



The Community Learning Centre will open for the first time on Sept. 8. (Submitted)

Quesnel Literacy Society to open learning centre Sept. 8

The Community Learning Centre will offer programming for adults looking to improve work skills

CASSIDY DANKOCHIK / Sep. 3, 2020 6:00 p.m. / LOCAL NEWS / NEWS



Residents in Quesnel will get a new resource to help them build up their work skills.

Literacy Quesnel will be opening a Community Learning Centre aimed at adults on Sept. 8.

The goal of the centre to to supply skills training and reduce barriers to employment for Quesnel residents.

Linda McIntyre is the centre's co-ordinator, and she said the support they'll be offering is flexible.

"The whole point of [the centre] is to give individual support," she said. "All [the other] places are great, but it's group support. We're looking at giving individual learning support — one on one. [Students] get to call the shots on what they need.

"They don't need to be sponsored; they can just walk in and say, 'hey I need to do x-y-z.' We'll make it happen for them."

Nearly 40 per cent of people in Quesnel between the ages of 25 and 54 read and write below a fourth-grade level.

The executive director of Literacy Society Quesnel, Rebecca Beuschel, said the centre saw a gap in programming and worked to fill it.

Funding for the centre was provided by the Union of BC Municipalities, through its poverty reduction strategy.

Support for the project was also offered from the City of Quesnel.



"The City was happy to partner with Literacy Quesnel Society in obtaining funding for this important community space," Mayor Bob Simpson said in a statement. "The overarching goal of the Community Learning Centre is to reduce as many barriers to education as possible by providing the opportunity for any community member to access free education and resources in a safe, inclusive, supportive environment."

The centre will be staffed Tuesdays to Fridays from 1-6 p.m. It has six computer work stations, with one being wheelchair-accessible.

COVID-19 prevention measures, including Plexiglas screens, are in place.

Beuschel said hundreds of people have been laid off from mills in the area, and some don't have the skills to effectively job search in other industries.

"They don't even have a resumé because they didn't need one for 20 years," she said.

"It's pretty daunting when *you* look at what Quesnel has been up against," McIntyre added.

Beuschel said the centre isn't repeating any other programming in Quesnel, and it will point people in the right direction if there is another program that is a better fit.

"We are the stepping stone to where they need to go in the community, but also they could just learn what they need to learn with us," she said. "It's going to be a very flexible model. We're going to really work with the individual that comes in and says what they need."

Plans for a grand opening of the centre were scrapped to help keep the spread of COVID-19 down, but the centre will be operational on Sept. 8.

The centre is located in Room 204 at 488 McLean St., the same building as the Quesnel and District Child Development Centre.

