

College of the Rockies History

Incorporated on May 8, 1975, College of the Rockies is celebrating its 35th year of providing post-secondary education to the East Kootenay region this year.

Forty years ago James Patterson, a hard rock miner in the Sullivan mine in Kimberley, BC and member of the local School Board, realized the need for apprenticeship training in the East Kootenay region of BC. In 1971 he approached the government in Victoria and, along with other interested parties, initiated the process of establishing a vocational school in the East Kootenay.

By 1973 the newly-formed East Kootenay Vocational School Committee, mayors of all East Kootenay communities and district school boards met and requested representation on the McTaggart-Cowan Commission, a government body formed to study the need for post-secondary education in various areas of BC. Patterson and Ray Hughes of Fernie were appointed as representatives of the region.

East Kootenay Community College was established on May 8, 1975 with an edict from the government that the main campus be constructed in Cranbrook. It was to offer vocational, technical and academic courses and Dr. Gary Dickson became its first Principal in June of that year. The next step was to hire faculty and determine exactly what courses were to be offered. The first classes took place on October 6, 1975 and the number of registered students that first year was 351 in Cranbrook, 64 in Kimberley, 52 in Fernie, 39 in Golden and 37 in Invermere.

Sod turning for a new 130,000 square-foot facility took place in February of 1978. While it was being constructed, courses were delivered in various venues in Cranbrook – from 1975 to 1982 the college operated out of 17 different locations in Cranbrook - and in high school classrooms in the other communities during the evening. Enrolment was growing exponentially.

The official opening of the Cranbrook Campus took place September 20, 1982 and amalgamated all the previous venues the college had occupied in Cranbrook. East Kootenay Community College had had a presence in the other communities from 1978 but new facilities were not completed until: Invermere March 1988; Fernie October 1989; Golden May 1992; Creston May 1995; and Kimberley March 2002.

The track and field at the Cranbrook Campus was opened in 1985, a BC Summer Games legacy. A 26,600 square-foot, \$4.1 million expansion was completed October 22, 1992 at the Cranbrook Campus, which included a Health wing and addition to the Cafeteria for the new Professional Cook Training program kitchen and Class Act dining room. Two years later a 5,000 square-foot Mechanics shop was added. This was to accommodate the continuing growth in enrolment. Associate Degrees in Arts and Sciences were offered for

the first time in the 1993 academic year and the Purcell House student residence was completed in 1995.

May of 1995 saw a BC Government Order in Council allowing East Kootenay Community College to change its name to College of the Rockies. COTR's first online course, Applied Research Methods, was offered in January of 1997. During the 1997/98 year the Avalanche men's and women's volleyball teams were introduced as the latest members of the BC College's Athletics Association. A new childcare facility, Kids on Campus, was completed in October 2002. November of 2004 saw the introduction of wireless technology for student laptops at the Cranbrook Campus.

The Cranbrook Campus saw a \$16.2 million expansion in 2007 with a new Academic building (Summit Hall) and a Trades facility (Pinnacle Hall) opening in September of 2007. The College also acquired the Gold Creek Trades and Technology Centre in 2007, the former TransCanada Gas facility.

A \$12.7 million federal/provincial government-funded Knowledge Infrastructure Program Project was officially opened at the Cranbrook main campus on October 29, 2010. It included a grand new entrance hall and interior renovations to improve the delivery of services for students and the public, as well as additional classroom space.

2010 also saw the establishment of the College of the Rockies' first degree: the Bachelor of Business Administration in Sustainable Business Practices. The BBA in Sustainable Business Practices is a four-year program that integrates social, economic and environmental theories and applications for sustainable business practices in a wide variety of fields.

On January 20, 2011 the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer granted College of the Rockies designation as a 'receiving' institution in addition to its former designation as a 'sending' institution. What this means is that COTR is now able to expand its transfer pathways for students to and from the college.

From 543 students at five campuses in 1975, the 2009/10 academic year saw the enrolment of 2,486 full-time equivalent students at seven campuses. These included: 1,892 in University Studies, Business, Career/Technical and Vocational programs; and 596 in Trades and Apprenticeships. There are approximately 8,000 part-time Continuing Education registrants as well. International Education student enrolment has also grown to include 123 international students from more than 20 countries.

From 24 employees and a \$1.2 million annual budget in 1975, in 2011 COTR had 247 full-time, part-time and seasonal employees and 626 non-regular employees^{#1} and a \$33 million annual budget^{#2}. It serves a regional population of 85,000 over a 45,000 square kilometre area and injects more than \$133.8 million in annual regional income from College operations and capital spending^{#3}.

As the College continues to grow it has also continued to revise and expand its on-campus program and course offerings. The range of programs includes University Studies, Business, Health, Fire Services Training, Global Studies, Kinesiology, Office Administration, Child, Youth and Family Studies, Tourism and Recreation, Information Technology, Trades and Adult Upgrading.

Keeping up with the latest course-delivery technology has seen the popularity of COTR online courses more than double in the past five years to more than 1,000 online students from all over the world.

President and CEO Dr. Nick Rubidge summed it up, “It is paramount that we keep up with the changing world of education. College of the Rockies has a history of adapting to change and growing within it, which has resulted in more and better opportunities for citizens of the East Kootenay and beyond. ”

#1 College of the Rockies’ payroll T4 slips March 31, 2011

#2 Exhibit B, College of the Rockies’ Financial Statement March 31, 2010

#3 Community Report Oct. 20, 2010