

Historical Overview of the Kootenay School of the Arts

Throughout its long tenure, the Kootenay School of the Arts (KSA) has been a hallmark of uniqueness and an integral part of the history, foundation and vitality of Nelson's arts and culture community.

From its origins in 1958 as a privately run Summer School of Fine Arts, a community-driven campaign paved the way for KSA to begin offering full time, year-round arts programming. The school quickly evolved to become a provincially funded Arts program through a merger with the vocational training institution. However throughout the years, its ties with government and funding sources proved to be tenuous.

Despite having defied the odds of being shut down twice, first in connection with the closure of Notre Dame University in 1977 and then again in 1984 when the David Thompson University Centre doors were shut, KSA fought to retain its artistic integrity, consistently attracting larger enrollment and winning international recognition for its students' and instructors' work.

In the early 1990s, KSA was reborn as a co-operative, taking on the challenging task of governing and administering the school through consensus and collaboration. Under this unique organizational model, KSA partnered strategically with community groups and skills training initiatives, affirming its key role as a contributor to economic development in the region.

In 2002, KSA once again lost its provincial funding, but fought to remain open by merging with Selkirk College in 2004, ensuring its continued survival and current day status as Nelson's post-secondary diploma-granting centre for art, craft and design.

Central to both KSA's success and struggles has been the vision of autonomy that the school was founded with. Grappling with ongoing issues of funding, location and curriculum, the continued survival of KSA has always been due the hard work and dedication of countless community members and an enduring commitment from the faculty, students and alumni of KSA.

The remarkable efforts that have been put forth demonstrate the strong enduring belief in the importance of arts education in this region and KSA's role as a major contributor from both an economic and social perspective.