

# College unveils learning centre

OK Sar Oct 10 01

**Centre for Learning is the first new building erected at Okanagan College campus since the library was built in the mid-1970s**

By STEVE MacNAULL  
The Okanagan Saturday

**I**t's been nicknamed "the basket", "the space ship" and "the pod."  
It is the Centre for Dialogue suspended in the middle of the three-storey atrium of the new \$28-million Centre for Learning at Okanagan College in Kelowna.

The Centre for Dialogue's sphere shape is modelled after a kekuli, which is an Aboriginal pit house that is used to promote dialogue, brainstorming and solutions.

As such, the unique space — accessed from a curved staircase — can be outfitted with 35 arm-chairs or tables and chairs to be used as a classroom, faculty retreat, civic forum or corporate meeting place.

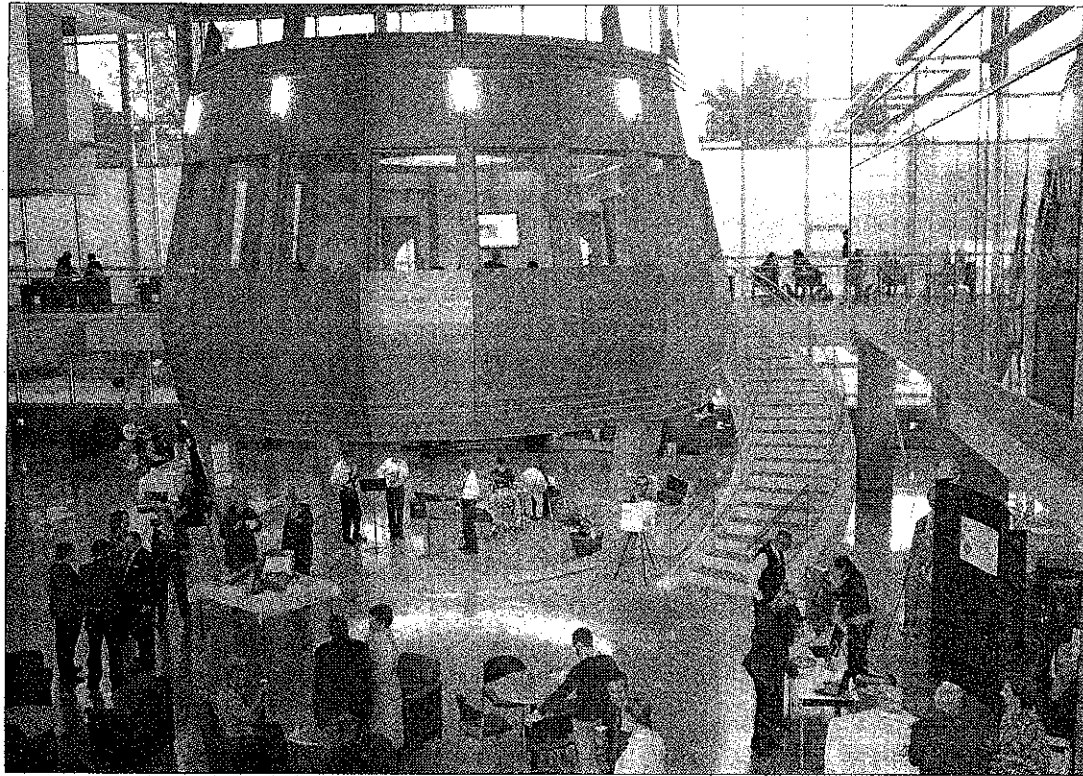
"The mayor (Sharon Shepherd) held a sustainability meeting there, classes are held there all the time and it's also available to the public to rent for a fee for events," said college director of advancement and alumni Kathy Butler.

"It's a great feature of the Centre for Learning."

While the Centre for Learning opened in late August for students, teachers and staff, its debut was this week when an Okanagan College Alumni Association networking event was held there.

The crowd of 200 marveled at not just the showpiece kekuli, but the fact the 70,000 square-foot five-storey building is the only structure in Kelowna built to LEED Gold energy efficiency standards.

"It's very green," said Butler. "It uses only about half the energy of a regular similar-sized building. It has geothermal heating and cooling. It is also part of the overall campus system to use waste water to heat the buildings. It has



GARY NYLANDER/The Okanagan Saturday

**The \$28-million Centre for Learning at Okanagan College in Kelowna is now open and played host to a networking event this week. The pod suspended in the middle of the atrium is the Centre for Dialogue.**

low-flow toilets, waterless urinals, no toxic or volatile materials or finishings were used, and it has windows that open and close automatically with a thermostat to provide natural ventilation."

The Centre for Learning rose from the site where a parking lot used to be.

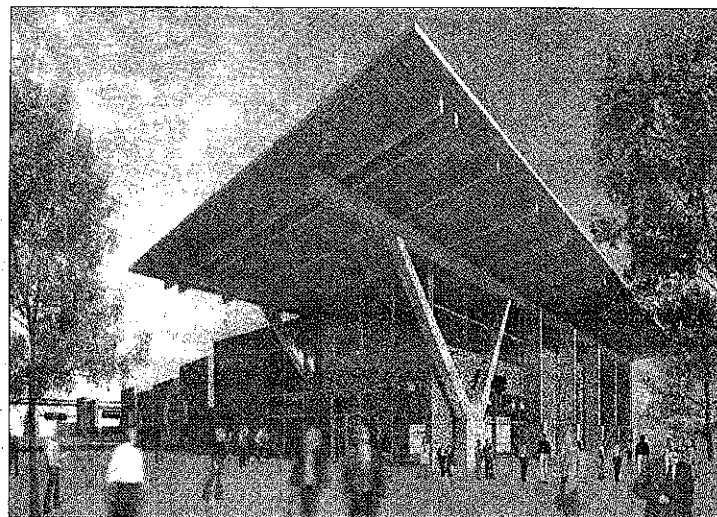
It's the first entirely new building put up at the campus since the library was built in the mid-1970s.

As such, the Centre for Learning was designed to be a widely-used, functional, beautiful and environmentally-friendly.

It has 20 classrooms that are used by all programs at the college; other meeting space; houses the college's human resources, public affairs and finance departments; atrium lounges for students; and is connected at the atrium to the library building.

Meanwhile, the Penticton campus of Okanagan College held an open house Friday to show off what its \$28-million Centre of Excellence will look like when it is complete in March 2011.

The 70,000 square-foot building



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**An open house was held Friday at Okanagan College in Penticton to show off what the \$28-million facility will look like when complete in March 2011.**

will be green and will house the classrooms and shops where the building trades will be taught sustainable planning and construction.

Ground breaking is set for next month.

The college is aiming to exceed

LEED platinum standards on the centre so that it earns Living Building Challenge status as a structure that uses net zero energy.

It will be one of the only buildings in Canada to have such enviable credentials.