

Simulated Domesticities: Settings for Colonial Assimilation in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada

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Volume 45, numéro 2, 2020

Approaching Home: New Perspectives on the Domestic Interior
Vers la maison : nouvelles perspectives sur l'intérieur domestique

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1073940ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073940ar>

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Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Miłosz, M. (2020). Simulated Domesticities: Settings for Colonial Assimilation in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 45(2), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073940ar>

Résumé de l'article

L'espace domestique est un lieu de rencontre important entre les peuples autochtones et les puissances coloniales. Au Canada comme ailleurs, le remplacement des habitations autochtones par des modèles domestiques coloniaux reflète des structures politiques coloniales de peuplement plus vastes. Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le gouvernement canadien a continué d'utiliser la domesticité comme forme d'assimilation. En 1950, lorsque les « Affaires indiennes » ont commencé à relever du ministère de la Citoyenneté et de l'Immigration, les espaces domestiques pour les peuples autochtones ont ainsi été développés par le biais de nouveaux discours d'intégration et de citoyenneté. J'examine trois de ces zones de contact domestiques : les maisons unifamiliales, les salles de classe d'économie domestique et les maisons modèles. En simulant les architectures domestiques colonialistes d'après-guerre, ces espaces démontrent un mimétisme déstabilisé qui constitue une vision de la place accordée aux peuples autochtones dans l'État colonial. Je soutiens donc que l'espace domestique est un site complexe qui rend visible, en termes visuels et spatiaux, le pouvoir colonial de peuplement.

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Introduction

Domestic spaces have long served as sites of encounter between Indigenous Peoples and colonial powers. Under colonial conditions, the home can become a refuge, but also a site of oppressive state intervention in the most intimate details of daily life. In settler-colonial states such as Canada, where access to Indigenous territories and the large-scale replacement of Indigenous Peoples with settler populations constitute key governing logics,¹ settler domesticities replace Indigenous patterns of dwelling. For settlers, settler architecture on colonized Indigenous lands becomes normal and thus unremarkable. Settlers thereafter construe Indigenous spaces as foreign and in need of “domestication.”² This process of architectural replacement exemplifies the pervasiveness, and thus invisibility,³ of settler colonialism as a formation of power expressed in the built environment.

Since at least the nineteenth century, European settlers in what are now known as Canada and the United States have observed and attempted to modify Indigenous Peoples' domestic spaces as a form of assimilation.⁴ Following the Second World War, the settler-colonial bureaucracy governing Indigenous Peoples in Canada continued this practice, but within a new and contradictory discourse of integration and citizenship.⁵ This repackaging of longstanding policies of both segregation and assimilation was a strategy to deal with an increasing Indigenous population and intended to eventually eliminate the legal status of Indigenous people defined as “status Indians” under the Indian Act. At the same time, Indian Affairs was brought under the purview of the Department of Citizenship & Immigration, where its mandate became to integrate Indigenous Peoples as citizens in a similar manner to immigrants.⁶ In this social and political context, Indian Affairs architects developed a range of domestic spaces that functioned as “contact zones,” which Mary Louise Pratt describes as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”⁷ These domestic contact zones simulated postwar settler domestic models and included the single-family dwelling, but also spaces like home economics classrooms in residential and day schools, as well as different types of model houses. I interpret these spaces as distinct, but related, prescriptive settings for assimilation, which were disseminated through the wide geographical reach of the settler-colonial bureaucratic apparatus. As conduits

1. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 388.

2. Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 582.

3. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 84–86; Adam J. Barker, "Locating Settler Colonialism," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 13, no. 3 (2012): 1.

4. Many such early attempts were tied to missionary activities. See Susan Neylan, "Longhouses, Schoolrooms, and Workers' Cottages: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions to the Tsimshian and the Transformation of Class Through Religion," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 11, no. 1 (2000): 51–86; Paige Raibmon, "Living on Display: Colonial Visions of Aboriginal Domestic Spaces," *BC Studies* 140 (Winter 2003): 69–89.

5. Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, "Making Aboriginal People 'Immigrants Too': A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s–1960s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 16, 2009): 427–61.

6. Bohaker and Iacovetta, 428–29.

7. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

8. Italics are in the original. Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 122.

9. Geoffrey Paul Carr, "'House of No Spirit': An Architectural History of the Indian Residential School in British Columbia" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2011), 70.

10. In Patrick Wolfe's formulation, settler colonialism is "a structure not an event." Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 388.

11. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 95.

12. David Fortin, Jason Surkan, and Danielle Kastelein, "Métis Domestic Thresholds and the Politics of Imposed Privacy," in *Our Voices: Indigeneity and Architecture*, ed. Rebecca Kiddle, luugiyoo patrick

for postwar settler domestic ideologies, these spaces also conveyed larger ideas about the place of Indigenous Peoples within the settler-colonial state.

The simulated spaces I discuss here remain ambivalent relative to their settler analogues. This state of ambivalence recalls Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry, which destabilizes colonial authority by producing "a reformed, recognizable Other" who is "*almost the same, but not quite*."⁸ Yet it was not the intended occupants who created this ambivalence, but subtle cues in the spaces themselves and the landscapes, both physical and political, within which they were embedded. While these spaces bear what Geoffrey Carr calls a "passing resemblance"⁹ to the broader settler-colonial built environment, they are imperfect simulations, partially revealing the often invisible "structure" of settler colonialism and bringing into question what it might mean to be "at home" within it.¹⁰ In this architectural context, tensions between interiors and exteriors also demonstrate settler-colonial anxieties about foreignness and belonging, and the ability of the exterior to conceal interior contradictions.

The spaces produced by the settler-colonial state to house Indigenous Peoples must be understood in relation to what Leanne Betasamosake Simpson calls "the assimilatory nature of domesticity," an ideology that punished generations of Indigenous women who existed "outside of the domestic sphere, outside of heteropatriarchal, monogamous Christian marriage."¹¹ David Fortin, Jason Surkan, and Danielle Kastelein have tied the architectural form of settler domesticity to an imposed privacy that is antithetical to Indigenous kinship structures.¹² In this context, domesticity is an ideology used by the settler-colonial state to infiltrate and harm Indigenous ways of being, with the overall goal of eradicating Indigenous nations as polities distinct from Canada. While this domestic ideology manifested in myriad ways, I focus here on its relationship to some of the architecture through which it was mediated.

My own position relative to the histories with which I engage here is as an immigrant and settler in various Indigenous territories, as well as a learner and worker within the settler-colonial academy. I have thus benefited from the structures of colonialism that I wish to critique. I also work, in the words of Adele Perry, with "what can be reconstituted through the particular lens of the colonial archive, especially the records created by Canada's Department of Indian Affairs."¹³ In doing so, I hope to interrogate Canadian architectural history as settler-colonial history.

An Ambivalent Settler-Colonial Domestic Ideal

Indian Affairs became a branch of Canada's Department of Citizenship & Immigration in 1950. In 1959, this branch published *Canadian Indian Homes*, which included seven house designs, prescriptive literature, and documents from the Department of National Health & Welfare, Central (now Canada) Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the US government. According to Indian Affairs, this collection of material was directed at field staff, band councils, and Indigenous homeowners to "promote the orderly development of Indian communities and adequate standards of housing, hygiene and essential services."¹⁴ Released in the midst of broader integration and citizenship

campaigns aimed at Indigenous Peoples and just a year before people with Indian status were granted the federal vote, this publication reinforced the link between citizenship and homeownership. A closer look, however, shows how it also revealed the cultural imperialism and fundamental inequalities underlying relations between Indigenous Peoples and settler Canadians.

Architectural historian Dianne Harris, in her examination of racial identity and postwar housing in the US, argues that “[l]ittle proclaimed whiteness, class stability, and citizenship quite like a house of one’s own in the suburbs.”¹⁵ Harris shows that desirable aspects of “ordinary” postwar houses like privacy, storage space, consumer goods, and landscaped property helped construct an often-invisible or implicit whiteness and that popular discourses emphasized “the rightness of associating white identities with homeownership and citizenship.”¹⁶ Almost immediately after the Second World War, the Canadian government set about housing the nation, holding architectural competitions, regularly publishing the results, providing low-cost plans for small houses, and offering loans to prospective homeowners.¹⁷ The “clients” for the CMHC’s inaugural small house design competition in 1947 were “Mr. and Mrs. Canada,” a white, heterosexual couple with two children, who exemplified the national ideal of the homeownership family.¹⁸ Yet despite the government’s new focus on integration and citizenship, these broader national efforts around housing were implicitly not for Indigenous Peoples, most significantly because mortgages supported by the CMHC were not available to people living on reserves.¹⁹ Instead, a parallel discourse around housing and settler-colonial domesticity emerged in this period as a distinct site of encounter between Indigenous Peoples and the settler-colonial state.

A comparison between *Canadian Indian Homes* and the CMHC’s *Small House Designs*, a series of house plan catalogues emerging from the 1947 competition and aimed at the Canadian public, suggests that the role of housing and domesticity in the settler-colonial state’s efforts to “integrate” Indigenous Peoples remained contradictory. On the one hand, the domestic spaces that the government promoted for Indigenous Peoples appeared as simulations of those for “ordinary” Canadian citizens; on the other, they remained a segregated endeavour characterized by exhaustive bureaucratic control and disparity in design. The covers of *Canadian Indian Homes* and the *Small House Designs* catalogue from 1957, for example, are strikingly similar, yet simultaneously jarring in their differences. | fig. 1 | The resonance of the tripartite graphic layout and even the choice of house design, an asymmetrical, gable-front bungalow with comparable windows on the front elevation, suggests an effort on the part of Indian Affairs to package its housing program as congruent with settler Canadian norms. Yet where the CMHC’s carefully rendered perspective and sparse but naturalistic vegetation were meant to persuade Canadians of the value of good design (preferably in a “soft-modern”²⁰ mode), the matter-of-fact elevation on the cover of *Canadian Indian Homes* offered the minimum of government-approved “adequate standards of housing.” The role of citizenship rhetoric is made clear on this cover by the visual emphasis on the word “Canadian,” which is in tension with the circled image of a tipi, whose smoke flaps point inappropriately to the rear of the structure. The tipi serves as a stereotype to mark the publication as “for” Indigenous Peoples, while claiming both this traditional

stewart, and Kevin O’Brien (Novato, California: ORO Editions, 2018), 76–84.

13. Adele Perry, “Drinking Disposition: Shoal Lake 40, Winnipeg, and the Making of Canada,” in *Surviving Canada: Indigenous Peoples Celebrate 150 Years of Betrayal*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Myra J. Tait (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2017), 262.

14. Canada, *Department of Citizenship and Immigration: Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1960* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel F.R.S.C., Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1960), 55.

15. Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 21.

16. Harris, 1.

17. George Thomas Kapelos, “The Small House in Print: Promoting the Modern Home to Post-War Canadians through Pattern Books, Journals, and Magazines,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 34, no. 1 (2009): 33–60; Ioana Teodorescu, “Building Small Houses in Postwar Canada: Architects, Homeowners and Bureaucratic Ideals, 1947–1974” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2013).

18. *67 Homes for Canadians* (Ottawa: Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1947), 74–75.

19. This was because reserve land could not be used as security for a loan. See government correspondence on this issue in July and August 1961 in Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), MG 32-B1, vol. 97, file 7, 1A-312 Housing 1958-63.

20. Harris, *Little White Houses*, 52.

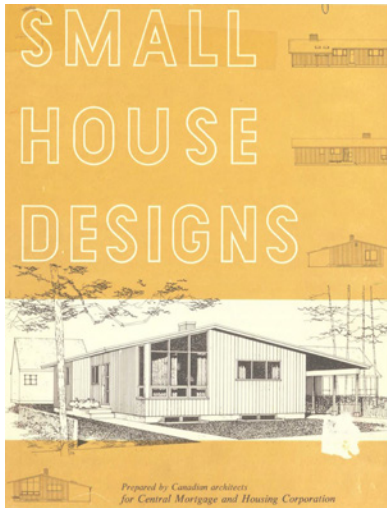


Figure 1. Cover of *Small House Designs* (1957) and *Canadian Indian Homes* (1959). Reproduced from *Small House Designs* (Ottawa: Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1957) and *Canadian Indian Homes* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship & Immigration, 1959). Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC); and Library and Archives Canada/ Richard Albert Bell fonds/ Vol. 97, file 8, Policy and Case Files—Housing - “Canadian Indian Homes”—Brochure, 1959.

structure and Indigenous Peoples themselves as “Canadian.” The tipi also stands in contrast to the bungalow depicted below it, suggesting the assimilative intent of the booklet and the superiority of settler forms of housing.

A closer look at the houses depicted on the covers of *Canadian Indian Homes* and *Small House Designs* reveals further ambiguities. Plan 7 in *Canadian Indian Homes* is about two-thirds the size of the *Small House Designs* bungalow.²¹ While both have three bedrooms, the former has no second bathroom, family room, or dining room. Significantly, plan 7 was intended to be built in two stages, the first of which was a small, 475-sq.-ft, one-bedroom house with a living room and kitchen, but no bathroom. Yet the larger, fully built version of the design was shown on the cover, obscuring the modesty of the first-stage house and conveying a greater congruence with houses promoted to settler Canadians.

Although the presentation of *Canadian Indian Homes* superficially imitated *Small House Designs*, some of the designs bear a strong resemblance to plans produced by Wartime Housing Limited (WHL) during the Second World War. A precursor of the CMHC, WHL was a federal Crown corporation that operated between 1941 and 1947 to build and manage rental housing for war workers and veterans.²² Designed by a “Committee of Architects,” these modest, single-family prefabricated dwellings were built quickly on greenfield sites near factories and intended to be temporary.²³ However, WHL developments sometimes existed for decades after the end of the war if the houses were sold, rather than dismantled.²⁴ In Nova Scotia, Indian Affairs bought several houses of this type around 1950: “Thirteen...homes, of pre-fabricated war-time construction, were purchased at Pictou, transported by scow, and set up on the Pictou Landing Reserve, where housing conditions have been particularly bad.”²⁵ Later, in the mid-1950s, the Indian Affairs Engineering and Construction Division collected “representative plans and specifications from each region” in order to “develop standards incorporating their best features.”²⁶ Field staff sent in examples that may have included WHL houses, whose plans were thus republished, in slightly altered form, in *Canadian Indian Homes*. In particular, the

21. Design 267 by architect M.G. Dixon of Ottawa, in *Small House Designs* (Ottawa: Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1957), 46–47.

22. See Jill Wade, “Wartime Housing Limited, 1941–1947: Canadian Housing Policy at the Crossroads,” *Urban History Review* 15, no. 1 (1986): 41–59.

23. WHL also produced dormitory-style housing and other multiple residences. For descriptions and images of the single-family models, as well as other details, see Burwell R. Coon, “Wartime Housing,” *Journal - Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 19, no. 1 (January 1942): 3–8; Graham McInnes, *Wartime Housing* (National Film Board of Canada, 1943), https://www.nfb.ca/film/wartime_housing/.

24. Annmarie Adams, Jennifer Beardsley, and Pieter Sijpkens, *Ville St-Laurent Revisited: Wartime Housing and Architectural Change, 1942–1992* (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1997).

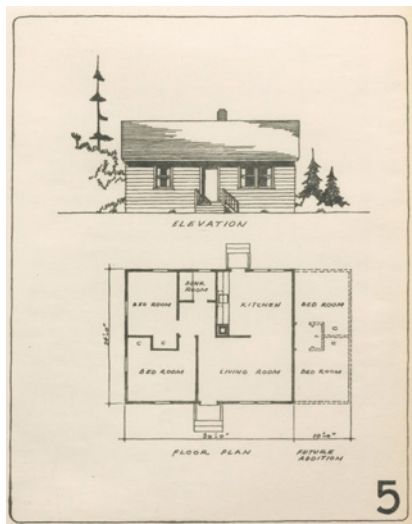
25. Canada, Department of Mines and Resources: *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1949* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, C.M.G., B.A., L.Ph., King’s Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1950), 62.

26. Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration: *Report of the Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1958* (Ottawa: The Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1958), 50.

Figure 2. Plan 5 from *Canadian Indian Homes* (1959) compared with Wartime Housing Limited Single Family Dwelling: Type H 1 (1942). Reproduced from *Canadian Indian Homes* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship & Immigration, 1959): n.p., and Burwell R. Coon, "Wartime Housing," *Journal—Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 19, no. 1 (January 1942): 7. Library and Archives Canada/Richard Albert Bell fonds/Vol. 97, file 8, Policy and Case Files—Housing - "Canadian Indian Homes"—Brochure, 1959.

interior layout of *Canadian Indian Homes'* plan 4, a one-and-a-half storey design, is virtually identical to WHL type H 12, except it is reflected on the vertical axis, and the latter features closets in the downstairs bedrooms. Plan 5, a one-storey, two-bedroom house, is very similar to WHL type H 1. | fig. 2 | In addition to the possible recycling of plans caused by the appearance of WHL houses in Indigenous communities, Indian Affairs architects may have had easy access to WHL designs, through either government channels or the architectural press. Thus, house plans promoted to Indigenous Peoples nearly fifteen years after the end of the war simulated temporary wartime housing for settler Canadians, highlighting the incongruence of domestic standards held for different categories of citizens by the settler-colonial state.

The bathroom represents a particular area of disparity in *Canadian Indian Homes*. Although the authors claimed that "[s]pace has been provided in most plans for a bathroom,"²⁷ these were either completely missing (plans 2, 3, and 6), earmarked as a "future bathroom" in a small bedroom or bunk room (plans 1, 4, and 5), or drawn as part of a future addition (plan 7). In other words, not a single plan assumed that a bathroom would be built during initial construction. "[I]n cases where pressurized water is not available," the text notes,



27. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, "The House Designs," in *Canadian Indian Homes* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 1959), 1.

28. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, 1.

29. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, "Selection of the Site," in *Canadian Indian Homes* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 1959), 1.

"the bathroom space is utilized as a small bedroom, with a double bunk bed, until such time as bathroom fixtures can be installed."²⁸ The authors do not address the practicality of converting one of these spaces into a bathroom and thus reducing the number of bedrooms in the house. "It is doubtful," they admit, "if water will be piped into many of the Welfare Housing projects for some time."²⁹ This bunk room/future bathroom space thus functioned as a placeholder rather than a real amenity. Although the state often couches the lack of safe running water and bathroom facilities in Indigenous communities in terms of unfortunate inevitability, in the *longue durée* of settler colonialism it remains remarkably consistent. Referring to state attitudes towards housing

for Indigenous Peoples, Sam Lewis, manager of the Squamish Nation, said in 1972 that “[t]hey never think there should be running water or a furnace... We will never build a house without facilities such as indoor plumbing.”³⁰ Barbara Penner, a scholar in architectural humanities, notes that, “[u]nless we recognize the part bathrooms play in enforcing order and existing power relations, it is hard to make sense of why they are often such bitterly contested spaces.”³¹ Where “Mr. and Mrs. Canada” could expect “the usual utilities” when building their home even in the immediate postwar period,³² this was not expected for Indigenous Peoples by the settler-colonial state in 1960 or, in many cases, even in the present.

Canadian Indian Homes demonstrates that settler-colonial attitudes towards Indigenous domestic space in the postwar era were characterized by a contradictory paternalism. They sought integration and citizenship while proposing inferior designs within bureaucratic control and restricted access to resources such as financing. Domestic space was co-opted by the state to produce a capitalistic “interest and desire for the house” as well as “intangible benefits of promoting independence and initiative.”³³ The government reiterated this contradictory attitude in its 1962 Subsidy Housing Program:

The Indian must choose his own objective and nothing must be forced on him, but by example, by visual education, by film strips and movies shown by Homemakers and other clubs or organizations, by the formation of housing committees through the band council, and through domestic science and manual training classes in the schools, a great deal can be done to create a desire for better things.³⁴

While paying lip service to the freedom of choice associated with citizenship, the state nevertheless inundated Indigenous Peoples with a settler-colonial domestic ideology connected to capitalism and consumerism, all the while promoting an inferior product. These practices are consistent with the settler-colonial state’s larger objectives of simultaneously assimilating and marginalizing Indigenous Peoples.

Institutional Domesticities

Until the 1940s, most residential schools for Indigenous children in Canada operated on a “half-day” system, with half a day in the classroom and the other half labouring at tasks like cooking, cleaning, laundry, and sewing (for girls) or farming and manual labour (for boys).³⁵ Often characterized as “vocational training,” this system represented great economic value through involuntary and uncompensated child labour that supplemented insufficient government funding for these institutions. It also produced a steady supply of domestic workers and manual labourers for white settler families (sometimes those of school staff), thus functioning as an indoctrination into the gender and class expectations of settler society.³⁶ As the half-day system was phased out in the postwar period,³⁷ an emphasis on professional home economics instruction emerged in both residential and day schools. Real spaces of institutional labour were replaced by the simulated domestic settings of classrooms for home economics, a subject that was also referred to as domestic science, homemaking, or household science. On average, five specialized home economics instructors were hired into the federal school system each year between 1956 and 1960, making a total of 66 instructors teaching the subject

30. Sam Lewis, quoted in “Squamish Band Completes Housing Project,” *The Indian News* 14, no. 8 (1972): 4. *The Indian News* was published by Indian Affairs.

31. Barbara Penner, *Bathroom* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 22.

32. 67 *Homes for Canadians*, 75.

33. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, “Community Development,” in *Canadian Indian Homes* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 1959), 1.

34. LAC, MG 32-B1, vol. 97, file 7, 1A-312 Housing 1958-63, Indian Affairs Branch, “Subsidy Housing Program,” April 1, 1962, n.p. Indian Affairs and the National Film Board of Canada produced a film-strip series called “We Learn English” for showing in reserve communities; titles included “The Home,” “Family Health,” and “The Community.”

35. John Sheridan Milloy and Mary Jane McCallum, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System*, Anniversary Edition, *Critical Studies in Native History* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 35.

36. Mary Jane McCallum, “Sweeping the Nation: Indigenous Women and Domestic Labour in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada,” in *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940–1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 21–65; Mary Jane Logan McCallum, “‘I Would Like the Girls at Home’: Domestic Labor and the Age of Discharge at Canadian Indian Residential Schools,” in *Colonization and Domestic Service: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Victoria K. Haskins and Claire Lowrie (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

37. For example, at the Birtle Indian Residential School in Manitoba, the youngest students began to attend full-day classes in 1943, and the older children were phased in over the next few years. The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, “Brief Administrative History of the Residential Schools & The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s Healing and Reconciliation Efforts,” September 2010, http://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/healing_administrative_history_of_residential_schools.pdf.

to 2,759 Indigenous children in 1960.³⁸ There was also a parallel surge in the construction of home economics classrooms, either in new schools or as part of additions to existing buildings.³⁹

The transition from institutionalized domestic labour to home economics was one way that Indian Affairs' push towards "integration" manifested through education. Following a review of the Indian Act in 1948, a government committee recommended that "wherever and whenever possible Indian children should be educated in association with other children" to prepare them "to take their places as citizens."⁴⁰ In practice, this meant increasing enrollment of Indigenous children in provincial public schools, but also conducting segregated federal "elementary school programs approximating those designed for comparable non-Indian schools."⁴¹

In mid-twentieth-century North America, home economics was a standard part of settler school curricula and required specialized spaces in school buildings. A classroom designed by Perkins & Will for the *Schoolroom Progress U.S.A.* exhibition in 1955 exemplifies this type, which ideally contained both laboratory spaces for activities like sewing and cooking, and a living area that "reproduces facilities and conditions for home activities."⁴² There was thus an inherent simulative aspect in these classrooms, which were also potent conveyors of ideological content because they had the unassuming appearance of a "typical" settler home environment.⁴³ Although the *Schoolroom Progress* publication proposed that the purpose of domestic science was "teaching the creation of a good home situation,"⁴⁴ it also noted that "today's classrooms have work centers which are models of what these young students will some day want in their own homes."⁴⁵ Education for consumption in the postwar economy was thus a key element of home economics, reinforcing the association between settler-colonial domesticity, household goods, and citizenship.

In this context, classrooms for home economics became a consistent feature of federal day and residential schools for Indigenous children in the 1950s. As a type of domestic interior within an institutional setting, they were more highly controlled than the dwellings promoted through programs like *Canadian Indian Homes* and could thus more directly impart notions of settler-domestic ideology to young people. Yet just as the dwellings designed by the settler-colonial state for Indigenous Peoples were not simply copies of contemporaneous settler housing, home economics classrooms in day and residential schools were subtly different from their settler counterparts in public high schools. Their very presence in these segregated "schools" suggests the importance of domestic ideology to the state's assimilation project. However, the ways in which they differed from those in non-Indigenous schools suggests bureaucrats' and politicians' anxieties about the place of Indigenous Peoples within the settler-colonial state. In these classrooms, architects more thoroughly modelled the idealized living conditions of a middle-class, white, settler nuclear family than did similar classrooms in non-Indigenous schools. They did this by consistently dedicating a significant proportion of space to the living, dining, and bedroom areas, the latter being rare in non-Indigenous schools.

The living space in home economics classrooms for Indigenous children was often furnished with a sofa, armchairs, end tables, and coffee table, not unlike the living rooms or "living centres" in non-Indigenous schools. While

38. Canada, *Department of Citizenship and Immigration: Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1956* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, C.M.G., O.A., D.S.P., Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1957), 79; Canada, *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1961* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel F.R.S.C., Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), 105.

39. See, for instance, Canada, *Department of Citizenship and Immigration: Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1955* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, C.M.G., O.A., D.S.P., Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1956), 61.

40. Canada, *Annual Report 1949, 199*.

41. Canada, *Department of Citizenship and Immigration: Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1953* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, C.M.G., O.A., D.S.P., Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1953), 58.

42. *Schoolroom Progress U.S.A.* (Henry Ford Museum, 1955), 22.

43. N.L. Engelhardt, *Planning Secondary School Buildings* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1949), 174.

44. *Schoolroom Progress U.S.A.*, 22.

45. *Schoolroom Progress U.S.A.*, 26.

Figure 3. Floor Plan of Domestic Science Room at McIntosh Residential School. Engineering & Construction Service, Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship & Immigration, 6 Classroom Indian Day School with Teachers Quarters at McIntosh Indian Residential School, Sioux Lookout Agency, ON, detail, 1957. Library and Archives Canada, RG 22M 912016, Plan 1326, Item 5983. © Government of Canada. Reproduced with the permission of Library and Archives Canada (2020).

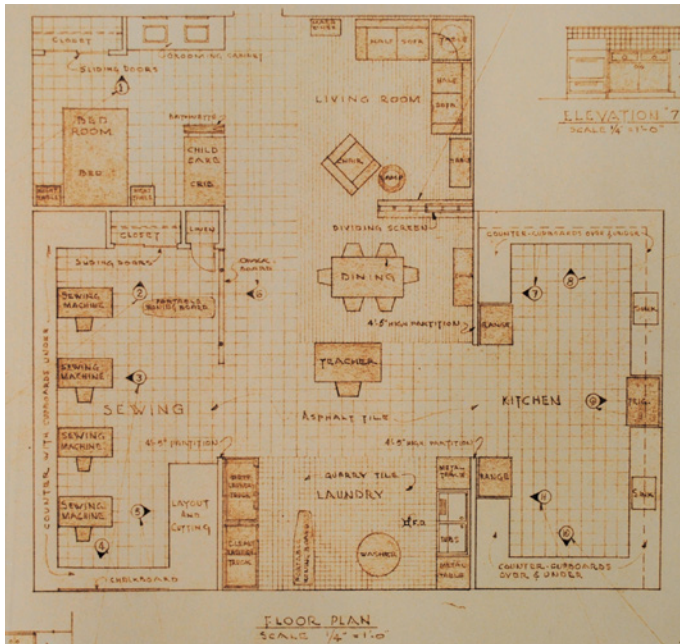
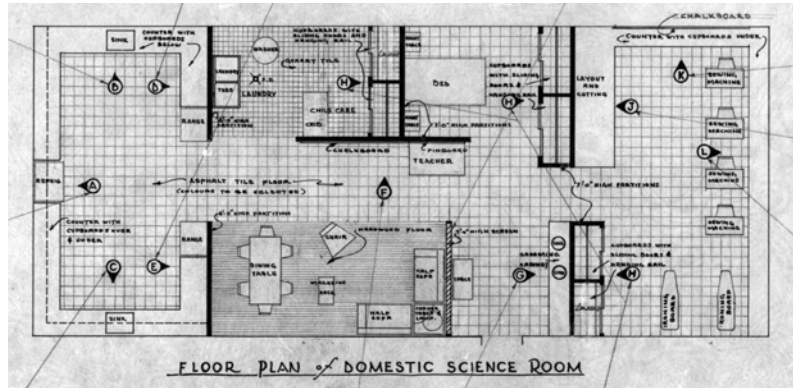
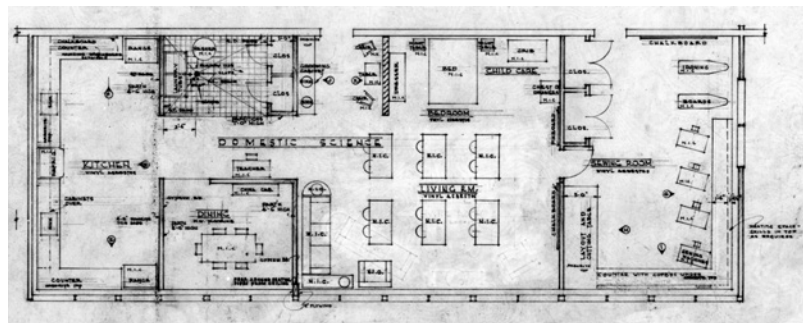


Figure 4. Floor plan of domestic science room at Peguis Central Day School. Engineering & Construction Service, Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship & Immigration, Peguis Central Day School, Fisher River, MB, detail, 1957. Library and Archives Canada, RG 22M 912016, Plan 1326, Item 6074. © Government of Canada. Reproduced with the permission of Library and Archives Canada (2020).

Figure 5. Plan of domestic science room for a standard school. Engineering & Construction Service, Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship & Immigration, Standard 4-Classroom School with Vocational Training and Assembly Hall, detail, 1959. Library and Archives Canada, RG 22M 912016, Plan 1463, Item 6477. © Government of Canada. Reproduced with the permission of Library and Archives Canada (2020).



mainstream schools were sometimes planned with complete “‘apartments’ or other typical home accommodations,”⁴⁶ these facilities varied widely and were sometimes quite minimal. Conversely, Indian Affairs put a special emphasis on these simulated domestic environments. Some plans even included details like lamps and magazine racks, as at the day school at McIntosh Residential School, Treaty 3 Territory (Kenora, Ontario) | **fig. 3** | and Peguis Central Day School at Peguis First Nation, Treaty 2 Territory (Manitoba). | **fig. 4** | As other scholars have shown, shelter and popular magazines were potent conveyors of ideas about postwar, single-family domesticity, guiding readers through text and images that reinforced normative conceptions of race, class, and gender.⁴⁷ The importance of the magazine rack is that it replicated an artifact from a settler home and simultaneously provided a source of material that promoted participation in the settler economy through consumption of domestic spaces and goods. The living room also conveyed ideas about settler social conventions like casual living and family activities,⁴⁸ and provided a setting for the display of various household accessories.

The living area in home economics classrooms often shared space with the dining room, either in an open concept configuration (**fig. 3**), divided by a screen (**fig. 4**), or in an adjacent room separated by a low partition. | **fig. 5** | These approaches echoed newer ideas about open-plan living, unifying the living and dining rooms with hardwood flooring throughout. The furnishings generally consisted of a dining table with six chairs, along with a china cabinet, which simulated the dining space of a settler nuclear family. These furnishings presumed ownership of china, which was a typical wedding gift during that era in settler families.⁴⁹ By contrast, many home economics classrooms in non-Indigenous schools employed a cafeteria-style layout with multiple tables.⁵⁰ While this difference may have had to do with differing class sizes, it also reflects Indian Affairs’ tendency to promote spaces that emphasized nuclear family togetherness and monogamous marriage.

Although some postwar North American school planning guides suggested that bedroom and childcare facilities could be included as part of the home economics space, these rarely appeared in publications or on architects’ plans of mainstream schools. This absence perhaps reflects the postwar perception of the bedroom as a private and individual space, especially as living/dining/kitchen areas became more open and public.⁵¹ It is also possible that designers and educators considered normative use of bedrooms as being implicitly taught in the home, and thus unnecessary to duplicate at school. Where beds were used, they might be of a “rollaway” variety that allowed them to be stored out of sight,⁵² or they were associated primarily with home nursing.⁵³ This lack of bedroom facilities contrasts with the prominent place accorded them in many home economics classrooms in day and residential schools for Indigenous children in Canada. These bedroom spaces were generally designed to include a double bed, night tables, a closet, and sometimes a dresser, as in one of Indian Affairs’ standard four-classroom schools (**fig. 5**). A “grooming cabinet” and crib for teaching child care were sometimes included within the bedroom, or elsewhere in the classroom. The grooming cabinet was similar to a dressing table and included a mirror and sinks. It may have been linked to the government’s promotion of hairdressing as a career choice for young

46. Engelhardt, *Planning Secondary School Buildings*, 174.

47. Dianne Harris, “Magazine Lessons: Publishing the Lexicon of White Domesticity,” in *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 59–82; Kapelos, “The Small House in Print.”

48. Harris, *Little White Houses*, 122.

49. I credit Annmarie Adams with this observation.

50. For examples, see Frank G. Lopez, *Schools for the New Needs: Educational, Social, Economic* (New York: F.W. Dodge Corp., 1956); Department of Manpower and Immigration, “Students in a home economics class, British Columbia,” n.d. (after 1965), LAC, accession 1972-047 NPC, box 06274.3, item no. 48823B.

51. Annmarie Adams, “The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbia,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 5 (1995): 173; Harris, *Little White Houses*, 117.

52. See, for example, a home economics room with a “Space for Roll-away bed” designed by Alward & Gillies in 1947. Library and Archives Canada, Architectural drawings produced and used by the firm Alward & Gillies, Architects (R8685-4-4-E), Project F-66, Additions to Grammar School Building, Bathurst, N.B., item 20.

53. Engelhardt, *Planning Secondary School Buildings*, 176.

Indigenous women in the 1950 and 60s.⁵⁴ While not all home economics classrooms included a bedroom, where it existed it served not only as equipment to learn skills, but also as a form of spatial rhetoric. As such, it instilled potentially foreign settler beliefs about use of private domestic space, heterosexual family formation, and cleanliness and hygiene, complementing other efforts to make Indigenous domestic space conform to prevailing settler-colonial norms.

Home economics classrooms provide an idea of the highly gendered domestic curriculum developed by Indian Affairs and spatialized by its architects in postwar Canada. Similar spaces in settler schools generally had living spaces, but their dining areas were often arranged in a cafeteria style, with multiple tables, while bedrooms were often missing. By comparison, classrooms in day and residential schools more thoroughly simulated settler domestic interiors in pursuit of integrating Indigenous Peoples as citizens within the settler-colonial state.

Model “Homes”

Model houses have a long history in social reform efforts, domestic science education, and the commercial sphere. In all cases, the persuasive power of a model house, unlike other representational methods, lies in its invitation to visitors to enter a domestic interior and imagine themselves at home. As Dianne Harris writes, model houses in the postwar period “served as three-dimensional, full-scale advertisements for... specific lifestyles.”⁵⁵ In the postwar encounter between Indigenous Peoples and the settler-colonial state, model houses functioned as persuasive simulations of an idealized settler domesticity. They integrated aspects of housing programs like *Canadian Indian Homes* and home economics education.

As standalone buildings in relation to residential schools, model houses were ambivalent spaces that underscored the contradiction of the state’s separation of Indigenous children from their families, even as it sought to instill settler family values. Model houses in this context appeared in at least two guises: as a training facility attached to a residential school and as a house built by day school students or community members as a demonstration project. Both types of model houses were prescriptive, involving Indigenous children in the production and reproduction of settler domestic norms.

Model houses used as training facilities were built at St. Anthony’s Residential School at Onion Lake Cree Nation, Treaty 6 Territory (Saskatchewan), and Pine Creek Residential School at Pine Creek First Nation, Treaty 4 Territory (near Camperville, Manitoba), both Catholic-run institutions. In 1955, *The Indian News*, an Indian Affairs publication, ran a front-page article about the model house at St. Anthony’s with the headline “Household study real to students.” The writer emphasized the “very realistic” and “practical” way in which the specially built, three-room house enabled female students, who took “turns at being ‘housewife,’” to “carry on all the normal activities of a household.”⁵⁶ The article goes on to list the variety of household equipment within the building, “all of the type which can be purchased easily by a young couple on a budget suited to their means.” In addition to providing a place for teaching skills like cooking and sewing (“including Indian handicrafts”), the house

54. Mary Jane McCallum, “The Permanent Solution: The Placement and Relocation Program, Hairdressers, and Beauty Culture,” in *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940–1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 66–119.

55. Harris, *Little White Houses*, 76.

56. “Household Study Real to Students,” *The Indian News*, April 1955; Canada, “St. Anthony’s (Onion Lake) Roman Catholic Indian Residential School (AP School Narrative,” September 6, 2012, 8, <https://nctr.ca/School%20narratives/SK/ST%20ANTHONY.pdf>.

was a kind of stage set for practicing gender roles and an advertisement for the domestic merchandise that the girls should aspire to own one day. As part of a “system of training for family life,” the house provided a simulacrum of the ideal settler nuclear family’s domestic sphere that had been lacking under the half-day system. The article’s placement as front-page “news” in a publication distributed by the government to Indigenous communities likewise reproduced the message of the house.

In their comparison of postwar programs for Indigenous Peoples and immigrants in Canada, historians Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta analyze the Onion Lake model house in terms of its significance within “campaigns of domesticity” aimed at women in both groups.⁵⁷ They note, however, that the model house “was far removed from the celebrated modern homes that CB [Citizenship Branch] officials and others encouraged new Canadians to aspire to eventually purchasing,” and even that it “resembled the conditions of wartorn or impoverished European regions. One could argue that Indigenous Peoples were not expected to aspire to the same level of modernity as white Europeans.”⁵⁸ Recalling the contradictions of the house designs in *Canadian Indian Homes*, these model houses provided an indoctrination into settler domestic norms while imitating them only partially. Indeed, the model house at Onion Lake was a log cabin,⁵⁹ which was a practical choice in regions where the material was abundant and Indigenous builders had the necessary skills. The government promoted such houses in *Canadian Indian Homes*, noting that “the log house has a very definite place in our housing construction program.... Properly constructed the log house is attractive and warm, it is economical and it allows a maximum use of Indian labour.”⁶⁰ Log houses also constituted a traditional form that to some extent increased independence from the settler-colonial state.⁶¹

The log house occupied an ambiguous position within state efforts to promote settler domesticity among Indigenous Peoples. Although it was not a housing type generally promoted to Canadians (the booklet on log construction included with *Canadian Indian Homes* was a US government publication), bureaucrats clearly saw it as an appropriate solution for Indigenous Peoples in certain regions. Log houses were also an expedient way to import mid-century domestic ideology to areas where frame construction and “soft modern” residential design were not feasible. The interior of the log house could be made similar to such a structure. An internal government memo, for instance, described subsidized log housing in which the logs were “squared on three sides so that they fit snugly and give a flat surface on the interior to allow for finishing by the application of strapping and wallboard.”⁶² The smooth finish of the wallboard would provide both an air barrier and conceal the structure, simulating the “modern” interior finish of frame houses.

Like at Onion Lake, the model house at the Pine Creek Residential School was built of logs, in this case arranged vertically. From a distance, it resembled the one-and-a-half-storey models from WHL and *Canadian Indian Homes*, with an enclosed entry vestibule and a steeply pitched roof with a gable window. | **fig. 6** | Inside, there was a kitchen, dining room, living room, and bedrooms on the upper level.⁶³ Built behind the main school building, the house existed in an ironic relation to its institutional context. | **fig. 7** | The girls who

57. Bohaker and Iacovetta, “Making Aboriginal People ‘Immigrants Too,’” 447.

58. Bohaker and Iacovetta, 447–48.

59. Canada, “St. Anthony’s (Onion Lake),” 8.

60. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, “The House Designs,” 2.

61. David Fortin argues that, in Métis communities, traditional log building has a “territorializing” or homogenizing effect because of communal building practices and the use of local materials, as opposed to the “deterritorialization” that occurs through increased contact with non-Indigenous communities, including road access, communications technologies, and the availability of manufactured construction materials. David T. Fortin, “The Assemblage of Kikino (‘Our Home’): Métis Material Culture and Architectural Design in the Alberta Settlements,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 40, no. 2 (2015): 11–23; cf. Brent Sturlaugson, “Housing Power: Log Construction on the Pine Ridge Reservation, 1879–1940,” *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 28, no. 1 (2016): 68–69.

62. LAC, MG 32-B1, vol. 97, file IA-312 Housing 1958-63, H.M. Jones, Memorandum to the Minister, January 29, 1963.

63. Canada, “Pine Creek Indian Residential School IAP School Narrative,” December 20, 2012, 8, <https://nctr.ca/School%20narratives/MB/PINE%20CREEK.pdf>.

Figure 6. Model House used for home economics at Pine Creek Residential School, Treaty 4 Territory (Camperville, Manitoba), 1942. Archives of the Missionary Oblate Sisters of St. Boniface, M17-02-17-02-01.



practised homemaking there during the day slept in the school's dormitories at night, the model house a reminder of a family life in which they were not permitted to partake.

Both the interior and exterior of the Pine Creek model house served as a backdrop for school photographs, and these provide clues about the house's representational importance. An exterior shot depicts a group of twelve girls in similar, patterned dresses, arranged in four rows in front of the vestibule. The vestibule is flanked on either side by sash windows, through which, on closer inspection, one can see curtains and a potted plant, details expressing the domestic quality of the building.⁶⁴ The girls' dresses are perhaps of their own making, a product of the sewing class that took place inside. Another, interior, photo shows four residential school students wearing dark dresses and blouses in different patterns, standing behind two seated nuns, probably Oblate Sisters.⁶⁵ The six figures are posed in a corner, and the domestic details are partially obscured or cut off—two pictures behind the girls' heads, a patterned rug beneath the nuns' feet, a stove edging into the frame. The photo suggests a family portrait taken at home, the nuns appearing as surrogates for the girls' parents.

Model houses like the ones at St. Anthony's and Pine Creek Residential Schools appeared at a moment when the half-day system of work had fallen out of favour and before home economics classrooms had been implemented on a significant scale. Once this happened in the mid-1950s, these model houses were relegated to other uses, such as regular classrooms or storage. For a time in the 1940s and 50s, model houses connected to schools constituted prescriptive and persuasive spaces to train Indigenous children, especially girls, in settler domesticity, simulating a home life that many were denied.

Another kind of model house brought together home economics education with ideas from the government's housing programs. One such house was built in 1961 at the Peguis Central Day School, discussed earlier in relation to its home economics classroom (fig. 4). Students themselves built this house, which was located near the school and linked education to a government philosophy of "self-help" around housing provision. The Peguis model house is a well-publicized iteration of this type of project, which was promoted in *Canadian Indian Homes*:

A project to encourage interest and participation that has been found successful in some regions is the building of a house by proper standards and methods of construction as a community project. A project of this nature would see the people of the community banding together, the men forming a bee to do the actual construction and the women interesting themselves in serving lunches. This project creates interest, imparts some knowledge of construction and creates a house for a worthy cause. The facilities of Homemakers' Clubs in the community, of local schools and especially manual training and domestic science classes may also be utilized to teach the necessary skills and promote home production of such things as furniture, curtains, rag rugs and other items which can be used by any household.⁶⁶

Unlike home economics classrooms and the earlier model houses, the model house at Peguis made the simulation real. Although the project, in both process and product, was a tool of persuasion about adhering to settler-colonial domestic ideals, it was also ultimately intended to be occupied by a

64. Archives of the Missionary Oblate Sisters/Archives des Missionnaires Oblates (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation), M17/22, Camperville—École Pine Creek School—1943, "In front of the Model House used for Home Economics/Devant la Maison modèle pour l'économie domestique."

65. Archives of the Missionary Oblate Sisters/Archives des Missionnaires Oblates (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation), M17/16, Camperville—École Pine Creek School—1942, "Inside the Model House used for Home Economics/A l'intérieur de la Maison modèle pour l'économie domestique."

66. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, "Community Development," 2.

Figure 7. Postcard of Pine Creek Residential School, Treaty 4 Territory (Camperville, Manitoba), with church (left) and model house (far right). Archives of the Missionary Oblate Sisters of St. Boniface/M17-02-35-04-03.



family in the community. “We feel,” a poster with a cutaway perspective of the house proclaimed, “that the average Indian family can build a similar home for themselves.” | **fig. 8** | The occupant of the Peguis house, Edwin McCorrister, appears in a photograph featured in an article on “Better Housing for Canada’s Indians,” written by the Information Officer for the Department of Citizenship & Immigration and published in *Ontario Housing*, a provincial government publication.⁶⁷ The image depicts McCorrister working on the landscape around his house, evoking popularly circulating ideas linking the “aes-

thetic ideal embodied by a manicured lawn and nonproductive landscape surrounding an individual dwelling” to leisured and homeownership “middle- and upper-middle-class white identities.”⁶⁸ This image, in the context of the article, was thus a powerful representation of the government’s “broad rehabilitation program aimed at the eventual integration of Indians into provincial and municipal organization of Canadian society.”⁶⁹

The Peguis model house was built from plans for a “Proto-Type Model Home,” envisioned by Indian Affairs as a standard house that could be repeated at the scale of a neighbourhood complete with tall fences for privacy and neat lawns punctuated by sparse shrubs and trees.⁷⁰ The interior, as shown in the cutaway perspective and in plan, was compact, at under 550 sq. ft. The front entry led directly into an L-shaped, open-concept living and dining area. | **fig. 9** | The kitchen was connected to both the dining area by a large opening and the living area by a counter-height pass-through, conforming to prevailing ideas about the integration of kitchens, and thus housewives, into the rest of the home.⁷¹ The kitchen had an “Enterprise” wood-burning cook stove, built-in cabinets, and countertop with sink; adjacent to the kitchen was a storage room and a secondary entrance. Two bedrooms were connected to the living area by short corridors with closets and access to the bathroom. | **fig. 10** | The bedrooms were small, at 59 sq. ft each, with the beds surrounded by walls on three sides, leaving only a small open floor area. According to *Canadian Indian Homes*, these “minimum standards” for the bedrooms allowed “more room in other parts of the home.”⁷² As a comparison, the two-bedroom bungalows in the CMHC’s *Small House Designs* from 1957 averaged 105 sq. ft for the smaller bedroom and 141 sq. ft for the larger. However, the children’s bedroom in the model house had two bunk beds, meaning an average of less than 15 sq. ft per occupant. There were no interior doors aside from the bathroom door. Curtains were hung at the entrances to the bedrooms because “It is felt that the occupant may prefer curtains, but if doors are required, they can be provided by his own efforts.”⁷³ These comments suggest an understanding of differing conceptions of privacy, but the lack of doors also made the house easier and cheaper to construct as well as slightly increasing its sense of spaciousness. The texts addressing prospective homebuilders stressed this notion of self-reliance, as in the poster’s admonition that “The more you are prepared to contribute through your own efforts, the better and more comfortable your home will be.” This rhetoric fed into a larger narrative

67. Norman Riddiough, “Better Housing for Canada’s Indians,” *Ontario Housing*, February 1962, 12–14.

68. Harris, *Little White Houses*, 295.

69. Riddiough, “Better Housing for Canada’s Indians,” 12. This statement was repeated almost verbatim in the Indian Affairs subsidy housing policy, with “successful” substituted for “eventual” and “as individuals, and as communities” inserted between “Indians” and “into.” LAC, MG 32-B1, vol. 97, file 7, 1A-312 Housing 1958-63, Indian Affairs Branch, “Subsidy Housing Program,” April 1, 1962, n.p.

70. LAC, RG 22M 912016, plan 3956, items 5300-5307, “Proto-Type Model Home.” See item 5300 for a perspective showing a group of houses.

71. Adams, “The Eichler Home,” 168–70; Avi Friedman, “The Evolution of Design Characteristics During the Post-Second World War Housing Boom: The US Experience,” *Journal of Design History* 8, no. 2 (January 1, 1995): 139.

72. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, “The House Designs,” 2.

73. Canada and Indian Affairs Branch, 2.

Figure 8. Model Home poster. Library and Archives Canada/Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development fonds/Plan 3954, item 5299. © Government of Canada. Reproduced with the permission of Library and Archives Canada (2020).

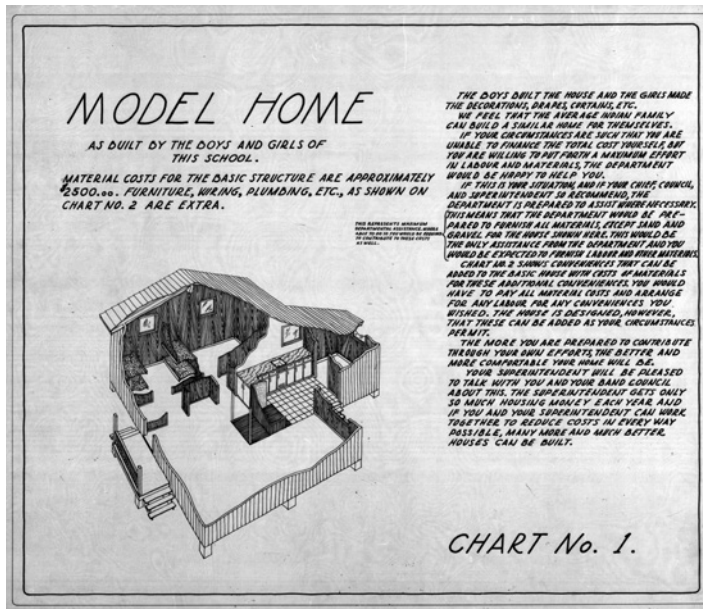
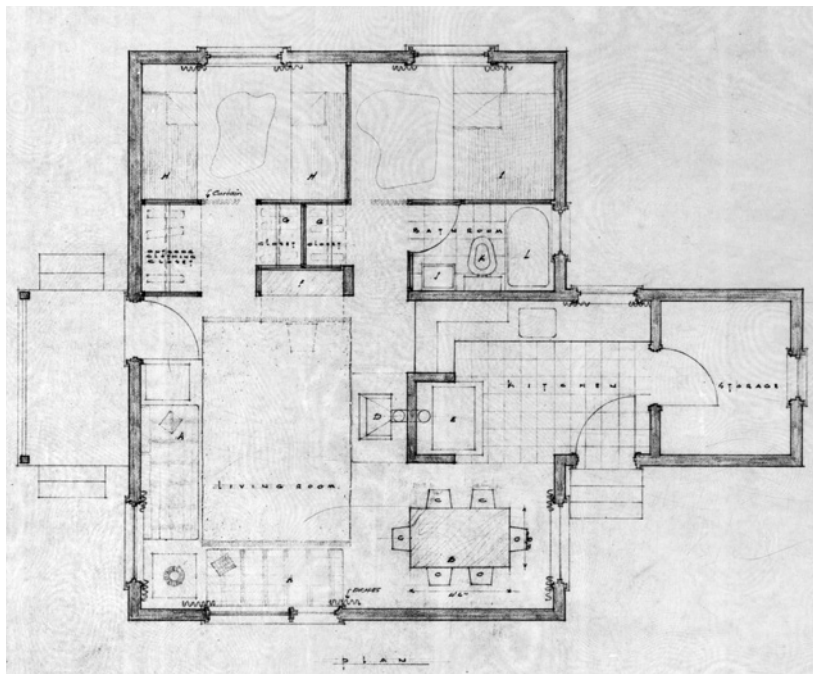
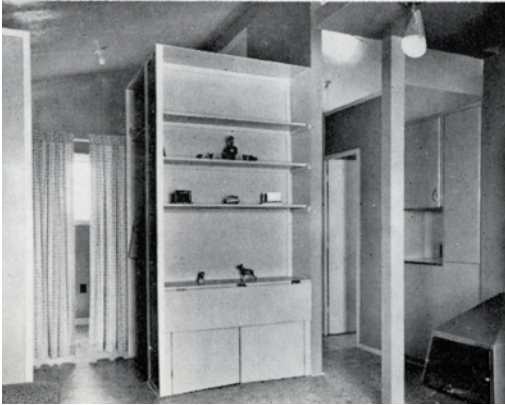


Figure 9. Plan and furniture layout of Indian Affairs' model house. A—Sofa Bed—2; B—Dining Table; C—Dining Chairs—6; D—"Acorn" Fireplace; E—"Enterprise" Cook Stove; F—Writing/Study Desk with Shelving; G—Clothes Closet; H—Bunk Beds (Two Doubles); I—Bed; J—Wash Basin; K—Toilet (W.C.); L—Bath Tub. Engineering & Construction Service, Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship & Immigration, Proto-Type Model Home Furniture Layout, detail, 1960. Library and Archives Canada/ Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development fonds/Plan 3954, item 5307. © Government of Canada. Reproduced with the permission of Library and Archives Canada (2020).



Interior view of model house as viewed from the livingroom. To the left in the background is entrance to children's bedroom; to the right is hallway leading to bathroom and adult bedroom.



This is the model home built entirely by teen-agers as a school project on the Peguis reserve 100 miles north of Winnipeg. Designed especially for Indians, its cost is \$3,000 for materials on site. The Indians are expected to provide their own labour for assembling the home.



Figure 10 (above). Model house at Peguis First Nation, Treaty 2 Territory (Manitoba). Interior view of entrances to bedrooms. Reproduced from Norman Riddiough, "Better Housing for Canada's Indians," *Ontario Housing*, February 1962.

Figure 11 (above right). Model house at Peguis First Nation, Treaty 2 Territory (Manitoba). Exterior view. Reproduced from Norman Riddiough, "Better Housing for Canada's Indians," *Ontario Housing*, February 1962.

about Indigenous Peoples' dependence on the state, which that state in turn used as justification for moulding the private domestic realm.

The design for the model house included a complete furniture layout using Indian Affairs' "Furniture for Canadian Indian Homes." This series included the built-in bunk beds with storage drawers, sofa beds with storage drawers, end tables, "straight" chairs, and an expandable dining table, all in plywood and "shelving-quality" spruce or pine.⁷⁴ "These plans," noted a description of the Indian Affairs subsidy housing program, "are simple and sturdy and easily constructed by the average householder."⁷⁵ The furniture designs and layout recalled those in home economics classrooms, and created another strong connection between domestic and institutional space for the students involved in its construction.

The model house simulated, to some extent, modest settler houses of the time. It was touted as "[d]esigned especially for Indians" | **fig. 11** | and indeed was the product of the settler-colonial bureaucracy governing Indigenous Peoples, in combination with the labour of Indigenous students and, in other cases, adult homeowners. This bureaucracy had just, in 1960, unilaterally extended the franchise to Indigenous people with status and was invested in "integrating" Indigenous Peoples into the settler-colonial state as another "ethnic group." The exterior of the house was thus unassuming, clad in vertical "ranch wall siding," with punched windows of various sizes. The interior was more ambiguous, clad in plywood rather than drywall, with curtains for doors and open closets, but with an open-concept multipurpose room with defined living and dining areas. Other plans by Indian Affairs had age- and gender-segregated bedrooms for children, following settler norms, and Indian Affairs controlled the selection of paint colours. The project was a built reality created by the efforts of students and inhabited by a family in the community, as well as an overdetermined and paternalistic approach to housing provision that served to advertise this ambiguous ideal of settler domesticity:

74. The poster mentions that furniture is "shown on chart no. 2" but this second poster is not filed with the other drawings of the house. Instead, see fig. 9 and LAC, RG 22M 912016, plans 2337-2340, items 4279-4282, "Furniture for Canadian Indian Homes: Built-in Beds," "Sofa Bed for Canadian Indian Homes," "Straight Chair for Canadian Indian Homes," "Expandable Dining Table for Canadian Indian Homes."

75. LAC, MG 32-B1, vol. 97, file 7, IA-312 Housing 1958-63, Indian Affairs Branch, "Subsidy Housing Program," April 1, 1962, n.p.

As part of a comprehensive review and modification of existing programs to meet changing conditions and increasing demand, a model home was constructed at the Peguis Central Day School.... This home was expertly constructed and beautifully furnished by the students and was viewed enthusiastically by representative members of a number of reserves. It was a practical illustration of what can be achieved by new design, Indian participation and community effort.⁷⁶

Yet the model house, like other domestic spaces where Indigenous Peoples encountered the state, remained firmly embedded within a structure of settler colonialism opposed to Indigenous sovereignty. As Shelagh McCartney writes of the domestic spaces designed for Indigenous Peoples by Indian Affairs, “[s]tandard designs were [complemented] by standard furniture, creating national uniformity.... Family space was the domain of the federal government.... institutionalized to serve broader policy objectives.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

The three types of spaces I have examined—houses, home economics classrooms, and model homes—were domestic contact zones between Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian settler-colonial state. They demonstrate the importance of the domestic realm, the roles of non-Indigenous architects and Indigenous labour, the significance of simulation, and the blurred boundaries between domestic and institutional spaces in the domestic ideology of this encounter. Although distinct, these architectures worked together within state assimilation policy to integrate Indigenous Peoples and attempt to reconstruct them as Canadian citizens. The significance of housing in the government’s citizenship/assimilation efforts was related by Cree leader Harold Cardinal in 1969, when he wrote that bureaucrats “have decided what houses will be built on what reserves for what Indians and whether they may have inside or outside toilets.”⁷⁸ In Inuit communities, government researchers concluded in 1972 that housing programs constituted “planned cultural change.”⁷⁹ A careful reading of these spaces shows contradictions and incongruities in their simulation of settler domesticity, rendering these “ordinary” spaces, in Bhabha’s terms, “not quite/not white.”⁸⁰

Indian Affairs’ design services were transferred to the Department of Public Works in 1987, and the “devolution” of architecture to Indigenous communities began in earnest around the same time.⁸¹ More recently, Indigenous architecture has been developing as a field of inquiry from a global perspective of Indigeneity, examining the emerging architectural sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples.⁸² Yet studies of colonial spaces like the ones in this paper can hopefully begin to unsettle the built environments of settler colonialism and render them more visible, and thus problematic, to settler society. How people experience “home” on colonized territories is always political. The domestic, with its connotations of privacy and family life, remains a complex site of investigation for its transmission of colonial ideologies, particularly in their “invisible” guise of settler colonialism. ¶

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS I wish to thank Olivier Vallerand and Erin Campbell, the editors of *RACAR*, and an anonymous reviewer for helpful feedback. Parts of this paper first emerged in a graduate seminar on domesticities led by Annmarie Adams at McGill University in 2017. I would like to thank her for comments on a later draft. Thanks to Amy F. Ogata for sharing her material on *Schoolroom Progress U.S.A.* I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Karine Célinas at Library and Archives Canada and Debra Conner at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Research for this essay was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada in the form of a Doctoral Fellowship.

76. Canada, *Annual Report 1961*, 1962, 60.

77. Shelagh McCartney, “Visioning Our Future Dwelling Together: Re-Imagining Housing with Eabametoong and Nibinamik First Nations,” *B/OAAG* (blog), February 13, 2017, <https://oaa.on.ca/bloaag-detail/Visioning-Our-Future-Dwelling-Together:-Re-Imagining-housing-with-Eabametoong-and-Nibinamik-First-Nations/416>.

78. Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969), 9.

79. D.K. Thomas and C.T. Thompson, *Eskimo Housing as Planned Cultural Change* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1972).

80. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 131.

81. Adele Weder, “The Quiet Devolution,” *International Contract* 2, no. 6 (July 1993): 22.

82. See Rebecca Kiddle, Luigiyo Patrick Stewart, and Kevin O’Brien, eds., *Our Voices: Indigeneity and Architecture* (Novato, California: ORO Editions, 2018); Elizabeth Grant et al., eds., *The Handbook of Contemporary Indigenous Architecture* (Singapore: Springer, 2018).