

Global interest in project

People from all over the world are eying Penticton. It's not just for the wine or golf or endless sandy beaches. It's also for the state-of-the-art Okanagan College Centre of Excellence that opened in June.

It's a building that grasps the international attention as a model in sustainability, like no other institution of its kind in the world.

"It has excited interest around the globe," says Okanagan College president Jim Hamilton. "It's truly world-class calibre."

Okanagan's College new Centre was one of the topics of conversation in Helsinki this October at the World Sustainable Building Conference. The Centre of Excellence is one of three Canadian projects that was discussed on the world stage.

The World Sustainable Building Conference is a forum to "share leading knowledge, and also to find new solutions which can enhance sustainable ways of living and working within built environments."

Okanagan College's Vice President of Education Andrew Hay says the Centre has attracted attention not just from those involved in post-secondary education, but from others as well.

"We've taken awareness of the building, to some extent, around the world," says Hay. "People are aware of what we've accomplished and its significance."

PCL Constructors Westcoast,

builders of the Centre, also see it as a showpiece for sustainable development. Project Superintendent Ron Gothe points out that sustainability is an important part of PCL's vision and values, along with continuous improvement. And, as the largest construction company in Canada and a significant building presence in the US, the prototype of the Centre of Excellence is one that can be applied in many other projects.

"We become better builders by sharing methodology, innovation, lessons learned and insights gained," says Gothe.

The next year will be even more telling as students, instructors and the community start to feel the full impact of the building: not only is the building a structure exemplifying sustainability, it demonstrates it through its operation and teaching abilities.



A delegation of architects and academics from Korea are among those who have made the Centre of Excellence a destination in their visits to the world's most sustainable buildings. National, international and green-focused media have profiled the project.

Students can study from the building structure, which has been designed to be a teaching tool. It's a unique concept that is sure to attract more attention.

"Once it's fully operational, it's going to attract students from around the world," says Hamilton.

It might seem that Penticton would be an unlikely spot to launch

such a prestigious project, given most significant structures end up in larger cities, but Okanagan College's president says Penticton was a great choice.

"People would say, 'why Penticton?' I'd say, 'why not?'" he says. "I can't think of a better place to do this."

Program array grows as Centre expands campus

The Centre of Excellence provides opportunity for development of several new programs and opportunities for professional development. One of the programs Okanagan College has developed is a 360-hour certificate in Green Building Design and Construction.

As the building was being erected, experts, advisors and program specialists at Okanagan College were developing the curriculum for the new program. Among those who participated in that process and are contemplating signing up for it is Nick Hill, owner of Ritchie Contracting and Design. He knows about the challenges and opportunities that arise as a consequence of the current focus on green building. He appreciates that clients want to incorporate sustainable practices and materials into their homes and projects. He also knows that they are cost-conscious, especially in the current climate.

As a partner in Solum Rammed



Nick Hill

Earth Builders and a partner in Earthen Living Inc., Hill can see the opportunity in the green building sector as it evolves and grows.

"We need programs like this," says Hill, who is also President of the Canadian Home Builders Association of the South Okanagan. "We need to develop the professional expertise and networks that can help us answer client needs when they seek advice on green building."

The Green Building Design and Construction program will be offered in a format that blends online instruction with workshops and classes in the Centre of Excellence, one of the world's greenest buildings.

"There aren't many programs about building envelopes that are easily accessible."

The Green Building Design and Construction program is just one of the program developments that the Centre has or will help spawn. The College hopes to be able to offer a new three-year technology diploma program in the near future: the Sustainable Construction Management



Plumbing is among the many trade programs finding a home in the Centre of Excellence. Technology Program.

As well, plans are in place to offer an Applied Ecology and Conservation diploma program in concert with the En'Owkin Centre.

Other programs on the drawing board include geothermal, metering and monitoring, and onsite alternative energy sources. Trades programs that are housed in the Centre of Excellence include electrical, plumbing, heating and refrigeration mechanic, and carpentry.

Another program that has found a home in the Centre is Okanagan

College's Human Kinetics diploma program that uses the Centre's gymnasium and fitness Centre as resources for the growing number of students.

"This addition to the campus really creates an inordinate number of opportunities for program development," says Regional Dean Donna Lomas. "From our Continuing Studies programs through to professional development opportunities, this will really benefit the communities of the South Okanagan and Similkameen."

Congratulations Okanagan College on the Grand Opening of the Centre of Excellence from Andy and Morgan at Top Shelf Systems. Proud suppliers of E-Z-Rect Shelving, Rousseau Benches and Lockers.



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