

MEDIA RELEASE

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CITY OF SURREY WINS BCRPA FACILITY EXCELLENCE AWARD

Totest Aleng: Indigenous Learning House Honoured for Capital Projects Under \$6 Million

Whistler, BC (May 8, 2025) — BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) announced today that the **City of Surrey** has been awarded the **2025 Facility Excellence Award for capital projects under \$6 million** for Totest Aleng: Indigenous Learning House (www.bcrpa.bc.ca/membership/provincial-awards).

This award recognizes excellence in facility design that reflects community culture, addresses community needs through innovation, and prioritizes accessibility for all. It honours facilities that serve as vital community hubs, demonstrate leadership in sustainable design, and enhance the health and well-being of their community.

Totest Aleng: Indigenous Learning House, located in Surrey's Elgin Heritage Park, was created through an extensive and respectful consultation process with Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, and Katzie First Nations. Every element of its design — from the wood-forward architecture inspired by Coast Salish longhouses to its flexible programming spaces — responds directly to what was heard through dialogue with Indigenous community members and cultural practitioners.

More than just a facility, Totest Aleng represents an advanced concept in community building: a place of learning, healing, and cross-cultural connection. It offers a welcoming space where Indigenous artists and knowledge keepers can share their practices, while also inviting the wider public to learn about Indigenous histories, rights, and ways of knowing.

Since opening in 2023, Totest Aleng has hosted over 100 activations led by Indigenous practitioners, creating visible and vibrant opportunities for cultural expression and understanding. The facility has become a living platform for reconciliation, providing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents and visitors with meaningful experiences that build connection, pride, and respect.

"The creation of Totest Aleng: Indigenous Learning House stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved when facilities are built through listening, collaboration, and a commitment to reconciliation," said Katie Fenn, BCRPA CEO. "It is not just a building — it is a dynamic cultural space that fosters belonging, learning, and celebration."

The Facility Excellence Award is one of six Provincial Awards of Excellence presented during BCRPA's annual Symposium, held this year in Whistler. Each award is presented on behalf of BCRPA's more than 5,200 members across the province who work to enhance physical and mental health, wellness, connectedness, and quality of life in their communities.

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BACKGROUND

BCRPA: Inspiring and connecting professionals to build healthy and resilient communities through the power of recreation and parks.

The British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA), a not-for-profit organization, plays a central role in leading the enrichment and improvement of the quality of life of British Columbians and their communities. We do this by championing the power of recreation and parks.

Our story is one of creating community connectedness and individual well-being, based on the knowledge that recreation, active living, and access to parks and the natural environment have profound impacts on physical and mental health.

Since 1958, BCRPA has provided leadership, training, and support, fostering the principles of accessibility and inclusiveness to help members meet provincial and local priorities that improve quality of life for all British Columbians. www.bcrpa.bc.ca/about-us/