

Press Release

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Students in Southern Interior to share \$ 6.94 million

KAMLOOPS – Students from communities across the Southern Interior of B.C., entering a wide range of trades and technology programs at four institutions will have access to \$6.94 million in support over the next three years, as the result of the single largest donation for student awards in the history of Thompson Rivers University, Okanagan College, Selkirk College and College of the Rockies.

The announcement was made today at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops by Jim Thomson, Chair of the Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust (SIDIT) and Soren Harbel, VP, Innovation Development of BC Innovation Council (BCIC).

The total package includes a \$2.4 million fund for Post-Secondary Trades and Technology Awards, a \$1.5 million fund for Secondary School Awards, along with a \$3.04 million fund supporting research, innovation and entrepreneurship to be jointly administered by SIDIT and BCIC, who have contributed \$ 1.52 million each.

“Experts have been warning us about the future shortage of a skilled workforce for over 40 years,” Thomson told the crowd of enthusiastic students, faculty and senior executives at TRU in Kamloops and at Okanagan College in Kelowna, Selkirk College in Nelson, and the College of the Rockies in Cranbrook via video conference.

“That future is here now and the reality is that there are few industries or businesses today whose capacity is not being restricted or limited due to a shortage of skilled people. This is an investment in the future well being of our region much the same as a business invests in plant and equipment or R&D. Education is expensive but in contrast to the alternative it is cheap, or in other words, this is a good investment.”

The BCIC programs will support students, faculty, post-secondary institutions, industry organizations and companies involved in the areas of technology innovation, research, development and commercialization. This will be a major step in addressing key actions identified in the Province of British Columbia’s Research and Innovation Strategy.

“The Council is excited to be joining forces with SIDIT to promote innovation and commercialization in the Southern Interior,” said Harbel. “The potential and talent is strong in this region, laying the ground work for great opportunities to strengthen B.C.’s knowledge economy and business growth.”

“With these contributions from SIDIT, TRU can offer a student assistance program that will provide trades and technology students opportunities for inquiry and innovation that will not only transform industry but also transform the lives of those involved,” said Dr. Roger Barnsley TRU President and Vice-Chancellor.

“College of the Rockies is extremely pleased to further assist students in the East Kootenay region through these awards from the Trust,” noted Dr. Nick Rubidge, president and CEO. “Encouraging our youth to begin or to continue their post-secondary education is a wise investment in the economic development of the Southern Interior.”

“SIDIT is pleased to be able to work with the BC Innovation Council, TRU, Okanagan College, the College of the Rockies and Selkirk College to deliver a diverse range of education awards,” says SIDIT CEO, Ron Baker. “With a strong focus on trades and technology, sciences, engineering entrepreneurship and innovation SIDIT’s investment in education will have a major effect in attracting students into programs key to the economic success of the Southern Interior.”

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