



From left, Quesnel Pride Society president Kassondra Schwab, vice-president and treasurer Ashley Rodgers and secretary Ellen Facey are putting the finishing touches on the society's grand opening and official launch event, which will take place Saturday, March 14 in the organization's new space in the West Park Mall. (Sasha Sefter - Quesnel Cariboo Observer)

Quesnel Pride Society finds a home

The organization will be opening the doors to its new space in the West Park Mall on March 14

SASHA SEFTER / Mar. 12, 2020 7:50 a.m. / COMMUNITY

The Quesnel Pride Society will be launching its new community space in the West Park Mall during a grand opening event Saturday, March 14 at 2 p.m.

The first Quesnel Pride Parade took place in 2014, and in 2019, the Quesnel Pride Society became a registered non-profit. The society has worked diligently to secure funding for its events and programs, mostly through fundraising efforts; however, in late 2019, Quesnel Pride Society president Kassondra Schwab submitted the winning proposal for the RBC Future Launch Community Challenge, and the society received a \$15,000 grant. The RBC Future Launch Community Challenge was hosted by Community

Foundations of Canada and Quesnel Community Foundation and was made possible thanks to a \$5 million donation from the RBC Foundation.

The society also received a \$1,000 grant from the Rotary Club of Quesnel in February and has submitted further applications for future funding to the Quesnel Community Foundation, Community Futures North Cariboo, and Trans Care BC.

“We’re always searching for grants because we don’t have core funding,” said Schwab. “Our role is to advocate for a welcoming and inclusive Quesnel by celebrating non-binary identities. We wanted to expand this celebration from annual Pride Parades to weekly events year-round.”

Opening a physical space was an important endeavour for the society, as there wasn’t a place like it in Quesnel dedicated for members of the LGBTQ+ community, says Schwab.

“It’s important to have a physical space because LGBTQ+ people may not feel safe to express themselves in their homes, workplaces or schools. We wanted to have a safe space in the community where people don’t feel the need to hide their identities. It means the world to have a dedicated space for the LGBTQ+ community.”

The society plans to use their space located in the West Park Mall, which will be open every weekend, to host educational workshops, support groups for gender-diverse people, social gatherings for individuals on the sexuality spectrum, and art classes, as well as movie and game days.

The grand opening and official launch of the Quesnel Pride Society will be an all-ages event on Saturday, March 14 from 2-5 p.m. and will include a free raffle for door prizes, a board game area and music from the LGBTQ+ community, as well as the official announcement of the name of the new space.

Anyone interested in learning more about or volunteering with the Quesnel Pride Society can find more information on the society's social media pages or by emailing the organization at quesnel.pride@gmail.com.

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