NICOLA VALLEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY THEATRE AND DAYCARE

LOCATION
Merritt, British Columbia

SIZE
706 m²

COMPLETION
2010

ARCHITECT
Meiklejohn Architects

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
CWMM Consulting Engineers

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
PCL Constructors Ltd.

PROJECT OWNER
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Project Overview

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is British Columbia's First Nations university with campuses in Merritt and Vancouver. NVIT was formed in 1983 as a private institute by the founding bands of Coldwater, Nooaitch, Shackan, Upper Nicola and Lower Nicola. The Merritt campus has grown from an initial intake of 13 students who received their instruction in a downtown basement, to an intake of more than 300 students located in a Governor General's Award winning facility — to which this new building is attached.

NVIT's aim is to address Aboriginal community needs with programs like Social Work, Environmental Resources Technology and Aboriginal Community Economic Development. Programs are taught in an environment that promotes traditional ways and fosters student success. Over its 20 years of operation, NVIT has become a unique and important public post-secondary institute in Canada.

The addition was conceived as part of the 2009 Federal Stimulus program and, as such, was fast-tracked in both its design and construction. The two-storey 706 square metre building includes a 144-seat lecture theatre located above a daycare facility that can accommodate up to 28 infants and toddlers. The daycare is operated by a non-profit society, and licensed early-childhood educators promote Aboriginal culture and language.

Architecturally, the new building was conceived as a freestanding structure, connected to the existing structure by a glass bridge.

Photo courtesy of Colin Jewall

"As an Aboriginal institution, NVIT prides itself on being environmentally friendly. The use of wood in our building projects is a key element in that strategy."

***Ken Tourand**, President/CEO, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology*

Wood Use

Throughout the library, wood is used simultaneously to open and enclose space. For example, the elliptical story-time area is enclosed by a 1.4 metre high wood paneled storage wall; warm in appearance, high enough to contain the activity and yet low enough to allow for easy parent supervision.

Wood is also used to identify all key service points. The service points are strategically located to enable customers to help themselves, allowing staff to focus on serving customers rather than processing materials.

Elsewhere, the atrium is lined with wood paneling, welcome and information desks are defined by suspended wood ceilings and backlit millwork, while catalogue kiosks are folded wood structures integrating technology, equipment and lighting.

The species of choice for this project was larch, which grows in abundance in the Cranbrook area, is familiar to the local residents and is important to the local resource economy. It was a natural choice for the paneling in the atrium lounge.

The larch paneling all came from one tree, and was harvested, milled, prepped, and finished within 65 km of Cranbrook. Efforts were made in the specification to ensure that the plain but beautiful tone of the wood could be fully displayed.

The project was made possible through extensive participation from the community through in-kind donations of materials and labour.

Photos courtesy of Colin Jewall

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The wood grain featured in this profile is Douglas-fir.