



CENTRE FOR INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP (CITE) – SENECA COLLEGE

by NATALIE BRUCKNER

The new five-storey Centre for Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship (CITE) at Seneca College's Newnham Campus has not only changed the face of Finch Avenue East in Toronto, but is a clear demonstration of the College's ongoing commitment to innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship.

The cutting-edge facility, designed by architects Perkins and Will, brings applied research, specialized training, and entrepreneurial activities all under one roof. The building incorporates the latest technology to reduce its carbon footprint, is home to Seneca's on-campus incubator HELIX (which is open to the public), and has state-of-the-art facilities to enhance the learning experience for students.

The idea for CITE came about back in 2015 when federal and provincial funding became available for the development of educational institutions. "The Seneca campus was extremely crowded and in need of a gateway building that would face south on Finch Avenue. Fortunately we had a team of people who saw this as an opportunity to also expand our business incubation capabilities and increase our applied research, innovation and entrepreneurship activities at the college," explains Angelo Miranda, director, major capital projects at Seneca.

The site for the new building – a former dilapidated parking area that Seneca was able to reclaim – posed a few challenges to the team including general contractors EllisDon Corporation, as Miranda explains: "The parking lot sat about 20 to 30 feet below Finch Avenue, which meant the soil was contaminated as it had been exposed to runoff and salt that was dumped there over numerous

winters. The decontamination of the soil in addition to a wet winter, which made the grounds look like a sea of mud, delayed the project somewhat. However, due to excellent teamwork, we were able to make up that time during construction."

For the design of the new LEED gold building, Seneca wanted a building that would complement the existing buildings on campus, but would also stand out as a gateway building. "We give our architects a lot of licence to incorporate as many new and exiting ideas as they can, while ensuring our buildings are sustainable, robust, and include the Seneca brand standard, and Perkins and Will, led by Andrew Frontini, did an amazing job," says Miranda.

To pay tribute to Canada's Indigenous history and provide a connection to the land that supports CITE's new structure, several Indigenous design and graphic elements were incorporated. The first of which can be seen on the exterior of the building. Between the two entrances, 13 white columns line the front facade of the building and each of those columns is emblazoned with a name representing the 13 moons of the Indigenous lunar cycle.

At the western front entrance on Finch Avenue is a four-storey graphic element created by Bruce Mau Design, which is a map from the 1787 Toronto Purchase land deal between the Mississaugas of the New Credit and the British Crown. Opposite to that on the eastern entrance wall is a map of the universe, which represents the progression of technology since the signing of the treaty. These all make for exciting design elements to the building and provide something akin to a historical document.

Access to CITE is via the external entrances as well as an internal bridge that connects it to Building D. "Inside CITE, the first three floors of the building are dedicated to academic spaces, while the top two floors are administrative space. My team will be moving in during summer of this year and we are very excited," says Miranda.

As you enter CITE on level two from the western entrance, you will see the Innovation Centre, home to Seneca's Applied Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship department. Across from this is the Innovation Gallery, which features a terrazzo medallion inset in the floor, called the Circle of Indigenous Knowledge.

The medallion was created by Indigenous artist Joseph Sagaj and measures 30 feet in diameter. It features symbols and culture of First Nations people of the Great Lakes, the Metis and the Inuit of the Arctic. Each of the 18 Symbols of the Medallion represent something different.

Up on level two, the space has been anchored by the Mechatronics Lab and the Motors and Process Control Lab on the one end and by Applied Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ARIE) on the other. Here graphics include a Hoop Dance circle, representing the strong spirit present in many Indigenous teachings, and the Particle Accelerator, a graphic created by Bruce Mau Design. "Throughout the building the graphics tie the technology aspect of the building to the aspects of the aboriginal life. We didn't want to do a token to the cultural significance of the space, instead we wanted to do something that meant something," says Miranda.

The third-floor student lounge is an open space that overlooks Finch

LOCATION

1750 Finch Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario

OWNER/DEVELOPER

Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology

ARCHITECT

Perkins and Will Canada

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

EllisDon Corporation

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

RJC Engineers

MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

Smith & Andersen

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Quinn Design Associates

TOTAL SIZE

244,000 square feet

TOTAL COST

\$100 million

Avenue and features Willie T's café (named after Seneca's founding president, William T. Newnham), eight general classrooms, three technology-enhanced classrooms and various student space and collaboration rooms. Here the central design element is the Northern Lights fixture in the ceiling, a concept developed by architect Frontini. "The design was chosen due to its importance to Indigenous culture and mythology, and at night, when it lights up, you can see it from the highway like a beacon," says Miranda.

The fourth and fifth floors are dedicated to admin and these spaces also feature Seneca brand elements such as the red and white wayfinding that mimics Seneca's logo, polished concrete floors, and clean lines.

"The architect has created a wide open and uncluttered feel, which is very refreshing. There are lots of breakout and collaboration spaces, the corridors are wide with study spaces, we have bleacher seating through the main areas next to the stairs, and natural light pours into the building through the exterior glazing on the building," says Miranda. "It has somewhat of a museum feel to it."

With construction having started in September 2016 and the project reaching substantial completion on December 6, 2018 and ready for students in January 2019, this project was a major success, being both on time and on budget. Miranda credits the talented team for this, saying, "It was pretty seamless how we went from construction to operation. We had very few issues. I am very proud of the building, where it stands, and how it looks. I only wish I was 30 years younger, so I could be a student here." **A**