

# Integration:

*Credit Union Spark Centre*



Saskatchewan  
Arts Alliance

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Art and Sport are often placed at opposite ends of the spectrum. The Arts have their facilities and Recreation have theirs. Art Galleries vs Ball Diamonds. Pottery Studios vs Hockey Arenas. In Weyburn we are challenging the belief that art and sport do not mix with the opening of the Credit Union Spark Centre.

The Spark Centre is a new \$25 million-dollar mixed use recreation and culture facility. This facility marks the beginning of a new relationship between the Arts and Sport. The Spark Centre features a walking track, simulator rooms, a half FIFA soccer field and more – but it also features a state-of-the-art gallery, pottery studio, and



three multipurpose rooms for arts education. With Sport and Art happening under one roof, the opportunity for cross-programming and integration is game changing.

The Credit Union Spark Centre is the start of a new era for the Weyburn. For the first time, all of Weyburn's art programming will be located under one roof. No longer will gallery exhibitions be held in the basement of our library. No longer will arts education take place across town from our gallery. This integration of arts programming allows for greater cohesion between gallery programming and arts programming. We can now easily offer art classes that tie into gallery exhibitions without having to relocate between venues. With an AA rated humidity & temperature control system, and LED stage lighting, our new gallery is a giant leap forward in the variety of art exhibition and installation we can bring to Weyburn. The gallery will be programmed in three months blocks, with a week scheduled between exhibitions. During the week when the gallery space is empty, we are planning to provide small, intimate concerts, art films or documentary screenings.

Our Grand Opening event was a fantastic example of arts and sports working together. The event featured a balance of art and sport activities. In the gallery space, we created a 16-foot mural as a drop-in community paint by





number. Painters then took in a lacrosse clinic or tried out the climbing wall. People who came to play rugby wandered into the pottery studio, watching local potters throw on the wheel. Information about upcoming class schedules were available throughout the building. For some residents, this was their first exposure to the City's pottery studio, or their first time being in a gallery. For other residents, they had never played soccer, or played golf on the simulators. By working together, we created a truly unique event that provided exposure to new experiences and ideas for the residents of Weyburn.

The location of the Spark Centre couldn't be better. We are uniquely situated in a busy urban greenspace,



next to the existing city pool, and connected to our community's new elementary school. Being a part of such a bustling community hub, the amount of people who come through our doors is astounding.

The new Legacy Park Elementary School is connected to us via a hallway. Over 600 children can access our facility and all that it offers conveniently and safely. Instead of visiting the gallery once a year, classrooms can walk down a hallway to take in exciting exhibitions and corresponding art projects geared towards their grade level. They are also able to utilize our turf field for indoor recesses and gym classes.

To further involve the students next door, we have developed a hybrid after school program called the Weyburn 360 program. Participation in this program is offered in two-week blocks. Students are separated into two groups: Division One (K -3) and division two (4-6). While Division One students are developing physical literacy skills, division two will be engaged in an art class designed to invite creativity, decision-making, and skill development. After an hour the students trade activities.

The opportunity for accidental exposure is high. Facility wide programming will be broadcast over the facility's



large TV's, set up at traffic junction points. Not only will these TV's feature upcoming recreational opportunities, they will also feature upcoming arts education opportunities: come for a soccer tournament, stay for an art class. Our 2nd floor-walking track is a draw for people of all ages. As visitors walk the track, they pass windows that look down into the first-floor gallery. This enables visitors to be aware of what is going on in the gallery, even if they did not come to the facility with the intent of taking in an art show.

The memberships to the Spark Centre are designed to encourage integrated activity. Members receive access to a wealth of drop-in programming. Programs such as Senior Soccer go hand in hand with our Seniors Art Club. These drop-in programs are free to our members and at a minimal cost to non-members.

Our work at designing programming for this facility has taken on a round table aspect. We want to present balanced opportunities. New programs like our "Date Night" program are designed as a fun opportunity for couples of all kinds to experiment with different art concepts and media. Drop-in Pickleball is offered as fun and relaxing way to learn the basics of a new sport. Weekly meetings with program heads are a synergistic dream, with ideas flying fast and being piggy-backed off to create larger, mixed focus events.

An example of this sort of thinking can be seen in our summer art market. With the Spark Centre being located on a large urban park, we began to take advantage of our glorious surroundings by utilizing it as an outdoor venue. We held our annual summer art market along the paved paths that wind throughout the space. The paths enabled people of all abilities to safely enjoy their shopping experience without worrying about uneven footing. While this was our 6th summer holding the art sale, this past summer proved that location does matter, with attendance reaching an all time high. The event was such a success that we plan to broaden the event next year, turning it into a multi-faceted event with recreation and culture front and centre. Why only have an art sale when you can have a midsummer festival built around the art sale, complete with potato sack races, a ball tournament, drop in arts and crafts opportunities, and a concert in the park to close out the evening?

The success of our art market made us think more about the park itself and begin reframing it as an exhibition extension space. Next spring, we begin a multi-year project painting murals on the 10 dug outs located around the five ball diamonds in the park. By turning the functional cinder block dugouts into unique and eye-catching works of art, we will make this new philosophy apparent to all who pass by. With community





involvement a priority, we are currently planning a mural design contest for our local students. The winning classroom is awarded an art adventure where the students come help the artists turn their design into a large work of public art. We are also exploring options for semi-permanent art exhibition spaces to be integrated along the park's walkways. Our long-term plan is to create a strong creative presence within the park by utilizing the existing recreational resources.

Our work is just beginning at the Credit Union Spark Centre. We hope to prove, without a doubt, that art and sport are stronger collectively. We believe that by integrating the two we are doubling our reach, creating opportunities for personal exploration, and designing a future of cooperation where both Art and Sport can shine together.



As Curator for the City of Weyburn since 2015, Megan has been working towards a more inclusive local arts scene. She has endeavored to raise the profile of the Weyburn arts scene both within the community and Saskatchewan as a whole. One of her first meetings taken as Curator was regarding the creation of what became the Credit Union Spark Centre. If you would like to learn more about the Spark Centre, are an artist interested in a showing or would like to become involved with our programming, Megan can be reached at [rlanning@weyburn.ca](mailto:rlanning@weyburn.ca).