

St. Eugene Resort Celebrates 25 Years of Golf and Reconciliation

Built on the site of a former residential school, St. Eugene is a remarkable golf course and a symbol of the resilience of the Ktunaxa Nation.

CRANBROOK, B.C., CANADA, May 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino is proud to celebrate 25 years since the opening of its championship golf course, a milestone that marks a powerful story of resilience and reclamation.

Built on the site of the former Kootenay Indian Residential School, St. Eugene is now home to a par 72, 18-hole course surrounded by the Purcell and Rocky Mountains and the serene St. Mary River. It was the first phase in transforming the site into a world-class resort that also includes a luxury hotel, RV campground, casino, and the Ktunaxa Interpretive Centre.

Collectively owned by four Ktunaxa (pronounced "k-too-nah-ha") Nation bands and the Shuswap Indian Band, St. Eugene Resort is a tribute to their resilience and determination. After 25 years, the five Indian Bands and the team that worked together to build the golf course and the rest of the facilities that followed have many reasons to celebrate the development that transformed a dark past into a bright future.

St. Eugene Golf Resort is unique in the world, and there were many challenges that came with building a resort on the site of a former Indian residential school. "There were many people who



In photo: Sophie Pierre, former chair of St. Eugene Resort.

had been so horribly impacted by their residential school experience, that they would have preferred to see the building destroyed,” explained Sophie Pierre, former Chief of Aqam, one of the bands of the Ktunaxa Nation, former chair of the St. Eugene Resort and a residential school survivor herself. “In the end, the people decided to build something that would provide employment and other opportunities for future generations.”

“St. Eugene Resort was almost an impossible dream when we started,” said Pierre. “Twenty-five years later, we’re looking forward and we’re celebrating the decision people made to reclaim the residential school and the land surrounding it for future generations. The decision the people made to build the resort was right.”



In photo: 18th hole at the St. Eugene Golf Course, with its Ktunaxa name, Qāpka (pronounced kapkath)

From the very beginning, the vision was for St. Eugene Resort to be a top-notch golf course and resort experience. “We could have compromised and built a lesser quality resort, but we chose not to compromise quality even as we struggled to get financing,” explained Helder Ponte, project manager for the construction of St. Eugene Resort. “We wanted to create something special and reflect what the community wanted in the design.”

Les Furber and the team at GDS Golf Design Services were hired to handle the design and construction of the course. Furber is a legendary Canadian golf course designer who has designed more than 70 golf courses and remodelled over 50 courses around the world. St. Eugene Golf Course was a memorable project for him. “It’s a beautiful property that spans three different environments, and you don’t find that very often,” Furber said. The varied environment allowed Furber and his team to create a course that offers a links-style experience as well as parkland and riverside golf – all on one property.

One of the ways the community was reflected in the design of the golf course was by giving each hole a Ktunaxa name. “A group of Elders came up with the names for each hole and Dorothy Alpine, one of the last fluent speakers of the language, was instrumental in this,” explained Graeme Douglas, who was the project manager for GDS Golf Design Services and is the current manager of golf and hotel facilities.

Members of the five Indian Bands were employed in the construction of the golf course and

resort, and today, about 30 percent of the grounds crew is Indigenous. When it came time to build the hotel, the nation chose to build the Ktunaxa Interpretive Centre on the ground floor of the original Mission Building. In 1984, Elder Mary Paul said, "Since it was within the St. Eugene Mission School that the culture of the Kootenay Indian was taken away, it should be within that building that it is returned." Today, resort guests can visit the interpretive centre, watch a touching documentary film about the former residential school and learn about Ktunaxa culture. Corporate Indigenous cultural awareness training is also offered.

As the Ktunaxa Nation and the Shuswap Indian Band celebrate 25 years since the opening of St. Eugene Golf Course, they are looking forward to the future. "The journey continues, and we know we're on the right path," said Sophie Pierre. "A lot has changed in the past 25 years, and we're better for it. This milestone is a time for real celebration, and it's a time to look forward with hope."

Kick Back in the Kootenays

When you're visiting Cranbrook and the East Kootenays, take some time to explore St. Eugene Resort. Spring Swing and Summer Stay and Play packages offer great savings for visitors in 2025. Custom golf packages can also be arranged.

For more information, visit steugene.ca/activities/golf/golf-packages.

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About St. Eugene Resort

Nestled in the spectacular Rocky Mountains and located within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, St. Eugene Resort celebrates a unique history within a beautiful and rare setting. Whether it's the dramatic alpine glow from Fisher Peak or the morning elk on our championship golf course, St. Eugene delights with exceptional resort experiences and warm, welcoming hospitality. steugene.ca

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