
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market
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COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES BREAKS GROUND FOR GATHERING PLACE

CRANBROOK – Aboriginal students at the College of the Rockies will have a chance to create their own lasting legacy in the form of a new gathering place built by COTR’s trades training students, announced Bill Bennett, MLA for Kootenay East.

The Province is investing \$450,000 in the gathering place, which will be constructed primarily by the college’s training programs. Students will gain invaluable hands-on training as they work on the project, learning construction-related skills such as framing, plumbing, and electrical trades.

Members of the Ktunaxa Nation blessed the site before today’s official groundbreaking.

“The Province is committed to supporting post-secondary education for all our citizens. Development of supportive learning environments like the new Aboriginal gathering place will increase participation and educational success. That benefits our whole community,” said Bennett. “Projects like this gathering place show what can – and will – be achieved when a committed group of people come together with a common goal.”

Construction is expected to get underway immediately. When finished, the octagonal structure will incorporate green building technology, such as heat pumps and solar energy lighting, and will feature a large open space for cultural and ceremonial events, offices, and a fully equipped kitchen.

“The Province’s investment in this and other gathering places shows our commitment to improving the quality of life and educational experiences of Aboriginal students,” said Moira Stilwell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. “By providing an opportunity to literally build a welcoming environment at College of the Rockies, we are helping Aboriginal students achieve success for themselves and for those who will come here in the future.”

The college’s Aboriginal community includes an education co-ordinator, students’ association and advisory committee, who work together to identify and support the development of appropriate, relevant programming for the area’s Aboriginal communities and quality learning opportunities for students.

“This gathering place will be a place of welcome to all Aboriginal people within the college community and beyond. It is being built as a result of a collaborative effort among the college, the Ktunaxa Nation and our other Aboriginal partners, as well as the college’s trades instructors and students,” said Nick Rubidge, president of College of the Rockies. “We thank the provincial government for its investment in our gathering place and are looking forward to its completion.”

Aboriginal gathering places are designed to decrease isolation and enhance support for Aboriginal students by building structures that reflect Aboriginal culture and history. The new gathering place at College of the Rockies is one of 27 being created at public post-secondary institutions across the province through a \$13.6-million investment by the Province.

“The Ktunaxa Nation is excited to build upon our strong partnership with the College of the Rockies,” said Kathryn Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation Chair. “The Gathering Place will provide a comfortable location for Aboriginal learners to explore their culture and heritage, and gain access to services that will ensure their long term success as a student.”

Improving quality and choice in education is a key pillar of the Province’s Pacific Leadership Agenda. The gathering places funding also supports the government’s commitments, through the Transformative Change Accord and the Métis Nation Relationship Accord, to close the gaps by 2015 in education, health, housing and economic opportunities.

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