

## // IDENTIFICATION.....

**PROJECT TITLE:** Faire sauter la clotûre

**STUDENT NAME:** Gaëlle André-Lescop, Ève Renaud-Roy, Lorena Saez-Graterol

**STUDY PROGRAM:** Master in science of architecture - urban design

**SCHOOL :** École d'architecture de l'Université Laval

**START DATE:** 11/01/2016

**END DATE:** 26/04/2016

**SUPERVISOR :** Geneviève Vachon

## // ABSTRACT .....

Faire sauter la clotûre presents a reflection on the Innu school's environment, which arose from the Quebecs model, itself modeled on the American postwar suburbs: vast site, car's predominance, lack of sensitivity towards local conditions (culture and climate). Although it is normal that a territory evolves from one generation to another, it is only in recent decades that the band councils gained the freedom to manage their own development. The urban environment inherited does not match the identity of the Innu communities. Most of them are now facing major social crises. It is recognized that investing in youth generate positive social changes in the future. We therefore propose to explore the potential for redevelopment of the schools areas in three Innu communities: Matimekush-Lac-John, Pessamit and Mani-utenam.

The Matimekush-Lac-John project is inspired by the traditionnal Innu base camps. By transforming the school area, the community can become a positive influence expanding toward the Nitassinan, innu's homeland. In Pessamit, we "reverse the boat", meaning that the public space is place in the front yard rather than backyard. That way, natural surveillance can take place. The Mani-utenam project seeks to reconnect young Innus to the forest in all its dimensions; landscape, spiritual, cultural and simply as a space to play and grow.

## // INTRODUCTION.....

Although the Innu sedentism was initiated more than sixty years ago, it is important to remember than it's only in recent decades that the band councils have resumed the reins over their own development. Some distinctive cultural features have emerged in the rigid suburbian fabric such as ; sharing the wide street among all users in a way that drivers adapt their behavior to the pedestrian prescence, and the pedestrian shortcuts irrigating the residential blocks since there is no land that is privatly owned. However, population growth encourages urban sprawl. The demarcation between the different uses in the zoning term is highly pronounced. Although the most populated community welcomes less than 2 400 people, the development is reflected in terms of motorized travel.

Most of the Innu communities have schools so kids from pre-school to high school can attend education in their own community, yet entrances and other outdoor facilities are neglected on several aspects. Accessibility can be difficult because of the lack of connexions with the surrounding neighborhoods. School sites are vast and low-rise, isolating the school on it's own island, detached from it's surroundings. Land use is not always optimal, overused fences governs movements and activities, transforming a free space into a controlled space. Generally, outdoor environments is not arranged to consider harsh winter conditions. Finally, school yards are not adapted to the young innu culture, who prefer the spirit of cooperation rather than competition, who learn more easily through observation and who gradually lose their link with the Nitassinan.

Specifically, Faire sauter la clôture analyse the school area of three of the nine Innu communities ; primary school Nussim and high school Uashkaikan in Pessamit, primary school Tshishteshinu in Mani-utenam and primary/high school Kanatamat Tshitipenitamunu in Matimekush-Lac-John.

## // THEORETICAL FRAME .....

This research-creation project is inspired by the concept of "Community School" ; school becomes a place addressing the entire community beyond the 9-4 classroom hours (in planning and designing school by William Brubaker, 1998 ; Children and their urban environment by Freeman and Tranter, 2010). We also paid attention to children's everyday environment between home and school, which have a important impact on the kid's development (in Children and their urban environment, by Freeman and Tranter, 2010). Focusing a bit more on the playfield itself, we also studied Simon Nicholson's concept of "Loose parts theory". As an architect, he believed that it is the loose parts in our environment that empower our creativity and involve more kids in the action. As a counterpart, fixed play equipment increases the level of sedentary activity; when children get bored easily with equipment that they can't manipulate, and look somewhere else for challenges. We also integrated Carl Theodor Sorensen's concept of Adventure playground; which relies on donation and promotes a more natural and challenging schoolyard. Finally, we focused on the specific learning profiles of the Innu students (Tshakapesh Institute, by Roy, 2007) and the evolution of the tradition and the perception of the territory ( D'Orsi, 2013)

Methodology :

- Analysis of the implementation of twelve schools across the nine Innu communities on Quebec's ground
- Observation In Situ (collecting photos)
- Consultation and workshops with children ( one class of 1st grade and two classes of 5th and 6th grade)
- Informal interviews with key stakeholders ( school principals, teachers, specialized educators)

## // SITE DESCRIPTION .....

*Matimekush-Lac-John is a community of 595 inhabitants (Statistics Canada 2011), adjoining the town of Schefferville which today account 237 people (CLD Caniapiscou, 2015). The community is accessible only by air and rail. The Kanatamat Tshitipenitamunu school has 136 students, from pre-school to high school (Tshakapesh Institute, 2012). The school is located on the fringes of the community since it was once intended for the Schefferville's children. Although the pre-school and elementary student enjoy relatively new play structures, they have to play in the school's shadow and facing the winter's prevailing winds. Meanwhile high school students have the advantage of having their space in the sun, but with little appeal .*

*Pessamit is a community of 2 400 people (Statistics Canada, 2011), located along the St.Lawrence River near Baie-Comeau. The elementary school Nussim welcomes 354 students while 195 students go to Uashkaikan high school (Tshakapesh Institute, 2012). The schools area is located in the village center. Pessamit is bounded by a bog in the north, the river in the south and the east, and the forest in the west. Natural barriers constrain the development of the community who then have to grow away from the center, leaving schools and services in the margins.*

*Mani-utenam is a community of 1442 people (Statistics Canada, 2011), where the pressures of population growth (1% per year according to the demographic study by ITUM and GSP and ass., 2013) require the construction of a new Early Childhood Center in the new development and the actual elementary school needs a 505 square meters expansion. Although some woodlot pocket subsist here and there in the urban fabric, urban sprawl pushed away the original forest. In addition, the development plan approved by the board does not include new shops in the heart of the village, encouraging the use of motorized vehicles.*

## // DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT INTENTIONS .....

The mission is to develop flexible school environments, resistant and adapted culturally and climatically to encourage students to attend school and improve the perception of the schools environment by integrating it more within the community. The community objectives of those interventions aim to: be based on the concept of "community school" to include school environments in the community, make them attractive and places of transmission of Innu knowledge; decompartmentalize large school block promoting natural surveillance and a variety of activities; Faire sauter la clôture wants to transform anthropogenic barriers to natural thresholds to maintain the perception of a free and shared territory; and finally planning the shortcuts taken by the Innu youth to encourage their active mobility in a safe and comfortable environment.

## // CONCLUSION .....

Matimekush-Lac-John's project exploits the advantageous position of the community in the center of the Nitassinan land, the Innu hunting and fishing territory, to develop a concept of a collective base camp. The wealth of Innu culture becomes a pretext to reconcile the school to the community. The school area becomes a place of convergence and excitement, especially for seniors and youth, becoming a cultural hub. New gathering places boost the already existing community spirit. Finally, a housing densification in the school's surroundings completes the transformation by consolidating vacant spaces.

Pessamit's projects overturns the boat, that is to say, putting the public space in the front yards rather than the backyards looking to improve the climatic confort and allow naturel surveillance,therefor discouraging vandalism within the public facilities. Also, to avoid or reduce urban spralw, we proposes the creation of medium density housings on the underutilized soccer field that face the community center. This strategy offers a residential proximity to youth families in addition to generating action all day long in this sector.

Mani-utema is spreading and the original forest is quietly pushed away from the children's daily lives. Furthermore, it is shown that frequent contact with nature is essential to develop a sensitivity to it and learn to protect it. Without this contact, nature becomes alien and even hostile. The "School to the forest" project aims the reintegration of the nature in all its dimensions; landscape, cultural, spiritual and simply as a place to play and grow. It is also a reflection on valuation shortcuts used by children as well as the use of land in the heart of the community. Taking the stand up for a vertical extansion over the elementary school, the project demonstrate that it would be possible to create a school courtyard both more compact and still reflecting the ambance of the landscape, giving priority to walkers and giving more space to the interactions between children and nature.