



FACT SHEET

History of the Rotary Performing Arts Centre

RPAC

For almost a century, the stately church on the corner of Elma Street and Centre Avenue served as a gathering place for the Okotoks community; a place to worship, gain inspiration and where music and praise filled the rafters. Although no longer a church, the facility continues to be a gathering place for celebration and inspiration in its new role as the Rotary Performing Arts Centre.

The building's history dates back to the early 1900s. In 1905, a special meeting of the Methodist congregation was held to discuss the building of a Methodist Church in Okotoks. A lot on Elma Street was purchased from John Lineham who donated two more as his contribution. James Metcalfe was hired as builder. The church was completed in December 1906 and officially opened in April 1907. It cost \$5,100.

While the Methodists were enjoying their new spacious church, the larger Presbyterian congregation was quickly outgrowing their small wooden church, St. Luke's, located on McRae Street. The Okotoks Methodists and St. Luke's Presbyterians united in 1917 to form the Okotoks United Church, several years before the nation-wide unification. Since the Methodist church was the larger building they decided to hold the services there, while the minister and the manse were retained from St. Luke's.

For close to a century, the Okotoks United Church witnessed the baptism of babies, celebrated the love of marriages, heard the joyful sounds of the choir and the laughter of children in Sunday school, and also assisted with the final journey of those who passed away. But as the Town of Okotoks grew, so did the congregation of the United Church and it eventually found itself in the same situation that St. Luke's congregation did 100 years earlier – they were rapidly outgrowing their space. In 2002, members of the Okotoks United Church made the difficult decision to put their beloved church up for sale.

After learning the church was to be sold, the Okotoks Arts Council embarked on an ambitious goal to raise the necessary funds to purchase the building from the Okotoks United Church. Their goal was two-fold; it would preserve a much-loved historic building in the town and it would also provide a needed facility for the performing arts. After hundreds of hours of fund-raising, planning and renovating the building, the arts council donated it to the Town of Okotoks. Its first concert was in November, 2004 and it was officially opened in April, 2005.

Town council has continued its commitment to the arts and to the preservation of the building during a two-year refurbishing project in 2007-08. Further structural and stabilization work was undertaken in the fall of 2009, thanks to economic stimulus funding of \$1 million that was split between three levels of government. It is anticipated the doors of the facility will again open to the public and the performing arts community in late spring, 2010.

ROTARY PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE
3 Elma Street

For rental inquiries, please contact
403.938.3204

Operated by

