buckets become toilets, and drinking water stands in large open drums in kitchens. The scarcity of housing in particular is a community wound, and local housing discussions have been known to erupt in conflict.36 Such conditions alter research. I was warned about "raising hopes" with my questions. "People would think they are getting a new house," an elder cautioned. An investigation of housing design preference was planned, but such questions would only tease, inflict more pain, and would be construed as more useless research. It was appropriately scrapped.

36 The Hollow Water people attempted to hold a community housing meeting in 1999. Discussion became so heated the meeting was adjourned. The position of "housing counselor" suffers a high turnover in many reserves as a result of frustration, burnout and feelings of helplessness.
Basic needs overshadow all others. Even to those who have adequate housing, the foremost "architectural" problem is the lack of housing and infrastructure within their community. In accordance with the laws of basic needs gratification, the architectural design of a place is meaningless without its first attribute, shelter. Design discussions are trivialized in contexts of extreme need. My research plans took illuminating turns as planned interviews shifted to lending an ear to a housing crisis.

37 See Maslow, Motivation and Personality.
I encountered a widespread lack of trust among First Nations, government departments and consultants. The resulting secrecy can be attributed partly to the nature of the subject matter. Investigations of on-reserve building reveal aspects of government tendering of lucrative contracts. Local people and firms complain of nepotism in the awarding of both buildings (who gets a house or a school) and contracts (who gets to build). Occurring in a context of great physical need, building is a defensive subject all around.

More general hesitations about talking with outsiders arose from the common understanding that knowledge has power. Information-gathering and, in particular, the recording of spoken words were threatening activities and consequently, withholding information and exerting control over the “right to write” was an effective means of both power and protection.

Speaking to people on reserves was further compromised by my own nebulous and, from their perspective, indecipherable role. Researcher, architect and student was a nebulous bundle, and being employed by no one was a suspect arrangement from which I could not escape. People asked, “What side are you on? Who is paying you?” And “Are you on our side?” Eventually, I expected suspicion, and greeted trust with surprise.

So information was generally difficult to obtain, and my methods were convoluted. Where I preferred to have much more community input, as in essay 1, I rely almost entirely on my own architectural observations. I initially planned to offer design services to a community in exchange for design information. (The actual act of design is an organic and direct route to retrieving architectural information from people.) A fair trade, I thought. A building or community design end product may prove more useful and tangible than some indecipherable text.

The chief and council of Hollow Water referred me to others, initiating a process of “negotiations to design.” I met many people over a period of weeks but persistent efforts to establish a design committee proved futile for a number of reasons. Cynicism circulated about committees. Previous attempts had been unsuccessful. It was occasionally suggested that I work independently and present a completed design as “people need to be led.” (I resisted this as it defeated the purpose of design as investigation and might be construed as job hunting.) My failures to establish a committee motivated partial agreement and I prepared a slide presentation to clarify my position and introduce the idea of architecture as a subject of importance. The presentation focused on the variety and creativity of historic indigenous architecture, the borrowing of Aboriginal
forms by others and government building approaches. I reluctantly introduced some architectural caricatures in an attempt to elicit interest and illustrate what may be possible.

The sketches generated discussion about the possibility of projects and many people seemed genuinely interested in improving their community through architecture. A space to house repatriated artifacts was one recommendation. Questions surfaced around government funding. What would they do with the design? Would I personally seek funding for the project? Did I know how to write funding proposals? Why design a building before funding is granted? I also suggested that design was a vehicle for funding by illustrating a project and making it convincing. Also, sources of capital may reach beyond government, and community visions should instigate projects rather than government programs. Unfortunately, conceiving a project outside the government funding box was a foreign concept. Why waste time, some felt. The community had no money for projects. A handful of prior ideas amounted to little. The meaninglessness of conceptual design was revealed. I hadn’t considered the frustration of government projects and the futility of dreaming in Hollow Water.

Although I anticipated the problems of presenting a building design and attempted to minimize its importance, my worst fears were met when a band member asked at the meeting’s end “How much will the project cost?” When I responded that it was not a project but was just an idea he added that “a salesman always knows what he is selling” and summarily left the room.

Shifting gears, I arranged to write a museum funding proposal over the next few weeks to initiate a community design process. Upon completion I traveled to Hollow Water to find that all the council members were in Winnipeg. Attempts to establish a design group took months and proved fruitless. Eventually I was approached to design a healing center. I agreed to do so if a community design committee was established. The design commenced under the direction of one individual. Despite continual pressing for community meetings they never materialized, and the project drew to completion. The building design absorbed a few months and lies in my office among a pile of unused notes.

Many people spoke of the desire to have a “turtle building,” which generated these sketches.
The project moved from concept to completion without a committee.

A building can have porosity and shelter like a tree.

People spoke of the need to break down boundaries in Hollow Water. The band office was a space comprising compartments that achieved the opposite. Healing requires both openness and shelter.
The shortcomings of this process lay in my own misreadings and inexperience as much as in other factors. What I interpreted as disorganization and distrust, for example, could have been conscious forms of resistance. The process was not a loss but the beginning of my complicated reading of on-reserve building processes and of their capacity to strangle local creativity.

Disappointed and enlightened, I abandoned the idea of architectural design as a research tool for chapter 2. Instead I traveled to communities, recorded notes and photographs, conducted interviews, attended conferences and other events, spent time with people, and engaged in casual conversation with anyone who would speak at all about reserve spaces. Information eventually filtered through the most unlikely places and “research” amounted to an untidy process of stumblings, fumblings, dead ends and restarts.

Chapter 3 is a description of a planning process for a new reserve, and it too relied on human informants. Limitations again involved the difficulty of eliciting conversations about reserve planning, the primary difference being that these difficulties arose from unwillingness more than from inability. People were careful about speaking of the Black Sturgeon Reserve. The reserve is a raw and ongoing creation and, sitting on the edge of the future, its fate can be affected by stories. So, caution stemmed from currency. It also came from other places.

The planning of the Black Sturgeon Reserve is situated in the postindustrial mining town of Lynn Lake, where information is carefully managed for at least two reasons. Firstly, the townspeople and the Marcel Colomb First Nation residing at Lynn Lake have long-standing turbulent relations and are engaged in current negotiations. Accusations of racism and injustice have stemmed from the particularly wretched conditions of this Aboriginal community. Since 1982, an eighty-year-old native trapper was murdered and mutilated in a Lynn Lake park, a female band elder has disappeared, and two fatal hit-and-runs have been recorded by the band. These and other violent acts remain unsolved, and the incidence of crime continues to soar.38 My questions unearthed politics of race relations that were barely on the mend.

38 Although Lynn Lake’s population never exceeded 3,500 and had shrunk to 700 by 2001, since 1986 there has been almost one homicide per year, a rate that has grown to 80 times the national average. (Canada’s homicide rate has been at a steady 1.8 per 100,000 since 1998.) In the year 2000 Lynn’s population of 836 endured one homicide, one attempted murder 240 assaults and nine sexual assaults. The total crimes against persons was 253 or 30 percent of the population, approximately 30 times the national average. (Crime statistics from Statistics Canada and the RCMP. Population from Manitoba’s Regional Health Authority.)
Secondly, mining and violence have disfigured a landscape that is now being remarkeched. Struggling to maintain its tenuous existence, the town is reinventing itself from industrial boom town to tourist haven, a challenging metamorphosis. A July 2005 Winnipeg Free Press article for example, “Spectacular fishing a constant at Lynn Lake,” is part of the town’s overall marketing strategy. This dichotomy between Lynn’s reality and its aspirations has generated a “management of information.” Conversations with outsiders are measured and polished.

The band was also silent about its stories, and questions about history often prompted distrust and intentional amnesia. A wariness of strangers and of telling stories hinted at a harsh history of disempowerment and exclusion. Storytelling has also been unkind. Many injurious myths continue to circulate about the Aboriginal people at Lynn Lake. At least two 1980 articles published in Lynn Lake’s Northern Breeze claimed the Aboriginals residing at the outskirts of town were trapping and eating town pets, allegations that attacked their dignity and humanity by conjuring up images of savagery. (The articles finally sparked a human rights probe.) Band members still refer to these articles with anger. Others such as “Tent people’ violence feared” (Winnipeg Free Press, 1985), “Squatters concern town” (Winnipeg Tribune, 1976), “Townspeople up in arms over alcoholism violence” (Winnipeg Free Press, 1983), and “Town under Siege” (Winnipeg Sun, 1994) proved equally damming characterizations of the Marcel Colomb band. Writing was potentially injurious, and outsiders could not be trusted with stories.

The Canadian government was most cautious about information, and some of my interactions with officials bordered on the bizarre. Given the primary role of government in reserve construction and the powers of individual bureaucrats with whom I spoke – the Regional Director of Public Works overseeing all Manitoba reserve construction – I will illustrate these interactions, albeit laboriously. On one occasion I sought a sample of the design guidelines consulting firms must follow to ensure Treasury Board project funding, in this case “School Space Guidelines” governing reserve schools. An INAC official claimed these were “privileged and required an access

30 Lynn Lake’s rail connection was cut in 2003 yet its beckoning website brags of sport fishing and Native culture. See, Lamont, “Spectacular fishing…”
31 The Marcel Colomb people still suffer extreme social challenges. In the year 2003 the band comprised 280 individuals and about fourteen families. In the year 2000 there were about 18 employed adults. Thirty-two percent of the population is below the age of seventeen. High rates of alcoholism, teen suicide and domestic violence are related. The average level of education in 2000 was grade three.
to information application." The guidelines were eventually released after much argument. I requested a sample "Terms of Reference," a document defining a project such as a school or feasibility study and distributed when a project is tendered. INAC officials would not release even a sample, stating that it was "privileged information." When I inquired about a listing of major capital projects done on reserves, many officials suggested that First Nations bands be contacted individually as "bands have autonomy." Officials explained repeatedly that any information involving a band is considered third-party information and is thereby protected under the Privacy Act. Deflections and reroutes to INAC's communications department were also customary yet, notwithstanding its title, the department could not answer most questions. After my fifth inquiry a department official offered his own assessment: "I don't know why they keep sending people to us. We don't know anything."

Confusion surrounding the public versus private nature of First Nations projects stemmed from a combination of contrary beliefs: that reserve projects are "public projects" subject to public scrutiny, and that bands have autonomy. When asked why First Nations cannot hire consultants directly without government involvement, for example, an INAC bureaucrat replied "because it's not their money. You have to understand this is a large amount of public money we are talking about." When asked to define INAC's mandate, the communications department stated, "Actually, I have a degree in Native studies but after I started working here I am totally confused. Can you believe there are people working here that don't know what the Indian Act is?" Probably many officials erred on the side of caution as a result of confusion and the politicized nature of First Nations issues, but not always.

On another occasion I sought the following information: INAC's 2002 budget for the sixty-two Manitoba bands, a list of Manitoba on-reserve projects since 1999 with contract value and firm names (available on two websites, Merx and Contracts Canada, although not in comprehensive

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41 The Access to Information Act stipulates a thirty-day government response time to reply to an initial access request without guarantee any information will be forwarded within this time. The government can also charge an hourly rate for research that can require an unspecified amount of time.
42 The Privacy Act contains provisions requiring that information about identifiable individuals or third parties be protected. INAC officials maintained that both a First Nation and a consultant contracted by government are third parties, broadly protecting data concerning reserve development.
43 INAC has a mandate to fulfill the Crown's fiduciary obligations to First Nations.
the number of First Nations firms winning contracts, and the waiting list for projects on Manitoba reserves.

Although, as I discovered later, some of this information appears on websites, the following process ensued. INAC officials directed me to Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) which is commissioned to manage INAC building contracts on-reserve. Dwayne Willmer’s office (the Regional Director of PWGSC western region in Edmonton) advised that Ron Payne (Regional Director of the Public Works arm in Manitoba operating under INAC) could provide the information. Mr. Payne directs a small division of nine people that oversees all capital projects on Manitoba reserves including the Black Sturgeon project. I telephoned Mr. Payne in February of 2003 asking for a listing of Manitoba on-reserve capital projects since 1999. The question yielded a barrage of questions. I explained the information was for the purpose of university research and informed Mr. Payne of my consistent research difficulties including being constantly rerouted to the communications department. He responded that “this process is in place so that departments do not have to deal with frivolous requests” and asked if “there is someone else on the line.” No information was divulged during this conversation, but Mr. Payne readily agreed to meet in person.

We met the following morning and Mr. Payne spent most of his time attempting to collect information about me. My name, the nature and purpose of the research and the University of British Columbia was either insufficient information or not believable. He insisted that I “be more open.” When I divulged little more, Ron Payne claimed I was “unlike any student [he had] encountered as most students share personal information out of courtesy.” I explained that the Access to Information Act did not require more personal details than I had already offered, or courtesy, as a prerequisite for the government’s release of public information. Mr. Payne replied “No, but your mother does.” He warned, “I could just bump you to the communications department, and many other departments would do the same. This is likely to happen if you are not more open,” in so doing confirming that the communications department was less an information source than a front and an effective threat. Attempting another angle, I discussed the public nature of the

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44 Merx is an online government tendering system. It is a vehicle whereby government can advertise projects and call for proposals from firms both nationally and internationally.

45 Merx contains an archive identifying both firms awarded contracts and the value of these contracts. Contracts Canada is a similar vehicle for smaller contracts with an accessible archive. Unfortunately, online searching uses search “engines” that fail to yield complete project lists.
information and suggested that government had a responsibility to its electorate towards transparency. I pointed out that I was a student and also a member of the public for whom, through avenues such as the Access to Information Act, such information is intended to be available. He replied, "I do not work for you. I work for the common good," elaborating with a peculiar missionary zeal. When I pressed that the public had rights to access information pertaining to government spending he replied, "Yes, but you are being very private right now." I asked finally, "So you are not willing to share this information with me?" He explained, "Yes, but this will depend on your personal information. You don't just offer comment to whoever walks in the door." When I finally reminded Ron Payne that the Regional Director's office had directed me to this division, he agreed to collect the data but "at a cost, because it would take some time, and if you want the department to be cooperative you must reciprocate."

Mr. Payne did not claim the information was sensitive or difficult to retrieve. We did not discuss the sensitivity of the information at all. Nor did he discuss the special status of Aboriginal communities. His willingness to divulge information was dependent on who I was rather than the nature of the information itself. No information was forwarded by Mr. Payne, who ignored all e-mails directed to him in the following months. I contacted Dwayne Willmer again, who recanted his office's promise. He advised that I forward an Access to Information application as my questions "were detailed and considered sensitive." I contacted Heather Peden's office (Regional Director General of Public Works) for assistance, but she did not reply.

Over these six months, I contacted a number of government information officers who confirmed that a project name, contract value and winning firm was not privileged information. An information officer at INAC's office in Winnipeg finally agreed to forward the list of projects, but maintained that if firm names and costs were requested an official access request to Ottawa should be completed. I surrendered.

Receiving my application, INAC's Ottawa information officer informed me that according to the department, the data regarding projects and firms had to be "compiled" and would cost an unspecified amount because it must be retrieved from various "zones." No such list existed and its assembly would be arduous. The cost estimate for compilation was one hundred work-hours totaling $1,000 and the government's thirty-day response time was put on hold pending clarification of the questions. I have seen INAC budget information often in the public sphere, information impossible to compile without a list of projects and costs. Bands customarily refer to INAC's waiting
list for projects. Public Works has a list of firms from which they buy services. Bureaucracies list, compile, organize and add up. They are data machines with efficient new tools, computers and spreadsheet programs. I was surprised.

Over time the information request shifted farther away from its source: from Winnipeg, where it is located, to Edmonton, to Ottawa and back to Winnipeg. The blockade transformed from "insufficient personal information" to "sensitive and detailed information" to "difficulty in tracking information." The final blockade was cost. Ultimately, if one wants information one must pay.

I complained about the hefty fee to Ottawa's information officer who advised a library search or limiting the request, asking for less information. I consulted Winnipeg's information officer once again (also assigned to my "case") asking for the list without the bill and delays. He consulted the department bureaucrats who claimed a spreadsheet could be generated with project names, values and even band names, but consultants' names added inordinate "search time and costs." I finally consented to the firm name omission and the department retrieved the information at no cost, most probably from Ron Payne's division. The list of firms was the obstruction.

Such negotiations for facts typified my dealings with government and underlay the writing of chapter 3. Public Works and INAC officials including Regional Directors resisted disclosure, citing band autonomy, the communications department, the government's Privacy Act, and the Access to Information Act as effective forms of resistance. (The Access to Information Act has particular ironies. The act does not stipulate what information is available for public consumption. It stipulates, however, what information can be withheld by government and for what reasons, and these reasons are sufficiently broad to give departments sweeping powers of silence. The application process also enables government to send a researcher on arduous journeys through paper and time. Worsening matters, the people responsible for sharing the information do not have the information, and located far from its source, mostly do not understand its nature, or how easily it can be retrieved. A bureaucrat can thereby estimate a retrieval time that denies access through outrageous costs. Importantly, the act eases the obligation of government personnel to share information and many quickly refer to its application procedure, supplanting formerly accessible forms of information provided by bureaucrats themselves.)

The secrecy is a meaningful reflection of the nature of the reserve construction world. The federal department of Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) awards 60,000 contracts totaling $9.2 billion annually. As Canada's largest purchasing organization the
department tenders and awards work to a variety of consultants. Public Works is commissioned by Indian and Northern Affairs to tender and oversee the department's reserve initiatives and in the year 2002 alone, $44 million was dedicated to Manitoba reserves. Approximately $300 million has been slated for reserve capital projects over a four-year period (2001-2005), boosting construction initiatives in the province. Competition is intense given the sizes of contracts, the reliability of government payers, and the snowball effect of landing a single project. Firms that win tend to win again as defined by government policy. "Previous First Nations work is an asset to winning contracts." So competition is stiff.

Within such an opportunistic context, Public Works and INAC tendering policies are intended to ensure competition among private contractors. According INAC's Corporate Manual System, only projects valued below $100,000 can be awarded without competition. Those between $100,000 and $500,000 must be open tenders or invited with at least three competing firms, and those over $500,00 must be open tenders and publicly advertised.

The process of awarding contracts, however, is factious. The selection process is murky, overly subjective and variable by many accounts. A selection committee is established by INAC comprising INAC representatives, Public Works representatives, band council representatives and Tribal Council representatives. Its constitution varies for reasons I could not determine. The Terms of Reference Document describing a project, which is, distributed in proposal calls, usually lists evaluation criteria established by INAC. Each committee member assigns a numerical value to each criterion, totaled to give a score to each competitor. While this numerical procedure renders an aura of objectivity, selection results from the preferences of a small committee. In addition, the department has an approved list of firms from which it buys and establishes short lists for invited competitions. Not all professionally licensed and bonded firms possessing adequate insurance are included in competitions, and some complain of exclusionary tactics.

Unjust practices are sometimes employed to win. The department boasts of a "cost driven approach that gives First Nations the biggest bang for their buck" and a general understanding exists that the lowest bidder is favored to win. A process known as "lowballing," however,

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46 Garden Hill First Nation school project is estimated at $27.7 million, Sapotaweyak school and teacher's housing at $17.8 million and Opaskwayak high school expansion $14 million, for example.

47 From INAC's "Corporate Manuals Systems" available online under "infrastructure and Housing." I was referred to this website when I asked the department for its tendering policies.
capitalizes on this department policy in order to win a contract. A consultant places a bid that is too low to meet the contract. The bid is won on that basis and either service is cut or fees are added later.

Some firms lobby both bureaucrats and bands prior to selection. "I know I have the INAC and PW vote," one architect claimed, explaining his many personal trips to Ottawa to lobby bureaucrats prior to a competition. Individuals from all groups involved in building, including consultants, government bureaucrats and First Nations, also described "kickbacks" or "buying" the job as a known method of winning contracts. "You can't get a job without $10,000 in your pocket" claims another architect. He explained that such gifts sometimes assume the form of tax-deductible donations. Another explained graft was a "...standard way of doing business among some of our First Nation clients and unique to First Nations work... You are dealing with communities that are coming out of a situation of incredible graft and corruption. It is generally widespread but what we call graft and corruption sometimes they call the rights of the chief and the way culturally they do business. It is traditionally how they see their roles...what white people consider graft they consider politicking. The problem is that they see this as their duty as the leaders but there is no money in the budget for it. So oftentimes it is taken out of a project budget." A top ranking INAC official acknowledged the prevalence of "job buying" and stated that "the department was attempting to clean up the process."

Architectural firm surveys revealed a general cynicism about INAC and Public Works tendering of First Nations projects that reverberate in the design and construction field. Of seventeen architectural firms surveyed, for example, only two perceived the tendering and selection process as transparent while twelve deemed it obscure. The bewilderment and apathy of firms is reflected in the following remarks. "I don't respond to those (government's call for proposals for reserve contracts). Wouldn't get it anyway." "Life's too short." "There is a general problem with transparency." "Proposal calls have nothing to do with who wins or loses. There is another agenda. It's a mystery to us." "INAC has their own preferences." "A lot of this is politics and..."

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48 Seventeen of Winnipeg's 57 architectural firms were surveyed. Those that participated ranged in size from small to very large. The majority of respondents had either completed First Nations projects or had participated in government proposal calls. Many that declined the survey did not participate in First Nations projects. Firms successful at winning contracts appeared to be medium to large in size and a number of small firms expressed difficulties in participating in competitions that demanded of a firm's time without assurances of work. There was a general perception that it was hard to "get one's foot in the door."
who you know. Not always the best qualified wins the bid. “There is a lack of transparency in proposal calls.” “We feel the process is very inequitable.” “Firms are usually chosen before the process is undertaken. The selection process is only conducted as a required political formality.” Within this context of lucrative contracts, extreme competitive tactics and charges of corruption, department bureaucrats were predictably mute. These contextual forces explain the department’s unwillingness to speak of government processes even off the record, and the fear of repercussion when they did.

The information for chapter 3 was gathered from a variety of sources including interviews, participant observation, surveys, the planning documents for the new reserve, informal conversations with people, especially Headman John Colomb of the Marcel Colomb First Nation, newspapers, minutes to meetings, and letters. In many cases, as I have shown, asking for information generated resistance and yielded little. Instead this story was constructed from a process of peering through the cracks of a tightly controlled world.

Overall, the process of reading reserves and writing about them revealed as much about Aboriginality in Canada as about the spaces themselves. Information arrived neither in bundles nor heaps but in the scraps that people, almost always, shared cautiously. This overwhelming caution spoke volumes. Relations between Canada’s indigenous peoples and newcomers remain tense and apprehensive, and is certainly affected by the spatial properties of Canada’s reserve system.

This research extended over four years, and the methods ranged widely, in good part because different questions and subjects required this. Entering an architectural firm or a government office with a questionnaire or interview schedule is one thing. Entering a reserve in this way is quite another.

Chapter two makes a harsh judgement of the Manitoba reserve landscape and this is substantiated largely through photographs and my verbal description. This assessment is based on substantial fieldwork. In 2000 I traveled to eight Manitoba communities, shot 700 photographs, interviewed seven local housing authorities and made field notes of my observations about buildings and space. I have also visited The Pas, Norway house, Fisher River, Peguis, Sagkeeng,
Pelican Rapids and Moose Lake reserves throughout my life in Manitoba, and my assessment of reserve architecture is informed by memories of all these places.

In all, I made nine separate trips to the Hollow Water reserve. What began as a formal interview process with local people later moved to more informal conversations about reserve life with anyone willing to speak of it. I also attempted to initiate a design project and wrote a proposal for a museum as vehicles to discuss local design approaches. These visits enabled observations about space, and people warmly offered me opportunities to attend local events such as a sweat lodge ceremony and conference pertaining to regional development. Ray Raven, a local elder and past housing councilor, was my main contact, from whom, I gained a wealth of information about the community.

Regional resource information was collected from the development conference, interviews with the Department of Conservation and Manitoba Hydro officials, a review of Manitoba's license renewal applications for timber cutting, and scanning maps from various government departments. Historical information was collected from a handful of writers such as George Barker, Norman Williamson, and Katherine Pettipas as well as Ray Raven.49

These trips to communities were used to identify some common architectural features of reserves that, although not present in every community, do characterize the majority. I use the Hollow Water reserve as representative of a pattern of building about which I then offer architectural analysis or "judgment."

Architectural decision-making or "design" involves an ongoing process of judgment – of assessing this solution versus that. Peter Collins in his book "Architectural Judgement" compares design judgments to those made in the legal profession based on precedent, principles or laws, reason and rationality. The evolution of the architectural profession has entailed an evolution of principles pertaining to how people have solved the problems of human relationship to one another and to surrounding space. Architectural decision-making is also made within a social, historical and environmental context, which also directs building solutions.50 This rational process is overlain with restrictions placed on design by building codes, functional requirements, environmental conditions, technological limits and other measurable criteria. In other words design evaluation is not entirely

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49 Barker, *Forty Years a Chief*, Williamson, *Black Island ... Never was*, Pettipas, *Severing the Ties ... Prairies*.
subjective. Assessments are not simple matters of opinion, interpretation or taste as is commonly understood. This is why design can be taught and intelligibly explained.

Using disciplinary principles from my own study, practice and teaching of architecture, in chapter 2 I assess the design characteristics of the built environment in Hollow Water. Mapping, illustrations and annotated photographs are used as evidence. Wherever possible, I observed space-in-use to measure "form against function." In large part these are my judgments, but I have also incorporated criticisms of buildings and spaces from Aboriginal people who live in reserve communities.

While there is a western orientation to the analysis derived from my own education, not all attributes of building design and planning are culture-specific. Environmental responsiveness, construction feasibility, practicality of building technologies, functional efficiency, and health and safety are examples of design requirements that can be evaluated without employing a cultural lens. While architectural criticism of "Aboriginal architectures" has often focused on difference, there are many commonalties in the solutions found by different people dealing with similar problems of environmental and human interaction. Furthermore, overemphasizing difference in architectural criticism in relation to health, safety and other standards can lead to the same stereotypes, reductionism and discrimination cultural theory seeks to remedy and to a relaxing of commonly accepted standards of design westerners expect for themselves.

Some differentiation needs to be made between people and the architecture within which they live. Chapter 2 is an assessment of the reserve built environment not of communities of people. It sets the stage for an examination of the factors that give rise to such forms in the following two chapters.

Research for chapter 3 commenced between May and December 2000 while I participated in a design process for a new reserve. I acted as a design consultant for the Marcel Colomb band exchanging my services for permission to write about the process of reserve planning. Several trips were made to Lynn Lake where the planning sessions took place. Headman John Colomb and Chief Andrew Colomb were my main contacts. They escorted me to the new reserve site and seven former village sites, which I recorded in photos and maps. John's storytelling wove into my trips to Lynn Lake and his trips to Winnipeg.
Between the summer of 2000 and 2001 at Lynn Lake and Winnipeg interviews were conducted to contextualize the Black Sturgeon Reserve planning process. They involved key townspeople, band members, former band consultants, a researcher hired by the Northwest Futures Development Corporation, representatives from the Provincial Department of Health, the Department of Conservation, the Manitoba Outfitter’s Association, the Lynn Lake RCMP, and a Pukatawagan elder. Many documents were also analyzed including letters, minutes to meetings, newspaper articles, and government and mining reports. In October 2000, I attended a Ministers’ conference at Lynn Lake involving the Provincial Minister of Conservation, the Provincial Minister of Northern Affairs, the Tribal Council, the Band Council and the Town Council of Lynn Lake. Here I collected regional development information.

Historical information about Sherritt Gordon mining was obtained in 2001 from documents at the Hudson’s Bay archives in Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Public Library, the Conservation Library and the Lynn Lake Mining Museum.

Seventeen architectural firms were interviewed and surveyed in Winnipeg in January 2002 to frame the Black Sturgeon project within a larger context of “Aboriginal projects” and industry attitudes. Key Indian and Northern Affairs officials and Public Works officials were interviewed between January 2002 and February 2003.

Chapter 3 offers a criticism of the Black Sturgeon reserve design process and its end product. As in chapter 2, I assess both, in relation to principles of community design and planning that are standard in the field. I read, for example, the relationship between design consultant (engineering firm) and client (a band) as it compares to typical client/designer relations in the marketplace. From these readings emerge an analysis of the uniqueness of reserve planning and an explanation of its unusual outcome.

Reserves comprise mainly housing, which is the focus of chapter 4. Information was collected between 1999 and 2001 from interviews with housing councilors at seven communities, from band members at Hollow water, from elders at an elder’s conference in Winnipeg, and from Canada Mortgage and Housing officials. Government policy documents from the 1960s onwards were used as reference as well as reports by the Auditor General, the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs annual housing reports.

This chapter was built around two Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reserve housing conferences I attended, one in Calgary in 1999 and the other in Winnipeg in 2000.
The conferences enabled me to observe the interactions between Aboriginal delegates, government representatives and industry goods and service providers. I recorded the proceedings, collected distributed material and talked informally with band representatives, government officials and industry representatives about Canadian reserve housing.

The participant observation process engaged throughout this writing enabled a glimpse at an otherwise off-limits world of planning, yet had limitations. The closeness of the subject matter increased potentials for bias. Lapses between the collecting of information and in the writing of each chapter became a necessary means of maintaining distance.

The methodological challenges of a non-Aboriginal person studying and making judgments about reserve space are immense, and this brief accounting of my methods and data sources does not do justice to them. This is but a first attempt to address these themes and I return to them repeatedly in the context of rendering my judgments and explanations.
This essay is about the architectural nature of a place. Living in places is probably the most effective means towards this end. Failing this possibility, however, traveling to them must suffice. In the fall of 2000 I traveled to eight reserves in south and central Manitoba: Hollow Water, Brokenhead, Chemawawin, Grand Rapids, Keeseekoowenin, Wawayseecappo, Dakota Tipi and Roseau River, and shot over 700 photos. I could have easily chosen eight other communities but settled on these for their variety and accessibility. These communities lay within a day's drive from Winnipeg and illustrate a variety of landforms, cultures, language groups and resource base, housed in a similar architectural form—the reserve.51

It is not incidental terminology that photographs are “taken” or “shot.” Photography captures and kills a good deal. It can take away more than people would be willing to give if they were familiar with its powers. It can be accomplished without people’s knowledge. It stills movements, activities and lives. It is rude. It is a means of staring and giving permanence to that stare. So, to “take” and to shoot” are fitting phrases for a camera, which easily transforms tool to weapon, and researcher to hunter and thief.

I employed the camera with such an outlook and used its powers with restraint. Most of the photos, for example, do not include people. Only once is the inside of a home recorded. Such tactics give the analysis an unfortunate objective rather than experiential quality but were necessary to respect the privacy of people whose homes and communities had become the objects of an outsider’s gaze.

51 These communities are varied in ways that reveal their Nation-ness and distinction. The language groups include Cree, Ojibway, and Sioux. The landscape is widely varied including flat prairie, rolling farmland, rocky Canadian Shield, and boreal forest regions. The resource base includes agriculture, hunting, trapping, wild rice farming, commercial fishing, Manitoba Hydro employment, building construction, berry farming, forestry, bison ranching and others.
This trip was one of many that I took to Hollow Water to try to understand the architecture of the place. During succeeding trips, my impressions remained the same. Shortly after setting out I began to feel the city of Winnipeg falling away behind the car. A new feeling engulfed me, one of entering an expansive and rich world.

It is easy to understand why Aboriginal people settled in this place. Highway 304, which bypasses the Hollow Water Reserve, cuts through Precambrian Shield, a landscape of dramatic rock outcroppings and meandering rivers. The area is habitat for a variety of eagle species, moose, bear and beaver. Wild rice and blueberries are abundant. Lake Winnipeg brims with pickerel, their numbers indicated by the cormorants and pelicans that swarm in fishing frenzies during the summer months. Black Island, in Lake Winnipeg, is just a few kilometers to the west. It is high, rocky and vast, with sandy beaches, coves, artesian wells, various medicinal healing plants, and a rich boreal forest. Hollow Water is a mere 190 kilometers from Winnipeg but the distance may as well be half a world.

52 Also known as Hole River and Wanipagow. The English translation for Wanipagow is “a hole in the land where water collects to form a lake or river.”
According to the map, I am approaching the reserve. Reserves are new creations. While the reserve at Hollow Water was set aside in 1875 for the Anishinabe people known as the Big Island band, the band lived in seasonal encampments throughout the Lake Winnipeg area into the early 1900s. At that time they did not know themselves by a geographic location but by the name of their headman. But with the arrival of the school and missions at this same time, and the pressure of outside interests to continue to develop the resources of Black Island, the people settled, reluctantly, many claim, at the present townsite of Hollow Water. Hollow Water was not an unfamiliar place, but it had been redrawn. The absence of reserves on official highway maps until recent years attests to this newness.

Like most travelers, I look for the boundary of the place, the demarcating line, some indications that a settlement is approaching. Architecture deals with dividing lines or walls, different types of walls, walls with varying degrees of subtlety, walls that separate, protect, demarcate and organize, and walls that define the relation between people and environment. At its most basic, architecture establishes what is inside and what is outside, and the nature of the dividing line.

So, where does Hollow Water begin? The historic boundary of the Big Island people was not a town with a perimeter, a small easily deciphered place. It was a territory defined by resources that sustained the group. The ancestors of the people of Hollow Water roamed a vast area around Lake Winnipeg with boundaries that would require mapping to be discerned. The Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada (INAC) reserve boundary, delineated in the years following the signing of Treaty 5 in 1875, is minuscule in comparison. It is a meager four thousand acres, a territory based on a calculation of seventy-two band members at the time the treaty was signed. Current band activities, including hunting, trapping, berry-picking, ceremonies, recreation, collecting medicinal plants, and environmental training, still encompass large areas outside this reserve boundary. The reserve boundary bears little relation to historic or current use. Nor is it an obvious

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53 A term the people use to describe themselves meaning First Peoples. They are Algonquian-speaking people who migrated from the Great Lakes region, also known as Saulteaux, and Ojibway.
54 See Barker, *Forty Years A Chief* and Williamson, *Black Island...Never Was* for a description of the regional patterns of occupation in the 1800s until the 1885 controversial signing of Treaty 5 that encouraged settlement at the present townsite.
55 Williamson, *Black Island...Never was*, 27.
56 Ibd. NormanWilliamson discusses the various outside forces that ensured Black Island would not become a reserve.
57 The band is in the process of mapping this expanded terrain according to the stories of the elders, archaeological findings and written historical accounts. A current land claims process is also underway to address this land grievance.
line following the natural lie of the land. It has the crude arbitrariness of its origin in a bureaucrat's office far removed from the actual site. Yet the reserve boundary is powerful.

The boundary separates the three surrounding communities of Seymourville, Manigotagan and Aghaming from the Hollow Water Reserve. It distinguishes these as Metis communities, a demarcation that splits families and friends, united otherwise by language, blood, proximity and significant social contact.

The boundary also determines government funding. Operating and capital dollars are based upon on-reserve membership. So the band continues to accommodate its expanding population within the confines of the reserve where actual buildable land is becoming scarce.

The reserve boundary/traditional territory discrepancy has created conflicts over land use. The federal government has a responsibility to uphold its treaties with Aboriginal people whereas the provinces have no such treaties. Neither do the provinces have any fiduciary responsibility to First Nations. So the “Manitoba Natural Resources Land Transfer Act” of 1930, whereby Canada transferred to the Province of Manitoba jurisdiction of “lands, waters and natural resources” outside reserve boundaries, formalized an exploitation of “non-reserve lands” by private interests that was already underway.

Aboriginal rights allow the people of Hollow Water to practice subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping within their territories, but the Province of Manitoba has never protected these rights from other competing interests. Most recently, provincial permits for development have been granted to Pelican Harbor, a private real estate development built between Hollow Water and Manigotagan and within Aboriginal trapping territories. The resulting monster summer-home development is a walled, recreational community for part-time residents from Winnipeg. Its contrasting spirit, form and interests create an uneasy relationship with the nearby Aboriginal communities, heightening feelings of encroachment and marginalization. Pelican Harbor’s recreational land use conflicts with commercial and subsistence fishing on and around the lake. Fishers and traditionalists fear speed boating, water-skiing, and other activities will affect their yields. Of the jobs promised to Aboriginal people, the development yielded one position – a security person was employed to guard against trespassers, giving Pelican Harbor a guarded posture.

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58 Trustee relationship, guardianship. The federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations established through the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

59 Treaty rights have been recognized and affirmed by Canada’s 1982 Constitution Act.
The reserve border shown in black on this Indian Affairs map is a constricted and mathematical space with rectilinear borders and grid lines that allow precision in location and management. The traditional use area overlaid in gray does not follow a grid but the geography of the land. Its expansiveness responds to the resource needs of the band and territories of other bands. It too has a precision not given justice in my crude drawing.

The territory is becoming filled with borders that exclude the people who call it home.
The communities of Hollow Water, Aghaming, Seymourville and Manigotagan comprise descendants of the Big Island band. But they are separated by the Indian Act definitions of Metis and Indian and the powerful reserve line. The land between the communities further disintegrates with the placement of Pelican Harbor and timber cutting contingency areas of a large paper company (shown in black dashed lines). If timber becomes scarce in the “license areas” contingency areas may be used.

Aerial photo from Manitoba Hydro digital files.
Lumber and mining companies have had long-term interests in the area. Timber was cut on Black Island as far back as the late 1800s. Pine Falls Paper Company (PFPCO) currently harvests 450,000 cubic meters annually in Manitoba, including timber directly bordering the reserve. The practice has affected subsistence activities by diminishing forest inventories. The Province is in the process of considering PFPCO’s bid to double its quota in the region. While the license to cut outside the reserve boundary (where the best stocks lie) has been awarded by the Province to the paper company, the Aboriginal people continue to harvest trees from their own minuscule townsite. There is presently no timber awarded to the community.

Manitoba Hydro also has interests in the territory bordering the reserve. The company is considering the construction of a transmission corridor along the east side of Lake Winnipeg from the Nelson River system to the city of Winnipeg. The high-voltage line will bring power from three new dams. The development gains momentum as the U.S. energy crisis increases and the Kyoto Accord ratification popularizes cleaner power. The development will affect at least eight Aboriginal communities, including Hollow Water.

With development, road building becomes necessary. The provincial Department of Highways is contemplating an all-weather road stretching north on the east side of the lake. In so doing the Province will support both Hydro and lumber cutting initiatives, enhance development in Manitoba, and spur tourism. Pine Falls Paper has already begun the construction of a lumber road from Hollow Water to the Berens River Reserve, situated directly north. It is uncertain how these developments will affect ecosystems and Aboriginal lifestyles.

The provincial government’s position on development has encouraged Aboriginal people to seek unlikely measures to protect their traditional territories, measures involving the “designation game.” Black Island is currently a part of Grindstone Provincial Park and Aboriginal people are permitted to use it for traditional, but noncommercial activities. Since 1997, however, the federal

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60 In fact it was largely the socioeconomic interests of various industries that ensured the Island of the Big Island band was not included in the reserve boundary despite the Band’s request. See Williamson, *Black Island...Never Was* for more.
61 Smaller subsidiary of Tembec, formerly Abitibi-Price.
62 Manitoba currently generates more power than it uses and exports a large portion of its power to the state of Minnesota.
63 An agreement between countries to reduce global warming which is partially due to greenhouse gas emissions and the burning of fossil fuels. Canada ratified the agreement in December 2002.
64 As an example, the band has been gathering blueberries on the island ever since they roamed the region. The Province currently permits the practice but prohibits the controlled forest burning that is required to maintain a healthy harvest into the future.
The strategy has paid off. Under substantial pressure from Manitoba Hydro, political opponents and the business community, in May 2005 Manitoba's Energy Minister, Dave Chomiak rejected Hydro's proposal on the basis an east-side transmission corridor would bisect a tract of wilderness being considered as a World Heritage site. The Hydro company still claims it has not given up. See Lett "Hydro won't get cheapest route."
So while the reserve line might be thought of as an arbitrary and an unseen paper border, it is a powerful line that compresses and splits the community while enabling devastating encroachment of the band’s traditional territories. Unseen lines on paper have inescapable effects. They are invisible but powerful architectural elements defining reserve communities. An important two-day conference begins today in Hollow Water to discuss these plans for the territories immediately beyond the border. My trip will be timely.
The paved provincial road to Hollow Water has abruptly ended, suspending my contemplations. I encounter gravel at an uncomfortable speed. I pass the turnoff to the reserve and double back to notice a modest sign tucked back in the forest. There the architecture of Hollow Water begins.

The sign is easy to miss. Standing alone, it is a weak architectural announcement. More importantly, however, the sign is a gross understatement relative to what it proclaims: “Hollow Water First Nation.” On succeeding trips to Hollow Water I did not look for the sign to mark my arrival in Hollow Water, but rather for the end of the pavement.

The federal road into the reserve has a soft gravelly top layer that raises enough dust to hamper visibility. It has a washboard surface punctuated with potholes. The combined effect makes my truck feel as though it’s falling apart. Trees on either side are a dull green, choking in their multilayered coatings of dust. When it rains in Hollow Water this road literally melts, transforming itself into a sea of mud. The yearly federal capital dollars allocated to the reserve cannot cover the costs of bringing the road up to required design speeds and the Province of Manitoba does not consider itself responsible because reserves lie within “federal jurisdiction.” So the road becomes a daily topic of discussion within the community.

As I travel down this road a satellite tower appears and then the first lonely house. I wonder if I am in Hollow Water. There is little in the way of greetings. The architecture neither prohibits entry nor escorts me in. There is nothing indicating arrival, nothing demarcating “inside” from “outside.” For a newcomer, it is difficult to ascertain whether one has actually arrived.
"Hollow Water First Nation" appears in bold print with a small arrow directing a driver to the left of the bank of trees.
Plan showing settlement pattern

The Hollow Water reserve is roughly six and one half km in length and two km in width. The Wapiagow River passes through the reserve where it meets Lake Winnipeg at its northern limit. A main road follows the river and then makes its way west and south through two Metis communities before it meets Highway 304. The terrain within the reserve is uneven and punctuated with granite outcrops. Aside from its built areas, the community is forested.

Buildings are scattered along the road, the first few houses appearing directly inside the reserve’s southern border. At Lake Winnipeg the population density increases. A school, two churches, two stores and a gas station are at this location in close proximity to the lake. I am told that the overall development of the reserve roughly follows an Indian and Northern Affairs community plan drawn many years ago.
Housing

A little farther up the road is a scattering of homes sprinkled here and there. I can read that they have been built before water and sewers arrived. Infrastructure has a way of ordering, of making uniform patterns in the landscape, and the lack of it permits both randomness and distance. The homes are two- or three-bedroom bungalow style, painted in pastel shades, with picture windows that face the main road. Built with prefabricated components and standardized plans, they could have been uprooted from any suburban city development. These are referred to as band houses, a reference to how they are financed and owned. Band houses were built by the band before government housing loans existed and so carry no mortgages. They are administered by the band.

As late as the 1890s the people of Hollow Water were living in wigwams, windowless structures made of bent wood saplings and covered with bark or skins. Floors were covered with spruce boughs. They were easily built and rebuilt. A few log cabins existed at that time. The early cabins had clay joints, moss for insulation and rough sawn timber-framed roofs. The government provided a few small windows, tar-paper and wood shingles. By the 1950s most people were living in log cabins and resided permanently at the new reserve of Hollow Water. In the 1950s the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs began providing funding for home building. The band
built approximately three houses per year and the prefabricated band houses slowly began to replace the log cabins.66

Along the main road I enter what is referred to as “the subdivision.” It was built within the last fifteen years following a preexisting Indian and Northern Affairs plan. With a government housing subsidy of $27,500 a figure unaltered from the 1970s, and a construction rate of three or four houses per year, the band could not keep up with the demand for new homes. For the first time Hollow Water began building on credit. There are fifteen houses in the subdivision built with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)67 loans. A steadily increasing number of CMHC houses built each year identifies the company as the new painter of the landscape.

The subdivision is a suburban arrangement of objects, introverted and turning in on itself. The houses have a proximity and regularity dictated by sewer, water and the novel idea of “subdividing” reserve land. Individualized boxes control an equal share of property. Such repetition eases the installation of infrastructure but lays new patterns of tenure onto old ones.

Historically, people arranged themselves in family groupings.68 A family’s yard was determined by what it maintained and used, establishing a loose system of territorial boundaries. The system created natural variations in property size. According to a local elder, there were no internal property disputes over land. To regularize this organic system of allotment would imply that some families might be assigned yards bigger than they could manage while others might have yards smaller than they desired. Infrastructure can be a powerful disrupter of traditional practices.

The subdivision is an individualized repetition of forms, uniform in size and type. There are no small clusters of building. There are no grandma suites. There are no multiple-family structures where a large family or extended family could reside. There are no attached or semidetached arrangements. Almost all the houses are new two-story designs cut from the same template. Minor variations result from more or fewer bedrooms, essentially variations in size. Sometimes mirror reflections are used to create an aura of specificity or customization, a designer’s shortcut to offering choice without redesigning anything at all. Sixteen people live in one of these, yet it is

66 From Barker, Forty Years a Chief and Ray Raven, Hollow Water elder, in conversation with the author.
67 Canada Mortgage and Housing is a Crown Corporation whose mandate is to “improve the housing conditions of Canadians.” It provides loans and grants for reserve housing.
68 If last names are a measure, Hollow Water is made up of about ten families.
impossible to identify it from the rest. They are houses built in a single broad stroke, all very regular and all very equal.

But the subdivision houses are larger than most, an enviable fact in Hollow Water. People often refer to their homes by its dimension and house size is a common means of differentiation, "We built a 24 X 36," claimed a band member. The importance of scale is a testament to overcrowded conditions. Generic designs also exaggerate scale differences that stratify the community. The subdivision has become the place "where the rich folks live."

Driving through these streets I feel strangely conspicuous. The feeling is brought on by the curious orientation of the houses. Orientation refers to the placement of windows and doors in a structure which when one-sided establishes a "face." With few exceptions, the houses in Hollow Water face the street. I look at the houses and the houses stare back. They are myopic, Cyclops-type creatures with singular gazing picture windows. Such myopia creates a fine system of surveillance but is costly.

One-eyed homes are fitting for one-eyed environments, densely packed sites with backside service lanes, and bordering vibrant streets for example. One-sidedness emerges when "looking out" is restricted to a singular view as a matter of contextual necessity. One-eyed sites are often found in urban and suburban environments. But in Hollow Water there are few such conditions. Building sites have usable fronts, backs and sides. These are low-density, wooded settings where much would be gained by developing buildings with a multi-faced aspect. And no one meets on the street or spends time there. Streets are windswept, vacant thoroughfares utilized for commuting by car. Even so, Hollow Water replicates an urban orientation in the midst of the forest.
Orientation affects a building's interior by establishing certain optics: how a building looks out, how it faces its environment, and how it opens itself up. Window and door placements connect a building to the world. They fit buildings into a context by prioritizing elements of that context and thus are significant architectural acts. To face a forest clearing, an overgrown tree or an expansive lake may determine whether a space is serene and meditative or animate and distracting. And the view from inside shapes what is relevant and worth contemplating.

Hollow Water buildings make a critical choice. They look to the street for their connection to the world while turning their backs to the forest. Even when indoors there is no escaping the procession of cars. The community’s fundamental forest existence is ignored.

The subdivision is a recreation of suburban North America even in details. Established front facades display fake shutters and symbolic entrance canopies. Vinyl siding, asphalt roofing and small standardized windows create an image of “catalogue architecture.” The interiors are drywalled with vinyl flooring and carpeting. Kitchens are prefabricated and electric heating is replacing the wood stove of the older band housing. It is a distinct style of building borrowed from city builders, although a poor copy. Windows are dual-pane sliding panels that offer minimal insulation. People complain of problems with craftsmanship, mold and vapor barriers. Minimum levels of insulation are provided in 2x4 framed walls and finishing carpentry is often crude.

I leave the subdivision and travel farther up the road. Stretched along this road is a scattering of more band houses. Wherever houses have been built, the landscape around has a resultant bareness, a kind of invasive scouring that discloses too much. Overcrowded homes create an overcrowding of personal items which find lives in the yard. Bombardiers, skidoos, boats, cars barbecues and old appliances, all these take their places outside the house in an unordered arrangement of effects because houses and yards do not serve the substantial outdoor gear that comes with outdoor life.

Yet the storing of items required for living in a particular place can be a strong architectural determinant. Some communities derive an entire aesthetic from the needs of storing particular types of items. Some coastal communities, for example, are architecturally defined by boat storage structures, which make the settlements recognizable and distinct.

But in Hollow Water the articles that make living in the place unique do not transform the suburban style housing. Instead people have adapted needs to structure. It would be impossible to read for instance where the twenty fishermen live. A double garage complete with garage door and
remote opener is used for meat storage and filing cabinets while cars are parked on imported Kentucky bluegrass lawns. This exterior carpeting, purchased by the square foot, transforms yards from sandy knolls, rock outcroppings and a variety of shrubs and grasses into one single color and texture. And there are no skidoo sheds, cold storage rooms attached to the house for wild game, or racks outside on which to mount a canoe. Outdoor space becomes littered with things that require homes of their own.

Otherwise yards are barren places. Elements that could transform them into usable spaces such as outbuildings, peripheral vegetation, seating, furniture, fire pits and canopies are nonexistent. The border between inside and outside is maintained as absolute and brutal. One is either inside or outside. One is either in the house where one is protected and one’s activities are accommodated or out of the house where there is no protection, accommodation or invitation to do anything at all. This abrupt juxtaposition of building and environment is felt as one enters living spaces from all manners of weather.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation does not allow for the provision of such elements outside the “standard unit,” elements referred to as “extras” or non-essentials. The corporation’s regulations for house design must be met to secure funding and design extras would only hinder approval of loans. But without these “extras,” houses remain unclad and exposed.

A variety of spatial opportunities exist between the extremes of inside and outside. Porches are such opportunities. A porch spills a building onto its site. It turns architecture inside out. Porches are a building’s greeting, making it more friendly and safe. A porch ushers one in. A porch is a place where one can decide if a guest gains admittance or not. And a porch is a place that enables the transformation of environmental discomforts, like rain, into a welcome experience. In Manitoba they are essential. Most importantly, porches are a means of entering a building without the weather at one’s heels.

And it is possible to design a standard “unit” onto which people can make such adjustments, onto which can be overlaid these “extras” that specify, customize and add comfort to a building. But the initial design must anticipate them. It must make some preparation and invitation

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Kentucky bluegrass was imported to North America by Europeans and their animals. It was, and is, used as a pasture grass due to its density, fodder quality and longevity. With proper grazing management no reseeding may be necessary. It has been cultivated for hundreds of years for usage in North America as pastures, lawns, and sports turf. It is popular due to its density, resistance to damage and impact (it forms tough sod), its uniform appearance, color and fine texture. Years of genetic breeding have produce varieties with specific disease and insect tolerance. It has recommended mowing heights.
for change. Building adaptations often hinge on roof design or how a roof can be gracefully and practically extended. But the Band house and CMHC house are designed as complete packages. They do not anticipate adaptation which, when it happens, occurs in spite of the design rather than because of it.

People attempt to create their own makeshift structures to soften the jolt of environment. Porches and decks are added to the standardized unit. Even indoor furniture is placed outdoors as a means of giving livability to the spaces around buildings. But there is generally a crudity about these add-ons. They are often meager, windowless plywood boxes for weather-breaks, or decks that are too small and exposed. They are tacked on. And having no invitation to be there in the first place, they fit the building poorly, slamming into the side of a wall rather than merging with it. Necessary elements become architectural afterthoughts.

Hollow Water housing is an architecture of interiors without external development or gradation. As I pass houses one by one, I sense this architectural abruptness which can be attributed not only to the lack of architectural embellishment but to the prevalent roof design.

Shelter begins with a roof. A roof is the first gesture of protection, residency and domain. Structure is based on roof load. A building can be merely a roof. Walls are not so elemental. Walls exist to support roofs. Walls are enclosure but not shelters. And people must be sheltered. So the term "shelter" has become synonymous with roof. Roofs are also the most challenged elements in a building. They withstand extreme forces, bearing the beating sun, and shedding snow and rain. So they begin to disclose the climate of a region. Flat roofs reveal limited precipitation and soaring temperatures, like desert architecture. High-pitched roofs and fantastic overhangs disclose the need to shed snow and rain and protect walls from midday sun. So roofs assume particular aspects in specific regions and even begin to define a place by their forms.

Manitoba precipitation occurs in snow, sleet, rain, hail and in their endless permutations. Flat roofs are problematic constructions that require all manners of specialized technique to make them work because they do not shed these loads. Steep roofs with overhangs are logical. They are also architecturally dominant. Local people sense this logic, associating pitched roofs with residential architecture and domesticity and flat roofs with institutional buildings. The more prevalent the pitch, the more "homelike."
Sensible local forms are sweeping constructions, sheltering and shedding like the brim of a great hat.

My early sketches for a Healing Center for Hollow Water First Nation. The building was intended to have the qualities of an "old hat."
But the houses in Hollow Water are not hats. In form they are almost contrary to the weather. Roofs are timid half-gestures that reluctantly slope to shed their loads with the smallest angle possible. It is a roof design that minimizes materials and cost. They are always gabled, never hip, and carry uniform low pitches of 1 in 3, the minimum slope for shingled asphalt. Roofs are barely evident, and so they do not exaggerate the reality of the weather much less express it boastfully.

And there is an absence of overhangs. The low-pitched roofs stop resolutely at the wall, pronouncing the wall. Gable forms further exaggerate the wall at each end. As roofs and overhangs disappear, buildings become walls, and walls with minimal openings relative to their planar area. Hollow Water housing is an architecture of walls rather than roofs, a dramatic departure from its wigwam predecessor.

But walls are not shelters. They are enclosures, designed to keep out and keep in. And so their prevalence gives the buildings an unapproachable aspect. Houses in Hollow Water are not visually beckoning and embracing creatures that extend their arms into the world as they shed their loads. Instead they have an abrupt, stoic attitude inherited from their wall and roof design.

A cluster of trailers unexpectedly emerges along the road and I swing in to take a closer look. In 1999 the band purchased ten trailers on a bank loan to ease an ongoing housing backlog. They were intended to be temporary emergency housing. But on reserve the temporary has a way of becoming permanent. Emergency relief structures partially define the architecture of the place.

The trailers are utilitarian and minimalist with a siting to match. The ground has been leveled and trees removed to create such a scoured landscape that the smallest and most unintended objects become significant. This environmental flattening and simplification amplifies the presence of telephone poles, storage sheds and garbage receptacles. Unlikely objects take on a new prevalence, replacing the forest landscape with a crudely utilitarian aesthetic. The trailer court is reminiscent of work camp housing, environments of sameness reflecting the monotony of a work cycle and the temporariness of the seasonal laborer.
Emergency relief becomes permanent environmental features
Clearing trees and leveling vast areas appear to precede the construction of most buildings in Hollow Water. Site access and construction is made easier. Equipment can move unencumbered, especially when building multiple structures in close proximity. It is a building method designed for speed and efficiency. No negotiating between trees. No figuring out how a building can be best fitted to a slope. No tampering with the generic design template. To flatten a site is to make it well suited for repetition in architecture, and with modern heavy equipment, removing huge areas of forest requires little contemplation. Deviations in geography are easily smoothed to accommodate the most uniform and repetitive design arrangements.

Site leveling is done before building designs are generated and well before a specific building can instruct what ought to be removed and what ought to remain around itself. So, few trees exist around buildings where they are most needed. And there are obviously no replanting programs. What is cleared remains cleared. Hollow Water has no trees within its built areas. The objective of landscape alteration is to make way for construction rather than to enhance design. It is an environmentally devastating system of removal. Sites are made to match the anonymity of buildings.

I often try to read buildings, to bend an ear to their whispers, to listen to their stories. Who lived in this house, for how long? How do they make a living? What do they deem important? Is it a painter’s house? Did his great-grandfather live in this house? And so on. Detailed stories have been constructed of past civilizations through mere scraps of building material. Archaeologists rely on these architectural continuities and evolutions. But the housing in Hollow Water is silent about any past.

It is silent because it is instant. Houses are designed for overnight assemblage and built from a prefabricated “kit of parts” manufactured elsewhere. Some buildings arrive at their sites in one piece. “Ready to Moves,” or RTM’s as they are called, litter the landscape. RTM’s are store-bought rather than homemade buildings. They are off-the-rack rather than custom designed. They are selected from a handful of designs provided by building material companies as goods are bought from a store. And so the place is given an aura of just being assembled.

And it has been. Most of the buildings in Hollow Water were built in the last fifty years. People also make few changes to the exterior of their homes that might record this fifty-year passage. If any changes are made they are minimal functional elements such as porches and decks to soften the weather extremes.
Hollow Water architecture is an unlikely marriage between flimsy, instant buildings and two-hundred-year-old occupation. The new and the temporary have overlain the old, and occupation has been made to feel brief, all through buildings. The architecture of Hollow Water speaks of a people without a past, as though they just arrived.
If one were to construct a house from the things that are found nearby, the house would have certain understandable properties. It would be recognizable and close. It would have a certain immediate familiarity. "I recognize this or that material, having encountered it a million times on my way home." But the houses in Hollow Water possess no such familiarity. Instead they have an "otherworldliness" derived from their form and organization and exaggerated by their materials.

The houses are prefabricated wooden frames clad with vinyl siding, asphalt roofing, drywall interiors, carpeting and vinyl flooring. With the exception of the invisible wall and roof framing, these are imported materials. They have distributors in Winnipeg and are often manufactured even farther away. When they do not come from afar, materials are manipulated to the extent that they no longer belong to the surroundings.

Drywall (also known as Sheetrock, gypsum wallboard and plasterboard), for example, is widely used because it is the least expensive of all the interior finishing materials. It is a substitute for plaster, requiring less skilled workers and enabling faster installation. Drywall is made of gypsum or hydrated sulfate of calcium, found in sedimentary rock. This mineral is mixed with various hardening agents. It is then sandwiched between special paper and passed between rollers to achieve certain widths. Drywall is a "synthetic" material, not unnatural or artificial (all materials come from nature), but synthesized, compounded from smaller elemental parts. And it is highly manipulated.

A high degree of manipulation often creates an abstract material, the origins and properties of which are not easily acknowledged or read intuitively. What is it? Where does it come from? How is it made? For what can it be used? One cannot look at drywall and say, "I have seen that somewhere outside in the natural world." It is not harvested and grown. It does not have a readily recognizable organic nature like a grain, even though it is mostly organic. You cannot read it and say "I think it is strong or weak or that it can be used in such a manner."

And so even its care becomes a mystery. How can it be cleaned? Can it withstand soap and water? How do I repair that crack in the wall? What is patching compound? And where do I get

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70 For a description of drywall usage see Allen, *Fundamentals of Building Construction.*
it? Perhaps this task requires an expert. Drywall feels foreign even when its constituent parts may very well be found nearby.71

Drywall's otherworldliness comes from its stubborn character. It cannot age because it does not have an aging process that improves its properties. Rather, drywall must be kept from aging. It must not look old and worn because it does not accept wear with grace. Imperfections do not add character. Instead it must have an appearance of having just been installed. And properly executed, drywall repairs require skillful plastering because joints must be perfectly smoothened. Walls must be spotless, devoid of dents and scratches, timeless and inert.

Drywall is also a streamlined material. 4x8-foot sheets are available for specific and predetermined purposes. Drywall panels do not invite improvisation. Panels are installed and one may catch a glimpse of its internal structure when ends are briefly exposed, but upon installation, interaction ends.

Moreover, interaction is undesirable because drywall lacks tactility. There is no particular feel or aroma to drywall. Its nature is nebulous. One elder reminisced about the spruce aroma of the old style cabin and wigwam, a familiar longing among elders. Wood is aromatic. It is a material that one wants to approach and touch, to run one's hand along its grain. But drywall does not beckon.

Nor does drywall have a grain like wood that allows for fastening. So it must be bypassed when asked to bear the weight of household effects such as pictures and shelving. It is merely an obstacle to getting to the real structure, effectively concealed behind its pristine surface. In short, it is an awkward material in this forest context. Abstract and without materiality, it is more suited to large public spaces than those close at hand. Pristine and non-aging, it is easily offended by a lifestyle that merges indoors and out.

Vinyl siding, asphalt shingling, and vinyl flooring are also heavily manufactured non-aging materials that are difficult to understand, have nebulous natures, and originate from afar. Even composite elements in the home are prefabricated and assembled on-site. Kitchens are mostly constructed from a particleboard structure onto which is glued laminate veneers. Particleboard is made from wood chips and shavings, glued using urea formaldehyde resin as a binding agent.

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71 I have borrowed ideas on materiality from Michael Benedikt who discusses “fakery” in architecture in For an Architecture of Reality. Benedikt proposes an architecture of “reality” that responds to “direct aesthetic experience” as a partial response to the fakery of historicism, neoclassicism, postmodernism and other architectural movements.
Sealing the edges is recommended to prevent resin emissions, a process known as off-gassing. The surfaces are covered with laminates such as Arborite or Formica\textsuperscript{72} constructed of papers and resin that also utilize formaldehyde in their manufacture.

Local materials are not prevalent in the buildings of Hollow Water. Wood is mainly used in rough framing where it is invisible, and after it has been harvested and manipulated elsewhere. But materials abound all round. At one time silica sand, abundant on Black island, was mined to supply a glass-making factory in the town of Selkirk near Winnipeg. Timber has been harvested all around the reserve for more than one hundred years. The reserve sits on the edge of the Canadian Shield with its vast granite base. There is no shortage of building materials. Yet when one enters a house in Hollow Water one leaves the forest behind.

Imported materials import a knowledge base that requires no appreciation of the immediate environment. Drywall requires special screws, special tape, special plaster, and of course installers with special knowledge. It replaces local knowledge such as carpentry. (Hollow Water is home to a handful of unemployed carpenters.) I wonder what became of local building knowledge with the onset of prefabrication and new materials. I wonder about how the use of new materials and techniques might have changed people’s relation to the forest. I wonder about the understanding of spruce, cutting and drying times, forest management techniques that would have been employed to ensure the most appropriate lumber was used and the ongoing forest inventory that tied together subsistence activities such as moose hunting and house-building. I wonder about the processes that cease to be because of new materials.

The importation of materials explains the new irrelevance of the forest and the new irreverence for trees. When spruce boards are replaced with vinyl, and logs with prefabricated 2x4 framed walls, there is no need to understand a forest’s natural rhythms, no need to understand its properties, and no need to exercise its care. Changing building materials changes knowledge and ultimately changes people’s relationship to the places in which they live. In Hollow Water, shelter is not derived from the forest. The forest is simply cleared to make way for a new set of foreign materials. No longer a necessity for building, the forest is an obstacle. Trees just get in the way, hence their indiscriminate removal.

\textsuperscript{72} Common product names.
As I travel farther along the road in search of the community hall, no hint of a center or townsite emerges. More houses appear and I feel the discomfort of disorientation, of not being able to locate myself through multiple frames of reference. Navigation devices are hard to locate. Each time I visited Hollow Water, I experienced a similar disorientation. Of course mine is a visitor’s view of Hollow Water. The local people have no navigating difficulties because their wayfinding does not rely on architecture. Traversing Hollow Water’s paths thousands of times have committed the plan to memory, and environmental cues are unnecessary.

My difficulty in navigation arises, partly, from the design and placement of houses. A building ought to feel its placement like a tree. It cannot be moved because it grows out of its site and merges with its surroundings. One should be able to look at it and read something about its environs, which way the wind blows, where the sun travels, in which direction the lake rests and so on. But Hollow Water houses are not tree-like. The same houses with the same materials in the same style scatter the landscape with the randomness of a rolling die. They float high above the land. They do not care where they are. They could have any background and any site. They are suited for anyplace and no place. They have a lightness and are characteristically transportable. Hollow Water houses may be wrenched from their sites, dragged down the street and replanted without effect because such activity would alter neither building or site.

And because they do not tell you where they are, they cannot tell you where you are. One cannot look at a building and read a location from it. The districts and zones based on localized character result from housing “programs” as opposed to geography and use. Each government program (the subdivision and the trailer court) establishes overall forms and particular designs that aid in navigation. Otherwise, there are no methods of distinguishing one house from the next. The band houses are identical and repeated throughout the reserve, offering the most extreme cases of buildings lost in space. The result is disordered space that is unnavigable. I cannot imagine how to direct a person to a specific house despite the smallness of Hollow Water.

As I leave the housing behind, the rattling in the car reaches new peaks and I slow down for fear of losing a wheel. This 4x4 truck was purchased anticipating such roads, but clearly without an understanding of the relationship between tires, potholes and wheel base. I begin to dread the Hollow Water road. A chance is approaching to end the rattling in my head. The band office lies ahead.
Band office and community hall

A band office appears along the main road dotted with houses. Without anticipatory gestures, finding the building would require a map or accident. Many Hollow Water structures are similarly placed without apparent logic. The building sits on a barren site retreating away from the road to allow a large parking lot. On weekdays, a sea of vehicles dominates the view with the building squatting behind. Any natural weather protection offered by the forest is eliminated. The siting is shopping mall style, exaggerating the way that people customarily arrive, by car.

The band office is the center of local government and a place of administration. The building’s governance function is clearly reflected in its plan, a boardroom surrounded by a hall with cellular drywalled offices, painted white. The boardroom is formal, and when closed its large double doors lend an exclusive aura. It is the official meeting place, a windowless space lit with fluorescent lights. The room has a symmetrical arrangement of doorways, and a great table at the center encircled with chairs. The only elements that break its austerity are some naively drawn images on 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper mounted on a wall. They proclaim the band’s fundamental teachings of honesty, sharing, love and other canons and, presented without aesthetic fuss or pretensions, offer a stark contrast to the room.

The band office is more than Hollow Water’s center of governance. It has become a main gathering place where people gravitate throughout any day for news and socializing, and the architecture’s severity does not hinder these frequent meanderings. During my own presentation in the boardroom, for example, the meeting changed personality a few times. Streams of people wander through the building daily. Some can be found chatting in the employee coffee room. People and their children socialize in the cramped entrance furnished with too few chairs. Their architectural “occupation” has little accommodation. The space begs more generosity. A scattering of furniture, inside and outside, and ten feet of additional lobby space, for example, would have eased the sometimes problematic juxtaposition of governance functions and main community watering hole, but the offices’ architecture did not anticipate nor eventually welcome its inevitable gathering function. The building’s design is uncompromising.

While this unplanned coexistence of activities has become an integral part of the building’s life, occasionally administrative meetings are held in Winnipeg, to avoid deviations from the building’s “planned use.” A band member explained that an important council meeting in June 2000
was held in Winnipeg to circumvent the distracting effects of people's movements. The entire council convened in a city hotel.

And people's activities are erosive, having a positive, destabilizing effect on the centralization of power, softening the problematic relations between the community and local government. Unlike typical government architecture, people regularly mingle at the band office with those who exercise power over them, and use the building as though they too belong to its organized workforce. New territorial claims have been made despite a lack of architectural strategies for possession.\(^{73}\)

The band office illustrates some important absences in Hollow Water. A community can be defined as a place where people \textit{gather} to do things together, usually work and spend leisure time. One band member observed, however, that in Hollow Water "the buildings we have create barriers. We want to break down the walls between us. A building that inspires networking and sharing would help fix what is wrong between us." He envisioned a building that housed a multitude of functions including band office, shopping cultural center and recreation center under one roof as a means towards community healing. Another band member spoke of the compartmentalization of the band office. "We are all in little cells. The building is awful for networking. You come out to talk to someone and miss your phone call."\(^{74}\) A Seymourville resident criticizing the spatial rules of residential schooling stated, "You had to eat here, sleep here and study there. These were not interchangeable. The space was not free to allow you to do as you wish in it."\(^{75}\) A desire clearly exists for more fluid and organic spatial relations, in part to facilitate a community togetherness that has vanished.

The band office's awkward usage is only symptomatic of a larger problem. Regular casual interaction in this tightly knit community is culturally important, and the need for such venues is increased with high levels of unemployment. But Hollow Water's rigid architectural order does not respond. The town's main communal facilities comprise band office, school, church and community hall. While they "gather people," the first three are planned as institutional structures with institutional purposes, governance, schooling and formal religion. The band office is the community

\(^{73}\) See Hertzberger, \textit{Lessons for Students in Architecture} for specific design strategies to enable people's occupation of space.

\(^{74}\) Both quotes from band members, Hollow Water June 27, 2000.

\(^{75}\) Seymourville resident, conversation with author, August 5, 2000.
locus because it is a place of community governance, land claims, social and cultural programs, welfare administration and other band affairs. But it is also a locus because of a lack of other opportunities for an informal collective life to take place.

The recently built community hall is the exception. It is a noninstitutional structure used for feasts, weddings, meetings and other organized gatherings. The hall was initially equipped with gamed for the youth, but it too has become guarded after incidents of vandalism.

Importantly, the occupation of the band office, school, church and community hall is controlled, and with the exception of the band office, none are truly public places, places that can be possessed at the will of people and whenever it suits them. Even the possession of the band office is marginal, a bit of spatial borrowing at its fringes. The random daily desires of people to interact informally with their neighbors do not have planned architectural outlets. Consequently one cannot see the Hollow Water people as one might see the people of a community by taking a trip to its center of gravity. Nevertheless people continue their activities despite buildings and defying buildings. They gather without architectural invitations. Visiting within homes remains significant, and it is likely the primary means whereby people meet and spend casual time.

People complain of a general lack of recreational facilities. Even weekly bingo is held in Manigotagan and Pine Falls. One person attributed the rise in youth violence to an absence of community structures that might focus idle youngsters. No hotels, restaurants, transit stations, shopping malls, public parks, historical and cultural sites or recreational amenities exist in Hollow Water. Two lone gas stations have attached shops for necessities. So, weekends instigate a mass exodus of people from Hollow Water for shopping, recreation and bingo, unloading crucial dollars elsewhere. Speakers and attendees of the two-day conference, beginning today, have reserved rooms in Pine Falls one hour away. They do not stay on the reserve because no public accommodation exists.

Lacking a community interface with which to interact with outsiders, strangers are suspect in Hollow Water. There is no place for them to be naturally. Although the band office offers a place for locals to mingle, an outsider is assumed to be a person "on business" who must want something. (While I was standing casually in its lobby, a band member asked if I was applying for a job. Hollow Water has an internalized character without a public interface.
Inheriting the problems of standard western planning models whereby "...solutions to architectural problems have been hampered by segregation of functions instead of integration,"\textsuperscript{76} Hollow Water also segregates its buildings. Each building has a sole intended function. There are no intentionally multipurpose buildings, no messy mixing of functions within buildings and between buildings. The band office and community hall are examples of compartmentalizations. They stand apart, yet substantial borrowings exist between them. Informal and awkward gatherings occur in the band office while the community hall is used for big political meetings. People often referred to the disjunctures in Hollow Water and their desire to bring their community "back together." One band member recommended "...one big building where everything can happen under one big roof. Everything would be here including a research center, healing center, gathering place, and band office, all under one big roof."\textsuperscript{77}

The rain has begun, and I must find the elusive community hall. Although the structure must be sizable, I cannot locate it and ask for directions. Hollow Water is a mere four thousand acres and yet one can easily misplace buildings. When I do find the structure, timidly situated off the main road, there are children playing in the mud that surrounds its entrance. The doors are locked. An irony exists about its title "Community Hall." Like similar buildings everywhere, it is mostly unavailable to the community unless specific functions, such as a conference, are planned.

I attempt to park the car on the sinking ground and observe some people constructing a sidewalk from the building to the parking area. The structure is being made from pieces of recycled lumber and wooden crates, bridges on which to walk to avoid the mud that would swallow one's foot. I underrated the surface treatment of outdoor spaces. They are more than details, beautification, and extras. Their necessity is obvious as I observe this laborious process. Buildings should not require such repeated structural preparations to make them usable. I wonder how often similar preparations are made. Is wood stockpiled somewhere to prepare the hall for use in such

\textsuperscript{76}Herman Hertzberger argues for "Functionality, flexibility and polyvalence," and against "prescriptive" architectural solutions that dictate human use. See, Hertzberger, Lessons For Students In Architecture, 146. See also Jacobs The Death ...American Cities and Newman's Defensible Space for discussions about the merits of multiuse design solutions. Combining functions can extend the daily life of buildings, reduce maintenance and administration by sharing space and personnel, and reduce vandalism by increasing occupancy and surveillance. Segregated and away from watchful eyes, the community hall vandalism is not surprising.

weather? Many buildings in Hollow Water suffer this same fate, the absence of details that make them comfortable and able to withstand nature's variable forces.

The rain is worth comment because of the degree to which it changes the character of Hollow Water – for the worse. Throughout the summer months I often contemplated the weather carefully before traveling to the reserve. With rain, the place becomes inhospitable because roads and trails become impassable, turning the simplest tasks into Herculean feats.

Environmental effects can be exaggerated or muted by architecture. Architecture can focus and extract the usefulness and beauty of a place and offer sites of refuge from which to experience nature's forces. Architecture can exaggerate the positive aspects of a place, the reasons why one chose it as a home in the first place, while softening its harsher qualities. These two architectural acts are at the heart of livability. But in Hollow Water the rain is neither softened nor positively exaggerated because there are no fields to be watered, ponds to fill for playful children, nor cozy porches on which to sit and experience its dramatic acoustics. There is nothing about the design of Hollow Water that eases a life with rain, only badly designed roads and buildings that are worsened by its falling. Nature's gifts become unnecessary enemies.
The community hall is a large, open, windowless form, with wood paneling and vinyl flooring. The hall is an anything and a nothing building. It has no specificity. A lack of embellishment contributes to its generic feeling. Loose chairs are available and various presentations are organized on tables around the perimeter, including information about sacred scrolls at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC., that originate from Black Island. A raised platform is at one end, backed by a kitchen.

We must remove our footwear upon entering, perhaps to reduce the mud, perhaps to follow some predefined protocol. The reasons did not matter. The cold vinyl flooring siphoned the heat out of my body over the course of a day of presentations, and I feel the beginnings of illness, all because of surface materials. (I am invited to a sweat ceremony this evening that may provide a cure.)

The conference is intended to enable interest groups to discuss significant developments planned for Lake Winnipeg's eastern side, including their impact on the surrounding Aboriginal communities, on the geography of the region and on the Manitoba economy. Aboriginal people from Hollow Water and other reserves are in attendance as are people from the University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba, Swiss visitors researching Canadian Aboriginal culture and others. Important people have assembled to engage in weighty discussions.

The conference begins with a pipe ceremony, drumming, prayers and smudging while people sit in a grand circle. The First Nations people open the conference by stating that the following proceedings are not to be construed as "consultations" to avoid the legal implications of giving "consent" to development plans. Presentations are made by the Provincial Minster of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Minister of Conservation, Deputy Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines, Provincial Highways, Parks Canada, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Pine Falls Paper Company, and chiefs from the region.

The proceedings have the aura of a treaty negotiation. The Pine Falls Paper Company engaged at least two Aboriginal people to peddle their proposal for a jointly-owned sawmill to be run by the company and the Aboriginal bands in the region. The deal would cement and pacify a

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78 Smudging refers to the burning of herbs to purify people and places. It uses the energy and power of the plant to create positive psychic energy. Sweetgrass, cedar, sage and tobacco are common plants used. Smoke is wafted around the body. Smudging is used in ceremonies, by healers and commonly by people.
relationship that has always been turbulent, and would help the company's bid to expand its
harvest license in the region.

Both industry and government are promoting the idea of development as a public "good." The new highway is presented as though it will be "good for Aboriginal people" and industry is merely a spin-off. (Yet an all-weather road was not a consideration before Hydro and Pine Falls Paper had interests in the region.) Presenters have elaborate and fully developed plans. The bands do not have a single spokesperson. Nor do they have a comprehensive plan for the region. It is simply their home. No legal counsel represents the bands. Impact studies have not been done to ascertain, for instance, the effects of altering the lake water levels, or the effects of clear-cutting on moose herds, or the effects on Aboriginal lifestyle as people from the more northern reserves obtain easier access to the city. The mood is often serious and intense, and sometimes breaks down into arguments between Aboriginal people. Many complain about the pace of development and a lack of consultation before previous developments.

The conflation of building form and interior happenings is striking. Throughout history civilizations have marked buildings and places, establishing visible hierarchical structure, social purpose, and meanings. Significant things tend to happen in significant places that are well-marked. Ojibway markings of places of significance are evident in petroforms and rock painting sites found around Lake Winnipeg. Yet today, an important conference takes place in the most indistinguishable form. Band members observed the unmarked nature of most Hollow Water architecture. "All our buildings look the same, just boxes," said a resident. Another added "...all our houses are cloned." When asked to describe their architecture a band member replied "square houses with plastic windows. That's Native architecture." Band members' desires for highly iconic forms such as "turtle structures" also reveal a need among the community for forms that convey meanings and for buildings that "speak."

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79 The relationship of a building's form to what it does — form follows function — is an established concept in architecture found in abundant literature sources. Notwithstanding its title, Enrico Guidoni's book Primitive Architecture illustrates the sophisticated meanings associated with building ornament, form and organization across the globe. Included are discussions about the symbolism displayed in the architecture of the Northwest Coast Haida villages. Symbolic structures were prevalent even among nomads. Nabakov and Easton's Native American Architecture contains a good discussion of the symbolism of the Plains Cree painted teepee, for example.

I muse about other main buildings on the reserve such as the band office with its small cellular offices. All sorts of things happen in the band office, important things, land claims, historical research and mapping, artifact reclamation, addictions programming, housing administration, finances, and highly important political meetings. Yet each office is furnished with a desk and a chair. They are stark drywalled interiors, painted white with sometimes only a map on a wall.

The Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH) building is another significant building. CHCH is a nationally renowned program that treats victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse.\(^{81}\) The program was the brainchild of Hollow Water people. It is believed to be one of the most contemporary alternatives to the treatment of sexual abuse within the western criminal justice system, and it has been referred to in numerous journals and articles since its inception. Hollow Water has become a model community because of the evolution of CHCH. Yet the CHCH building is just another prefabricated form I passed many times along the road, assuming it to be a house. Significant things occur within insignificant forms.

An absence of articulation contributes to the unimportant demeanor of buildings. Articulation is not decoration. To articulate is to define or make clear, to communicate meanings such as hierarchy and purpose. And one achieves this partially through the manipulation of detail. A heavily detailed building, for example, expresses a level of care and attention that communicates importance. In some cases these details entail the refinement of such basic things as joints. But in Hollow Water there is no indication that one building is more important than another. There is no reading the purpose of a structure. There is no discerning how a building might stand in the scheme of things, because detailing is absent.

Hollow Water architecture is also characterized by a noticeable absence of artifacts, art, and cultural material.\(^{82}\) Even house interiors lack articulation. People have few possessions. Yet all

\(^{81}\) Hollow Water people have suffered a high incidence of sexual abuse for several generations. 75 percent of the community have been victims and 30 percent of community have been victimizers. Almost everyone in the community has been directly affected. CHCH offers an alternative to the western criminal justice system. Accountability is sought through admission, healing circles and community work, versus jail time. The offender is offered a choice. He/she may enter the criminal justice system and take his chances, or he can be charged, plead guilty, be placed on probation, and begin the healing circle work of reintegrating into the community. The program is based on restorative justice or putting the community back together. The western justice system fails in Hollow Water because of this community's tightly knit character and many kinship connections. After serving sentences, offenders reenter the community and relationships continue. For more see Canada, The Four Circles...Water, and Canada, A Cost Benefit...Healing Process.

\(^{82}\) Black Island birch bark scrolls depicting the Midewiwin (Medicine Dance) Lodge and ceremony were recently discovered at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. The community has begun a repatriation process. See Barker, Forty
cultures have significant objects that are collected, preserved and displayed, and objects that communicate ideas about what people deem important, or how they spend their time. bell hooks, a leading cultural critic, states that "...no matter how poor the surroundings, individuals create beautiful objects." But I cannot find significant objects in Hollow Water, large or small. An elder informs me, "Europeans outlawed our ceremonies and stole our artifacts and museumized our things." Neither the buildings nor their contents convey to an outsider "Who are the Big Island people? Where did they come from?" There is little to "read" from buildings. These are illiterate spaces, generic and unarticulated, lacking a language that communicates who lives inside.

Places where people reside are full of information. Buildings and spaces communicate by their forms, details and contents and so become "legible," a term used by Kevin Lynch. And aside from buildings, information appears profusely in the form of signage, billboards, newspapers, flyers and bulletins posted at every available opportunity, all so that people can read what is happening in a place. In such ways information about places become visible and retrievable even for the passerby. But I realize that the workings of Hollow Water are invisible to an outsider. It is almost impossible to ascertain how things work, where people do things, what occurs in what buildings, and when. Information travels invisibly by telephones that ring incessantly, and there is an anarchy of activity behind bland and hypocritical facades.

_Years a Chief_. Pettipas, _Severing The Ties...Prairies_, and Johnston, _Ojibway Ceremonies_ for more on the Midewiwin ceremony.

bell hooks, _Art On My Mind_, 121.


Kevin Lynch, _The Image Of The City_.

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The first day of the conference has ended and I resume my relationship with the main reserve road with a dissatisfaction of not yet having reached “the place” Hollow Water. I look for a center when in a new town, the locus of attraction, the center of gravity, the heart. Clustering is the first act of community. It is also the means whereby third spaces evolve, offering opportunities for social contact. Clustering binds entire cities together by creating spatial summations that are usable, summations that no building could create alone.

Because there is a kind of expectation of maps, I refer to my map, which is actually an old INAC development plan, to find such a place. I presume there will be some three-dimensional reality that responds to its basic two-dimensional structure. According to the plan, the main townsit lies ahead. There is greater density of structures and a variation of building types: a school, teacherages (a grouping of teachers’ residences), two churches, two stores, a gas station and a fish cleaning station.
Arriving at this “center,” I am surprised. The Indian Affairs plan drawn by J.A. Reiber in 1976 and later revised in 1985 differs wildly from its reality. No sum emerges from the parts. It is a lost space, more barren than the road from which I came, unmaintained and windswept. Three trees left standing are the only survivors of the forces of development. The plan arrangement is merely an idea for a center because the space itself does not cohere. It is leftover space, used for passing through rather than for spending time.

An obvious discrepancy exists between the planner’s vision and reality. I realize that converging lines on a 1:1,000 plan do not create a place. At 10,000 feet above ground level, places cannot be deciphered, and so cannot be designed in totality. There will be gaps, aspects that cannot be considered due to the scale of the drawings. Such drawings are just beginnings. They are organizational charts that require filling in, people getting involved, appropriating and making their own markings. A place is born in the final resolution, in the details, in the human scale perspective that makes it comfortable and fitted to people moving about and spending time. But this center is a development plan without development. It is just a sketch.

Church missions and schooling were part of the settlement and relocation process of the Big Island People, and Chief George Barker records attending school at Hollow Water as early as 1910. In the fall of 1967 the present school was built expanding to a high school in 1981. Between the planner’s 1976 schematic and a later 1984 plan, future proposals for the center were added including a recreation center, laundromat, seniors residence, commercial development, marina, dock, tourist parking and an increase in housing density. None of them materialized, and the band office once located close to the Anglican church was moved to its current location.

86 Barker, Forty Years A Chief.
farther along the road. People complain of the area’s environmental barrenness and high density. The local people’s image of the space as overly crowded without privacy and environmental protection contrasts with the planner’s view of developing a “town center.” People moved away from the planned center as density grew and other parts of the community were serviced. The **planner’s center** was never realized.\(^7\) While the area clearly does not satisfy the rules of good western town planning more significantly, it fails to appeal to local people as the public heart of their community or as an appealing place to live.

The housing at the center is older band housing, built before the housing along the road. Permanent housing began at the lake and later spread towards the main highway. Most houses are two- to three-bedroom bungalows indistinguishable from one another, even in their monochrome gray color. The houses are plunked onto rock outcroppings, ignoring their geography. They do not nestle into sides of slopes against the wind but face the wind off the lake without flinching. There is no terracing of spaces that respond to changes in ground level. Houses sit as though on flat sites.

The overall arrangement is more organic than that of the newer subdivision and trailer court, a result of piecemeal development and lack of infrastructure. The houses in each growth spurt have a similarity that reveals their era. Each year there are two or three designs from which a family can choose. But over the years the arrangements in Hollow Water have tended towards greater regularity and more rigid planning with newer developments tending to more geometric ordering.

I look again at the development plan and note the nearness of the lake. Yet no lake is seen or felt. The map also indicates a river running along the road just traveled. The Wanipagow River drains into Lake Winnipeg at Hollow Water. Yet I have been traveling along this road without even a hint of its existence. Hollow Water is actually a **river and lake** community with abundant access to water. But the architecture does not reveal such a geography. Some houses are within thirty feet of the lake without facing the water. There are few decks, private docks or lakeside sheltering. While in Hollow Water I must refer to a map to confirm the location of Lake Winnipeg.

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\(^7\) Anastasia Shkilnyk in *A Poison Stronger...Ojibway Community*, discusses the strong resistance of the Grassy Narrows Ojibway community to the reordering of a new community plan that increased density. In Simon et al., *A Culturally Sentisitive...Canadians*, the writers describe the preference among the Ojibway and traditional hunting gathering societies throughout North America towards dispersed low-density settlement patterns.
School and churches occupy this non-center and suggest a history of religious and state control. Judging by scale and location, they are the most architecturally significant forms in the community. One cannot avoid the churches and their graveyards when moving through the community. And children must pass them daily on their way to school, a subtle part of schooling itself.

The school is built on a peninsula, a piece of land that reaches into Lake Winnipeg. It consumes prime waterfront. A chain-link fence encircles the site and protects children from the water. It is an ironic marriage of building to site. The school is of the peninsula but does not want to belong to the peninsula. It sits on the peninsula and simultaneously cuts itself off from the lake. It claims the peninsula yet gives up the water. The building invites children to the lake only to protect them from it. And so it teases, an introverted, closed form placed on the most open of sites.

Western schools are commonly introverted spaces, hermetically sealed from their social and physical landscapes. Entering means leaving the outside world behind. So they do not require sites that are particularly animate, interactive, or breathtaking. The Hollow Water school epitomizes such planning. It sits alone with its yard, buildings and parking, commanding an immense area.
Smallish windows are placed in vandal-proof masonry walls. The structure is a steadfast monolith that neither reveals itself or interacts with its environs. The chain-link fence contributes to the building's exclusionary aspect. Only when the school yard is full of children (twice daily at recess) does the yard come alive. Otherwise – most of the time – the school and its controlled precinct are eerily silent.

The school does more than ignore the lake. It severs the community from its lines of force, the water's edge. There are no grand docks or marinas, no elaborate cabin developments, no views and vistas carefully manipulated and framed. The positioning of the school transforms an opportune site into a lost opportunity. And yet the school could have been easily situated on the opposite side of the road. It gains little from its lakeshore perch.

I walk around the fenced yard in order to experience the dramatic lake. Fighting thorough four-foot brush, I eventually make my way to the obscure shoreline where the scenery broadens. The shore cannot be seen or accessed easily from any public arena in Hollow Water. But the water view, expansive and calming, is well worth the struggle to reach. Lake Winnipeg is so large that, if not for islands, its opposite shore is usually invisible. Some birds are fishing and Black Island is in the distance, dark and serene. Here lies Hollow Water. I have finally arrived.
The fish plant and its small jetty are located on the south side of the peninsula. The planning ignores the fact that children use the lake for recreation; this meager dock must suffice as a springboard for all kinds of water antics. I stumble across two petroforms at the shoreline. The turtle and snake are associated with centuries-old Ojibway legends and creation stories, but today these are slighted forms, overgrown and forgotten. Their masking gives the site a forlorn feeling. The peninsula was once an important place, cared for and marked with backbreaking boulders. The urge arises to secure a lawn mower and cut some grass, just to prove how easily a transformation can take place. Sometimes architecture is as simple as making visible what is already there, unearthing and uncovering meanings imbedded in a landscape. Here lie markings worth disclosing.

Some say the school is situated on a burial ground. Probably so, given that the peninsula was once an encampment and gathering place. In the summer people moved here from various locations because it was windy and free of mosquitoes. But the peninsula is no longer a community place. People are not found here. The center of Hollow Water is organized by religion and state-run education, not by local people. It has rewritten a relationship with land and water that existed before the reserve came into being. The peninsula has been marked with different meanings.

Waterways were central to settlement in the region. Lake Winnipeg provided transportation and food. Local mythology and legends are nature-based, derived from the specific geographic features of the area. Yet there is no celebration of these natural features, no vistas, no views and no important lakeside places that speak of the water’s importance. The lake is an invisible giant that influences neither the form nor the organization of buildings. Instead the community, epitomized by the peninsula, turns inward, away from the waterways rejecting its past and perhaps its quintessential being.
The center: church, school and petroforms

The first day of the conference has ended and I resume my relationship with the main reserve road with a dissatisfaction of not yet having reached "the place" Hollow Water. I look for a center when in a new town, the locus of attraction, the center of gravity, the heart. Clustering is the first act of community. It is also the means whereby third spaces evolve, offering opportunities for social contact. Clustering binds entire cities together by creating spatial summations that are usable, summations that no building could create alone.

Because there is a kind of expectation of maps, I refer to my map, which is actually an old INAC development plan, to find such a place. I presume there will be some three-dimensional reality that responds to its basic two-dimensional structure. According to the plan, the main townsite lies ahead. There is greater density of structures and a variation of building types: a school, teacherages (a grouping of teachers' residences), two churches, two stores, a gas station and a fish cleaning station.
Pathways and In-betweens

Although I have been speaking mostly about material objects, people live in the in-betweens. Architects work with materials, but it is what the materials have framed, the void, that is of use. In the words of Fritjof Capra, "The reality underlying all phenomenon is beyond all forms and defies description and specification. It is therefore said to be formless, empty or void. But this emptiness is not to be taken for mere nothingness. It is, on the contrary, the essences of all forms and the sources of all life." 88

In architectural terms, life takes place within interstices. The larger interstices, those occurring between whole buildings and groups of buildings, are often understood to be the job of planning and landscape architecture. Roads, paths and open spaces are such in-betweens. They create necessary connectivity. They define relations between buildings. They are the means whereby people move about. They are opportunities to spend enjoyable time while in transit. And they themselves are destinations. These interstices require consideration.

One really needs to walk a place to acknowledge the nature of these fissures and joints. At a meager four thousand acres, one hundred homes and six hundred people, Hollow Water is a small place. It ought to be walkable. So I leave my car and engage in some useful wandering. But there are colossal gaps between buildings that do not invite walking at all, and I have to resist the temptation to return to the truck. Both the distance and the nature of the distance resist my inclination to walk. I endure these spaces and hasten through them, as there is nothing to stop and enjoy, nothing that offers a distraction from the actual work of walking. They are blank spaces without comfort. They are not spaces to be enjoyed but tolerated. They are not spaces to be in, but to pass through and at as fast a pace as is possible. And even when buildings are near, the nature of these in-betweens render an illusion of farness. Design distorts reality.

Well-worn footpaths occasionally appear, cutting through terrain and tall grasses. But they are accidentals. There are no pedestrian paths, designed in accordance with such human considerations as lighting, safety, acoustics, scale, weather protection and surface treatments. The roads laid out on the Indian Affairs community plan are utilitarian spaces, meant for cars, water, sewer and hydro lines. Drawn with the broad sweep of a planner’s pen, they are grossly overscaled.

88 Capra, The Tao Of Physics, 222.
for the pedestrian and are characterized by dust, cars, mud and a lack of other people. I feel overpowered, unprotected and minuscule. I cannot imagine walking this road with a cold wind blowing off the lake, or on a gusty day that raises the dust, or on a rainy day with deepening potholes and a sinking surface, or on a hot sunny day without shade. Even ideal weather would make this road barely walkable.

Some children are inching along, barefoot and equipped with swimming gear. They are tiny figures, swallowed by the scale of their surroundings, simultaneously lost and on display. I must appear the same on these twenty-five-foot-wide gravel ways. The gravel is loose and unsteady, but a lesser discomfort than the overgrown ditch alongside. Everyone including children and the infirm must share this path with cars and negotiate their own route. Hydro is brought to every home, yet there is no street lighting. Lit only by the moon, Hollow Water becomes an ominous place for travel at night. Whenever I see people on the road at any time of day or night, they seemed not to belong there, out of place, out of scale, out of sync and in the dark.
I feel as though everyone is watching me and wondering why I am walking on this road. After all, I own a vehicle. The pressure to move from inside to inside is indicative of a place designed as "insides" only, without consideration of the interstices, where outdoor spaces are merely leftover gaps resulting from the placement of buildings rather than designed spaces themselves. Hollow Water is a collection of unconnected internal environments.

So, naturally, the many times I traveled through the reserve I rarely left the truck. Locals do likewise. People drive to work, drive their children to school and drive to each other's homes. The smallest movement is accomplished by car. Hollow Water is experienced through an automobile window from where it gains an illusionary largeness. Walking has been made so undesirable that people who are immensely comfortable out of doors are not seen there.
Sweat lodges and teepee villages

The sweat ceremony begins shortly, and so I must hasten to locate it, by car of course. The ceremony is a recent revival in the community and is often held at important events. It is a cleansing and healing ritual intended to extract physical, emotional and social toxins, offer thanks, prepare for anticipated challenges and build solidarity.

The location of such rituals can hardly be detected in Hollow Water. The sweat lodges have a distinct invisibility. Vigilant scanning may reveal a lodge in a family’s backyard, but they are humble, ephemeral structures that mostly disappear in the surrounding woods. The sweat was a banned ceremony, as was the Midewiwin or medicine dance of the Grand Medicine Society held at Drumming Point on Black Island’s eastern end. As Katherine Pettipas writes, the Midewiwin in particular was part of a larger strategy of government suppression of religious ceremonies on the prairies from roughly the 1880s to the 1940s, and was subject to police surveillance. As late as 1921 “…Joseph Black’s giveaway drum from the Hollow Water Reserve was seized by the local police detachment.” The government’s 1885 Potlatch law banning Native religious ceremonies throughout Canada was one leverage used to encourage the Big Island people to relocate permanently to the mainland reserve. But well into the 1920s people continued to travel off reserve to traditional places including the island, conducting ceremonies well out of sight of the state.

The evolution of the sweat lodge relative to other on-reserve structures is worthy of note. The Big Island people have been settled within the last one hundred years, and most buildings became permanent to suit the new sedentary lifestyle, but the sweat lodge remains subversively temporary and elusive. It can be constructed in a day and deconstructed in minutes. It is light and...

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89 The Grand Medicine Society was an elite group of healers or Shamans that held healing ceremonies known as the Midewiwin at various sites around Lake Winnipeg. Black Island was one of the more regionally significant sites according to community elders and was one of the last known sites where the ceremony was practiced. The healers came every summer to Drumming Point (the eastern end of Black Island). They came from the Great Lakes region where the Ojibway people originated. The event lasted eight days. (Barker, Forty Years A Chief, Pettipas, Severing The Ties…Prairies and Johnston, Ojibway Ceremonies.)

90 Pettipas, Severing The Ties…Prairies, 156.

91 Williamson, Black Island…Never Was, 38.

92 Barker, Forty Years A Chief.
made from found items. It is sited without announcement or fuss and difficult to detect. Importantly, it has not evolved with added decoration or permanence.

Conversely, the churches have a betraying permanence, visibility and aloofness. Both church and sweat bear architectural witness to their character, one proselytizing the other tolerant. Both reflect powers of suppression in the landscape. The sweat may have maintained its reclusive, temporary and humble nature to survive in the face of oncoming, aggressive colonial missions.

And the sweat has maintained its significance, a concept elaborated by Michael Benedikt. Significance is not derived from decoration or even noticeability. "Things can be significant and not be symbolic."93 A building does not have to be heavily ornate, monumental, or communicative to be significant. Significant buildings are important to someone, are designed with care, and reveal their genuine history. "Significant buildings are built over time by someone rather than arriving all but ready-made by strangers."94 The sweat lodge, unlike other Hollow Water buildings, is derived from the Ojibway cultural traditions and is built with an extreme particularity from which it derives its significance.

Raven’s Place, as it is called, lies off the beaten path in a world unto itself. I would have missed it without directions. Raven’s Place is where the Raven family has lived for as long as the reserve has existed. Sometimes biweekly sweats are held here. And it is a place. Two houses sit on a small acreage along with a scattering of other structures. The main house is situated close to the river and faces its banks. It is hardly seen.

The overall arrangement stands out from the rest of the Hollow Water architecture. A great circle of stumps is used for benches. A fire pit, picnic table, storage structures for wilderness gear, a number of wigwams and a teepee all establish precincts for things to happen. There is a distinct placement of structures and attention is paid to their groupings and connectivity. The landscape is carefully maintained to demarcate zones of use. Trees are carefully removed. Those that remain create outdoor rooms for activities. The site is an inviting manipulation of space. For the first time, in Hollow Water I see a place where the outdoor is designed for use through furnishings and arrangement.

93 Benedikt, For An Architecture of Reality, 39.
94 Ibid., 40.
The sweat ceremony requires a wigwam, a demand that protected the form from almost complete architectural extinction. Function has preserved form. Even the construction process of the lodge is an aspect of the ritual, binding architecture and function.

As mentioned, the sweat lodge is one of the few clearly defined forms in Hollow Water. It is built according to specific codes. Designed for introspection, it is an introverted space, windowless and womb-like. A small enclosure of no more than five by seven feet is made from a bentwood frame, and covered with bark, blankets, skins or tarps to maintain heat. While the frame may remain all year round, the skin is commonly removed and reconstructed. The lodge door faces a large outdoor fire pit which is used to heat especially chosen rocks (those that release certain minerals, do not explode under heat, and are of a certain size). The center of the lodge has an earthen dugout for rocks retrieved from the fire. The outside pit is ceremonially linked to the lodge by a line of fresh cedar branches. A full day is required to prepare the lodge and special artifacts such as drums that are needed for the ritual are assembled.
The ceremony is highly structured and follows predetermined and gender-specific codes which I am instructed to follow, such as removing jewelry, offering tobacco before entering and sitting with legs folded to one side. The leader sits at the door, the dividing line between men and women. We must announce our clan and state who we are and where we are from. Glowing rocks are transferred from the fire into the lodge over which the leader pours water. Steam released into the air raises the heat and humidity to invigorating and simultaneously suffocating levels. Sacred items are used to conduct the ceremony. Prayers, songs and testimonials are spoken and sweet grass is burnt and passed around for smudging.
The sweat offers the rare opportunity for outsiders to interact with the local culture. Some lodges at Raven's Place are used for teaching. Groups of university students attend sweats while in Hollow Water on broader learning missions. Many come to learn about the land-based local culture and environmental issues from elders who escort them to significant sites throughout the region. People have come to Hollow Water from as far away as Europe for the same purpose. They are valuable interactions that may dispel at least some of the myths surrounding Aboriginal people.

While the sweat lodge has a secluded, reclusive nature, all are welcome. I am astonished at the warmth of the people and their openness towards sharing this ritual with complete strangers, a warmth I will frequently experience. But many local people do not attend. Of the twelve people present, only four are from the Hollow Water band. Most are outsiders (such as the school principal, an anthropologist from Winnipeg and I) or come from other neighboring reserves. I am told these are typical statistics. Locals do not attend because the sweat lodge rests on shaky ground. It lies along a series of fault lines or community ruptures.

Many who attend sweats do not attend church, and those who attend church do not attend sweats. Coexistence is not entirely peaceful. For some the sweat lodge is a place of solidarity and of return to roots. The ceremony enhances political mobilization by reclaiming cultural values. It is also a vehicle for healing the many illnesses in the community. But some distance themselves from a ceremony they deem clandestine and pagan, and are relieved that the structures are discreetly out of sight. I hesitate to call this split a traditionalist/nontraditionalist divide as many who attend church consider themselves traditionalists. But it is a split, nonetheless, among the many forms of traditionalism. The revival of the sweat lodge has revealed the ruptures caused by the imposition and consolidation of colonial missions.

Community ruptures also emerge around questions of authenticity. Is the correct “way” of the sweat lodge being followed? Who is qualified and has the expertise to conduct the sweat ceremony? Who has earned the community respect? And are they the real traditionalists? Questions of authenticity are raised around the presentation the sweat lodge and its traditionalists make to outsiders. Outsiders attend sweats for the purposes of learning and healing, but also to experience “a bit of Aboriginality.” The sweat lodge is the meeting place of traditionalism and ecotourism, healing and cultural representation. These are problematic collisions. Many local people ask “What is authentic Aboriginal culture? And who are its ambassadors?” It is this uneasy tapestry of healing,
teaching, cultural revivalism and cultural representation that characterizes the unstable landscape of the sweat lodge.

The "Ojibway Historic Village" at Brokenhead reserve I passed earlier today comes to mind. It is situated forty minutes north of Winnipeg on Provincial Highway 59, towards Hollow Water. The village is a clearer manifestation of the struggles surrounding cultural authenticity and representation that are built into the reserve architectural landscape.

Unlike the sweat lodge at Hollow Water, the Ojibway Historic Village is an established site, designed for commercial tourism. It markets Aboriginal culture as far away as trade shows in Germany. The village is a new player in a fast growing and highly competitive Aboriginal tourism market\(^{95}\) bringing much needed dollars to Brokenhead and providing employment for a handful of band members. And it is a significant accomplishment, given the limited resource economy upon which reserve life depends. The industry also brings outsiders closer to the reserve than they would venture otherwise. I met Swiss tourists who had been revisiting the Brokenhead Village for several years, living in teepees throughout the summer.

The Brokenhead brochure lists: "teepee teaching, campfire stories and legends, Ojibway values, local First Nations history, beadwork and quill work sessions, traditional herbs and their applications, bison ranch safari, sweat lodges, traditional powwows, nature walks and guided tours." The village is also the center of a number of initiatives beyond tourism such as teaching and reviving traditional knowledge, tree planting through Manitoba Hydro Forest Enhancement programs, and community gardening. But tourism brought it into being and generates its destabilizing forces.

The Ojibway village is a cultural display, and achieves its imagery primarily through architecture. The main village site comprises a group of large teepees. Dramatic white canvases protrude through a forest backdrop. Set against an azure sky, the scene is surreal and inviting, reminiscent of a movie set. The teepees are the sleeping precincts. The site is also equipped with showers, toilets and a main lodge building with a kitchen and alternative sleeping quarters for

\(^{95}\) Aboriginal culture in Canada is a commercial asset fueling various industries. Aboriginal tourism alone generated 270, million in 1999 and is expected to generate 1.9 billion in ten years at its present rate of growth. In 1999 it employed 14,000 people in Canada (from Manitoba Aboriginal Tourism Association). There are more than 6,000 internet hits under the title "Manitoba Aboriginal Tourism" which has its own official website. Aboriginal tourism has strong linkages with the national and provincial parks systems which capitalize on Aboriginal culture and image as "stewards of the land" to popularize the parks. See Francis, The Imaginary Indian for more on marketing Aboriginality.
wretched weather. Nature trails are developed around the site, and greenhouses provide nurseries for traditional plants.

For visitors, grand teepees situated in pristine and manicured environments are attractive, known and comfortable images. Many come to Canada seeking such places. In fact, the village is an insulating alternative to the actual reserve architecture, which cannot deliver such satisfying imagery. It is a substitute for the prefabricated suburban-like places that shatter the image of Aboriginals living in romantic structures situated in nature. The village is even equipped with showers and flush toilets, neither yet available to all on-reserve people. According to one Rolling River band member, European tourists stumbled upon the Rolling River reserve in search of Aboriginals living in teepees. To their disappointment “Aboriginal people were living in houses.” The reserve brought into focus a much more complex, modern-day Aboriginal living in places of monotony and disillusionment, where traditionalism is a practice rather than a display, where it is unseen and not so easily captured on film.

But marketable culture must be visible and capturable which is why the tourism industry is concerned with the outward appearance of things. Tourism is less concerned with the real and the authentic than the image, what things appear to be rather than their complicated and sometimes undecipherable underpinnings. It often demands the simple stories and comfortable realities the village easily provides.

The village architecture is driven by tourism and its need to consume Aboriginal things. It serves the entertainment needs and fantasies of outsiders by offering an exotic Aboriginal experience. It allows one to assume an Aboriginal identity by living in Aboriginal structures. Importantly, the village promises accessibility to a remote culture through a traditionalism that is conveniently externalized, made visible and situated within reach.

Architecture is the primary means of this cultural marketing. The scheme would not work effectively without a constructed place within which to situate oneself. Experience is place-dependent, and the tourism industry applies this concept wholeheartedly by fabricating place-based experiences. So the village becomes an architectural stage set, the backdrop for a great performance, minus the actors, a historical performance that sets Aboriginal people back in time. The architecture constructs history and embeds it in the landscape, creating a fantastic and simple image of a historical people tied to the land.
But tourism and reserve life are complicated collisions. Tourism encourages cameras, strangers peering in, gawking, consuming, and taking away small bits of misinformation. It is a business rife with misunderstanding and stereotyping because people from faraway places arrive for fleeting periods to be offered scraps of a culture for consumption, all epitomized by the souvenir that is “made in Taiwan.” But the Brokenhead reserve, like many reserves does not welcome cameras and scrutinizing eyes. Reserves are private and guarded domains. In fact, while I was in Brokenhead this morning an angry Aboriginal man threatened to break my camera. Tourism and reserve life is a strange coupling of fierce protectionism and a catering and bowing to outsiders. They do not live easily together.

Some local people label the village inauthentic fakery and cultural commodification, traditionalism manipulated and used only at convenient times. Aspects of traditional knowledge, particularly about healing plants, are contentious issues as they are not to be shared nor sold. Some people are troubled by the use of Aboriginal imagery to “sell” anything, and particularly in disrespectful contexts such as gaming. “Why not just have a building without the images?” suggested one Seymourville resident critical of the use of Aboriginal symbolism to sell items as gasoline. The links between tourism and learning are also problematic. Referring to the Brokenhead Teepee village, a Brokenhead band member complained, “I don’t know what nonsense they have been teaching them [tourists]. The teepees are not even built correctly. They [the band] are selling out.”

The teepees are particularly manipulated forms. The Ojibway of the region did not live in these large-scaled teepees, forms more closely associated with Plains tribes. The Ojibway of Hollow Water and Brokenhead migrated from the Great Lakes area, bringing with them architectural forms to which they were accustomed, most commonly the wigwam. While they adopted teepee-like structures during their migrations to Manitoba, these structures were smaller, with birch bark coverings. So the teepees of the historic village, the forms that give the site its primary image and aesthetic, distorts architectural history. They reconstruct an experience that is not particular to the Anishinabe people of the Great Lakes.

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96 Seymourville resident, Seymourville meeting with author, March 2001.
97 Band member, Brokenhead Reserve, conversation with author, October 23, 2000.
98 See Nabokov and Easton’s Native American Architecture, 64-73 for a description of the traditional dwellings of the Great Lakes Ojibway.
With little claim to the hide teepee's evolution or historic use, the Ojibway have assumed its image for the purpose of ritual, celebration and cultural display. It is a common borrowing. The image is well suited to the simplicity and clarity demanded of advertising and has been spread worldwide. It has attained an iconic status and symbolic power other Aboriginal architectures did not.

But representing diverse cultures through such borrowings, agitates many. The widespread use of the teepee as a vehicle of cultural representation has a homogenizing and stereotypical effect, collapsing many cultures into one. Some Aboriginal people are dismayed at the form's loose usage, which creates confusion and cultural disorientation for people who are struggling to define their own cultures and histories. According to a Seymourville resident, "Aboriginal people are confused about what is Indian architecture with [Douglas] Cardinal building teepees all over the place. It is confusing and misleading. An Indian building is either an eagle or a square box."99

I am told that local people are beginning to accept the tourist village, and that only a few do not "understand." The band has made great efforts to reconcile tourism and reserve life. Village visitors are taken off-reserve to attend traditional ceremonies such as the Hollow Water sweat, for example. The village is located on a site that is removed from other reserve buildings, perhaps a discretionary distance bridging an antagonistic affair.

The tourism sites are sites of controversy. They are unstable architectures that mingle in a broader context of Canadian tourist destinations far away from the realities of the reserves within which they are placed. They are artifacts generated for outside consumption, yet another layer of foreign forms.

Places of Longing

The sweat ceremony is complete. Amidst all my musings about the real and the fake, the authentic and the inauthentic, I emerge from the lodge amazed to discover that my flu-like symptoms have passed. A skeptic has been enlightened. The air outside the lodge has a feeling of morning, inoculated with a sudden burst of energy that had been consumed by a day of wanderings.

People are gathered outside the lodge, and many speak of the sweat lodge’s recent revival. The conversation turns to Black Island. Formerly, the island was a seasonal gathering place for the people of the region. Bands whose territories surrounded Lake Winnipeg met on the island to make important decisions. When the Canadian government attempted to settle Aboriginal people, the Big Island Band requested the island as their townsite, but due many competing economic interests, the island was not granted. Indeed, the government engaged in treaty-making with the Aboriginal people partly, as a means to open the island’s resources to non-Aboriginal interests. It was the first major state-imposed rewriting of architecture encountered by the Big Island people. But traditional activities and even banned ceremonies continued on the island into present times. Occupation did not cease.

“Black Island Days” is the most significant island event. The entire community of Hollow Water, along with people from the three surrounding communities, gather yearly on Black Island for eight days of festivities. The reserve and its business shut down. Given the warmth of the Hollow Water people, I imagine that anyone would be welcomed to Black Island Days, but outsiders are not customarily invited to the eight-day pilgrimage. It is a low-profile, unadvertised gathering. There are no elaborate pamphlets peddled at trade shows. There are no outward displays of traditionalism. Black Island is still home, a private place for the Big Island people where traditions are quietly practiced. Tourist brochures for Hecla Island, sitting immediately west, warn tourists to respect the activities of the Aboriginal people who occupy Black Island. So, despite the many cultural fractures, Black Island has remained a place of calm, solidarity, and traditional cultural

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100 There was much interest in the island’s timber, ironore, gold and silica sand. The French had contemplated mineral exploitation as early as 1729. See Williamson, *Black Island...Never Was*, for more. Also see Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail...* for the economic context of treaty-making in Manitoba.
practice providing the main venue where the entire community can be counted on to gather faithfully.  

The Black Island site is a distinct place with residences, communal structures and recreational areas. The overall settlement form is a single road that culminates into a large structure at one end. One side of the road is linked to a circular clearing or powow ground and small family precincts frame both road and clearing.

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101 When I was experiencing difficulty motivating people towards a community design project (my initial research vehicle), it was suggested I take my presentation to Black Island Days.
Each family is responsible for its own zone of occupation, which it designs, maintains and eventually transfers to others. These residences are minimal structures offering only the slightest gesture of shelter. A handful of poles, in most cases, is all that establishes the structure necessary to carry a rainproof tarp. Each plot is nestled amid towering pines that provide its anchor and refuge. Some structures even span the space between existing trees, preserving the red pine inventory. The structures recede and disappear, assuming humble and grateful postures in their natural home. They live lightly on the land, demanding few resources and creating little environmental disruption.

The forest "design" adopts a particular form and is deliberately considered in the overall scheme. In fact the forest provides the fundamental architectural form of the place, its organization, shelter, intimacy and sense of scale. It is ever present and generates protection, fuel and the powerful aesthetics of the Black Island place.

Each precinct is oriented towards a single, thirty-foot-wide sandy road that runs along a ridgeline parallel to the shore of Lake Winnipeg. The road is a meeting place, a place of organized activity, and a place to move to and from other encampments. It is an ideal road animated by its multipurposeness. The path culminates in a communal hall which is used as a shelter for games, bingo, meetings, feasts, and presentations.
Family precincts
The road and residences are protected from the harsh lake winds by a row of trees, maintained along the lake embankment. This row also frames the lake, creating continuous pictures windows of water and horizon. The trees follow the natural change of level, exaggerating the break between upper and lower spaces. Beaches fifteen feet below the edge allow spectacular views and easy supervision of children swimming and people arriving by boat.

Black Island is unusually well laid out. A planner could not improve on it. The arrangement is tightly organized, and has an overriding communal form that welcomes the gathering of people. There is wholeness and cohesiveness rather than sporadic disjunctures. The Black Island community is responsive to function and context, design principles not found on the reserve. It is, in fact, the antithesis of Hollow Water architecture.

The place is designed by local people, and judging by its level of care, is highly respected. Photos taken one day after the festival reveal no evidence of habitation by hundreds of people. Many speak of “curing their ills,” of “casting aside grievances” and of “breaking down borders” as they gather on the island. Lines between organized religion and traditionalism, between rich and the poor, between band members and band council, and between Treaty and Metis quietly extinguish themselves. For eight days the community togetherness longed for on the reserve makes a brief appearance. People become emotional and nostalgic when speaking of the island and its cathartic effects, disclosing the perpetual longings that come from exile...
Conclusion

Speaking of longings, it is time to head home on the same washboard that marked my arrival. I would enthusiastically spend a few dollars in Hollow Water on a meal and the chance meeting with more local people, but as noted, there are no such opportunities for casual interaction. As on many following occasions, I must await a meal in Pine Falls forty-five minutes away. The day has felt longer than its actual eight hours.

As the federal reserve road disappears behind the car, I hit provincial pavement and my nervous system returns to normal. The rain has ceased and the approaching scenes engulf the car with a familiar feeling of calm. The landscape returns to focus. Magnificent tall yellow grasses along the roadside turn to gold as they filter the evening's sun. It is late, but I must stop and collect a few of these for a vase that is waiting.

I have not spoken of this majestic landscape while on the Hollow Water reserve because I did not see it. The colored photos at the beginning and end of this chapter are not a means of manipulation, distortion or exaggeration. They are contrasted with black and white photos of the reserve architecture to emphasize the disjuncture between bland architectural forms and their dramatic contexts. Reserve buildings, arrangements, and clearings had an uncanny way of both distorting and camouflaging landscape, of obliterating and masking its details and colors.
I will travel to other reserves in Manitoba, but you need not follow. Hollow Water is an architectural pattern replicated across a varied Manitoba landscape, albeit with different names. Observations of other reserves would be much the same. It is a recurring picture, a built landscape that repeats from place to place. Reserves are architecturally interchangeable. They are new forms with borderlines that have rewritten a previously shifting and expansive spatial occupation. They are shrunken, delimited spaces with contested sittings because "settling" Aboriginal people meant displacements that created longings, tensions, and a continuing exile.

Their borderlines serve dual purposes. They enable encroachment and use of traditional Aboriginal territories by outsiders, while compressing the controllable homeland of the Aboriginal people. Borders designate land outside the reserve that, according to government, must be used for the benefit of the "common-good", even when this "sharing" is at odds with the survival of the reserve community itself. Land immediately outside the border is available for development while Aboriginal people are "permitted" to continue their traditional activities within its bounds. Reserves, therefore, exclude by design a controllable land base on which Aboriginal communities can secure their sustenance.

Most reserves comprise the bare minimum of buildings: a collection of houses, a church, school, band office, and community hall. The church, school and band office establish new centers of gathering, replacing old ones. Aside from these, there are few meeting places. Community is inhibited by design. Houses comprise the principal fabric of reserves and determine their primary architectural character. Prefabricated, repetitive, spatially isolated units face vehicular commuter routes.

Reserves are spatially inorganic. Without a set of systematically related parts, they are fractured, incoherent environments. There is no deliberate axis of movement or animate center to be discovered. There are no cozy paths to meander. The in-betweens have no substance and the

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102 The process of photographing reserves was revealing. The more reserves I recorded, the fewer frames I shot because exactly the same information recurred. There was a redundancy in the landscape that made the work of recording frame after frame appear meaningless after a short period. I also made the mistake of placing more than one reserve on a single roll. Weeks later, distinguishing one place from the next became arduous. In some cases I had to rely on the most insignificant details around buildings in order to determine which reserve was depicted in the photograph. "Was that dog in Chemawawin or Grand Rapids?"
spine is missing. Physical chaos emerges from this combination of randomly placed objects without connective sinew.

Locally made artifacts at any scale are hard to find, having been replaced with imported, borrowed forms. Reserves suffer the architectural alienation of imported materials and processes that has created places independent from context. The land has been made obsolete through design.

Reserve buildings have a striking a-temporality. The erasure of historical forms coupled with preferences for the new and prefabricated have left gaps and discontinuities. The landscape has little documentation of its past through buildings. Instead a meager fifty years of building has sped up architectural history, generating instantaneous landscapes and eradicating any trace of rootedness and longevity. Reserves have just been built and do not conceal the fact.

And they lack details. Reserves are communities that are barely drawn. Skeletal buildings stand in desolate interstices. And these forms sit in landscapes that have been devastated by their very construction. There is no water character, nor river character, no celebration whatever of the land's offerings. The community plans and buildings are incognizant of their environs. So, it is little wonder that we have noted nothing distinct about Hollow Water or its people through this architectural reading, because these are indifferent forms.

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103 Aboriginal material culture underwent massive scouring, witnessed by significant indigenous collections in museums across the world.
The Marcel Colomb First Nation currently resides off-reserve at Lynn Lake, Manitoba. This essay describes the development of their new reserve, Black Sturgeon, situated forty kilometers east of Lynn Lake. I offered design-consulting services to this First Nation in the spring of 2000, and was granted a position from which to observe the many processes that shaped the initial reserve structure. The evolution of the reserve involved many people and spanned several decades. The site, for example, was negotiated in 1972, and the Marcel Colomb leadership approved the boundaries of the reserve in 1987. I will focus, however, on the nature and outcome of a planning process that began in 2000 and culminated with "The Marcel Colomb Community Plan and Capital Plan," a document that laid out the elements of the new reserve. I will describe the final plan and the process that brought it into being, specifically the interactions and decision-making of the group assembled to design the community: the Marcel Colomb First Nation, Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada (INAC), Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), the Swampy Cree Tribal Council (SCTC), and a municipal engineering firm.

This planning process was virtually incomprehensible. Tensions surfaced among the group assembled to plan the new community. Relations between the band and government of Canada, which has a fiduciary responsibility to uphold their interests, were sometimes confrontational. Ordinary planning questions from both the band and me were met with irritation and dismissiveness by the design consultants and suspicion by government officials who even asked me "Who do you work for?" My confusion arose partly because I had been catapulted into a process that was long underway but even more from the unique relationship between reserve communities and the federal government, a relationship that initiates an incomprehensible style of planning.

Marcel Colomb is also a member of this Tribal Council.
Reserve planning history

Most reserve forms evolved in a different era although those that emerge on recent drawing boards bear a striking resemblance to their ancestors. Given such continuity, it is useful to situate the planning of Black Sturgeon within the historical context of Canadian reserve planning.

Canada has had a characteristically hesitant relationship to reserve building. The treaties written between Canada and Aboriginal people, in the interests of colonial land settlement, instigated a massive resettling of indigenous people. Native people were assigned reserves, restricted land parcels on which they would reside. Importantly, this era of architectural redrawing established a new set of boundaries that would delimit Aboriginal space until today.

Treaty-making was not a community building process. It was a land-clearing process, not a vision for the development of reserve space but for the development of the land reserves bordered. It was a scheme of negative development, of inverted planning, of drawing reverse perimeters and establishing anti-space. The future of this anti-space was not envisaged. In fact, a nonsustainable, dependent design fit Canada's goal to assimilate Aboriginal peoples and is reflected in the hesitant unfinished forms described in chapter 2.

Recent pressures have encouraged Canada to develop reserve space. Reserves continue to exist, but lacking development and surrounded by depleted resources, they have become the country's shame. Internationally broadcast images depicting the deplorable living conditions of Aboriginal people have slowly replaced romantic ones, as when Chief Louis Stevenson invited South Africa's ambassador Glen Babb to Manitoba's Peguis Reserve. The 1987 visit sparked international headlines and revealed that Canadian Aboriginals lived in third world conditions. First Nations have steadily politicized the plight of reserve underdevelopment, and have continued to pressure the federal government to invest in their communities as part of its long-standing treaty

105 The historical roots of Canada's "Indian" policy predating Confederation are outlined by John Tobias. The intentions of the state as early as the late 1700s were to protect, civilize and assimilate Natives into the larger Canadian community so that eventually Aboriginal identity and culture would cease to exist. Schemes were put in place throughout history to achieve this goal including establishing reserves, or "social laboratories," aimed at civilizing Native people and legislation such as an 1869 "Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians" that was to slowly eradicate special status, and alienate lands held by bands. See Tobias, "Protection, Civilization,Policy," 127-144. As late as 1969 the Canadian government produced a White Paper calling for full integration of Native people into Canadian society. The "special status" afforded Native people by the Indian Act of 1867 was to be repealed. Fierce opposition from Aboriginal people barred the policy. See Weaver, Making Canadian Indian Policy....
obligations. Reports of reserve living conditions have increased in number since the 1980s culminating in Gathering Strength, The Report Of The Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples. Released in 1996, the report called for an overhaul of the government’s approach to the provision of housing on reserve.

Reserve populations are also growing. In 1985, Bill C-31 reinstated treaty status to those who had lost it through marriage, causing an influx of people who subsequently became entitled to housing.\textsuperscript{106} In particular Metis populations residing adjacent to reserves moved across the “border,” sometimes doubling reserve populations.\textsuperscript{107} Aboriginal population growth on reserves continues to exceed that of Canada overall according to census reports.

The result has been a slow rise in reserve construction initiatives. In 1990, when pit privies and trucked sewer systems remained the norm, the federal government’s “Green Plan” committed Canada to providing services to all Canadian reserves.\textsuperscript{108} More capital has been dedicated to on-reserve projects, namely sewer, water, schools and housing; in the year 2000 Canada’s Treasury Board approved eight infrastructure projects on Manitoba reserves and twelve schools. Communities once destined for extinction are being patched. Recent public whining about “public money” that flows to reserves stems in part from this process, the result of an initial and longstanding reluctance to build these communities coupled with more recent pressures to make them work.

According to Doug Kirfwood, INAC’s regional planner overseeing the planning division from 1980-86, INAC established a planning division in 1976 under pressure to bring modern standards to reserves. The division’s late arrival explains why most drawings of reserve communities, including land use, topography and building maps, date from after 1976. No comprehensive documentation of reserve space exists before this time, except for small-scale drawings that identify the size and location of reserves or projects such as plans for subdivisions. To a lesser extent, a more altruistic motive influenced some individual planners. Kirfwood states, “While planning was a normal type of activity in other communities, it wasn’t part of the psyche of

\textsuperscript{106} In 1985 Parliament passed an act to amend the Indian Act. The act was intended to bring the Indian Act into line with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Importantly, it removed sexual discrimination from status regulations. It allowed women who had lost status through marriage to reclaim status for themselves and their children. “By June 1990 the status Indian population grew by 19 percent in 5 years alone.” From Young et al., The Health Effects...Reserves, 7.

\textsuperscript{107} From an interview with Doug Kirfwood, INAC’s regional planner during the 1980s, February 2002.

\textsuperscript{108} Young et al, The Health Effects...Reserves, 1.
reserve communities. Communities did not embark upon self-analysis and physical needs were the only needs that had been formerly addressed. Planning was narrowly focused and engineering-oriented. The federal department of Public Works, a group of engineers, handled all the physical on-reserve developments. The new planning division was intended to introduce planning to reserves and to build a community's self-knowledge. Community participation was encouraged for the first time, reflecting the genuine idealism of at least some bureaucrats.

But it appears that external pressures to upgrade health and safety and provide essential services such as schools remained the primary reasons for the new planning department. These demands forced the department to acknowledge that communities were haphazardly planned. Prior to 1976, most reserve houses had pit privy or trucked sewer systems. Early investment in unserviced road permitted houses to be built almost wherever people desired, and communities sprawled. It would cost the department heavily if communities were not more efficiently planned. The larger engineering projects also needed a context within which they could be placed. So, while the initial conception of reserve communities did not involve a comprehensive notion of development, reserve planning as a government activity arose from the pressure to provide essential services. It emerged because it had to.

The planning department became an information-gathering tool, and the community plan was the vehicle to facilitate the provision of services. Referred to as "comprehensive community planning" by Kirfwood, the department's strategy was to generate a baseline of information from which decisions could be made to organize and increase the efficiency of development. The physical community plan also became a means to identify specific projects before capital was allocated, and to facilitate the government's capital planning decisions such as which reserve was first in line for a school. From these data waiting lists could be established because the plans

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109 A devolution occurred as a result of the growing Aboriginal clientele and of new demands for people experienced with Aboriginal communities. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs evolved its own engineering capacity and continued to use Public Works for project management on the largest projects.

110 While pit privy houses can be placed anywhere, truck delivery systems require roads, and piped systems require proximity to a central facility, limiting piping distances.

111 Under public pressures in the early 1980s, septic fields began to be put in, but two-thirds of Manitoba reserve houses were not in areas where septic fields would work and piped systems were often not economically feasible because of community sprawl. Since then reserves have evolved with piped systems in some areas and trucked systems in others, a disjointed pattern of infrastructure. Complicating the process, houses needed to be grouped, but some people wished to maintain the housing distances of early communities, so housing proximity became a thorny issue. Closer spacing occurred nonetheless a result of the shortage of land and of demands for piped systems. Communities increased in density.
communicated clearly to government bureaucrats who had what, and who needed what. They allowed the department to contextualize its projects, track them and take inventory. Long-delayed record-keeping was in order, and the rigorous mapping of communities began.

Community plans simplified, organized, and economized the task of placing projects in a context, and department officials intended that plans precede individual projects, although this was not always the case. A badly needed project, for instance, proceeded without a plan. Reserves received housing capital each year (although for only one or two homes), and housing requires careful planning because it makes up the fabric and structure of the overall plan. But few communities had a community plan, nor did they require one to receive yearly capital. The conflict between immediate needs and long-term comprehensive planning plagued communities.

The department hired planning firms along with band coordinators, who worked together. The firms were retained for several months. Their work entailed collecting and compiling physical, social, economic, and demographic data. Through air photo interpretation and site surveys, maps were generated that illustrated existing services, building types and locations, natural resources on-reserve and sometimes concepts for future development. Demographic analysis forecasted population growth. Many Manitoba bands did not have these planning data until recently, and even today much of it remains in government offices. Some bands did not see the need for or understand how planning data could be put to use, while others, overwhelmed with immediate conditions, could not concern themselves with long-range schemes. Not surprisingly, their community plans remained the tools of government.

INAC's planning division was closely allied with the department's engineering division; neither division was structurally under the other. As projects were identified, a project manager would be assigned for its implementation, generally from the engineering group. Doug Kirfwood, INAC's regional planner, later managed INAC's capital program, maintaining strong links between these divisions.

Government downsizing in 1986 brought the death of the infant department only ten years after its inception, and a decision to relocate the vast archives of topographic maps, terrain analysis, and physical plans of reserve communities. They were to be made available to bands or destroyed. Fortunately, Natural Resources Canada Legal Surveys Division and Geomatics rescued

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112 The coordinator was a band member who acted as a liaison between the consultant and the community through which data were collected and relations eased.
the material that bands did not claim. The political climate encouraged transferring of authority to Tribal Councils, at least in appearance, and any funding remaining for comprehensive planning. It was channeled directly to bands. The department currently has no budget for community planning. Allocated dollars were split between seven Manitoba Tribal Councils, and without an increase since the 1980s, it often disappears into general revenues.

The decision illustrated the department's change in attitude, as it moved out of the planning business as quickly as it had entered. Unfortunately, planning died just as funding increased for reserve development. Important linkages persisted, however, with the department of Public Works. With downsizing, INAC's large engineering staff shifted to the Public Works department, which now has a dedicated division overseeing the implementation of INAC capital projects on-reserve. The movement from engineering-style planning to more comprehensive planning, then back to engineering planning was complete. Engineers once again oversaw planning. Not long after the 1986 downsizing, the department realized its shortsightedness and scrambled to locate the sizable pool of data that had been expunged from its archives.

Currently, virtually all on-reserve capital projects flow through the department. INAC, working closely with its Public Works branch, approves projects, sets project standards and guidelines, establishes design committees, tenders projects, positions itself on consultant selection committees, and manages projects. In 1998, the department had 263 employees in Manitoba and a capital budget of $300 million to be divided between sixty-two Manitoba First Nations over five years. The Marcel Colomb First Nation community plan evolved in this planning context. INAC no longer had an official planning department yet the idea of establishing a "community plan" remained. The Public Works division, made up of engineers, was in charge of it.
Origins of the new reserve

In 1999 $18.3 million was set aside by the government of Canada to build the new Black Sturgeon reserve at Hughes Lake, Manitoba, for the newly formed Marcel Colomb First Nation. Marcel Colomb is a group of approximately 260 Cree-speaking people whose ancestors formed part of the James Roberts band at Lac La Ronge in northern Saskatchewan. Before settling on reserves, the Lac La Ronge Cree migrated seasonally along the Churchill River, which originates in the Rockies and flows into Hudson Bay. Hughes Lake is part of this watershed. Since signing an adhesion to Treaty 6 in 1898, the James Roberts band splintered three times to finally form the Marcel Colomb First Nation.

The reserve is being constructed on 5,000 acres located forty kilometers east of the mining town of Lynn Lake. New reserve communities are rare, making Black Sturgeon one of the few opportunities of the twenty-first century to establish a new type of reserve space.
The new reserve at Hughes Lake emerged only after a long struggle in which the town of Lynn Lake was pivotal. A 1941 ore discovery at Lynn Lake was one of Manitoba's largest mineral finds, and it rescued the dying mining town of Sherridon 120 miles to the south. Between 1948 and 1949 the entire town of Sherridon was relocated by dragging buildings across a winter haul road. Houses, school and churches moved.\textsuperscript{113}

The initial scale of mining at Lynn Lake during the Sherritt Gordon era of 1953-1976 was impressive. Nickel and copper were principally mined, but gold and silver were important byproducts. In all, $26 million was required to put the mine into operation and fifteen million to build a 145-mile rail line from Sherridon. Lynn Lake is still the last rail stop from Winnipeg. Only a substantial mineral find – described as Canada's second largest at the time\textsuperscript{114} – could justify such investment.

Isolation and cold caused a 90 percent annual rate of turnover among workers in the early 1960s. The mine responded with high wages and incentive loans for home building in a constant effort to maintain its labor force. Lynn Lake epitomized the Canadian frontier spirit. Brimming with well-paid workers, it was a boom-town with a peak population of six thousand. A town museum attests to the mining efforts. Lynn Lake's isolation and bitterly cold climate (recorded as low as $-60^\circ$C$)$ contributed to a closely knit community.\textsuperscript{115} Recently, the town has become a sportfishing mecca and has a number of fishing lodges. It is also used by NASA\textsuperscript{116} scientists who launch weather balloons, conduct experiments, and maintain the airstrip.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.jpg}
\caption{Lynn Lake in 1959 had bitter winters. Image with mine and early buildings, from Lynn Lake Mining Museum, Lynn Lake, Manitoba.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{113} From the Lynn Lake Mining Museum, Lynn Lake, Manitoba.
\textsuperscript{114} From D. J. Tibby, Report on Sherritt Gordon Mines Lynn Lake operation 1964, found in the Lynn Lake Mining Museum.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} The U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Juxtaposed with Lynn Lake's heroic narrative is a more despairing one as recalled by John Colomb, Marcel Colomb Headman. From 1969 a group of Aboriginal families lived immediately outside the town limits in a makeshift village of tents. The village existed for sixteen years and grew to approximately fifteen families. It comprised a clustering of uninsulated polyethylene constructions over makeshift wooden frames heated with oil drums. A few were canvas. For winter survival, tents were deliberately crowded. The “tent village people,” as they came to be known, withstood the temperatures that discouraged mining personnel from settling permanently at Lynn Lake, although some died of treatable ailments like pneumonia. There were no lights in the village, except for the lights of stoves. Nor did the village have water, power, appliances, furniture or even dishes. The only employment (for a few) was trapping. A day in this astonishing life would have been a constant struggle to accomplish the simplest tasks such as cooking and bathing. The village would seem unimaginable in twentieth-century Canada, but a myriad of footpaths and a litter of rusty cans are evidence of its existence.

Most of the tent village history was collected through my numerous interviews with Headman John Colomb of the Marcel Colomb First Nation.
Town relations

The villagers' relations with the town were strained. Not a single villager was employed in Lynn Lake's mines. Indeed, for them, the town had an opening time and a closing time; they customarily waited at its edge until allowed to enter. Within town, the villagers were chaperoned by local RCMP officers who escorted them back to the outskirts when they had completed their business. "We weren't allowed in Lynn Lake," states Headman John Colomb. "I used to come to sell my furs at the little store that is now Osmond's [the current local pawn dealer]. I would leave my dogs where the tower is and walk down the hill into town. As soon as they saw me they would send someone to escort me out." Villagers were frequently incarcerated for loitering, intoxication and other minor offences.

Despite a strong RCMP presence in town, a series of unsolved murders and disappearances reveals a pattern of violence. Seven homicides and two disappearances occurred since 1969 within the new Aboriginal population of fewer than three hundred, and villagers give personal accounts of physical and verbal abuse at the hands of the townspeople, particularly during the early years when they were camped beyond the town limits. The unsolved murder and mutilation of an elder trapper in a town park and the disappearance of a female elder are bitterly remembered.

The town council ruled that school attendance required a fixed address and residency within town, conditions the villagers could not meet. So the children did not attend school in Lynn Lake, and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs assisted in their relocation to Guy Hill, Dauphin and Brandon, returning them to the village in the summer months. John Colomb recollects the experience of losing the children with melancholy acquiescence: "At least they had a place to stay and did not have to live in tents."\(^{120}\)

In 1972 INAC built the first Friendship Center in Lynn Lake, part of a national system of Friendship Centers to serve Aboriginal people. "It was a place for us to warm up and have coffee. Town people were hired to run it at first...."\(^{121}\) The center had an Aboriginal restaurant, which the town soon closed down, claiming it was not in the town's business district, although one town

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\(^{120}\) Ibid.

\(^{121}\) Ibid.
business was across the street. From 1985 to 1988 the center had its first board member from the
tent village. At the town hospital, "we were thrown out, cause people didn't clean up. We had to go
wash up first before we come to the hospital but we didn't have no place to clean up. That's how
people were dying left and right with TB and asthma and other illnesses," remembers Headman
John Colomb.\textsuperscript{122}

Between 1966 and 1985 the tent village was forcibly relocated seven times and was
rebuilt at various locations at the town outskirts. The moves sometimes corresponded to newly
elected town councils. The reason was "...cause the town was scared. Just in case they burned
the place down, or there was a forest fire because there was fuel tanks here. That's why they
moved us farther and farther."\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{122} Headman John Colomb, Lynn Lake, conversation with author, August 30, 2000, Lynn Lake.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., October 3, 2000.

Lynn Lake townsite showing seven village locations.
Site 6 was the largest and both 6 and 7 were connected.
A complex pattern of paths and highways were
established over time. One is shown above. Site 1 was
occupied from 1968 to 1969, site 2 from 1970 to 1971,
site 3 from 1972 to 1973, site 4 from 1974 to 1975, site 5 from
1976 to 1977, site 6 from 1977 to 1984 and site 7 from

Aerial photo from the Province of Manitoba
Townspeople both mythicized and vilified the villagers. According to Headman John Colomb, “Whenever we went to town the cops had to escort us ‘cause these people here in Lynn Lake, they were so scared of us. They used to call us savages ‘cause we used to have long hair, the way my hair is now... they used to call us all kinds of names. But I didn’t mind....”124 A town resident who helped organize the villagers recalls being blacklisted by neighbors and was often blamed and harassed for “being with Indians” and for having “brought the Indians into town.”

The villagers had migrated to Lynn Lake from the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation at Pukatawagan 120 kilometers south, but the reasons for their move are not agreed upon by townspeople. One Lynn Lake resident claims “they left Pukatawagan when Pukatawagan became a dry community and they were outcasts from their own community. They’re the kind of people that put down roots anywhere, but they aren’t necessarily the type of people you want living next door.”126 Others claimed that they were a collection of outcasts from various bands, that they came to Lynn Lake in search of employment and that they were returning to their traditional hunting territory disrupted by mining. Myth is present even in the more sympathetic accounts. “One thing about the people, not once was I ever afraid,”127 states a former Lynn Laker. If not being afraid was a state worth mentioning, an expectation existed to the contrary: that Natives were to be feared. The tent village borders were more than physical. Referred to as the “Alabama of the north” by National Chief Ovide Mercredi,128 Lynn Lake had entrenched ideological boundaries that kept the tent village people beyond its limits.

The existence of the village was mentioned in both leading Manitoba newspapers for at least a decade and was known to many agencies.129 The provincial government’s welfare department distributed checks in the forest and kept surveillance on those who earned a living through trapping. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs relocated children for schooling. In 1973 and again in 1975, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation made detailed studies of

124 Ibid.
128 National Chief Ovide Mercredi was describing a climate of hit-and-runs unsolved murders and general relations in a March 17, 1995 meeting at Grand Rapids with the Minister of Indian Affairs Ron Irwin. From minutes to meeting with Minister Ron Irwin, Indian and Northern Affairs.
living conditions in Lynn Lake. A University of Winnipeg research team spent months observing, recording and analyzing the townpeople's response to isolation and cold, but these studies do not mention the people who lived immediately outside the town limits. Although the village existence was known, for almost twenty years its conditions were ignored.

In 1972, Marcel Colomb, the chief at Pukatawagan and grandson of Mathias Colomb, began appealing to the government to have his traditional hunting and trapping grounds at Hughes Lake forty kilometers east of Lynn Lake declared reserve lands. The Lynn Lake region is the traditional area of the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation within the Pukatawagan Registered trapline area. Members of the Mathias Colomb band frequented this region including and surrounding Lynn Lake, in particular Hughes Lake. Pukatawagan elders recall seven trapping cabins that were bulldozed and burned to create the new town upon the discovery of ore. (The site at Hughes some

Topographic map from Energy, Mines and Resources Canada showing locations of seven trappers' cabins destroyed by the mining interests. Sites at Ralph Lake and Sheila Lake had two cabins. Information provided by Elder Dominique Hart of Pukatawagan.

130 See Nickels et al. Life Satisfaction in...Community and Nickels, Studies of...Frontier Communities.
distance away remained undisturbed.) Many, including the townspeople, journalists and others, have portrayed the residency of the villagers as strange and inexplicable. Yet it was far from arbitrary. The tent village people were living in places their forefathers knew and used.

Knowing the plight of the tent villagers, Marcel Colomb made a plea to his sons before his death in 1982 that they develop the Hughes Lake site and establish a new band on a new reserve. The band had splintered many times. The Mathias Colomb band at Pukatawagan separated from the Peter Ballantyne band of Pelican Narrows, which separated from the James Roberts band of Lac La Ronge. Precedent was ample. By 1981 the Mathias Colomb band petitioned the Land Entitlement Section of the Lands and Trusts Program Manitoba Region to acquire the Hughes Lake site from the province. In 1982 the Minister confirmed that Mathias Colomb had a valid Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) claim,¹³¹ and Headman John Colomb worked tirelessly to fulfill his father’s wish.

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¹³¹ When Canada entered into treaties with Manitoba bands between 1870 and 1910, it set aside reserve land based on band populations at that time. Some bands were not awarded their entire land allotments. Treaty Land Entitlements are lands owed to specific bands under the terms of these original treaties.
Negotiations for entry

For years the villagers attempted to gain town residency without success, but in 1983 events turned in their favor. According to Headman John Colomb, “We had a meeting with the town council. We told them that the children were coming home from residential school for Christmas. We wanted a place for them to stay. We told them they could not stay in a tent for Christmas. They asked us where we would sleep. They said, you have nothing. You live like animals. We said we could sleep on the floor and cover ourselves with jackets, as long as it was a warm place to stay. They said we would have to get new things. We could not use the things from the tent village. We could not bring our garbage. We told them to give us six months and we would have everything. I told them that we would bring our welfare dollars to the town. Welfare would pay our rent. It would help the town.” He added, “They let us in when we started supporting the town from welfare, that’s the only way we got in.” Constant references to “in” and “out” by John and others revealed the power of Lynn Lake’s border and its exclusionary effects.\(^{132}\)

These December 1983 negotiations with Lynn Lake’s mayor and council coincided with events that encouraged the townspeople to cooperate with a request for residency. In 1984 the mine suffered the first of many closures; numerous buildings stood empty. Vacancy was eroding the town’s tax base. The promise that welfare dollars might invigorate the dying town altered the council’s position, and for the first time the villagers were accepted as residents.

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Uneasy new relations

The band established an office in Lynn Lake following the December 1983 negotiations. "It was a little office, just to answer phones and we got a little money from Indian Affairs to run it," explained Headman John Colomb, but relations remained strained even after "entry." "We had to fight against the mayor and council. It's been a long fight but we did not want to quit. Even when we were negotiating for a new reserve and band status they would say you would never be able to run your own affairs. You people are like animals. You have no knife and forks. You have nothing. They even threatened to try and stop the reserve at Hughes Lake, but it was too late. They vandalized my boat and killed my dogs. The RCMP did nothing," Chief Andrew Colomb stated, "We were asked to leave by many people. We were told we did not belong here. We were told that this was their workplace, their development, their business base and their livelihood."

Over time a handful of townspeople became landlords, acquiring homes for as little as $3,500 and renting them to the tent village people for a substantial part of their welfare checks. In the year 2000 only one member of the Marcel Colomb First Nation owned a house in Lynn Lake. Controversy arose over the local pawnbroker who had obtained keys to mailboxes, in exchange for credit in his store, and was opening and cashing welfare checks. Some businesses gained in such ways.

While no one admits that the town is segregated, many refer to living on "this side" or "the other side" of the L-shaped community. The commercial district separates an older section of town from a newer one, and most of the former tent villagers reside on the old side with its crumbling infrastructure and RCMP detachment.

The band children began attending the town school, but the institution remains a contested site. According to Rudy Subedar, education planner for Marcel Colomb, after sixteen years, the average level of education among the people was grade three, and a recent study has unraveled various disturbing patterns of treatment of Aboriginal students. Many students failed grades as early as grade one, while others were placed in alternative classes without parental

134 Chief Andrew Colomb, Lynn Lake, conversation with author, August 30, 2000.
notice. Frequent and early suspensions removed some for the entire year. The school board in 2000 was made up entirely of whites even though 75 percent of the school population was Aboriginal. One town member recalls a recent school board and town council joint meeting to discuss Aboriginal children. Native people asked to participate, a request the board refused citing issues of confidentiality: children were being discussed. The argument was used to exclude people whose children were being discussed. The school's exclusionary status is reflected in its architectural "off limits" posture – locked doors and an unavailable yard. These issues sparked a review that ended in the dissolution of the school board and its merger with another division, but the Marcel Colomb people remain apprehensive of interactions with the school. A band member offered the following advice when I proposed a school visit: "You can't just go to the school. You must phone first and ask permission. Do you want me to come with you? You have to report to the front desk. There are rules." The apprehension persists. As I stood in the lobby of the Lynn Hotel awaiting a ministers meeting on a frigid October day, I was asked by the front desk worker what I was doing standing in the lobby. After explaining that I was awaiting a meeting, he instructed me that the meeting did not begin for another half-hour. "Loitering" in the Lynn Hotel was not permitted. Booking a room at the shabby hotel required two-day advance payment plus a $100 damage deposit. When I complained of the lack of trust the owner explained, "I can't make exceptions. That would be discriminatory. This is northern Manitoba. I can't be prejudiced or I would be out of business. Most of my clients are First Nations." Everyone was to be treated with caution. The group attempted to improve its state amid such relations.

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135 Children are "placed" in alternative classes when they are two years behind, yet grade one had an "alternative program" as did many other grades. These "alternative" classes were primarily Aboriginal and the band typically referred to these classes as "native classes" rather than alternative classes. The school receives most of its funding through its Aboriginal population while expelling many within the first three months of the school year. A report of these conditions was presented to Dr. Ben Levin, Deputy Minister of Education on October 16, 2000. Rudy Subedar, Winnipeg, interview with author, October 2000.


137 Band member, Lynn Lake band office, October 2, 2000.
Band separation and TLE

As soon as they gained town residency, the Marcel Colomb people (renamed Black Sturgeon) began negotiating for government funding but with limited success. While Canada, through its Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, delivers yearly funding to First Nations for capital projects (yearly capital allocations) and operating dollars for programs, such funding is limited to on-reserve Aboriginal groups with band status. INAC does not award band operating and program dollars to off-reserve First Nations. Considered officially off-reserve, the villagers were not entitled. They were also technically members of the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation band at Pukatawagan, which was already allocated capital and program support. Whether any portion of these benefits actually accrued to Black Sturgeon was irrelevant. Consequently, the group faced two large obstacles before it could obtain support. It had to become its own entity, a “band” distinct from the Mathias Colom band, and it had to be situated “on-reserve.”

Two processes began: negotiations for official band status (which would entail a difficult and hurtful separation from Mathias Colom), and negotiations for a geographical space with official reserve designation. (Incidentally, the Black Sturgeon Reserve, a 5,000-acre land parcel at Hughes Lake, was created for the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation on July 26, 1990, and registered on November 13, 1991. While it was designated a reserve of the band at Pukatawagan, the Marcel Colomb band would later claim that the site was negotiated for their own use and development.)

The Indian Act requires the agreement of the entire First Nation through referendum for separation and official band recognition, but separation was a contentious issue for Mathias Colom. It implied capital and asset splitting, and the mother band refused to vote on the issue for years. An outstanding Land Entitlement (TLE) of 230,000 acres owed to Mathias Colom was also a source of controversy. Pressure came from both Mathias Colom and the government, for Black Sturgeon to sign the TLE agreement. Mathias was eager to receive its entitlement, as Canada was to close the ongoing negotiations. But Black Sturgeon refused to sign the agreement that made the 5,000-acre parcel (already conceptually belonging to them) their portion of the TLE. The group insisted on negotiating their own claim, and resisted their inclusion in negotiations between Mathias Colom and government, arguing separation was already a physical reality. The TLE argument stalled the process of band separation for a decade.

138 The Mathias Colom band was awarded a Treaty Land Entitlement, after negotiating with government for a number of years. The 230,000 acres was based on membership numbers.
In 1993, a water and soil contamination crisis peaked at Pukatawagan, and strengthened the motivation to relocate to good water. With the discovery of high coliform levels in the drinking water, the government issued a “boil water order.” Pukatawagan’s water and sewer infrastructure design was defective. Sewage outlets were located upstream of drinking water intakes and at popular swimming sites. Water filtration and treatment were inadequate, and the community’s lagoons were located too close to the community. The lagoons had been relocated at least three times and buildable land was scarce due to contamination. The band would wait seven years for a government commitment to begin to solve the problem. Pukatawagan was in panic, and there was speculation that a new reserve at Hughes Lake would draw members from Pukatawagan simply by virtue of its location on a healthy water body. An increase in band membership was possible.

While awaiting a referendum at Pukatawagan, a number of organizations including the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs recognized the tent village people as a band with a headman. On March 17, 1995, Headman John Colomb made another plea for official recognition during a meeting with Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Ron Irwin. Minister Irwin, concerned about the financial responsibility a new band would generate for the department, inquired of costs for a new reserve and even suggested purchasing homes in Lynn Lake, then available for $5,000. The various First Nations representatives returned the meeting to its agenda, new band formation.

In a landmark decision the minister made a commitment to Black Sturgeon to recognize the group as Manitoba’s 62nd First Nation. Minister Irwin arbitrarily declared Black Sturgeon an independent First Nation in contravention of the Indian Act, after which INAC made a resolution to terminate the formation of new bands in Manitoba. Black Sturgeon would be the last band to be registered and recognized as a Manitoba First Nation. Minister Irwin, however, asked that the band delay requests for a new reserve until the completion of his term in office (a request the band honored). Around this time the band was receiving minimal monetary support from the department, but INAC refused to grant further funds until a plebiscite was held in favor of the First Nation.

The band was again renamed Marcel Colomb First Nation in honor of Headman John Colomb and his father Marcel Colomb, who both were responsible for the momentous achievement of creating a new band. From this point the group continued in its attempts to get the necessary plebiscite from Mathias Colomb, while honoring the minister’s request.

In 1995 Granduc Mining was developing Farley Lake open pit mine, in close proximity to the reserve site. Headman John Colomb negotiated with the company to donate $100,000 to clear
a right-of-way to the site, known as the Hughes Lake road. The band received $8,000 from the Indian Affairs department to conduct an environmental assessment and road survey, and the right-of-way to the new reserve was cleared.

In 1997 Minister Irwin left office, and in March 1999, without a vote, and under continuous pressure from the band, the government granted the group full recognition as a First Nation. Status was official, and $18.3 million was set aside towards building a new community. By 2000 the band comprised fifteen families (according to surnames) and 262 members with 215 living in Lynn Lake and 47 in other centers, including Winnipeg and Thompson.

The capital allocation quickly became a thorny issue. An understanding circulated in newspapers and among many groups including the Aboriginal community and the Canadian Taxpayers Association that the band was awarded $44 million. That a band was building a new community between two dying ones raised the ire of taxpayers and the envy of other bands on long waiting lists for services. In a recent front page Winnipeg Free Press article entitled “Reserve a blow to dying town: $44-M community to be set near ‘empty’ Lynn Lake,” the town’s mayor Audie Dulewich added fuel to the fire. “It seems a little ridiculous to me that (Ottawa) would spend tens of millions of dollars to create a new community so close to one that is suffering.... They're building new houses when there are houses standing empty here. There is no good logical reason for it.”

The industrial centers of Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids on either side of Hughes Lake were dying slow deaths and were lobbying for government support. Pressure was again applied from unexpected sources.

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Negotiations for an urban reserve

On March 30, 1999, Black Hawk Mining, the last company to operate the mine in Lynn Lake, finally closed the mine. The town diminished to a population of a few hundred. Buildings were abandoned or stripped for materials by a community quickly realizing its death. The town was facing bankruptcy as Black Hawk Mining refused to pay $6 million in taxes. Strangling under a depleted tax base, the town was awarded a $1 million provincial subsidy over five years to offset its operating costs. During this time unemployment, alcohol abuse and other social pathologies remained high among the First Nation members seen drifting to the band office, the new gathering place. The abject social and economic state of the band was on display.
When the mine closed, ownership of it reverted to the Crown under the authority of the Crown’s Lands Act and the site became an orphaned or abandoned mine under provincial authority. At closure no environmental licensing requirements addressed environmental concerns, so no cleanup occurred. The environmental devastation and human health risks caused by the mine tailings (twenty-two million tons of mining waste covering 212 hectares within a kilometer of the town) was becoming a public issue.\footnote{Fiddling and Rabson "‘We’re dying a slow death’...” \textit{Winnipeg Free Press}, and Hendry, “Mine sites...cleaned up,” \textit{Winnipeg Free Press}.}

Described as a disaster area by many, Lynn Lake’s contamination could be traced back thirty years. Fisheries biologists reported complete collapse of aquatic ecosystems in the Lynn River and Eldon River as early as 1964 and 1972. Attempts were made at the time to contain the heavy metals present in the tailings with a system of dikes that reportedly failed because of high water levels. The breaks leaked toxic materials into the nearby Lynn River, and biologists’ reports warned of the spread of contaminants to Wheatcliff and Cockeram Lakes. Entirely depleted fish populations were attributed to the mine tailings.\footnote{See Crowe, \textit{The effects of mine tailings...} and Jo-Anne Cober. \textit{The effects of mine...}.} Later reports have been consistent with the biologists’ conclusions.\footnote{See Green, \textit{Aquatic impact investigation...report}, 1998.} Although Cockeram Lake was not originally believed to be affected, provincial Department of Conservation officers at Lynn Lake have recently confirmed that damage has reached its waters. Contaminated dust also blows off tailing piles in the summers, and sulfuric acid continues to leak into waterways.

Worsening matters, tailings were used as backfill at the hospital, school and playgrounds, and on some streets and lanes, and they have been eroding an already rusty system of water mains. The age and dilapidation of Lynn Lake’s infrastructure is visible in the distinct dark reddish brown of the town’s water piped from West Lynn Lake. A large percentage of town pipes require replacement, and the repair of water mains accounts for much of the town’s budget.

\footnote{Fiddling and Rabson "‘We’re dying a slow death’...” \textit{Winnipeg Free Press}, and Hendry, “Mine sites...cleaned up,” \textit{Winnipeg Free Press}.}
View of Lynn Lake's Tailings pond immediately south of the mine site.
Members of the Marcel Colomb band notice reduced numbers of fur-bearing animals, once prevalent in the area. In 2003 Neil Campbell, a town councillor, began conducting a study of Lynn Lake cancer levels, which are claimed to be high. The Sierra Club cites Lynn Lake as one of Canada's environmental disaster areas, and litigate.com, a website dedicated to class-action suits, recently began encouraging residents to claim damages. Despite these pressures for cleanup, the province still refuses to admit that life in Lynn Lake poses a health hazard.\textsuperscript{143}

Within such a context, the band unsuccessfully negotiated with the town for an "urban reserve."\textsuperscript{144} In September 1998 Chief Celestine Colomb approached the mayor and council to establish a reserve in Lynn Lake. In the town council meeting dated March 23, 1999, the town council acknowledged the band's interest in creating an urban reserve and passed a resolution "that Marcel Colomb First Nation's request to develop an urban reserve at Lynn Lake be turned down."\textsuperscript{145} By April 1999, Jerry Kozubal, a researcher was hired to assess the Keystone Mine closure and its effects on the town. The report states that the band was in the process of preparing a proposal for an urban reserve in Lynn Lake for consideration by the town council and that "this matter [urban reserve] should be reviewed as an economic benefit to the town."\textsuperscript{146} However, a letter dated August 25, 1999, from Lynn Lake's Mayor Audie Dulewich to then Minister of Indian Affairs Robert Nault requested that "your department take whatever steps necessary to establish a reserve for the Marcel Colomb First Nation away from Lynn Lake as soon as possible....Martin Eagen (Director of Lands and Trust Services) has given the band an option of an urban reserve in Lynn Lake as their quickest method of obtaining on-reserve status. The Department of Indian Affairs has never released any figures as to what they would be willing to put into Lynn Lake, and

\textsuperscript{143} The NDP provincial government in 2001 dedicated $2 million to the “orphan mine fund” to begin the rehabilitation of abandoned mine sites in Manitoba. Half of the fund was dedicated to conducting health risk and environmental assessments. The study concluded that environmental damage does not extend into the regional area of Cockeram Lake, or significantly affect regional populations of fish, plants and mammals. It also concluded that Lynn Lake does not pose a health risk to people who spend a lifetime there, alleviating the pressures on government. See Dillon Consulting Limited, Site... assessment for Lynn Lake.

\textsuperscript{144} Urban reserves are land within urban areas that has reserve designation and is federal Crown land. The concept is not new. There are 111 urban reserve agreements in Canada. The Nelson House band, just one hundred kilometers east, has an urban reserve in the community of Thompson. The Mystery Lake Lodge is owned by the Nelson House Band and has reserve status.

\textsuperscript{145} From “Minutes To The Regular Meeting Of The Council Of The Town Of Lynn Lake Held On March 23, 1999,” in the Centennial Building, Lynn Lake.

\textsuperscript{146} See Kozubal, “A Community in Transition....”
the Marcel Colomb First Nation has approached this issue in a radical way which has convinced our council that we will never be able to strike a deal with their band." The letter was a refusal.

My own inquiries at the town office in September 1999 regarding urban reserve talks were met with silence, then denial. "Who told you about this?" asked Helen Gibson, the town's Chief Administrative Officer. "Indian Affairs is pushing urban reserve on the people, but the people really want to move to Hughes Lake. We never had any council meetings to that effect." According to a Winnipeg Free Press article, mayor “Dulewich said he actively pursued the urban reserve idea but could not say why it didn't work out. 'In the beginning (about four years ago), there was a lot of correspondence with (Ottawa) back and forth on that.... The band initially asked to be able to put together a business base in the community and we said that was fine. I don't know why it's happening this way.'”

Other attempts were made to establish a reserve in town. The band attempted to purchase nearly worthless buildings from the town, which had obtained them for outstanding taxes. Yet according to some Aboriginal people, purchasing private homes from the town was impossible. One person was refused an offer to purchase on the grounds that she was not planning to retire in Lynn Lake, even while a town council member acquired multiple buildings for rental. (I could not secure a list of buildings subject to tax sale in 1999.) The band bought a house for $40,000 from the town for a day care, but building inspectors refused occupancy because of its dilapidation. Members of Marcel Colomb could not take advantage of the ample opportunities to purchase real estate in Lynn Lake, and they remained renters.

Apparently INAC played a peripheral role in the negotiations and, according to one official, did so partly because of Lynn Lake’s environmental and structural ailments. "Canada cannot accept land, infrastructure or assets that don’t meet all current INAC standards and environmental standards," he stated, referring to Lynn Lake’s pollution levels. "Who is going to pay to bring it up to Canadian standards? There will be a fight between Manitoba and Canada as to who is going to pay." In short, an urban reserve might prove costly. Officials speak of Lynn Lake’s pollution and of the government’s unwillingness to inherit a mine cleanup from the province by establishing an urban reserve. "I'm sorry," he said. "The government doesn't want to get someone else's horror

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story. Inheriting a provincial mine disaster was averted by allowing urban reserve negotiations to take their course.

The band did not negotiate for land in Leaf Rapids, a gold mining town one hundred kilometers to the east that closed in 2002. Leaf Rapids was built between 1971 and 1974, shortly after Sherritt Gordon's discovery of an ore body that became the Ruttan mine. The province was heavily criticized for building a community that severed Lynn Lake's population. It contributed $17 million of the $32 million required to build the award-winning community, which lured a Japanese study mission on town development in cold climates to northern Manitoba and won the prestigious Vincent Massey Award for Urban Excellence. Marcel Colomb did not negotiate for Leaf as it lies at the junction of three registered trapline areas and is within another band's traditional territory.

Urban reserve negotiations were underway at Lynn Lake while reserve lands were set aside at Hughes Lake. The band planned for reserve designation of town land alongside development of the Hughes Lake site. While one process did not preclude the other (many reserves have multiple locations), the negotiations for urban reserve stemmed from an immediate need to be on-reserve which could not be met by a long-term community planning process. It had more to do with releasing department program and yearly capital funding than with building community. However, the urban reserve negotiations broke down, and, for now, have ceased. An urban reserve did not materialize, nor did it factor in the development of the Hughes Lake site as a business base, a permanent community or an interim reserve. Pressures mounted for the speedy development of a reserve.

Motivations for a new reserve revolved around residency and its meanings. As Headman John Colomb put it, "We have to have a home. Then we will be residents, person, human being, having his own house. We need a place of our own. Now we are only renting. We are not residents." The desire for a new reserve came from the process of exclusion, and also from the development limits of an environmentally devastated town. It came from the politics of Aboriginal

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149 The town is semicircular in design. The town center is one multilevel 220,000-square-foot complex that combines hotel facilities, 40,000-square-foot shopping center, library, cultural center, municipal council facilities, provincial and federal offices, health and recreational facilities (gymnasium, curling rink, arena), theater, multipurpose rooms and 625-student school. It is a street and town square under one roof. See, for example, “Leaf Rapids wins applause,” Winnipeg Tribune, “Leaf Rapids...economic mistake,” Winnipeg Free Press, “Japanese group coming to observe Leaf Rapids,” Winnipeg Tribune, Atkinson, “Leaf Rapids town-center plan wins award,” Winnipeg Tribune.
space in Canada with its gaping on-reserve/off-reserve divide intimately tied to rights and designation. It came from the desire to cleanse, to create a "dry community" away from the Lynn Hotel, and it came from connection to a traditional space. Most importantly, a new place became synonymous with a new beginning. The symbolic power of place was the fuel that propelled the process forward and kept a small group of dedicated band members, led by Headman John Colomb, working towards a new and idealized geography.

Moving to the promised land

Chief wants to lead his people to new life

John Colomb in an interview with Doug Nairne, Free Press reporter, June 12, 1994
Planning the new reserve

The Marcel Colomb First Nation band office at Lynn Lake is a center, a place for work, a place for gathering and a place for drifters. In 2004 the building itself, used as collateral for a bad deal, faced confiscation. The times I had visited the office in 2000 papers were strewn about: contracts, confidential documents, accounts, letters, maps and other significant material. Almost everyone is new to his or her assigned task. High school graduates are rare and the average age of education is grade three. Unemployment, teen suicide, poverty, domestic violence and addictions afflict the community. Forty incidents of children being sent home from school due to extreme hunger were reported in the year 2000. Organizing a workforce for tasks such as firefighting or clearing land is nearly impossible despite high unemployment levels. A widespread lack of motivation and sense of hopelessness exist among the young. Development is occurring, from here, "in the dark" according to Chief Andrew Colomb. Moving from periods of tenuous short-term stability to despair, the people inch ahead.
Having dissolved its planning division, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs sought consultants outside the Department to plan the Black Sturgeon reserve, and as early as 1994 a professional planner was contracted by INAC to do a cost estimate for a "Community Plan and Capital Plan." The consultant was hired to determine the cost to hire a consultant. The planner estimated it would cost approximately $100,000 to produce a community plan and capital plan, documents that would establish a physical layout for the community and projections for spending.\footnote{INAC bureaucrat, Winnipeg, telephone interview with author, February 8, 2002.}

In March 1999 the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs began the planning process of the new reserve at Hughes Lake and in May 2000 I offered the Marcel Colomb band my services as a consultant, to attend planning meetings and advise on the community plan. I did this in exchange for permission to write about the process. Chief Andrew Colomb sent a contract to the engineering firm explaining my role.

I use the term "community planning" to describe this process only because the final report which was its outcome is entitled the "Marcel Colomb Community Plan and Capital Plan." My usage of the term, however, is not intended to suggest that planning a community actually took place. A description of the process instead revealed attitudes and power relations that simply congealed to produce a geographic space, a location intended for living, with certain familiar characteristics.

In the fall of 1999 the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs began a selection process for a design consultant to develop a plan for the new reserve. The band, the and the Department of Public Works were involved in the process, and the Public Works department oversaw it. The Department of Public Works and Government Services of Canada (PWGSC) is an engineering group and is the government's major service delivery organization, providing many government departments and agencies with services. Federal building contracts, in particular, are managed by the department. Public Works has an agreement with INAC to provide technical advice and management of on-reserve capital projects, most notably housing infrastructure and schools. Consequently, the department manages the spending of capital funds allocated to reserves. The Public Works website defines its mandate "to ensure effective management and accountability for on-reserve assets." Consulting firms surveyed emphasize the department's power
in the reserve building process, as summarized by one consultant. “Their word is like gospel. It is
difficult to contradict them or go against them. You don’t win.”

An INAC screening process ensued. “The ability to work with First Nations, experience
with similar projects and in remote conditions” were cited by a department official as important
selection criteria. The short list comprised an Aboriginal architectural firm, a landscape architecture
firm, a municipal engineering firm, a professional planner (the same consultant who established the
initial budget), and an Aboriginal project management firm that previously had worked for Marcel
Colomb and was the band preference.

A letter of invitation was sent to the five firms along with a “Terms of Reference” document
for a Community Plan and Capital Plan, defining the project and the required elements in the
consultant’s proposal. These elements included relevant work experience, a work plan illustrating
the assignment of work to whom, person-hours in chart-matrix form, a bar chart of management
schedule, résumés of required professional staff, and bar charts of costs in a sealed envelope to
avoid overemphasis.

The letter of invitation refers to the project as a “Preparation of a Community Plan,”
whereas the Terms of Reference accompanying it describe the project as a feasibility study – a
revealing oversight. The discrepancy reveals the use of old, generic documents for new projects.
Interdepartmental correspondence between two INAC bureaucrats describe a process of tinkering
with old standardized documents to define the scope and nature of the new reserve: “Marcel is in
the process of doing a Community Plan. You wouldn’t happen to have any sample Terms of
Reference?” “I have a hard copy of a generic form, which would need to be updated re referencing
current INAC procedures and manuals etc. I’ll send it up to you. There would also be many [terms
of reference] attached to old community planning files.” “I have given X the generic community plan

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52 Planning consultant, Winnipeg, telephone interview with author, January 22, 2002.
53 These selection criteria formed part of the Terms of Reference and add up to 110 percent.

10% Qualification and experience based on similar work
10% Quality and experience of proposed team
20% Practicability of the consultant’s time schedule
20% Proposed methodology
10% Cost control
10% Ability to communicate and work with the natives on the project site
10% Specialized equipment available for use
10% Desirable innovations submitted or other desirable submissions by the consultant
10% Cost of service (in a sealed envelope)
package that Y has given me. He is going to review it make some comments and pass the package around to us for our comments and changes. Once we have an idea of the dollar amount I will be transferring it down to the capital unit...."154 The Terms of Reference was a generic document designed to meet INAC budget restrictions. Its structure and design originated from department filing cabinets and did not involve Marcel Colomb band members.

In September 1999 the invited these five firms to submit proposals for the preparation of the community plan. The letter of invitation that accompanied the Terms of Reference stated "On behalf of the Marcel Colomb First Nation, I am inviting your firm to submit a proposal...." The Terms of Reference defined the terms of the contract. "The contract will be between the Consultant and the Marcel Colomb First Nation" and "The Project Manager will have the final decision regarding the acceptance of the work and will be responsible for approvals," in this case Brian McIntosh, the engineer and project manager. 156

The firms were asked to submit proposals by October 21, 1999. In a January 2000 e-mail to Robert Kury the Public Works technical services officer (an engineer), Brian McIntosh stated, "The Chief wants to have a meeting to present the Consultant that the First Nation selected for the Community Plan. I have spoken to Gail Swain from Manitoba Highways in Thompson. She is ready to meet. She would prefer a meeting in Thompson if things could be coordinated that way....In any event the Chief is eager to get things going. What times will work with you and other personnel at INAC?"156 The band had made a selection based on the short list, and the Tribal Council engineer was arranging to move forward.

Robert Kury had a swift and short response, written in bold type as follows. "If the Chief wants to proceed without a signed Contribution Agreement, he does so at the risk of receiving no funding from DIAND. I am NOT available to attend any meeting not sanctioned by DIAND." Further correspondence between the and Public Works reveal Robert Kury's insistence that INAC's tendering and contracting policies be followed for the project to receive funding, beginning a process of threats to delay the project. The need to offer the consultants an

154 INAC departmental e-mails January 10 and 14, 2000, obtained through an access to information request.
155 See Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, "Terms of Reference For Provision Of Consulting Services For Preparation Of A Community Plan For Marcel Colomb First Nation," September 30, 1999.
156 E-mail from Brian McIntosh Tribal Council engineer, to Robert Kury, Public Works team leader January 18, 2000, obtained through an information access request.
opportunity to make a 30-minute presentation was given as one reason to repeat the selection process.\textsuperscript{157}

INAC arranged for a project team to select a design consultant and for the second time Robert Kury, the Public Works engineer, was given the role of team leader. Another selection meeting took place. On February 16, 2000, Robert Kury, Brian McIntosh (the Tribal Council engineer), Dale Hutchison (an INAC official) and a single Marcel Colomb band councilor, Douglas Hart, met to select a consultant. Some applicants presented their proposals while others did not. Proposals were ranked numerically using INAC's list of criteria and its point system. Band representation was notably low and the chief was absent.

While only 10 percent of an applicant's score were to be attributed to the proposal's cost, the outcome of the voting suggested the power of this category. The contract was awarded to UMA, the lowest bidder, and the highest bidder was ranked lowest.\textsuperscript{158} The firm's bid was 30-50 percent lower than the three midrange bids, 115 percent lower than the highest bidder and 30 percent lower than INAC's own estimate, which had formed the basis of its budget. (Budgets are established prior to tender partly to identify and eliminate low bidders. The estimate would likely have been discarded in the construction industry where an understanding exists that a job cannot be done without compromise below a certain price.) When asked how large bidding discrepancies could exist for such a small project, an INAC official stated "lowballing to get the job and then adding on costs during the process is a classic style for some firms." Asked whether the process is legal he responded, "If you are very good at what you do, you can do it legally."\textsuperscript{159} The winning firm was neither the band's first nor second choice, and a general belief circulated among the band that "They were the cheapest, and that's why Indian Affairs selected them."\textsuperscript{160}

UMA is a large, corporate-style, municipal engineering and project management group specializing in infrastructure and road building, with major infrastructure contracts from the City of Winnipeg, the federal government and the Canadian National Railway. It has regional offices across Canada and is organized according to several profit centers – engineering, architecture,

\textsuperscript{157} Letter from Robert Kury, Public Works team leader, to Brian McIntosh, Tribal Council engineer, January 31, 2000. Obtained through an information access request.
\textsuperscript{158} E-mail from Robert Kury to Regional Director General Lorne Cochrane, and Assistant Regional Director Mary Blais, February 16, 2000, obtained through an information access request.
\textsuperscript{159} INAC official, Winnipeg, telephone interview, with author, February 18, 2000.
\textsuperscript{160} Chief Andrew Colomb, Lynn Lake, conversation with author, October 2, 2000.
planning, landscape architecture and project management — that all compete for work. The firm's Vice President and Regional Director, Jim Terris, completed a career in senior management with the Department of Public Works prior to joining the firm in 1990. There is one professional planner on staff.

The firm selection remained contentious. The band’s preference was an Aboriginal firm that had cleared the existing Hughes Lake road and offered support during the band’s struggle for status. The firm is partially owned by three First Nations that belong to the same Tribal Council as Marcel Colomb. Its second choice was an out-of-province Aboriginal firm. Robert Kury’s e-mail to INAC’s regional directors that gave notice of the contract award also informed the department that “The chief was not available to join us. The chief joined us after we were complete, i.e. we had reached a consensus.”

Chief Andrew Colomb negotiated fiercely after the selection has been made, but finally submitted to the department’s choice, understanding that if the band did not comply, the planning would not proceed. Robert Kury notified other department staff on March 20, 2000, that “The Marcel Colomb First Nation have accepted UMA Engineering to do the Community Plan,” even while protest reigned. He added that “the band members were wondering why a new community plan was being done when Don Pearson had done a community plan a number of years ago….RPS/PVGSC have no copy of the Don Pearson plan.” The comments illustrate a lack of discussion with the band about the planning process. The government’s choice prevailed, and a contract was written on the band’s behalf. In planning sessions six months later, the issue of the firm selection would be again be raised, but as the INAC’s capital services officer put it, “The department did not want to discuss it.”

I will digress for a moment. Marcel Colomb could not choose a qualified consultant on its own. Instead its voice was reduced to 25 percent of a selection committee. The inability of Marcel Colomb to “hire” is significant, for it established the relationship between “consultant” and “client.”

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161 E-mail, from Robert Kury to Lorne Cochrane Regional Director INAC and Mary Blais Assistant Regional Director INAC, January 17, 2000, obtained through an access to information request.
162 E-mail from Robert Kury to Robert Kimball and Rod Graham, funding and capital service officers dated March 20, 2000 obtained from an access to information request. A plan was drawn by Don Pearson, a planning consultant some years prior. The band continually referred to this plan and wondered why the work was being repeated. It was not used in the planning process.
Bypassing the First Nation's choice shifted power from band to department, to whom significant issues would be addressed. To the firm, the government would remain the client despite outward displays of band control, as in the writing of the contract.

Particular ideologies fueled and legitimized the strong government presence throughout the planning process. When I asked why a band selection could not be made, as is typical in the construction industry, an INAC official explained, "...you have to understand this is public money, a very, very large amount of public money. The planning dollars are just the tip of the iceberg. It doesn't matter if chief and council want a certain firm. It matters who shakes out in the end on the basis of points." And, further, "...if allowed, they [bands] will just select the same firm over and over" (although long-term client relationships are a normal manner of doing business in the building industry). An architectural firm with First Nations clients replied to the same question: "...it's not their money, it's federal government money, and the government dictates policy." Interviews with firms revealed a high level of confusion about client identity and about whose dollars were being spent. Only five out of seventeen architectural firms engaged in First Nations work stated that their client was the First Nation. Seven said it was the government and ten said it was the Tribal Council.

The reserve construction world is influenced by the belief that reserves are built with public money. This attitude coupled with Canadian possessiveness about all Aboriginal things mask the substantial differences that lie between First Nations projects and public projects. The rules applied to the building of common institutions are simplistically applied to reserve construction without consideration of treaties or the special rights of First Nations. So, our national archives, our national parks, our First Nations and our reserves slide into the same category. Consequently, reserves must be built in ways that please the public. Contracts must be broadly distributed in the marketplace. Projects must be publicly tendered, and so on. Most importantly, government

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164 INAC official, Winnipeg, telephone interview with author, February 8, 2002.
165 From surveys and interviews of 17 architectural firms in Winnipeg in January 2002.
166 Native "appropriation" is most evident in the appropriation of Native artifacts and images. Canadian museum collections of Native artifacts marketed as Canadian icons are a good example. Daniel Francis speaks of the "appropriation" of Native imagery by non-Natives in *The Imaginary Indian*. Book titles such as *National Asset: Native Design* produced by the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association in 1956 is one of many sources describing Native things as Canadian cultural "property." Proprietary attitudes are also expressed in the most casual conversation with non-Aboriginals. "At least we treat our Indians much better than the U.S. treats theirs," stated a university colleague, January 20, 2002.
intervention is required to ensure accountability, fairness and free market competition, legitimizing a strong state presence in the design process.

Another prevalent attitude is that reserve projects are not funded through the taxes of Aboriginal people but by the taxes of everyone else. They are, therefore, a form of welfare, a handout that reinforces a faith in government control, the missionary zeal that accompanies the administration of projects, and the acceptance of a low level of choice among the perceived “beneficiaries.” Many firms also consider Indian Affairs projects to be “safe,” with built-in guarantees of payment. Government involvement is welcomed, especially in response to often-cited cases where consultants’ contracts were not honored.167

According to the department, in the process of building reserves in Manitoba, virtually all major contract dollars are awarded to non-Aboriginal firms. INAC has policies that address the special status of First Nations people and their unique relationship with the Crown. The Treasury Board’s umbrella policy to favor Aboriginal firms – the Aboriginal Procurement Policy – attempts to recirculate First Nations capital within First Nations communities. An “Aboriginal set-aside” clause included in some contracts encourages the hiring of Aboriginal workers in certain circumstances.168

But the application of these policies is overridden by the attitudes of those charged with their enactment. Ron Payne, the Public Works Regional Director overseeing reserve capital projects in Manitoba, states that department under which he works “…does not have an umbrella policy favoring Aboriginal firms.”169 An upper ranking INAC bureaucrat added, “You cannot give preference to Aboriginal firms [when tendering reserve projects]. It would be unconstitutional.”170

The comments reveal a sense of obligation to other Canadians that override any interest in Aboriginal people. Public interest, common good, and free market competition tend to place the department in opposition to the communities it purports to serve.

The presence of government and its ability to override Marcel Colomb’s decisions established a power structure between designer and client that is unique, and is founded on and reinforced by entrenched attitudes about public money. To consultants, an owner/client is the body

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167 From architectural firm interviews and surveys conducted in Winnipeg in January 2002.

168 These two policies have led to particular changes in the market. More firms that call themselves “Aboriginal” have been emerging with Aboriginal “fronts,” yet are largely owned and operated by non-Aboriginals. They may even have on-reserve mailboxes.


170 INAC official, Winnipeg, telephone interview with author, February 8, 2002

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that remits payment and that has the ultimate power to continue or stop the design process, in this case the government. Band power is subverted from the start.

The engineering firm’s services were retained in March 2000. In addition, INAC assembled a group of experts to plan the community: the Tribal Council engineer, an INAC Capital Services officer, an INAC Funding Services manager, an INAC Program Planning and Allocation Officer, an INAC Lands and Trusts officer, an INAC Senior Environmental Officer, and the Public Works engineer who remained project leader.

The department hired a band member on the band’s behalf to act as community coordinator. The coordinator amassed background information for the firm, conducting interviews in Lynn Lake, Thompson and Winnipeg. He collected information about housing needs and population statistics (although the Terms of Reference describes community research such as population analysis and housing needs information as part of the firm’s contract). The coordinator was stationed in the office of the firm, and when I met him he was working on drawings at the office. His position was nebulous, merging the roles of firm employee and band representative. In meetings, for example, he defended the firm’s work as though an employee, and was reminded by the band that he worked for the band. Firm loyalties that stemmed from the arrangement impeded band interests and critical analysis of the firm’s work. Overall, the arrangement would cut firm costs, simplify the firm’s task of interacting with the community, and encourage a band member to promote the plan.

The coordinator aided in the firm’s hardest work: background research about band needs. The difficulty of understanding unfamiliar people and places, and of determining needs, opportunities and constraints across barriers of language, custom, education, gender and economics are well known to those employed by First Nations. One Winnipeg design firm summarized the obstacles admitted to by many: “It’s difficult to get information. Their way of doing business is different. They do not trust us. We need to establish relations of trust. Even then it is difficult.”

Another commented on the stereotypical, empty gestures that sometimes result from a lack of information and an outsider’s interpretation of a design problem. “I do not know how to get the information. Only at the fourth design meeting [for a school] did I glean something from what an elder was saying to utilize as a cultural component, to generate a vision and concept. And it was

very few things, very little to base a design on. Would standard classrooms suit their needs? There are cultural differences, but we do not know what they are. This school here could be placed anywhere. The cultural elements are token, a bit of color change and patterns in brick. What do we know about life on a reserve? Nothing! And how do we get this information? I don’t know anything about the history.” Amid such problems, the coordinator was relied upon for community research, and sometimes even provided the main substantive information himself as in an interview on which the firm’s environmental assessment is almost solely based.

By June, UMA Engineering was also awarded the contract to design the 1.7-kilometer community access road connecting the reserve to the provincial highway. The bigger contract to construct the road was still undecided. Specifications for the road design were already submitted to INAC, but it is unclear why this contract had begun prior to the approval of the community plan. The access road design contract proved doubly advantageous to the firm, as it was later used to justify the firm’s selection to the band. One INAC official explained that the firm was favored to win the community planning contract as “they were already in the area.” The access road design was not part of the community plan’s Terms of Reference, yet community design meetings doubled as access road design meetings, and even the firm was unsure whether the contracts were separate or combined. The final community planning document included cost estimates for the access road.

By July 2000, after four months of planning and two planning meetings, the firm claimed that its work was 75 percent complete. The phase culminated in a “Background and Needs Report.” Few band members attended the initial meetings or those that were to follow. With the work nearing completion, no band member, with the exception of the coordinator, had seen a preliminary plan for the community. When questioned about the low level of community involvement at planning meetings the firm engineer, Bob Romanetz, admitted he did not understand why attendance was so low but claimed that, “even though they [band members] are not present, they are listening with one ear.” He described bringing doughnuts to meetings as a means of getting people to attend, adding that pitiful attendance at design meetings was “not an uncommon phenomenon in past First Nations projects.” Meetings between the designers and the band were fly-in and fly-out affairs. The project team made the three-hour flight to Lynn Lake from Winnipeg, conducted project and community meetings, and returned to Winnipeg the same day.

172 Ibid.
The coordinator was relied upon to retrieve key information from the membership including its goals for the new reserve. The band member surveys found that self-determination was the foremost reason for relocation. "We have a right to our own reserve, to self-determination and to look after ourselves." They also identified Marcel Colomb's many other reasons for desiring to leave Lynn Lake: "So we can get out of this town – we've been struggling to get out of here." "Living here for so many years as squatters...." "We all want something that belongs to us...." "A place to call home." "Too many struggles in Lynn Lake." The surveys also cited "maintenance of cultural traditions" and an "antidote for social problems" as secondary reasons for wanting to move. Hughes Lake was envisioned as a place to reconnect with and "teach the children the old ways." It became the answer to the many social ills afflicting the band at Lynn Lake and the answer to a healthier life. "Want to get away from violence." "Accessibility to alcohol is limited." "Better environment....Better place for a family. Quiet." "....Build more things for the kid to do; bring down the suicide rate." Band members envisioned Hughes Lake as a cleansing, redemptive space.\(^{173}\)

The band's statements illustrated the enormous hope that was attached to the new plan and what relocation was expected to achieve.

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\(^{173}\) Band member comments from UMA Engineering Ltd., Marcel Colomb Community Plan and 5-Year Capital Plan, 26.
Planning session three

Because of their importance, I will discuss the last two planning sessions in detail. They were meetings that sought band approval for a design that was being finalized, yet they were characterized by discord. On July 19, 2000, the third of the four scheduled planning sessions was held. The many quotes I use are from tape recordings of the proceedings unless noted otherwise.

The firm had been working for four months, and the planning was nearing completion. The July meeting was intended for the first presentation of three plan options from which the band would choose. A copy of the Community Plan and Capital Plan interim draft report, outlining for the first time the community design and its cost, were provided to the chief and council prior to this meeting.

On July 19, 2000, two UMA Engineering representatives, a group of INAC officials, the Public Works team leader, and I made the three-hour flight to Lynn Lake. The Tribal Council representative and a Health Canada representative traveled from The Pas. The engineers were armed with drawings outlining the elements of the new reserve, a capital planning report that projected costs, doughnuts, and an expectation that a community design would be chosen.

The meeting began with a prayer at 11:00 a.m. Unexpectedly, discussion began about a Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) owed to the Mathias Colomb band at Pukatawagan.

INAC's Capital Services officer Robert Kimball: “The TLE must be resolved first or there will be no funding for the new community. The community plan will go on hold.”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “What does this [the planning process] have to do with TLE? What does Mathias Colomb’s TLE have to do with us? We have not even been consulted in their negotiations with you.”

INAC’s Capital Services officer: “Write these issues down so that we can take them back to INAC instead of beating around the bush.”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “The TLE did not exist when we negotiated for Black Sturgeon. That land was set aside for Black Sturgeon already in 1972. Why is it being brought up now? We don’t even know what TLE means. This is not our problem. This is Mathias Colomb’s problem. The TLE is a big part of the community planning, a big stumbling block.”

INAC’s Capital Services officer (continuing to pressure for the signing of the agreement): “The RDG [INAC’s Regional Director General] and Associate R.D.G made it very clear

Outstanding land owed to some Manitoba First Nations originating from early treaty agreements with Canada.
that if that agreement is not signed, the capital projects on here will not be able to proceed."

Chief Andrew Colomb: “You [INAC] cannot release capital dollars because we are off-reserve, but we must sign TLE to get our reserve. Now, the only way the community plan will go ahead is if I sign.”

Headman John Colomb: “So we either sign or we’re dead. We get nothing.”

Band member: “It’s always the same. If we don’t sign or if we don’t agree with the department there is always something you guys are putting on us. If you don’t do this you won’t get this. What does TLE have to do with building a new reservation? That’s the question—”

INAC’s Capital Services officer (interrupting): “We indicated that we are the wrong people. You gotta talk to senior management. The understanding is that the TLE committee and my representatives are coming here on Wednesday.”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “Why have a meeting if we don’t get anywhere?”

INAC’s Capital Services officer (again merging the two processes): “Well, it’s a working group that’s developing a community plan. That’s what it is.”

Many band requests to postpone a TLE meeting were not successful.

INAC’s Capital Services officer: “These issues are beyond my control.”

Band member: “I thought we dealt with TLE issues with different departments [a different group of INAC officials].”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “You are restricting us from moving ahead.”

Band member: “And we are told not to stop.”

The TLE discussion consumed much time and energy and was frustrating and antagonistic, fueling sentiments of distrust and criticisms of the project’s budget. The band’s position was clear. Its plan funding was threatened while the planning process was nudged forward.

Chief Andrew Colomb: “Money is not even available for this study. Why should I pay for this? This process is meaningless.”

The report estimated that in the first year infrastructure, roads, fourteen houses and one row house would be built for approximately $17 million or all the available capital. Consequently, the current community requirement of forty-five homes and additional community facilities would prevent a complete move to the Black Sturgeon reserve. The remainder of the community is projected for construction in the following twenty years although without a government commitment for more dollars. INAC officials warned:
INAC's Capital Services officer: "After the initial capital is spent the band will be put on the bottom of the department's waiting list. There are sixty-one other bands waiting for facilities."

The remaining housing requirement of thirty-one homes was projected for building over the following four-year period along with the band office, garage and gas pump, store, playground, and hunting and fishing lodge, this for an additional $11 million. Between year six and ten an arena, eight more houses, a health services addition to the band office, and a community dock would require $4 million more. Fifteen additional houses were slated for construction with a visitor center, school and teacherages between year eleven and twenty, this for $12 million. The total twenty-year requirement to accomplish the basic plan was $44 million, $27 million beyond INAC's commitment.

Chief Andrew Colomb: "We did not even chose these guys [consultants]."

INAC's Capital Services officer ending this discussion: "I don't want to discuss this."

The Capital Services officer explained that the ongoing process was "necessary." Other INAC representatives and the Tribal Council chimed in, arguing that "the community planning is an information gathering tool that Marcel Colomb needs to go through to move to the next step of releasing capital dollars." A consensus arose around the second point. Despite claims of information gathering, community planning was fundamentally a process of releasing dollars. (Moreover, it was in everyone's interest to "release" this capital, although reasons varied.) Capital was "frozen" unless the community planning was completed, and the tenuousness of the new reserve was reinforced by government threats to put the project on hold. This ongoing hostage process enabled the department to have its way. Ironically, capital that was dedicated for building the community was concurrently being spent: by July 2000 more than $1 million was eroded by a range of other costs including band operations, hiring a coordinator, the community access road design and others. Capital was not frozen at all.

The band's lack of faith, the government's threats to freeze the project, and concerns over fees worried the consultants who addressed their unease to the department rather than to their First Nation clients.

The firm's engineer: "We were told the project was going to go through. We have done work since April that has received no payment. What about money for the community access road? Does this funding hang on the TLE?"
INAC’s Capital Services officer: “Fee payment has to be settled with the Chief.” (Yet the band’s audit, and the flow of funds through the Tribal Council were commonly known.)
The firm’s engineer: “Does an urban reserve affect our fees?” [Will we get paid if the community is not built?]
INAC’s Capital Services Officer (cementing the department’s approval): “The only way the department will reject the plan is if the TLE is not signed.”

Assurances of government approval were given to the firm before the band had approved the plan, and were made on other occasions to calm the fears of the firm when their work and existence were challenged. Threats to freeze the community project were strangely juxtaposed with assurances that the firm’s plan would be approved.

INAC’s position was neither unbiased nor mediating, but appeared to lean on the consultant’s “side.” Roles merged once again. Differentiating between consultants in a planning firm and government became difficult for the band and eventually it interpreted the arrangement as coercive. Positions taken by government heightened the lack of trust between the planners and the community. What was intended to be a planning meeting between a client group and engineering consultants broke down before it began. The chief asked, “Why would I bring these people here and continue working, and you [INAC] are just going to disapprove? It’s just a waste of time and money and it’s [the plan] so expensive already.”

The discrepancy between the cost of the community and the available funding was a significant issue for the band. Marcel Colomb’s choice to develop Hughes Lake was influenced by misconceptions of both the costs of a new community and of available funding, and four months of planning was complete before the insufficiency of capital became fully known to them.

The firm’s estimate for the community approached $44 million with most of the existing budget of $18.2 million dedicated to building merely infrastructure, the access road, and power and telephone lines to the reserve boundary. Chief Andrew Colomb continued to challenge the legitimacy of the process. “Why go through the community planning and capital planning? It does not make sense.” Planning a community that could not be built, due to lack of government approval and funding, seemed suspect.

Band members discussed the current freezing of all their funds with the Tribal Council engineer, who explained to them, “The audit will solve that, this week or next.” Whether funding was withheld due to the audit or the TLE was unclear.
Band member: "But we will still be out [of money]...why go ahead now?"

Tribal Council engineer: "So you will have your community plan ready for when things get solved. A community plan is a long-term process. It gives a blueprint for your future, and this TLE is a long-term process. So if you are doing both at the same time, when you get the TLE resolved this plan is ready to go." (He attempted to move the project along, assuring the band of the planning’s logic, amid the disputes over timing, funding and feasibility.)

INAC official: "Everyone knows you cannot build a community for this, but there are no additional dollars (emphasis). The community needs to set priorities splitting Hughes Lake and Lynn Lake. You do not have enough dollars to do what you want to do at Hughes Lake because there is an $18.2 million funding cap."

The funding cap, realized for the first time by band members and the engineering consultants, precipitated arguments by both.

The firm’s engineer: "This is news to us. They [the band] were led to believe there would be more money. What if it turns out to be more? A 1998 DIAND analysis was presented by the first Nation indicating total community development costs of $44.1 million." (The $43,910,500 cost of the firm’s plan matched this former figure.)

The exchange illustrated how far planning had progressed before the project budget was clarified, and the slipperiness of the information on which the planning was based. It was unclear to the project team how the plan budget was reduced. Discrepancies between promises of $44 million and the $18.2 million budget vexed the process as Indian Affairs officials continued to deny the department had committed to the larger sum.

The INAC official’s offhand tabling of the urban reserve potential of Lynn Lake was a negotiating tool rather than a design suggestion. The government did not play an active role in the urban reserve negotiations between the town and the band. No planners were hired to formally investigate the potentials of Lynn Lake. No environmental assessment of the Lynn area was commissioned by INAC, a required process prior to the government’s acquisition of land and done for the Hughes site in 1993. In short, no government process was in place to acquire land in Lynn.

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INAC’s $18.3 million budget was not based on the cost to build a community. The department was aware that “you can’t build a community for that.” The Ouje-Bougoumou Cree settlement in northern Quebec cost $44 million almost 10 years earlier and was referred to by Minister Irwin in the 1995 band status meeting at Grand Rapids. It was during this meeting that the Black Sturgeon group, as they were called at the time, presented Minister Irwin with a conservative budget of $18 million for a new community. The current budget of $18 million is likely based on what the band had asked for in 1995.
Lake for the purpose of an urban reserve nor was this process foreseen in the future. The possibilities of Lynn Lake remained outside the planning process. Lynn Lake’s opportunities were raised only when it was convenient for government — a theoretical alternative whereby the problems of funding for a complete community at Hughes were effectively circumvented.

Attributing the budget problems to unnecessary design elements and lavish standards, Chief Andrew Colomb remarked “what you envision is a golf course and flower beds. This is not what we see.” The comment erupted during a long and raucous discussion about design standards and whose standards prevailed.

*Headman John Colomb:* “Why do we have to design to these standards? They did not exist when we were living in tents and hauling water. One time in 1986 we wanted to move to the reserve. An Indian Affairs worker in Thompson said to us we could not move to the reserve because we have to have running water, you have to have electricity. You have to have everything. They said it was the new law. I told them why there was this new law and I have been living in a tent for over twelve years. I wanted a cabin and a better life than I had in the past. What was the difference? Was there any law in there where I was staying in a tent with my people for twelve years? I wanted to move to a better place that I could move, build our own log cabins. That is what we wanted to do and they did not let us do that.”

The band sought building alternatives to a process that threatened to erode the entire budget with infrastructure alone, but the necessity for strict adherence to INAC “standards” prevented alternative design solutions. More importantly, rules were mistaken for standards, and standards of the part overrode standards of the whole, lending an absurdity to the planning. Roads had to be built according to department rules that specified design speeds and curvatures, for instance, even if the budget for the road design swallowed that of the buildings it intended to serve. Building a *part* of a community was entirely acceptable. If the part is built according to INAC’s “rules of design,” the *whole* need not exist at all.

*INAC’s Capital Services officer* (with sarcasm): “Well, you have to talk to your consultants. They do not work for us.”

*Chief Andrew Colomb:* “But you hired them.”

*INAC’s Capital Services officer:* “I don’t want to discuss this.”

*The firm’s engineer* (explaining to INAC officials): “The chief says the services are gold-plated but they’re not. You just can’t build this community with $17 million.”

*INAC’s Capital Services officer:* “$18.2 million is an absolute cap.”
The firm’s engineer: “But we are designing to Indian Affairs standards.” (Suggesting the difficulty of building a community according to INAC’s guidelines given the available funding.)

INAC’s Capital Services officer: “We change these standards.”

The firm’s engineer: “Are you going to restrict this First Nation to outhouses?”

INAC’s Capital Services officer: “You can go to a truck system.”

Health Canada representative: “There will be health issues with that system.”

Band member: “Would you live with a truck system?”

The Capital Service officer’s willingness to slash standards to meet INAC’s budget was overridden by the band, the firm, the Tribal Council representative and the Environmental Health officer working for Health Canada who agreed that the project needed to maintain a minimum levels of standard services. The firm representatives argued that their design was based on INAC’s own Level of Service Standards (known as LOSS) which exist for all project types. INAC’s project approvals are based on consultants’ adherence to these and other guidelines.

The group discussed ways the project might proceed without compromise to the level of infrastructure service, and the planning meeting was reduced to issues of cost saving and cost sharing. The main issues remained, who would pay for the hydro power and the provincial access road, how capital could be saved, and the timing of the firm’s payment. Increasing the density of the community layout became a main cost-saving goal, even before the plan was presented to the community.

The firm’s engineer addressed the Tribal Council for settlement of the access road design fees and the Tribal Council’s engineer admitted that the government was stalling on funding. With more complaints from the firm, INAC’s Capital Services officer finally agreed to release funding, explaining, “OK, if the audit is in, then there will be no funds withheld” and contradicting earlier statements that the resolution of the TLE was a prerequisite to project funding. Department officials adjusted their rules when convenient.

The engineering firm’s representatives were unclear about the relationship of their two contracts, and throughout the meeting they pressured the government to begin construction of the road, yet another contract. One contract slid effortlessly into another, and considerations of road construction derailed more fundamental discussions about the plan.

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176 Band capital was channeled through the Tribal Council due to an ongoing audit.
The planning group's power structure stemmed from its purse strings. INAC's power overshadowed others while it teased of band autonomy. Its power to approve the project, stop the process, dispatch the consultants, or choose alternatives was on display. The consultants addressed the department rather than the band in the significant matters of fees and authorizations to proceed, and the band followed. Information flow between band and firm – between employer and employee – was complicated by the government's powerful middleman position. Marcel Colomb's concerns about inadequate funding, timing and the choice of consultant were hardly heard because they did not have to be; the authority to halt or enable the process did not lie with the band.

The proceedings revealed the department's lack of concern about the long-term life of the Black Sturgeon reserve and added to the band's sense of isolation and distrust of government. As the chief put it, "When I listen to the consultants, they give me the impression I should be able to live with the plan, but they know they won't be around for a long time. There are so few people willing to help." Despite the stalling, threats, and severe constraining factors of the plan, all parties rushed towards completion. Consistent advice from the Tribal Council – "well, everybody is here, we may as well follow through" – reflected the mood of inevitability. Momentum instigated sign-offs, speed overtook logic, and a machine-like process edged matters along.

As the firm had predicted, some band members arrived to sample the doughnuts during a break. Women and children wandered through the room, staring without comment at the drawings mounted on the wall. Many left as soon as the meeting resumed and the planners began their presentation. By mid-afternoon, the engineering firm's planner finally made a short presentation, his voice often drowned out by simultaneous discussions. The content and negotiation style of this meeting dwarfed the importance of the actual community design. Nevertheless the project team expected the community to hastily "pick a plan."

The layout of the plan elements was derived from four factors: physical site conditions, economy of infrastructure planning, INAC's guidelines and population statistics. High, dry and flat regions were identified as buildable "with high suitability for road construction, foundations and buried services." Cost dictated higher densities. The plans conformed to INAC's funding

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177 INAC has a set of guidelines known as Level of Service Standards (LOSS) for all reserve building such as schools, roads and infrastructure to which all projects must comply for funding.

structures, and Option A was even described as "advantaged" because it fit the department's density guidelines.\textsuperscript{179} Combinations for mixed use were also informed by department funding guidelines. The firm was instructed that "only facilities constructed with monies derived from the same sources/types of funding should be combined."\textsuperscript{180} These determinants ruled out design possibilities such as lower densities preferred by band members and building combinations such as arena and band office.

The planners devised three community layouts from which the band would choose. Each illustrated a physical layout of the same elements: housing, band office, school, teacher's housing, day care, arena, fire hall, gas station, maintenance building, nursing station, water treatment facility, lagoon, visitor center, cultural grounds and lodge development. Variations were a result of different infrastructure arrangements, which consequently altered costs.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Topographic map from Energy, Mines and Resources of Canada}
\end{figure}

To the right is my sketch after UMA's plan drawing. Option A is planned with a main road to the lake, ending at the water pump/intake. A secondary road is planned for more housing stretching towards the visitor center and cultural grounds. The community favored the lagoon that was farther away from the community.

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\textsuperscript{179} "To qualify for funding of fully piped systems...community densities need to be a minimum of 7.5 dwelling units per hectare (3 units per acre) and lot frontages averages no more than 30 meters." UMA Engineering Ltd., Marcel Colomb First Nation Community Plan and 5-Year Capital Plan, 95.

\textsuperscript{180} UMA Engineering Ltd., Marcel Colomb First Nation Community Plan and 5-Year Capital Plan, 118.
The schemes were each evaluated by the consultants to help the community choose. A chart-matrix listed eight criteria: fit with terrain condition, site suitability aspect, impact on natural environment, community form and efficiency of land use, infrastructure efficiency, level of compatibility with department guidelines (known as LOSS), compatibility with First Nation needs, and preferences and infrastructure cost. Each factor was given a percentage weight. Infrastructure cost contributed 35 percent. The factors were valued and totaled to give a "score" for each scheme. Option "C" received the lowest score (320) and option B was given the highest (375.5).

Marcel Colomb's goals defined in the background and needs report, however, did not form part of this evaluation matrix except as the generic category "compatibility with First Nation's needs and preferences." Heavily outweighed by the combination of other factors, it amounted to 15 percent of the score given to each scheme. The plan's ability to answer the main problems cited by the band – self-determination, maintenance of cultural traditions, antidote to social problems, and environmental concerns in Lynn Lake – were not used to evaluate the options.

The firm was unaware of the current water levels and a discussion emerged about the site's limits. The band informed the firm of the current record highs, and that a section of housing in option B was below the water line. The existing cottage lot area and the planned cultural grounds were islands. The firm explained that it was an "option" to live close to the water although there were some "drawbacks." The band eliminated plan B and later plan C as it placed the community along a main road close to the reserve boundary and away from the lake. Option A was selected on the grounds the band wanted neither a community away from the lake nor under water. Despite the elaborate matrix, a selection was made by elimination.

The organization and content of the community were not the focus of this meeting or the next, and there was a general approach of not taking the design too seriously. According to the band "It [the design] can always be changed." According to the firm, "I have yet to see a community follow a community plan." A member of the Tribal Council declared that "sometimes it's not good to allow too much time for selection."

The planning group left Lynn Lake in time to arrive home for dinner. The community plan option had been selected in a few hours. As we were leaving the Lynn Lake Friendship Center, many band members were arriving for bingo.
Option C is moved close to the reserve boundary. The community buildings are relocated at the reserve entry. Drawn after UMA Engineering plan.
The last of four planning sessions was on August 29, 2000, and was intended to present the final plan to the community. The project team assembled again at Lynn Lake, and a band member said the Lord's Prayer.

An INAC representative tried to clarify at the beginning that the Treaty Land Entitlement negotiations (TLE) had no linkage to the community plan, and that capital dollars and program dollars were based on population and other factors, not TLE. He claimed that the department's arguments linking the two were "bogus." Bob Kury, the Public Works team leader disagreed, and arguments continued between the two departments and within INAC, without resolution.

The firm's engineer took the opportunity to turn the discussion to the community access road and its fees: "If there is no relation to the signing of the TLE, the TLE should not hold up funding at all. So money is flowing. Does it include the road?"

INAC's Capital Services officer: "The road funding is contingent on the approval of the plan."
Firm engineer: "There was a sign-off."
Public Works engineer: "Was there a sign-off?"
Firm's engineer: "Well, we had comments."
INAC's Capital Services officer: "There was more than one report."
Firm's engineer: "There were four reports."
Public Works engineer to INAC Capital Services officer: "So we can start finance flowing for the access road?"
INAC's Capital Services officer: "Yes."
Public Works engineer: "I was not aware there was a sign-off on the community plan."
Firm's engineer to Public Works engineer: "[INAC Capital Services officer] just said funds can be released."

Apparently, financing was available for the road without approval of the community plan. A long discussion ensued about funding for the provincial community access road and who would pay. Convinced that the Manitoba government would not cover the entire cost, INAC officials advised the band to negotiate a cost-sharing deal with the province. They explained that no rules exist for a split, and that the cost breakdown was subject to negotiations. They instructed the firm to include the cost of the entire provincial access road in its estimate, as there was no guarantee that the province would contribute. (The province's eventual 40 percent contribution was described by an INAC official as "generous.") The department also suggested negotiations with Manitoba Hydro
over payment for service to the community. Both off-reserve items were included in the community plan estimate. A lengthy discussion followed about the possibility of cost breakdowns, and about who should negotiate with the province and with Manitoba Hydro. The firm commented on the project's many unknowns.

Band members again focused on the provincial access road and its high cost. The 1.7-kilometer Community Access Road predesign submission made by the firm in June 2000 projected a $1.5 million cost including a 20 percent contingency fee. The $891,723-per-kilometer pricing was omitted from the community plan document in which the main community collector road, designed according to the same design criteria, was estimated at only $450,000 per-kilometer. The band also noted, as the predesign submission states, that "the horizontal alignment was predominantly based on utilizing the existing cleared trail/road into the reserve. This was chosen as the preferred route in a previous study, is already cleared and grubbed a majority of the way, and has already received an environmental licenses." The $1.5 million figure seemed high.

Band members questioned the road's design and suggested ways to increase efficiency and reduce costs. The firm's representatives resisted, explaining the cost was due to high design standards, which precipitated further arguments:

Band member: "Do our roads have to be built at these specs? Other reserves have tracks for roads. Why are we slapped with these standards? Are there really Indian Affairs standards? Seems there are either good roads or trails."
Firm engineer: "We can reduce the 90 km design speed but we would not recommend it." (He explained the need for design speeds and curvatures for ambulance and school buses.)
Tribal Council engineer (agreeing, and adding warnings): "If you want the province and Hydro to pitch in you have to build to their standards."

When I asked for a cost comparison with provincial roads of similar standards, the firm's representatives described costly terrain conditions and sarcastically ended the discussion: "Are we done with the road now?" Apparently, the cost was an issue of standards and terrain conditions, but the company would later lose the lucrative construction contract to the Province. The predesign for the 1.7-kilometer road cost the band $43,000 but was never used due to the unreasonably high

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181 See, UMA Engineering, Marcel Colomb Access Road Pre-design Submission.
cost of the proposed road, -- more than two to three times too high according to the Province. Provincial government engineers hired by INAC redesigned and constructed the road.182

The chief requested tendering of the access road construction, citing three First Nations including Mathias Colomb that were able to perform the work and that expressed interest.

Public Works engineer: “Let me take that up with the department. We can create an Aboriginal set-aside for tendering. Send out an expression of interest to these firms so they can outline their qualifications. You do this to protect yourself, so they meet requirements of yours that they are able to perform the work. You have to be careful.”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “Of three million dollars in road construction most should come to the community. Once we tender, we want to partner. We do not want to end up with nothing.”

INAC’s Capital Services officer: “We have policies to hire First Nations. It can be written into the road tendering project.”

Band member: “At least we should end up with some equipment. Is INAC going to provide equipment for maintenance? In the community plan we did not once discuss equipment.”

INAC’s Capital Services officer: “You are getting caught in the program capital. The budget does not include equipment, and equipment is costly. It’s not good to have too much equipment. It has to be maintained…” (He elaborated the disadvantages of equipment ownership.)

Band member: “Give us $100,000 and we will build our own road.”


The Tribal Council engineer took the discussion back to the approvals required to begin construction. Bringing power to the community was a necessary first step and Manitoba Hydro became another player. He stated:

“We need plan approval. Hydro won’t do anything until Indian Affairs kicks in $50,000.”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “Who pays for this? Does it come out of our dollars?”

INAC official: “We are hoping the Province will pay that.”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “INAC should negotiate to get Hydro to pay for all of it [power to the community]. So who will spearhead this [negotiations]?"

INAC Capital Services officer: “Not me. I don’t know.”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “What guarantee do we have that you guys will show up?”

Tribal Council engineer: “There was a meeting where INAC did not show.”

INAC’s Capital Services officer: “Well, it depends on who you assign. If there was a meeting with the Deputy Minister, I will have to excuse myself.”

Firm engineer (pushing to begin construction without a contract): “Can we start work on the reserve? How does Highways have to be involved? Because of the access road and


183 It is unclear why no Aboriginal firms won the road building contract.
Highways we can’t....”
INAC’s Capital Services officer: “The Province needs to negotiate with the band. The process needs time to work.”
Chief Andrew Colomb (Frustrated with the band’s in-between position): “You are saying we need to get together with the Province. The Province says let’s come up with a plan to deal with you. How long will this take?”
Tribal Council engineer: “None of this is worth anything if we don’t get on with it [the presentation of the plan].”
Band member: “First you say it’s related [Hydro negotiations] then you say it’s not.”
Chief to the Capital Services officer: “We can’t have more meetings. Write a letter to the Province to start the process.”
Capital Services officer: “You write it with cc to INAC.”
Firm engineer (still pushing the access road construction): “I am still confused. Until there is an agreement with Highways, can’t the band start work on the reserve?”
INAC’s Capital Services officer: “You can’t start any project until there is an agreement. All capital projects need to go one step at a time.”
Firm engineer: “It’s not a project, just some clearing of the land.”
INAC’s Capital Services officer: “We are looking for a 50/50 split for the whole road from Highways. This is why we have to wait.”
Firm engineer: “This is the first time I heard this. Well, we need to get discussions on now!”
Tribal Council engineer: “Hydro will not do anything until they get 50,000 for mapping, licensing and clearing.”
Chief Andrew Colomb: “Who pays?”
INAC Capital Services officer: “I don’t know. You have to sit down with the Province. Hydro is the big guy. You will have to negotiate for this. Power to the community is two to three million.”
Chief Andrew Colomb: “INAC and the Province should sit down and negotiate.”
Capital Services officer: “You need to approve this document and sit down and prioritize. Then we can assist you with the negotiations.”

Assistance with negotiations now hinged on approval of the plan document, and the conversation returned to the community plan. “Can we make changes [to the plan] as we go along?” asked a band member.

INAC Capital Services officer: “I would not accept much deviation.”
Band member: “But they [the three options] were all essentially the same. We will follow the basic....”
INAC’s Capital Services officer: “You mean revisions? I have no problem with that.”

Marcel Colomb needed operating dollars, and confused about the funding allocation, the Chief raised more arguments about the capital plan.
Chief Andrew Colomb: "The start of funding is set aside for four years. We have been at this for two. When does four years start? We have been recognized as a First Nation in 1999."

Band member: "Two years have gone by and you're on a five-year plan, or are you just starting when the community plan is done?"

INAC's Capital Services officer: "It [funding] starts with acceptance of the plan or plan approval by you. $18.2 million has been put there to establish a new reserve. Once that money is spent and you are at Hughes Lake, standard department process kicks in."

Chief Andrew Colomb: "There is a five-year plan. You said $18.2 million was for five years. If we spend it in the first year it will be all used up. In one year we will spend $15-16 million. What do we do for the next four years for program dollars to kick in?"

The limits of the capital were becoming apparent. How operating dollars could be granted after the capital was depleted and the reserve was incomplete would not be resolved.

INAC's Capital Services officer: "There is a misunderstanding. The money you have is to establish a reserve. Once you spend that capital you go on the department's programs priority list. If you spend it in the first year there is no more money for four years. Once you are on reserve you will get program dollars."

Department representatives were dogmatically stating INAC policies without addressing the enormous problem that flawed the planning process. The capital was insufficient to relocate to the reserve, and relocation was a requirement for program and operating dollars. Also, reserve building capital was being eroded as the planning process wore on. Negotiations began for an increase.

Chief Andrew Colomb: "How about more capital dollars?"

INAC official: "You will be number sixty-three in priority."

Chief Andrew Colomb: "Everybody knows $18.2 million will not establish a First Nation. Where will the additional capital dollars come from if there is no funding after five years?"

INAC official: "After the money is used up you are put on the priority list. You become part of the department's programs. Thirty-two million per year we split between sixty-two First Nations. There is a five-year spread based on a priority list. Who knows where you will be on the priority list. You may not see any more dollars for ten years."

Public Works engineer: "There is band capital available for each band to build one and a half houses per year."

INAC official: "The region has no more money. No more money will come to this community."

INAC's Capital Services officer: "There are other programs like busing and education. You need to sit down and start compromising."
The Capital Service officer's suggestion of reducing the community's level of service elicited more arguments. The limits of the capital became evident as the final planning meeting progressed, and with relocation itself now under threat, distrust grew. The department's piecemeal and dogmatic approach sparked suspicion about its motives.

Chief Andrew Colomb: “INAC is trying to push urban reserve, but the mayor wants us out of his town, and I don't want urban reserve." (Yet the department had no plans in effect to develop a reserve at Lynn.) "How can INAC approve this if there is no funding, only $18 million? I can see you guys are not going to approve it.”

INAC Capital Services officer: “We might not approve, but we will accept this plan. We want you to approve it and prioritize it. You have to become a politician. This is just planning. You have to sit down with the community and the Province and negotiate.”

The firm's planner (anxious to continue): “We want to go through the report now, can we _”

Chief Andrew Colomb: “You guys mentioned a priority list. We are a new First Nation, and we should be a priority. We are funded very limited and not fully staffed. Our administration is developing very slowly. We are short programs and funds.”

Various arguments were made for a capital increase - the need for operating dollars, the new band status of Marcel Colomb, the inadequacy of the present funding and the urban reserve stalemate - but none were effective. The project team trudged along.

INAC official: “The Tribal Council should be providing some of this. You can start establishing floor plans and clearing lots.”

Tribal Council engineer: “Hydro power is not there until 2002. What's the point?”

(INAC official: “This predesign will trigger a first meeting with the Province and then we will bring in Hydro.”

Firm engineer: “Everything is done! It's more than just predesign.”

Yet, when faced with criticism of the plan's design, such as the lagoon location, firm representatives claimed, “it's just predesign. These are details that have to be refined later on at another stage." (A year later another firm would be hired by INAC to refine the firm's work at a cost in excess of $250,000.) The detail required of the contract was unclear and shifting.

INAC's suggestions that the band negotiate with the Province and Hydro for additional dollars prompted ongoing resistance from the band.

Chief Andrew Colomb: “You are throwing us back and forth saying it is our responsibility. When we request something we have to wait, the process is slow and the wrong people are there. I made an attempt to get you guys at the same table. When it comes to showing up there is always no-shows. I went through a lot of trouble to get you guys together.”
INAC’s Capital Services officer: “I sense frustration. You need to learn to live with frustration.” (INAC’s representative offered some more overbearing advice on the difficulties that accompany leadership.)

The firm and the Tribal Council engineers nudged the meeting back to the planning document, and the firm’s planner took the opportunity to present the final community plan. Preceded by such discord, the presentation had a surreal and meaningless quality, and smaller discussions continued about funding amidst the planner’s drone. The drawings illustrated the entire $46 million plan without identifying phasing and timing. It was deceptive to those who neither had access to nor understood the capital-planning document that outlined costs. The drawings illustrated a community that contained a school, housing, band office, gas pump, grocery store and cultural grounds, most of which could not be built with the available dollars. It illustrated a community that was not possible.

The planner’s presentation focused on cost-saving refinements to the selected plan. Design development from the previous planning meeting amounted to a constriction of elements, even to moving the lagoon location closer to the community. Road lengths were generally minimized to reduce cost. The secondary community road was eliminated. Building density was increased. Standard lot sizes of 60 to 80 feet by 175 feet were plotted for efficiency. Functions were merged to reduce road frontage and servicing cost. Attached units were added to the mix of housing. The firm’s planner made an optimistic presentation as he spoke about “fine-tuning the plan and prioritizing to make things work.”

The band commented that a sewage line break would leak effluent to the pump location. The firm’s representative explained that “the intake is 150 meters into the lake and 18 inches from the bottom of the lake. It would have to be a lot of sewage to affect the water supply. The sewer is not intended to break. We can build in precautions such as increasing the pipe diameter. Does it make sense to build infrastructure that would stand around for a long time? We need feedback and a prioritization of elements.” In short, the band needed to identify where there was willingness to adjust standards to meet the budget. The chief addressed INAC again.

“Our backs are up against a wall. We don’t have enough funding. Why do we have a community plan when we do not have funding? We should have funding in place before we can approve the plan. We will not follow the plan anyway because we have to make full use of the funding [before the community is built]. Pieces will be missing. That will not
The Capital Services officer suggested that the band submit a proposal for tree cutting and clearing to start the project, and the firm continued with their presentation of the final plan. Eventually the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

I telephoned the firm engineer a few days later and asked why the suggested design changes to option A were not made. The lift station placement and the water treatment facility in relation to the sewer line were problematic. A sewage break would leak effluent to the pump location. The band was also unhappy with the lagoon placement. I also asked why more options were not generated, considering that one was submerged. The engineer explained that the design remained unchanged "because commentary was minimal and detailed design is to be done at another stage. Locations are not finalized." When I suggested that these were not details, he asked sarcastically "Then where would you put it [the lift station]"? I reminded him that the infrastructure design was the firm's job and asked that the refusal to make the design changes be formally recorded. The engineer refused, stating that "the Marcel Colomb band is my client not you. I never knew what your exact role was." He finally admitted receiving my contract with the band and agreed to shift the elements in question, concluding: "I don't have a problem with that" as though making some concessions to me.

The planning sessions were heated negotiations. Self-interests fueled helter-skelter discussions and an atmosphere of confrontation that did not subside. A consensus of basic goals was not reached, but the process sped ahead, its momentum derived from a number of factors.

The band was anxious to be on-reserve to release program and operating dollars, currently extracted from the capital allocated to build the new reserve. Headman John Colomb even converted an old trapper's cabin at Hughes Lake to a band office, in efforts to change the
“official location” of the band. Escorting the Assistant Regional Director to view the new address, however, did not change the department’s policy. A lengthy community-planning process was a threat to realizing the community that it was intended to create, underlining the problems of INAC’s policies for bands developing new reserves. The erosion of building capital with the need for operating funding\textsuperscript{184} disables development, punishes off-reserve bands for being reserveless, and creates pressures to establish “automatic communities.” Ironically, bands most in need of operating funding, those in the early stages of development, are denied it because their development is not more advanced.

Haste also came from some underlying assumptions. The chief explained that funding risked being “sent back” if not spent. Other First Nations were standing in line, and the possibilities of a government change of mind intensified the threat. “If there is an emergency with some other First Nation it [funding] may be pulled for that, and the band will have to wait again,” he stated. Capital was elusive. Consequently, immediate needs and the fear of jeopardizing the project reduced the force of the band’s criticisms of the process and encouraged quick solutions. Any suggestion that the project would be put on hold if the band did not approve a recommendation tended to secure that approval.

The band’s desire to be on-reserve legitimized both the consultant’s and government’s speed. “The band is in favor of a relocation and we don’t want to be the old Indian Agent and tell them what to do. We have to respect autonomy”, cited one INAC official as a defense for the rapid process. Government wheels were turning, and autonomy such as it was, did not slow its course, but maintained its myopic direction and uncompromising speed.

\textsuperscript{184} Operating funding includes administration costs to operate a band such as chief and council salaries, travel expenditures, and band office costs. Being on-reserve also provides access to a host of programs and services unavailable to off-reserve First Nations such as postsecondary education support, housing, youth employment strategies, and the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative to name a few.
The consultants added more pressure for speed. Their interests were reflected in the meeting's agenda as attempts were constantly made to move ahead, to maintain a tight schedule and to complete the document, all while keeping a predatory view on the next round of contracts – the access road construction project.

The planning method and outcome was designed and governed by INAC to ensure compliance with the government's procedure. In the words of Ron Payne, Public Works Regional Director, "If Public Works is involved they [bands] must follow our process." If they don't do this they won't get that. And INAC's role in the process was to secure approvals. Many signatures were required for the project to proceed. The band approval was necessary to maintain appearances. The various stages of the plan passed along an assembly line of people beginning with the engineering consultant, who submitted it to the Tribal Council project manager, who submitted it to the Public Works Technical Services officer, who submitted it to INAC's Capital Services officer. Five to six people approved the plan stages and discussions emerged around approvals. Who signed off, who didn't, and what would be required to obtain the necessary signatures, became the stimulant for the next step.

Planning was not a creative process but was rather a matter of "going through the motions." Its characteristic linearity was summarized by INAC's Capital Services officer: "It's a commitment from the Minister. Sometimes logic has nothing to do with it, and the region's hands are tied. When the Minister speaks all options are over with. When you are given a directive from the Minister's office, the discussion is finished. The Community Plan must be done to release capital dollars. Once the planning is done, dollars could begin to flow." One member of a local project management firm agreed: "The process is so bureaucratic that the actual community planning is not taken seriously. Some bands just follow through with the community plan phase so that they can proceed with their capital projects. They just want to get it done so that they can get their infrastructure." The machinations of government followed from a directive handed down from the Minister. The process of sign-offs forged ahead to completion because it had been started.

186 Robert Kimball (INAC's Capital Services Officer), Lynn Lake, Black Sturgeon planning session, July 19, 2000.
The community design and its operations were not a topic of discussion. Instead the meetings focused on funding, and planning was reduced to spending. Planning was a question of what could be bought for how much money. The budget also defined the extent of planning and indicated that “community design” was complete when dollars were spent. The planning method coincided with INAC’s regional budget rather than with the needs of the community. Hence the primary role of INAC’s Capital Services officer in meetings between a First Nation and its consultant.

Marcel Colomb’s status as one band among sixty-two continually refocused the project while adding pressure. A department representative reminded the band that “there is only thirty-two million to be divided between 62 bands. The money will have to come from some other First Nation.” Another explained, “This is more than what other bands have been allocated. Some bands have been waiting for a school or water and sewer for decades.” References to other First Nations awaiting essential services created a context within which the funding seemed a particularly good deal, and the presence of a waiting list on which Marcel Colomb would also soon find itself further encouraged agreement. The deplorable conditions of Aboriginal communities worked to the government’s advantage.

The Black Sturgeon project could not be isolated and particularized, and instead was continually repositioned relative to those of other bands. And maintaining department practices was crucial because every reserve project is a precedent for others. INAC’s reluctance to grant band operating and program dollars, for example, stemmed from this position. A clear differentiation was made between capital funding (which the band received) and operating funding (which it did not) even though operating dollars were extracted from the capital funding. This differentiation is significant. Granting operating and program dollars to an off-reserve band would open the funding doors for others. Whatever the outcome at Black Sturgeon, sixty-one other bands were watching.

The planning group represented many divergent positions. The department’s desire to transfer fiscal responsibility to the province and to Manitoba Hydro underlaid the meetings, as did the firm’s interest in commencing construction. The band was questioning and hesitant about the logic of the process, yet fearful of jeopardizing its opportunity for a new community. The possibility that the department would change its mind hung like a cloud. The Tribal Council adhered to the

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schedule and pushed the process forward. All sides encouraged band approval of the plan.

The process revealed a piecemeal and reluctant government approach to the project, which could not be camouflaged as a well-intended fiscal strategy, and official explanations imploded. When asked how the government planned to build a community from the allocated capital, an upper ranking INAC official explained, “18.2 million was not intended to cover the costs of the entire community. The project was supposed to be one of cost sharing between Hydro, the Province and ourselves” (a premise apparently unknown to the planning group). Yet, when questioned as to why the Province could not cover the entire cost of a provincial road, he stated that “the Province has no obligation to contribute because it does not have a stake in the project. It gains nothing from building a reserve community. There are no rules for such cost-sharing.” In fact, the firm was instructed to include an estimate for the entire cost of the provincial road. The INAC representative expressed surprise at the Province’s eventual 40 percent contribution, stating, “I thought they (the Province) were quite generous.” Evidently, even the department was uncertain about this “cost-sharing plan” that likely emerged in the process of defending a limited budget rather than in a strategy for building a community.

The government instigated a new and generalized concept. The $18.2 million was now referred to as start-up funding, a term the project team gradually adopted. It sank in that more capital would be needed. The many subsequent meetings between the band and INAC predictably comprised negotiations for more funding to build the bare necessities of a community. A future of begging was planned.

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189 INAC official, Winnipeg, interview with author, January 2003.
"Experts" and Information:

The planning group was an assembly of experts: engineers, planners, environmental officers, program planners and capital planners. The experts hired experts whose reports also formed part of the final document. The group's primary focus and end result was the production of a 300-page document entitled the *Marcel Colomb Community Plan and 5-Year Capital Plan* containing charts, graphs, mathematical calculations and other information, a tangible record of data. The document's contents and format were defined by INAC's Terms of Reference sent out to firms at the beginning of the project. Throughout the process INAC controlled what the group produced or omitted. The department defined what characterized *community planning* by its control of the production of information and the transformation of data into a physical plan for a community.

The main "planning work" achieved by the project team was roadway and infrastructure engineering along with projected construction costs and twenty-year life cycle costs for three different settlement options. The plan also contains data pertaining to environment, population statistics and demographics. The remainder of the hefty document was generated by a process of "bulking up." Included are two design options eliminated in the second design meeting, along with their detailed cost breakdowns and the analysis of all three schemes used to select the preferred option. Information that forms parts of manuals, and is not usually purchased by clients, is also included, such as zoning for future buildings and other fill material. The language of the document is unnecessarily prescriptive, providing, for example, zoning guidelines without explanation. Standard lot type developments are enforced, without indicating how the guidelines can be adjusted to fit particular circumstances.

Information in the report is preliminary, amounting to a rough estimate of infrastructure and building costs. Crude cost estimates resulted from the lack of test holes to determine soil conditions. Subsurface conditions were generalized through air photo interpretation and site visits.

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190 Clients are often presented with options, then a process of elimination develops a preferred option. The end product is a refinement of one option. The discarded options and the process whereby the elimination process takes place is not what is being commissioned and so is usually extracted.

191 The report is also filled with excessive title pages, large diagrams (a wind rose requires a page of its own and a title page), and permits for the consultants, Land Titles information, a fruitless Manitoba Conservation search, a letter stating that Conservation has no information on First Nation Crown lands, a generic description of forestry regions for all of Canada and hydrology calculation diagrams and charts for the access road - a different contract.
Building costs were estimated from square footage costs for different construction types – e.g. wood frame or concrete block – found in design manuals. The “environmental assessment” is a general site description generated from a visual walk-through inspection and an interview with the coordinator and one band member. The plan’s many sections contain few findings and recommend more investigation. For example, the impact of Lynn Lake – only forty kilometers away – is a significant consideration for migrating wildlife on which many band members depend, but Lynn Lake’s contaminants are not mentioned. The archaeological report relies on an interview with an elder and a site visit limited by high water levels. It, too, recommends more investigation. A heavy reliance is placed on guidelines and manuals to create a noncustomized end product.

The document’s specificity came from its site description accomplished through air photo interpretation, visual inspection and interviews. Customization is derived through terrain analysis, enabling the design to fit micro site conditions. These physical elements suggest, by their limits, specific, economical arrangements for infrastructure.

The information band members helped to generate was transformed into “data” that were mapped. Headman John Colomb indicated wildlife patterns on the reserve, which was mapped. He identified high, dry locations that were buildable, drainage patterns, possible lagoon locations, and sites that should remain reserves. This too was mapped. The engineers engaged an archaeologist to determine the presence of archaeological sites. Elders provided historical information through storytelling and acted as guides to identify significant locations, which were mapped. Headman John Colomb and others provided an intimate knowledge of the land derived from long-term use that lent substance and specificity to the report. What the band helped to generate, however, it could not read. Their knowledge of the land was transformed into obscure and unfamiliar data in a language destined for departmental readings. Portions remain indecipherable except to municipal engineers. While some band members read the land with ease, most are illiterate. The document was not for their consumption.

The planning process favored measurable, easily retrievable information such as the physical properties of the site. Even design preferences turned into measurable data in chart-matrix form. Other types of information remained outside the planning process, particularly the specificity of the lives of the Marcel Colomb people. Such information was less measurable, less retrievable, and most importantly, was beyond the scope of what INAC commissioned. The band informed the plan mainly as numbers. An unbridgeable gap existed between the project team and the people for
whom they were intended to work, one that could not be overcome by a lone coordinator tasked with collecting people-specific data. Even the chief spoke of communication and information difficulties. "I have to go through the Tribal Council and INAC to get to the consultant, and the consultant has to go through INAC to get to me. When it [the plan] gets back to me it's different."\(^{192}\) Such was the nature of the information exchange between a small unorganized band and a large corporate-style engineering firm tasked to design a community that suited their needs.

\(^{192}\) Chief Andrew Colomb, Lynn Lake, conversation with author, October 2 2000.
Hughes Lake was a choice location for the Black Sturgeon Reserve because of previous occupation. Stories by band members and Mathias Colomb elders from Pukatawagan tell of the continuous use of the Hughes Lake site since the late 1800s. The archaeologist's map indicates four locations occupied between the 1890s and 1940s as well as a 1925 gravesite. Dominique Hart, a Mathias Colomb elder living at Pukatawagan, explained the regional significance of a large area surrounding Lynn Lake and including Hughes Lake. Mathias Colomb people hunted and trapped in the region including the Lynn Lake townsit until seven trappers' cabins were bulldozed and set ablaze with the discovery of mineral deposits. But mining only disrupted traditional harvesting activities, which did not cease. The Colomb family, which has formed the leadership of both the Mathias and Marcel Colomb bands, have continued their historic use of the area for trapping and fishing, and control the registered trapline block that surrounds and includes the reserve. The Hughes Lake site has meanings derived from long-term occupation.

The site's allure is also derived from its perceived distance from Lynn Lake's industrial devastation. The 5,000-acre reserve is surrounded by water on three sides. Hughes Lake forms the eastern and southern edge of the reserve and the Hughes River and Chepil Lake bound the reserve to the north and northwest. Both Chepil and Hughes lakes are part of the Hughes River system, originating in Reindeer Lake a hundred kilometers to the north. Band members are hopeful that the southward flow and a location upstream from Eldon and Cockeram lakes avoids the heavy metals from Lynn Lake mine tailings that local conservation officers, the town and the band agree, contaminate both Eldon and Cockeram lakes.¹⁰³

A high ridge runs northeasterly through the reserve along the southwest shore of Hughes Lake, and affords expansive views of the water. West of the ridge lie large areas of peat bog and muskeg interspersed with till ridges and rock outcrops. A recently established cemetery is situated at the southwest edge of the reserve overlooking Hughes Lake. A considerable number of band members already rest here, including the 1999 gravesite of Headman John Colomb's teenage daughter, tended with care.

¹⁰³ Cockeram and Eldon lakes, part of the Keewatin river system, and Hughes and Chepil lakes, part of the Hughes system all flow southward into the Churchill River drainage basin. They are part of the same watershed but are not connected. The Woodland Cree of northern Saskatchewan, from whom the Marcel Colomb and Mathias Colomb bands originated, lived along the Churchill River or the Mississippi — “Big Water” as they called it. They migrated along its waters from the Rockies to Hudson Bay, traversing the Lynn Lake region. Present-day Pukatawagan, “fishing place” in Cree, was a gathering place for hunting groups. It is from the Churchill River that these Cree derive their name, the Missinippi Cree or “Big River People.” (See Bill Hillman, “Pukatawagan part I, Pukatawagan Early Days” www.angelfire.com/trek/puk.)
The site is within the coniferous boreal forest region of Manitoba, containing black spruce, jack pine, mosses and lichen. Aspen, birch, white spruce and fir are also found, although less abundantly. Trees are small, and there is no commercial timber. Wildlife is common, including moose, rabbit, caribou, timber wolves, lynx, muskrat, beaver, bear, eagles, hawks, ducks and geese. The lake contains walleye, whitefish and pike, and sturgeon spawn in the Hughes River.

On this terrain the planners overlaid a set of physical structures. The arrangement arises from the site's constraints. Large central areas of the 5,000-acre site are unsuitable for construction due to the thickness of organic materials, poor surface drainage and a high water table. The community is logically located on the eastern ridgeline along Hughes Lake where the most continuous buildable land is found – till over bedrock.

A central five-kilometer road runs from the westerly reserve boundary east to the lake, and the community is located where this road meets the lake. The culmination of the road is the lift station and pumphouse, an inadvertent geometric focus for the community, reflecting the planning's engineering orientation. Following criticisms that all roads "lead to the pump house," the site was transformed into a park and community dock, in so doing creating conflicts between different uses at the lake. Two future residential subdivisions are planned as loops off the main road, with an equidistant, mostly detached pattern of housing according to the zoning guidelines. The elements of the reserve are strung along this road and tightly arranged for efficiency.

The constituents of the new planned community will be few: a water treatment facility, sewage lagoon, fourteen houses, one row house, hydro and telephone service. The plan does not assume core community facilities. People were asked what services the new town should provide, a survey resulting in a list of buildings all towns require and that planners usually plan without the need to poll a community: a fire station, general store, elementary school, health care facility, band office and maintenance garage. Necessities became "options." Band members will commute to a school, hospital, churches, Friendship Center, youth center, police detachment, bus depot, hotel, restaurant, retail stores, gas station, playgrounds, band office, bingo hall, recreation center, pharmacy, airport, post office and other facilities in Lynn Lake because they do not exist on the new reserve. A needed treatment facility is not projected in the optimistic $46 million capital plan. The Black Sturgeon plan is an incomplete settlement, given a suburban character by its omissions.

194 UMA Engineering Ltd., Marcel Colomb First Nation Community Plan and 5 Year Capital Plan, 18.
Two aspects of the new plan alter the power structure between the communities of Marcel Colomb and Lynn Lake. Band members will experience a drastic reduction in the level of service they presently receive, and an unplanned, dependent relationship with the town of Lynn Lake will emerge by necessity. (Even the use of Lynn Lake’s landfill site is currently being negotiated.) Lynn Lake’s facilities will continue to be used, but from afar, and band members will experience the uniquely suburban problem of access by car. With few people owning cars (fewer than five) the problem is exaggerated. Secondly, as band presence in town diminishes, so will the powers that accompany residency, such as voting rights. These two factors combine to reinstate the familiar historical power relations that have persisted between the two communities: dependency without residency. The Colomb band will again be “outsiders,” dependent on trips into town to access services unavailable in their own community.

“Leaving Lynn Lake” is a misnomer. Even housing will not be sufficient to enable a complete relocation of members. Given the report’s aggressive population growth rate of 2.5 percent, housing will be inadequate to meet future needs.  Neither would INAC’s yearly funding for 1 1/2 houses per year match these growth rates. An absence of services and of housing to relocate the entire band means that the band’s desire to leave Lynn Lake and to establish a place of their own will not be fully realized in the foreseeable future.

While the document is full of the “language” of development, the new community will have no economic base. Two sections of the plan document – “Needs and Requirements” and “Opportunities and Constraints” – mention economic development on reserve. One-half of page 25 in the “Needs and Requirements” section is dedicated to possible work-generating initiatives. Band members were asked to identify work opportunities on the reserve or in the surrounding area. Hunting and trapping, construction, commercial fishing, sport fishing, a hunting lodge, wild rice harvesting, logging, harvesting wild plants (blueberries, cranberries mushrooms), trail rides, firefighting, guiding, ecotourism, band management work, policing and natural resource management are listed. This list subsequently became part of the plan document under a section entitled “First Nations Issues,” but the feasibility of any of these options was not investigated. The document does not make recommendations to achieve the employment schemes envisioned by the band. Such recommendations were not part of the planner’s mandate.

A community survey was undertaken to establish “skill sets.” People were asked what skills they had and in what work they were presently engaged and another list was generated by survey including such

195 Ibid., 11-12. A 2.5 percent annual growth rate is projected for Manitoba status Indian population compared to 0.3 percent for other Manitobans.
things as cooking, welding, computers, day care work, guiding, logging, fishing, mining, carpentry, firefighting and business management. However, no plan emerged for using community skills. The only job creation discussed in planning sessions was a proposal to employ band members in the building of the community. The proposal will result in a handful of short-term, low-skilled, low-wage, laboring jobs such as tree cutting and rubbish removal that will begin and end with the project.\(^{196}\)

The planners relied solely on the band to generate information about resources and job creation. The recommendation for a lodge, for example, did not emerge from planning analysis but from polling the community. People were asked about their skills. They were asked about local resources, and they were asked about economic development ideas for the new reserve. These data were transformed into some of the many lists contained in the document, without any assessment of feasibility. People were involved in generating resource information to produce a document rather than to solve a problem.

A lodge is the only economic development initiative illustrated on the plan. Yet it is merely a concept sketched on the drawing and projected for year fifteen without government commitment. One INAC official expressed the steadfast view that "there's no way the government is going to fund a fishing lodge."\(^{197}\) No precedent exists for such spending, with most reserve capital dollars allocated for structural community elements such as schools and roads. A lodge would expand government involvement in reserve development beyond the provision of basic town services, and set new precedents. INAC officials frequently reiterated that once the capital for Black Sturgeon is exhausted, the infrastructure demands of sixty-one other Manitoba First Nations would have priority over any further developments at Black Sturgeon.

Apart from its sources of capital, the lodge's specifications, viability, workforce, and potential markets were not investigated. Even the lodge location has not been settled. The industry is competitive, and the geographic isolation of regional lodges is an important marketing tool. Many boast of their status as "the only lodge on the lake" and local lodge owners seek to control entire lakes in order to offer exclusive use rights. Isolation creates the exotic appeal of "uncharted Canadian getaways" demanded by foreign visitors, primary users of the industry. According to the Manitoba Association of Lodges and Outfitters, fly-in lodges reap more dollars than those accessible by road because of their isolation, thereby offering long-term benefits that outweigh higher start-up costs. Located at the end of the reserve, however, the Black Sturgeon lodge would compel users to cross the reserve community for access, and to share the lake with the

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\(^{196}\) The band’s inability of capitalizing on even short-term opportunities due to problems of alcoholism, lack of job training, limited skill sets and long-term unemployment is not a justification to omit job creation, but a reason to provide adequate social programs.

\(^{197}\) INAC official, Winnipeg, interview with author, February 22, 2002.
community. The report recommends an “extensive buffer zone” around the lodge “to protect the potential location...”, in so doing feebly addressing the need for isolation. The idea of the lodge resulted from a band survey of possible industries and is nonchalantly mentioned a few times in the report without a plan to bring it into being. It remains an image projected onto a hypothetical landscape, a simple circular form at the north end of the reserve.

Planning stops at the reserve boundary, beyond which most of the useful resources lie. Within the section entitled “Opportunities and Constraints,” intended to analyze the potentials and limits of a site in order to guide development, half a page is devoted to “Resource and Economic Development Opportunities.” Another list is provided of “special resource areas” requiring protection. It includes the burial ground, heritage sites, high-quality beach areas, cultural grounds area, high points and promontories, areas with aggregate potential, areas with steep slopes, areas with medicinal plants, areas with wildfowl significance and particular stands of trees with firewood, lumber or habitat potential to be identified by the First Nation. These resources are on the reserve; there is no analysis of regional opportunities.

The absurdity of this “planning border” becomes evident in the report’s various studies. Moose migration patterns are plotted on the 5,000-acre reserve site, while regional patterns are ignored. Wild rice, identified as a resource by 70 percent of band members interviewed, could not be mapped because it lay outside the reserve. Neither does the planning seek protection of land and resources around the reserve on which livelihoods might be based. The report lists trapping as a possible resource, for instance, and notes the prevalence of traditional harvesting. The “Registered Trapline System” was implemented in the 1940s by government to manage the fur harvest, and forty-two trapping districts exist in Manitoba within which traplines are assigned to individuals. Entire communities control registered blocks. Black Sturgeon sits within the registered trapline boundary of Pukatawagan, and is within the Colomb family’s trapline, which expands far beyond the reserve border. The family will continue to practice its traditional activities, but the plan affords no protection of a trapline that, under provincial jurisdiction, will be susceptible to encroachment.

Commercial fishing is a short-season, fall industry in the area. Although it is challenging work and presently competes with lodges and mining contaminants, the provincial Department of Conservation

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199 The remainder and the majority of this section is descriptive, describing details of the terrain, topography, building foundations, road construction, buried services, sewage lagoons, clay and aggregate resources, thermal considerations, soil type and moisture content, snow cover, climate, depth of frost penetration, design thermal gradients, lake water temperature, permafrost, hydrology, design flow in streams, water quality analysis, archaeological investigations, environmental assessment and wind. Traditional ecological knowledge comprises a half page.
granted ninety-two commercial fishing licenses within the Pukatawagan registered trapline area last year, and 150 licenses were assigned from Lynn Lake to the north. Pukatawagan has a fishermen's association that supports fishermen, and the region has many marketable species, such as whitefish, perch, walleye and pike. But Black Sturgeon's planning stops at the water's edge. While the band will control five thousand acres of waterfront land, it has no jurisdiction over the water. The lake is another domain. The Fisheries Branch of the Manitoba Department of Conservation confirms that Hughes Lake has commercial fishing potential, but the lake is currently designated "recreational." A parcel of provincial Crown land with six seasonal-use cottages adjoining the reserve accounts for Hughes Lake's designation. The land is barely mentioned in the report and is incorrectly described as band-owned. Owners are townspeople, one American and more recently, Headman John Colomb. The cabins are accessed by boat from a landing off Provincial Road 391 and stand on the shore directly south of the reserve. The cottages have been in existence since 1986 and dictate the lake's recreational zoning. Unless those seasonal uses change, provincial legislation prevents band members from commercial fishing in the lake. The band's lone commercial fisherman does not currently harvest fish from Hughes Lake, but is flown to Dunsearth Lake to the north.

The report does not mention larger economic potentials in the surrounding territory. According to the provincial Department of Transportation, a Memorandum of Understanding established between the governments of Nunavut and Manitoba has been signed to establish cooperation and trade between the two territories. A northern transportation corridor is currently at the study stage and the province plans to examine other possible linkages. Extending Provincial Highway 391 to the northern border of Manitoba is proposed by local communities.

Russia's ambassador to Canada, Lloyd Axworthy Canada's former Foreign Minister, Manitoba's Premier Gary Doer and many others are promoting the establishment of trade links between Murmansk, Russia and Canada through the Port of Churchill. The prospect of global warming opening up the port year round has generated international interest in it and other arctic routes for international trade and specifically

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200 The Manitoba Department of Conservation is responsible for allocations of use and for the granting of fishing licenses. It disallows conflicting uses. A lake with a lodge would be classified recreational, and commercial fishing would be disallowed. Such allocations are determined by prior use.
201 UMA Engineering Ltd., Marcel Colomb First Nation Community Plan and 5 Year Capital Plan, 4.
202 Goldsands Lake is an example. For many years a single commercial fisherman had been fishing the lake and it was designated a commercial fishery. An individual recently purchased the fisherman's equipment. A lodge was developed. The lake is currently allocated for lodge use and sport fishing. Commercial fishing will be disallowed unless the lodge is purchased by a commercial fisherman.
for transporting oil from oil-rich Russia to the United States. Omni-TRAX a U.S. transportation giant has already purchased the port in 1997 and owns the rail line from Churchill to The Pas. Both proposals mean development potentials for the region at large.

In the absence of mining, tourism is cited as the best potential for regional development by Brad Stoneman, director of Northwest Futures Development Corporation (NWFDC) stationed in Lynn Lake. The corporation was established in 1986 after the closure of the nearby Fox mine to investigate second industries. It works with twelve surrounding communities, and chiefs and mayors form the board of directors. "Opportunities exist if you have a trained labor force," says Stoneman. "Aboriginal guides are highly knowledgeable and currently work seasonally in the industry including members of the Marcel Colomb band". The corporation even offers guide training and other support for business development.

Lodges and outfitters are common, nine in the Lynn Lake area alone and one only eleven air miles away from Lynn Lake. "Notigi Portage Outfitters" immediately south is owned by the Nelson House band, but only a handful of Manitoba lodges are owned by Aboriginal people, although they are used heavily as guides. The lodges draw American and European adventure-seekers and are prosperous. In 2003-04 the province granted 154 lodge licenses and 356 outfitting licenses. These businesses sold US$17 million worth of hunting packages, US$34 million worth of fishing packages, and reaped a total economic benefit of US$238 million for the province.

The Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association projects a growth in ecotourism, although the industry is currently slow. Churchill is one exception due to its exotic wildlife (polar bears, beluga whales, birds) and the northern lights. Aboriginal tourism is also a growing sector, and at least one local individual in the Lynn Lake region is trying to generate an income from trapline packages, enabling visitors to experience the trapping lifestyle. Selling lifestyle that relies on nature-based experience such as dog-team riding to witness the northern lights is uncharted but promising territory.

Hughes Lake is uniquely positioned to be a competitor in the lodge industry if it can maintain a degree of remoteness. It is presently accessed by boat off Provincial Highway 391. The reserve's proximity to Lynn Lake and accessibility by highway to the Lynn airport would cut the transportation costs of fly-in.

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203 See, Teotonio, " 'Why we need and 'Arctic bridge,' " and "Time ripe for Arctic trade..."
204 The Northwest Futures Development Corporation published an optimistic report on regional tourism in 2002.
205 "Outfitters" provide hunting guides and equipment. Some are full service and include accommodation and meals but only for up to eight persons. Facilities that provide accommodation and meals over this scale are considered "lodges."
lodges. According to the lodges association, outfitting, lodges and tourism are both supplanting and competing with traditional harvesting activities on which added pressure is placed. It estimates that $3 to $5 million can establish a fly-in lodge.

Local commercial enterprises are also available. Lynn Lake’s Esso and Shell stations have recently closed due to reduced sales, and the bulk fuel business was available for purchase during the planning of Black Sturgeon. The communities of Lac Brochet, Brochet, and Tadoule Lake to the north rely on bulk fuel from the town for diesel-generated power as no Hydro landlines exist to these communities. A fish processing plant at Leaf Rapids is another economic opportunity. It is used only to pack fish for processing in Winnipeg.

There are also constraints beyond the planner’s boundary that will influence the reserve’s future. Lynn Lake pollutants are the most immediate and obvious. The report’s Environmental Assessment misses the territory’s main concern, the effect of the mine tailings on the environment and on migrating wildlife. Some band members harvest caribou for food in the northern Brochet area, and many live on a wild meat diet. The possible contamination of moose meat would threaten the band’s food supply.

The Manitoba government continues to encourage mining and other development in what is still considered Manitoba’s “underdeveloped” North. In 2003 the Province began the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program (MEAP). Loans of up to $500,000 are offered in an activity area that includes Lynn Lake in order to boost mining activity. The program allows exploration and development in the immediate vicinity of the reserve, activity that can threaten subsistence lifestyles and recreate Lynn Lake’s devastation. Opportunities may also exist for responsible co-management that would enable Marcel Colomb to benefit from such development.

Unfortunately, these linkages between inside and outside, between a townsite and a surrounding region, were not made. Planning disregarded the inventory of possibilities beyond the reserve. Instead, the planner’s drawings and calculations are bounded by the fixed reserve boundary, and even within the reserve it disregards opportunities for sustenance. The community plan is an illustration of a town. It provides a location for residency without livelihood.

The plan’s lack of provision for employment is equivalent to a lack of acknowledgment of the Marcel Colomb people. Marcel Colomb’s illegibility surfaced in other ways. Jobs alone will not solve the band’s many social and economic problems, which require programs and facilities. Nor does the plan acknowledge the activities in which people are presently engaged. It also ignores the subtleties of living in
Lynn Lake and the significance of sites such as the friendship center, church, youth center and school, over which wars are still being waged.

Schools are central to community life on reserves and are particularly important where no other recreational facilities exist for children. They are also sites First Nations communities have reclaimed, turning back their once assimilationist goals\textsuperscript{207} – a process assisted through organizations such as the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Center. Yet there will be no school building at Black Sturgeon for at least fifteen years.

The band will continue to use the West Lynn Heights school from a distance, altering an existing relationship for the worse. The school has been a site of controversy over the treatment of band children and some small inroads have been made. As band presence in the town dissolves, however, it is uncertain how the current problem of parental influence, and the questionable treatment of band children, will be eased. Children will also encounter the additional obstacle of transportation, and current levels of absenteeism will likely increase as children rely on daily bus service.

Lynn Lake’s recreational areas are currently off limits to children. The recreational center with gym, pool, kitchen and bowling alley, is opened solely for NASA scientists, and is unavailable to the locals.\textsuperscript{208} Playgrounds have deteriorated into overgrown shambles except for the schoolyard, which is locked after 4:00 p.m. Lack of opportunities are intensifying the problems of vulnerable band children. A number of band teens have committed suicide in recent years.

A youth drop-in center combined with an enforced curfew has only partially answered the problems associated with depression, feelings of hopelessness and uselessness, and difficult home environments. A heroic group of band volunteers, “The Night Hawks,” led by a band member, Floyd Linklater, have dedicated themselves to keeping children occupied and safe, and with little a capital from the Manitoba Justice Department, the center has been a success. It is filled with games, offers lessons of various sorts, and is often found filled with children from 4 to 10 p.m. The Friendship Center with its social worker, youth worker and community development worker is another site offering significant social support.

Bingo is a regular social event held at the community hall and at Lynn Lake churches. Both offer places for community gathering and socializing. Band members also regularly attend church, for some a place of healing and guidance. Months after the planning was complete, Headman John Colomb observed architectural drawings for a chapel in my office. He remarked, “this is what we need, a church for the people

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\textsuperscript{207} See Milloy \textit{A National Crime}... for a history of Native people and the residential school system in Canada.

\textsuperscript{208} The town gives operation costs as reasons for its restricted use of this facility.
to go to at Hughes." I was surprised when he began scanning the Black Sturgeon plan to locate one. John asked me why the planners had omitted a church and suggested I communicate his request. (Band members were often reluctant to outwardly criticize the planner's plan and when occasionally they did, were surprised when their commentary was heeded.) The various unseen practices of a community struggling with its own development did not appear on the planner's drafting table.

John plans to reintroduce the youth to traditional life-ways, one of his goals for Black Sturgeon. At sixteen years of age his father Marcel Colomb gave him a set of traps and sent him to Hughes Lake to make a living. He initially lived on his own under a shelter of spruce branches. "Sometimes I would have to get up in the morning just like an animal. When you get up you have to look for your own food to find what you could eat," he explained. His life with animals and the land overlays every conversation. Setting his nets in -50 °C temperatures, encounters with timber wolves, feeding the foxes around his cabin, and hunting marten, mink, moose, caribou, rabbit and distributing the produce were the subjects of just a few of his most relished stories. Animals provided sustenance and a belief system, and he still traps when he is strapped for wage labor.

John worked seasonally trapping, commercial fishing, and on the CNR rail, moving from one industry to another as opportunities emerged. Survival depended on flexibility, practicality and a knowledge of the territory that is illustrated by his still astonishing ability to take inventory of the surrounding resources, read maps and interpret the land at almost any scale. John has a home in Lynn Lake, one at Hughes Lake, and his family lives at Pukatawagan. His home is not a particular location but a region and his sustenance and traditions derive from an expansive relationship with the land. Importantly, Hughes Lake was home, and home was a place of work.
During the planning process John knew where the best building locations lay, where the access road should be built, and the general location of infrastructure elements. He knew how the waterways interlaced the land. But his knowledge and practicality were not the fundamental force behind the plan. Nor was the historic use of the land as a place of sustenance. John’s traditionalism, based on a relationship to resources, was traded for one based on a defined mathematical space and on a display of “cultural” revivalism. Traditional ecological knowledge emerged as remnants in the report.\textsuperscript{209} The Marcel Colomb people remained outside the planning process, except in bits and pieces refocused through an engineering lens to answer INAC’s Terms of Reference.

\textsuperscript{209} Traditional ecological knowledge became a description of animal habitat on-reserve and registered trapline boundaries. It accounts for part of page 58 of the Marcel Colomb plan report.
The overall smoothness of the Black Sturgeon reserve plan ignores the band’s realities. Band members prefer a less dense pattern of housing, for example, but as John observed, “the planners drew it that way because it’s cheaper.” The broad lines of planning constructed an apparently tidy order into which a chaos of circumstances must fit. It is a plan without a client: a drawing without the intention of its inhabitants, and most of all, without peripheral vision. The “community plan” is a plan to spend allocated capital according to department standards. It reflects INAC’s budget requirements rather than people and context.

I wrote a letter to the planning committee outlining the long-term dependencies designed into the community and asked that they be addressed and incorporated into the planning document. They were not.
Conclusions

Black Sturgeon’s planners produced what Canada commissioned. Bounded by INAC’s Terms of Reference and led by a group of municipal engineers, a geographic space emerged that was overlain with efficient infrastructure arrangements. Planning was reduced to engineering. The process cemented the department’s definition of a reserve community, a set of physical elements. As the logic of engineering prevailed, large problems were bypassed for small ones. Building community implies building the means for its survival as opposed to building buildings. But the problem of infrastructure superseded those of sustenance. Black Sturgeon is a provision of things rather than a provision of mechanisms from which the physical elements of community would emerge. So it will struggle to find the mechanisms of survival.

Black Sturgeon is a typical reserve, an allocation of a limited acreage in the band’s traditional area. Space has been constricted as old boundaries are replaced with new ones. The elements provided are few: housing, a band office and roads. The rest is intended to follow, likely under another elected government. By the time the school is built, the housing will require repairs, beginning a perpetual process of maintenance, replacement and catching up. It is a tentative space awaiting completion and its future is left to fate, founded on a shaky belief that beginning a project may bring future government commitment.

Black Sturgeon illustrates the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs’ reluctant approach to planning reserves, as the plan defers to later governments. Piecemeal commitments coincide with each new government as Black Sturgeon’s community planning is passed on. The process is intended to pacify people rather than to solve problems. It is an act of appeasement, not of design.

Black Sturgeon’s capital planning means spending capital rather than investing capital, and spending on physical elements only. Like most reserve building, the majority of its dollars are dedicated to achieving minimum shelter. INAC’s lengthy list of reserve projects from 1999-2003 boasts of spending $300 million on 102 projects. Thirty-seven of these were dedicated to water and sewer, forty-three to schools and teacherages, and nineteen to access and poor drainage. Many projects were repairs to poorly built, aging facilities or badly needed facilities. It is the type of spending governments do as a form of foreign aid. ¹²⁰

¹²⁰ School and teacherages project included many expansions, building and repairs, feasibility studies, repairing roofs, changing heating and ventilation systems, and temporary and portable classrooms. Road building included winter roads, roads, landfill, soil remediation and drainage. A group of CMHC houses at Dauphin River Reserve were built with sump pumps too low. The Fairford and Rousseau River reserves are built entirely on floodplains where basements regularly flood, creating health hazards. The Opaskweyak school in The Pas was too small when it was built because of incorrectly calculated floor area ratios. Mathias Colomb
Such spending encourages and maintains a climate of predatory consulting firms from which services are bought. Building nonsustainable communities is of both short- and long-term benefit to those awarded the contracts. Any type of experience working with Aboriginals favors a firm to win more contracts, a snowball effect that produces the non-Aboriginal Aboriginal expert. Consultants seek steady relations with the department, and some firms employing air-photo interpreters, geotechnical engineers, architects, municipal engineers and even archaeologists have dedicated personnel specializing in Aboriginal projects to capitalize on such spending. Incomplete, dependent communities encourage a reliance on outsiders for further building.

The context in which Black Sturgeon was produced – like the treaty-making era 130 years ago – depended on disadvantage. The uneven distribution of power between government, consultant and band enabled an autocratic planning approach that enforced band compliance. Compliance was also secured by the unfortunate state of other reserves competing for services. Wretched conditions amounted to political leverage and the planning process became a negotiation process.

The building of Black Sturgeon is one example, but it is significant. When governments build communities they follow policies or make new ones, either maintaining the status quo or setting new precedents. But Black Sturgeon is not precedent-setting.

Black Sturgeon’s planning process was partly impeded by Canada’s dual government structure, with the federal government bearing a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations through treaties, and provincial governments controlling resources. The constitutional barriers to reserve planning were cemented in the 1930 Land Transfer Act, transferring most Manitoba lands to the province. Without the province at the planning table, essential resources bordering Black Sturgeon were virtually off-limits to the planning group. Neither could the band’s existing use of these resources be afforded protection from encroachment. And although prior to the Act bands had little control of resources surrounding their borders, the new act helped to restrict any fundamental change in reserve planning. Without economic development opportunities, Black Sturgeon maintains standard reserve building strategies.

The project team was experienced in building reserve communities but this experience was also a liability. With all its fissures and cracks, the plan was approved. Embedded assumptions about what constitutes a reserve influenced the plan’s broad approval. Economic dependency is acceptable because joblessness is part of reserve life. That the community will have to wait indefinitely for basic services is

has water and sewer system catastrophes, and a school with mold and ventilation problems was recently closed. Many other examples exist across Manitoba.
acceptable because waiting, too, is part of reserve life. In other words, reserves are unique and do not require the elemental constituents of other communities to make them work. Unemployment and economic dependency have been naturalized. Black Sturgeon's boundedness, lack of facilities, and tentative character has been "approved" exactly because together they replicate the patterns of existing reserve space. Consequently, Black Sturgeon's planning sacrifices an opportunity to rechart reserve development. Barely off the drawing board, the reserve has a familiarity, sadly derived from its omissions.

Hovering between Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids, Black Sturgeon's location exaggerates difference. Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake emerged out of industry and jobs, in contrast to Black Sturgeon's suburban status and economic dependency. The death of both industrial communities also stands in contrast to the ongoing residency of the people who migrated along the Churchill River from Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan. Black Sturgeon is a place to which people are committed and were living long before the development of either industrial center. There has been an unlikely constant to their occupation and the community remains optimistic and committed to the new plan. John says the new road is "beautiful." "Finally we are building it, a place of our own. We have been waiting for so many years."

Another engineering consultant was hired to "develop" the engineer's plan for an additional $300,000. John has asked for a better lagoon location. By January 2004, $8 million had been spent of the original capital to build the community.111 No infrastructure has been laid, and $10 million remain to develop the reserve and maintain the band at Lynn Lake. The capital will not build the elements identified in the Community Plan and Capital Plan document, and negotiating for an increase has become the burden of incoming band councils.

In 2003, Marcel Colomb was granted an outstanding Treaty Land Entitlement of 17,000 acres. In keeping with INAC guidelines, a committee of four trustees outside the council is required to select the land. Headman John Colomb is attempting to coordinate efforts and discourage land selections in random locations of little benefit. An expansion to the reserve design is already planned. John is planning to build a

111 Eight million dollars has been spent on pre-design of the provincial access road, construction and detailed design of the access road, pre-design and design development of the community plan, Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Telephone System lines to the reserve boundary and band operating costs for four years (access road $2,335,000, Hydro line $1,124,600, infrastructure design consulting fees – still incomplete – in excess of $473,000).
gas station at the junction of the reserve and Highway 391 to create work. He has asked me to write a proposal.

I asked John if he is designing his own house, to which he replied earnestly, "I am going to have a mansion. It's going to be built by CMHC." All the houses at Black Sturgeon will be built by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, initiating another wave of government design.
This essay, like the last, is about architectural production. The first part describes the evolution of government housing on-reserve. Information was gathered from conversations about reserve housing with community members, local housing councilors, and government representatives as well as sources on the history of government programs. The second part describes some of the current reserve housing strategies of the federal government's housing corporation, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), gleaned from two conferences which I attended in 2000 and 2001.

The evolution of government housing 1959-2003

The reserve house evolved in a mere fifty years, replacing a variety of traditional architectures across Manitoba. This change in housing design, production, and attitudes among Aboriginal people occurred in the context of a larger socioeconomic transformation. The introduction of government housing on Manitoba reserves in the 1950s and early 1960s emerged only after a significant decline in flourishing and diverse Native economies. In the context of severe economic failures in the 1870s, Aboriginal people negotiated treaties with the government of Canada, instigating the process of settlement that led eventually to new housing.\textsuperscript{212} Notably, reserve architecture arose out of harsh economic realities that encouraged government intervention in housing rather than out of a long, evolutionary process of traditional or vernacular house design. The government house accompanied a lifestyle that included schooling and Christian instruction, both already promoted by the state.\textsuperscript{213}

Prior to reserve settlement and its new architecture, Manitoba bands moved with economic opportunities, and housing, according to elders, was built when and where it was needed. As late as the 1950s many bands remained engaged in seasonal subsistence activities that required quicklymade, semipermanent dwellings. Housing comprised a combination of temporary structures such as wigwams and earthen dwellings as well as more permanent log cabins. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs provided items such as windows, shingling and flooring for log cabins, a type of housing that remained prevalent up until the early 1960s. Most importantly, Native people built these dwellings, and the primary design decisions were made locally with little government intervention or regulation.

\textsuperscript{212} See Tough, As their Natural Resources Fail..., for the economic history of Manitoba Native bands from 1870 to 1930.

\textsuperscript{213} See Tobias, “Protection, Civilization…Policy.”
After World War II — and partly in response to the Aboriginal war contribution — the socioeconomic conditions of Native people became a national concern. Respiratory diseases and high rates of infant mortality were prevalent. The link between housing and tuberculosis, and the rising costs of health care, compelled Canada to seek improvements in Aboriginal living standards.\textsuperscript{214} The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs began its first large-scale Aboriginal housing program in 1959, targeting the Inuit. An Inuit house rental program was also instigated in 1966 with the government acting as landlord.

These early housing programs were accompanied by an aggressive educational campaign intended to teach Inuit families how to use their houses. Numerous childlike picture books produced and circulated by the educational branch of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs are evidence. Educational material also introduced the concept of rent. As these book titles suggest — \textit{New Ideas About Houses} and \textit{Living in the New Houses}\textsuperscript{215} — the houses propagated new ideas about living. At the heart of the new housing program were plans for a fundamental shift in Inuit lifestyle. The program was an exercise in acculturation.

\textit{Living in the New Houses} is a blueprint of the rituals of daily living and is filled with value-laden and culturally specific commentary about family life and its meanings. It begins by explaining, “Eskimos used to eat a great deal of fresh meat and raw fish which kept them healthy and strong. Now Eskimos are getting less food from the land and buying more store food. The Adult Educator will show you how to choose and prepare good nourishing meals for your family, using both land and store foods.”\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Living in the New Houses} instructs people about how to shop for food, plan meals, prepare food, store food and clean a kitchen. It refers to the publication \textit{Care and Use of Household Equipment}, a maintenance and use guide for basic household items.\textsuperscript{217}

The use of both space and time is part of the new house “package.” Eating rituals are recommended beginning with a detailed illustration of a place setting, complete with cup, saucer and serviette. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are also introduced as new concepts fitting for life in the

\textsuperscript{214} See, Thomas and Thompson, \textit{Eskimo Housing as ...Change}, 9, Carter, \textit{Evolution of Northern Housing Policy}, and Tobias, “Protection, Civilization...Policy.”


\textsuperscript{216} Needham, \textit{Living in the New Houses}, 3. Eskimo is the term given to the Inuit by European explorers meaning “raw meat eaters.” It is rarely used in Canada today.

\textsuperscript{217} Needham, \textit{Care and Use of Household Equipment}.
Most people enjoy sitting down at a table to eat food. If you do not do this now, try setting a place at the table for each person in your family. They may enjoy having a special place where they always sit. (8)

Now that more Eskimos are working regular hours at jobs about the settlement and children are going to school, you might find it helpful to set special times for eating meals. (25)

Try to have everyone in the family sit down together to eat meals....Set a time for meals and let the family know you will be expecting them at that time. (30-31)

Families are better rested if there are separate bedrooms for sleeping...Children need separate bedrooms from their parents. School children need a place to do homework. A warm bedroom is a good place. As children become better educated they must spend more time reading and studying. (51)

Details about personal hygiene and housecleaning are provided such as removing fingerprints from walls, providing separate towels for everyone and even waxing floors that were likely plywood or linoleum. People were instructed that beds "should be made each morning after getting up," and that layering and overlapping sheets for tidiness and cleanliness was essential.

The house came with an Adult Educator who, the booklet states, "will be telling you more about sanitation."  

218 Needham, Living in the New Houses, 53.  
219 Ibid., 61.
The books' instructions fuse health and western cultural practices, illustrating the housing program's dual purpose of controlling disease while instigating social change. The new government house brought specific norms that Inuit people were expected to adopt, in so doing restructuring both time and space. The publication's very language emphasized the foreign status of the house imposed on the Inuit social and cultural landscape. Many officials, including an Adult Educator, the Housing Association, an Area Administrator and the Department of National Health and Welfare, were listed as resources on which to call for assistance with house use. The new house was a mystical and complicated structure, the use of which required guidance from experts.

The Department sold houses directly to wage-earning Inuit families. By 1965 more than eight hundred Inuit families signed agreements expressing an interest in purchasing homes, but those who purchased houses earned only enough to buy small houses. The first units were matchbox size, one-bedroom, 26-square-meter structures, manufactured in the South and imported. Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate heating and construction remained common. Due to the cost of houses, heating and other factors, more than 50 percent of families fell behind on payments, and 50 percent made only one small payment.

Social science researchers D. K. Thomas and C. T. Thompson, working for the Department, were soon to criticize the housing program, recording its clash with Inuit lifestyle. The new houses removed almost all the traditional responsibilities of women in their homes. They also lacked special areas for cutting and storing meat, and working on machinery such as Ski-Doos. "Seals are now stored in the bathtubs and cut up in the living room area. Ski-Doos are repaired indoors and the dining table is used as a workbench...Eskimos have yet to adopt Canadian standards of bedroom morality concerning sleeping arrangements." The researchers also noted a general failure to consult with people about aspects of house design. In fact, this early government housing strategy came with the assumptions that traditional Inuit lifestyle was unfit and required civilizing.

In 1966 the Department implemented its first large-scale program intended to eliminate the backlog of reserve housing. A federal plan emerged with three components: a subsidy program, an Indian on-reserve housing program and a band-administered program. The subsidy program

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222 Ibid., 14-15.
began at $7000 per unit in 1966 and climbed to $10,000 in 1973, to $12,000 in 1977 and to $22,125 in 1980, where it has remained. The Department has maintained that the subsidies were never intended to cover the entire cost of construction, but, strapped for additional dollars, communities built entire homes with the small grants. The result was overcrowding in small, poorly constructed dwellings. Still, these early structures carried no mortgages, and the people who lived in them paid no rents or mortgages. Some never have.

The “Indian On-Reserve Housing Program” was a CMHC loan program designed for home repair, and a band-administered program that used the band’s yearly capital allocation for house construction and repair. Together, the programs enabled the construction of a handful of homes annually in most communities, but not enough to meet the rate of band population growth or to satisfy the backlog they were intended to resolve. Approximately 17,000 units were built nationally in the following decade.

At the time of these early programs, government “Indian agents” located in every community were responsible for running the affairs of every band, and housing would have been an expansion of the parameters of government responsibility and control. For the first time it was being established that, “for one, INAC was building houses, and, secondly, councils and individuals need not take responsibility for the provision of shelters....The template for Aboriginal housing was set and controlled by people other than the First Nation people, and continuing and revised programs have generally been built on this foundation.

The 1980s was a time of devolution as the Department moved to relax its comprehensive power over communities, and the regulation and surveillance of reserve housing stock was transferred to local authorities. In the event of vacancies, for instance, decision-making for new occupants lay with bands, thereby inciting a local clamour of families on waiting lists. While evictions and forced moves were practically nonexistent, it was understood that housing assignment remained the business of elected councils. Occupant files enabled bands to keep track of requests for housing and repairs, loan payment history, housing conditions, recurring episodes of vandalism and other information needed to evaluate conditions and make housing allocations. Bands also began to increase their surveillance of homes to curb repeated repairs that drained

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223 See Brant, Successful Housing... Case Studies.
224 Carter, Evolution of a Northern Housing Policy, 20.
225 Brant, Successful Housing... Case Studies, 2-3.
yearly funds. Computerized photo databases are the newest trend in administration. Councils became regulatory mechanisms, and some even adopted INAC's restrictive attitudes towards local design.

Since 1983 all DIAND subsidized housing was to be built according to National Building Code standards, but inadequate financing and lack of inspection meant that in a majority of cases houses were not built according to these regulations.

With housing administration left to band councils, the reserve house fused with community politics, and backlogs tightened local tensions. Unpopular housing decisions that may have been good for a community in the long term were hampered by fear of immediate community backlash – a problem exacerbated by two-year council terms. Housing dollars also became a vehicle for vote buying. Importantly, band members began to view local administrators as one link in a long chain of bureaucrats who controlled, regulated, restricted and allocated housing. Community leaders became the local face of government policy, and often bore the brunt of housing frustration. Housing issues began to foster intense community cleavages. “People are very angry. Some people come to the band office almost every day to see if they are getting a house. Sometimes they are very upset and we get the blame. It's a difficult job,” stated a weary housing councilor.²²⁶

Transferring housing management from the federal government to the Chief and Council brought little change to the nature of the band house or to the responsibility of home owners. The common property status of houses and land disabled private liquidation of band assets through a housing market and essentially protected Aboriginal land from flowing into non-Aboriginal hands, but the system had its drawbacks. The band-owned house juxtaposed with individual rights to housing complicated the relationship between people, band councils and homes. Responsibilities for home maintenance and rents, for example, were routinely shifted to band governments and remain significant problems for some bands pressured into repairing doorknobs and garbage can lids. Usually, poor home maintenance was limited to a few families; still some band budgets were drained by recurring repairs and the desire of councils to care for those most in need. Some bands encountered an additional problem of people moving away and selling their houses to other

members for quick cash, only to return and demand a new home as a band member "right." The standardization of government-built housing reminded everyone of the common property status of the reserve house and the interchangeability of its occupants.

Although not a widespread practice, some bands issued "Certificates of Possession" to document the respect that exists between band administrations and a family's ownership rights to a house and to encourage good home husbandry. The certificate only formalized long accepted practices such as passing homes to the next generation, and it is still the closest facsimile of a land title on-reserve. Even so, people could not retrieve personal investments in homes by selling, use their home as collateral for loans or move the house off reserve. (Obtaining home insurance was also nearly impossible for on-reserve dwellings with difficult access to roads and emergency vehicles, and high rates of vandalism.)

By 1980 Canada had shifted the delivery of its reserve housing programs from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to the government's housing corporation, Canada Mortgage and Housing (CMHC). The origins of this Crown corporation reveal some of the approaches it would later take towards Aboriginal housing. Prior to 1945, the government of Canada assumed little responsibility for providing housing to Canadians, but two world wars and the Depression brought mounting public pressures for Canada to house returning soldiers and to create greater housing access for Canadians. CMHC, formed in 1945, initially built thousands of units for soldiers. A Central Mortgage Bank, which never materialized, was an ancestor of CMHC and illustrates the corporation's early origins as a lender. The ideology of the corporation evolved from emergency housing initiatives and from the need to provide housing loans. CMHC provides loans and grants, conducts research and education and manages government money invested in housing. It is both landlord and lender. The corporation has also been responsible for administering the National Housing Act, legislation that outlines the parameters of government housing loans. By 1992 CMHC had $10 billion in assets from fifty years of building.

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227 Waykaykan is a Hollow Water band company established to assist with home repair and is one solution a band has found to keeping homes within band assets. It creates a fund by collecting rent and using it to repair homes. When people want to move off-reserve the company buys the homes. There are 20 Waykaykan homes on the Hollow Water reserve.

228 See Anderson, Housing Policy In Canada.

229 The National Housing Act is an act to "promote the construction of new houses, the repair and modernization of existing houses, and the improvement of living conditions" (The National Housing Act). Generally it outlines the guidelines whereby loan agreements are entered into with the corporation for the purpose of housing construction and repair.
The corporation's mandate expanded to include Aboriginal groups during the 1980s when band
subsidies and capital dollars were failing to meet rising construction costs and population growth.
By 1985 reserve-housing backlogs were severe. The 1991 census revealed that 65 percent of
reserve houses in Canada fell below one of the standards of adequacy, suitability, and affordability:
71 percent of on-reserve Aboriginal people lived in such houses, 31 percent of these houses were
crowded and 25 percent did not have working bathrooms. Although on-reserve housing tends to be
newer than the Canadian average – the majority were built after 1965 – by 1991 39 percent were in
need of repair. "On-reserve housing below standard is concentrated from Ontario west to Alberta,
and peaks in Manitoba at 74 percent of the stock. Between three-quarters and four-fifths of the
people living on-reserve in these regions reside in these dwellings."^30

While Aboriginal households are generally larger than the Canadian average, the on-reserve median income according to the 1996 census is only 46 percent that of non-Aboriginals.\(^{231}\) The problem is worsened in the North by the high cost of goods and services imported from outside communities. Overcrowding, inappropriate design and dependence on outside sources for repairs also contribute to poor housing.

To solve housing demands, bands began building homes with loans. Most were restricted from direct borrowing, as lenders could not acquire title to a home in the event of loan defaults. Neither could banks expropriate reserve lands that are held in trust by the Crown. CMHC assumed the role of primary lender through a unique process. Its loan is secured by way of a "Ministerial Guarantee" issued by Indian and Northern Affairs.

The department allocates yearly capital to each band for on-reserve building projects, an amount determined by criteria such as membership, size and location. A Ministerial Guarantee is an assurance from the department that funds would be extracted from this pool to pay the corporation or any other financial institution in the event of loan defaults. By underwriting housing mortgages, if individual families do not comply with rental agreements, capital is simply recovered from the band's yearly allocation, allowing the corporation to operate in an economically risk-free environment. The department's role is cosigner for a band, offering loan security to lenders by using a band's own capital. With local management transferred to bands and federal management transferred to CMHC, INAC's main role in housing moved to issuing Ministerial Loan Guarantees.

Loans are established through three CMHC programs. The "Loan Insurance Program," or "Section-10 Housing," enables the corporation to cosign loans from other lenders, and defaults are paid by way of a Ministerial Guarantee. This program is not widely used. The "Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program" or "RRAP Housing" is a loan for the repair of existing homes, a portion of which is forgivable. It has been the main vehicle for repairing mold problems and for accessibility retrofitting, and also requires a Ministerial Guarantee for defaults. It too has not been widely used.

The "Non-Profit On-Reserve Housing Program," also known as "Section-95 Housing," has been the government's biggest reserve housing program for new construction. Borrowing allows bands to build more houses in one year than their capital allocation would permit and has become

\(^{231}\) Drost and Richards, C. D. Howe Institute, Commentary.
the main solution to a widespread housing backlog. Through this program bands build rental houses with an expectation that individual families will repay the loan through rent. The system is confusing for some who are uncertain if they are paying rent or a mortgage. Due to poverty and strongly held beliefs that housing is a treaty right, rental payment defaults often arise. The department then pays the loan through the Ministerial Guarantee. The entire yearly capital allocation of some bands is extracted for housing payments, and reserve dollars travel from one arm of government to another.

The Indian Affairs Department and CMHC have generated house designs required for loan approval and depicted them in regularly-produced documents such as *Rural and Native Housing Program: Approved House Plans*. Even when building supply companies, project management companies, or designers were engaged to provide house designs, these had to meet with CMHC design guidelines which, according to local design firms, have become more stringent.

Just a small glimpse of Roseau River reserve's Section 95 housing. An even wider angle lens is required to capture this "programmed" landscape.

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232 Canada, *Rural... Approved House Plans*. 
in the last fifteen years. The corporation was both lender and designer.

During the 1980s and 1990s the Section-95 program grew exponentially with a surge of new home building financed mainly by the corporation. The older subsidies with which bands built a handful of homes debt-free were now used as the equity contribution for loans. Today Section-95 is the largest pool of capital available for on-reserve housing. Although 56 percent (34 out of 62) of Manitoba First Nations did not qualify for Ministerial Guarantees in 2003 because of bankruptcy, third-party management, receivership, or too small allocations, the Manitoba budget for 2002-2003 CMHC Section-95 housing was $25 million, 21 percent of the corporation’s national budget for the program. Section-95 homes account for 50 percent of all homes in Easterville (Chemawawin) reserve, 70 percent at Roseau River and 75 percent at the Wawayseecappo reserve. Between 1998 and 2000 the Hollow Water reserve built twenty-four Section-95 homes, a significant increase from the previous yearly rate of three or four homes.

INAC has supported Section-95 through “shelter allowance” contributions, a government financial assistance program designed to help low-income families pay rent and hydro (the main source of heating on-reserve). To qualify, a family must reside in a Section-95 house and receive social assistance. The program enables low-income families to live in houses they would not otherwise afford and is an effective way of solving the housing backlogs, but has created a disincentive to seek wage labor. Meager on-reserve salaries combined with high cost of living (sometimes $400 to $500 monthly to heat a home by hydro) mean accepting a local job would not outperform social assistance and shelter allowance provided in Section-95 housing. In many instances, two adults per household must work to exceed this government assistance, and so single adults bypass wage labor if it means their children will starve. Otherwise, the program has enabled many families to obtain homes.

While the earlier band housing was often assembled locally, most Section-95 housing is built entirely by city builders. The change is partly due to a CMHC requirement for “bonded” contractors. A performance bond, is a guarantee from a surety company that says the company believes the contractor will perform the work. It protects clients from financial loss by compelling surety companies to arrange for completion of the work in the event of contractor defaults. This cosigner relationship takes a long time to develop and small, new contractors, such as many First Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Annual Housing Report.

CMHC houses that follow the catalogue patterns are found on most reserves. Brokenhead and the Roseau River reserve houses are shown from top to bottom, each illustrating only facade variations of the same plan. Prominent front facades designed to face streets without side or back development give the houses a two-dimensionality. Section 95 brought a much-needed increase in house size by “borrowing” to build.
Nations firms, often have difficulty obtaining bonds. So communities typically use outside contractors.

Despite housing costs and government design regulation, the Section 95 units have been plagued with design and quality control problems. The Roseau River reserve is a notable example. The reserve is located on a floodplain with a high water table and is bounded by the Roseau and Red Rivers. A dike is intended to protect homes. Most of the houses are Section-95, less than ten years old, and include finished basements as part of their design. Initial construction costs escalate with this feature. During the 1997 Manitoba flood, significant water seepage occurred in basements, and electrical power was shut down for safety, causing all the sump pumps to fail. As a result, sewage backed up in basements. Mold problems were extensive. Of 114 homes that were flood-damaged, eighty-seven carried molds and thirty-four carried dangerous molds even after basements were cleaned and in some cases renovated.

A 1998 report by Bill Boles of Boles Construction states that “poor site drainage resulting in seepage into basements is the single largest contributing factor to the mold problems...The original building construction techniques have made the buildings, particularly the foundations, more susceptible to moisture and mold problems. Deep basements insulated and finished on the interior, insufficient drainage provisions, poor detailing of the above-grade envelopes, inadequate mechanical ventilation along with inadequate maintenance, have all exacerbated the problem.”

Other communities complain of workmanship and design problems associated with government housing. A number of basements were recently built at the Dauphin River reserve with sump pumps that did not connect to weeping tiles. Overcrowding, lifestyle and newer airtight construction techniques have increased the moisture content of the air in many reserve houses, causing fatal molds, yet reserve houses tend to have inadequate ventilation such as attic venting; air exchangers are not part of the design guidelines required for funding approvals. Mold has been a systemic problem in reserve housing, but it was the Roseau River tragedy that finally compelled the government to issue an educational package targeting reserve homes. Unfortunately, the

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234 Housing prices in non-remote areas accessible by car, for instance, hover around $100 per square foot – close to city prices.
235 Boles, A Study of Recurring Mold....
236 See Canada, Mold...First Nations Communities.
strategy focuses on occupant use and education rather than more appropriate design and quality control during house construction.

According to the 2003 Auditor General's Report, the government considers bands responsible for ensuring houses meet National Building Code standards, but inspection systems on reserves are inadequate, and the routine inspections required by CMHC for new construction are for progress payments (level of completion) rather than code compliance. Alan Croteau of CMHC in Ottawa states, "We finance. We don't guarantee the quality of construction...Funding is not tied to building code compliance," an unusual circumstance.

Normally a lender's insurance, or collateral, is in the building itself. So if the loan in not repaid the building can be confiscated, and resold. So lenders have a direct interest in the quality of building which bears direct relation to the loan amount. The guarantee for housing loans on-reserve, however, is not the house, because it cannot be expropriated. It is in a band's yearly capital allocation. This means that regardless of what gets built, the corporation will be repaid, the primary interest of any lender.

Schools are the only buildings on-reserve always subject to the Manitoba Fire Commissioner's inspection states an INAC representative, enforced by a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between the provincial Department of Labor and the federal Department of Indian Affairs. "As far as other buildings go, it is up to the designer and builder to follow what is good and safe practice as is stipulated in the Acts that govern their profession" — builders must regulate themselves. "Chief and Council can hire a provincial Fire Commissioner on a fee for service basis." So, current production methods cannot ensure construction quality. The Auditor's report agrees concluding "most regions interpret their role as a funding service with little or no accountability for the results."

But debt problems have outweighed others, and some bands, such as Rolling River, have escaped them by not qualifying for housing loans. Rolling River's small on-reserve population of

237 CMHC has a "Native Inspection Services" program offering training to Native inspectors for on-reserve housing inspection. These inspectors are trained to report 6 inspections to CMHC for the purpose of the corporation issuing progress payments to the building contractor. These inspectors do not have the authority to enforce a building code such as issuing "Stop Work Orders" as do municipal or city building inspectors. Furthermore, Chief and Council have this authority but very few reserves in Canada have building code requirement in their local housing policies or knowledge to enact it. Alan Croteau, Ottawa, telephone interview with author, 6 June 2005.

238 INAC official, Winnipeg, telephone interview with author, 7 June 2005.

239 Canada, Report of the Auditor...Chapter 6, item 37.
219 is housed entirely in band housing, and while a backlog of fifty homes remains in 2000, it does not face the debt problems of other bands. The band at Poplar has also deliberately managed its debt and risk levels with more cautious building strategies. Learning from the pitfalls of other bands, the reserve of 1,000 has built only two five-plexes and a seniors unit using Section-95 loans.

Like the band house, the CMHC Section-95 house brought a new set of ideologies. It introduced mortgages, which required rent payment from families, a challenging concept for locals to adopt. The mortgage-free, rent-free band house entrenched a pattern of housing provision. An elder from Hollow Water was recently moved to a nearby town because of a lack of elder care facilities on reserve. Having to pay rent from her old age pension, she quickly returned complaining "they were taking my money." Introducing rental charges for the older band housing was not a viable option. "Some members received a home 10 or 20 years ago and did not have to pay a shelter charge. Now that the unit is old and in a state of disrepair, how can you ask them to start paying now?"

Similarly, enforcing shelter charges for CMHC housing in the context of the "free" band house creates a climate of unfairness. Bands still struggle with the rental dilemma.

A band member summarized the problem of many bands. "CMHC housing was a big problem. The band is caught up paying a big deficit. They got into a big project with big dollars unlike band housing. If it worked the way it was supposed to it would be OK — more housing could be done. These are expensive homes and the band ends up paying. People were supposed to make payments but a lot of people don't once they get in." Councilors also lament the difficulties. "If we could only get people to pay" and a chief "If Indian and Northern Affairs issued a directive that effective April 2001, all First Nation members must pay rent we could work with that — but to try it on our own is political suicide."

Complicating matters, confusion reigns around the difference between rents and mortgages and some people are unclear whether they are paying one or the other.

Families receiving welfare have been the most reliable rent payers. The band council is the welfare administrator, and in units where people are on social assistance, the shelter allowance subsidy is extracted before welfare is administered. Together, communal ownership, the rent-free

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241 Koeck, On-Reserve Housing Assessment, 14.
244 Koeck, On-Reserve Housing Assessment, 20.
band house, housing rights arguments and housing dependencies, together challenge bands in their attempts to constitute a rent-paying membership. Like the earlier Inuit program, little revenue was generated from the new CMHC homes for which bands, as opposed to individuals, continue to carry debt.

The slow replacement of reserve structures, built, controlled and maintained by individual families with the prefabricated units provided by government is remarkable. The problems of disease, overcrowding, lack of services, insulation and heat was being eradicated. But, just as important, the process of making buildings was permanently altered, and a new housing culture emerged that would have a drastic effect on local creativity. House architecture was no longer the result of local processes, but of bureaucratic ones originating elsewhere. People were told “this is the design we have this year” and were asked to choose from two or three options that offered minor variations. Bands also purchased RTMs or “Ready to Moves,” whole houses which were shipped to reserves in one or two pieces. The process of conceptualizing and making buildings was replaced with a process of providing and administering buildings.

The arrival of government housing instigated significant ideological shifts and created uncertainties about housing ownership, rights and responsibilities. The “band house,” as is it still called, built with either yearly band capital dollars or Department subsidies, became a shifting band asset. Many band members still refer to their homes as a “band house,” “band capital house,” or “CMHC house” and are unsure of their proprietorship, while many councils maintain that houses belong to families and attempt to establish responsibilities towards homes and good home husbandry. “Even if they do not pay, evictions do not occur. The house is theirs,” says a band councilor. Still ownership uncertainty abounds due to the distant methods of house production, dependence on the band and government agencies for repairs, house designations such as “CMHC house” and “band house” that reflect their makers, the bureaucratic control of the house by various levels of government, and rental arrangements that seem to pay “landlords.”

Overall, the government house obstructed relations between a family and its abode that would encourage an ongoing husbandry and interest in a place. A concern for design and longevity became mired in the home’s uncertain ownership because the government house had no “owner.” Instead it floated between its producers, its regulators and the people it housed.

CMHC programs altered the reserve landscape in other important ways. Only within the last fifteen to twenty years have bands been increasing their overall debt load and swallowing future capital to build emergency houses, a formerly unknown process. Reserve initiatives beyond housing are strangled by this debt. These debts have increased at an alarming rate from $806 million for all Canadian reserves in 1992-93 to $1.25 billion in 2001-02.246

Also, replacement of the early provisions of windows and shingles and later subsidies with a loan program became the means whereby government shifted its fiscal responsibility for housing to the bands themselves. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has encouraged loan financing as a means for bands to solve their present shortages, increasing the national funding limit for Ministerial Loan Guarantees from $1.3 to $1.7 billion in 2000.

Elders appear to have a unique perspective on the current housing shortages. I asked a number to comment on their people’s housing before the government began building and specifically whether shortages then existed. Many described the hardships of living in the older cabins, but shortages did not seem prevalent. A shift in attitudes among local people is thought to be partially responsible as suggested in the following commentary from a Nelson House elder.

“Before 1969 there was no welfare, no child allowances. Before that we learned about survival. As soon as you could hold a pail you start working. We used to build our own houses. We made our own gardens. Houses were logs with moss and dried earth on the roof. Spruce boughs were the floor. We changed these once in a while. Some people had stoves. Everybody had a house, built their own. On the trapline we would build our lodging in three days. We would have a cabin wherever it was needed. We didn’t have much. We had nothing but we survived. We need to teach this to our young. When welfare came everything changed. Now everybody is waiting for the welfare house.”

A Hollow Water elder agreed. “People here at one time built their own because they did not have government subsidy. They had to, and so they did. Today many wait for the government to provide. And yes, housing is a right, but there is a price for waiting. It breeds bitterness and laziness.” The elders were not lamenting the loss of the buildings of the past – they were lamenting the loss of attitudes towards building that disappeared with them.

246 Canada, Report of the Auditor General..., Chapter 6 item 16.
According to some present shortages resulted from a greater demand for modern conveniences and an increase in government regulation. "People used to get together and build a house. Since the 1960s people no longer did things on their own, get together and build a house. Roads were built and lots were subdivided by DIAND without consultation. And now people must go to Chief and Council for everything. In this way they became dependent." Another Pukatawagan elder explained, "Long ago you built cabins yourself in three weeks to one month. Does not happen nowadays because everything has to be standard. And today people want everything. Money spoils everything. I'd rather stay in a cabin. You don't spend money in the bush. When you are out in the bush you are free." Whatever the differences, there is an agreement that local people no longer build for themselves, and that government housing programs and people's attitudes both bear a burden of responsibility.

Although the early band houses were assembled on reserve, ever since their arrival, people have had less and less input into the design of houses. Eventually choice was reduced to the number of bedrooms, and construction was transferred to outsiders. The government house design was generally accepted with little criticism. This acceptance was rooted in prevalent local attitudes. I found that many people had not contemplated the new form their housing had taken, or how it could have been different. I asked one band member what he would build if given the chance. His reply: "Now you got me thinking. I really don't know. And I don't know what I would choose if I had the choice. I never thought about it. I don't even know how this house is affecting me. This housing is all we know. It's what we have been given." With severe housing shortages, a sense of gratitude for housing allotments also shrank complaints about design. One band member explained, "It's different if you have your own funds...People feel 'I'm getting this house, or I should be thankful for what they're giving me.' If you went to some people here and you told them, 'You're getting a house' they would be so happy that they're getting a house they wouldn't care [about its configuration]. I don't think that kind of thing is really a concern. As long as they get a house is the main concern. For me, if I wanted a house now, I would want it the way I wanted it. At the time when I got a house that wasn't important." She went on: "If you got a house and someone else didn't you should be happy. The houses that we lived in

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249 Ibid.
251 Band member, Hollow Water Reserve, interview with author, August 2000.
when I was growing up, my dad built them. They were just basic. We had a kitchen and a living room and a whole bedroom for everybody, with beds just out. My grandfather's house was two rooms – the kitchen and another room where the four corners were beds. We didn't complain about this house. There were more serious things. When we got this house I was so happy we had some place decent. Why should I complain? I didn't have the right." Similarly, when I asked if band members requested individual changes to the design of their homes before the homes were built, a housing councilor replied, "Everybody was just happy to get homes. We have a backup of seventy families." Upon visiting a reserve, one readily understands how local conditions would virtually eliminate any critical analysis of housing design (Chapter 2).

Attitudes also persist that elevate the government house while discouraging local traditions. When asked if people were allowed to design and build their own house, a housing councilor replied, "No. We don't allow any shacks here." Another explained, "Why hire city designers then do it yourself? We have city designers. We need to leave it to the experts. Maybe its 'cause I'm Indian that I believe we need experts." Hiring experts was necessary, improved the status of a house, and was generally more desirable than designing and building oneself. When I asked an elder why people no longer built with logs as they once had, he replied, "You are working in the wrong community. We are living in the bush but we have been modernized. People want the real thing." Such inquiries, particularly about log buildings, were often received as an insult – both assuming backwardness and suggesting it. Log building was akin to traveling to a premodern world at a time when Aboriginals had been "modernized." For a variety of reasons, imported house design was esteemed.

During the last forty years, arguments have only grown between Aboriginal people and the Government of Canada over who is responsible for the provision of reserve housing. The national Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has stated that "...the Government of Canada has special obligations to provide adequate housing to Indian people, as a right. They believe that these obligations of the Government of Canada flow from a combination of treaty rights, basic Aboriginal

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252 Band member, Hollow Water Reserve, interview with author, August 2000.
253 Housing intern, Roseau River Reserve, interview with author, June 2000.
254 Housing councilor, reserve community, interview with author, June 2000.
rights, and the Constitution.\footnote{257} The Report Of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has also stated that Aboriginal people have a right to housing based firstly on adequate shelter as a fundamental social right: a moral more than a legal argument. Secondly it argues that "At the root of the housing problem is the poverty that has resulted from the dispossession of Aboriginal people from their ancestral lands and their exclusion from mainstream economic activity.\footnote{256} The Crown's historical obligation to protect Aboriginal lands and resources stemming from the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and its failure to do so reinforces arguments for government housing provision. "The evident failure of governments to make such an economic base available to Aboriginal people, in accordance with their obligations, adds force to the argument that governments should bear the main burden of financing adequate shelter for these communities until such time as this economic base is restored.\footnote{259}"

But the government has not recognized any such responsibility for housing. Instead Canada has proposed "...a policy of providing financial support to First Nations, at a level comparable to that available to other Canadians with similar housing and financial needs, to enable them to ensure that their people have housing that meets basic national standards.\footnote{260} This policy has translated into an increase in government housing loans with bands bearing the primary financial burden of reserve housing. Subsequent policy changes have dealt primarily with housing program delivery, enabling more flexibility in how housing loans are allocated, for example. Government housing policy has yet to acknowledge the larger context within which housing problems are born. Houses continue to be built, although building them will not solve the homelessness that stems from the economically strangled conditions of reserve communities.
Two CMHC conferences

In 1999, I traveled with Ray Raven, an elder from Hollow Water, to Calgary to attend a CMHC Aboriginal housing conference entitled “Sharing our Knowledge.” Ray had hoped that some of the housing dilemmas plaguing his reserve and others would be addressed. Bands from across Canada sent hundreds of Native representatives with similar aspirations. A year later I attended another CMHC Aboriginal housing conference in Winnipeg, “New Housing, New Ideas, New Concepts, New Opportunities.” The conferences were sponsored by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Bank of Montreal and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. They were useful windows on the current attitudes of the corporation towards the challenges of reserve housing.

Both conferences began with the presentation of an innovative house design. The Eagle Lake “Healthy House” was introduced by a CMHC representative. The corporation initiated the demonstration housing project in 1997, and it was built in 2000 at the Eagle Lake First Nation near Dryden, Ontario. The project was labeled “Healthy House” for several reasons. The bungalow design employed an insulated concrete slab on-grade construction without a basement to avoid basement mold. A heat-recovery ventilator supplied fresh warmed air to the house while removing moisture-laden air, further reducing mold. Fire-resistant fiber-cement siding would resist forest fire threat. Cabinet boards were manufactured from straw fibers and non-toxic resins (to avoid the process known as off-gassing from toxic resins commonly used in particle boards). High insulation values were used, R-50 for walls and R-60 in roofs. Triple-glazed, low-emission windows were strategically stationed for cross ventilation. Double drywall walls increased the heat storage mass of the house. Energy-efficient fixtures were used throughout, and the solar orientation of the house was planned to maximize heat gain and minimize heat loss.

The main feature of the house was the “EcoNomad” system developed by Architectural and Community Planning Inc. of Kenora, Ontario. The EcoNomad is a recycled shipping container providing self-contained “micro-infrastructure” to a house that is unconnected to community infrastructure. The unit delivers power, heat, hot water, water treatment, and wastewater management to the house. A small computer-controlled diesel generator provides electricity and heat for space heating and domestic hot water. A solar panel and a wind generator are intended to back up the diesel system. Two hot water tanks service radiant in-floor heating that is intended to
lower the required indoor air temperature. Water is pumped from the nearby Eagle Lake and is treated using a sand filter, then a micron filter along with ultraviolet light treatment and is stored in a ten-day (500-gallon) storage tank. Wastewater is treated and the non-potable water is reclaimed in a holding tank for recirculation in toilets. The remaining waste is discharged into a septic field. The 8'x8'x16' transportable EcoNomad utility container is designed to be "plugged in" to the reserve "off-grid" house.

The EcoNomad's promotional package lists a host of mainly commercial, industrial and temporary applications. Nursing stations, research stations, mining and logging camps, army deployment, disaster relief, airports, weather stations, wilderness outfitters and generating facilities are possible areas of use. Marketed along with other types of "container architecture" the EconoNomad is a response to provide infrastructure to off-grid structures and remote locations, allowing buildings to be placed almost anywhere "The standard container, although integrated into the building, is physically separate and can be removed or replaced at any time." Ontario's Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement (OCETA) completed a study in 2000 on target markets for the EcoNomad for temporary housing.

Yet Eagle Lake is a permanent settlement, and 20 kilometers outside of Dryden, a town of 8,000 located on a major Canadian highway. Eagle Lake reserve is far from remote and can be reached by two highways. A CMHC pamphlet entitled "Tomorrow's Housing Today: Meeting the Housing Challenges of a New Millennium" describes the Healthy House and EcoNomad as solutions to the longstanding infrastructure problems of established Aboriginal communities - a temporary work-camp solution is applied to a permanent settlement.

The affordability of the EcoNomad was stressed to First Nation delegates. "A main factor that contributed to the development of the portable utility container is the high cost of conventional sewer, water and electrical grid infrastructure." The utility box was a means for off-grid communities to lessen the costs of installing infrastructure. Yet the pressure to provide these services and the necessary capital costs are presently borne by the government. If built with CMHC loans, however, the EcoNomad would transfer the costs of infrastructure from government to bands. And at $65,000 to $85,000 per unit, the container would double the cost of housing presently borne by communities. (Incidentally, a house in 2004 could be purchased in Dryden, Canada, Building Communities, 28.)
Ontario complete with town services for $85,000.) The utility makes infrastructure provision more affordable for government by removing it altogether.

The EcoNomad is a high-tech mystifying box that complicates house use. "Users have to be trained in power management before they move in, said the current residents. Early in December, the entire electrical system failed on their 300 outdoor Christmas lights. 'Educating is the big hurdle,' said David Nixon, a solar energy designer with ARISE Technologies of Waterloo, Ontario." The computerized system monitors all operations. "The brain of the EcoNomad is a control box containing the relays, timers and a SCADA computer. The SCADA was chosen because it supported the light industrial application and integrated monitoring alarms and data logging functions. The computer controls pump operations and generator run times, while monitoring water flow, pump and battery performance. Alarms will sound when the system is not working properly...the Eagle Lake prototype has demonstrated how fragile this system can be – the design team has yet to identify which detergent has killed the Biofilter bacteria, resulting in recycled water with an unacceptable odor." 

The utility box boasts "the capability to remotely monitor and troubleshoot all integrated functions." It can be managed by someone other than the occupant and at an arm’s length. Like the government’s Inuit housing program almost forty years ago, the unit comes with an instruction manual and requires homeowner training and undoubtedly well-trained, off-site service providers for breakdowns.

Eagle Lake is the testing ground for the EcoNomad’s lengthy list of markets, and the experiment continues. "Later this year the performance data will be posted on the internet. Doug Hart of Watershed Technologies in Toronto will use these data to model the buildings response to weather and improve efficiency." 

The utility box was one of the winners of the year 2000 CMHC housing awards and enjoys strong support of the corporation and other government agencies. The $485,000 test project was funded by two levels of government. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs provided

262 "Achievements and Potential," 100.
263 Ibid., 101.
264 EconoNomad.com.
almost half, or $200,000, with the provincial government through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, CMHC and the Bank of Montreal providing the remaining dollars.

Where houses have been built in challenging locations and families are unwilling to relocate, the benefits of the EcoNomad are clear. But the utility is promoted for new construction and will substantially increase the costs of new reserve housing. And Native communities have been the first buyers. The utility was planned for 16 needy Pikangikum families on waiting lists for houses with few other takers. An oil field in Alberta leased a unit over the winter, and another unit is slated to service a firefighting base camp. Prefabricated reserve houses now have their counterpart, prefabricated infrastructure that are Ready to Move (RTM).

The Roseau River Healthy House was another CMHC demonstration project presented by a corporation representative. The Roseau River Reserve is located 92 kilometers south of Winnipeg on a floodplain. After the 1997 flood, CMHC hired an architect to design and build a “Healthy House.” The house is a basement-less bungalow with a concrete slab-on-grade construction, avoiding the problems of the high water table and basement seepage. Triple-pane windows, increased insulation values, energy-efficient appliances, energy-efficient boiler, in-floor radiant heat, fluorescent lighting in task areas and tight air seals to prevent heat loss are some of the energy-saving features. A heat-recovery ventilator (HRV) warms incoming air while removing moisture-laden stale air, keeping air fresh in the air-tight home while inhibiting mold growth. Kitchen and bathroom fans also remove moisture from high humidity areas. Plywood kitchen cabinets avoid formaldehyde-based particle products that emit harmful gases, and when these are used edges are sealed. Low-flush toilets and a small lawn reduce water consumption. Radiant in-floor heat lowers the necessary indoor air temperature.

The Roseau River Healthy House has many features of the Eagle Lake Healthy House. Its main distinguishing feature, however, is not its utilities system but its wall system. The Roseau River house employs structural concrete wall panels. Prefabricated concrete panels sandwich three inches of rigid polyurethane insulation and not only carry the load of the roof but also form interior and exterior finishes. In contrast to the transportable utility box, the Roseau River house is immovable.

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266 Ojibway First Nation in Northwestern Ontario.
268 Canada, Building Communities, 15.
The predominant use of concrete as both a floor and wall material combined with steel roof and doors is justified on the basis of the material's durability. "The concrete structure will last indefinitely without the need for repair." It is maintenance-free and dent-free architecture. But with durability comes resistance. One cannot interact with the Roseau River house as one might a house comprised of wood, drywall, and shingles. The walls cannot be manipulated, and so they are bare. Hanging a picture would be a feat. Additions and alterations to the house are not anticipated nor can they be easily accommodated. Even in its construction and assembly the flexibility of wood has been exchanged for the demanding exactitude and resolute quality of prefabricated panels. Where a carpenter might make on-site adjustments that a family may desire, the prefabricated concrete panels are pre-designed for on-site assembly, and on-site changes to the house design or construction are nearly impossible.

And all the materials that would customarily make a house cozy and warm, welcoming and intimate are absent. Wood, carpeting, shingling and incandescent lighting are replaced with concrete, steel and fluorescent lights in the interests of energy efficiency and indestructibility. The resilience, softness and natural movement of a wooden floor has been replaced by one that resists the foot so that walking in the Roseau River Healthy House is akin to walking on an airstrip. While the house has no basement, a rational choice on the Roseau River floodplain, the concrete qualities of below-grade architecture in Manitoba have been brought upstairs. The Roseau River house is an inert, airtight and indestructible concrete bunker, uncommon for house architecture. It too is an example of the use of industrial and commercial products in a residential context.

Like the Eagle Lake Healthy House, dependence on outside material providers and trainers was a by-product of the Roseau River Healthy House concept. Embedded in the house design were many new products awaiting a market. The house brochure recommends that "The design is best suited to First Nation communities with an all-weather road access for easy access to the construction materials." The structural concrete sandwich panels were manufactured in Winnipeg and shipped to the community. Training is required for assembly. The corporation's brochure and presentation stresses the affordability of the house, derived solely from its resistance

269 Ibid.
270 Ibid.
to damage and low operating costs, but at $145,000 per unit, the capital costs of this basement-less house exceed city house prices by a notable margin.

The brochures for both projects are market-oriented and persuasive while ignoring the challenges. "The Roseau River Healthy House incorporates features that can help improve the health of your residents and your community. Built from concrete, the Healthy House represents a new approach to housing..." and "The Eagle Lake Healthy House is designed to meet First Nation community norms, allowing the 107.2m bungalow to be built in any First Nation. Other features that make it affordable include: no cost for water consumption, no cost for electricity, dramatically reduced energy requirements, little or no cost to develop expensive infrastructure...."

A product representative from Royal Building Systems (RBS) gave a presentation on the company's prefabricated system for house construction. Similar to the concrete sandwich panel, the RBS system comprises a series of interlocking polyvinyl chloride (PVC) based panels that slide together to create concrete forms. The concrete filling is then poured on site. Insulated panels are available for foundation and exterior wall sections. The prefabricated system forms walls, roofs and partitions. PVC forms the interior and exterior finish material. RBS boasts an airtight wall system, increased wall massing to temper the indoor temperature, high sound transmission ratings, and vapor-resistant walls that do require damp-proofing of the foundation. The house is shipped to the site as a "package." Again, assembly requires training. The company offers a four-day course and provides a supervisor for assembly.

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271 Canada, Roseau River Healthy House.
272 Canada, Building Communities, 12.
The representative described the material's indestructibility and resistance to extreme conditions including typhoons and hurricanes. The products have been used in a variety of international and third world contexts such as Venezuela, the Philippines, Poland, Siberia, Argentina, Mexico, and Columbia. A series of commercial, industrial and emergency uses are listed in the product brochure including factories, car washes, hog and chicken barns, housing for hurricane and earthquake regions and Habitat for Humanity projects. Seventy-one homes were built at the Lac La Ronge Reserve, Saskatchewan.

A “James Hardie” representative delivered a presentation about James Hardie fiber cement products. The main selling feature of the material is its inertness. Like the RBS products and the concrete panel, HardiPlank, a type of siding, is weather-resistant and zero-maintenance. No interaction is required. The HardiPlank brochure brags that the material “resists hot dry climates, resists cold windy climates, resists wet humid climates, resists impact, resists fire and resists termites.” Hardi siding is marketed as a wood look-alike that can be made to fit any style of home including Tudor, Colonial and Victorian. Hardie products are also said to outperform wood due to their dimensional stability and uniform composition and are “Environmentally friendly.
protecting old-growth forests." Most importantly, the product remains the same with time and use.
The company's response to maintenance problems on reserve has been to remove the necessity of interacting with homes.

An Indico Holdings Ltd. representative delivered a presentation about their "Nu-Fab metal building system." The galvanized steel and styrofoam panel is a wall and roof system for use in "...hog, poultry and dairy barns, slaughterhouses and freezer/coolers" according to company brochures. The company also manufactures a similar system for its export housing division. The brochure states "Nu-Fab has developed a construction system to meet the challenge of providing quality, durable, aesthetically appealing, and cost effective shelter for the millions of people in the

AN AFFORDABLE STEEL HOUSING SYSTEM

A revolutionary approach to quality home building

Indico Holdings Ltd.
world who live in sub-standard housing. Its features include quick installation, strong lightweight components...good in high wind conditions and earthquakes. Economical to ship anywhere in the world. No wood to provide food for insects." 273

Nu-Fab panels are prefabricated and shipped to any site for an assembly method that involves “clipping together components” to form walls and roofs. The company representative described the system as “fast and cheap,” and boasted of its indestructibility. The prefabricated panel he claimed was “the ultimate answer to Indian-proofing reserve houses.”

A “Metal Log” manufactured by an American company was presented in the form of a video. The video began with a music-filled nostalgic glance at a log cabin juxtaposed with the Metal Log structure said to mimic its properties. Metal Logs are made from lightweight hollow tubes of galvanized steel and aluminum. A computerized log-making machine is brought to the site to form logs of the precise size required. Connections are prefabricated and allow the product to “snap into place.” The roof system also comprises logs snapped together. The video claims “The savings are fantastic, with this non-combustible construction that is impervious to rot, rust, termites, earthquakes and hurricanes. The technology makes use of local materials because steel and aluminum are available almost everywhere in the world. Best of all, no duties and fees are charged for importing our product. It’s old. It’s new. It’s a perfect solution for building the structures of tomorrow.” Heroic music accompanied this infomercial, played at the conference end, and a CMHC event organizer closed with the statement “I hope you will attempt to use the technologies that you saw.”

Other presenters were selling training and services. Anokiiwin Training Institute Inc. offered a housing managers’ training workshop, Manitoba Building Officials Association provided memberships and building officials’ training courses, Naskapi Imuun Inc. was selling a housing maintenance database and training, and CMHC offered training to Native housing inspectors. Two companies provided architectural and community design services for reserve communities. Mold management was even packaged as a workshop that could be held in communities for $1200 per day. Thirty percent of the Winnipeg presentations were from manufacturers selling housing products, and 30 percent were from organizations selling housing services. Even a fire safety presentation endorsed the use of sprinkler systems for private homes. Company representatives

273 Indico Holdings Ltd., NU-FAB Metal Building Systems.
sat at tables with Native delegates and peddled their wares up close. Mistaken for Aboriginal, I was solicited by many vendors including one representative selling a water purification system.

Manufacturers and service providers that were not given the strategic opportunities to make presentations had trade show type exhibits outside the main conference hall, displaying products such as cabinets, windows, sprinkler systems, and insurance. The Bank of Montreal, a conference sponsor, had its own booth with loan information for the next housing initiative that came with a Ministerial Guarantee.

The reserve housing challenge was a matter of buying the right materials and technology. The right product would fix the housing problem, and the faster, cheaper, and more indestructible the better. The tone of the presentations was generally competitive with claims that a certain product was the best of its kind. First Nations people flocked around displays that claimed to answer their housing needs with one type of magic panel or another.

Housing materials superseded housing design. With HardiPlank or other siding products a house of any style could be created. Companies had design displays of Victorian, Cape Cod and
other styled mansions. All the ingredients were available to transform any reserve into a western middle class suburb – the products simply had to be bought. Conversely, design concepts enforced particular materials. The Healthy House required a concrete sandwich panel or EcoNomad box. One could not have a healthy house without certain manufactured items.

And these technologies bring new ideas. They harbor assumptions about Aboriginal society. Concrete and steel are unusual choices for house architecture, which demands malleability and warmth, and so they are typically reserved for institutional contexts where resistance is a prerequisite for a building’s use. They are used where buildings need to be protected, such as prison architecture. Yet, on reserve, these materials are marketed for residential use for the same institutional reasons, to protect the building from its occupants. The use of technologies like Nu-Fab, borrowed from hog barns and warehouses, has a built-in cynicism. It aims to “Indian-proof” houses as the company representative explained.

The portable, temporary, and flimsy technologies also harbor ideas. Snapped together, assembled architecture borrowed from disaster relief and work camp contexts assumes Aboriginal communities are temporary, requiring temporary measures. And the proliferation of the suburban middle class styles also harbors ideas – that Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal communities are on the same trajectory and that everyone wants the same things.

No endorsement came for the use of materials within reach of communities. The use of wood, usually plentiful around Manitoba reserves, was discouraged, and the many concrete, steel, vinyl and synthetic housing products for sale were marketed as environmentally friendly because they preserved the forest. I thought about Ray Raven and his people’s struggle against the Pine Falls Paper Co. that had been clearcutting forest around the reserve for 75 years. The government granted the company a timber license, while it advocated products to bands on the basis that they preserve the forest. The message was clear. The wood that surrounded reserves was simply not for band use because forests must be saved, but apparently only from Aboriginal people. And while Tembec cuts forest around the reserve for use in faraway places, reserves import houses from faraway places. The movement of materials is illogical. And Ray Raven knew that buying HardiPlank or Nu-Fab panels would not save the forest.

Although labor typically absorbs the main costs in standard home building, self-building and local building training were also bypassed as strategies. The sea of available human capital created by widespread unemployment was not addressed, nor were the possibilities of local lumber
milling and forestry management. CMHC adhered to a restricted mandate of issuing housing loans to buy housing and housing products from outsiders.

Government bureaucrats acknowledged the educational obstacles of importing housing ideas with the Inuit housing program almost forty years ago, as the Department's many publications that accompanied the housing attest. Social science researchers C. T. Thompson and D. K. Thomas working for the Department further identified the blatant disregard of these early houses of Inuit needs, lifestyle and economic conditions. Recently, a CMHC representative cited education as one of the main on-reserve housing challenges. She explained that many band members do not understand the government housing programs and its ideas such as rent, and many do not appear to understand house use. Some home owners were discovered using crawl spaces to store game, then forgetting the carcass. Eavestroughs cleaning, mold recognition, changing furnace filters, managing thermostats and other maintenance chores were sometimes disregarded as a result of "lack of knowledge and understanding." She added that brochures and workshops did not seem to help. Even so, the conferences were a bombardment of new and foreign technologies with futuristic, ephemeral qualities that would challenge any homeowner. The presentations' abstract language reflected this content. Unit, container, bio-filtration, unplugged, Nu-Fab, EcoNomad, "vision for the 21st century," and "Tomorrow's Housing" Today and "Challenges of a New Millennium" gave the reserve housing problems a mystical far-reaching quality, requiring peculiar and abstract interventions that people could not possibly concoct on their own initiative.

Ray Raven returned to Hollow Water with a bag full of brochures yet few answers to his community's complex housing problems.

274 Thomas and Thompson, Eskimo Housing...Culture Change.
275 Donna Burke CMHC representative, Winnipeg, Interview with author, October 2000.
The form of a house is more than a physical framework. It is an idea that suggests how one ought to live. Embedded in the house form is a concept for living delineating meal rituals, sleeping norms, persons per room, entering habits, notions of the public and the private, gender relationships, use of outside space and even temperature tolerances of entire groups. And house building is a creative act that enables groups to give form to these concepts. So houses carry cultural practice, and making them nurtures local creativity. For these two reasons, widespread and dramatic transformations to reserve housing design and production are significant.

The spread of the new government housing on reserves represented a radical departure from previous forms and processes of Aboriginal building. Most importantly, it disseminated new ideas and practices. The new housing came from genuinely humane government goals to improve local conditions, but, as in the Inuit housing project, the building process generally implied a one-way exchange of ideas. The new houses encouraged certain practices while inhibiting others. A Native elder described the new compartmentalizations. "I grew up in a one-room house. You could eat anywhere. Something happened in our house when you could only eat at the table." Indeed, the new houses replicated patterns of western middle class living.

The process of making the new houses was marked by an absence of local involvement. An increase in external controls over housing design, and decades of compliance with government guidelines tied to funding, bred a growing local resistance to ad hoc development. People became hesitant, even fearful, to act outside the government funding box, and local design across Manitoba reserves was reduced to selections from a handful of catalogue choices provided by both building supply companies and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The rise of government housing paralleled the rise of the welfare state in Canada, and a national concern for the social and economic conditions of Aboriginal people. For the last fifty years, attempts have been made to improve reserve living conditions. Through housing programs, regulation, and local attitudes, houses were transformed from the creation of communities to the provisions of government. This new method of housing production undermined housing tenure. It transformed the family's abode to a shifting band asset with nebulous proprietorship, and restricted personal investment in homes. Exporting house production also mystified house design, which became a detached and complicated process exercised by others. The process of removal and
mystification increased dependence on band councils to provide and maintain housing and on outside experts to “fix” the housing problem.

A niche was born for a proliferation of building technology specialists with “answers,” and their increasing involvement again transformed the process of house production. “Making” was transforming into “shopping.” Reserve house architecture was no longer generated. It was “bought” from experts. House structure comprised a “kit of parts” and house plans were selected from yearly catalogues. House architecture was driven by industry and manufacturers rather than by communities.

Recent government-sponsored trade shows display this new production method. CMHC Aboriginal housing conferences are a marriage of government, Aboriginal people and industry, a problematic juxtaposition of common-good, utopian ideals and private for-profit interests. The conferences introduced the building construction industry to Aboriginal communities, underscoring the conviction of government and industry that complex reserve housing problems can be fixed with the right type of material. Products replaced big ideas. Reserve house production has incorporated Native people into the larger market economy beyond the reserve, where large portions of reserve capital are now spent, and opportunities abound for manufacturers to peddle products to consumers with a new and unsurpassed level of borrowing power.

The new production method has also involved government-sponsored experimentation. Wood is the material of choice for homes in Manitoba, and most people will resist living in concrete, steel, or even uncommon designs, but when in need people accept just about any form of shelter. Homelessness, and technologists with government support, have transformed reserves to experimental fields for hard-to-sell housing concepts such as the concrete house and computer-controlled micro-infrastructure.

Aboriginal people have been complicit in this process of remote house production and consumption. Bands seek outside experts, deny local creativity, esteem the imported, and devalue the handmade. They hesitate to “criticize” what has been provided, and seem to prefer the comfort and familiarity of government-structured processes. When self-build practices were embraced locally, it was mainly on the grounds that it reduced project costs rather than that it had intrinsic value as a form of architectural production and cultural practice. There is an entrenched architectural passivity about house design. Houses and their ideas have been imported to reserves for over forty years, and the process is calmly accepted and alternatives are barely contemplated.
The loss of the frigid log cabin with its lack of insulation, daylight and modern conveniences was far less significant than the loss of the local process that disappeared with it. Replacing the log cabin with the prefabricated band house was a replacement of a whole series of processes such as taking forest inventory, timber selection and transportation, squaring logs, solving building problems locally and merging people rather than splintering community. As a Native elder explained, "Those were the days families would get together and build a house. It was a community initiative." But the reserve house is no longer a creative act requiring community cohesion. It is a bureaucratic one. It was not created and nurtured. It is provided or purchased from a new market. Aboriginal people are the new consumers, with more borrowing power than ever before. This commodification of the reserve house has meant two things. The house has become an element of consumer culture, dividing those that have and those that have not. At the same time the process of making became entirely unimportant. Local creativity was stifled.

I began this thesis by trying to design a building with a community. My difficulties in getting the project started were only the beginning of a long series of revelations that explained why such dreaming could not take place. I began to realize that Aboriginal people have been profoundly affected by the drawing of lines that expanded much farther spatially and temporally than the narrow window through which I was looking.

All architectural lines, be they borders, perimeters, walls, or fences, define two spaces – inside and outside, the included and the excluded. Some lines, such as fences between neighbors, define two equal spaces, while others establish a spatial hierarchy separating the more important from the less. Whatever the power relationship between spaces, all lines are two-sided. So it was that when early reserve architects put pen to paper they were not only defining a place for Native existence in Canada but also a place for the rest of us. Canada's spatial hierarchy was entrenched.

Reserves are colonial constructs arising from state negotiations with Native people at a time of their extreme material deprivation. Through treaty-making, Aboriginal people surrendered the control of most of Canada. And while reserves lie within the traditional areas of bands, they are mostly too small and resource-poor to secure the band's sustenance.

Borderlines located and fixed Aboriginal people in space, clearing them from the path of both an expanding settler society and the industrial development of land on which they once depended. The wealth of settlers is reaped from this same land. So the reserve border delineates not one population but two – the nature of their existences and the ability of their cultures to prosper. It delineates relationships: Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal, insiders – outsiders, off-reserve – on-reserve, economic deprivation – economic prosperity, cultural dominance – cultural collapse. The border has effectively ensured the dominance of one group and has threatened the other.

These polarities characterize the essential spatial relationship between Canadian and reserve communities. Mutual coexistence has not been designed, and Canadian society remains torn along the problematic overlapping planes of a resource frontier and a people's homeland. Sit-ins, blockades, land claims, lawsuits, and other forms of Aboriginal unrest have persistently exposed our conjoined existences and have reminded Canadians that reserves are not an "Aboriginal problem." Many reserve failures flow from their spatial relationship to Canadian society as a whole. Reserves are about all of us.

Between "on-reserve" and "off-reserve," lies a world of difference. Beyond the border federal jurisdiction stops, treaty obligations diminish, and the federal government accepts little responsibility for Aboriginal people. Traditional areas beyond reserves are a jurisdictional black hole. The 1930 Manitoba
Land Transfer Act transferred all natural resources from federal to provincial government control, exposed land beyond reserves to greater exploitation and restricted federal protections. Furthermore, Aboriginal residency beyond the reserve means the loss of housing, roads and other entitlements, and a band's capital allocation and program dollars are slashed in proportion to the number who venture “outside.”

Spatially delimited, reserves with growing populations are unable to expand. Instead they must expand by infill, towards their insides, compressing populations in new and uncomfortable ways. This architecture is one of containment, neither fluid nor organic but static and fixed, contrasting traditional Aboriginal life that moved according to resource opportunities and limits. Reserves ghettoized Aboriginal people.

The comprehensive management of 633 bands by a centralized bureaucracy also simplified Native space, replacing spatial multiplicity and specificity with repetition and monotony. Complicated patterns of regional movement that defined territories, and the diverse building technologies, forms, and information that people employed were replaced with the unmarked forms of the dominant society.

These basic characteristics of Aboriginal space in Canada emanated from the treaty agreements between Aboriginal people and the state, and while the pattern is subversive the formula is still applied. The modern reproduction of reserve space is a result of many forces including government processes, market interests, people's attitudes, and above all, Native disempowerment. Mostly, reserves are reproduced because they are constituted in relations of power that have been consistent since their beginnings.

Aboriginal people's wardship relationship to Canada has ensured that the terms of reserve design continue to be written and controlled by others. Through its fiduciary responsibility to Aboriginal people, the state acts on their behalf. Canada hires planners who hire consultants who follow government guidelines, and the Department of Indian Affairs maintains exclusive control over how land and capital resources are used. It is an exclusionary planning method owned and controlled by non-Aboriginal people who are further disempowered by language and economic barriers.

Management by Canada also means that reserves are a product of community design meeting community governance. The repetition of patterns, for example, flows directly from the political, practical and economic necessity of governing people. The Department of Indian Affairs, like all bureaucracies, applies formulas that speed decision-making, and enable the management of large populations. An even application of these templates is considered to be democratic. Conversely, breaking patterns sets
precedents for new ones, creating new demands, new costs and new unrest. In short, however badly reserves are patterned, political strife and costs are averted if they remain the same.

New approaches are hindered by this adherence to guidelines and precedent. Black Sturgeon presented a unique design problem where few design guidelines apparently applied. It demanded creative leap-taking rather than bureaucratic rule-following. It required an expansion in the definitions of what constitutes a community. Community might begin with education, detox and the revitalization of local traditions rather than with roads and sewers. Perhaps infrastructure consultants were better replaced with market analysts, business planners, social workers, and elders. Maybe capital needed investing rather than spending, and investments in individuals and skills rather than in roads and sewers. But no precedent exists for this type of planning, nor can it be found in manuals and guidelines. Furthermore, such creative methods are unbounded, messy, unpredictable and uncontrollable, and do not suit the interests of governmental order-keeping.

The bureaucratic severing of Aboriginal life into various bits and pieces also influences how reserves are conceptualized and designed. Through various government departments and sub-departments, housing, education, health, heritage, land claims, self-governance and other matters are isolated, and the decision-making of the most out-of-the-box thinkers is confined by the edges of an agency. The media treatment of Aboriginal issues has added to this postmortem. Presented in soundbites, the airwaves bombard the public with isolated “reserve problems” from asbestos-containing insulation used in housing to teen suicides, and whole communities have become synonymous with singular problems. These “deconstructions” encourage reductive design. So, Black Sturgeon’s planners planned houses before an economy that would create and maintain them, the land, which underscores all life and sustenance, was overlooked, and many experts gathered around a community plan and, blinded by their assigned fragments, could not see a community in its totality. Planning, which requires comprehensive strategies as opposed to compartmentalization, is strangled by this hackery.

Reductionism is also born from attempts to stretch a $60 million yearly budget across sixty-two impoverished communities. The result is a regional patchwork of “planning distortions” – building only parts of communities – building houses without services – building services without houses, and building whole communities without industry. Decades of planning incomplete communities has normalized the “pattern” and desensitized planners to its reductive space. The Black Sturgeon plan was approved because so many reserve communities suffer from the same incompleteness. Its results were far from shocking to its planners.
Still, the media are abuzz with relentless government reserve building initiatives that tell a different story. Congratulatory headlines contrast the ongoing maladies of communities and add to Canadian confusion surrounding Aboriginal people. The Canadian Taxpayer's Federation, in particular, keeps a steady eye on Aboriginal projects. Tanis Fiss, the director of the federation's Center for Aboriginal Policy Change and one of the biggest critics of “reserve spending,” links the ongoing existence of reserve communities to the flow of government dollars rather than to strongholds of Native culture that have withstood economic deprivation. She writes, “The process of providing a plethora of programs and services to reserve communities at the expense of other Canadians has produced a perverse incentive for Indians to remain on reserves – even with social assistance rates as high as 90 percent on some reserves.”

Fiss’s preposterous notion that reserves are artificial communities and nothing more than “financial black holes” for taxpayers is held by others who complain about too much government spending and Native dependency rather than about faulty planning processes and results. The arguments typically follow this type of reasoning: so much money flows to Aboriginal communities yet nothing seems to change. And the argument is almost always about how much money is being spent rather than about how it is being spent. Take, for example, this quote from an acquaintance: “We spend so much on housing and they keep destroying them. What can you do?”

The conclusion is often to do away with reserves altogether, deconstruct communal property arrangements on reserve and tear up the Indian Act – all the structures that, however flawed, serve to protect Aboriginal people’s rights in Canada. The Taxpayers Federation has actually reached these conclusions. Media reports of government spending have been most damning to Native – non-Native relations and has undermined community building by adding to Canadian confusion, and disillusionment with Aboriginal problems that never seem to go away regardless of how much money is spent. This disjunction between what is reported and what really happens has not helped average people to understand the realities of Native communities.

Aboriginal people are also part of the process of reserve reproduction. Years of disempowerment, impoverishment, dependency and government control – years of architectural inertia, of having spatial issues determined by outsiders – have bred passivity regarding local design. I am

277 Fiss, “Canada’s Ugly Secret.”
278 Ibid. Tanis Fiss recommended abolishing the reserve system and its common property structures along with the Indian Act, prompting a rebuttal from Grand Chief Phil Fontaine with an invitation for Fiss to visit communities to better understand the realities of Aboriginal life in Canada.
referring primarily to the architecture within reserves, the spatial order that is inherited and practiced and that organizes and arranges life. This order that determines house form and lot size is the domain of outsiders, and western architectural ideology dominates. As an object of mass consumer culture the imported, western-styled house is, in fact, esteemed on-reserve and its proliferation reaffirms the dominance of a society outside the reserve.

Houses are uncomplicated constructs, and with a carpenter, electrician, and plumber just about anything can be constructed that a family might envision. But, just as the complex has been simplified, so too the simple has been complicated through government programs, guidelines and experts so that even the smallest local projects are rarely contemplated outside government involvement.

This loss of local building practices that nurtured pride, ownership, and traditions, and that fit people to place, has been a barely witnessed, uncontested process. No war is waged over house design or over the right to design one's place. Instead bands have esteemed outside experts, restricted the local and the handmade, relished imported designs and increased their debt loads by importing both designs and labor. Cultural practice has quietly turned to provision. House design is the most blatant example of culture turning on itself – of people disregarding their traditions. Impoverishment has undoubtedly hastened this loss by trivializing design in the face of poverty. People will fight for shelter long before they will fight for the right to its design.

The Aboriginal expert slides easily into this “creativity gap,” and product and service providers are the newest designers of reserve space. A Canadian industry built on fixing Canada's “Aboriginal problems” has emerged alongside the evolving dependencies of reserve communities and their increase in borrowing power. Profitable government contracts drive reserve design and production from outside reserve communities where most design and consulting firms are found. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the government's housing delivery system, is the main interface between reserves and this building industry lobbying to sell its services at every turn.

Bureaucratic government processes, Native disempowerment, Canadian myths, and a profit-seeking building industry are some of the main forces that align to reproduce the familiar, subversive and adversarial equation of space and anti-space in Canada.
Throughout this research, the most common questions asked by well-meaning friends, colleagues and acquaintances have been: “What is the solution?” and “What do we do?” I still cringe at the monolithic scale of these questions posed against my own surface-scratching research, and still more at their nature. The questions reflect the very paradigms that have plagued reserve design – reductionism and the superiority of outsiders. More importantly, the two-sidedness of reserves and of our country is acknowledged in this question, outside, inside, us and them – the very duality that has put us in the position of the bearer of answers. But they also reveal that many ordinary Canadians have reached a point in history where the equation is bothersome. Something in our collective psyche has acknowledged, largely through an echoing Aboriginal voice, that the country is not quite right.

Perhaps the questions is better rephrased. How can communities be made to prosper where their very structures are designed to prevent this from happening? It seems to answer itself. Reserves cannot prosper without a fundamental change to their structures. Anything less is just tinkering with a design, the structure of which is inherently faulty. One cannot decorate away a building’s foundational flaws. So I will think the unthinkable and speak the unspeakable for many – land reform.

While Canadians speak of fixing reserve problems, the conversation often dwindles when it begins to involve all of us and implies that the rest of us must make some concessions. Melvin Smith’s Our Home or Native Land illustrates the fears associated with reexamining the Canadian equation. Resistances stem from a disconnection with history that places the faults and responsibilities with other people in other times. Such is the nature of inherited wrongs. Yet reserve problems cannot be solved without addressing the design of Canada as a whole – namely the two-sided lines that have created the dual realities of space and anti-space. Spatially strangled communities cannot prosper. So, the drawing of this country needs revisiting to understand why it was drawn the way it was, and to forge a new set of lines that rewrites the spatial relationship between Aboriginal people and Canada. I am only reiterating what Aboriginal people have been saying for a very long time. Land is the central ingredient of community. From land, resources emerge, from resources economies emerge, from economies livelihoods emerge and from livelihoods traditions can be nurtured such as architecture. This is the

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222 Smith, Our Home or Native Land?
correct order of things. Adjusting the lines of power that overlay our land would fashion our Canadian map in accordance with a more mature democracy by enabling fuller participation of all its citizens.

But redrawing the map is not enough. Reserve space will not be transformed without an overhaul of government approaches to planning. A currently bureaucratic process of limits and constraints must transform into a creative one of expansive possibilities. In other words, planning needs to acknowledge that communities exist in all forms and are at various stages of development, and what constitutes a "community" requires the broadest possible interpretation. A plan is more than a mathematical space for living. It is a vision for a set of processes to take place. Visioning a community from its rudimentary beginnings and brainstorming its potentials is the crucial and missing first step that can replace the hunt for departmental precedents on which restrictive patterns are now modeled. Children, for example, ought to have taken priority in the Black Sturgeon plan as they are at unusually high risk and cannot wait for the next round of government interventions. (One trip to Lynn Lake reveals this fact to anyone who cares to notice.) Planning, at its very least, should have designed a way to feed them every day. Yet, as it stands, a partial road is built while hunger abounds, because the immediate needs of children were not part of the standard terms of reference set by department bureaucrats. Templates need to make room for customized thinking that fit plans to people.

Expanding the definitions of what constitutes a community implies a broadening of the current government mandate towards reserve building - a slippery slope for government that raises the questions of roles, responsibilities and treaty obligations. Yet, clearly, government bears some responsibility for rebuilding communities whose lands it afforded little protection and whose treaty obligations it failed to uphold. Rebuilding communities does not mean constructing roads and houses. It means restoring the means of survival that have been undermined by other interests for generations. The terms of reference for community plans must, therefore, expand to include economic development schemes as an essential aspect of community planning.

The processes of design must also change, and I do not mean that planners need to be educated in planning rules. Black Sturgeon's problems did not arise from the lack of common sense of its designers, and so there is no need to reduce this thesis to a handful of mundane planning recipes that can be found in dozens of manuals that say: long-range views are essential. Holism needs to be practiced. Arm's-length rubber-stamping cannot replace human interactions. Community planning is planning the means to survival. It is the creation of opportunity. Houses are not opportunities, they are
things – which is why building houses alone will not solve housing backlogs. The literature is profuse with such theories that inform good plans. One needs only look there.

The question really is why haven’t even the most basic, widely accepted planning concepts been applied to Black Sturgeon? How can a road built in the bush be called a community? And how is such an outcome possible in the face of the knowledge that we have? It is possible because government, industry and Native bands are the designers. But, governments manage countries, maintain order and try to get reelected – they do not build communities, and consulting firms run for-profit businesses – they do not build communities, and Native bands, who have the greatest stake in communities, are largely powerless to control the outcome of this consortium of interests.

Black Sturgeon is possible because of its unique power arrangement. Native people’s wardship status means that if a bureaucrat says to a chief, “this is our money, not yours, and this is how things must be done,” little will be done to alter the course of events. Headman John Colomb will not complain. His band received funding where others did not, and he needs to maintain good relations with the department to which he will lobby for the next project. The consultants will not complain. They won the design contract and they need to maintain good relations with the department, which they must lobby for the next award. Ordinary people will not complain because a lack of government transparency conceals the inner workings of the system. In fact, the Canadian public is mostly unaware of such planning fiascos except that Natives seem to be getting another break at taxpayers’ expense. Black Sturgeon is possible because its design process limits criticism and its power structure, entrenched in our constitution, subordinates the interests of Aboriginal communities to the whims of powerful bureaucrats. And these bureaucrats, according to the 2003 Auditor General of Canada’s report on reserve housing, have not been overly concerned with results.²⁸⁰

Immersion in an academic world often makes one forget the politics of spatial production. It makes one somewhat optimistic, even idealistic, and quick to assume that current debates and sentiments have reached the ground, and that people act more wisely for this knowledge. But, the planning of reserves lies far behind the academic debates and the literature that would inform it. Moreover, what happens around planning tables has less to do with planning than with power and with economic interests. And worse, many colonial attitudes remain. The Indian Affairs Department, full of reincarnations of the Indian agent we met in our history books, illustrates the department’s sense of its

²⁸⁰ See Canada, The Report of the Auditor...
own omnipotence, the unevenness of power, and the plight of Aboriginal people who attempt to interact with government in the interest of their communities. Reserve abnormalities are perpetuated partly because the people who have always had the power to design them remain in their positions, and their will is done.

Building successful communities relies on the alignment of many things, and if the fundamental arrangement of political power, capital resources, thinkers and communities of people are in opposition, as with Black Sturgeon, community building is nearly impossible. If each is fighting for its own interest, governments will forever face dependent communities, communities will struggle for survival, and consultants will not build reputations on such messes. Yet as it stands, these alignments are far off, and if they occur are too dependent on individual good will.

There seems to be no way around the problems of power and perceptions except to accompany new spatial lines with new paradigms that restructure the way Aboriginal people and their communities are conceptualized and with new systems of power that strengthen the voices of Aboriginal people. Shedding the prevailing assumption that we need to help them seems the first step. The position perpetuates existing power structures by misinterpreting Native economic and political depravation for inherent powerlessness and has led to a one-way transference of planning ideas from Euro-Canadians to Aboriginals. Even when “Aboriginality” is incorporated, as in the mapping of Marcel Colomb’s “traditional ecological knowledge,” for example, it was subject to the narrow interpretations of planners and used only in ways that fit preexisting planning models defined by the state.

Yet Aboriginal people are capable of spearheading community designs if allowed the mechanisms. Headman John Colomb and other band members understood the lay of the land and their people’s plight enough to inform a more appropriate vision of community. If their knowledge was received as equally legitimate and authoritative and was able to frame others, a more contextually fitting outcome would have resulted. I am not saying there is no role for non-Aboriginals in designing Aboriginal communities, just that the power structures need an almost complete reversal if communities are to reflect the needs of people. Furthermore, if local people head the planning table, development will emerge in the context of cultural practice, not in place of it, and traditionalism will distinguish Native communities in ways not yet witnessed. Such planning does not require Aboriginal people as subjects but, rather, Aboriginal people at the helm.

Designing a place of one’s own is also a fundamental requirement of self-determined people because the arrangement of space influences how life takes place. Through design one decides how
one will live. It is therefore a creative act and an exercise of power. For these reasons, repatriating design or the systems of production is necessary part of reclaiming space, renewing local sources of creativity, and ultimately of asserting sovereignty. Aboriginal people must reclaim a more powerful place in the production system that fashions their lives.

This does not mean that every Aboriginal person needs to build a house from the ground up. It means renewing attitudes that sees buildings and spaces as important and participating in design versus watching it take place and accepting its results. It means changing the way that local people think about their own power and role in the making of places even regarding the smallest details around them. "Reclaiming design" is reclaiming a concern for shaping the environment at all scales.

When I suggested the renewal of forest burnings on Black Island to reinvigorate the traditional blueberry harvest, for instance, a band member responded "we would be arrested." When I suggested people cut and mill their own logs, a band member said, "The housing built from this lumber would not pass government inspections needed for hydro hook-up." When I suggested designing a building according to the visions of the community, a band member said, "We need government funding first." When I asked about the degree of participation and choice in house design (even to change a window from one corner of a room to another), a band member said, "I got this house for free. Why should I complain?" While some of these processes pose real restrictions, others do not, and the degree of local inertia is most striking. They reveal the lingering compressions of colonial space, adopted by people themselves. Repatriating design is about recovering many processes that fashion community life. It is about recovering the right to dream.

Aboriginal people have been concerned about the design of space at regional scales where it is most important, and many reserves have begun the process of repatriating expropriated artifacts, but the process of local design remains the preserve of outsiders. Houses have been provisions for almost a generation and to transform them into self-envisioned, self-built creations would require an ideological leap among local people. It would require a complete change in way the architecture is viewed, from an external and trivial process to be practiced by others, to an important practice of self-determination. Most importantly, it would require a reversal of the colonial positions that lead people to reject their own traditions.

Restorative reserve design entails significant shifts in the paradigms that have restricted building communities, in the boundaries that have strangled them and in the power structures that serve
the needs of the state and the market rather than people. These are necessary steps towards reconciling the space and anti-space equation that blemishes our Canadian landscape.
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