

## Port Alberni's Wolfgang Zimmermann Receives BC Community Achievement Award



*L to R: Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development  
Ida Chong; PCU-WHS President Wolfgang Zimmermann, OBC;  
Lieutenant Governor of the Province of British Columbia Steven  
Point, OBC*

*April 27, 2012* — A decades-old dream to see the new Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS) established in Port Alberni, BC culminated in recognition for its founder and president, Wolfgang Zimmermann, who was one of 36 British Columbians honoured at the ninth annual BC Community Achievements Awards ceremony held April 25 at Government House in Victoria, BC.

Lieutenant Governor Steven Point and Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development Ida Chong presented each recipient with a BC Community Achievement Award medallion and certificate.

“Strong communities start with people like those we are honouring here today—individuals who demonstrate excellence by going above and beyond to change the lives of others and make BC a better place for families,” said Minister Chong. “These individuals exemplify inspired leadership and stand as an example to others of what it means to be passionate, dedicated and community-oriented. It is an honour for me to recognize their achievements.”

Wolfgang Zimmermann was specifically recognized for his role in bringing the new PCU-WHS to fruition. The world's only uniquely specialized university providing education in Workplace Health Sciences to industry professionals, labour, government, and the service-provider communities officially opened its doors in Port Alberni in September 2011.

Chair of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation Keith Mitchell said, “Wolfgang Zimmermann is an internationally recognized leader in workplace safety and disability management. He has overseen the establishment in Port Alberni of the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) and the Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences. As executive director, his foresight and tenacity will benefit workers not only provincially, but also worldwide.”

MLA Scott Fraser, Alberni-Pacific Rim, wrote a letter supporting the well-known Port Alberni philanthropist's nomination for the award saying, “Mr. Zimmermann's tireless efforts have led to the creation of this centre of excellence in disability management—the only one of its kind in the world.”

In his letter, he further detailed the important role that PCU-WHS will play locally and internationally. “Pacific



Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences' programming will be on the leading edge of occupational health and safety...combined with optimizing disability management and return-to-work initiatives." He adds that the university "will benefit workers worldwide and help to ensure that those who are injured will be able to continue to be active members of their workforce and their communities, not to mention a key part in the economic diversification of the region."

Former Port Alberni Mayor Ken McRae nominated Zimmermann in light of the economic boon that PCU-WHS will represent for the regional district of more than 25,000, which is currently facing economic challenges due to changes within the forestry, and pulp and paper manufacturing sectors that are the city's largest employers. McRae is pleased that following a City of Port Alberni donation of a 3.5 acre parcel of land, construction of the university was given the green light to proceed.

"This idea started in the late 1990s and continued. It was hatched in Port Alberni and I'm very proud of the fact that our Council gave them the land; without it, the university might not have gone ahead here. We were able to make sure PCU-WHS was built where it belongs, here in Port Alberni. Other towns have had universities start small and then grow. There will be expansion here, too."

The City of Port Alberni's Economic Development Manager Patrick Deakin also sees the university's potential to benefit Port Alberni's economic base. "Having the university in Port Alberni gives us a highly specialized post secondary institution that adds significantly to our economy and our diversification efforts."

Of the BC Achievement Award going to a local, he says, "The Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences would not have come into being if it were not for Wolfgang's vision, determination, tenacity, relentless hard work, ability to forge partnerships at every organizational level, and, of course, his sense of humour and charm. The award is really well deserved and we all applaud his selection."

Zimmermann said the support he has received over the years has been overwhelming, but he is most proud of negotiating with the provincial government to pass legislation that created the private, not-for-profit university in 2007. The *Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences Act* passed through the British Columbia Legislature with unanimous support from all members.



According to Zimmermann, “Our goal has always been to create a basis that future generations can build on. The opportunity is that Port Alberni and this region now has a statutory university. Just look at what other universities have done as economic generators.” He cites Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo and the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George as examples of educational institutions that started small and have grown, transforming those cities and their economies.

The award coincides with another milestone for Zimmermann and PCU-WHS: the finalization of the university's first bachelor degree program proposal, which will be presented shortly to the province's Degree Quality Assessment Board of the Ministry of Advanced Education. Pending approval, it is hoped that the university will begin offering a bachelor of workplace health sciences with a specialization in disability management in September 2013.

For information on the BC Community Achievement Awards, please go to:  
[www.bcachievement.com/community/recipients.php](http://www.bcachievement.com/community/recipients.php)

For more on Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences, please visit the website at:  
[www.pcu-whs.ca](http://www.pcu-whs.ca).