



Special to the Herald

West Kelowna's Gorman Bros. Lumber has donated 12,000 board feet of beetle-killed pine wood to Okanagan College. At the mill Wednesday as the boards were loaded for delivery, were, from left, college regional dean Donna Lomas, college president Jim Hamilton, Gorman co-founder Ross Gorman and Gorman sales manager Cameron Cook.

Beetle wood to go into college building

Gorman Bros. donates beetle-killed wood to Okanagan College for Centre of Excellence

By STEVE MacNAULL
Special to the Herald

Beetle-killed wood is turning into a real made-in-B.C. success story.

Pine trees killed by the pesky beetle are a blight on the landscape and present a challenge for harvesting, milling and selling wood.

However, B.C. has turned the proverbial negative into a positive.

If harvested before it starts to deteriorate (somewhere between two and seven years), wood from beetle-killed trees is just as strong as wood from healthy trees.

It's also environmentally friendly to use a product that otherwise could be considered waste.

Even the blue stain the beetle leaves behind is considered fashionable — a mark of finding value in a situation that could have been a disaster.

Gorman Bros. Lumber in West Kelowna and Okanagan College have embraced the beetle-killed wood dilemma and become partners in the college's \$28-million Centre of Excellence, under construction at the Penticton campus.

The 70,000-square-foot, two-storey building is the first to make extensive use of beetle-killed wood and strive for ambitious Living Building Challenge, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum and Wood First certifications.

On Wednesday, Gorman Bros. donated 12,000 board feet of beetle-killed pine boards valued at \$8,500 to the college for use in the Centre of Excellence, which is set for May completion.

"The boards will show up on the

exterior soffits (the underside of roof overhangs) and in the interior in shops, classrooms and offices," said Gorman sales manager Cameron Cook.

"In all uses, it will be very visible, showing that beetle-killed wood can be both functional and beautiful."

The college has also sourced beetle-killed two-by-six lumber for framing the building and roof beams from Vernon-based Tolko Industries and Structurlam in Penticton.

"Part of the Living Building Challenge is to source materials as close as possible, and we've done that," said college president Jim Hamilton.

The Centre of Excellence will end up to be about 65 per cent wood, which is high for an institutional building.

Like many forestry companies around the province, Gorman's entire harvest right now is beetle-killed trees in an effort to bring in the resource while it's still viable.

However, 75 per cent of the wood looks like regular wood because it has been harvested soon after the tree's death.

That means only about 25 per cent of the boards Gorman puts out have the telltale blue streaking.

Besides using beetle-killed wood, the Centre of Excellence will be outfitted with geothermal systems to use free energy from underground for building heating and cooling.

As well, an extensive solar installation will harvest the sun's heat for electricity.

"This building will be used for trades programs that will teach sustainable building," said Hamilton.

"It's a living laboratory. We wanted it to be sustainable so the building could be what it teaches."

Besides trades programs, the building will also have classrooms and labs for kinesiology, engineering, arts, science and business students.