

STAFF PROFILE: CHRISTOPHER CLARKE



Christopher Clarke is a Technical Officer, Architectural, for the NWT HC. NWT born and raised, Christopher was born in Hay River and grew up throughout the North.

From an early age, it was clear that Christopher was destined to become an architect. “From the age of about 8, I remember drawing floor plans of houses that I lived in, and these drawings became more elaborate to the point where I was drawing hypothetical cities on large sheet of graph paper at around 12 to 14 years old. All I can remember wanting to be was an architect from a young age.”

After attending Sir John Franklin High School in Yellowknife, Christopher got his Bachelor in Environmental Science from the University of Calgary. From there, he went on to complete the four-year Masters of Architecture at the same institution. It was during this period that Christopher started working for the NWT HC as a summer student. Following a five-year stint working in Toronto, Christopher accepted his current position with the NWT HC.

Christopher points out that he has encountered added benefits by working for the NWT HC. “As a government agency, I am also able to do more research into sustainable architecture than I might in the private sector”. Christopher is also a licenced Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional, which qualifies him to design green buildings in Canada and the US. “As such, having the opportunity to examine the ways we use energy in the North and how to solve problems associated with using fossil fuels is fantastic”.

Christopher points out that the NWT HC faces challenges such as the extreme climate that other jurisdictions do not necessarily face. This causes much greater differences between exterior and normally accepted interior temperatures. Christopher points out that “we are constantly looking to improve our construction methods to optimize energy use to combat this discrepancy in temperature extremes”.

The son of a mother who is Yellowknife Chipewyan and his father who is part Mi'kmaq, Christopher focuses on Aboriginal culture and current architecture practices. During his schooling, Christopher won an award to do research at the Canadian Centre of Architecture. After this, his thesis was the conceptual design of the Northwest Territory Metis Nation Legislative Assembly in Fort Smith. For that design, Christopher also won the Alberta Association of Architects award for Best Thesis in his graduating class.

Currently, Christopher is the only person of Aboriginal heritage practicing architecture in any of the three Territories, and one of about 10 in Canada. “I am extremely interested in Aboriginal issues, which I get to address at the NWT HC. Here, I design and oversee designs of some of our buildings, many of which house First Nations individuals,” he remarks.