

KITSUMKALUM HEALTH CENTRE

LOCATION

Kitsumkalum, British Columbia

SIZE

411 m²

COMPLETION

2013

ARCHITECT

Lubor Trubka Associates
Architects

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

CWMM Consulting Engineers Ltd.

**CONSTRUCTION
MANAGEMENT**

Unitech Construction
Management Ltd.

PROJECT OWNER

Kitsumkalum First Nation and
Health Canada

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Kitsumkalum are one of the 14 bands that make up the Tsimshian First Nation that inhabit the northwest coast of British Columbia. Kitsumkalum, meaning 'water running over rocks' was the name given to both the people and the river — a tributary of the Skeena — along which their traditional territory lies. This facility is designed to meet the contemporary healthcare needs of the Kitsumkalum band.

Historically, the Kitsumkalum were sea-faring people who thrived on plentiful salmon, seals, and other seafood. This abundant food source enabled them to live in permanent settlements of large longhouses and to develop an architectural language rich in symbolism. Their longhouses and all of the goods of their daily lives were made of western red cedar, with both the wood and the bark being used.

The important cultural heritage values of the Kitsumkalum include a reverence for nature and an affinity for wood. These values were progressively transferred into the design of the new facility through a series of community workshops. This participatory process also contributed significantly to the sense of pride the community has taken in the building.

To foster a symbiotic relationship between the internal spaces and the natural surroundings, the sun's rays are welcomed into the building throughout their daily path. The changing angle and intensity of light brings the appreciation of nature into the interior.

The Kitsumkalum were known as fearsome warriors, and the powerful form of the building's front is an echo of that heritage. At the same time, it resembles a copper, a metal plaque that is a traditional symbol of power and wealth.



Photo courtesy of Peter Powles Photography

“We at Kitsumkalum Health Centre, feel that our new Health Building is reconnecting us to the land and culture. The appearance of our building is beautiful with the use of wood inside and out. It appeals to the eye as it somewhat resembles what we used long ago in the making of longhouses.”

Charlene Webb, Health Director, Kitsumkalum Band

WOOD USE

This project demonstrates how wood construction and detailing can create a strong architectural expression symbolic of First Nations’ culture, using only standard materials and components.

The building structure is erected on concrete foundations and a slab-on-grade floor. The perimeter foundation walls rise 0.6 metres above the finished floor to provide an exterior surface that will permanently endure the frequent accumulation of snow during the winter.

The wood structure is a combination of standard 2x6 and post and beam framing. The lower roof is framed with standard 400mm deep TJI joists with plywood deck. The upper roof is framed with

standard, pre-fabricated triangular roof trusses, but in this application the triangular form is installed upside-down. This way, the truss affords large cantilevered soffits for added protection against snow build-up and, at the same time, allows daylight into the heart of the building.

The exterior wall cladding, installed over the rain-screen, is custom cut 25mm x 305mm Douglas fir with shiplap joints to express 19mm wide horizontal reveals.

The expansive exterior soffits are clad with 19mm x 89mm square-edge Douglas fir, installed with a 10mm space between for ventilation. The same application continues on the ceiling throughout the interior of the building.



Photos courtesy of Peter Powles Photography

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This profile is published by Forestry Innovation Investment, the Government of British Columbia’s market development agency for forest products.

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