

# Trent University - First Peoples House of Learning



The design team, Two Row Architect from Six Nations of the Grand River and Dunlop Architects from Toronto used the vision statement developed by the First Peoples House design committee as the informing element in the design. This statement talks of the building as honouring the land, creating a respectful community and acting as a beacon. The ground floor of the building is open to create a sense of sitting gently on the land. The First Peoples House of Learning is a distributed space. It consists of six distinct elements spread out throughout the building. The idea behind the distributed space is to reflect the distribution of Aboriginal Peoples throughout the country: that all Aboriginal Peoples are not in one place and to ensure that the encounter with aboriginality is everywhere and unexpected, much as it is in Canada. The Aboriginal elements were also designed to push the boundaries of Aboriginal representation. Trent has been extremely successful at pushing the academic boundaries in Aboriginal programming and in making an outstanding contribution to the creation of places of dignity and respect for Aboriginal Peoples.



The colours of the building are derived from the four colours of a medicine wheel: yellow, red, black and white.

Yellow, which is the colour of the east, represents the rising sun, the dawn of a new day and new beginnings, hope; The entire building is clad in Ochre #33.

Red, the colour of the south, represents youth, energy and celebration. The First Peoples Gathering Space is clad in weathered steel, which will turn red as it rusts.

Black, the colour of the west, represents growth and maturity. The entire trim of the building is black.

White, the colour of the north, represents spirit and wisdom. The windows and greyish metal of the building represent the white of the medicine wheel.

The shape of the Gathering Space honours the Anishnaabe / Ojibway peoples of this area. The steel cladding was chosen to honour the legacy of the Mohawk/Iroquoian steelworkers in this territory.

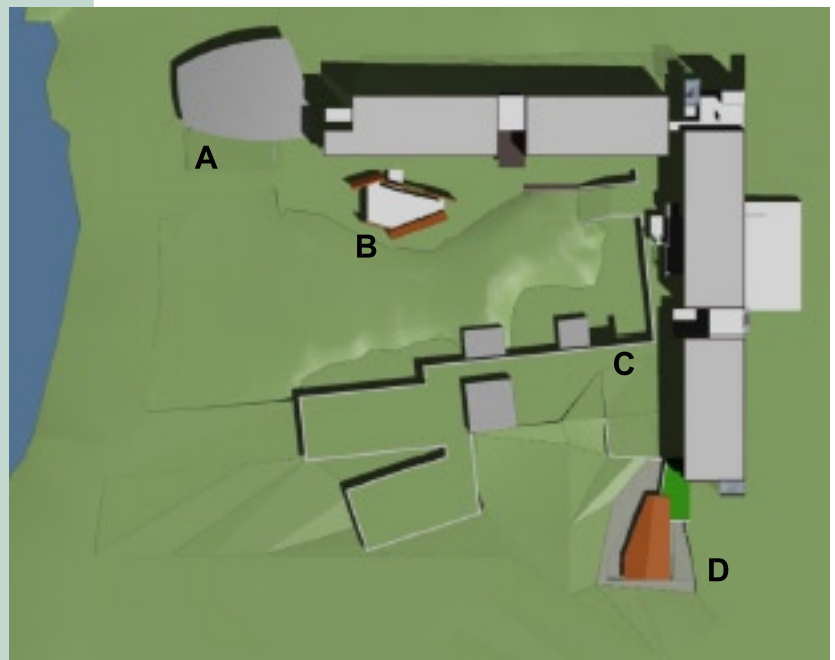
The building profiles were fairly narrow to encourage cross ventilation and an abundance of natural light.

An extended effort was made to be respectful of the treatment of the ground plain. A person enjoys unobstructed views as they travel through the site to the river. By carving the building harmoniously into the landscape, a sense of the building being in and of the earth is expressed.

A lack of hierarchy exists in the design so that individuals are treated in a democratic and even handed way.

The spaces are left simple and clean and their various activities are to be determined by the occupants.

**Client:** Trent University - First Peoples House of Learning  
**Size:** 140,000 ft<sup>2</sup>  
**Cost:** \$30 M Project Cost  
**Architects:** Dunlop -Two Row Architect Joint Venture  
**Status:** Completed 2004



## Legend

- A First Peoples Theatre
- B Gathering Space
- C Dedicated Lecture Hall
- D Outdoor Ceremonial Space



Two Row Architect