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Intersection | Connection | Alliance | Transcendence: Studio Pedagogy Informed + Inspired via Indigenous Culture

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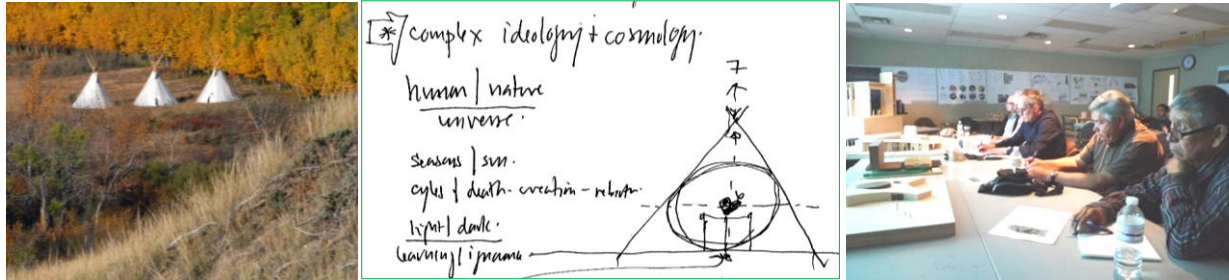
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Studio Pedagogy Informed + Inspired via Indigenous Culture

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Images 1-3: brian r. sinclair 2015

"A little while and I will be gone from among you, when I cannot tell. From nowhere we came, into nowhere we go. What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset." Chief Crowfoot

Modern times move at breath-taking speed with intense pressures to elevate performance based on assumptions that faster is finer, bigger is better and more is more. Education embraces these measures of progress and metrics of success, with expectations that students meet tight deadlines, produce in quantity and compete for attention, resources and accolades.

Studio education is distinctive in higher education with a model of individualized mentoring, iterative exploration, reflective practice, tacit knowing and an equilibrium of intuitive with rational, creative with analytical, and art with science. This paper considers a unique studio focused on a 'centre for Aboriginal culture', having students design a project for an extraordinary community of users/clients, bringing those individuals into resonance with designers, and fostering a climate where 'seeing through the eyes of the other' was fundamental to process and to shaping the generation & resolution of products. Methods included literature work, critical assessment of precedent, experts/stakeholders engagement, cultural immersion (including sacred rituals), and guidance of Elders. This intense, innovative, demanding and complex comprehensive design studio exposed students to rich history, deep culture, and strong values of indigenous peoples while concurrently revealing tragic dimensions of their journey.

Understanding design problems from a 'foreign' perspective, gaining insights into different notions of chronology, synchronicity & spatiality, and slowing down the

pace to meaningfully connect, contemplate and create, proved central to the definition, development, progress and success of the educational journey and learning outcomes. Harmony was essential: individual with collective; competitive with collaborative; objective with subjective; thinking with feeling; and digital with analogue. In the end economic, environmental, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions came together in an ethos of holism, connectedness and meaning. Pause – Reflect – Reconsider – Reach – Attain.

Keywords: *design, education, studio, community-based projects, indigenous, Aboriginal, First Nations, Treaty 7, pedagogy, empathy, respect, culture*

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Images: 4. Alberta Tourism + 5. 6. Glenbow Archives

DESIGN STUDIO PEDAGOGY, PARAMETERS & PROCESS

(outline for proceedings article + interactive diagramming @ roundtable) | brian.sinclair@ucalgary.ca

1. Overview | Design and the Pursuit of Solving Wicked Problems
 - a. Complexity
 - b. Controversy | Provocation
 - c. Interdisciplinarity
 - d. Forces at Play
 - i. Environmental
 - ii. Social
 - iii. Financial
 - iv. Phenomenological
 - v. Technological
 - vi. Political
 - vii. Spiritual
2. Dualities versus Holism & Systems Thinking
 - a. Science-Art
 - b. Technology-Humanity
 - c. Individual-Collective
 - d. Thinking-Feeling
 - e. Empirical-Intuitive
 - f. Analysis-Synthesis
3. Studio Pedagogy
 - a. Problem-Seeking | Problem-Solving
 - b. Critical Thinking
 - c. Communication
 - d. Mentorship | 1:1 Relationships
 - e. Tacit Knowing | *The Eyes of the Skin* + *The Thinking Hand* (Pallasmaa)
 - f. Self-View | World View
 - g. Cooperation | Small Group Learning | Team-Based

- h. Conversing + Drawing
- i. Exploration | Iteration
- j. Appropriateness versus Right or Wrong
- k. User Needs & Impacts Paramount [Environment & Behavior | Environmental Psychology]
- 4. Comprehensive Studio
 - a. Creativity + Competency + Professionalism
 - b. High Technical Resolution (Buildability)
 - c. Collaboration | Integration
 - d. Manageability (e.g., 2000 m2 gross area)
 - e. Expected Complexity
 - i. Programmatic
 - ii. Spatial
 - iii. Constructional
 - f. Balancing Pragmatics + Poetics
- 5. Aboriginal Centre | Aboriginal Culture
 - a. Spiritual, Customs, Historical, Political, Symbolic ...
 - b. Parallel Constructs | Seeking Translation + Shared Understanding
 - c. Engagement | Immersion | Honor (including Protocols)
 - i. Community
 - 1. Elders & Leaders
 - 2. Others (e.g., Architects who have worked w/ FNMI; government, academics, etc.)
 - ii. Spirit
 - 1. Oral Traditions
 - 2. Rituals (e.g., Sweat Lodge Ceremony)
 - d. Process
 - i. Course Syllabus & Delineation
 - ii. Phases
 - 1. Research
 - 2. Site | Programme
 - 3. Concept [Parti]
 - 4. Design Development
 - 5. Technical
 - 6. Final Resolution of Project
 - iii. Evaluation
 - 1. Term's Work | Cumulative Learning, Development & Deliverables
 - 2. Aspects Under Evaluation At All Stages
 - a. Development (Process)
 - b. Conclusions (Products)
 - c. Presentation
 - d. Participation

6. Lessons Learned ...

1. High Expectations with Commensurate Supports
2. Open-Mindedness & Willingness to Challenge the Status Quo
3. Fostering Responsibility + Responsivity
4. Seeking Sensitivity + Sensibility
5. Cultivating Respect
6. Metrics for Success + Progress
7. Empathy: "Seeing Through the Eyes of the Other"

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