



Press Release

PORT COQUITLAM STAKES THE TERRITORY AND LAUNCHES CONSTRUCTION OF THE LEIGH SQUARE COMMUNITY ARTS VILLAGE

Port Coquitlam, BC, Saturday, May 7, 2005 ... Mayor Scott Young, Federal Minister Ujjal Dosanjh, City Councillors, community stakeholders and the public gathered in Port Coquitlam's Leigh Square today to symbolically claim Port Coquitlam's new downtown cultural precinct and to herald the new Leigh Square Community Arts Village. The *Staking the Territory* celebration claimed Port Coquitlam's new arts precinct with a groundbreaking ceremony and a fun, flag-filled music-making procession around Leigh Square. Adding further colour and excitement to the procession were residents and community stakeholders who 'staked the territory' with large clusters of balloons.

Port Coquitlam Mayor Scott Young, acknowledged the importance of partnerships in fulfilling the community's vision for the Arts Village and thanked the federal and provincial governments for supporting the project and recognizing the value of cultural infrastructure to the overall sustainability and well-being of Canadian municipalities. Young also noted, "Any public acknowledgement of this project would not be complete without recognizing the continued involvement and support of the community in the creation of a vision and design for the Arts Village. In particular, the ongoing commitment of the citizen members of the Community Cultural Development Advisory Committee has been outstanding." Other key partners committed to creating a strong presence for cultural development in the downtown core include the Port Coquitlam Heritage and Cultural Society, Art Focus Artists Association, and ArtsConnect, the regional arts council.

"We are working in partnership with the Province of B.C. and the City of Port Coquitlam to develop healthy and sustainable communities throughout the province, " said the Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, on behalf of the Honourable Stephen Owen, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Sport). "This Community Arts Village is a prime example of the Canada - B.C. Infrastructure Program's priority to improve local quality of life by providing cultural and recreational facilities to British Columbians."

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The City of Port Coquitlam was awarded \$1.6 million in grant funding for the Leigh Square Community Arts Village through the Canada - BC Infrastructure Program. The grant awarded provided the additional funding required to undertake the first phase of the project, including renovations of the former Post Office Building to the north of Leigh Square and a new construction on the site of the current Parks and Recreation Department offices to the east. Planned space allocations for the renewed Post Office building, to be called the Outlet building include community art workrooms, a visual arts studio, a public archives, and artisans' co-op and a resource centre. The new building, to be called the Gathering Place, will house a display centre and related production rooms as well as dressing rooms to support performances on the Leigh Square Bandshell. The new building will also contain community meeting rooms for local arts, heritage and cultural groups, and administrative offices to support the operations of the Village.

This \$4 million project, which will showcase the arts and cultural activities in the community, is the outcome of a comprehensive study undertaken to develop a strategy for the creation of a grassroots, community-driven cultural focal point for Port Coquitlam. The City of Port Coquitlam is demonstrating leadership and vision in the construction of this creative project and has been mindful of environmental sustainability impact in the development phase of the project. In addition to recycling two older buildings as part of the arts precinct, a new building, to be called the Gathering Place, has been designed to meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver accreditation standards.

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