
Animakee Wa Zhing #37 First Nation Administrative Building:

Supporting community health and well-being



The Animakee Wa Zhing #37 First Nation Administrative Building is located in Northwestern Ontario. Part of the Anishinaabe First Nation, this newly built office provides those resources necessary for supporting health, wellness and healing for the community.

Respecting Cultural Values

Purposefully designed as a multifunctional environment, the Animakee Wa Zhing #37 First Nation Administrative Building supports the community's success in various areas ranging from health, advocacy and counseling to administration, governance, finance and housing. The 6,600 square foot structure is the result of a highly consultative and collaborative process undertaken between Boreal Architecture Studio and the community.

After consulting with the community's Elders, the building was aligned with the cardinal directions; in harmony with nature and the traditional Anishinaabe teachings. The building's spine is deliberately aligned along the North-South axis with access points situated on the East and West sides. Following these cardinal directions, interior doorways are aligned with the windows (all operable to allow fresh air in) to provide clear views of sunlight and the outdoors throughout the day. The use of natural architectural materials like the wood on the exterior and interior provide a sense of warmth and welcome to the space. Tall ceilings, clearstory windows and natural light connect the building's occupants with the outdoors.

Adds Shawn Sinclair, Principal Architect at Boreal, "Unhindered visual pathways to the outside are mirrored and reinforced by the lines of the ceiling planks to support a feeling of 'moving forward', of progress and momentum. All integral to the positive outcomes of health, wellness and healing."

Nurturing Community

In addition to its administrative function, the building acts as a gathering place for everyone in the community, so the design incorporates maximum flexibility and functionality. To support connection, common spaces are linked to an outdoor deck oriented around a communal fire pit. The main boardroom features a table comprised of several folding and stackable tables. These tables can be reconfigured or rolled away to support whatever the community needs – be it a linear classroom arrangement or a circular setup for a traditional gathering.

Supporting Wellbeing

When it came time to select the furnishings for the building, Global furniture was used in the offices and Global Healthcare furniture was selected for use in the medical-related areas and in all public spaces. Selected for its enhanced quality, durability and cleanability, the furniture will stand the test of time. Its modular design was especially important as it enables pieces to be repaired or replaced on-site – an important factor considering the Council's remote location. Adèle Sinclair, Designer & Partner at Boreal does emphasize that choosing healthcare furniture did not mean sacrificing aesthetics in the space. Contemporary, residential design detailing coupled with richly colored textiles ensures the seating brings infusions of color and pattern into the building. Importantly, all furniture choices support ergonomics and wellbeing. She says, "There is an efficiency in planning. Everything is in easy reach. We want people to be comfortable in their spaces because everyone deserves a healthy work environment."

Ultimately, The Animakee Wa Zhing #37 Administrative Building provides the perfect backdrop to the energy and personality of the people who will inhabit it. Both the timelessness of the architecture and the furnishings within it ensures the connection between people and place. Sinclair sums up, "The site holds the architecture, the architecture holds the furniture, the furniture holds the people. This dictum has driven our design. It will also ensure the relevance of this building and the happiness of the people within it for years to come."



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Designer & Partner at Boreal

