

# REDEFINING INDIGENOUS LANDSCAPES FOR AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

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## 1 ABSTRACT

*There are few examples of contemporary Indigenous landscape architecture in North America, despite the great number of rich cultures and their strong relationships with the land. A possible reason for this gap in representation includes the impact of colonization on Indigenous design principles and precedent examples, with many communities deprived of opportunities to evolve culturally. However, cultural landscapes pre-dating colonization could be used as precedents of possible Indigenous design. Unfortunately, classification of these types of sites is not currently consistent across North American institutions. Despite the UNESCO World Heritage Committee adopting the term 'cultural landscape' in 1992, little progress has been made to broaden the range of heritage sites to include those that hold both cultural significance and natural value. Many sites with World Heritage "natural site" designation are ancestral homes to Indigenous groups and by neglecting to recognize them as culturally significant, UNESCO is misrepresenting the cultural history of Indigenous communities, as well as leaving engagement with Indigenous communities up to the relevant federal body. This research examines a number of pre-colonial sites of significance to Canadian Indigenous communities that should be re-evaluated for their cultural value: examples such as these could stimulate contemporary Indigenous landscape design and provide recognition of the role Indigenous communities have had in North American culture and history. Most importantly, by recognizing the cultural narrative tied to these landscapes, UNESCO and other institutions would be identifying the ongoing relationship Indigenous communities continue to have with landscapes considered culturally significant.*

### 1.1 Keywords

Indigenous peoples, cultural landscapes, UNESCO designation, natural heritage, Aboriginal societies