Indigenous Resistance at Expo 67:

A Case Study on the Indians of Canada Pavilion[1]

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Architectural History 2 – Professor Annmarie Adams

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[1] I would like to thank John for speaking with me about his experience at Expo. I would also like to thank Gina Page for her time and feedback clarifying the focus of my work. Finally, I'd like to thank Magdalena Milosz who helped to provide me with source materials for my paper as well as providing valuable guidance and background in my topic.

Expo 67 presented Montreal to the world as a progressive city, emblematic of all of the peace, innovation, technology and movement encapsulated by the theme "Man and his World" and the general spirit of comradery compared to past World's Fairs.[2] In spite of this image, two years later the federal government would release the contentious White Paper of Trudeau's liberal government which erased treaty rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada under the guise of assimilation into a multicultural Canadian society, the rhetoric of which is still being fought against today.[3] The photograph I focus on in my paper shows the Indians of Canada pavilion with Queen Elizabeth the II in the foreground, taken by Meredith Dixon at Expo 67. Ruth Phillips argues that the Indians of Canada Pavilion attempted to balance the "value of cultural difference" against "the survival of traditional values."[4] Meanwhile Cécile Cadela-Laborde posits that the pavilion represented a gesture of colonialism because of its tokenistic representations and the lack of decision-making power given to Indigenous artists involved.[5] In what follows, I argue that in spite of the overt colonial overtones of the pavilion and Expo itself, using the Indians of Canada Pavilion as a case study demonstrates how a tokenizing platform can be used for decolonial ends and how material culture can act as a tool for resistance and resurgence. I argue for a nuanced role of the pavilion, as it is situated in a colonial context but provided individual opportunities for decolonization within a rigid, neoliberal structure.

The nascent stages of the pavilion show that it was never meant to involve Indigenous people in a meaningful way, despite the large scale collaboration that ensued. The original plan

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[2] Thérèse Bernard, *Expo 67 Official Guidebook* (Toronto, Montreal: Maclean-Hunter Publishing Company, 1967), 8
[3]The White Paper was challenged by many Indigenous people in Canada because it effectively erased any treaty rights and "special rights" or protections they had under the Indian Act.
[4] Ruth Phillips and Sherry Brydon, "Arrow of Truth: The Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo '67." In *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums. (*Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 27
[5] Cécile Cadela-Laborde, *The Indians of Canada Pavilion, an expression of colonialism* (Accessed via eScholarship McGill, 2010): 2-3.

by the architect of the pavilion, J.W Francis, was to have "Indian artifacts" strewn about "a dreamworld forest."[6] Consultation was encouraged by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (henceforth referred to as DIAND) in constructing the pavilion, though it was made clear that it was of the utmost importance to work with "the right sort" of Indigenous people if they were to be involved.[7] Federal officials involved in planning the pavilion knew that they needed to include Indigenous voices, but were wary of being criticized for their handling of Indigenous peoples issues in Canada.[8] The tension of establishing the confines of the pavilion while also relinquishing control of these confines to Indigenous artists came to a head when members of the Indian Advisory Council (created by the DIAND's Expo task force to integrate an "Indian voice" in the pavilion) threatened to walk out on the project and bring their stories to the press to gain autonomy over the process.[9] Despite this action by the time architect J.W Francis consulted with the IAC and Indigenous artists, the architectural plans were well underway with several thousand dollars already having been poured into the design.[10] The consultative process was never meant to be more than symbolic and the manipulation felt by First Nations artists from accounts by those present during consultations echoes that.[11]

Figure 2 in the Appendix shows the original site plan by Francis, complete with a more rudimentary teepee-like structure without the hexagonal bases included in the final plan, with several landscape elements that were also omitted in the later site plan that were most likely

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[6] Ruth Phillips and Sherry Brydon, "Arrow of Truth: The Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo '67." In *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums. (*Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 30
[7] Ibid., 31
[8] Ruth Phillips, "Decolonizing Canadian Museums" in *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011) 103
[9] Ruth Phillips and Sherry Brydon, "Arrow of Truth: The Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo '67." In *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums. (*Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 32
[10] Mya Rutherdale and Jim Miller, "'It's Our Country': First Nations' Participation in the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 2 (2006): 157.
[11] Ibid.

meant to emulate the forests and landscapes associated in the minds of a visitor with Indigenous peoples, also serving to situate them in a historicized Canadian context.[12] Francis' aim was to make utmost use of the space allotted to the pavilion by building vertically as much as possible, and trying to visually distinguish the pavilion "amongst the chaos of a world fair," with a design that would be "sufficiently inviting and obviously Indian."[13] These original plans show the representation the architect desired for the pavilion, in stark contrast with the pavilions surrounding it, whose architecture is much more modern. As Cadela-Laborde notes in her paper, "technological innovations were almost de rigeur at Expo 67, the pavilion did not take part of this trend," showing that Francis wanted to anchor the work solely in the past and evoke an architecture of a colonial past, moreover highlighting the teepee which was a form primarily from Plains nations in the American midwest, outside of Canada.[14] This misuse of this form to distance the pavilion from the Canadian context geographically and temporally combined with the reluctance to consult meaningfully at the start with Indigenous representatives' reveals a desire to maintain a space that would not implicate the federal government for mistreatment of Indigenous people in any meaningful way.

However, the DIAND was not alone in carrying out consultations. In Cadela-Laborde's essay, former Kahnawake Chief Andrew Delisle discusses his travels across Canada to consult with different nations on the content for the pavilion.[15] The significance of this consultation cannot be diminished, given the Kahnawake reserve was just adjacent to where Expo was

[12] Mya Rutherdale and Jim Miller, "'It's Our Country': First Nations' Participation in the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 2 (2006): 157.
[13] Ibid., 33
[14] Cécile Cadela-Laborde, *The Indians of Canada Pavilion, an expression of colonialism* (Accessed via eScholarship McGill, 2010), 5
[15] Ibid.

happening. Sherry Brydon posits the "primary mandate of Expo 67 was to celebrate the centennial of Canada as a nation," and the theme was to promote "one of the most important developments of our age, the growing interdependence of all men and nations."[16] Reading this in a Canada-specific context, we can think of the theme as promoting the "growing interdependence of all men and nations" as the mounting wave of resistance happening across Canada, culminating in the formation of several regional bodies that were fighting colonialism of their own fronts using national movements as inertia. This consultation process can be seen as part of that trend - a nation to nation delegation which actively worked against the idea that all Indigenous people have the same history, culture, or experiences. In the late 1960's, the National Indian Council (which represented both status and non-status 'Indians' at the time) dissolved into the National Indian Brotherhood as well as the Native Council for Canada, with regional chapters representing interests of individual nations.[17] This coordinated effort led to a response to the educational systems at the time that disadvantaged Indigenous children, a political maneuver that drew together several nations to strengthen their arguments and claims.[18] The art of the pavilion represented a confluence of Indigenous voices that was unprecedented, being the largest collaboration of artists from a diversity of generations and nations up to that point.[19] Though the project integrated Indigenous voices in a tokenistic way from its outset, Indigenous actors leveraged their power m to assert their right to self-determination in this context. Given the similarly coordinated efforts a few years later it is safe to say that the Indians of Canada pavilion

[16] Sherry Brydon. "The Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67." *American Indian art magazine* 22, no. 3 (1997): 55
[17] Jane Griffith, "One Little, Two Little, Three Canadians: The Indians of Canada Pavilion and Public Pedagogy," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2015): 173.
[18] National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, "Indian Control of Indian Education,"(Policy Paper, Ottawa, ON, 1973), 1-45.
[19] Ruth Phillips, "Decolonizing Canadian Museums" in *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011) 104

represented on a small scale what distinct Indigenous nations could do together to resist settler colonialism.

The design of the structure was meant to be primarily referencing the past, as the materials from planners before the IAC was involved show. In *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject,* Phillips states that the pavilion was originally going to be feature pre-Confederation displays, despite the fact that Expo was explicitly celebrating the century since Confederation.[20] This temporal placement conveniently located colonialism in a distant historical past, effectively absolving Canadian society of any wrongdoing in the present. The pavilion worked directly against this narrative. The text upon entering the pavilion read:

> "The Indians of Canada bid you welcome.
> Walk in our moccasins trail of the past,
> Live with us in the here and now.
> Talk with us by the fire of the days to come."[21]

This text addresses the past first but implores the visitor to think of the present and future as they move through the pavilion, which was not a present or future that visitors necessarily wanted to interact with. Many news account at the time have testimonials to visitors rushing out, one even saying "This is horrible, I'm not going to stay here."[22] In these accounts there is often an accusatory tone, as though visitors felt tricked by the outside of the pavilion (and ironically, most of all by the teepee which was a known entity to most people interaction with the pavilion). John, who was nine years old at the time he visited Expo, describes his experience in the pavilion with his family who drove to Expo from Ottawa early in the morning for a full day excursion.

"My parents were definitely concerned… definitely a somber air after that, we might have even gone to

[20] Ibid., 103
[21] Michel Régnier, *Indian Memento*, directed by Michel Régnier (1967, National Film Board of Canada) film
[22]"Indian pavilion tries not to be restful," *Globe and Mail* (Montreal, QC) May 11, 1967

get lunch at that point. I wasn't very advanced or critical obviously… I think that Dave [John's brother] and I were excited by the tools and masks and all of that, we were probably discussing our weapons of choice."[23]

Later in our interview, John recalled his mother ushering him and his brother forward from the images of children in residential schools to get out faster. This captures an interesting dissonance that I suspect would be found in interviews between people from different generations experiencing this exhibit in particular, based on John's experience. In an interview with hostess Velma Robinson, an Ojibwe woman from Sault St. Marie, the CBC tour the inside of the pavilion, continually evokes the past tense in discussing the pavilion, saying that the "Six Nations Indians have a culture that goes back quite a long time… there were very few Parliamentary systems in Europe, but they used to have a democratic government," to which Velma responds "Yes, and they still do."[24] This snippet of audio perfectly captures the attitudes of many visitors to the pavilion whose discomfort with the nature of the messages inside forced a reading of it which was nostalgic and necessarily historical.

The site map and official guidebook of Expo highlight the story the organizers wanted to tell. As one of the only pavilions that represented Canada not on the basis of shared geography but rather shared identity, the Indians of Canada pavilion was bound to stand out.[25] The placement on site of the pavilion provides insight into how it was being used by organizers of Expo to project a certain image.[26] It was situated between the Atlantic Provinces and the United Nations Pavilion, with the other non-geographic pavilion on the other side of the UN Pavilion

[23] John, in discussion with the author, March 2018.
[24] Jim Robertson, "Expodition: Expo 67's Indians of Canada," *CBC Radio Archive.* August 4th, 1967.
[25] Jane Griffith, "One Little, Two Little, Three Canadians: The Indians of Canada Pavilion and Public Pedagogy, Expo 1967," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2015), 175
[26] Thérèse Bernard, *Expo 67 Official Guidebook* (Toronto, Montreal: Maclean-Hunter Publishing Company, 1967) Site Map

(the Christian Pavilion).[27] Of all of the pavilions that made up Canada's section it is the smallest at 6,900 square feet (for reference, the two other smallest pavilions that made up the Canadian section are the Christian pavilion at 9,500 square feet and the Western provinces at 12,500 square feet).[28] The square footage of this pavilion surely was no accident, in dedicating a smaller amount of space to fill the organizers implicitly sent a message about what space in society Indigenous people should feel they can occupy. The physical placement of the pavilion between the United Nations and the Atlantic Provinces is also significant in how the planners assigned meaning. The organizers placement of the pavilion is an effort to "force" a geographic identity onto the pavilion by using it as a bridge between the Eastern provinces (where contact with Europeans first happened) and the United Nations pavilion (two of whose founding nations were the primary colonial forces in Canada's colonization, France and Britain). Despite not being tied to geography, the pavilion was still placed in a way that signifies a trajectory of Christianity causing Europeans to interact with Indigenous peoples to form Canada. It is important to look at the materials used inside of the pavilion to counteract this narrative. In the documentary 'Indian Memento,' produced for the NFB, we see the text lining the walls of the pavilion that reads "When the white man came, we welcomed him with love."[29] This is in direct conflict with the accounts put forward in the official expo 67 guidebook, which discusses the "bloodshed" between French and Iroquois that finally ended to allow for peace.[30] In the Official Expo 67 Guidebook I consulted, the page listing all of the Advisory Committees did not contain any

[27] Marilyn Berger, *Expo '67 Slide Collection,* McGIll Blackader-Lauderman Library of Art and Architecture, 2006. http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/expo-67/all_maps.html
[28]Ibid.
[29] Michel Régnier, *Indian Memento*, directed by Michel Régnier (1967, National Film Board of Canada) film
[30] Thérèse Bernard, *Expo 67 Official Guidebook* (Toronto, Montreal: Maclean-Hunter Publishing Company, 1967), 3

reference to the Indian Advisory Committee at Expo.[31] This omission effectively erases the contributions of the IAC in Expo at large and at the pavilion. The materials presented by expo organizers (through the site plan and guidebook specifically) highlight the narrative they wanted to present, where Indigenous people in Canada were part of a history that was over and not an ongoing narrative. The content of the pavilion responds directly to this shirking of responsibility thus, as all of the interactive parts of the exhibit counter this suggestion.

Alex Janvier was one of the artists who was commissioned to ornament the pavilion at Expo 67. He recounts his time collaborating on the pavilion with frustration, as the government did not like the original designs and wanted happy pictures, "[we] bristled. How come our people are dying in the jails and rotting in mental hospitals and here we're going to tell the world we're doing great?"[32] Janvier painted "The Unpredictable East" which was featured on the front of the pavilion, seen in Figure 5. His quote here encapsulates the difficult choices that Indigenous people who became involved with the pavilion had to make, as there is a fine line between acquiescing enough to be able to work from within a system on dismantling power structures and becoming part of the system you are working against. Janvier's work was significant to include in the pavilion because it was very far from the more legibly Indigenous pieces chosen for the pavilion. Later in his career, he created another mural for a building by architect J.W Francis at Ermineskin Residential School.[33] This mural is tied directly to the experiences of the survivors of residential schools through the imagery used, and employs more symbolism that is easily legibly

[31] See Figure 4 in Appendix.
[32] Ruth Phillips and Sherry Brydon, "Arrow of Truth: The Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo '67." In *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums. (*Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 37
[33] Magdalena Milosz (PhD Candidate at McGill University) in discussion March 2018. Her research into Janvier's work on the murals at Ermineskin and comparing those to his work on the Indians of Canada pavilion. Figure 7 has one of his plans for the mural he eventually painted.

as “Indigenous art” compared to that he produced for Expo. In light of his later work, the mural he painted for the Indians of Canada pavilion represents a critique on the stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous people used at large in Canadian society. His piece on the pavilion in particular breaks away from conventions of what a public would expect a typically “Indigenous” piece of art to look like. Even the title of his piece, “The Unpredictable East,” evokes the lack of trust between artists and the organizers. His mural was lost along with the many others on the site during demolition, which is important to note in that several structures that were not destined to be preserved remained.[34] The fate of the pavilion reveals much about who it was for and - the fact it was not preserved the way that other monuments were. Only the totem pole piece by Henry Hunt has been preserved from the original pavilion, and even in preserving this piece there was contention as Tony Hunt (the son of the original carver who helped design and carve the pole) says he was not invited to repair the structure nor to the rededication ceremony.[35] In response, city spokesperson Claude Guerin said that “Officially, the totem pole belongs to the city, but we invited the family to work on it for tradition’s sake.”[36] This interaction speaks for itself, as the idea of ownership over the totem pole as an excuse for improper consultation echoes the idea of poor consultation done by architects who were part of DIAND. The artists worked within the boundaries set for them in the pavilion but still refused to simply go along with what the organizers set out to do, showing a resistance effort that capitalized on resources and exposure while retaining identity within that struggle.

[34] Stuart James, “ART: Talent overcomes cultural suppression in Alex Janvier at the AGA,” May 8th 2012.
[35] René Bruemmer, “Chief sees ceremony as totem-pole tokenism,” *Montreal Gazette* (Montreal, QC), Sept. 7, 2007.
[36] Ibid.

In her piece about the Indians of Canada pavilion as pedagogy, Griffith quotes Susan D. Dion at a conference held at the Ontario College for Art and Design titled "Revisioning the Indians of Canada pavilion: Ahzhekewada (Let Us Look Back)."[37] Dion's quote reads:

> "Aboriginal people have always been involved with cultural production, representing ourselves and our world views in stories, art and ceremony. It was - and is - the violence of colonization that
> created the conditions wherein Aboriginal people were deprived of the power to control the ways in which dominant society constructed and interpreted their images."[38]

This quote articulates a problem in moving towards a "decolonized" art and architecture, which is that these disciplines are both necessarily experiential and to some degree subjective. The conditions of colonization can affect the subjectivity of a viewer so that the experience of a particular piece becomes coded a particular way regardless of the intention of the artist or architect. If the metric for whether or not an artist or architect has succeeded in creating a decolonized piece of work (not a postcolonial one) is that the viewer receives it a certain way, it becomes difficult for any art or architectural practice to be deemed as such. I am inclined to agree with Griffith, and by proxy Rutherdale and Miller as well, in saying that if visitors came away without learning, it is not the fault of the pavilion but of the non-Indigenous visitors not being able to listen.[39] The Indians of Canada pavilion was marketed as balancing between tradition and innovation in the Official Expo Guidebook, and in much of the writing about the pavilion since. I believe the pavilion was actually a balance between acquiescence and resistance. In their paper "Decolonization is not a metaphor," Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang articulate the ways in which societies ensure the erasure of Indigenous bodies from the land to

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[37] Jane Griffith, "One Little, Two Little, Three Canadians: The Indians of Canada Pavilion and Public Pedagogy," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2015): 197.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 198.

sustain colonial projects, which they argue is also why settler colonial states often have conflicting messages about their Indigenous populations, where all of these messages are desires for a "resolve to the colonial situation, through the absolute and total destruction or assimilation of original inhabitants."[40] Expo 67 was far from a postcolonial event. The hostesses of the pavilion underwent a four month long course developed by the Department of Indian and Northern Development, including tenets such as Indian culture and personality development.[41] Four months is significant in comparison to the one month training of the hostesses of the Quebec pavilion, despite the much larger square footage of their pavilion.[42] The pavilion itself evoked a stereotypical image of an "Indian" in a teepee with a totem pole out front, and did its best to historicize indigenous peoples in Canada. There was a vocal perception that all Indigenous people would "be baffled by a modern city" and essentialized their lives to reserves far away from the world of Expo 67.[43] It worked in the same way that many colonial institutions work against Indigenous peoples, to either destruct or assimilate as Tuck and Yang write. There were very powerful efforts at holding up a narrative counter to the one set forth by the DIAND and the organizers of Expo and as Griffith writes in her paper, accounting the conference about "Re-envisioning the Indians of Canada Pavilion," clearly something has stuck in our minds about it. I believe that it is due to the truly dexterous work achieved by the Indigenous artists, hostesses, designers and stakeholders that drove the process of bringing the pavilion to life.

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[40] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Lang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 9.
[41] Arthur Laing, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development "Annual Report: Fiscal Year 1966-67" (Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, Ottawa, 1967) 1-81.
[42]Kamila Hinkson, "Expo 67 hostesses reminisce about the thrills and starpower, 50 years on," *CBC News,* June 19 2017, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-expo-67-quebec-pavilion-hostess-reunion.
[43] Jane Griffith, "One Little, Two Little, Three Canadians: The Indians of Canada Pavilion and Public Pedagogy," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2015): 185.

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Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Lang. "Decolonization is not a metaphor" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40.

Appendix of Images

Figure 1. Queen Elizabeth the II greeted outside of the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67, via the McGill Libraries collection, photographed by Meredith Dixon.

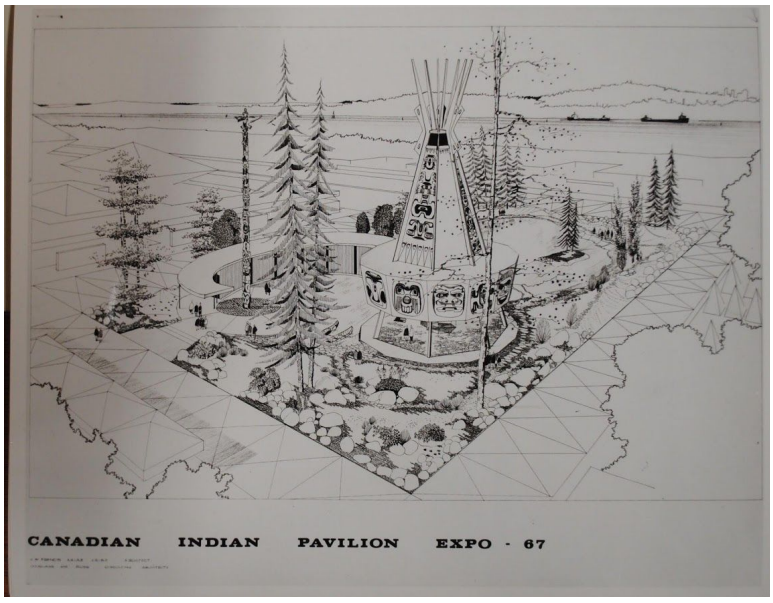

Figure 2. The original site plan for the Indians of Canada Pavilion by J.W Francis. Image provided by Magdalena Milosz.

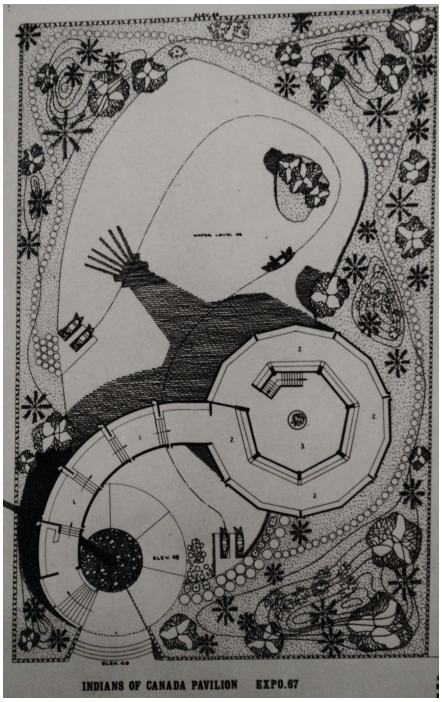

Figure 3. Original site plan from above.

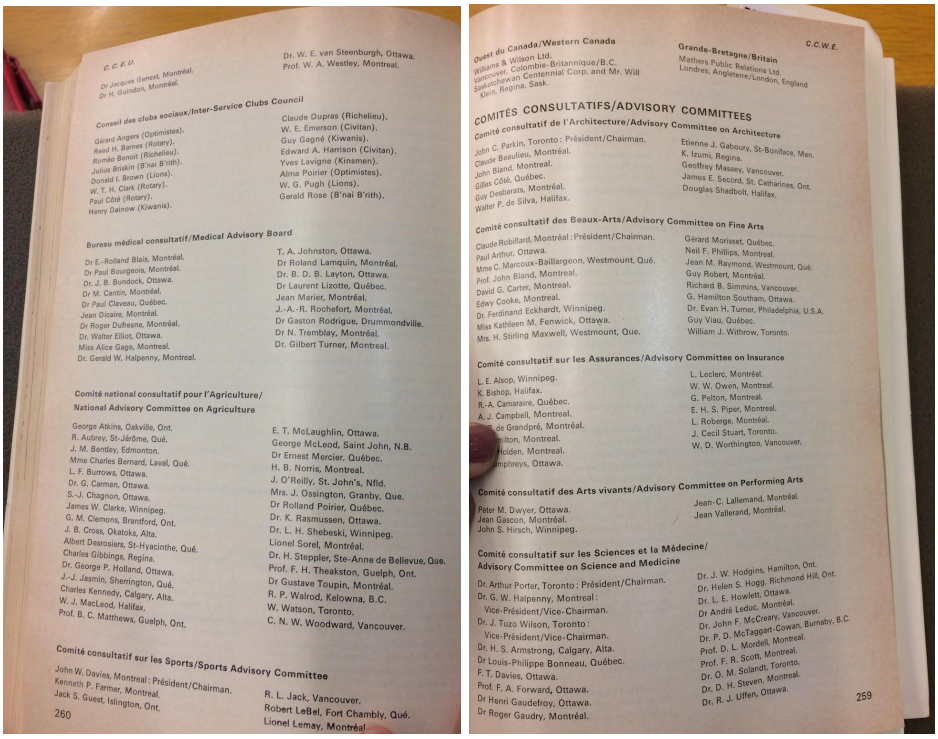

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Figure 4. Advisory Committee Pages from the Official Expo 67 Guidebook.

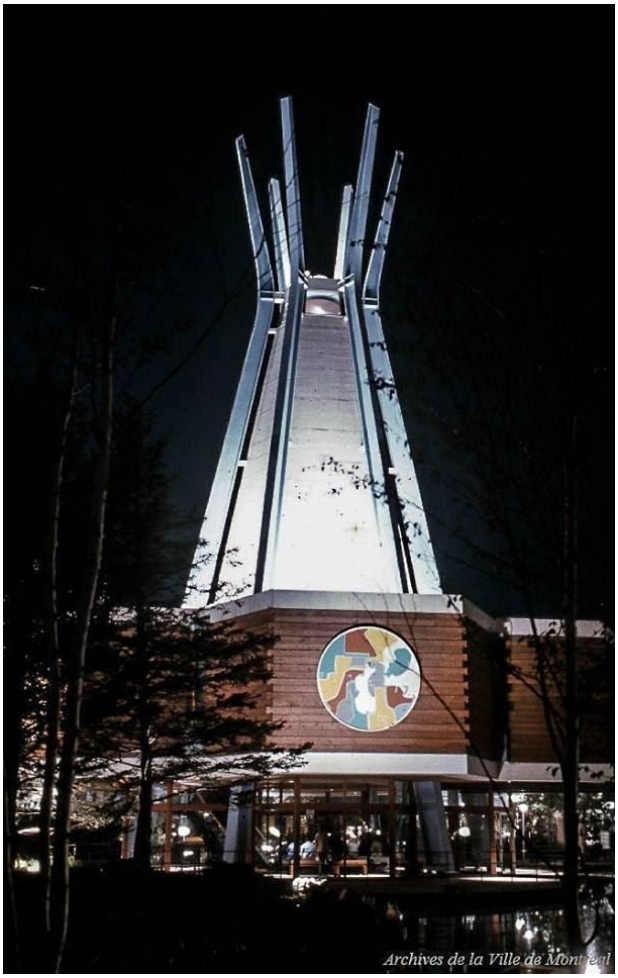

Figure 5. Alex Janvier's mural, featured on his artist Facebook page. *Beaver Crossing Indian Colours (renamed, from "The Unpredictable East).* 1967.

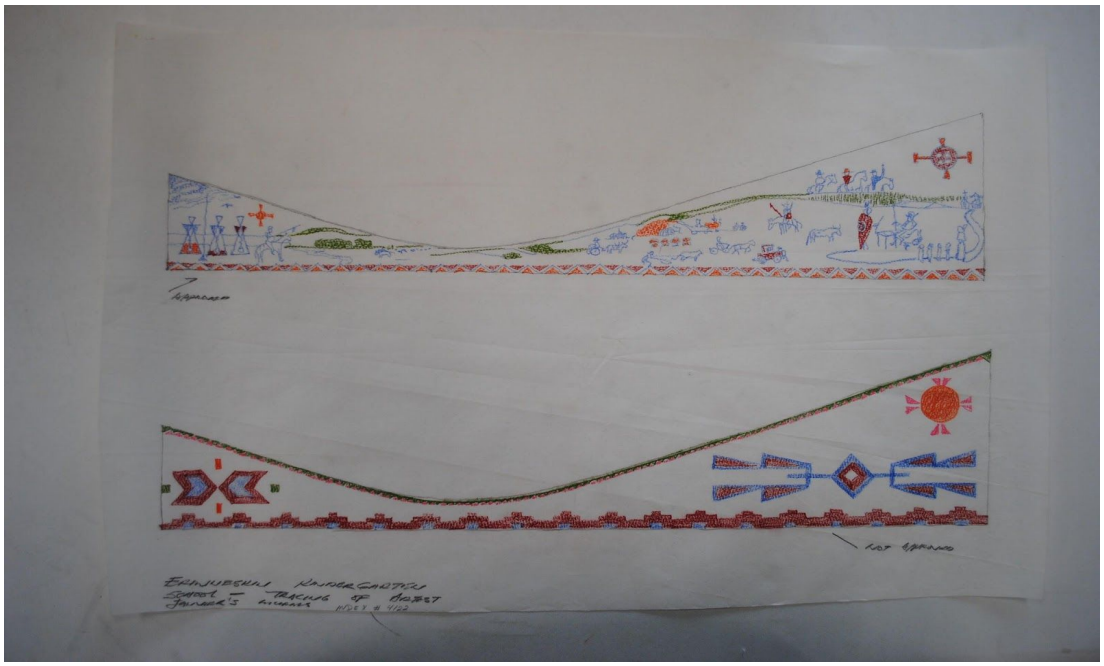

Figure 7. Janvier's plans for a mural at Ermineskin Residential School upon addition of a kindergarten, from Magdalena Milosz's work on Ermineskin and Janvier's art in colonized spaces.