

Martial arts centre is applauded

By Warren Henderson, Staff Reporter

One brief glance at the exterior of the Kelowna Traditional Martial Arts Center is all it takes to realize that this new building is anything but typical.

The 17,000 square-foot, three-storey, oriental-style structure on Ambrosi Road seems to command the attention of all passers-by.

"People are curious to know what we have here and they often stop in," says Tom Mah, manager and chief instructor at the center.

"They're really in awe of what they see."

The building features a 4,000 sq.ft. bamboo training floor, a fully equipped weight room, a retail shop, steam rooms, massage and reflexology facilities, change areas with heated floors and a spacious rooftop patio.

The center, owned by local businessman Peter Schumann, currently offers traditional Shito-Ryu karate style training with plans to add yoga, tai chi and other disciplines in the future.

"It's an anchor for martial arts in Kelowna," says Schumann, who is also president of Big White and Silver Star ski resorts.

Martial Arts centre manager and chief instructor Tom Mah (top photo) in front of the new Kelowna Traditional Martial Arts Center on Ambrosi Road; a look inside men's change room inside the center. Photos Gordon Bazzana



"All of the martial arts are growing fast and it's a good time for this type of facility."

Schumann, who took up karate himself about five years ago, says the center also compliments the general attitude of baby boomers who are becoming progressively more aware of the importance of physical and mental fitness.

As for the architecture, Schumann says the temple-like appearance with the rock and huge, natural wood timbers, gives the building a unique combination of Oriental and Canadian themes.

Inside the facility, the atmosphere is second to none, according to Blaine Sakamoto, a member at the center and a black belt in karate.

"This is such a peaceful setting and very relaxing," says Sakamoto.

"We're blessed to have a place like this in Kelowna."

While the center currently has just over 200 members, Mah expects those numbers to grow significantly in the months and years to come.

He says the building will put Kelowna on the martial arts map, making it easier to attract elite guest instructors to the city while also opening up new opportunities for members who want to take their karate to a more competitive level.

Above all, Mah believes the center offers a well-rounded approach to physical and mental fitness.

"We'd like to change the perception that karate is a violent thing," he says.

"This isn't just about self defense.

"It's about helping people become healthier and more fit and more confident, and giving children a good healthy start to life."

For more information on the Kelowna Traditional Martial Arts Center or any of the programs offered, call 712-0268.

whenderson@kelownacapnews.com