

Best Practice

Centre 48 Arts and Education Centre

CONTACT

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Project Date: 2002 (ongoing)

THE PRACTICE

The main course of action that was taken by the two municipalities was the creation and management of the Centre 48 Arts and Education Centre. Centre 48 offers arts, culture, music and personal development classes in the Town of Montmartre.

THE PROCESS

In 2001, the RM and Village of Montmartre jointly created an Economic Development Committee (EDC). This committee was tasked with creating new initiatives which would make the community more attractive for current and future residents. As rural populations were on the decline at that time and the community's school was being evaluated for usage, the EDC decided that enhanced school usage would be one of its main goals.

Community consultations were held before Centre 48 started, with all stakeholders (school students, town leaders, business owners, organization members) being invited for a strategic planning session. RM and town councils knew it would be critical to get buy-in from the community, and also to draw on the social capital found in the town. So, these consultations were designed to bring all sectors on-side and to let them have a direct contribution into what Centre 48 would be. Since this was a completely new initiative, the community was really vital in helping the EDC come up with what it wanted Centre 48 to be.

During the community consultations, an analysis was done and one-year, three-year and five-year goals were set for the project. Participants came up with great ideas such as holding special events, training our instructors and forming a separate board of directors. These goals outlined the types of classes and courses to be offered, instructor recruitment and an annual operating budget.

Once Centre 48 was established, a part-time coordinator was hired and a survey was distributed in Montmartre and to other towns. This survey asked for feedback about kinds of classes the public wanted offered and it formed a solid basis for Centre 48's first year or two of programming.

In terms of resources, there was the \$1,000 plan funding that came from the RM and village. The in-kind resources provided by the Montmartre school (space) and the Village and RM of Montmartre (office rental, photocopying, etc.) has proven to be invaluable and Centre 48 could not operate without these generous community-based donations. In addition, all events are operated and sponsored by volunteers and the local business community.

THE RESULTS

The results are that Centre 48 is now in its 7th year and it is continuing to be a vital part of the community and surrounding area. The benefits are that people are taking classes in rural Saskatchewan, not having to depend on the cities for personal development classes. Centre 48 has been able to train and employ many rural instructors, but most of all offered classes to all ages and have met many people's interests and requests. The challenges have been finding qualified instructors and working on a regional basis. With many school closures it is much more difficult to find facilities that are appropriate and cost efficient. Centre 48 offers 30 to 40 courses each year. These classes range from painting to play school, belly dance, violin, yoga, piano, guitar, quilting, drum, voice, composting, soccer coaching, photography, sweat lodge healing, gardening, card making, learn to run, kinderkids music, barrel racing, sketching, clay, babysitting, cooking and much more.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned are to keep asking people what they want and to keep going after the regional population, because without a broader base this project would not be feasible.