

Whistler Public Library - a novel approach to building green

In January 2008, a new 12,000 square foot library opened its doors in Whistler. Not only is this timber-framed library built to blend into its natural surroundings, it has many green and gold features that make it unique.

Gold is the level the Whistler Public Library earned through LEED certification. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) recognizes environmental innovation including the building's exceptional passive solar design principles, a geothermal heating and cooling system, high efficiency baseboard heaters, and compact fluorescent light bulbs. LEED, a green building rating system governed by the Canada and US Green Building Councils, is highly regarded as a third-party certification for the most internationally-accepted green building practices.

The building, which uses low-emitting and local materials, maximizes the use of natural light and air, and reduces water use, is projected to use 45 to 50 percent less energy and to produce 13.7 tonnes less of greenhouse gases than a comparable facility with no environmental initiatives. This reduction equates to energy savings of approximately \$19,000 per year based upon current energy prices.

The library's timber roof structure incorporates hemlock, an abundant renewable local resource. The Resort Municipality of Whistler won a BC Wood Works award for choosing hemlock, traditionally undervalued as a material in the lumber industry, in the construction of the library.

The library also won the 2009 Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia Award in Architecture, which recognizes excellence in architectural projects and is judged on a number of sustainability criteria.