



ELIZABETH GYDE PHOTOGRAPH

Interior shot of the UBC Life Sciences Centre, showing the Atrium as viewed from the Laboratory. The shot demonstrates the importance of diffused natural light as part of sustainable architecture for the health and well-being of individuals.

(Bunting Coady Architects in joint venture with Diamond Schmitt Architects)

The Business - **IMPACTS OF SPECIALIZING**

by Teresa Coady MAIBC

When we began our practice in 1994 our vision was to “heal the earth with buildings”. We believed that much of what had gone wrong with our surroundings could be attributed to the development of the built environment. We were passionate in our commitment to sustainability, idealistic in our view of the living-breathing building and energetic in our pursuit of great projects. We were also completely clueless about the realities of running an architectural firm. Fortunately for us, after twelve great years of practice, we have learned that the very act of specializing in a passion creates both the momentum and the attraction required to succeed in business.

Most of our clients are involved in ventures based on their individual passions, allowing them to immediately identify with our drive and commitment. When you care, it shows. We have found that our clients have an incredible range of interests; from medical research focusing on the creation of synthetic blood products to the development of urban campuses for people to play beach volleyball. As our practice is focused on sustainability, we are excited about many things from forest corridors in the city to photovoltaic power plants. Each of us has something to share in order to inspire others and this excitement creates its own momentum.

We have also found that specialization has a very definite connection to free publicity. When architects focus on one area of practice it always generates attention. As globally recognized experts in sustainable design, we at Bunting Coady Architects have found ourselves featured extensively in numerous magazines and have been invited to speak on the lecture circuit. Our peers believe we have a compelling story to tell, for whenever an architect specializes they will see and express architecture in a new and unique way. This creates visible built evidence which often acts as a trigger for beneficial social change.

In the beginning, when we followed our passion for sustainability, we created the “Crestwood

Corporate Centre” - twin buildings both built to different standards (one standard, one sustainable). We soon garnered attention from around the world and many other architects copied the ideas embedded in our simple design solutions. Bunting Coady went on to invent the Integrated Design Process to enable our teams to create a synergy of ideas in an orderly and methodical way. This in turn generated further attention and eventually led to the development of the CBIP program in Canada. Later we took our complex lab designs in for LEED® certification. That also brought additional recognition and eventually contributed to the ongoing evolution of the LEED® program itself.

Sustainability is not a building type; it is rather an “approach to architecture” that can be applied to any construction. That may be the key differentiator between success and failure when it comes to specialization. We have managed to keep growing through turbulent times. By necessity in the 2000 tech crash, we switched away from high tech buildings. For the five years after 9/11 in 2001, we abandoned all office building construction as the private sector development market failed. We have gone full circle from ‘commercial’ to ‘institutional’ to ‘public buildings’ and back again. Throughout all of this, we still focused on our speciality: sustainable living-breathing buildings. We have retained our clients throughout these changes as



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BUNTING COADY ARCHITECTS

Exterior shot of the UBC Life Sciences Centre. The Centre is the largest building in Canada to receive LEED Gold certification by the United States Green Building Council.
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they too have been forced to alter building types. Even when buffeted by the winds of economic change, our passions, our values and our common ground remain strong and resilient.

However, perhaps the very best reason to specialize in something you believe in is the particular tapestry you weave with your life. It is beautiful to look back over twenty-five years, (since my UBC thesis in 1983 on the “Living Breathing Building”), and see how life and work have added up to an identifiable contribution to be proud of. Today our work at Bunting Coady is expanding to include public policy development, certification policy improvements and renewable energy businesses. We also focus on international efforts to reconcile the political agenda with the environmental facts. As we continue our practice to 2010 and beyond we pursue our commitment to heal the earth with living breathing buildings, a commitment we first envisioned so many years ago. Specializing in a passion leads to a much more profound understanding of the connections between varied issues, and is virtually unlimited in its potential to reward.



Managing and founding Partner of Bunting Coady Architects, Teresa Coady is a past Vice-President of the Architectural Institute of British Columbia and is associated with many professional affiliations including the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, American Institute of Architects, Alberta Association of Architects, Hawaii Association of Architects and the Washington Association of Architects.

As an innovator in sustainable and energy efficient design, Teresa ensures responsible environmental design for all of the firm's projects. She acted as an advisor to the British Columbia Energy Code and the National Energy Code, as a lead facilitator for the BC Hydro, Design Smart Energy Efficiency Program and the BC Buildings Corporation Green Initiative. As the inventor of the IDP (Integrated Design Process), Teresa has gained international recognition for her work in changing the practice of Architecture. She is also a LEED Accredited Professional.

Teresa has shown exceptional vision and leadership. Her work is repeatedly recognized by local and national awards and she has been featured in television programs and numerous publications. In addition, Teresa was honoured in 1999 as the YWCA Woman of Distinction - Entrepreneur and Innovator of the Year. She has recently been named to SB05 (Sustainable Buildings 2005) 'Team Canada', a select group of individuals charged with showcasing Canadian industry achievements at the Green Building Challenge in Tokyo, and to promote the “Greening” of the construction industry in Canada.