

Community Use of the Sacred Heart School

A follow-up to the report "The Sacred Heart Collective: An Effective
Use of a Closed School?"

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I. Introduction

In October 2005, the Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) released a report entitled *The Sacred Heart Collective: An Effective Use of a Closed School?* which evaluated the unique initiative implemented by the Sacred Heart Collective (the Collective), a group of seven non-profits located in the former Sacred Heart School. In agreement with Edmonton Catholic Schools, the Collective sought to provide free access to meeting and recreational space located in the school to other non-profits and local community groups.

The following is a follow-up to the October 2005 report, and details usage of the Sacred Heart facilities for a six month period, from August 2005 to end of January 2006.

II. History

In November of 2003, ESPC moved into the former Sacred Heart School, along with seven other not-for-profit organizations that together comprise the Sacred Heart Collective. The Collective aimed to provide community access to public spaces in the school at no cost to community groups. An agreement with Edmonton Catholic Schools allowed for the Collective to book certain spaces for local groups and other non-profits. Edmonton Catholic Schools perceived the Collective as helping them fulfill its promise to the McCauley community to ensure area residents had access to space located within the school. The public spaces available to book are the gym, kitchen, basement, and room 226.

For a more detailed history, please consult the report *The Sacred Heart Collective: An Effective Use of a Closed School?* available online at www.edmspc.com.

III. Rooms

Rooms that are available to book by community groups are the gym, basement, room 226, and kitchen. The following is a report of the booking activities for the selected rooms for a six month period from August 2005 to end of January 2006.

Number of Bookings and Number of Times Rooms are Used by Groups

Room	Number of Times Used By User Groups (August 05 – January 06)	Number of Groups who Book Room (August 05–January 06)
Gym	243	35
Basement	156	17
Room 226	78	33
Kitchen	67	9
TOTAL	544	94

The Gym is used every night of the week for sports activities, including volleyball, netball and basketball. Every Saturday and Sunday the gym is booked solid from 10am – 5pm during the day by regular users, with Friday and Saturday nights often booked for fundraisers, dances and community events. From August to the end of January, the gym will have been used 243 times, accounting for 45% of the time that Sacred Heart is used by user groups.

The Basement is used often on the weekends by support programs or for small meetings. In a six-month period, it will have been used 156 times by numerous groups, representing 27% of the total bookings made in six months.

Room 226 is only available for five days of the week, with no access to it on Wednesday or Thursday evenings due to Catholic School classes. This room is used most often by Collective members and by religious groups for prayer services. From August to end of January, it has been used 78 times, accounting for 15% of the time Sacred Heart is used.

Groups holding large events in the Gym often use the Kitchen to prepare food for fundraising events or community suppers. Collective members often use it during the week for English classes, as well as for cooking lessons and as a community kitchen. During this six-month period, it will have been used 67 times, representing 13% of total time user groups access the facilities.

During this six-month period, 94 groups accessed the facilities at Sacred Heart. In a three month period, from November to end of January 7 groups were turned away due to scheduling conflicts.

IV. Groups & Events

Various user groups access the space at Sacred Heart School on a regular basis. The following chart details what types of groups book rooms at Sacred Heart.

Types of Groups that Use the Facilities November – January

Non-profit organization	14
Community Group	16
Religious Group	3
School/Education Group	6
Other	5

From November until the end of January, the majority of user groups (36%) were local community groups who used the facilities for various reasons including annual meetings or community fundraising events. In comparison, 32% of groups booking space were non-profit organizations while school programs or religious groups accounted for only 7%. Other types of groups, including private parties, used the facilities 11% of the time. This high usage by diverse community groups and non-profits reflects the need for affordable, local community space to be available to these groups.

The type of events that are held at the Sacred Heart School also varies. Below is a listing of the types of events that have been held at the school, as well as the number of groups who have held the selected events.

**Type of Event & Number of Groups that Utilize Facilities for Selected Events
November – January**

Meeting/Community Gathering	8
Fundraiser	3
Sports	8
Education Program	8
Support Program	5
Religious Ceremony	4
Dance	4
Other	6

Of the 46 bookings that have taken place at Sacred Heart from November to end of January, the majority (51%) have been meetings/community gatherings, sport activities and education programs. Most often than not, these community gatherings involve a dance (8%), fundraiser (6%) or physical activity (17%). Sacred Heart is used for many functions besides meetings and community gatherings, including religious ceremonies ((ie. prayer service, bible study (8%)), band practice, art classes, support groups (11%) and much more. Sacred Heart is a space that serves various functions for local community members and groups.

V. Community Use

One of the reasons for the Collective to be established, and for Edmonton Catholic Schools to provide the Collective office space in the Sacred Heart School, was to ensure that residents of the surrounding communities would have access to meeting and recreational spaces.

The following chart breaks down user groups according to the fixed address provided at the time of booking.

**Number of User Groups from Surrounding Neighbourhoods
November 2005 – January 2006**

Neighbourhood	Number of User Groups from Neighbourhood
McCauley	17
Boyle Street	8
Other Central Edmonton Neighbourhoods (ie. Queen Mary Park, Spruce Avenue, Central McDougall)*	11
North Edmonton	4
South Edmonton	1
Unknown	5

* Central Edmonton neighbourhoods included are Queen Mary Park, Alberta Avenue, Cromdale, Parkdale, Eastwood, Spruce Avenue, Norwood, and Central McDougall

Seventy-eight percent of bookings made in the three month period from November to end of January were made by user groups situated in Central Edmonton. In particular, 36% were from the McCauley area, while 17% were from Boyle Street. The surrounding neighbourhoods, including Spruce Avenue, Queen Elizabeth Park, and Central McDougall accounted for 24% of the bookings made. Groups located in North Edmonton rented the facilities 9% of the time, while 2% of the bookings were situated from South Edmonton. Unfortunately, 11% of the user groups had no known address.

Please see the chart in the Appendix that details the groups that use each room at Sacred Heart School.

VI. Operational Needs

In order to operate the bookings at the Sacred Heart Council, numerous resources are required, including a bookings manager and a facilities host.

i) Bookings Manager

The bookings manager is responsible for facilitating and overseeing community use of the facilities, and act as liaison between Edmonton Catholic Schools, user groups, facilities host and custodian(s). Duties also include:

- a. Preparing rental worksheets for use of the gym and kitchen which are then faxed to Facilities Services (Edmonton Catholic Schools);
- b. Drawing contracts for users of the basement and room 226;
- c. Ensuring all user groups are aware of the rules and regulations for use of the gym and other Sacred Heart facilities;
- d. Informing user groups of district omit dates and custodians/facilities host of cancellations;

- e. Communication any special requests/issues/concerns regarding user groups to facilities host and custodian(s).

It is also the responsibility of the bookings manager to ensure all contracts and related paperwork are properly signed, that both custodian(s) and facilities host receive up-to-date schedules for each room, and copies of signed contract.

The bookings manager requires a part-time position, requiring 15-20 hours per week.

ii) *Facilities Host*

The ESPC also employs a facilities host who is responsible for maintaining an atmosphere in the school that supports the safety and security of both the facility and community members who use the facility. Duties include:

- a) Opening the school for community functions, ensuring only authorized groups are allowed access;
- b) Assisting groups with set-up, playing a supportive role by addressing any concerns that may arise;
- c) Ensuring the rooms and school are returned to its previous state;
- d) Responsible for ensuring the rules and regulations for use of the Sacred Heart facilities are implemented and followed
- e) Ensure groups adhere to the specified time;
- f) Document any damages or incidents that occur and report these to the custodian(s) and bookings manager;
- g) Supervise groups that have obtained the proper liquor license and ensure they use alcohol in a responsible manner.

The facilities host is required to be at the Sacred Heart School on Saturdays and Sundays during the times groups have booked space. As well, if there is a large event on Friday nights, the facilities host is required to be present. On average, the facilities host works 15-20 hours per weekend.

During the week, a custodian employed by Edmonton Catholic Schools is at the school until 11pm. This individual is responsible for supervising groups that have bookings during the week.

VII. Conclusion

The former Sacred Heart School has become an important fixture in the McCauley and Boyle Street area for on a daily basis local groups and non-profits are utilizing the facilities available to book. In a six-month period, the school was used 243 times. In a three month period, from November to end of January 46 bookings were made. During this time, local community groups were responsible for 78% of the bookings at Sacred Heart, which indicates that there is high demand for meeting spaces in the McCauley area.

In order to operate the bookings of the Sacred Heart, it requires the resources of two part-time employees, a bookings manager and a facilities host. Both must invest considerable time and energy into the scheduling and implementation of the policies and procedures for use of the Sacred Heart School.

It is important to continue this unique model of providing access to free meeting and recreational space in the former Sacred Heart School for many user groups are situated within the immediate area, and struggling to operate with limited resources. While this initiative has had its operational problems, it has been a success by providing needed space and opportunities for groups to grow. Sacred Heart has become essential in the operation of many organizations for they rely upon the school to conduct their business. This should cause anyone to ponder over what will happen to these grassroots, local community groups that rely upon the school if access is denied in the future. Hopefully, this will not be something that any of the user groups have to experience.

VIII. Appendix

User Groups

Gym	Basement	Room 226	Kitchen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Learning • Action for Healthy Communities • All Nations Gospel Church • Bissel Centre • Bosnian Community • Cambodian Basketball • Catholic Social Services • Chinese Community • Congolese Community • Edmonton Columbian Assoc. • Edmonton Immigrant Services • Eritrean Society • Hands Across Africa • International Literacy Day • Life Long Learning • Making Poverty History Campaign • McCauley Community Volleyball • McCauley Daycare • Multicultural Health Brokers • Oromo Community • Salvadoran Society • Sierra Leone Association • Sudanese Community Basketball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abiye Jazz Band • Action for Healthy Communities • Afghan Families • Alberta College of Social Workers • All Nations Gospel Church • Alternatives to Violence • Bissel Centre Support Program • Community Guitar Lessons • Community League Games • Deeper Life Church • Edmonton Immigrant Services • Edmonton Inner City Children's Project • Eritrean Society • Global Hands Drumming • Ildiko (Drumming Group) • Lower Deck Club (AA meeting) • McCauley Community League • Salvadoran Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action for Healthy Communities • All Nations Gospel Church • Alternatives to Violence • Deeper Life Church • Edmonton Immigrant Services • Egyptian Drummers • Eritrean Society • Global Hands Drumming • Heart of the City Music • McCauley Community League • Salvadoran Society • Zone-In Community Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action for Healthy Communities • Bissel Centre • Edmonton Columbian Assoc • Eritrean Society • Hands Across Africa • McCauley Daycare • Multicultural Health Brokers • Oromo Community