

# Kwantlen nets grants for hi-tech research lab, greenhouse

by DAVID SCHMIDT

ABBOTSFORD – The Institute for Sustainable Horticulture (ISH) at Kwantlen University College in Langley is finally becoming more than just a dream.

In late November the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) (a federal government foundation which funds research facilities at Canadian colleges and universities) awarded the ISH \$2.2 million to build a 450 sq metre bioproduct laboratory and a 500 sq metre geothermally-heated research greenhouse.

Kwantlen horticulture professor Jim Matteoni began the ISH in 2004 as an adjunct to Kwantlen's School of Horticulture, B.C.'s largest horticultural training centre. After health reasons forced Matteoni to resign as ISH director, Deborah Henderson of E.S. Cropconsult took over as part-time director and Leading Edge Endowment Fund (LEEF) chair designate.

"My job is to build research programs in horticulture," Henderson explains, saying the ISH's plans to work in integrated pest management, ecosystem sustainability, industrial innovation, community awareness and education and training.

Before much of that can be done, the ISH needs money – a lot of money. Henderson has set a fundraising goal of \$13.5 million, including \$5.5 million for capital projects, \$2.5 million to endow the LEEF chair, \$2.5 million to fund post doctoral fellowships and \$2 million for operating costs and a lecture hall.

The CFI award has given those efforts a huge, and almost unexpected, boost.

"Kwantlen had no research facilities and no previous experience with CFI so our application was a longshot," Henderson admits.

The B.C. government has already committed \$1.25 million for the LEEF chair provided Kwantlen raises the other \$1.25 million, and is expected to match the CFI funding as well. Add another \$200,000 already received from Western Economic Diversification for growth chambers and other equipment and a CFI commitment to provide another \$600,000 for operating funds and Kwantlen has already raised almost half its goal.

Henderson is now making the rounds of local agricultural organizations and community groups to increase awareness of the Institute and raise the rest of the funding.

CFI has given Kwantlen 18 months to begin construction of the facilities, although Henderson expects it will be up to 30 months before they are completed. The greenhouse will use well-based geothermal heating instead of conventional boiler heating, allowing researchers to study climate control of a closed system.

"This is an opportunity for us to be innovative," Henderson states. "Climate control is a real challenge."

The greenhouse will permit research into new production systems and new crops for green energy greenhouses while the lab building will hasten development of new biocontrols for indoor and outdoor horticultural crops, Henderson's own field of interest and expertise, having spent the past 18 years as an Integrated Pest Management consultant.

"I started with just three potato growers when few people knew what IPM was," she notes

B.C. has since become an international leader in the commercial use of IPM in greenhouse vegetables, potatoes, field crops and cranberries and is home to two major commercial producers of biocontrol products. However, IPM uptake still suffers from both a lack of understanding of IPM techniques and a lack of products which is what prompted her to accept the ISH position.

"I needed to move to a place where I

could support (her IPM trainees) more. I can do more by enabling other people."

She insists she will retain her focus on commercial production, saying "we're going to be researchers who understand farming."

"We have to be multi-stakeholder from the beginning. For IPM research to be effective, we have to go from the bottom up. We have to start by asking what is needed to control a particular pest or disease, then make sure it can be produced commercially. If IPM solutions cost more, they won't be purchased."

## Kelowna hosts nat'l farm biz seminar

by DAVID SCHMIDT

ABBOTSFORD – How can farmers position themselves for the future?

Find out at the 2007 Managing Excellence in Agriculture conference, an annual conference presented by the Canadian Farm Business Management Council. This year it is being held in B.C., at the Grand Okanagan Resort in Kelowna, January 31-February 2.

"This year's theme, 'Farming for Tomorrow – Sowing the Seeds of Sustainability' will be of value to many producers who are looking for creative ways to improve their business," says CFBMC executive director Wendell Joyce.

Conference topics include value chain management, risk management,

farm transfer strategies and the emerging bio-fuel sector. There will also be break-out activities and a learning group and participants will leave with a "learning journal" to assist future management decisions.

Keynote speakers include:

- David Hillson, a leading practitioner of strategic risk management who will discuss ways to turn uncertainty into a competitive advantage.
- Laurie Skreslet, the first Canadian to climb Mount Everest, who will illustrate parallels between the challenges of mountain climbing and challenges in the modern business world.

Conference organizers have made the event family-friendly, with special activities to keep kids busy while their parents participate in the seminar.



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