

architectureBC

The Journal of the Architectural Institute of British Columbia, Issue 34 January 2010



INSIDE:

Community Building: The Social Impact of Architecture

Ucluth Eco Resort and Cultural Village:

Looking to the Past
to Define the Future

Page 16

Inner City InteGRITy:

Woodward's Redefines
Urban Living

Page 13

Design for the Ages:

A New Approach
to Seniors' Housing

Page 27



ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ucluth Eco Resort and Cultural Village:

Looking to the Past to Define the Future

By Scott Kemp MAIBC

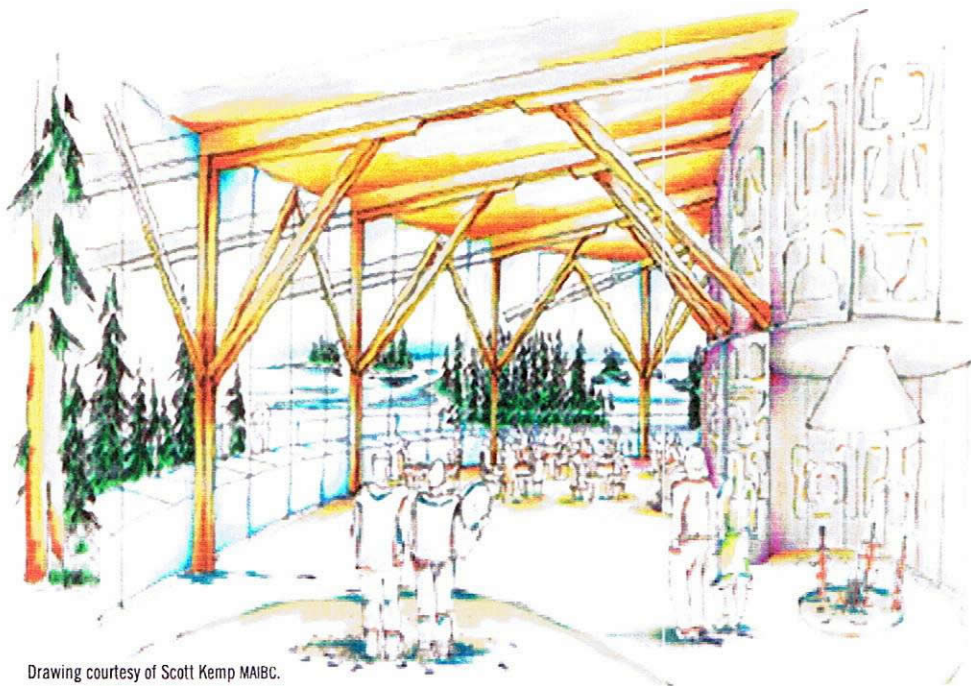
The Ucluelet First Nation (UFN) has faced generations of economic and social hardship due to years of systemic suppression. Now, light is on the horizon as the UFN begins the development of an eco-resort like no other. Plans imagine a destination sustainable in all ways: culturally, environmentally and economically. The planning is being led by the community itself, in partnership with architect Scott Kemp MAIBC.

The People, the Land

The Ucluelet First Nation, also known as the Yuu-tluth-aht First Nation, is located on the west coast of Vancouver Island on the northwest side of Barkley Sound on the Pacific Rim Peninsula. It is part of the Nuu-chah-nulth cultural and linguistic family. "Ucluelet" comes from the Nuu-chah-nulth phrase "Yu-clutl-ahts", meaning "the people with a good landing place for canoes". The lands around Ucluelet have sustained First Nations peoples for many thousands of years, and oral histories describe several independent groups occupying the area around Ucluelet Inlet. Each had a Chief (*Haw'iih*), a namesake village and its own territory (*hahuuthli*).

Gifted with some of the most spectacular scenery in the world, the UFN has had a long spiritual relationship with the land. Traditionally, the community lived at several sites and moved seasonally between locations. UFN traditional territory currently spans nine reservations. The main village, Itatsoo Reserve, is located on the west side of Ucluelet Inlet across from the town of Ucluelet. The village population is approximately 200 residents.

One of the traditional community settlements for the UFN was located on the west side of the peninsula on the beach at Ucluth – a spectacular curved shoreline sheltered from



Drawing courtesy of Scott Kemp MAIBC.

the western storms by several islands and rocky promontories. The UFN was forced to move off the site, home to several families for untold generations, at the turn of the century.

For many generations, aboriginal culture was actively suppressed with communities dependent on the federal government for sustenance. Economic opportunities were hampered with restricted land ownership and government bureaucratic hindrance. In recent generations, community members were typically employed in the logging and fishing industries. The decline of these industries has exacerbated the social difficulties now challenging many First Nations.

As part of the Maa-nulth First Nations treaty negotiations, the UFN reached an historic final Treaty settlement with the federal and provincial governments. The treaty recognizes that the First Nations have used, occupied and governed their traditional territories from time immemorial, and that they have an inherent right to self-governance. The treaty supports the rights of the First Nations to evolve and flourish as self-sufficient and sustainable communities, and is meant to bring certainty with

respect to each First Nation's rights to use, own and manage land and resources throughout its claimed traditional territory.

Old Meets New

In response to the newfound opportunities presented through this treaty, the UFN have undertaken an important new development; a one-of-a-kind ecological resort and cultural village. The goal is to maximize the benefit to the community in all regards. Upon completion, it will form the economic centrepiece for the UFN, a step towards financial independence.

It will also be a source of renewal and celebration of UFN culture. The UFN has a vibrant community of artists, performers and fluent speakers. There are many men and women who express themselves traditionally and artistically through carving, beading and weaving. Visitors will have a unique opportunity to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the spectacular natural environment through the cultural eyes of the UFN. It is by looking back to their traditional lifestyles and values that the UFN envisions future growth.

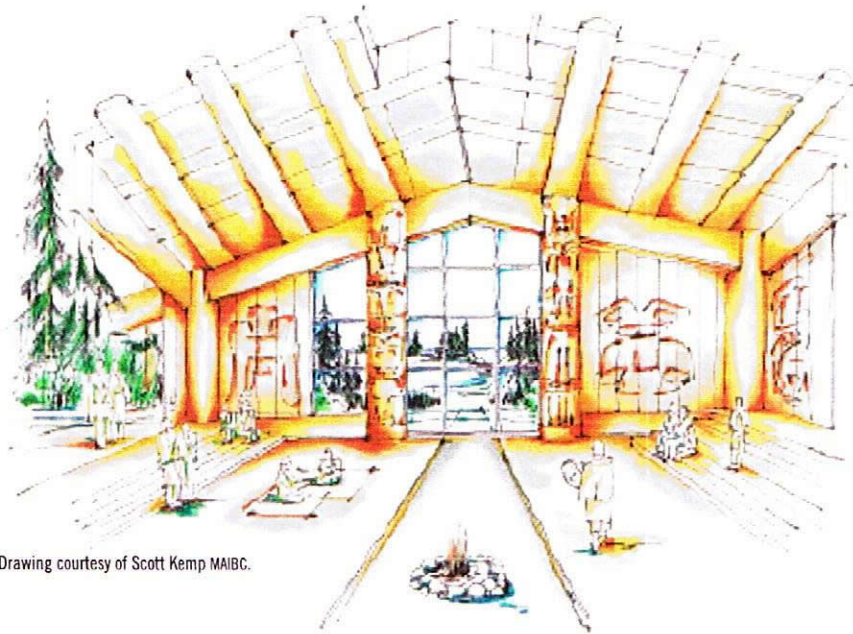
As a business, the resort will provide financial stability and employment, both during construction and ongoing operations. By way of example, the community and design team are hoping to identify young members of the community who are interested in architecture to participate in the design process. To date, there have been very few Aboriginal B.C.-registered architects, a reality this team hopes to begin rectifying. Additionally, trades training programs will be incorporated during the construction phase.

Community members will also receive the hospitality industry training needed to run the resort; youth will be resort hosts and guides, the main conduit in passing on their culture to visitors. They will gain not only meaningful employment but also a greater appreciation of their own culture.

A Community Vision

The proposed development site is located immediately south of the Pacific Rim National Park on Vancouver Island, minutes from the main junction of Highway 4 leading to Ucluelet. With more than 800 acres and five kilometres of spectacular coastline, it includes five distinct beaches. Bounded by the ocean to the west and the highway to the east, the site contains extensive marsh lands in the southern portion and a lake to the north. The shoreline is home to old growth trees, including several culturally modified trees. The main beach at Ucluth will be the heart of the new development.

The Eco Resort and Cultural Village has been a community dream for more than 50 years. At the beginning of the project, an extensive series of community workshops was facilitated to ascertain the needs of the community. Several public meetings were organized, complete with spectacular dinners provided by the community.



Drawing courtesy of Scott Kemp MAIBC.

Smaller meetings were also conducted with select community groups – elders, youth, artists and other stakeholders. A highly interactive dialogue emerged, with the meetings involving small break-out work groups that then reported back to the larger group. Led by Kemp, the design team created sketches during these events that evolved into the final visioning sketches for the development.

Similar to the experience that is promised to visitors to the resort, the design team was afforded a unique opportunity for rare insight into the UFN culture. Team members extensively hiked the site – often on hands and knees to fight through the dense undergrowth. At various times the explorers were accompanied by local denizens: sea otters, eagles, and even a cougar on the beach.

Sitting around in small groups, members of the UFN told stories of the land, describing

which plants can be used for making tea, which roots can be used to make a poultice for treating sores, and which grasses contain water in the stock to refresh a thirst. During walks along the shore, various harvestable resources (including sea foam that can be used to cure sea sickness) were identified.

Given the cultural connection to the land, it stands to reason that sustainability is the guiding principle for all aspects of the development. In response, Kemp is designing all buildings to LEED® Platinum standards. The design will also incorporate local materials and resources including locally-harvested FSC certified wood. Other planned features currently under research and development include:

- A completely self-sustainable, off-grid facility;
- Energy generation through wave and wind power;
- A carbon-free site with all heating and cooling done through ground source heat pumps;
- Rainwater collection and domestic water provided from the nearby lake; and
- Use of the marsh's natural cleansing properties to treat grey water.

The Resort Experience

While the project is still in the development stage, the vision for the resulting resort experience is already clear. Upon exiting the main highway, visitors will be greeted by the reception building nestled amongst a grove of trees. Vehicular traffic will be restricted, and guests will travel by electric carts on pathways linked throughout the site.

Guests will immediately be immersed in a truly unique west coast experience. While their



Drawing courtesy of Scott Kemp MAIBC.

accommodations and luggage are being taken care of, visitors will be treated to a guided tour of the site passing around the shore of the lake and skirting the marsh. Guides will identify regional flora and fauna while telling stories of local landmarks and cultural history.

The choice of accommodation will include a boutique hotel, individual cabins and tents. Situated on a promontory of land, the hotel will boast views of a rugged wind-swept beach to the south – complete with a naturally-produced ocean blowhole – or the secluded Ucluth beach to the north. Individual cabins will be located along a wooded boardwalk on an isolated cliff on the south end of the site, providing spectacular ocean views while offering complete privacy. For those seeking a slightly more rugged experience, full facility tents (complete with electricity, running water and toilet facilities) built on wooden platforms will be tucked into a grove of trees just off the beach.

Daily guided tours will feature traditional stories and lessons on local harvesting techniques and hand carving canoes. Raised boardwalks will allow guests to explore the unique water environment of the marshlands. Visitors will also sign up for trips on the local waters to fish or gather other traditional seafood. World-class diving and surfing will also be readily available.

Combing the beach at Ucluth, visitors will glimpse the cultural centre: a series of long-house structures emulating the villages of the past – nestled amongst the trees. Guests will be able to sign up for a language class, listen to traditional storytelling, or learn to carve and weave with resident artists. A gallery will offer guests mementos of their stay.

Above the cultural centre, on a high point of land overlooking the beach and sea beyond, will be a restaurant. All foods will be locally harvested and prepared in traditional ways. Guests will be able to dine on specially-prepared dishes incorporating the guests' catches of the day. After dinner, visitors can look forward to an evening of performances and celebrations back at the cultural centre. The cultural centre will also be able to accommodate community potlatches for up to 1000 guests.

Health and wellbeing will be further nurtured at the spa – a series of buildings stretching between the beach and the lake. One section of the spa, complete with a private beach, will provide traditional treatments focused on woman's health. The onsite retail centre, designed as a village with a series of buildings linked by a pedestrian boardwalk, will accommodate every need with convenience

stores, coffee shops, restaurants, clothing boutiques and a pharmacy. Outdoor gear will be available for rent, along with guided surfing, diving, hiking and canoeing adventures. Working artist studios will provide opportunities for guests to meet and support local artists.

In identifying possible building sites on the property, the design team was sensitive to the desire to enhance the experiential opportunities provided by the spectacular site while minimizing any negative impacts resulting from the development. Spreading the development throughout the site will provide visitors with a comprehensive experience of the varied qualities of the land. Each site has been chosen to link with each building's function and typology. Choices were no doubt influenced by the design team's own experience of being guided through the land and educated about its historic significances. Specific site choices include:

- **The hotel**, located in a spectacular wooded grove situated on a promontory of land with views of the beaches to the north and south – a natural lookout;
- **The cabins**, situated at the isolated southernmost portion of the site along a bluff edge overlooking the ocean – a place of reflection;
- **The tents**, nestled in a grove of trees sheltered from the winds blowing from the ocean – a place to gather and shelter;
- **The cultural centre**, sited adjacent to the main beach to emulate the traditional long house village historically located at the site – a sacred place of timeless occupation;

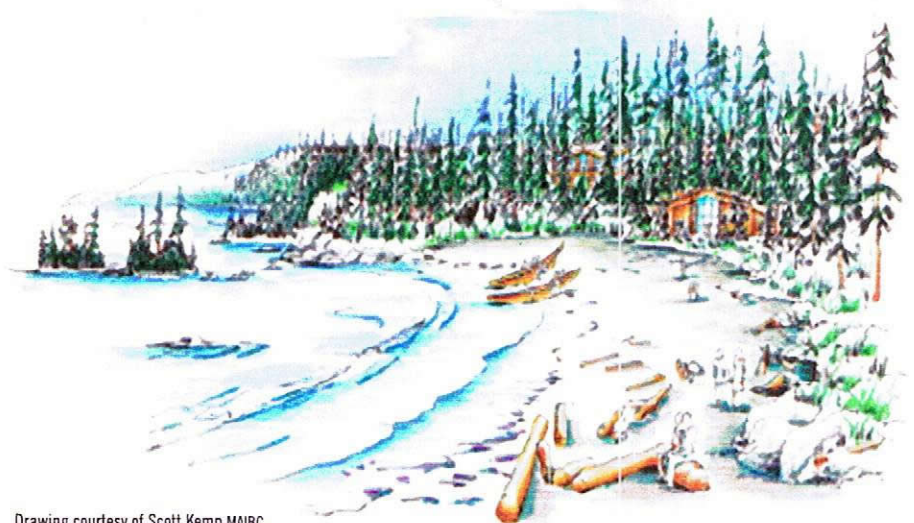
- **The restaurant**, with a spectacular view to the west but in close proximity to the cultural centre – a place to view the bountiful resources of the ocean; and
- **The spa**, linking the two main water bodies on the site, the ocean and the lake – a place to enjoy the healing properties of water.

Standing on the beach at Ucluth, one can't help but feel the timeless quality of awe-inspiring nature in harmony with human habitation, as it has been over countless generations. Resort construction is anticipated to begin with phase one (site infrastructure and cabin accommodation) in spring 2010. Once complete, the resort will provide a once-in-a-lifetime experience: one gained from having witnessed one of the most spectacular natural settings in the world seen through the cultural eyes of the Ucluelet First Nation.

Scott Kemp MAIBC is owner of Scott M. Kemp Architect.

The design team consists of:

- **Project Lead:**
Ucluth Development Corporation – Trevor Jones
- **Community Liaison:**
Ucluelet First Nation – Tyson Touchie
- **Architecture:**
Scott M. Kemp Architect – Scott Kemp MAIBC
- **Civil Engineering:**
Newcastle Engineering Ltd – Rod Smith
- **Environmental:**
Ecodynamics – Cedric Robert
- **Meeting Facilitator:**
Fulcrum Solutions – Scott Meadows
- **Project Coordinator:**
Tawney Lem



Drawing courtesy of Scott Kemp MAIBC.