

A survey completed in the '90s revealed that in North America an estimated 50 per cent of non-residential buildings could be using wood in some way, but less than 10 per cent were. This is according to Mary Tracey, executive director of B.C. Wood WORKS!, and this statistic is exactly what she's intent on changing. "It's a huge untapped market," she explains. "We're losing a great opportunity here and I think it's a result of how the trends have gone over the years." Tracey says if you ask someone in Canada what materials they think of when picturing a hockey arena, they would likely respond with "steel and concrete"; whereas in Europe, the response would be "wood."

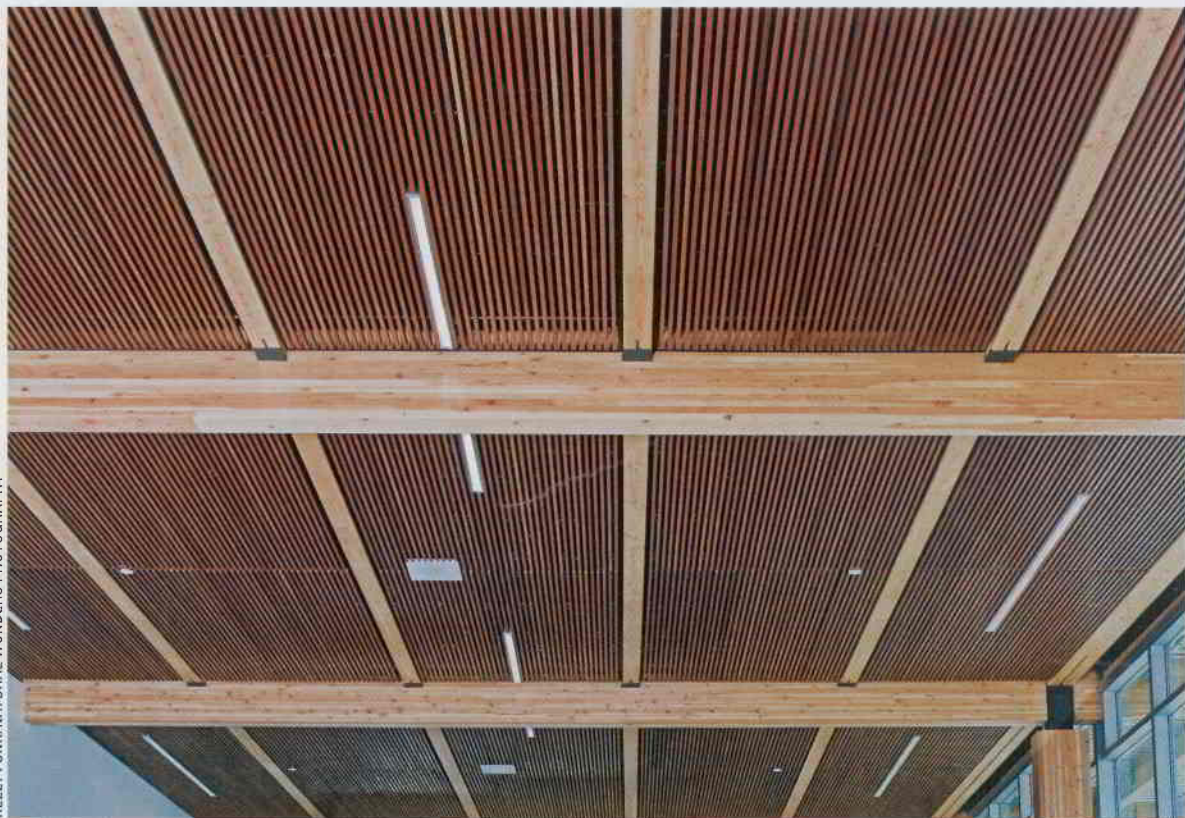
B.C. Wood WORKS! is a national campaign to increase the use of wood in construction and create a wood culture in Canada. The campaign is supported by the Canadian Wood Council which receives funding from the wood industry and the federal and provincial governments. Wood is the only renewable building material, and the only one that sequesters carbon. Basically, Tracey explains, the molecular structure of wood removes bad carbon from the atmosphere and stores it until the wood is burned or decomposes. Tracey says that building with wood and engineered wood products is easy, taking less time than if other materials were used, and is affordable, with the cost of wood at an all-time low.

Pete Polderman from Kanaka Creek Forest Products thinks the environmental and sustainable benefits of wood are influencing the market. Kanaka Creek is known as a custom cut sawmill that manufactures wood products for various projects. But as its clients became more environmentally conscious, Polderman says his company began to develop a side business: reusing wood cleared from the sites. Often this will mean working with the builder to get a unique piece of wood that will be featured in a home. "I think there's a sense that you're getting something that nature's created, and some people have sentimental attachments to trees in their yards," Polderman explains. "They don't want it wasted, and this way it becomes a living legacy in their home."

Kanaka Creek also reuses trees on a large scale, as is evident in the Richmond Speed Skating Oval. This was originally an old farm site, so Polderman says there were a fair amount of trees on the property. Everything from the site was gathered and then eventually processed according to specifications made for the venue's interior. "The wood on the inside, excluding the roof – the reception area, the locker rooms, the changing rooms, the feature wall at ice level – was made from wood that was harvested at that site," says Polderman. Some of this wood was reused at the Olympic Media Centre at Robson Square in downtown Vancouver.

Another company is reusing wood ravaged by the mountain pine beetle. Geometrik, which specializes in acoustical ceiling and wall panels, installed stunning panels created from mountain pine beetle lumber at the Kamloops Airport. "The best part is when you see the panels after we're done working with them. Never in your life would you guess that this is pine beetle (wood)," says owner Vladimir Bolshakov. He explains that they have a special stain that reacts with the natural blue stain that the pine beetle leaves and turns it brown. Bolshakov says the result is like a high-end piece of furniture. "The nature of that project and the importance of us providing the pine beetle (wood) made that innovation in Kamloops very important for the local community," Bolshakov reflects. "The Interior of British Columbia was affected very badly by the pine beetle situation and that was a great way to promote the pine beetle product." Beyond this, Bolshakov and business partner Natasha Bolshakova, are firm on environmentally friendly practices. Geometrik complies with the latest LEED requirements and is involved in green building through the Forest Stewardship Council.

The panels Geometrik produces are made from either solid wood or veneer products and they also offer a complete engineered suspension system for their panels. Vladimir and



Creating a Culture with Wood

ENGINEERED WOOD PRODUCTS REINVENT TRADITIONAL USES OF THIS PLENTIFUL NATURAL RESOURCE

by Lissa Alexander

Natasha worked at the very factory in Europe that developed this unique system, and are now one of only two companies in Canada (five throughout North America) that produce this product.

Natasha describes a trend toward having a lot of windows and hardwood floors in homes. But she says it's important to absorb the sound, which is why acoustical panels are in high demand.

Greg Wells, brand marketing manager from iLevel by Weyerhaeuser, notes that wood is durable and easy to work with. "We've been building houses with wood for thousands of years; if you take care of them they will last a long time," Wells affirms. "Wood is easy to use, it's a great use of natural resources and in our manufacturing process we use close to 100 per cent of the log."

The company's new Shear Brace is an engi-

neered wood product that overcomes limitations of previous wood products. This solid wood wall has outstanding lateral force resistance and can be trimmed for custom heights. It has pre-cut holes and chases, and an ideal nailing surface. "People can drill it, cut it, trim it and make it easy to use on the job site," Wells says. "But the capability of carrying a heavy load while keeping the occupant safe and allowing design freedom, those are challenges, and that makes wood a better product."

Andre Lema, manager of business development with Western Archrib says that his company recently completed a potash storage facility in Saskatchewan. This project was designed specifically in wood because it is corrosion resistant. Western Archrib has CNC equipment (computer numerical controlled) paired up with CAD that mills glulam to exact dimensions. The two main species or grade combinations they use are spruce pine and Douglas fir due to their strength, workability and abundance. Western Archrib also had a hand in the completion of the West Vancouver Aquatic Centre, using a system of curved glulam columns, beams, purlins and wall girts for a feature wall comprised of floor-to-ceiling glazing.

Tracey hopes that eventually the wood culture in Canada will become more like that of Europe's. "In Europe, they look at wood – especially in non-residential construction – as a superior product," Tracey explains, "whereas we maintain the opposite view; you know, slap something cheap out of wood. It's just a cultural thing." ■

Left: West Vancouver Aquatic Centre. Above: acoustical panels made from mountain pine beetle lumber at the Kamloops Airport.

