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Media Release

For Immediate Release

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SUMMERLAND—George Ryga Arts & Cultural Centre

The District of Summerland and Summerland Community Arts Council hosted a celebration on October 21 to announce the completion of the building renovations at 9525 Wharton Street. This building, which was formerly the home of the Summerland Branch of Okanagan Regional Library and then became a public space for arts and community activities, has been recently upgraded.

The full-scale interior renovation included electrical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, lighting, flooring, new partition walls and floor plan, as well as fire and life safety improvements. The energy efficient heating and cooling equipment will improve the District's commitment to GHG reduction. The accessible washroom upgrades create a more welcoming and inclusive building.

Final costs were just under \$600,000. In addition to the District's Capital Reserve Fund contribution, funding support was provided by the Summerland Community Arts Council's BC Gaming Grant and the Rick Hansen Foundation.

The Summerland Community Arts Council and Art Gallery will reside on the main floor of the renovated building. The second floor is shared space which will offer arts and cultural programs and events, recreation programs and rental space administered through the Arts Council.

Council recently renamed the building the George Ryga Arts & Cultural Centre just as the renovations were being completed. The nationally acclaimed playwright George Ryga wrote most of his major works at his Summerland home. The District of Summerland 2016 Cultural Plan includes a recommendation to name a street or public space after George Ryga.

"Council knows the value of having a rich and varied arts and cultural community. Not only does this creative sector contribute to economic strength, it is an important part of a healthy community and provides yet another reason for people to be grateful to call Summerland home," said Mayor Toni Boot. "The reopening of the newly-named George Ryga Arts & Cultural Centre has been a long time coming. On behalf of Council, I extend a huge thank you to the current and previous Summerland Community Arts Council Boards, District staff, and the members of the Board's Building Committee. Your perseverance through relocations, project design, planning and renovations—much of it during a pandemic—has resulted in a beautiful new space for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike."

“We’re happy to be in our new home and we’re excited to continue as the voice of the arts in Summerland,” says Laurie Weir, Vice President of the Summerland Community Arts Council. “We look forward to strengthening our relationship with the local community and partnering with the District to serve Summerland. We’re grateful to the District and to BC Gaming for providing the funding to renovate the building and making our new home possible.”

Members of George Ryga’s family attended the celebration event. “Blown away, thrilled, and grinning from ear-to-ear pretty much sums up the family’s reaction to the naming of the Arts Centre,” said Tanya Ryga. “Dad’s writing is respected around the world but it’s extra meaningful to honour him here in this way. Thank you, Summerland!”

The President of the Ryga Festival Society, Dan Dinsmore said: “On behalf of the Ryga Festival Society Board, I would like to thank our Council for their foresight and to Councillor Holmes who got this ball rolling six years ago. We look forward to collaborating with the Summerland Community Arts Council Board as these two community organizations work to bring arts and cultural experiences to Summerland.”

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GEORGE RYGA ARTS & CULTURAL CENTRE

