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CDNS 4403-5003

Sustainable Heritage Case Study
Class Presentation
Nov.28, 2017

Spaces of Community & Cultural Recovery

The Iskotew Sweat Lodge at Health
Canada Headquarters, Tunney's
Pasture, *Ottawa*

Tunney's Pasture



Brooke Claxton Building & map of Tunney's Pasture federal campus, Ottawa, ON. Google Maps 2017.

<https://www.google.ca/maps/place/Iskotev+Lodge/@45.4061524,-75.7365624,1021m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x4cce046cce02ff2d0xe8c7ad1d63fcfa36:8m2!3d45.4087643!4d-75.7373575>

Description

- Situated at 70 Columbine Driveway, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, ON.
- The Brooke Claxton Building is a Classified Federal Heritage Building.
- It is occupied by Health Canada's headquarters, and the Iskotew Healing Lodge is situated in the basement.
- Designed by architecture firms Balharrie, Helmer and Morin, & Greenspoon, Frelander and Dunne. The Iskotew Healing Lodge is designed by Metis architect Douglas Cardinal.
- Its architecture stands out as Modern International Style with Brutalism elements mixed in. It stands 19 stories tall and is the 9th building on campus. Its function is mainly office space, but also includes a cafeteria, fitness centre, print shop, sweat lodge and a Health Canada crisis centre in the basement.
- The building was a result of the federal government attempting to consolidate their departmental administrative buildings with new Modernist buildings and move out from the downtown core to build their presence in the suburbs.

Brooke Claxton Building

B. Butler. 2012. Brooke Claxton Building, Ottawa, ON.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABrooke_Claxton_Building_from_the_front_2.jpg)

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Stakeholders

- **Health Canada & Federal Government of Canada:** Occupants and owners of the site.
- **Local residents & businesses:** The building is a source of employment, clientele and resources for them and it impacts their everyday life.
- **HOK Architects:** Architectural firm hired to study the building's performance and chosen to carry out the Tunney's Pasture 25-year redevelopment plan.
- **Local indigenous people & Indigenous communities across Canada:** Elders & users of the Iskotew Lodge. Cree people run the lodge but all nations and religions welcomed.
- **Peace Flame Drum Circle:** Regular users, promoting equality & peace through gatherings.
- **Ottawa Civic Hospital:** Interested in the redevelopment of the site for possible expansion.
- **Odawa Native Friendship Centre:** Nominated & supported the Iskotew Lodge for the Wolf Project. Potential user and partner.
- **Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health:** Nominated & supported the Iskotew Lodge for the Wolf Project. Potential user and partner.
- **Local Universities and Schools:** Potential users and researchers from the medical field, cultural studies, and indigenous & Canadian studies.

Timeline

- 17th Century onwards: European contact with Aboriginal peoples & increase in the dissemination of disease.
- 1867: *British North American Act* transferred the responsibility of managing the Native population & the lands reserved for them to the federal government.

Anthony Tunney settled on the site & occupied the land up to Parkdale Ave.
- 1904 - *Department of Indian Affairs* appoint a General Medical Superintendent to begin medical programs and to develop health facilities in reserves.
- 1945 - *Dept. of National Health & Welfare* is established and begins providing medical services
- 1950's - Tunney sold his land and the federal government built here fleeing the downtown core in fear of nuclear attack from the Cold war.
- 1961-1964 - Construction of the Tunney's Pasture Campus.
- 1974 - *Policy of the Federal Government Concerning Indian Health Services*: Government is under no obligation to provide health services to Indigenous people, but will make such services more readily available for remote places & give financial aid.
- 1979 - *Indian Health Policy*: Recognition of community importance to build strong relations between indigenous people and the federal government in order to provide better Healthcare systems.
- 1980 - *Medical Services Branch & the Strategic Policy, Planning & Analysis Directory*: Marks the beginning of transferring of control of health services to Aboriginal people.
- 2000 - Medical Services Branch renamed "First Nations and Inuit Health Branch," who now occupy the site.
- 2000 – 2002 - The Iskotew Healing Lodge is completed. Other modifications are assumed to have been completed around this time, reconfiguring floors to meet space requirements and renovations for universal access.
- 2003 - Iskotew Healing Lodge won an award from the Wolf Project for excellence in promoting respect & understanding between cultures and race.
- 2005 - Brooke Claxton Building was designated as a Classified Federal Heritage Building.
- 2015 - The HOK Architectural firm won competition to re-develop Tunney's Pasture as Canada's first mixed-use development lead by the federal government.

Natural/Cultural Heritage

- Designated as Classical Federal Heritage Building due to:
 - Historical, Architectural, & Environmental values
- **Natural Heritage:**
 - The Brooke Claxton Building has a distinct relationship with its environment. It stands as both the landmark and focal point of Tunney's Pasture and its surrounding community.
 - It is also a landmark to the West of Ottawa as it was the first building to surpass the height restriction (150ft) set by Peace Tower downtown. This led to other buildings doing the same and ultimately shaped Ottawa's downtown skyline.
- **Cultural Heritage:**
 - The site commemorates achievements in Canadian medical history by demonstrating the role of the federal government at ensuring health standards in the postwar period.
 - It is associated with the Canada Pension Plan, Medicare, Health Canada Act, and Canadian Assistance Plan.
 - Other historical associations are from being the first building to break the height zoning code for skyscrapers in Ottawa's downtown, and from being a prime example of fine architecture from the 3rd phase of constructing Tunney's Pasture.
 - The architectural style of the building marks a time when the federal government was rebuilding its departmental administrative buildings according to this modern international style & brutalism in order to unify and modernize their structures. There was a focus on using qualitative materials to express its materiality and emphasizes the image of Tunney's Pasture.
 - It is equally significant due to its functional design & craftsmanship as a modern building. Some of its defining characteristics are:
 - Elegance, richness, mass, composition based on scale, balance and quality.

Iskotew Healing Lodge



Douglas Cardinal Architect. Iskotew Healing Lodge, interior, Brooke Claxton Building, Ottawa, ON.
<http://www.djcarchitect.com/work/#/iskotew-healing-lodge/>.

Sustainability

- **Economic Sustainability:**
 - Health Canada became known as one of Canada's best diversity employers in 2012, and one of the initiatives used to increase diversity was the installation of the Iskotew Sweat Lodge. The lodge allowed for aboriginal employees to be better accommodated in the workplace.
 - Also, a better dissemination of indigenous cultural knowledge among workers helps them serve a wider clientele and perform more efficiently. Accessibility of information is eased by immediate access for employees, and by the addition of a collection of helpful media on loan.
- **Socio-Cultural Sustainability:**
 - The inclusion of an aboriginal sweat lodge in an urban setting helps Health Canada employees offer a more understanding service, and aboriginal individuals in the area who have lost touch with traditional healing traditions and their culture.
 - Many aboriginal people have lost their traditional knowledge of healing over the years of conflict with the government, so this addition is an attempt to unify these differences and re-introduce traditional aboriginal culture, values and practices in the community.
 - This builds a stronger, healthier and saner community while also promoting spiritual and social healing.
 - Elders from across Canada are invited to host events for a week or two during the year and it sets a national stage for cultural healing and understanding.
 - Promoting sort of stewardship of community health & relationships.
- **Environmental Sustainability:**
 - Modern heritage buildings struggle with adapting to environmentally sustainable standards. After a study done by HOK architects in 2008, Brooke Claxton Building was found to be incredibly vulnerable to climate change. Of the greatest concern was the inaccessibility of the structure compared to contemporary standards, the potential damage to the building's envelope, the overworking of the inefficient cooling systems, and the taxing effect this has on the electrical systems. The new re-development plans to solve some of these problems in the future.



HOK architects. (2008). "Building as an interrelated group of systems" from *Climate Change Vulnerability: A Case Study of Public Buildings*. P. 44:128.

Lessons

- Considering the Aboriginal context on a national stage:
 - The superimposition of the sacred Sweat lodge on a national landmark of healing and federal power on unceded land acts as a type of reconciliation between the two histories & cultures to possibly create a more inclusive heritage narrative.
 - It shows how historical places of healing can serve as a bridge to enhance not only physical & mental health, but also spiritual and cultural health. This allows for both people and whole communities to heal from cultural divides, isolation, alienation, ignorance and discrimination.
 - This promotes communication and understanding for future generations, as well as cultural regeneration, which empowers cultural and social sustainability within the community.

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