



Quw'utsun Smuneem Elementary School | Cowichan Tribes | Duncan, BC

David Nairne + Associates

Wood has been a natural resource to the inhabitants of forested regions, particularly North America's northwest coast First Nations.

An important use of wood in the case of the Cowichan cultures (Southern Vancouver Island), was the construction of fishing weirs, which were strategically placed along the Cowichan River for catching salmon. These weirs were substantial structures and required the cooperation of an entire village. The salmon caught in these large weirs were owned and shared by everyone.

The formal and symbolic spine of the 14,370 sq. ft. Quw'utsun Smuneem Elementary School is articulated as a cultural weir – the building abstracts this cultural artefact into the structure and form of the school. Constructed using traditional cedar, "The Weir" orders all the components of the project both in plan and section and defines the main circulation route along the entire length of the building. The design premise was based on the creation of an uplifting and vibrant facility to promote a learning environment rooted in the cultures and traditions of the Cowichan peoples.



Wood materials used:

- 2 X 6 wood framing with plywood sheathing
- Glue laminated Douglas fir columns and beams
- Ship lap cedar siding, tongue & groove cedar siding
- Plywood decking
- Maple veneered solid core doors and millwork



Design team:

Architectural:

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