

Kirk Centre Annual Report

2025 – Building Community, Strengthening Connections

Message from the Board of Directors

This past year has been one of growth, resilience, and deepened community impact at Kirk Centre.

As stewards of a unique and evolving community hub, Kirk Centre's Board of Directors remains committed to ensuring that this space continues to serve as a vibrant, inclusive, and accessible gathering place for northwest Edmonton. In 2025, we saw firsthand the power of collaboration—how partnerships, shared spaces, and community-driven programming can transform a building into a true hub of connection.

We are proud of the continued leadership of our Executive Director, whose recognition as an Emergent Leader in Community Spaces at the Community Spaces Network's Social Purpose Real Estate Summit in Los Angeles reflects not only individual excellence, but the strength and innovation of the Kirk Centre model as a whole.

At a governance level, the Board has focused on strengthening oversight, clarifying policies, and ensuring long-term sustainability. As we navigate the realities of maintaining an aging building while expanding programming and partnerships, we remain committed to responsible stewardship and strategic growth.

We extend our sincere thanks to our:

Staff for their dedication and hard work.

Volunteers to the hours they donate to Kirk Centre.

Partner tenants who give life to the building every day.

The United Church of Canada and Northern Spirit Region for the use of their building.

Funders for the support and believing in our project and programs

Community members for your support, interest and participation in our projects

Your trust, collaboration, and participation are what make Kirk Centre thrive.

Message from the Executive Director

Kirk Centre continues to evolve—and 2025 has been a year that truly reflects what is possible when community leads the way.

We welcomed more people than ever into our space this year—through free community dinners, cooking classes, cultural programming, concerts, and informal daily interactions that happen simply because our doors are open.

We also deepened our commitment to inclusion and representation. From the installation of our outdoor mural, *Canvas of Community*, to the creation and use of our sacred fire pit for Indigenous ceremonies and wakes, we are working intentionally to ensure that Kirk Centre reflects and respects the diverse communities we serve.

Behind the scenes, the work remains complex. Operating a 67-year-old building with limited resources requires creativity, resilience, and constant problem-solving. From security concerns to infrastructure needs, our small but dedicated team continues to wear many hats to keep this space safe, welcoming, and functional.

This year also reaffirmed something important: Kirk Centre is not just a building—it's a model. A model for how underused spaces can be transformed into sustainable, community-driven hubs.

Thank you to everyone who walked through our doors this year. You are Kirk Centre.

About Kirk Centre

Kirk Centre is a vibrant, welcoming hub and an integral partner in building community in northwest Edmonton. Located in the Dovercourt neighbourhood, Kirk Centre operates out of a repurposed church building that has been transformed into a multi-use community space. With over 26,000 square feet, the facility includes offices, meeting rooms, a gymnasium, a commercial kitchen, and large gathering spaces.

Our Mission

Kirk Centre provides an open, safe, diverse, inclusive, and accessible facility, working collaboratively with other organizations to help meet the identified cultural, educational, spiritual, and physical needs of the residents of Dovercourt and its neighbouring communities.

Our Values

- Leadership and Service
- Commitment, Collaboration, and Partnership
- Diversity, Inclusivity, and Accessibility
- Integrity and Accountability
- Faith and Trust

2025 Highlights

Community Engagement and Programming

Kirk Centre's programming continues to reflect the diversity of our community.

- Hosted free community dinners, including Ukrainian and German-themed events, feeding over 250 community members
- Delivered sold-out cooking classes in partnership with Culina, including Indigenous, Italian, and Ukrainian cuisine
- Hosted travelogue events featuring Thailand and Morocco, combining storytelling, culture, and food
- Hosted community Senior Coffee Breaks
- Partnered with Dovercourt Community League to support programs while they were under renovations
- Offered free summer community concerts, bringing people together through music, food, and shared experiences
- Hosted two summer student who hopefully learned as much from us as we do from them
- Partner with Alberta Chinese Outdoor Adventure Club to provide Tai Chi classes as well as events such as Women's day celebrations, Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival Mooncake making, talk shows and book launches.

These programs not only provide accessible cultural experiences—they create meaningful opportunities for connection across backgrounds and generations.

Canvas of Community – Public Mural Project

In 2025, Kirk Centre unveiled its outdoor mural, *Canvas of Community*, created by local artist Jamelle (JD) Davis. This project:

- Celebrates diversity, inclusion, and community identity
- Enhances the visibility and accessibility of Kirk Centre
- Serves as a lasting symbol of belonging in our neighbourhood

The mural received media attention and has become a recognizable landmark in the community.

Indigenous Inclusion and Cultural Space

Kirk Centre continues to deepen its commitment to reconciliation and cultural respect.

Key initiatives include:

- Installation and use of a fire pit to support Indigenous sacred fires, ceremonies and 24-hour wakes
- Hosting Indigenous arts and cultural programming
- Creating space for future teachings and partnerships with Indigenous organizations
- Sought out a community partner with Indigenous roots to support our journey in reconciliation.

These efforts reflect our belief that community space must be adaptable, respectful, and responsive to cultural needs.

Growing Partnerships and Tenancy

Kirk Centre's collaborative model continues to grow.

In 2025:

- New partner tenants joined, including community and recreational organizations
- Existing tenants expanded their use of the space
- Partnerships strengthened with organizations such as Nechi Institute and local community groups

By offering affordable, flexible space, Kirk Centre supports non-profits, small businesses, and grassroots initiatives that might otherwise lack access to infrastructure.

Operations and Capacity

Kirk Centre operates with a lean team—an Executive Director, a Facility Caretaker and a Kirk Centre Assistant—supported by seasonal employees and volunteers.

In 2025:

- A Centre Assistant role was introduced to support weekend operations and improve safety and oversight
- Canada Summer Jobs positions provided youth with hands-on experience in non-profit operations, community programming and facility management
- Staff continued to manage bookings, maintenance, programming, partnerships, and administration with limited resources

This model demonstrates both current efficiency and the ongoing need for sustainable operational funding.

Funding & Grant Impact

Kirk Centre is grateful for the support of grant funders who make our programming, staffing, and facility improvements possible. As a non-profit operating a large, multi-use community facility, grant funding plays a critical role in ensuring accessibility, affordability, and sustainability.

Below is a summary of funding received in 2025 and how those funds were used to directly benefit the community.

Government of Alberta – Ethnocultural Grant Program (2024–2026)

Purpose of Funding:

To support inclusive, culturally diverse programming that fosters connection, understanding, and community belonging.

How Funds Were Used in 2025:

- Delivery of free community dinners (including Ukrainian and German events)
- Hosting cultural cooking classes in partnership with local chefs and organizations
- Presentation of travelogue events highlighting global cultures
- Support for free summer concerts and performances
- Creation of the “Canvas of Community” mural, celebrating diversity and inclusion

Community Impact:

This funding enabled Kirk Centre to remove financial barriers to participation, allowing hundreds of community members to engage in meaningful cultural experiences at no cost or low cost.

Canada Summer Jobs (Government of Canada)

Purpose of Funding:

To provide youth with meaningful employment opportunities while supporting community-based organizations.

How Funds Were Used in 2025:

- Employment of youth staff in roles such as Community Hub Development and Building Operations support

Community Impact:

This program supported workforce development for youth while increasing Kirk Centre’s capacity to deliver programming and maintain operations during peak months.

Alberta Security Infrastructure Program (Government of Alberta)

Purpose of Funding:

To improve safety, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of the facility.

How Funds Were Used / Allocated:

- Completion of a CPTED assessment (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) to aid in planning and implementation of strategies to deter offenders.

Community Impact:

The completion of a CPTED enabled Kirk Centre to apply for the second part in the grant for training and security systems upgrades. Upgrades help ensure that Kirk Centre remains a safe and welcoming environment for all users, particularly during evenings and high-traffic events.

Community Mural Grant (City of Edmonton)

Purpose of Funding:

To support Community Mural Projects for community leagues, non-profit organizations.

How Funds Were Used in 2025:

- Supported the installation and release of our beautiful outdoor mural on the east end of our building.

Community Impact:

The *Canvas of Community* mural has become a powerful symbol of inclusion and belonging, reflecting the diversity of the community Kirk Centre serves while helping reframe the space as a vibrant, welcoming hub. Its visibility has increased community awareness, sparked engagement, and created a lasting sense of pride and identity in the neighbourhood.

Challenges and Opportunities

While 2025 was a year of growth, it also highlighted key challenges:

Aging Infrastructure

Maintaining a 67-year-old building requires ongoing investment in repairs, accessibility, and modernization.

Security and Safety

Incidents of vandalism and break-ins have reinforced the need for improved security systems and infrastructure upgrades.

Capacity Constraints

With minimal staffing, balancing daily operations with program growth continues to be a challenge.

Looking Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

Kirk Centre is committed to building on its momentum.

Planned initiatives include:

- Expansion of ethnocultural programming (cooking classes, travelogues, concerts)
- Increased Indigenous partnerships and teachings
- Program and grant partnership with Robertson Wesley United Church in “Spill the T” The Human Library
- New community events such as family cultural nights, craft nights, and lunch-and-learns
- Continued efforts to improve accessibility, sustainability, and security
- Sharing the Kirk Centre model as a scalable approach for repurposing underused buildings

Thank You to Our Community

Kirk Centre exists because of its community.

We extend our deepest gratitude to:

- Our partner tenants
- Volunteers and community members
- Funders and grant partners
- The United Church of Canada and The Northern Spirit Region
- Local leaders and elected officials who support our work

Your continued support allows Kirk Centre to remain a place where people gather, connect, and belong.

Kirk Centre is more than a facility—it is a shared space shaped by the people who use it.

As we move forward, we remain committed to fostering connection, supporting diversity, and ensuring that this space continues to serve as a welcoming hub for all.