

The mild climate was a crucial factor — wood and glass could be used freely. But, as Erickson went on, there was also the inspiration of the matchless B.C. landscape: "It was...the natural surroundings that evoked a poetic response from a few architects. For them, the house was more of a device to enhance the magic site — to take advantage of the shifting moods of light and the great diversity of view, to lead one through an experience of nature as if the house were landscape itself."

The B.C. architects in those years developed an approach that was unique in Canada. Their work was humane, close to nature, and very personal. Two men of that generation spread their influence far beyond British Columbia. One was Arthur Erickson. The other was Ron Thom.

It is significant that both of them are most widely known for building universities — Erickson and his partner Geoff Massey build Simon Fraser University at Burnaby, B.C.; Thom build Trent University at Peterborough, Ontario, and Massey College in Toronto. Their work was part of the university building boom in the 1960s.

In that period another fundamental change occurred in Canadian society. In the past, education beyond high school had been limited to a small proportion of the citizens. But in the early 1960s it became clear that a modern society would require much larger numbers of well trained people. Canadians demanded far more university and college education, and provincial governments hastened to provide it. Everywhere universities expanded and new universities were created; community colleges were provided by the dozens.

In many cases the architecture was ordinary, but in a few cases it was distinguished. One such was Simon Fraser, an entirely new university designed by Erickson. It is now a leading tourist attraction in the Vancouver area; certainly in the mid-1960s, when it was built, it was the most talked-about new building in western Canada and perhaps the most admired of all the buildings created by the