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I attribute KCAD with introducing me to the various scales at which architectural design affects our daily life, from its ability to alter our most sensitive conscious and subconscious perceptions to its immense impact on the evolution of our built and social infrastructure. However, it was not until recently that I realized what initially made architecture feel so personally important to me. It was not being indoors in a built space, it was growing up being constantly outdoors surrounded by the beautiful natural environment in northern Michigan.

Historically, built spaces have evolved to create a barrier between the human occupants and the nature surrounding them as linked to our biological need to seek and create shelter. I remember growing up building forts and shelters in the woods, using whatever nature provided to fulfill this basic human need. What I did not realize, until very recently, was that by spending all that time outdoors that I was simultaneously fulfilling another basic human biological need: feeling connected with my natural surroundings.

The field of architecture has only recently begun to revisit the importance of this human-natural connection, that our built spaces do not have to be so separate or dominating over our natural environment. During my time at KCAD, thanks to the mentorship and encouragement of my peers and professors, I have aimed to instill this core value at the heart of all my projects. Throughout my work my aim has been to foster human-natural connections through built environments in ways that make each component of the relationship feel intertwined and interdependent on one another.

At its core, architecture is driven by human needs. And at our core, we are driven by our biological connection to our surrounding environment. Architecture has the facilitative power to make this relationship mutually beneficial, and I consider the responsibility of designing healthy, sustainable, and ecologically friendly built spaces to be a privilege.

