

## **Bell e-Learning Centre – *Hub for e-Learning and Connected Community***

### **Vision**

The Bell e-Learning Centre is a key piece of the development surrounding the Community Learning Campus (CLC). It is intended to consolidate the Information Technology infrastructure which is becoming more and more commonplace in education and community. This consolidation enables the distribution of distance learning to students at Olds College, to students of the Chinook's Edge School Division (CESD), and allows courses produced at the CLC to be distributed worldwide.

The Bell e-Learning Centre provides a wide range of e-Learning<sup>1</sup> opportunities. The facility is the hub for e-Learning and the connected community, providing improved rural access to broadband technologies, such as video conferencing, through the SuperNet.

The Centre is a flexible space that allows for a variety of self-directed, project-based, and distance learning experiences, built specifically for accommodating technology applications. Learners have the opportunity to access face-to-face, online learning off-site, or a combination of delivery methods best suited to their individual needs.

In 2003, Bell Canada partnered with the Government of Alberta to build the SuperNet, a 13,000 km high capacity network connecting libraries, schools, hospitals and provincial government offices in communities throughout Alberta. Three years later, in 2006 Bell Canada partnered with the CLC, Olds College and the Chinook's Edge School Division through a \$3,150,000 financial commitment toward innovation and equipment. Bell has not only greatly assisted with funding but with the fundamental transition to the notion of technology enabled learning, on-site and remotely. This is a unique "partnership" that will bring to bear, the strengths of each of the respective organizations. Olds College and the Chinook's Edge School Division bring forth relevant content and pedagogy that has been demonstrated over the last 95 years in rural Alberta. Bell brings 125 years of experience of telecommunications knowledge that will help deliver that content and pedagogy to present and future learners, as well as deliver new and innovative services to rural Alberta through the SuperNet.

### **The Facility**

Strategically located in the centre of the campus, and adjacent to the existing Learning Resource Centre, the Bell e-Learning Centre enables access to shared learning resources for students, staff and the surrounding communities. The six key components within the building are:

- Bell Innovation Centre – Bell Canada has an Innovation Centre agenda to drive development and investments in Canada – Canadian people – Canadian businesses – Canadian ideas. Bell's Innovation agenda is truly national in nature with centres established in Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, and the Atlantic Region. The Bell Innovation and e-Learning Centre in Olds, Alberta is the latest addition to Bell's network of 12 Innovation Centres across Canada. This centre will lever technologies and applications developed in other Innovation Centres and customize them to be used in an e-Learning environment. Additionally, this Centre will be an incubation site for projects which utilize the SuperNet for e-Learning or business applications.

- Computer Commons – a place for students to come together in a collaborative environment to work on group projects, or individual learning.
- Geospatial Technology Labs – these high-end computer labs are a place for learning about all things spatial. Specialized software and equipment in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Computer Aided Design (CAD), Remote Sensing, Precision Farming, and GPS, allow students to learn and apply the latest industry tools to help solve complex land-related issues.
- Olds College Students’ Association (OCSA) – the OCSA offices are expanded, and meeting rooms and a student centre have been built. The new facilities are accessible to students for a variety of activities and leadership opportunities including spaces for school clubs to meet. This expansion enables the OCSA to enhance the services they provide to students and creates additional employment opportunities for students on campus.
- Media Studies Department – this area is a state of the art media services studio that delivers courses in Career and Technology Studies. Students will also be involved in the production of materials that can be used on campus and in the school.
- International Centre – this is an expansion of the present International department at Olds College. The College has extensive experience working with industry and educational partners in more than 30 countries. Olds College has an international reputation and a proven track record working with business and industry in agriculture, agribusiness, horticulture, land use, environment, human resource development and applied research. The centre allows for expanded services to include student recruitment for the College and the school district and international delivery of programs via new technologies.

## Community Engagement Sites

The CLC will also steward the establishment of Community Engagement Sites (CES) or “service hubs” in 12 communities in Alberta. This network of Sites will be connected to the Bell e-Learning Centre and will provide access to broadband technology, learning applications and support. The CES will act as the catalyst for community members – young and old – to learn about the opportunities broadband access can provide, assist them in adapting to the technology, and begin to develop a “culture of use” in communities throughout the region. The CES network enjoys the strong support of the Community Learning Campus, the Chinook’s Edge School Division, Olds College, David Thompson Health Region, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, and a wide range of community and province-wide partners and supporters.

Community Engagement Sites provide the “next mile” of the SuperNet build, providing connectivity to rural communities by giving them a public site in their community where they can access broadband technology and learning applications. The concept was founded on the following principles:

- Learners include Kindergarten to Grade 12, post-secondary, community, business and industry.
- The continuing evolution of information and communication technologies provides an opportunity for motivated individuals to access high school and post-secondary education courseware, distance learning, professional development, health, employment, immigrant, family literacy, industry, business, child and family programs and services in ways that were previously not possible.
- Rural communities should have access to broadband technologies and the global market place.
- The key to success is providing value to individuals, community, business and industry, specifically in terms of how to use technology and knowledge creation for their benefit (i.e. small and medium enterprise incubation and development).

Community Engagement Sites will be “hub” for community members to access programs, services and courseware through videoconferencing or other broadband learning applications. Rather than traveling to major centres to access opportunities, rural residents from students to seniors, business and industry owners and workers, and First Nations members will make the connection over the SuperNet. Instead of trying to navigate the learning applications and opportunities on their own, on-site support will be available to coach and guide them. This support is crucial to begin developing a “culture of use” so that people can achieve the full benefits and full potential this type of high-speed access can provide.

## The Bell e-Learning Centre Offers Unique Solutions

The Bell e-Learning Centre:

- Provides specialized facilities and technology including new broadband technologies such as video conferencing and webcasts
- Improves rural access to high speed internet through the SuperNet
- Provides access to CLC courses to learners beyond the physical campus through Community Engagement Sites
- Enhances synergies between Olds College and the Chinook’s Edge School Division to increase technical tool and resource efficiencies and provide a venue for sharing technology resources and expertise
- Increases access to new technology for business applications
- Provides a centre for leadership growth by creating opportunities for professional development of faculty, staff, industry/business, and government
- Expands the Olds College Students’ Association and improve services to students
- Enhances Olds College’s range of services for hosting seminars and conferences

The Bell e-Learning Centre provides a wireless environment for all users to access, including computer labs for high end applications. Rural students in Chinook’s Edge have access through a combination of distance and on-site opportunities as they are linked to the CLC through remote e-Learning access points in Chinook’s Edge schools. Video conferencing suites create links to 12 remote satellite e-Learning centres in schools across Chinook’s Edge School Division, as well as linking the high school and college to others for special events.

Video editing suites will be available for learners from the high school, college and community. Community technology courses will be available for all learners including: online courses; multi media courses; and project work.

High school technology courses such as Information Processing and Communications Studies will be delivered in the Bell e-Learning Centre, as will specific college technology courses.

Olds High School students will have access to library learning resources generally only available to post-secondary students. This will happen through electronic databases, such as the provincial digital library available on computers in the Core High School and Bell e-Learning Centre, and computers and text materials in the Olds College Library. The Olds High School Library materials will be merged with the collection at the Olds College Library.

## e-Learning: Education Themes

The Bell e-Learning Centre will support the four Education Themes established for the CLC:

- **Living in a Digital World** – provides enough broadband and range (infrastructure) to accommodate all learners’ needs; focus instruction on how technology will be effective.
- **Environmental Sustainability** – constructed as a wireless building that utilizes extended connections (SuperNet), it will promote sustainability, and maximize the use of natural light.

- **Learning for All Persons in the Community** - integrates community space and will provide access to programs and services for users of all ages and abilities.
- **Globalization** – provides access to technology creating a global environment (video conferencing, distance learning); provide opportunities for students who are not physically present; and will remove barriers such as distance, age, income, and background to create a truly “international” community.

## Timeline

The Bell e-Learning Centre opened its doors in spring 2008.

Four Community Engagement Sites will open each year beginning in fall 2008. The first to open will be located in the communities of Bowden, Cremona, Delburne and Red Deer.

## Financial Impact<sup>2</sup>

### Bell e-Learning Centre

Capital	7,380,915
Furniture & Equipment	<u>606,452</u>
Total	7,987,367

<sup>1</sup>Definition of e-Learning - the delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means. E-learning most often means an approach to facilitate and enhance learning through the use of devices based on computer and communications technology. Such devices would include personal computers, CD-ROMs, Digital Television, P.D.A.s and Mobile Phones. Communications technology enables the use of the Internet, email, discussion forums, and collaborative software

<sup>2</sup> Budget established August 2007

Note: Olds College has committed to raise \$5,000,000 toward the CLC Campaign Total



*In collaboration with the Town of Olds,  
Mountain View County and the University of Alberta*

*For more information about this 2009 Capital Vision Campaign Project, please contact:*

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