



KAINAI BOARD OF EDUCATION

ISSOITAPI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

What is inside our new school?

April 2024

OUR SCHOOL

The new **Issoitapi Elementary School**, formerly, **Aahsaopi Elementary School** is a testament to collaboration, ingenuity, and incorporation of our Kainai values. We worked together with our design team to ensure that our school building is a representation of who we are as educators, Kainai, and cultivators of the future. It creates a space that we can implement our unique teaching philosophy and provide a 21st Century Learning space that will last us for generations to come.

Floor areas of the school can be found on the following page. Consideration for current and future needs was incorporated into the program. Community space was also funded by the Kainai Board of Education, producing a total school and community building area of 6,140 m². It was of key importance that community and gathering became the anchor for the school program.

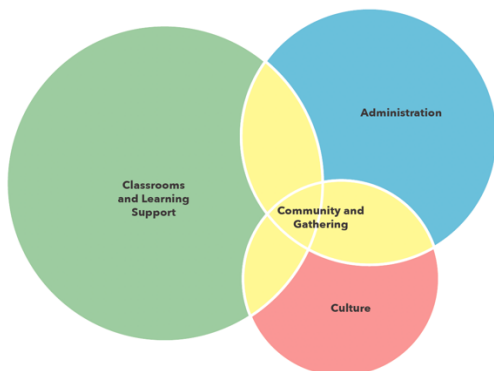


Figure 1: Thematic categories overlapping at heart, community & gathering.

From the beginning our community, parents and students were consulted through engagement workshops to produce a vision for the school that is true to the needs and voices of our People. Interior and exterior spaces are arranged to promote connections to the surrounding natural environment. The school's integration with the site is an important feature, and the exterior spaces which are carved from the programme placement are key gestures in articulating project values. It was determined that a two-storey building would suite the priorities placed on both views of the mountains and the separation of grades.

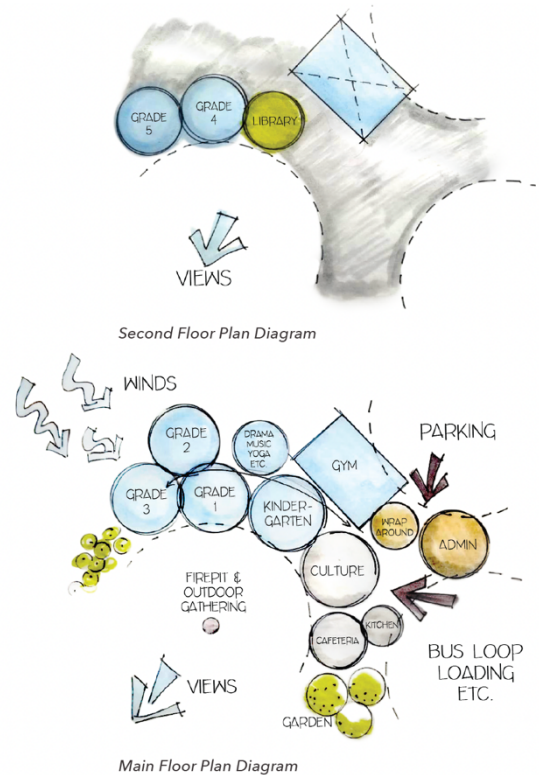


Figure 2: Diagrammatic representation of the layout for the school

LANDMARKS

Natural landmarks - mountains and erratics - have long been anchoring points for the Blackfoot community, spaces to gather and come together, as well as signifiers that you are in Blackfoot Territory. They hold a prominent place in the oral history and storytelling of the Kainai, providing connections to the land and one another.

This was translated into the design by ensuring certain views were maintained, and connection to the land in the direction of key landmarks was created.

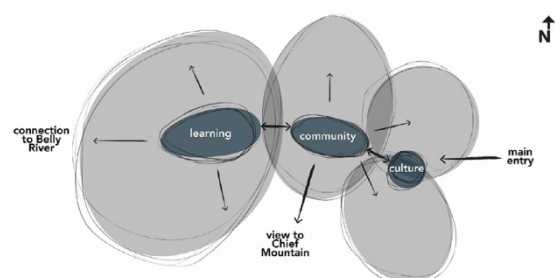
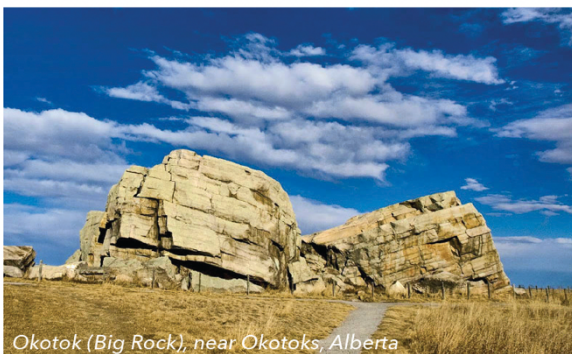


Figure 3: Anchoring Diagram

This was also translated thematically: much as landmarks are anchors for the Kainai culture, the community hub set programs and services will anchor and create important nodes of gathering around which focused learning, community and cultural spaces will be loosely situated allowing the potential for future expansion and adaption.

- The learning support spaces are grouped into a central 'Okotok' with the classrooms huddled around it loosely providing equal connection to these spaces.
- The community gathering area and café is anchored by a multi-use stage and assembly stair that connects the main and second floor and provides a space for performance and gathering.
- The Ceremony room creates a strong presence of Blackfoot Culture at the entrance of the school between the administration and cultural spaces.



Precedents for Anchoring Landmarks

Figure 4: Example of an anchoring landmark, and interpretation of design

NATURAL PROCESSES

The presence of water in and around the new school site as a carving and persistent force is a powerful metaphor for the journey of education in a child's life. Building on the concept of anchoring landmarks and considering how the flow of water is shaped and shapes such natural

landmarks, the flow of the school is similarly envisioned; students move through the school, pooling around nodes of gathering, learning, and dispersing again per their own individual journeys.

"A river cuts through rock not by its power, but its persistence." – James N. Watkins

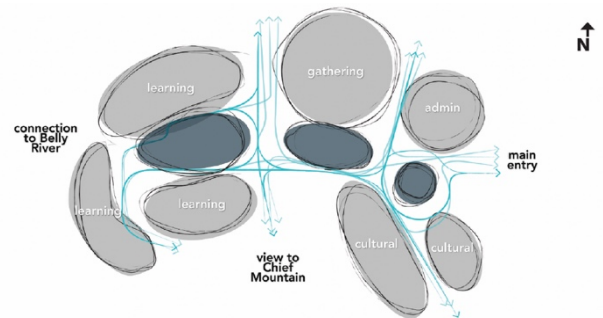


Figure 5: Flow Diagram

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE & 21ST CENTURY KNOWLEDGE

21st Century Learning represents a shift in education, moving away from the instruction of facts to the holistic development of competencies. The focus is on creation rather than consumption. 21st Century Learning thus values principles of design thinking, seeking to empower students through their learning environments.

Embracing a leading framework for 21st Century Learning, the design of the new **Issoitapi Elementary School** will support the creation of a wide range of learning and collaborative spaces. Rather than prescribing a single way to use, interact, and learn within a space, these spaces will allow students to create guided learning environments. This method will encourage student choice in utilizing space to support collaboration, while enhancing productivity and learning. Whether working individually or in groups, the flexibility of spaces in the new school will allow students to authentically adapt spaces to their learning needs.

The learning environments for the new **Issoitapi Elementary School** design embrace 21st Century Design and reinforce the anchoring landmark and flow design concepts utilized throughout the design of the school, as shown in Figure 7.

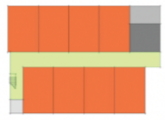
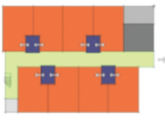
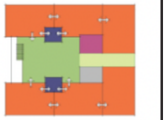
	TRADITIONAL	EMERGING	LEADING	PRINCIPLES
METHOD	Teachers work in isolation in their classrooms	The school provides time and space for teacher collaboration	Teacher collaboration drives teaching and learning	
STUDENTS	Classrooms are self-contained	Students move between multi-use learning spaces	Learning spans several related and flexible spaces	Shared ownership Transparency Safety + Comfort Inspiration
TEACHERS	Private teacher lounges are designed for eating and socializing	Teachers move between multi-use learning spaces	Teaching spans several related and flexible spaces	Health + Wellbeing Movement Sustainability Connection to Nature Local Signature
SPACES				

Figure 6: Principles of teaching evolving

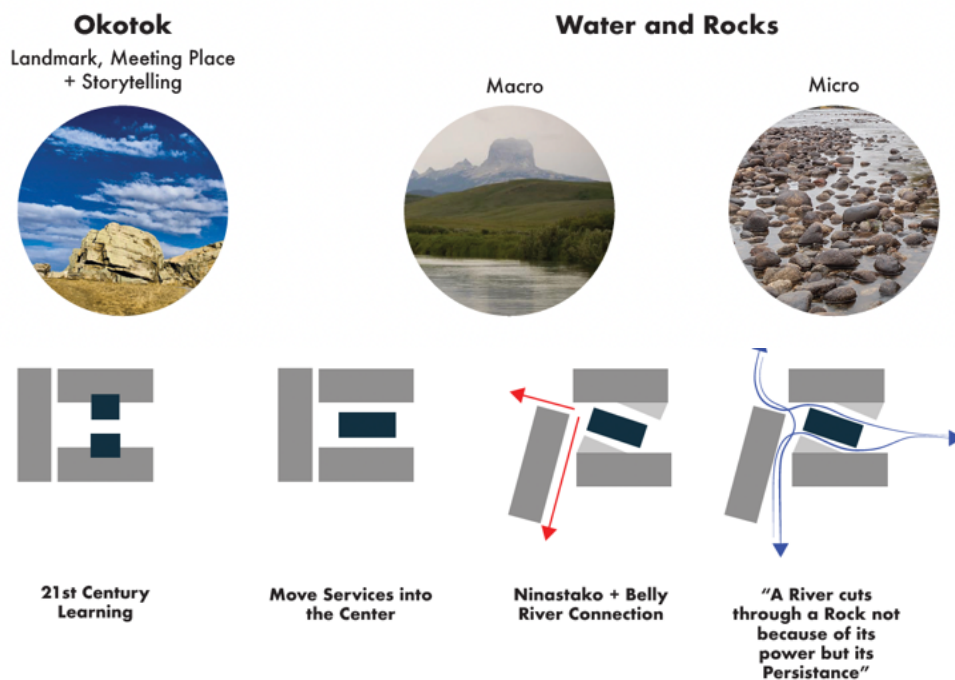


Figure 7: how our school incorporates all key concepts

The underlying principles of 21st Century Learning are rooted in the grounding values of Indigenous Knowledge. Both 21st Century Learning and Indigenous Knowledge seek to foster creativity and innovation, critical thinking, positive and respectful collaboration, and effective communication as a means of building character and cultural and ethical citizenship. Learning thus takes place across the different spheres of human experiences, including the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. In applying 21st Century Learning to the physical design of the school, the new **Issoitapi Elementary School** will embody the cultural values of the community it serves.

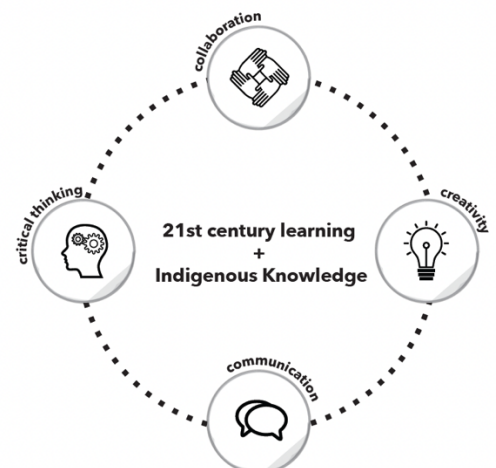


Figure 8: our school is a unique blend of the latest in education and steeped in our cultural traditions and teachings.

THE DESIGN OF OUR SCHOOL

The final design for the new **Issoitapi Elementary School** incorporates series of gathering nodes or landmarks, around which learning environments are distributed and students, staff, and community can flow through. There is an opportunity for future expansion along the south facade of the school.

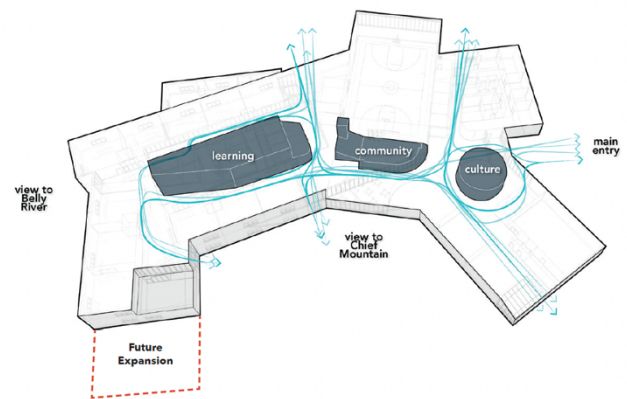


Figure 9: Final concept design of the school

- Administration
- Culture
- Community
- Learning

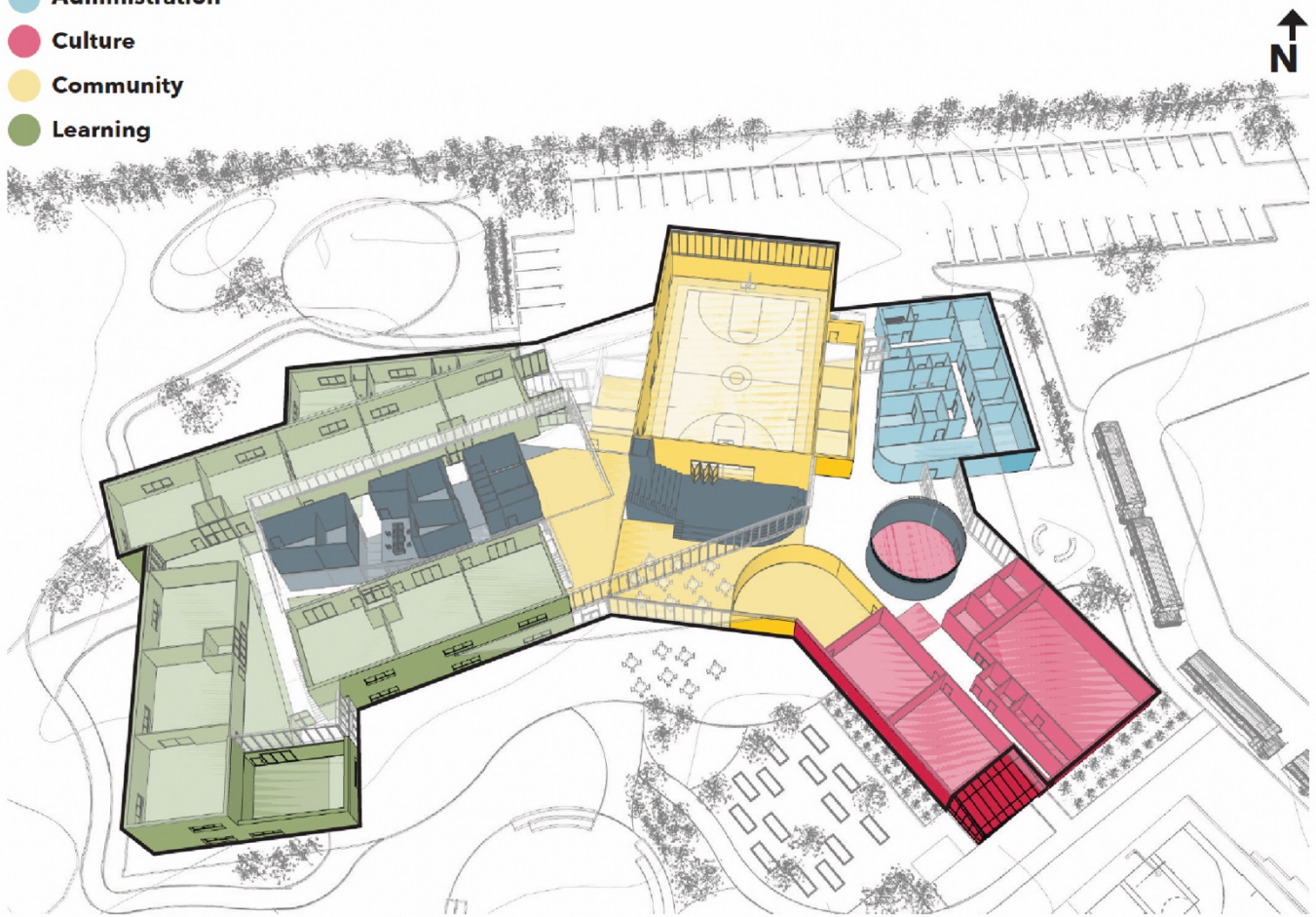


Figure 10: Program areas of the school, defined by colour

Entrances

There are five entrances, with primary drop-off entrances situated along the north and east of the building. The east entrance is the main entrance to the school and can be directly accessed from the bus loop. The north entrance provides parent drop-off from the parking lot consisting of 50 parking stalls. Entrances situated on the south end of the school are for means of accessing the outdoor learning and courtyard spaces.

Administration Space

The main entrance of the school is situated to the east connecting to the rising sun. This sets culture as a prominent tone of entry into the new facility. The entry is flanked to the north by the administrative wing which allows for views to the parking and drop-off areas as well as the main gathering spaces of the school, allowing for passive supervision. Spaces within the administration block includes reception, offices, staff room, health room, and other spaces that facilitate the wellness of students, staff, and community members.

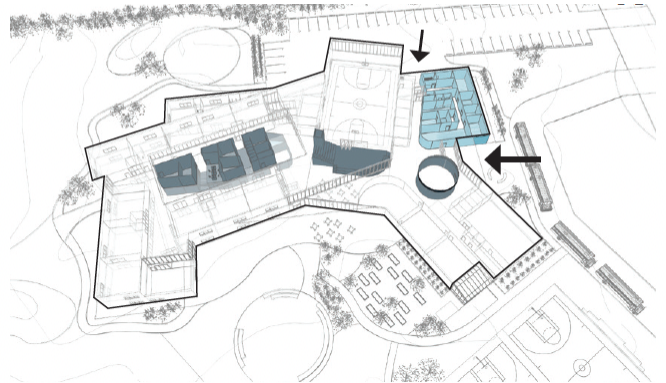


Figure 11: Administration space - blue

Cultural Space

The main entry of the school is prominently distinguished by the circular form of the ceremony and language room, which anchors the cultural and community spaces of the school at the south-east of the new building. Spaces in this wing include music, drama, a multipurpose room, a Blackfoot Life Skills room, a Traditional Craft Room, and a greenhouse. The multipurpose space to facilitate external events and gatherings for the larger community, and allows for separation from school functions, if necessary, while also providing important cultural services to the student body.

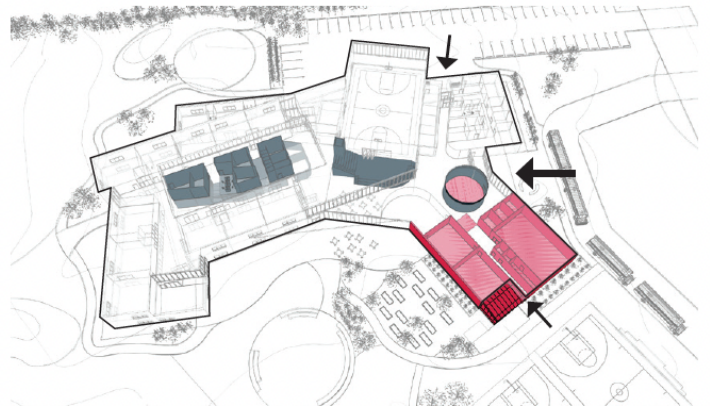


Figure 12: Cultural space - red

Community Space

The heart of the school is a central gathering space defined by the gym, a feature stair, a cafeteria, and large commercial kitchen. This space frames views to Chief Mountain and opens to a south facing courtyard allowing for the integration of interior and exterior spaces. The form of the courtyard emerges as a void carved from the school, connecting, and integrating the school directly into its immediate surroundings, while nurturing and protecting the school community from prevailing westerly winds.

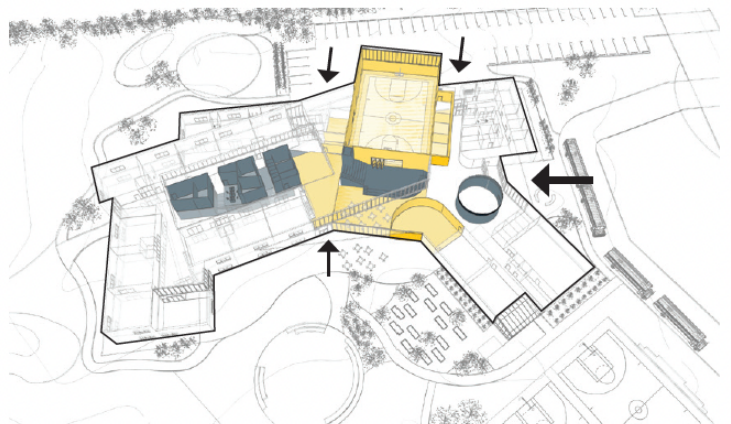


Figure 13: Community space - yellow

Kitchen

The proximity of the kitchen to the main entrance is intentional to facilitate morning meals as students enter the school and for easy access for community use. It further allows for the kitchen to serve community events that may occur after-hours in the cultural spaces for community members.

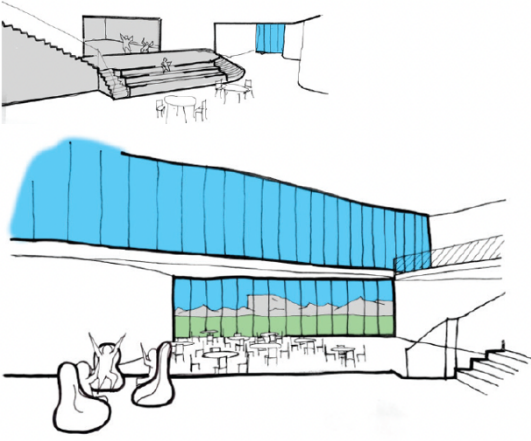


Figure 14: Assembly stair & stage

Gymnasium

The gymnasium is prominently placed at the heart of the school and opens to the south to a stage and feature stair that can facilitate student gathering and performance. This space features prominent views to Chief Mountain, with immediate access to the sheltered outdoor courtyard for integrated land-based learning opportunities.

Learning Commons

On the second floor, the learning commons overlooks the main gathering space below. The learning commons is a resource space for students, functioning both as a library and workspace.

Learning Space

Flowing west, learning spaces are clustered around a central service and collaboration block, where learning communities create gradients from focused to collaborative learning environments. This portion of the school is doubled in height with classrooms on both the main and second floor. The learning commons is also situated on the second floor and overlooks the heart of the school. This space has been created to provide a distinct separation from community and cultural spaces such that the school can be programmed and closed for separation of uses, as necessary.

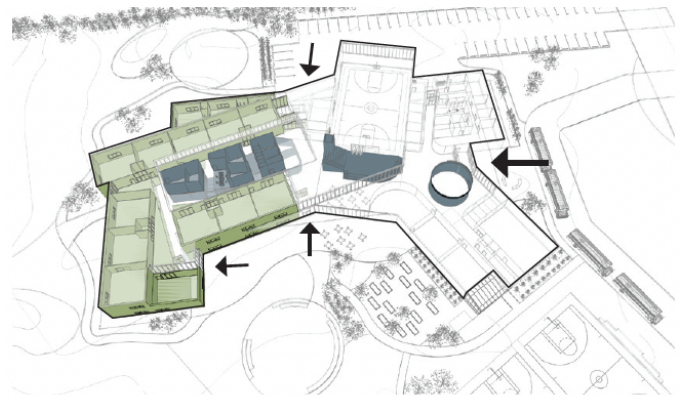


Figure 15: Learning space - green

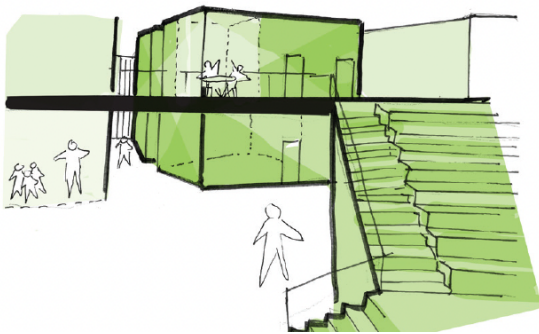


Figure 16: Learning spaces

Classrooms & Learning Communities

Classrooms are clustered in small groups and are connected to one another by learning communities, which run along the circulation axes of the learning block. This connectivity allows for learning to spill out from within the classrooms, where students can flow from focused to collaborative learning environments. Classrooms are additionally intended to be interconnected with sliding doors, which enables collaborative teaching, with the flexibility to close the doors for smaller group learning.

Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms are situated in each cluster of classrooms and can be used for concentrated learning such as small group work, one-on-one mentoring, and student testing.

Resource Spaces

The central mass around which classrooms are distributed is a resource space for students, teachers, and parents, to support learning and collaboration. This mass, existing as an anchoring landmark in the building form around and through which students can flow, includes teacher collaboration spaces, washrooms, sensory rooms, work rooms, storage, and more.

INTERIOR DESIGN & OUR PHILOSOPHY

The interiors of the new **Issoitapi Elementary School** balance aesthetics and performance to provide a pleasant and inspiring environment for students, teachers, and staff. The design also reflects the importance of community, language, and local culture.

Focused Learning

Classrooms in our new elementary school create a positive atmosphere for students, encouraging productivity and boosting mental well-being. All classrooms have access to natural light, healthy and comfortable temperature levels, and bright colours to foster idea exploration and holistic cognitive development, creating a joyful learning environment.

Collaborative Learning

To create a variety of learning spaces, the 21st Century Learning model removes corridors from buildings. Circulation spaces in the learning block are instead expanded into 'learning communities' to empower collaboration between instructional spaces, linking together classrooms, and allowing for spilling of learning. This encourages creative means of engagement between teachers, the subject matter, and students. The learning communities additionally provide space within the school for increased physical literacy.



Figure 17: An example of collaborative learning & flexible spaces (not our school).

Flexibility

We have created a flexible environment to support a variety of learning configurations and activities. We have achieved this by providing furniture is flexible and moveable, with a combination of soft and hard surfaces. Storage spaces in classrooms are built into the height of

the underside of the roof to provide extra floor space for learning activities and prevent clutter.

3D Textbook

The term 3D Textbook refers to the physical space (the school itself) being used as a teaching tool; for example, by exposing the construction process or mechanical room to students for learning opportunities.



Figure 18: Exposure of structural systems, and other building systems to teach students about the building

Connection to Nature

It is intuitively understood that children belong outdoors and need to be active. Connection to nature in the new elementary school is achieved through spaces for discovery and exploration. All focused learning environments are situated with a connection to the outdoors, with transparency between interior and exterior spaces.



Figure 19: Active, land-based, and cultural learning (KBE)

Active & Land-Based Learning

The active and land-based learning approach encourages students to concentrate, speak freely, and share information safely. This methodology reinforces students' connection to their heritage, language, and traditions, embedding cultural values in both the school design as well as its curriculum. Education is thus transformed into

life-long learning that inspires creativity, innovation, and social responsibility.

Accessibility

Our school has been designed using the highest standards of accessibility and universal design, ensuring that the building is inclusive for everyone. This includes ensuring the following elements are easy to use and provide accommodation for all abilities:

- Exterior approach and entrance
- Vehicular access
- Interior circulation
- Interior services and environment
- Sanitary facilities
- Wayfinding and signage
- Emergency systems
- Additional use of space
- Trails and pathways

Access

All areas of the school are accessible to everyone, except for stairs. However, to ensure equitable access to usable areas like the stage and upper floor, an elevator is provided next to the gym and has been positioned to allow users to access all levels regardless of ability.

Universal Washrooms

A washroom with a changing table and lift system has been provided within the learning block as well as a standard universal washroom in the community and cultural spaces for use after hours. This is important to include in both areas as the building's use changes throughout the day and access to these facilities is important for all users.

Signage

Emergency signage, wayfinding, and other elements using language have been designed to include both English and Blackfoot. Wherever possible, language has been avoided for critical elements and communication and is instead indicated through clear pictogram style images. Colour and other visual cues have been used throughout the school to allow for wayfinding without as much reliance on signage.



Figure 20: Example of signage from another building on the Blood Reserve (RCCC) with both languages