

# Centre for Learning in LEED

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The Daily Courier

NOV 10  
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Former college student Donald Forbes got a lot of credit for Kelowna's first LEED gold standard building Monday.

Forbes was just completing his term as student representative on Okanagan College's board of governors as planning began for the \$28-million Centre for Learning, which officially opened Monday.

When he suggested making it a LEED – or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – building, some governors had to ask what that meant.

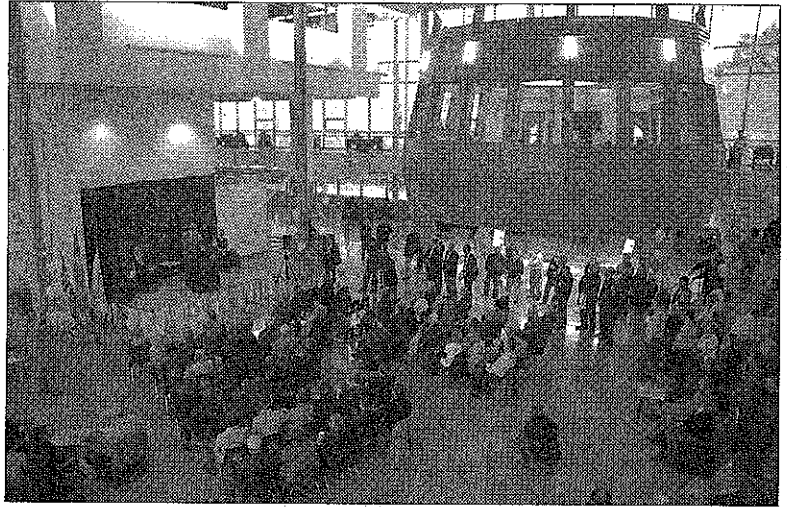
"Right away, they were like, 'This is interesting,'" said Forbes who was invited to attend the official opening of the high-performance green building.

"It was something they hadn't considered. It was a pretty easy sell. The other thing that I pitched was that they could learn from it and create programs to teach people how to build LEED-standard buildings. LEED standard is becoming recognized around the world. They were really smart three years to take this opportunity to be part of the future."

The college is now seeking LEED platinum certification for a new building at its Penticton campus, he said, since "That is really hard to do. You actually have to produce energy with solar panels, for example; it's not just energy-neutral."

College president Jim Hamilton paid tribute to Forbes during his official opening speech.

"We listened, we learned and decided LEED gold would be our standard even before the province



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**Kelowna-Mission MLA Steve Thomson officially opened Okanagan College's \$28-million Centre for Learning on Monday. It features a unique 30-seat Centre for Dialogue classroom in the middle that was based on an aboriginal pit house.**

came to the same conclusion. It has become part of our key strategies," said Hamilton.

"The lessons we learned from this are quite simple. First of all, we can learn from each other and often our students. The other thing is we can play a role in changing attitudes and approaches."

The Centre for Learning has "encouraged students and staff to take up a quest for sustainability in a much more rigorous fashion," he added.

The \$23 million from the province is "a great investment" that will bring a return to not only college students but communities that will benefit from the education and training.

Steve Thomson, Kelowna-Mission MLA and Agriculture Minister, said construction created 179 jobs, that more than 2,100 students now use the 21 class-

rooms and expanded library every day and that the unique circular wooden classroom in the middle was inspired by an aboriginal pit house.

"It's amazing to see this building finally opened and being used by the students," said Kelowna-Lake Country MLA Norm Letnick, who taught business at the college for 10 years.

Alex Recsky, former director of recreation at the college, also attended the opening.

"I just love it. I think it's a great addition, really spacious, long overdue. I love the acoustics; you can hear anybody talking. They've done a great job with it."

First-year business student Lauren Currie added: "I really like it. I think it's really cool. It's nice to look at, but I like sitting in here and studying. It's quiet and it's kind of relaxing being in here."