



For immediate release:

St. Eugene Golf Resort Casino takes Ktunaxa culture to the golf course

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Cranbrook, B.C.

Through a coordinated effort by staff and Ktunaxa elders, golfers at the St. Eugene Golf Resort Casino can now learn a few words in Ktunaxa as they play a round.

"We want to be more than a golf resort," said Dallas Ferguson, Chief Executive Officer. "We want to be able to educate people on the Ktunaxa and aboriginal people as a whole. We see it as something unique we can offer as part of that whole experience you are just not going to find anywhere else."

Currently, the tee box markers throughout the golf course are being changed as the holes have been renamed in the Ktunaxa language—with phonetic spelling and translation. In keeping with the Ktunaxa culture, the nature of the course and the overarching environmental ethos of the resort, the hole names reflect far more than distance and shape. They show an intimate knowledge of the environment that developed over 10,000 years of aboriginal history and 11 years of first-hand experience with the course.

For Graeme Douglas, CGSA, Manager, Golf and Hotel Facilities, the path to creating the markers started with the inspiring phrase, "The Ktunaxa language has no word for extinct. Let's keep it that way." Since the course's inception, he explained that the resort has always worked diligently to preserve the environment - leaving wildlife corridors, buffer zones, paths to water and taking other measures to reduce its impact on the area. He pointed out that walking the grounds with golf course architect Les Furber in the early planning stages allowed them both to see that this place had something special that should be preserved.

"Yes, we have a lot of wildlife out here. Sometimes you'll see an eagle chasing an osprey for its fish. We have Kingfishers that actually fish in Joseph Creek, deer that give birth here and a badger's den," said Mr. Douglas. "But it's more than just looking at the wildlife — some holes were named for their natural character like 'Rising Spirit'."

And those observations, coupled with the years of experience of Mr. Douglas and his staff, led to tee box marker names such as "Eagle's Perch", "Kingfisher", "Badger's Den" and "Spirit Tree".

But renaming the holes wasn't as easy as just observing and coming up with a fitting name. The Ktunaxa written language, like many aboriginal written languages across this country is a new and evolving initiative. Dorothy Alpine, a Ktunaxa elder and language expert, said that around 1979 she started working with other elders to create a written Ktunaxa lexicon. A linguist from the International Phonetics Association (IPA) was brought in to teach them the symbols used to represent sounds unique to the language and the mission to preserve a keystone of her culture took full flight.

"If you look at the history of our people or the condition of our language today – I could be the last of the fluent speakers," said Ms. Alpine. "If we don't do what we can to preserve what we know and hopefully pass it on to the younger generation, this language is going to be extinct. I get a special kind of good feeling when I hear people trying to speak it. On the course, with the phonetic spellings, people who don't understand can at least try and say the words. We are in Ktunaxa country and I want people to know that."

St. Eugene has 125 beautifully appointed guestrooms. Dining choices include the Purcell Grill, Fisher Peak Lounge, 19th Hole Bar & Grill and Fred's Saloon. The St. Eugene 18 Hole Championship Golf Course and Ktunaxa Nation Council Interpretive Centre are located within the resort and the Health Club contains a fully equipped gym, steam room, sauna, year round heated pool and hot tubs. The St. Eugene is located at 7777 Mission Road, Cranbrook, B.C. and is owned in equal partnership by the Ktunaxa Nation, the Samson Cree Nation and the Chippewa's of Rama First Nation.

Room Reservations – 250.420.2000 or 866.292.2020

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