



St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino ranked one of BC's most culturally authentic Aboriginal tourist attractions

Coast Salish Territory / Vancouver, January 18, 2010: The St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino is one of five tourism businesses in British Columbia to receive the 'Authentic Aboriginal' title, a new designation awarded by the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC). The authenticity program recognizes the most culturally authentic, accurate and respectful representations of First Nations peoples and cultures in British Columbia's tourism industry.

The Cultural Authenticity program is a new program launched by AtBC to help visitors differentiate which of the business operators in British Columbia's booming Aboriginal cultural tourism industry are among the most culturally authentic Aboriginal and Métis-owned businesses in the province.

"St. Eugene Golf Resort Casino is honoured to have been accepted into the ATBC Authenticity and Quality Standards program. Our Resort recognizes the importance of authenticity and cultural content in an Aboriginal tourism experience," said **Wendy Van Puymbroeck, Director of Sales & Marketing, St. Eugene Golf Resort Casino**. "To be recognized through the ATBC program with this certification is a valuable asset in our efforts to market our property throughout the world. We were excited to be invited to participate early in the standards program and of course thrilled to be one of the first five operators approved!"

Businesses which live up to a high set of standards and incorporate accurate representations of Aboriginal cultures, and other tourism and hospitality benchmarks, are being recognized with a seal that **Keith Henry, Chief Executive Officer, AtBC**, calls the "pinnacle of excellence for an Aboriginal tourism operator."

"We want to avoid the equivalent of the 'made-in-China' totem pole," said **Henry**. "By recognizing our most culturally respectful and authentic Aboriginal business operators, we're helping visitors easily identify which operators have well developed, culturally appropriate programming. It is also a way to recognize the operators who go extra lengths to incorporate their culture and industry-leading hospitality into the product."

Certified culturally authentic operators can display the authenticity logo on their marketing materials to help visitors easily identify them. The logo is an eagle feather and human eye motif accompanied by the words "Authentic Aboriginal". The eagle feather symbolizes the pinnacle of achievement, the eye represents vision towards the future, and together, the logo represents how nature and people come together in the Aboriginal tourism industry.

By qualifying for the Cultural Authenticity program, a tourism business qualifies for enhanced marketing benefits through AtBC, including preferential placement in promotional brochures and on the AtBC web site.

The Cultural Authenticity program goes beyond evaluating the level of cultural experiences and interaction with Aboriginal people as the hosts of a tourism business, it also incorporates other criteria. This includes ensuring majority Aboriginal ownership and control to ensure the cultural experiences are factual and respectful of the Aboriginal culture, satisfy cultural protocols and market-readiness in accordance with the tourism industry as well as operation standards of

safety and hospitality. The program is free and all Aboriginal owned tourism businesses can apply.

The **Hon. Kevin Krueger, Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts** was on hand for the announcement and applauded AtBC for the initiative. "Aboriginal cultural tourism is a home grown success story that draws visitors from around the world. Very few countries have programs and operators as well developed as those here in BC, and there's really no competition when it comes to the number of unique and living cultures."

The first tourism operators to qualify for the new Cultural Authenticity program are:

- Haida Heritage Centre at Kaay Llnagaay, Skidegate
- NK'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, Osoyoos
- St. Eugene Golf Resort Casino, Cranbrook
- 'Ksan Historical Village and Museum, Hazelton
- Squamish Lilwat Cultural Centre, Whistler

"The recent interest in cultural tourism has given Aboriginal tourism operators the opportunity to develop profitable business plans while promoting and protecting the traditions and customs of their people, providing employment for communities and helping revitalize culture and language for younger generations," said **Henry**. "By introducing the Cultural Authenticity program, we're helping promote operators who are running businesses that celebrate Aboriginal cultures with quality and Aboriginal hospitality, and are building a cultural legacy for their community and future generations."

St. Eugene Resort is owned by a partnership of First Nation communities - the Ktunaxa Nation in British Columbia, the Samson Cree Nation in Alberta and the Chippewas of Rama First Nation in Ontario. St. Eugene which is located on the St. Mary's reserve, outside of Cranbrook, once operated as a residential school and both the history of the school and the Ktunaxa Nation are showcased in the Ktunaxa Interpretive Centre as well as throughout the Resort.

The 60 stakeholders with AtBC range from gallery curators to outdoor interpretive experiences, wineries and cultural interpretative experiences and are located in every corner of the province. Each member is an Aboriginal owned and controlled business that guarantees cultural authenticity as part of its attraction. More information about the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia is available at www.aboriginalbc.com.

- 30 -

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