

café ATLANTIC

Toward an Architecture Policy for Canada

CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE FORUMS ON EDUCATION FORUMS CANADIENS D'ARCHITECTURE SUR L'ÉDUCATION NEWS

October 17, 2019



“ You put together two things that have not been put together before. And the world is changed. ”

- Julian Barnes /
Prof. Catherine Hamel

CAFÉ Atlantic: Launching a National Conversation on the Built Environment in Canada

What is the future of architecture?

On October 7th – world architecture day – over 100 architecture students, educators and professionals gathered in the magical Medjuck Building at Dalhousie University to attempt a response to this difficult question. The occasion was the first in a series of Canadian Architecture Forums on Education, also known as CAFÉs, intended to foster a trans-national conversation on the role of architectural education and research in shaping Canada's future. The aim is to take the pulse of questions and desires currently on the minds of the next generation of design professionals in order to shape the agenda and priorities of a forward-looking architecture policy for Canada.

In addition to regional students, educators and professionals, this first CAFÉ – CAFÉ Atlantic – hosted 10 representatives from four other Canadian schools of architecture, including the University of Calgary, Université Laval, the University of Manitoba, and the University of Toronto.

Aspirations, Concerns and Contexts

The afternoon began with a series of short pecha-kucha-style presentations framing current aspirations, concerns and contexts.

Student co-presidents of the Dalhousie Architecture Students Association (DASA), **Kaley Doleman** and **Stavros Kondeas**, began the session with a welcome and celebration of student diversity and achievements. **Diogo Burnay**, Director of the School

of Architecture at Dalhousie University, emphasized the school's approach to design as simultaneously experimental and grounded in daily life and physicality. Quoting favorite maxims, he emphasized: "The only rule is work." **Lisa Landrum**, CAFÉ Project Lead and Associate Dean Research at the University of Manitoba, provided an overview of the CAFÉ project and its contribution to a broader national initiative to mobilize an architecture policy for Canada through broad public consultation. Nova Scotia architect and RAIC Atlantic Regional Director, **Gregory MacNeil**, summarized RAIC programs aimed at advancing architectural excellence and enhancing public and political appreciation of architecture's value and impact. Prof. **François Dufaux** and graduate-diploma student **Maxime Nadon-Roger** from Université Laval discussed Québec's progress toward a provincial architectural strategy and the unique role the school of architecture plays in reconciling forward-looking ambitions with respect for tradition. Professor **Ted Cavanagh** of Dalhousie University spoke to the importance of elevating research (not just practice) in any conversation about the future of architecture, and to integrating multi-disciplinary research into an architecture policy process, including studies in the social sciences. **Yasmin Al-Samarrai**, the 2018-2019 President of GALDSU, the Graduate Architecture Landscape and Design Student Union at the University of Toronto, commended the multidisciplinary richness of the U. of T. Daniels community and presented some exciting student initiatives in advancing work-life balance, including yoga for architects, film nights, TGIF parties, and a rigorous health and well-being report. **Matthew Gillingham**, a current Master of Architecture thesis student at Dalhousie University, shared a philosophy of architectural education as

"learning how to learn," which includes learning to appreciate architecture as a verb; to embrace collaboration as key to creativity; and to discover links between personal interests (like grilled cheese sandwiches and drumming) and the synaesthetic pleasures of making and experiencing architecture. **Jessica Piper**, thesis student and president of the University of Manitoba Association of Architecture Students (UMAAS), presented the architectural situation in Winnipeg as a complex nexus of creativity and struggle: a laboratory for hands-on making and successful emerging practitioners, yet also a place continuing to grapple with issues of urban sprawl and social injustice. **Peter Braithwaite**, a Halifax-based architect, shared his trajectory from carpenter to Dalhousie architecture graduate, to design apprentice, to principal of Peter Braithwaite Studio Ltd., with its strong commitment to collaborative processes, design-build and craftsmanship. **Catherine Hamel**, Associate Professor at the University of Calgary, presented a series of probing questions and poetic observations, drawing inspiration from the ancient deity of doorways (Janus), who looks both forward and backward – simultaneously to the future and the past; and the words of Julian Barnes, who reminds us: "You put together two things that have not been put together before. And the world is changed."





Brian MacKay-Lyons, of MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects, brought the presentations to a close with inspiring built examples and reminders of architecture's social agency. Echoing the poet William Carlos Williams, he asserted "ideas only in things."

Dialogue and Debate

Following the presentations, the assembly divided into smaller groups to begin the interactive core of the CAFÉ: round-table consultations on a set of themes and questions concerning architecture's relation to Place, People, Prosperity and Potential.

Concurrently – across the Bay of Fundy in Moncton – dozens of architects and interns assembled in a meeting of the Architects' Association of New Brunswick (AANB) to discuss these same four themes. Reporting on the consultations began with a virtual exchange between Dalhousie students in Halifax and AANB professionals in Moncton, sharing insights on their respective conversations. AANB past-president **Don Sterritt** reminded everyone that an architect's design attention must extend far beyond the footprint of any building, to enrich the public realm, streetscapes and life of a community. He also emphasized the importance of architects lending their skillsets to the broader social good by participating in activities like Planning Advisory Boards and Community Groups, which precede design work but often establish design agendas and collective aspirations.

Meanwhile, around the tables in Halifax, students articulated a range of issues: the pressing need for present and future architects to tackle the climate crisis and to embrace sustainable design as integral to design excellence; the importance of trans-disciplinary collaboration, such as the crucial

“ ... sharing and community give us an opportunity to develop new forms of policy making. ”
- Sarah Yoes
Dalhousie graduate student

role of humanities in design education to help foster ethical practitioners; and concerns that new developments disregard the history of a place and lack strategies for listening to people, especially Indigenous Peoples. At the same time, students were optimistic that architectural leadership – coupled with public and political support – could renew relations with communities, restore connectivity and local economies, and harness architecture as a powerful tool of reconciliation.

In the closing comments, University of Calgary graduate students **John Baziuk** and **Modjeh Kamal** – who were visiting the east coast of Canada for the first time – expressed gratitude for the opportunity and "unforgettable experience" to discuss these large questions among their new-found Canadian peers. There was a profound sense of common ground being established and expanded, and an inspiring curiosity about the diversity of perspectives, enthusiasms and concerns.

As AANB architect Don Sterritt offered in a follow-up remark, "The conversation with Dalhousie students brought home the concept that this is a much broader initiative

than a professional workshop in a conference room. The notion that we were participating in an initiative that others are also addressing, from different perspectives, makes people aware that they are contributing to something significant."

The next challenge for both the academic and professional sectors is to expand the circle of conversation to even more public arenas.

Continuing the Conversation

The Canadian Architecture Forums on Education will continue its inclusive arc from East to West with CAFÉ Québec, hosted by the Université de Montréal, on November 11th. Subsequent CAFÉs include CAFÉ Ontario at Ryerson University on February 6, 2020; CAFÉ Prairie at the University of Manitoba on February 28; and CAFÉ West at the University of Calgary on March 12.

If you would like to participate in the CAFÉ initiative, but cannot attend in person, you may join the conversation by completing the CAFÉ Questionnaire and/or by responding to the Call for Manifestos, which invites you to creatively describe your vision, question or concern about the future of architecture.

Full details are available on the website: <https://architecturecanada.ca/> For the Survey and Call for Manifestos click ENGAGE.

For information on the national policy initiative, visit <http://riseforarchitecture.com/>

CAFÉ is supported by a SSHRC Connection grant and contributions from twelve architecture programs represented by the Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture (CCUSA).

café QUÉBEC

Toward an Architecture Policy for Canada

CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE FORUMS ON EDUCATION FORUMS CANADIENS D'ARCHITECTURE SUR L'ÉDUCATION

November 18, 2019

NEWS



“ Make architecture
a public policy.

- Anne Cormier
/ Atelier Big City

”

CAFÉ Québec: Continuing the Conversation on Architectural Education, Research and Advocacy

On a cold Remembrance Day (Jour du Souvenir), architecture students, educators, practitioners, activists, and researchers gathered at the Université de Montréal at the foot of Mount-Royal for the second forum in the series of Canadian Architecture Forums on Education, or CAFÉs. The event was hosted in the north-east wing of a former convent built in 1936, occupied by the Faculty of Architecture since the seventies and renovated by the Montreal firms Saucier + Perrotte and Menkès Shooner Dagenais in the nineties. About 120 people assembled to consider topics related to Place, People, Prosperity and Potential, while considering how a national architecture policy might inspire positive change.

The event began with brief presentations. Director **Jacques Lachapelle** welcomed visitors, while Professors **Jean-Pierre Chupin** (Université de Montréal) and **Lisa Landrum** (University of Manitoba) introduced the CAFÉs and the aim to involve academic communities in describing architectural

quality and imagining the future of architecture in Canada. Dr. Landrum stressed the importance of involving students and educators in the process, and alluded to etymological links between policy and *polis*, which is Greek for “city” – comprised of citizens speaking and acting together.

Why a national architectural policy?

A variety of regional speakers and student delegates addressed the CAFÉ questions and themes. Architect and professor **Anne Cormier** made a presentation about her career leading to the motto of her architectural firm (Atelier Big City): “Make Architecture a Public Policy.” The firm’s slogan emphasizes that architects have the power to question conventions and redefine the contours of the status quo built environment. Architect **Anne Carrier**, president of the Association of Architects in Private Practice in Québec (AAPPQ), addressed the question of “why a national architectural policy?” – arguing that a policy would help define and promote architecture quality in order to improve our living environment. Former president of the Order of Architects of Québec (OAQ), **Nathalie Dion**, presented the work conducted since 2014 to actively support and shape the adoption of a Québec Architecture Policy, summarized in a document titled *Livre Blanc pour une politique québécoise de l'architecture* published in March 2018.

Bruno Demers, sociologist and director of Architects Without Borders Québec, advocated for a more humanitarian approach to architecture and outlined a variety of concerns, notably architectural illiteracy in Canada; the scarcity of critical architectural journalism; the lack of politicization of

architects; and the need to support climate action, Indigenous communities, social justice, and research. **Maggie Cabana**, an architect with the Montreal-based practice Architecture Microclimat and 2015 graduate of Université de Montréal, presented examples of small interventions having broad community impact, while emphasizing pressing questions and concerns, including the need to advocate for more accessible and just cities. **Maude Tousignant-Bilodeau**, president of the Université de Montréal student association, *Regroupement d'Étudiants en Architecture* (RÉA), described the status of mental health in architecture schools and the involvement of the RÉA in addressing an ethos of care for student well-being. Finally, **Jonathan Kabumbe** and **Noémie Lavigne**, student-delegates from the McEwen School of Architecture at Laurentian University, presented some of the special focuses of their school’s pedagogy, including the valuation of sustainable building materials, especially wood; the integration of regional and international research trips; and community-oriented design projects involving children and Indigenous groups.

Conversations and Complex Consensus

Following the presentations, attendees joined roundtable discussions, each moderated by a student who oriented conversations and ensured all voices were heard.

As a visiting delegate from Carleton University, I joined a table including representatives from McGill University, Université Laval and Université de Montréal to address the topic of People. We asked questions such as what is the most pressing issue regarding the influence of architecture



“ If the future of our profession depends on a specific issue it may be the capacity to contribute to the fight for a more accessible and just city. ”
- Maggie Cabana

We are indebted to the dedicated and generous organizers of CAFÉ Quebec. Too rare are the occasions to gather people from different Canadian universities as well as practicing architects and professional institutions. The CAFÉ was an important way to catalyze serious conversation and intensify thinking about a possible architecture policy for Canada. That timely initiative – following the recent election – has the potential to bring forward changes at the national level in the years to come.

upon individuals and different communities? How can an architecture policy contribute to improving those preoccupations? What are the best examples to illustrate the positive impact of architecture on people? And, what strategies could be employed to help the public better understand the value of well-designed environments?

While it was not difficult to reach consensus about pressing issues, it was more challenging to identify precise strategies to address them. Highlights of the discussion included the suggestion that more education and communication was necessary to generate a better understanding of architecture amongst the general public. It was proposed to give more media attention to the built environment by raising the quality and quantity of architectural criticism in mainstream publications and newspapers. Our group debated if those critics should be architects, academics or unspecialized cultural critics. While there was no consensus on the right background or expertise for critics, there was broad agreement that cross/trans/multi-disciplinary research and collaboration was necessary in architecture. Cross-disciplinarity has the potential to not only deepen appreciation of the built environments in all its complexity, but also to highlight the importance of architecture across diverse domains. Better understanding would mobilize different agents of the built environment, such as entrepreneurs, builders, politicians, institutional boards, and community groups.

Regarding ways that built environments are appreciated, we suggested that the notion of "comfort" might be an accessible way to communicate architecture's qualitative components, thus avoiding a shallow and

ocular-centric interpretation of the built environment. "Comfort" can encompass questions of atmosphere, thermal control, sound quality, natural light, ventilation, safety, aesthetic and synesthetic experience, as well as a sense of community and belonging. Re-considering the place and experience of the human as the center of our concern, leads us to think about the more-than-human issues, like relationships to broader ecosystems. Around the table, the climate crisis was the focus of concern, with sustainability conceptualized in terms of resilience, building regulations and architectural strategies, but also the preservation of historic buildings.

Finally, our group pondered the temporalities of architecture – how we account for the integration of the past, as well as the future and responsibility for heritage. Our table suggested that architects might be involved in projects from their very inception, working with clients early to establish parameters and develop holistic approaches. If time scales might help us to consider differently the processes of the built environment, it also conceptualizes progress, value, growth and prosperity under alternative criteria.

Timely Initiative and Vast Potential

The event addressed the importance of policies and the numerous challenges that built environments confront now and will continue to face in the years to come. More work needs to be done to show specific ways that policies might advocate for reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities, for spatial justice in cities, as well as how research and education might tackle questions of environmental sustainability early on in the education.

Now that we have returned to our respective schools, the reflection is not over. In our capacity as educators, students and researchers, it is important to assess the ways that those discussions might influence how we teach and conduct research, and attune us to various forms of activism to enhance our built environments.

Future CAFÉs

The next CAFÉ will be hosted by Ryerson University on February 6, 2020; followed by CAFÉ Prairie at the University of Manitoba on February 28, 2020; and CAFÉ West at the University of Calgary on March 12, 2020.

Canadian Architecture Forums on Education are supported by a SSHRC Connection grant and the Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture (CCUSA), representing twelve architecture programs in Canada.

/ Émélie Desrochers-Turgeon
Émélie is a Ph.D. student and Vanier scholar at Carleton University's Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism. She is also coordinator of the research collaborative CRIPTIC (www.criptic.org).



café ONTARIO

Toward an Architecture Policy for Canada

CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE FORUMS ON EDUCATION FORUMS CANADIENS D'ARCHITECTURE SUR L'ÉDUCATION NEWS

February 24, 2020



“The existential threat of a changing climate must inform our personal, educational and professional practices.”

- Sustainability Collective
University of Waterloo

CAFÉ Ontario

On Thursday, February 6th 2020, over one hundred students, academics and professionals gathered in a former fish processing plant – now 307 Sidewalk Labs – to grapple with the slippery question of the future of architecture.

CAFÉ Ontario, the third in a series of Canadian Architecture Forums on Education, was organized by the Ryerson University M.Arch class of 2021 in conjunction with their annual student-led symposium. Student and faculty delegates joined the event from schools across Canada: from the University of British Columbia, Dalhousie University, University of Manitoba, University of Toronto and Waterloo University. The Sidewalk Labs innovation hub and community-outreach centre on Toronto's St. Lawrence Blvd East provided the perfect provocative setting for this transformational dialogue on how politics and architecture shape our communities.

Calls to Action and Awareness

CAFÉ Ontario started with a series of short presentations to set an aspirational tone for subsequent consultations.

Stephanie Steriotis, Ryerson M.Arch student and lead organizer of the symposium, launched the event by thanking the team and describing the tradition of Ryerson student leadership in engaging timely topics via public debate. The annual off-campus symposium mixes emergent and established voices on critical issues facing society, and challenges present and future professionals to rethink their role and modes of practice.

Lisa Landrum, CAFÉ Project Lead and Associate Dean Research at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Architecture, shared an overview of the CAFÉ initiative and summarized past and upcoming events. The series of forums is involving all twelve University architecture programs in five forums over the course of one year, enabling the next generation of designers to envision a future architecture policy for Canada and to inform its priorities and ambition.

Craig Race, architect and co-founder of Lanescape, provided a compelling example of how policy-making and design-thinking can creatively coalesce. He described a vision for responsibly densifying Toronto's urban core with quality laneway housing and accessible greenspace via innovative zoning policy. Such micro-interventions are already having macro-effects for a more sustainable and pedestrian-friendly urban fabric.

Richard Witt, architect and principal at Quadrangle, shared lessons learned from the process of creating Ontario's first mid-rise mass timber building, 80 Atlantic. Taking advantage of a 2014 amendment to the Ontario Building Code, the award-winning five-story commercial complex features

exposed glulam beams and columns, supporting a nail-laminated timber floor. The result is not only a beautiful and bright open work space, but a building that acts as an agent of environmental change by sequestering carbon and offsetting more greenhouse gas intensive construction practices.

Next up, University of Toronto graduate students and GALDSU representatives shared initiatives and option studios at the Daniels Faculty of Architecture Landscape and Design. **Adam Krajewski**, **Valerie Marshall** and **Jana Nitschke** each reflected on how the Daniels pedagogy and new facility balances radical technology-enhanced design exploration with community engagement and experiential learning via global field trips.

Devin Arndt and **Nicole Rak**, M.Arch students and Sustainability Collective Directors at University of Waterloo, shared a variety of bottom-up student initiatives that are motivating institutional change. Their advocacy and activism include waste management systems for design studios, and principle-based climate actions that acknowledge inextricable links between architectural decisions, environmental rights and human rights.

Jesse Martyn and **Vincent Perron**, UBC graduate students and members of the Architecture Union of Students (ARCHUS), provided an overview of work and wellness strategies at the School of Architecture + Landscape Architecture (SALA). Studying in the context of Vancouver's housing crisis and investment-driven development, SALA students are grounded by environmental, ethical and speculative design approaches fostering resilience, social well-being, material knowledge, and fun.



“What is our role in architecture policy?”

- Equality in Architecture (EiA)
Dalhousie University



Finally, **Karen Mills** and **Sarah Yoes**, M.Arch students at Dalhousie University, shared the goals and accomplishments of the student-led organization Equality in Architecture (EiA). Aimed at supporting diversity in areas of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and accessibility, EiA is raising awareness within and beyond academia via knowledge-building workshops, research and special events.

Consultation & Conversation

Fueled by these examples of design and advocacy, CAFÉ Ontario participants turned their attention to a set of specific themes for discussion and debate. Thirteen groups joined the round table consultations on questions concerning architecture's impact on Place, People, Prosperity and Potential.

Key take-aways from these animated conversations included the following insight: that any architecture policy must set ambitious yet open-ended goals, so as to be adaptable to different regions and attuned to change over time. For a country as large and diverse as Canada, policy adaptability to local conditions is a crucial challenge. One consultation group, which had focused on Prosperity, emphasized architecture's role in shaping not simply buildings but society and identified the need to redefine the role of the architect in terms of listening to and interpreting the desires of communities. Another group discussing Prosperity asked *whose prosperity?* - suggesting equity and inclusion ought to be guiding principles in setting goals and assessing success. While there was some concern that status-quo development, suburban sprawl and revenue-driven design would be difficult to combat, it was highlighted that existing policies enabling such practices are devised by people, so people can change and improve

them. There was also an overwhelming sense that public education about the impact of design on daily life should be enhanced. As one group stressed: understanding architecture's impact on environmental and social justice is not only broadly important, but urgent.

Architecture cannot be divorced from politics!

After a stimulating social break and delicious catered feast, participants reassembled for an engaging panel discussion. Moderated by former *Canadian Architect* editor **Ian Chodikoff**, the four panelists included: **Anne Cormier**, Professor and LEAP Researcher at the Université de Montréal, and co-founder of Atelier Big City, whose motto is "make architecture a public policy"; **Toon Dreessen**, President of DCA Architects in Ottawa, OAA past-President, and member of the working group mobilizing a national architecture policy and *Rise for Architecture* platform; **Peter Milczyn**, former Ontario Minister of Housing and architecturally-trained city-building strategist with PM Strategies; and **Alex Josephson**, lecturer at University of Toronto's Daniels Faculty and co-founder of PARTISANS, an entrepreneurial architectural practice striving "to make the improbable possible." Together, these politically-savvy maker-thinkers delved deeper into the role of architects in elevating public understanding of the value of design, and underscoring the links between architecture and politics and the need for more architecturally-trained individuals to serve in government.

Ongoing Discussion

The next morning, student leaders from three Universities met at *Page One* - a favorite café among Ryerson journalist students - to reflect and plan further initiatives.

Future Forums

The next forum - CAFÉ Prairie - will be hosted by the University of Manitoba on February 28, 2020, and will include a Nation-to-Nation conversation on Indigenous Principles, Perspectives and Practices. The fifth and final CAFÉ West will be hosted at the University of Calgary on March 12, 2020.

More Ways to Participate

Aside from attending a CAFÉ in person, anyone can participate in the initiative by completing the online survey and/or by responding to the Call for Manifestos, which invites students to describe a vision, question or concern about the future of architecture. All feedback will help shape the priorities and ambition of any future architecture policy for Canada. Full details are available on the website: <https://architecturecanada.ca>

Canadian Architecture Forums on Education are supported by a SSHRC Connection grant and the Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture (CCUSA), representing twelve architecture programs in Canada.

/Lisa Landrum



café PRAIRIE

Toward an Architecture Policy for Canada

CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE FORUMS ON EDUCATION FORUMS CANADIENS D'ARCHITECTURE SUR L'ÉDUCATION

NEWS

March 6, 2020



“ Looking back to
move forward.

– Ryan Gorrie
Architect at Brook McIlroy

CAFÉ Prairie

CAFÉ Prairie was hosted on February 28th 2020 at the University of Manitoba, on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. As the site for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and with its strong commitment to Indigenous achievement, the University of Manitoba was a fitting venue to support a special CAFÉ conversation on Indigenous principles, perspectives and practices in shaping Canada's architecture.

Nation-to-Nation

The morning started with a smudge and song ceremony led by the **Kind Hart Women Singers**. Scented smoke, rhythmic drums and multiple Indigenous languages filled Centre Space of the John A. Russell Building, the first purpose-built architecture school in Canada. University of Manitoba architecture students and members of the newly-founded Indigenous Design and Planning Student Association (IDPSA), **Danielle Desjarlais** and **Reanna Merasty**, introduced and moderated the conversation. Entitled *Nation-to-Nation*, the panel discussion aimed to deepen understanding of multiple First Nations communities; to acknowledge Canada's commitment to nation-to-nation relations with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples

based on recognition of rights, respect and co-operation; and to ask how architects can help advance the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The panel was generously sponsored by the Manitoba Association of Architects.

David Fortin, member of the Métis Nation of Ontario and director of the McEwen School of Architecture at Laurentian University, began by presenting architecture's role in fostering relationships, reciprocity and respect. The McEwen school aims to instill these values by incorporating Indigenous content throughout the curriculum in studies of ecology, cultural sustainability, precedents and history, and through land-based teachings, ceremony, language and engagement with elders.

Anishinaabe architect and senior associate at Brook McIlroy, **Ryan Gorrie**, shared a vision of "looking back to move forward," embracing a multi-generational approach to learning and design. Through examples of award-winning built projects, he showed the potential to meaningfully recover rich stories and histories of Indigenous cultures in vital and contemporary ways.

Roxanne Greene, Anishinaabe councillor for Shoal Lake 40, emphasized the role of dialogue and respect in all partnerships. Most important, she stressed, is an open heart. Roxanne's recent design-build collaboration with University of Manitoba students, Indigenous scholar Shawn Bailey, and Shoal Lake residents and Elders exemplifies possibilities for community partnerships.

Gitksan Nation artist, author, storyteller and Prairie Climate Centre technician, **Brett Huson**, called on architects to *truly* "acknowledge the land" as that which we inherit and become responsible for; and as that which we come from and return to. The

land shapes us and we must give back to it – ten times what we take.

Amina Lalor, a Métis-Irish-Vietnamese graduate student at the University of Waterloo's School of Architecture and co-founder of *Treaty Lands Global Stories*, challenged architects to critically acknowledge the colonial nature of their practice, and to attempt a deep site analysis of where they work through decolonizing place narratives. Her collaborative project with University of Guelph Indigenous scholars called *Nokum's House* provides one possibility for a land-based research lab.

Nicole Luke, an urban Inuk born in Yellowknife, now pursuing a M.Arch at the University of Manitoba, described an apparent disconnect between architectural education and northern communities, as well as opportunities for work and research. She also speculated on how an architecture policy might help bridge gaps, while ensuring sustainability and Inuit autonomy.

Cheyenne Thomas, designer and RAIC Indigenous Task Force member, addressed the challenges experienced by many Indigenous students attending university while acknowledging recent positive changes, evidenced by the increasing number of Indigenous architecture students, mutual support networks, and open discussions like the one underway.

The panel conversation elaborated on many of these topics. All participants were inspired to seriously consider what grounds them as designers; to make space for true agency and expression; to hold governments and institutions accountable for promises; and to rally around concerns that unite non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, such as care for the planet, land, water and future generations.



“ I hope to be a part of the movement to bring environmental and architectural aspects to arctic infrastructure and inspire Inuit youth. ”

- Nicole Luke
M.Arch Student, University of Manitoba



CAFÉ Conversations

After sharing a meal of bison stew, provided by Indigenous-owned Feast Café Bistro, participants reconvened for an afternoon of presentations and consultations.

CAFÉ Project Lead, **Lisa Landrum**, relayed the impetus for these SSHRC-supported trans-national conversations, intended to involve students in defining the scope and aims of an architecture policy for Canada. University of Manitoba M.Arch students and graduate representatives, **Jessica Piper** and **Tia Watson**, described the experiential learning aspects of the Faculty of Architecture, including community-outreach and design-build opportunities. **Johanna Hurme**, co-founder of the award-winning Winnipeg firm 5468796 Architecture, stressed that any architecture policy must address the “missing middle” – through sustainable development, affordable housing, specific measurable targets, incentives, quality-based selection processes, and education. **Julia Nakanishi**, M.Arch student at the University of Waterloo, shared initiatives she has led as co-director of the BRIDGE Centre for Architecture and Design. These include a recent interactive exhibition called *Common Waters*, examining the future of communities in relation to a transforming environment. **Sarah Cooper**, professor of City Planning at the University of Manitoba, addressed the specific challenge of de-commodifying and decolonizing “home” and the general imperative that policy reform be an agent of social justice. **Nik Luka**, professor of Architecture and Urban Planning at McGill University, described strategies of “unforgetting” the wrongs of the past through curriculum reform and community engagement. M.Arch students from UBC’s School of Architecture + Landscape Architecture (SALA), **Emilia Brasdefer**, **Thomas Foster** and

Halley Sveinson, outlined various streams of student-led social and environmental activism, and posed specific questions as to how any architecture policy would advance positive potential in areas of human and animal rights, inclusive urbanism and sustainability. **Monica Giesbrecht**, landscape architect and principal at HTFC Planning & Design, shared an ethos of humility and open-mindedness in approaching design. She also highlighted the potential for collaborative research and outreach projects to instill a love of landscape among youth and to create more sustainable communities. **Max Vos Coupal**, M.Arch student at Laurentian University, presented an overview of the people, place and material sensibilities defining the McEwen School of Architecture community. UBC architecture professor **John Bass** stressed the importance of simple yet powerful communication skills for any architect, and described four overlapping modes of practice crucial to the evolving profession: artisan, ecologist, industrialist and activist. **Wins Bridgman**, co-director of BridgmanCollaborative Architecture demonstrated the firm’s motto of *making public work* by sharing activist-designs engaging humor, metaphor and direct calls for social equity. Finally, McGill University architecture students **Odile Lamy**, **Michael Kurt Mayer** and **Olivier Therrien** presented a series of pedagogical strategies aimed at learning how to engage unpredictability, to work with communities, to model environmental systems, and to value processes of formation over form.

Fueled by the examples and advocacy of the presenters, CAFÉ participants turned to focus on more intimate round-table conversations addressing specific themes of architecture’s impact on Place, People, Prosperity and Potential.

Provocations and Questions

While difficult to synthesize the full day of discourse, two guest respondents provided key concluding remarks at the end of CAFÉ Prairie. **Rafico Ruiz**, Associate Director of Research at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, highlighted the inspirational atmosphere in the room and the invention of new relationships and possibilities formed through dialogue. He encouraged participants to engage cultural institutions, like the CCA, and to help ensure they are reflecting goals and aspirations of the communities they serve. He also provocatively asked how an architecture policy might be manifested as an exhibition, and what would be its interactive medium and rousing title.

Andrea Rounce, University of Manitoba Political Studies professor, posed a series of questions grounded in her expertise in public administration: What would a successful policy look like? How would we know it’s successful? What assumptions are design professionals and students making about social change? Who drives this change? And, who prevents it? Is public policy sufficient to make change, or does it also require that change be undertaken by the people and professions represented in this event?

CAFÉ Prairie culminated with a tour of design studios and the CAFÉ CAFÉ exhibition in the Arch2 Gallery, and a social mixer.

As a personal observation, at the end of this CAFÉ (as with all of them), and especially upon hearing the student table captains, I have felt convinced that positive change is already underway and the future of architecture is in good hands.

The fifth and final CAFÉ will be held at the University of Calgary’s City Building Design Lab on March 12, 2020.

/Lisa Landrum

café WEST

Toward an Architecture Policy for Canada

CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE FORUMS ON EDUCATION
FORUMS CANADIENS D'ARCHITECTURE SUR L'ÉDUCATION

March 20, 2020

NEWS



“ We are all in this together. ”

– Madysen McKay
Architect with the City of Calgary

CAFÉ West Place and Circumstance

On Thursday, March 12, 2020 – a day before social distancing and cancelled events became the norm due to the coronavirus – keen participants from four provinces gathered at the University of Calgary's downtown research hub to join the last in a series of Canadian Architecture Forums on Education. The unusual circumstances served only to strengthen collective concern for public health, community well-being, and the quality of Canada's social infrastructure.

Participants met on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, on traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, home to: the Blackfoot Confederacy, comprising the Siksika, Piikani and Kainai First Nations; the Tsuut'ina First Nation; the Stoney Nakoda, including the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Wesley First Nations; and the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

CAFÉ West took place across from City Hall in Calgary's former public library, a site for seeking and sharing knowledge for over a half-century. Recast as City Building Design Lab (CBDLab), the building now serves as a satellite event centre for the University of Calgary's School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL). Alongside CAFÉ West, the CBDLab hosted an array of parallel activities: a press conference with the Mayor

of Calgary, Neheed Nenshi, to launch the "9 Block initiative," a collaboration between the city and SAPL to address vibrancy, safety and social inclusion in the downtown core; two Design Matters public lectures; an exhibition; and multiple "block week" courses with guest instructors, including an Arch Agency course taught by CAFÉ project lead Lisa Landrum and Kris Kelly-Frère, social innovation designer and manager of the Vivo Play Project. Arch Agency students engaged a week of experimental play, ethnographic adventure, videography and performative storytelling, while exploring their own sense of agency in fostering human thriving. As part of the Arch Agency course, students produced multimedia masks and manifestos, and acted as creative protagonists and table captains at CAFÉ West, leading discussions on Canada's architectural future.

Words and Works

CAFÉ West began with a welcome and rally from John Brown, Dean of the University of Calgary's School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, and President of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. Reminding participants of a variety of pressing societal concerns intersecting design professions, Dean Brown emphasized the timeliness of the CAFÉ conversation and the collaborative nature of its endeavor, involving schools, provincial associations, and a national advocacy body. Lisa Landrum, CAFÉ Project Lead and Associate Dean Research at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Architecture, provided context and background to the initiative, while also acknowledging SAPL support from Associate Dean (Architecture) Jason Johnson, Professor Catherine Hamel and a team of event organizers.

Following the introductions, a series of short presentations by students, professors, and regional professionals set the tone and topics for open discussion. Zach Ward, a Master of Architecture student at the University of Calgary, shared perspectives of SAPL students. Focusing on the formative internship process, he suggested how the profession can better support graduates in realizing career goals through diversified experience, enhanced mentorship, interdisciplinary opportunities and research development. Augmented by student drawings and designs, Zach presented varied voices and visions for an architecture policy, including priorities of environmental stewardship and public engagement, and the need for any policy to evolve over time. Kate Allen, principal and founding partner of FRANK Architecture & Interiors, described a series of ways in which architecture positively impacts people by fostering social connections; humanizing neglected 'in between' spaces; encouraging curiosity; and inspiring communities. As Kate emphasized – with exquisite examples of FRANK's built works – good food, comfort and storytelling are key agents in creating social bonds, a common sense of dignity and architectural meaning. David Down, senior architect and chief urban designer with the City of Calgary, tackled the difficulty of defining good design. With a presentation entitled, "Quantifying Quality," David shared the recent Calgary Municipal Development Plan and Quality Design Project, relaying specific strategies to understand design expectations, perceptions and performance. Jean-Pierre Chupin, Professor of Architecture at the Université de Montréal and Canada Research Chair in Architecture, Competitions and Mediations of Excellence, expanded on the challenge



“ I anticipate a career in which environmental stewardship inhabits a primary role in every design decision. ”

- Caleb Hildenbrandt & Zach Ward
M.Arch Students, University of Calgary



of quantifying quality by sharing steps taken toward creating an Atlas of Research on Excellence in Architecture (AREA). Building on his recent work in establishing a Canadian Competitions Catalogue – and now in partnership with dozens of universities, cultural institutions and professional associations – Dr. Chupin described a new research initiative to aggregate collective wisdom and support architecture policies with reliable data and analyses of criteria for architectural excellence. Next up, Carleton University students **Kim Langat** and **Vedad Haghghi** described life and learning at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism. Highlights included student publications, awards programs, directed study abroad adventures, diverse research labs and robust public forums. Significantly, these students emphasized that the socially-supportive and structurally-expressive architecture building is itself an influential agent in their education. **Alkarim Devani**, President at RNDSSQR (Round Square), began his presentation with a bold question: *Is great architecture alone enough?* As a business graduate, now leading an award-winning place-making practice, Alkarim argued that creating thriving communities requires a holistic vision not just for buildings but for their management, socialization, neighborhood development and long-term adaptability. He advocated for a design policy that views the well-being of people, place and urban settings as intertwined, and engages tenants, owners, managers, and local merchants as entities in a mutually-supportive ecosystem. **Logan Armstrong**, an intern at Works of Architecture, outlined architecture’s effect on cognitive experience. Bridging neuroscience, psychology and architecture, he described how aesthetic experience impacts health and well-being. Such research could help

designers understand the personal effects of challenges like mass urbanization and social isolation. **Shawna Cochrane** and **Madyson McKay**, architects with the City of Calgary, shared their collective wisdom from extensive outreach and project management experience on numerous municipal projects. Shawna highlighted the role of the city as a building owner, and thus a key shaper of public infrastructure. Calgary owns over 800 buildings: from recreation facilities and emergency service centres, to parks and pump stations. She also emphasized the role policy plays in establishing a common language for the desired outcomes and impacts of civic projects. Madyson described recent affordable housing initiatives and stressed the links between quality housing and healthy citizens. Finally, **Michael Plummer** and **Stephanie Steriotis**, M.Arch students at Ryerson University, who recently led CAFÉ Ontario, shared examples of work and insights from studying on a dense urban campus. Drawing lessons from Ryerson’s masterplan – which prioritizes intensification, pedestrianization and design excellence – they suggested municipal and national policies might be modeled on such forward-looking campus plans, which also mix everyday urbanism with academic research and edifying play.

Dialogue and Debate

Inspired by presentations and provocations, participants turned to focus on conversations in small groups led by Arch Agency students and delegates from visiting schools. As with each CAFÉ, these fluid exchanges – aided by doodling devices and word cards – generated memorable experiences and meaningful take-aways. For instance, reporting on a discussion of architecture’s Potential, SAPL student **Inioluwa Adedapo**

emphasized the need to design the *right* thing, before designing the thing right – that is, to ensure from the start that projects are oriented in the best direction via broad community input. M.Arch student **James Luca Pinel**, from Université de Montréal, summarized his group’s reflections on Place with a diagram of interconnection between creativity and complexity, listening and trust. And SAPL student **Daniel Howard** distilled broad conversations about design’s impact on People, as an “architecture of empathy” – involving continual dialogue between designers and citizens.

Decolonization

After a refreshing interlude, CAFÉ West culminated with a special presentation by the Design Matters Somerville Lecturer **Chris Cornelius**, member of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, founding principal of *studio:indigenous*, and architecture professor at the University of Wisconsin. With imagistic words, animistic works and palimpsestic drawings, Chris demonstrated the power of engaging design as ceremony via storytelling and participation in a world of tricky reciprocities. His talk ended with a message that resonated with CAFÉ Prairie’s opening premise: to make architecture indigenous again – not through applied styles but with open-minded and open-hearted involvement with others, the land and histories of place.

Café Culmination

Thank you to the nearly 1000 students, faculty and professionals who participated directly in these five CAFÉ events over the last six months. The Call for Manifestos and online survey remain open until May 15th. A final report will be prepared and posted in summer 2020. Follow announcements on Instagram **@archcanadacafe**.