

Elsipogtog First Nation

Elsipogtog First Nation K-8 New School Design-Build Project

Association of Consulting Engineering Companies - Canada | Canadian Consulting Engineering Awards 2022



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



RVA as the prime design consultant in its design-build team was tasked to design a new K8 community school for Elsipogtog First Nation, with much-needed amenities to create a student-friendly environment conducive to safety, education, and long-term growth.

Objectives

- ▶ Conceived to accommodate 630 students from junior kindergarten to eight grade, the school had to meet many differing needs.
- ▶ RVA's approach was informed by viewpoints from band leaders, educators, and school staff.
- ▶ The design was tailored to create an inclusive and culturally-rich learning environment that would offer students – and the broader community – new ways to come together.



Outcomes

- ▶ By leveraging 3D design software and engagement with the community, innovative solutions to address programming, space, and operational complexities, the new community school has led to improved learning and employment outcomes.



INNOVATION

Community Spaces

With the goal of fostering collaborative learning and an inclusive and culturally rich learning environment, RVA developed unique community spaces for teachers and students to come together and share ideas.

The design included semi-private “wings / pods” for individual age groups, teacher collaboration rooms, and a two-story gymnasium at the heart of the school with the intention of bringing students and staff together in unique ways and unlocking new possibilities.

Cultural Inspiration

The team also drew inspiration from the culture and environs of the local community, incorporating elements such as large windows, high ceilings, custom branch-like columns, and the use of colours and cardinal directions from the Mi'kmaq Medicine Wheel as motifs in the design and in the semi-circular layout.

One of the building's most defining features is its layout: Kindergarten students begin their educational journey in the East pod, and as they grow, they move westward until their graduation as a mature student in the West pod, reflecting the movement of the seasons and natural sunlight through the building each day.

The new school was delivered under a Design-Build project delivery mechanism, which is unique in New Brunswick.

The unprecedented event of the COVID-19 pandemic also presented challenges towards the completion of the project.

COVID-19

- ▶ The team leveraged remote file sharing, BIM modelling, and online workshops to engage owner stakeholders, owner representatives, design team members, contractors, and subtrades.
- ▶ Using 3D design software and online collaborative platforms, all design team members were able to work on the same models and designs in real-time with input from Owner stakeholders.
- ▶ This allowed for an enhanced collaborative process and increased speed of the final design completion, all while delivering unique value-added benefits.
- ▶ Online progress meetings were also held regularly from design development to final project closeout.
- ▶ The team successfully delivered the project on-time and on-budget despite COVID travel restrictions, with commendations from the EFN Educational Authority.



SOCIAL AND / OR ECONOMIC BENEFITS

RVA's design for the new K-8 School was a proactive response to the economic and social needs of the Elsipogtog First Nation, serving as a culturally-rich learning environment in which community members, including families and elders, would act as partners in the educational process.

1.

Consultation & Input

RVA's approach was to work in close consultation with the Elsipogtog First Nation band to ensure the school provided a safe, inviting, and nurturing environment with access to a variety of educational and employment opportunities.

2.

Educational Performance

Since opening day in September 2021, the new school has surpassed several enrollment projections and performance benchmarks.

3.

Focused Learning

The new school has capacity to serve the growing local demographic that is under 25 years of age, with approximately one-third of the student body on Individual Educational Plans that require special accommodation and services.

4.

Community Amenities

The facility also houses community amenities that are open to the public for use, such as an after-hours dental clinic.

5.

Modern Facility

Elsipogtog First Nation Community School is a modern and efficient facility that has introduced new learning pathways, local jobs, and economic stimulus to the community, while shaping the future leaders of tomorrow.





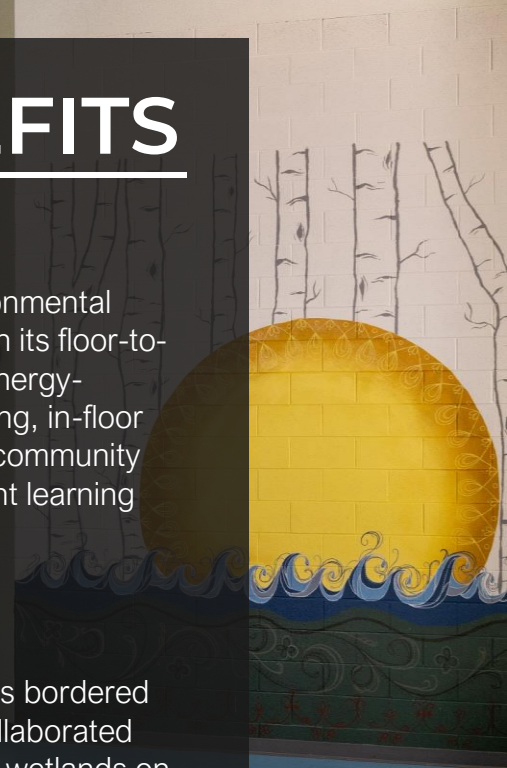
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Environmental Standards & Efficiency

The Elsipogtog First Nation Community School meets all provincial environmental standards and provides an immersive system throughout the building with its floor-to-ceiling windows and panoramic nature views. This project made use of energy-efficient technological approaches such as passive lighting, indirect lighting, in-floor heating, energy-efficient boilers, LED lighting, and automated control. A community garden was also incorporated into the design to provide additional student learning opportunities.

Wetlands

The chosen location for the school presented a unique challenge as it was bordered by a wetland. Through the Wetland Compensation Program, the team collaborated with the Elsipogtog First Nation Band and a biologist to identify additional wetlands on Elsipogtog territory that had not been previously identified as Provincially Significant. Through the Wetland Compensation Program, Elsipogtog First Nation and the design-build team were able to create new wetlands and “swap” for the impacted wetland where the community school is now located. This ensured that the off-setting permitted impacts and loss of wetland caused by the construction of the new school were restored and enhanced through the creation of new wetlands. The additional wetlands also served as a natural classroom for students to study native flora and fauna.



MEETING CLIENT'S NEEDS

Community Needs

- ▶ A diverse group of teachers, educational planners, operational and service staff, skilled trades trainers, and school psychologists provided input on how the school should be used, and the purposes it would serve.
- ▶ Guidance from the local community and the Elsipogtog First Nation Educational Division were also accounted for in all decisions related to their areas of the new school.
- ▶ The design for the new K8 school was a proactive response to the economic and social needs of the Elsipogtog First Nation.
- ▶ Working in close consultation with the Elsipogtog First Nation Educational Department, the team designed a safe and inclusive environment with increased access to a variety of educational services and employment opportunities.
- ▶ The building also has additional capacity for specialized services and amenities open to the public, such as an after-hours dental clinic and an outdoor and indoor running track.
- ▶ By integrating education with community, the new community school has introduced new opportunities, a safe and positive learning environment, and economic stimulus to help shape the First Nations leaders of tomorrow.

Completion Date | September 2021

