

The new Squamish Adventure Centre in Squamish, B.C., is a visitors' information bureau, a showcase for the area's myriad of adventure sports and activities, business development office, cafeteria and R&R spot for weary tour-bus drivers and their passengers.

Brian Sawyer, Compass Management construction director says the "Recreation Capital of Canada" wanted some respect. "I think what they really wanted was a statement that put Squamish squarely on the map and said, 'Hey guys, we're here now and we're serious.'"

At 9,253 square feet on the main floor, 1,329 square feet of mezzanine, the \$5.5-million centre is not physically huge, but it is visually grabbing. The two overlapping ovoid roofs echo an eagle's splayed wings, while the overall profile mirrors the mountains behind. Crafted of local fir and dark basalt rock, the centre exemplifies the area's resources, tangible and intangible.

"The building is really all about

LOCATION
40001 Loggers Lane, Squamish, B.C.

OWNER/DEVELOPER
District of Squamish

ARCHITECT
Iredale Group Architecture

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER/GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Compass Management

MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT
MCW Consultants Ltd.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
Senga Landscape Architecture Inc.

GEOTECHNICAL CONSULTANT
Thurber Engineering Ltd.

EXHIBITS CONSULTANT
Aldrich Pears Associates Ltd.

CIVIL CONSULTANT
CJ Anderson Civil Engineering Inc.

TOTAL AREA
10,612 square feet

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
\$ 5.5 million

Squamish Adventure Centre

by David Leidl

simplification," says Richard Iredale, project architect. "It's a graceful form that has been simplified. The absence of clutter is what makes it beautiful."

When Iredale and project teammates Liz Scremin and Dennis Maguire first walked the site, they instinctively raised their arms to the Tantalus mountains, then to Squamish's signature mountain, the Stawamish Chief. "If you do that and do that," says Iredale, "you've basically got the shape of the building. It's just reaching out in both directions to capture the view."

After years of inter-governmental effort by Squamish city council, the funding came together and in late September 2004, Iredale Group Architecture got the contract. However, project completion was March 30, 2005. "We just started digging," says Iredale. "We started in the dark."

Most anywhere else, the process would take two years, minimum. But this is Squamish. The demographics and attitude is "very youthful, optimistic, can-do and frontier," says Iredale. "The mood there is they seem to love a challenge."

When locals saw the concept sketch, Iredale says they got it immediately: "The difficulty of building it, they could see, but it didn't scare them."

Master builder and job super, Philip Glen rallied local trades to build a

sense of community ownership. "When I first saw [the concept drawings]," Sawyer says, "I was excited." The complexities were obvious. "But we've always been up for a challenge like this, so we were very keen to get into it."

Trucked on site, the bones of the building (the largest 8 inches by 18 inches by 36 feet) were craned and bolted into place by Timberhaven Homes's small, skilled crew.

The tight timeline kept the AutoCADs and e-mails humming between Squamish and the Iredale office in Vancouver, the detailed designs printed and taken directly to the work site. "There was a fast-track methodology being used," says Sawyer. "It worked incredibly well." With the fit and finishing of a multi-million-dollar home, the Adventure Centre is one of the finest, yet most complex, wood buildings he has seen. "There is no question about that. Nothing was straight or level or perpendicular. Everything was at an angle of some sort, so that was a challenge."

The tightening budget "streamlined" the landscaping, says Senga Lindsay, principal of Senga Landscape Architecture: "It was a design-build scenario where we started adding or deleting things and prioritizing, what was important, what could be left out and still meet the objectives."

CJ Anderson Civil Engineering Inc. assisted with a storm-water management plan to reduce post-development runoff and improve the quality of the site's runoff water.

To improve efficiency of the installed on-site oil/water separator, the naturally clean rainwater caught by the roofs, is channelled and separated from the rainwater running off from the parking lot. The clean water goes one way; the dirty parking-lot water goes off into the on-site oil/water separator. After that, it is passed through a large bio-filtration swale designed by Cascade Environmental Resource Group Ltd. before it is finally discharged, fish friendly, into the Mamquam Blind Channel.

"In a building with large open ceilings and soaring views into the building, concealing the HVAC system required special design," says Gregory Lord, partner, MCW Consultants Ltd. "The final design, in keeping with a tight mechanical budget, utilized conventional rooftop HVAC units, with ductwork concealed in the few areas with suspended ceilings.

"The lighting design needed to complement the design, and highlight the rich wood used for the building," says Lord. "Direct/indirect suspended fluorescent fixtures illuminate the office component of the building, providing a

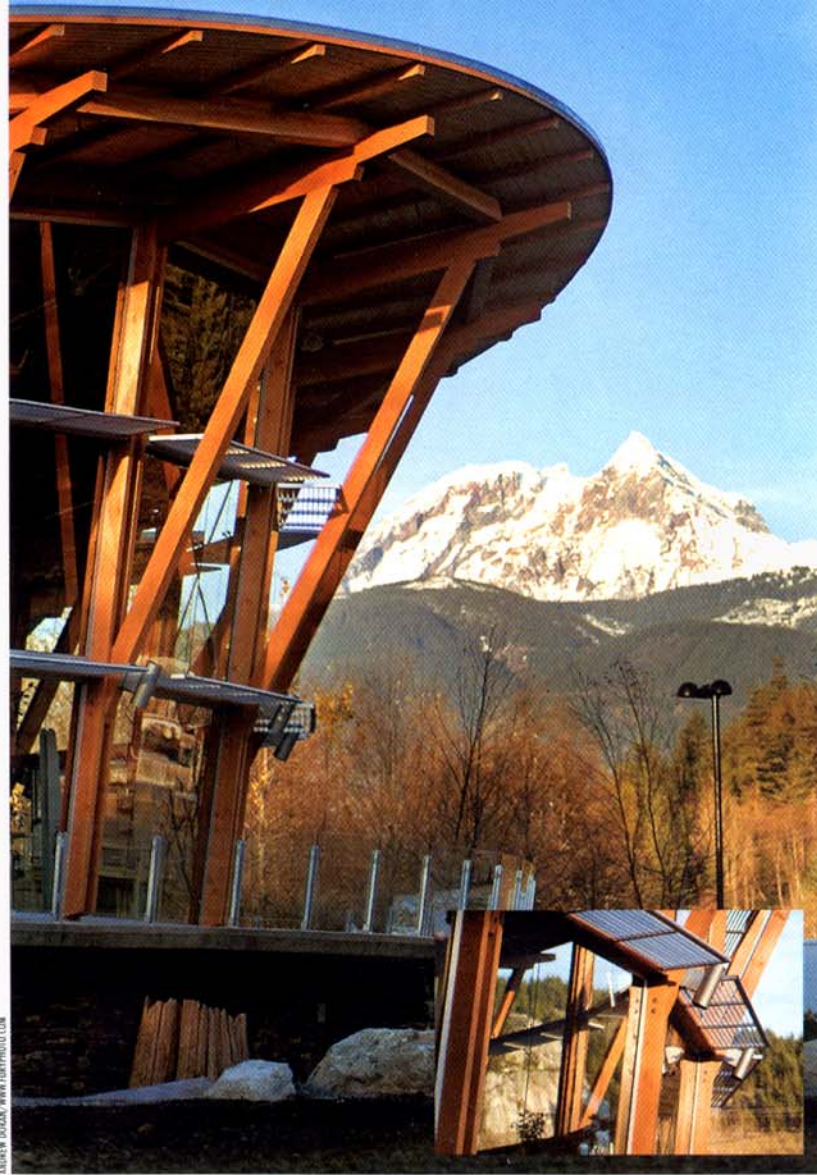
comfortable glare-free environment for office staff. Energy efficient HID architectural low-bay fixtures were used in the public area for controlled lighting with a different look."

Visible from the road, the centre's 30-foot height will have what Aldrich Pears Associates' Doug Munday calls a "large sculptural installation" overhead — a medley of recreational craft (from bikes to a hang glider) and bold swatches of colour united by streaming banners. Says Munday, "In a fairly short snapshot, [the exhibits] give folks a sense of the richness of the place and things to do."

With a tight timeline and budget, the near impossible was pushed through. "One of the hardest parts was finding the people with the skills and courage to do the job," says Iredale.

"Whenever it was a question of either doing the right thing, versus saving money, Brent [Leigh, District of Squamish deputy administrator] always chose the right thing. He did a great job working with the Squamish district staff to do the things they needed to do," says Iredale.

In turn, Leigh says it is all part of Squamish's push toward the "paradigm of the conservation economy" — one based on sustainable industries and knowledge-based businesses, bolstered by the area's "natural capital" and human smarts. ■



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