

# Student builders busy

**BY STEVE MACNAULL**  
The Okanagan Saturday

**T**here's nothing like learning by doing. Eleven Okanagan College residential construction students are doing just that as they build an upscale, 5,000-square-foot house at Kettle Valley Village in Kelowna.

"I always knew that I wanted to go into trades," said student Joe Skuce, 18.

"My uncle is a plumber and my grandfather is a mason. I thought it would be a good fit for me."

Skuce and his classmates have spent the last 10 weeks at Okanagan College's Kelowna campus learning safety, building practices and tool usage.

Now, they switch to on-site building to put that learning to work.

For the next 20 weeks, the students will build the forms for the foundation, framing and carpentry before sub-trades come in to finish the house.

The students will be supervised by Okanagan College instructor Ken Radelet and general contractor Jim Lamé of Vintage Design.

The Home for Learning program started with Okanagan College in Salmon Arm in 2004 and has been expanding ever since," said spokesperson Christine Ulmer. "It's a great way for students to



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**Joe Skuce, 18, is an Okanagan College residential construction student helping build a house at Kettle Valley in Kelowna.**

learn hands-on, and the money raised goes into student bursaries."

That's how the program works. The homes are built to be sold and the profits go into bursaries for the students who work on them.

For example, every residential construction student receives \$1,800

in bursaries — enough to cover three six-week stints at Okanagan College during the next three years as they earn their journeyman trades ticket.

Students aren't paid while they work on the home, and they've all put up \$3,443 to take the 30-week

residential construction program. Electrical pre-apprenticeship and plumbing pre-apprenticeship students who work shorter shifts on the house each get a \$600 bursary. Nine Homes for Learning have been built between 2004 and 2007 in Summerland and Revelstoke.

Sale of the homes has generated \$365,000 in profit for bursaries. The most successful monetarily was a 2007 home in Kettle Valley that sold for \$600,000 and turned a profit of \$166,000.

This year, seven Home for Learning projects are underway in the Okanagan — the Kettle Valley home, another in Kelowna in conjunction with Okanagan College and Rutland Secondary School and others in Summerland, Revelstoke, Vernon, Salmon Arm and a First Nations collaboration in Hedley on a community hall.

The innovative practical experience and bursary aspect of the Home for Learning projects attracts students from across the country.

Skuce found out about the program while visiting Kelowna from Toronto a few months ago and

four of the other 11 students are also from Ontario, one is from Grand Forks and five from Kelowna.



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**At the Home for Learning launch this week are, from left, Okanagan College professor and Kelowna Councillor Norm Letnick, Okanagan College vice-president Andrew Hay, Kettle Valley sales manager Bill Wendt, student Adrian Walker, trades and apprenticeship dean John Haller and Vintage Design president Jim Lamb.**