

CONNECTS

Issue 8 | Fall 2009



A beacon at dusk: the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

A Year to Remember

Welcome to *Connects* and to the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. This issue recounts achievements of the past fiscal year (April 2008 – March 2009) and previews some of the highlights ahead.

CONTENTS

3 2008/09 Highlights

4 Looking Ahead

► IT'S CERTAINLY been an eventful time for the Learning Centre. After five years of planning and construction, the facility celebrated its grand opening in April 2008. This event represented the culmination of a huge amount of effort on behalf of so many – and the realization of a dream for Dr. Irving K. Barber,

whose generosity laid the foundation for the Centre's future. We must also extend a warm and sincere thanks to: the Premier and the provincial government, whose strong support made this project possible; and to UBC's leadership, whose commitment to innovative spaces for

continued on page 2 ►

► **A Year to Remember***continued from page 1*

teaching and learning, and dedication to community engagement and support, has been inspiring and crucial for this endeavour.

The following November, I arrived as the new Director of the Learning Centre. I was struck at how successful this facility was in terms of attracting students to spaces for group work, solo contemplation, and other modes of study, teaching, and research. It was with great pleasure that I learned about the inventive services already established and those being developed to support learning.

Advisory Committee

Outreach is crucial to the Learning Centre's mandate – and so I immediately turned my attention to understanding the Learning Centre's role amidst UBC's diverse community initiatives.

To aid in this process, we've established an advisory committee that includes UBC and community members from across the province. We're asking representatives to share their organizations' and communities' interests as examples of other like-minded institutions and people, and to consider how the Learning Centre and UBC may add value.

The committee features 25 members. UBC's contingent includes representatives from various faculties, the First Nations House of Learning, UBC Okanagan, the Alumni Association and more. Those from the broader community hail from organizations such as the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., the First Nations Technology Council, secondary and post-secondary schools, public libraries and others. A complete listing of members is available at www.ikebarberlearningcentre.ubc.ca/about/advisory.html.

The advisory committee is set to meet twice a year, and the inaugural get-together was hosted in June 2009. We will update you on developments as the committee moves forward.

Looking Ahead

As Director, I am frequently asked about my vision for the Learning Centre. This is a challenging topic because it presumes that I will set a template for all to follow. However, the Learning Centre has many diverse stakeholders and has been a collaborative endeavour from inception to the present. As a result, I don't really believe that the Director alone can answer the vision question. Adding to the process is the Learning Centre's expansive Statement of Purpose and Charter of Principles (www.ikebarberlearningcentre.ubc.ca/about/charter.html) and our admittedly very young age. Truly, there are many possibilities now that we have a full team in place.

For these reasons, we are holding off on finalizing a vision for the Learning Centre. If we speak too soon, we will unnecessarily limit our potential. Rather, we are going to spend the next couple of years experimenting to see what types of activities fit – or don't – within our mandate. We will identify and pursue diverse initiatives that represent different approaches to service and involve many stakeholders. Through this experimentation, we will begin to see what the Learning Centre can do, and a vision will emerge.

While the Charter is our guiding document, over the next few months we will initiate a discussion about the Learning Centre's principles, which will help guide us as we explore opportunities and set priorities.

Communication is Key

We always want to know what people think about the building, our services, and our programs. If you think we are doing things right or wrong, or believe there's room for improvement, we want to hear about it.

So please contact any of us and let us know your thoughts. We're here to listen – after all, this is *your* Learning Centre. ☺

Sincerely,

Sandra Singh

Director, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre

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Photo: "A collaborative endeavour" – Sandra Singh, Director of the Learning Centre.

THE LEARNING CENTRE TEAM

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Community Connections

Reaching users at UBC and beyond is a key part of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre's philosophy, programs and services.

- WE'VE BEEN INVOLVED in many initiatives over the past year, and here are a few examples of our efforts.

Chinese-Canadian Heritage

A three-year project was launched in spring 2009 to record and share the oft-untold stories of Chinese-Canadians who endured significant hardships during some of Canada's formative years. The project was initiated by Henry Yu, an Associate Professor in UBC's Department of History and is supported by Allan Cho, the Learning Centre's Program Services Librarian.

The initiative involves UBC students interviewing elders from B.C. communities (the Lower Mainland, Victoria, Nanaimo and the Okanagan). The goal is to preserve Chinese-Canadian accounts and experiences from 1885 to 1947, during the times of the restrictive Chinese Head Tax and Chinese Immigration Act. This valuable project also received \$50,000 in funding from the federal government's Community Historical Recognition Program.

Completed interviews will be archived online thanks to UBC Library, and follow-up workshops, lectures and public events will be held at the Learning Centre.



UBC student Angela Wong, a participant in the Chinese-Canadian heritage project, holds an authentic head tax certificate from the Chung Collection in the Learning Centre.

B.C. History Digitization Program

The B.C. History Digitization Program, launched in 2006, enables the Learning Centre to play a key role in helping preserve the unique histories of B.C. communities. The program provides funds to make B.C. heritage accessible to the public.

This valuable support helps organizations such as libraries, archives and museums to convert original and historical items – including images, sound or print materials – into digital files that can then be accessed on a computer.

This spring, the Digitization Program was honoured by the British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) when it was awarded a Program and Services Merit Award. The awards committee highlighted the program's scope and ability to connect communities across the province.

The first round of 17 successful applicants was named in 2007, followed by 21 applicants the following year. The 2009 round was recently announced and includes 14 projects. So far, digitized items include photographic collections, community newspapers, Indo-Canadian oral history, city directories, medical artifacts, three-dimensional fossil specimens and much more, all hailing from communities large and small throughout B.C. For more information, please visit www.ikebarberlearningcentre.ubc.ca/ps/BCDigitInfo.html.

Business Accelerator Program

In 2004, the Learning Centre travelled throughout B.C. to gather feedback on services to be offered. The results indicated that many were keen to see the Learning Centre support small business development. That makes sense – after all, a recent government report noted that 98 per cent of all businesses in the province in 2006 were small businesses.

As a result, we've been busy during the past year developing the Business Accelerator Program (BAP). Along with Sauder School of Business librarians, we are creating an online, collaborative portal to assist B.C. entrepreneurs and small businesses with market research. Sector-specific guides will focus on areas including jewellery making, the pet industry, cosmetics and aromatherapy, consulting, furniture making, outdoor recreation and more.

Aleha McCauley, the Community Business Services Librarian, and Sandra Singh, the Learning Centre's Director, travelled to four B.C. communities to discuss the program and garner feedback. Additional visits to other locales are planned and we look forward to launching the BAP site in late 2009.

In the Centre

In January, students from Professor Peter Newbury's Astronomy 310 class gathered in the Learning Centre foyer to create a "human orrery" that modelled the solar system – a project supported by UBC's Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative (www.cwsei.ubc.ca).

Also that month, and for the second consecutive year, UBC Library sponsored two students as part of the Room-to-Read initiative. The students lived in a tent in the Learning Centre's main foyer for 10 days to raise money to build schools in rural India. Similar events occurred in six other universities across Canada.

24/7 learning

In April, much of the Learning Centre remained open 24 hours a day to help students prepare for the final exam period.

This pilot project marked the first time a UBC Vancouver learning facility remained open on a round-the-clock basis, an effort made possible through the support of Land and Building Services, Campus Security and Classroom Services. Outcomes are being reviewed to determine the pilot's success and decide whether this service should become a permanent feature at exam times. ☉

The Learning Centre:
Connecting with communities
throughout B.C.

LOOKING AHEAD

Future Directions

So you've read about some of our progress over the past year – but what lies ahead for the Learning Centre?

- ▶ BELOW IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF some of the exciting plans that we have in store for our users at UBC and around the province.
 - We will continue to explore digital capacity and information management initiatives with the First Nations Technology Council.
 - We will continue work on the Business Accelerator Program and its launch, planned to take place later this calendar year.
 - The Learning Centre will work with the UBC Community Learning Initiative and Sauder School of Business to pilot community service-learning (CSL) in rural environments. CSL combines classroom learning with volunteer work to achieve community goals, and this pilot involves connecting UBC business students with rural entrepreneurs to assist with business planning.
 - The Learning Centre will work with the Faculty of Medicine's eHealth Strategy Office and UBC Library's Medical Liaison Librarian to examine the online health information needs of British Columbians. The project involves surveying public libraries and seeks to understand what activities could support the provision of health information.

- The Learning Centre will work with UBC Okanagan on a "Story Behind the News" resource for British Columbians. This involves highlighting UBC expertise in various areas and developing community resources to help British Columbians explore current events on a deeper level. Tools may include webcasts, resource guides, and question-and-answer sessions with professors and other specialists.
- A Student Advisory Committee featuring student members from various UBC faculties will be formed to help guide the development of programs offered by the Chapman Learning Commons.
- The construction of a "Learner's Walk" outside the Learning Centre's south entrance will be completed by the fall, resulting in a gorgeous outdoor setting to complement an outstanding facility.
- We will continue to offer the B.C. History Digitization Program, and explore how we can support communities at the early stages of digitizing their historical resources.
- Finally, the Advisory Committee's insights and feedback will help us determine how to best focus future efforts. Potential topics arising from the inaugural meeting include finding effective ways to connect UBC research with communities (and vice versa), along with determining how UBC expertise can be used to support communities. ☺

CONNECTS

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