

Werklund Centre



2024-25 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

Our vision is for Werklund Centre to be a lasting ecosystem where people of all backgrounds and lived experiences can engage with artistic experiences that honour the cultures, stories, and creative expressions that shape Calgary — fostering connections, celebrating creativity, and reflecting our city's social fabric.

Werklund
Centre



PROUD HOME TO



NEW!

Look for these icons to expand on iconic moments from this season



40 Years in the Making —and Just Getting Started

This year marked a defining moment in our history — one that celebrates both where we've come from and where we're boldly headed. As we honour 40 years as Calgary's performing arts centre, we also embrace a new name, a new vision, and a renewed sense of purpose as Werklund Centre.

Our transformation from Arts Commons to Werklund Centre has been inspired by the extraordinary generosity of Dave Werklund, whose historic gift — the largest to the performing arts in Canadian history — has made it possible to dream on a new scale. With his support, and with the collective belief of so many who see the arts as essential to Calgary's identity, we've begun to reimagine what a cultural home in the heart of our city can be.

Breaking ground on our transformation project this year marked more than the start of a construction journey; it symbolized a new chapter for our city. Once complete, Werklund Centre will become Canada's largest performing arts campus — a space where creativity thrives, where diverse voices are celebrated, and where our community can come together to shape the cultural story of Calgary's future.

This past season was one of remarkable change and collaboration. We launched new partnerships, deepened relationships with artists and organizations, and created experiences that could only happen here — born from the spirit, curiosity, and creativity of our city. Every step of this transformation has been guided by those who inform our work: the artists who inspire us, the organizations who call us home, the audiences who believe in us, the staff and volunteers who bring our vision to life, and the community that continues to dream with us.

Our transformation has always been, at its heart, a story of people. To everyone who has believed in this vision, who has given their time, energy, and spirit to help it take shape — thank you. Werklund Centre exists because of you, and it will continue to grow with you, as a place where creativity and community meet in remarkable ways.



Alex Sarian
President and CEO

W

W shaped symbol,
the initial letter for
WERKLUND



A free-form interpretation
of building forms
and architecture



Illustrating three areas
that represent the
layout of the campus



Illustrating a civic centre designed
for sharing and exchange



Idea of intersection
and connection

A hand-drawn, organic
shape that symbolizes a
transformative space

Our story
told in a
seasonal
timeline

SEP ●
OCT ○
NOV ○
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In 2024-25, we set out with a bold ambition to build a distinctive brand for Werklund Centre — one that will be a dynamic reflection of our organization's future and our commitment to the community — inspiring audiences, increasing awareness, and improving brand recognition. To support this transformation, we released a Request for Proposal in the summer of 2024, attracting 29 submissions from agencies worldwide wanting to assist with market research, brand strategy, and identity design. After carefully evaluating each proposal for creativity, strategic insight, and relevant experience, we selected a team consisting of the firms: **Stone-Olafson, Studio 15%, and Caserne.**

The rebrand project unfolded in three dynamic phases over six months, starting with Studio 15%, who assessed the Arts Commons brand and crafted a compelling strategic brand narrative. They collaborated with local partner Stone-Olafson to conduct key stakeholder engagement and audience surveys, gathering valuable insights to support our rebranding efforts. To create our new visual identity, we engaged award-winning Caserne, leveraging their expertise in brand development for other cultural institutions.

This collaborative initiative cultivated a unique and powerful brand for Werklund Centre, one that is reflective of the Werklund Family's values and truly reflects our commitment to the community and enhances our role as a vital civic centre in Calgary.

As our new brand evolves alongside Calgary, its value will be realized as people connect with it in new and meaningful ways — and that depends on a strategic vision that aligns with our ambitions and guides the programs and actions we take. With Calgary nearing a population of two million, this clarity has never been more important. That's why, alongside our brand work, we also launched the development of a new five-year strategic plan. By engaging our staff, board, and the resident companies and organizations that call Werklund Centre home, we are building a plan shaped by the full breadth of insight across our community. When completed in 2026, it will provide a clear vision and shared compass to guide our growth and ensure Werklund Centre continues to play a meaningful role in shaping a vibrant, growing Calgary.



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Embracing our role as a cultural hub, we began our season with moments that brought people together through creativity and conversation. In early September, Werklund Centre led a proud showing of staff in the **Calgary Pride Parade** — marching in celebration of love, identity, and the right for everyone to live authentically. That same spirit of celebration carried into **Culture Days**, when 200 students filled our facilities with curiosity and wonder. From stage combat to Bollywood dance and immersive storytelling, young imaginations came alive through the transformative power of the arts.

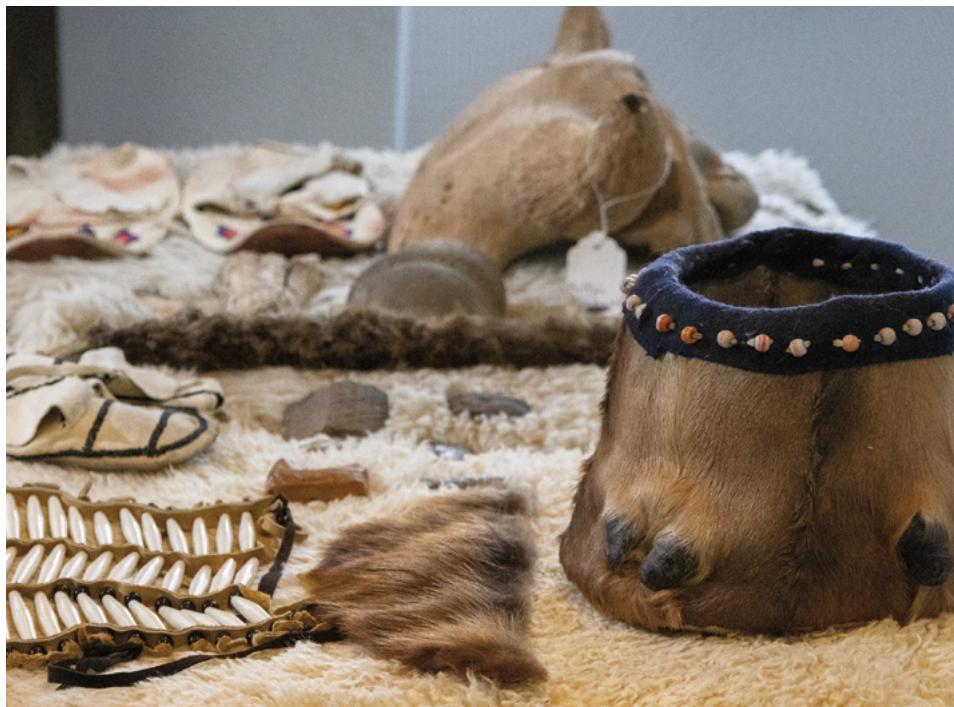
Later that month, we observed **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation** welcoming 1,874 visitors with a day of reflection and connection. Our galleries featured the evocative work of **Jared Tailfeathers** and **ReconciliACTION artists**, while visitors explored the Authentically Indigenous curated Makers Market and engaged with local creators. The evening culminated in the **Elders Story Project**, returning for its third year with a record audience to hear stories of trauma, strength, and resilience — a testament to the trust and relationships built over time between members of the Indigenous communities that live in Treaty 7 and Werklund Centre.

(Top L) The public peruses the Makers Market in the Jack Singer Concert Hall lobby as part of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation events. ©Kim Gordon

(Top R) Work by Blackfoot artist Jared Tailfeathers is showcased in the Ledge Gallery. ©Dena Vahle

(Bottom) Communities come together for the Elders Story Project. ©Kim Gordon

(Right) Pow Wow Showcase featuring dancers Cara Big Plume and Keeva Big Plume of the TsuuT'ina Nation in the Jack Singer Concert Hall lobby. ©Kim Gordon



1,874

PEOPLE ATTENDED NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION ACTIVITIES AT WERKLUND CENTRE







This season marked an exciting evolution for the **TD Incubator** artist development program as we welcomed our first International Fellow, the remarkable Migguel Anggelo – a Miami/Brooklyn-based, Venezuelan-born, transdisciplinary performing artist. His bold, imaginative vision helped ignite our 2024–25 season and set the tone for the most innovative and artistically ambitious year of the **TD Amplify** performance series to date. Guided by the dynamic leadership of local directors Steven Conde and Jaime Dunsdon, the four-chapter TD Amplify series offered Calgary-based artists meaningful opportunities to collaborate, experiment, and reach new heights in their creative practice. As home to a wide range of artistic disciplines, Werklund Centre is uniquely positioned to nurture, celebrate, and learn from the artists we support through the **RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program** and TD Incubator.

Alberta Theatre Projects (ATP) kicked off their season in the Martha Cohen Theatre with a special partnership with Werklund Centre that brought celebrated Canadian actor Paul Gross to the stage for an intimate, behind-the-scenes conversation ahead of ATP's milestone 50th-anniversary opener, *The Seafarer*.

Offering a warm, engaging look into the career of a true Canadian icon, *An Evening with Paul Gross*, set the perfect tone for *The Seafarer*, which went on to be a hit. The production earned three Calgary Critics Awards, a Betty Mitchell Award, and helped boost ATP's subscriptions to their highest level in 15 years.

Theatre Calgary's second performance of their season was a timely, beautifully layered production of the multi-award-winning *The Lehman Trilogy*. In an exciting first, the show was directed by our own Vice President of Programming, Sarah Garton Stanley (SGS), whose creative vision and passion for exploring big cultural questions brought new life to this epic script. The result was a production that drew audiences in with its sweeping storytelling and standout performances – setting an inspiring tone for the season ahead.

(Top) Christopher Hunt, Chirag Naik, Shaun Smyth (on stairs), and Paul Gross in Alberta Theatre Projects' production of *The Seafarer*. ©Benjamin Laird
 (Bottom L) MX Jendr performs at *Origins: Spirit* as part of TD Amplify. ©Mike Tan
 (Bottom R) Alex Poch-Goldin and Diane Flacks performing in Theatre Calgary's *The Lehman Trilogy*. ©Trudie Lee





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As fall eased into winter, we once again teamed up with **Casa Mexico** to fill the building with free performances, hands-on crafts, and beautifully designed **Día de Muertos** altars. Centre Court was buzzing — families, friends, and visitors of all ages gathering to celebrate the tradition and remember loved ones in a bright, welcoming space. TD Incubator alum “Yiyo” Partida brought even more sparkle to the day, arriving in full Catrina makeup and chatting with media about his artistic practice as people stopped to admire his work in the Community Spotlight window.

Meanwhile, in the Jack Singer Concert Hall, we kicked off the BD&P World Stage series with the internationally celebrated **Social Tango** from Argentina — a production that held special meaning for President & CEO Alex Sarian, who grew up in Buenos Aires and has a deep, personal connection to this art form. More than a performance, *Social Tango* invited audiences to step onto the dance floor themselves, joining the performers for a lively post-show milonga that brought the spirit of Buenos Aires to Calgary.

The excitement around elevating tango in Calgary was shared by our community partners — **Tango Alberta**, **Tango Calgary**, and **Casa Mexico** — who helped spread the word and build momentum. Tango Calgary even kicked things off with an energetic preshow in the lobby, perfectly setting the tone for an unforgettable evening.

From tango rhythms to slam dunks, Werklund Centre’s programming celebrates the incredible range of culture and creativity that brings our community together. When Calgary’s professional basketball team, the Calgary Surge, took the stage to kick off **360 ALLSTARS** with a friendly free-throw competition — mascot Sergio cheering them on — the energy in the Jack Singer Concert Hall was electric. It was the perfect warm-up for a show bursting with high-octane stunts, heart-pounding beats, and nonstop surprises. As one audience member put it, “The show was an international compilation like nothing we’d attended before. A very unique experience that kept you wondering what would happen next.”



Just as Werklund Centre prides itself in creating one-of-a-kind experiences, it also champions the development of local creators. That commitment is reflected in the journey of **Kelly Choo** (Kelly the Sand Artist), who expanded her practice through opportunities at the Centre. Her captivating sand art first appeared in the **+15 Galleries**, before being featured in **TD Amplify's Origins: Spirit** and on **TELUS Sky's Art While You Wait** — a public art initiative that transforms the building's LED facade into a digital canvas for local artists. From there, Kelly debuted a new collaboration with the **Ammolite Opera**, performing live sand art designed to mirror the opera's rhythm and emotion. "This collaboration wouldn't have been possible without the confidence and inspiration I gained through my experiences and connections at Werklund Centre," she shared.

The holiday season brought a special kind of magic to Werklund Centre, filling every corner with music, laughter, and celebration. From the sweeping symphonic sounds of **Calgary Philharmonic's A Choral Christmas** to the cozy jazz of **A Charlie Brown Christmas** with the Claire Butler Trio, there was something for everyone to enjoy. Longtime partner

Fire Exit Theatre added to the festivities with their enchanting production of ***The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*** — marking their 83rd performance in the **Engineered Air Theatre**. And in a glittering finale, the 10th anniversary of **A Drag Queen's Christmas** lit up the stage with glamour, humour, and unforgettable performances by fan-favourite contestants from RuPaul's Drag Race, spreading joy and sparkle in equal measure.

Amid the festivities of the holiday season, Werklund Centre reached a defining moment more than a decade in the making: in a ceremony filled with pride and anticipation, **Dave Werklund** and the **Werklund Family**, joined by representatives from the **City of Calgary**, the **Government of Alberta**, and **Elders from the Piikani Blackfoot community**, officially broke ground on the largest cultural infrastructure project in Canada.

This historic milestone marked not just the beginning of construction, but the laying of the literal and symbolic groundwork for a bold new chapter in Calgary's arts and civic life and a new era of cultural possibility.





Drs. Reg & Rose Crowshoe, David Smith, (former) Mayor Jyoti Gondek, Kate Thompson, Alex Sarian, Mark Werklund, Dave Werklund, Minister Tanya Fir, Deanna Werklund, Rhet Vanden Elsen, Shae Adams, and Max Werklund at the December 11, 2024 groundbreaking of the Werklund Centre Transformation project. ©CMLC



336,175

TICKETED PATRONS ACROSS ALL WERKLUND CENTRE VENUES





The new year began with a surge of creative energy with **One Yellow Rabbit's High Performance Rodeo** — a beloved festival that transforms the winter months into a citywide celebration of daring art and performance. This year's edition featured sold-out shows from the delightfully chaotic clowns **Mump & Smoot** and the incomparable **Ronnie Burkett**, alongside bold co-productions between **Werklund Centre, Calgary Philharmonic, One Yellow Rabbit, Downstage**, and many others. From the unapologetic power of **Hot Dyke Party**'s femme rock anthems to the nostalgic fusion of **Unplugged: Nirvana Reimagined**, these partnerships embodied the spirit of artistic risk-taking — and rewarded it with full houses and an unmistakable buzz throughout the Centre.

In that same spirit of collaboration and boundary-pushing, and in partnership with the **Calgary International Film Festival** and **One Yellow Rabbit**, Werklund Centre hosted **Taylor Mac in Conversation with Denise Clarke** — a rare opportunity to welcome one of the world's most influential and genre-defying theatre makers to Calgary. The conversation gave local artists and cultural leaders direct access to the mind behind the Pulitzer Prize-nominated **A 24-Decade History of Popular Music**, whose work is celebrated globally for challenging norms, centring Queer narratives, and expanding the definition of live performance.





(Left) Hot Dyke Party heats up the Engineered Air Theatre in a co-production with Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Werklund Centre. ©Jarrett Edmund

(Top) The High Performance Rodeo welcomed back the chaotic clowns Mump & Smoot ©One Yellow Rabbit

(Bottom R) Taylor Mac performing in *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. ©HBO



- SEP
- OCT
- NOV
- DEC
- JAN
- FEB
- MAR
- APR
- MAY
- JUN
- JUL
- AUG

Hot on the heels of the High Performance Rodeo came **Chinook Blast**, Calgary's signature winter festival celebrating arts, culture, and sport. With the revitalization of **Olympic Plaza** well underway, **Werklund Centre** joined forces with **The Confluence** and **Springboard Performance** to host the **Disco Blast Sunday Skate Party**. The event transformed downtown into a joyful celebration — complete with professional figure skaters, **Cowtown Collection** (Canada's best cow-themed marching band), a beer garden, and Alberta's First Lady of Breaks, **DJ Molly Fi**. Even in sub-zero temperatures, Calgarians turned out in force, proving once again that nothing — not even a frosty day — can cool this city's passion for coming together.

As February's creative energy continued, **Werklund Centre** celebrated artistry that uplifts and unites. In partnership with **Calgary Philharmonic** and **Jones & Jones**, Werklund Centre debuted the world premiere of **A Tribute to Bob Marley** — perfectly timed to honour the music legend's 80th birthday. The sold-out performance filled the Jack Singer Concert Hall with Marley's timeless message of love and resilience, brought to life through striking visuals from Calgary-based art and production collective **FOREIGNERZ**. The project itself was a powerful demonstration of what's possible through collaboration — the result of a remarkable joint fundraising effort led by James and Janice Morton, that galvanized community support and made this landmark production possible, setting the stage for future remounts and international opportunities.

(Top R & L) Skaters of all ages took to the ice for *Disco Blast Sunday Skate Party* at The Confluence, a collaboration between Springboard Performance and Werklund Centre. ©Darin Gregson

(Bottom R) Soloist Ammoye performs alongside Calgary Philharmonic for *A Tribute to Bob Marley* a co-production with Werklund Centre, and Jones & Jones. ©Darin Gregson







Beyond our walls, Calgary's creative future continues to take shape in the heart of the city. In February, **Werklund Centre Transformation** and **Olympic Plaza Transformation** projects unveiled new public artworks to animate the construction hoarding around the future campus site. Created by Calgary-based artists **Anthony T. Russell, Harvey Nichol, Josee La Güita, and Laura Caraballo** – all alumni of the Werklund Centre **RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program** – along with our teaching artists **CHISH** and **Paula Timm**, the works celebrate the vibrancy of city life and the artists shaping its future. As several of the artists shared their inspiration with the media, the unveiling offered a first glimpse of what a reimaged Olympic Plaza will embody.

Early spring brought a spark of pure joy to the city – a stretch of weeks bursting with laughter and connection. Werklund Centre was alive with energy as audiences roared with laughter at world-renowned comedian **Sarah Millican**, presented by Outback Productions, and dove into **Downstage's** bold world premiere of **ARE YOU THE ONE?**

(Top L) Artwork by Josee La Güita.

(Bottom L) Mural created by students from Dr. Gordon Higgins, Lake Bonavista, and Notre Dame High School.

(Bottom R) Voyage to the Unknown by Harvey Nicole.





The season also saw the triumphant return of **Art Party** — bigger, brighter, and more joyfully chaotic than ever — complete with an art market featuring members of our artist development programs, live performances, public workshops, and free tours of our galleries. The reimagined event was an instant hit, filling the building with Calgary's arts loving community.

As part of a new initiative for the 2024–25 season, Werklund Centre partnered with the National Music Centre to launch ***Behind the Cut: Ziggy Stardust***, a deep dive into the iconic album featuring musicians from the **Classic Albums Live** series, hosted by the ever-engaging **Kenna Burima**. The positive momentum with Kenna continued as she stepped in to lend her talents to **TD Amplify's Origins: Spirit**, a performance that helped lay the groundwork for her selection as TD Incubator Fellow for the 2025–26 season. ***Behind the Cut*** would also return in the 2025–26 season to an enthusiastic reception from music aficionados.



Our love for Calgary doesn't stop at the doors of our venues — it spills into the streets, office towers, and everyday moments that make this city shine. This spring, with support from the **RBC Foundation**, we teamed up with the **Bankers Hall Window Gallery** to bring bold local art into the downtown core. The eye-catching works of **CONTEMPORARY VICE** stopped office workers in their tracks, followed by the vibrant installations of multimedia pop artist **Moey Blanco** and artist **Brendon Many Bears**, whose creations added colour, curiosity, and conversation to the daily commute of thousands. Each artist selected for this new opportunity were members of the **RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program**, an artist development program designed to provide mentorship, professional development, and exhibition opportunities to early career artists. This collaboration with RBC was yet another example of how we helped artists connect with new audiences in the galleries — and how Calgary's creativity continues to turn heads in the most unexpected places.

As momentum builds toward the creation of the **Werklund Centre campus**, a major milestone arrived with the long-awaited design reveal for a reimagined **Olympic Plaza** — a civic landmark poised to become Calgary's modern gathering place for generations to come. In partnership with **Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC)** and **The City of Calgary**, Werklund Centre proudly shared the visionary design two years in the making, conceived by **gh3*, CCxA Landscape Architecture and Urban Design**, and **Belleville Placemaking**. The renewed plaza maximizes flexibility and accessibility through a barrier-free layout that can accommodate gatherings of up to 5,000 people, all while honouring the site's rich Olympic legacy.



6,370

JOBs CREATED/SUSTAINED ANNUALLY ACROSS CANADA





Olympic Plaza design reveal concept rendering unveiled at spring announcement. ©CMLC



Pushing the boundaries of what it means to host cultural experiences, this spring Werklund Centre welcomed some of the world's most inspiring voices to reflect on our shared responsibility to the planet and one another. In April, the legendary **Dr. Jane Goodall** took the stage to share stories from her extraordinary life as a scientist, conservationist, and global humanitarian. Her message of hope and empowerment resonated deeply with a sold-out audience, as well as the 1,700 students, teachers, and chaperones who attended a special student presentation free of charge. Made possible through the generous support of the **Flanagan Foundation** as well as many other corporate sponsors, foundation and individual donors, these events extended Dr. Goodall's lifelong mission — reminding us that the pursuit of knowledge is inseparable from care for our planet. Her passing later this year lent even greater significance to what became her final Calgary appearance, a moment our community will long remember.

Just a week later, we had the honour of hosting **Doug Smith**, preeminent wolf specialist and National Geographic Explorer as part of the **National Geographic Live** series whose groundbreaking work leading the **Yellowstone National Park Wolf Project** remains one of the most remarkable conservation stories of the past century. His talk carried a special resonance for local audiences, as many of the wolves reintroduced to Yellowstone had

originated in **Banff National Park**. Thanks to the **RBC Newcomers Accessibility Program**, nearly 300 people were able to attend his presentation free of charge — part of a broader effort that opened doors for more than 1,290 individuals throughout the season. This is in addition to the 3,828 students that attended National Geographic Live this season free of charge, ensuring that the transformative power of the arts and ideas remains accessible to all.

As Werklund Centre continues to rethink how our spaces are used by local arts organizations, the resident companies are finding new ways to stretch their creativity to connect with new audiences. By stepping beyond their typical venues, they're exploring spaces within the Centre that may better suit their artistic vision and, in doing so, redefining what's possible within our walls.

Theatre Calgary's Awoowaakii exemplified this spirit of innovation, premiering as the company's first production in the **Big Secret Theatre**.

Featuring a revolving set — a first for the black box space — the sold-out run captivated audiences, who described the work as "a love letter to Two-Spirited Indigenous people. A tearjerker and a breath of fresh air." Whether reimagining scale, intimacy, or acoustics, every time a resident company experiments in new venues, it reflects a growing confidence in using the entire Werklund Centre campus as a living canvas for innovation.







At the heart of Werklund Centre's mission is a belief that access to the arts can change the course of a life — a commitment that is alive and thriving every single day of the year. In alignment with **UNESCO's International Arts Education Week**, and supported by **Calgary Arts Development**, our annual **Arts ReimaginED** festival returned for its third year, once again uplifting arts education in schools across the four quadrants of our city. The festival's culminating summit brought together teachers, artists, parents, and advocates to exchange ideas, spark inspiration, and fuel each other's passion for creativity in learning. Headlining this year's gathering, Canadian scratch DJ, music producer, and multidisciplinary artist **Kid Koala** brought his trademark energy and imagination to a room brimming with possibility.

These impactful workshops were led by 40 local teaching artists including **Autumn Whiteway**, **Brendon Many Bears**, **Mera Reyes**, **Eazy G**, and **Masani St. Rose**, not only igniting creativity in schools but also demonstrating Werklund Centre's unique commitment to introducing local artists to the teaching artist profession. Many of our teaching artists have grown working within the Centre — exhibiting in our galleries, performing at events — and now they are turning their talents towards mentoring for the next generation. With a dedicated teaching artist training program tailored for local artists, we are strengthening a vibrant community of artists and educators who embody Werklund Centre's commitment to lifelong learning.

21,727

STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND VOLUNTEERS IMPACTED
BY WERKLUND CENTRE'S ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Throughout the week-long festival, more than 145 free workshops connected local **teaching artists** with 240 classes across Calgary — both in-person and online — students became painters, musicians, digital artists, mask makers, puppeteers, poets and storytellers. Ensuring we are exploring new ways to remove barriers and increase access to arts education, teaching artists joined diverse learners at Sir John Franklin, Jack James High School, and Dr. Oakley School for workshops in African Dance, visual arts, and beatboxing. Over 175 diverse learners, aids and teachers connected through the power of the arts. One teacher exclaimed, "These students NEVER get this sort of experience."

New to the Arts ReimaginED festival this year was **Little Wonders**, a joyful collaboration between **Werklund Centre** and the **University of Calgary's School of Creative and Performing Arts**, designed to introduce preschool-aged children to the magic of artistic exploration through storytelling, hands-on creation, and play.

The visible impact of programs like these on young people inspired **ConocoPhillips Canada** to deepen their support of the **ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning (CHIL)**, allowing Werklund Centre to reach even more students with transformative arts experiences throughout the school year. Said one teacher after participating in CHIL, "This experience has had a real and lasting impact —not just on student learning, but on how we, as teachers, teach and connect with our students."

The impact of the arts in young people's lives cannot be underestimated – it nurtures growth in meaningful ways that go beyond the classroom by igniting wonder, imagination, and curiosity through creative expression.





(Top L) Students get hands-on experience learning about the Carthy Organ in the Jack Singer Concert Hall. ©Mohammad Ahmed
(Bottom) Teaching artist Samantha Whelan Kotkas leads students in a storytelling session in the Arts Learning Centre as part of the ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning. ©Mohammad Ahmed

(Right) Children explore creative fun with *Little Wonders* in the Arts Learning Centre in collaboration with the University of Calgary's School of Creative and Performing Arts. ©Kiani Evans





While young minds were finding inspiration in classrooms, another kind of creative spark lit up the stage. In the **Martha Cohen Theatre**, **Glitterverse Productions** dazzled audiences with ***Big Band Burlesque*** — a high-energy fusion of glitz, glamour, and live big band sound showcasing some of Western Canada's premier burlesque performers. The production's creators later shared their appreciation, noting, "We couldn't have asked for a more professional, knowledgeable, and welcoming group," in praise of Werklund Centre's exceptional team. Not to be outshone, the season's final **TD Amplify** performance, ***Origins: Freedom***, strutted confidently into the spotlight with Drag Queen **Jackal Morose**, dream cowboy **Robert Adam**, and musicians **Bella Ríos Romero** and **Duke Domino** — a joyful, genre-defying celebration of identity and artistry. Together, these performances embodied what Werklund Centre stands for: under our roof, the full spectrum of human expression finds its stage.

As spring turned to summer, Werklund Centre once again opened its doors to the city — welcoming Calgarians to celebrate milestones that define their own cultural moments. June brought with it one of our most joyful traditions: **graduation season**. The **Jack Singer Concert Hall** filled with cheers and proud tears as **Bow Valley College** graduates crossed the stage to mark one of life's most transformative milestones. These moments remind us that Werklund Centre is more than a home for the arts: it's a home for the city itself, where people of every background come together to honour achievement, creativity, and community. Whether through art, performance, or celebration, our mission remains the same: to ensure that everyone who calls Calgary home can experience something meaningful and transformative.

(Top L) Drag Queen Jackal Morose performing live on the Engineered Air Theatre stage for TD Amplify *Origins: Freedom*. ©Jarrett Edmund

(Bottom L) Robert Adam enchanting the audience with their performance for TD Amplify *Origins: Freedom* in the Engineered Air Theatre. ©Jarrett Edmund

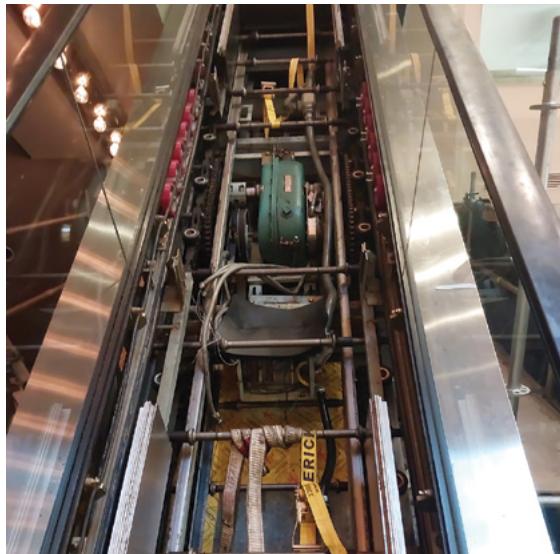
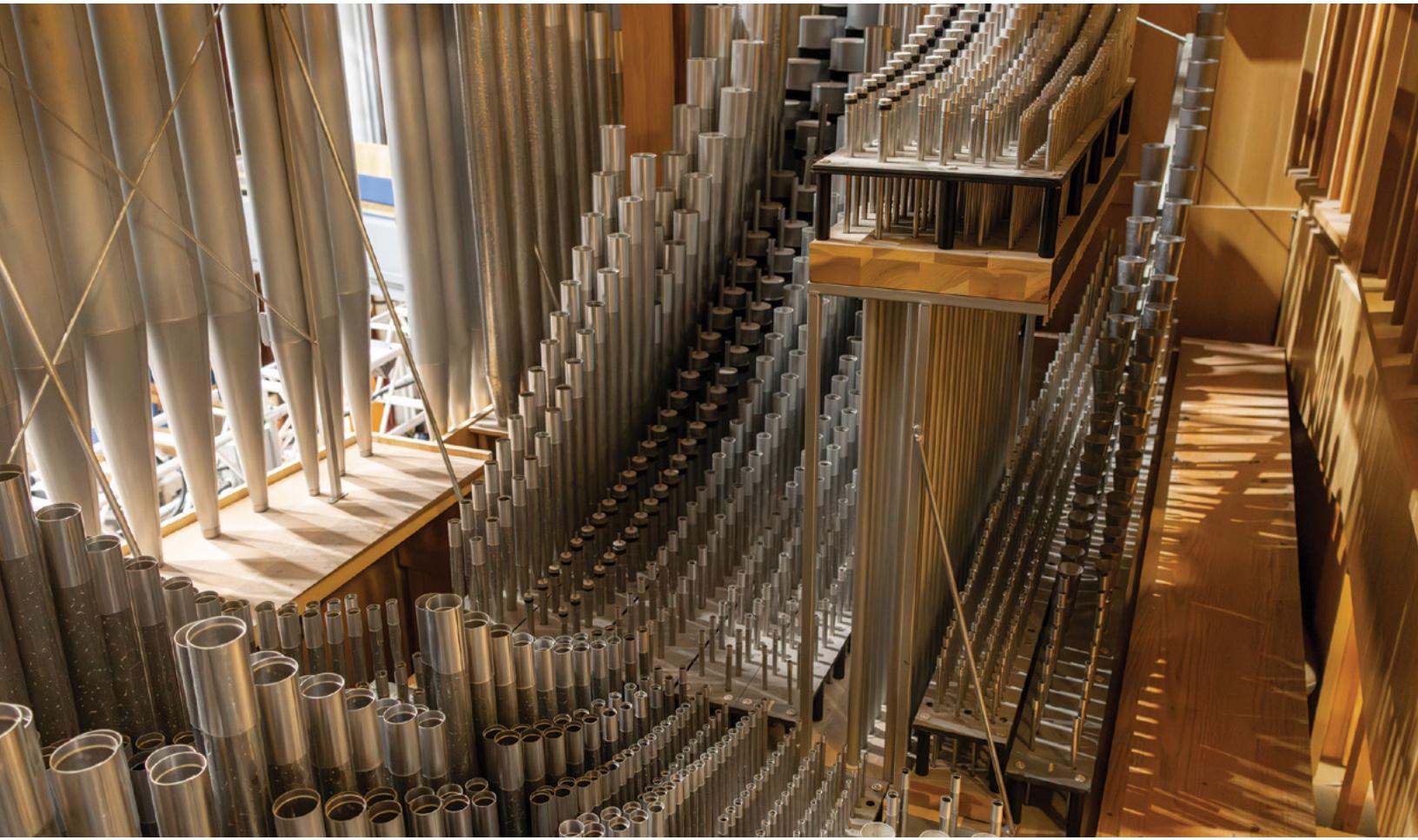
(Bottom R) Duke Domino rocking the Engineered Air Theatre stage for TD Amplify *Origins: Freedom*. ©Jarrett Edmund

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- OCT
- NOV
- DEC
- JAN
- FEB
- MAR
- APR
- MAY
- JUN
- JUL
- AUG

Our ongoing journey toward **Truth and Reconciliation** continues to be among the most personal and transformative work we do. While much of this learning happens quietly behind the scenes, it is no less vital to who we are becoming. This year, we deepened that commitment by creating spaces for honest reflection and collective growth. Staff and Board members participated in a Blanket Exercise facilitated by **Jessica Smith** (Executive Director, Elders Knowledge Circle Society), **Karen Worrell** (EFS Inclusion & Reconciliation Lead at ATB), and led by **Elder Darryl Brass Jr.** (Circle Keeper at Trellis and member of Werklund Centre's Indigenous Advisory Circle), who guided participants through ceremony and smudge. We were also honoured to support the planning and execution of the Aboriginal Awareness Week Opening Ceremonies, which celebrated the theme "Keeping the Circle Strong through the Sacred Relationship with Mother Earth." These experiences serve as quiet but powerful reminders that reconciliation is not a single act or event — it's a way of being, guiding us to becoming an organization rooted in respect, reciprocity, and the courage to do things differently.

The heartbeat of Werklund Centre lies in the people who make our work possible: staff, artists, and donors whose passion and generosity bring every performance, workshop, and celebration to life. This season, we were honoured to celebrate our **Founders Circle** members with an unforgettable behind-the-scenes dinner in one of the Centre's most unexpected spaces. For one evening, our **scene shop** — the kind of rare creative workspace where ideas are imagined, designed, and built long before they reach the stage — was transformed into a candlelit setting filled with conversation, connection, and live music from **Kue Varo, Lisa Jacobs, and Jonathan McCaslin and his band**. The evening offered a powerful reminder that artists don't just perform on our stages — they paint, build, sew, sculpt, and design. Werklund Centre is an engine of creativity and employment, sustaining a community of makers whose work extends far beyond what audiences see under the lights. It's this full spectrum of artistry — both seen and unseen — that fuels our vision for expansion and reinforces why growing our physical footprint is essential to Calgary's creative future.







While the spotlight most often shines on the artists that grace our stages, it's the quiet dedication behind the scenes that keeps Werklund Centre running smoothly for hundreds of thousands of guests each year. Our Facilities team meets the daily challenge of maintaining a beloved, 40-year-old building with remarkable creativity and skill. This season, their ingenuity was put to the test with one of the year's biggest projects — restoring the **Jack Singer Concert Hall escalators**, which were custom-built for the lobby decades ago. Working hand in hand with **Fujitec**, the team sourced parts from around the world, engineering a solution that brought the escalators back to life.

The Jack Singer Concert Hall also received a full overhaul of its heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, ensuring balanced airflow and greater comfort for both audiences and performers. And in one of the most intricate projects of the year, our **Carthy Organ** — with its 6,040 individual pipes — underwent a meticulous inspection and cleaning. Together, these efforts exemplify the care, craftsmanship, and pride that go into making Werklund Centre not just a home for the arts, but a finely tuned instrument of creativity in its own right.

Even as our performance season wound down, the creative energy of Werklund Centre continued to ripple across Calgary. After the 2024-25 TD Incubator program wrapped, its 24 participating artists wasted no time making their mark. **Jackal Morose** lit up the stage at the **Cowboys Music Festival**, while **Robert Adam** celebrated winning their first **YYC Music Award** before heading overseas for a tour of Japan.

Watching our **RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program** and **TD Incubator** alumni take flight — applying their craft, confidence, and collaboration skills out in the world — is the clearest proof of the program's impact. This ongoing success is made possible by **Royal Bank of Canada** and **TD Bank**'s unwavering commitment to artist development, helping us nurture a new generation of creators who shape Calgary's cultural identity year-round. Their achievements remind us that our investment in artists doesn't end when the season does; it's the spark that keeps our city's creative ecosystem thriving long after the curtain falls.

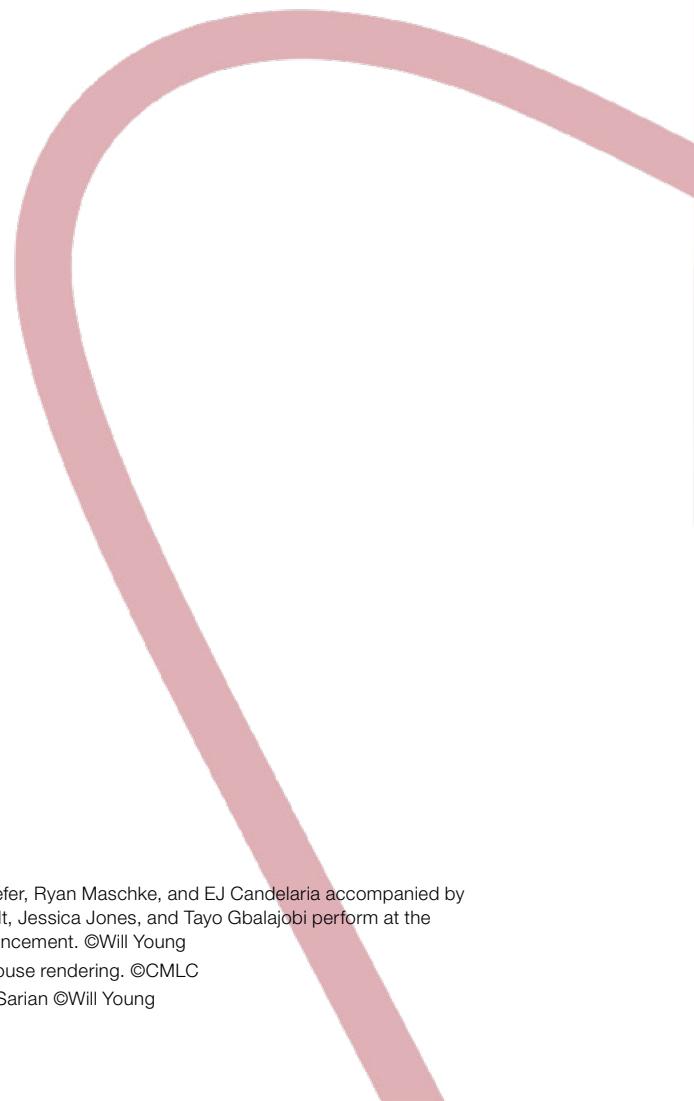
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As if the season hadn't already given us enough to celebrate, it concluded with a moment that reminded us why the arts matter — because they reflect not just creativity, but courage, love, and community. In August, Werklund Centre proudly honoured **Al Osten and Buddy Victor**, lifelong partners whose generosity and vision helped shape Calgary's cultural landscape. Their extraordinary **\$12 million gift** to establish the new state-of-the-art **Osten-Victor Playhouse** — the largest in their long history of philanthropy — stands as a lasting tribute to their belief in the power of the arts to bring people together. From supporting major Broadway productions to championing local performances here in Alberta, Al and Buddy's legacy transcends geography and stage. At its heart, theirs is a love story that now lives on in the city they helped make more generous, creative, and compassionate.

Transformational gifts like this one have laid a strong foundation for new opportunities as the **Werklund Centre Transformation** project gains momentum. Their leadership has inspired private and corporate donors, sponsors, and funders to join them, recognizing the passion and momentum behind this community-driven vision.

Reflecting on their gift, Al shared, "Buddy and I were able to experience unbelievable moments through the arts, and I hope that this gift will allow that power of the arts to be shared with countless future audiences."

Their generosity is already doing exactly that — opening doors, expanding possibilities, and helping ensure that generations to come will experience the full breadth of the arts.

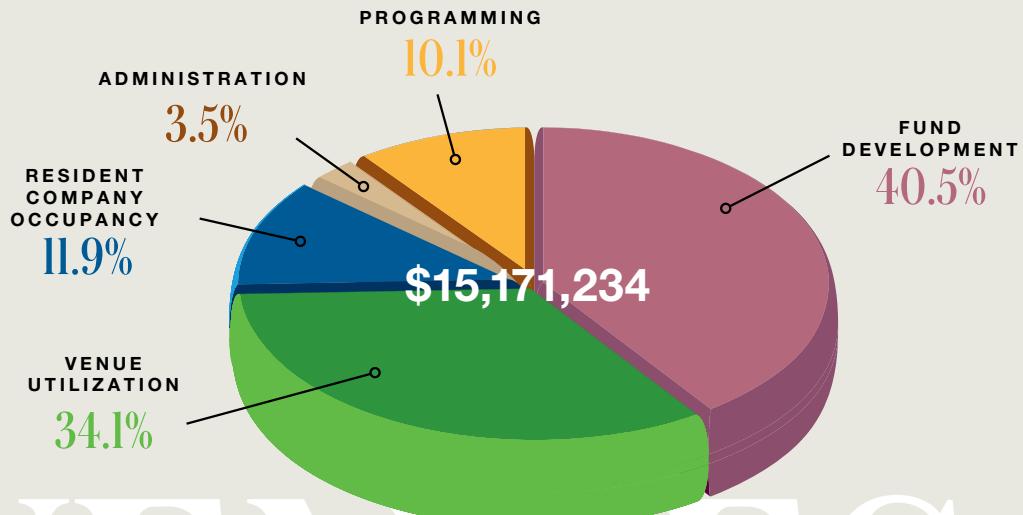


(Top R) Alex Smith, Joel Schaefer, Ryan Maschke, and EJ Candelaria accompanied by Layne Labbe, Jessica Eckstadt, Jessica Jones, and Tayo Gbalajobi perform at the Osten-Victor Playhouse announcement. ©Will Young
 (Bottom L) Osten-Victor Playhouse rendering. ©CMLC
 (Bottom R) Al Osten and Alex Sarian ©Will Young

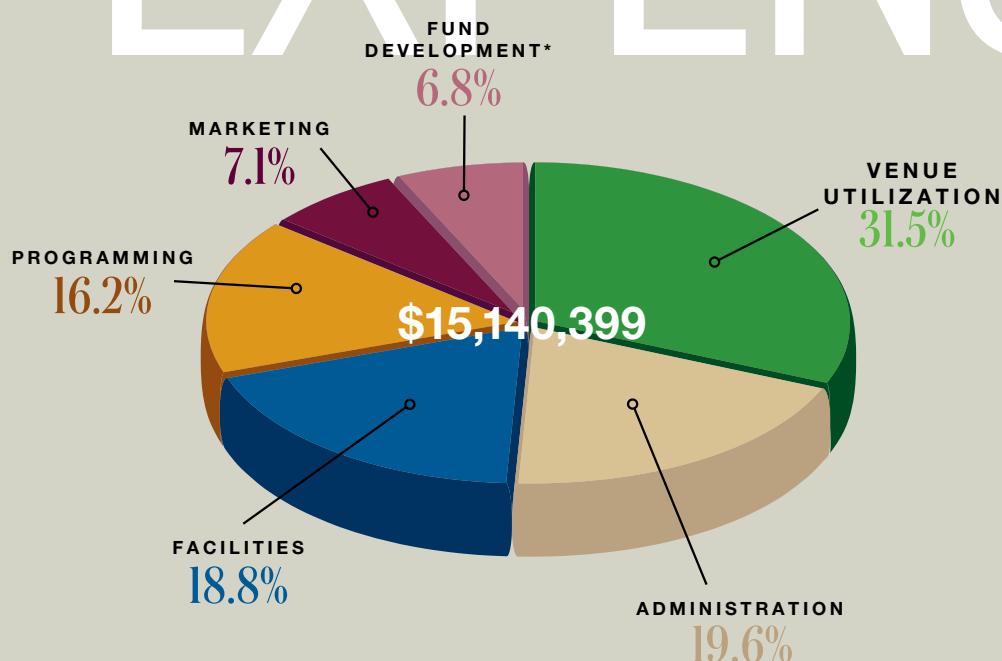


We planned for a challenging financial year as numerous capital repair projects necessitated the closure of most of our venues over the summer months. This work is essential to ensuring that we continue to provide reliable and versatile venues for our creative community to realize the full potential of their vision to inspire Calgary audiences. The impact of this venue closure was mitigated by our Venue Services team maximizing our venue utilization outside of the capital project venue closures as well as huge successes from our Development team who exceeded their fundraising goals with granting, philanthropic giving, and corporate sponsorship. We also exceeded ticket sales revenues with sell-out performances including Led Zeppelin: *Led Zeppelin II, A Tribute to Bob Marley, In Conversation with Jane Goodall*, and Jann Arden *The MIXTAPE Tour* demonstrating the appetite of Calgarians for a diversity of cultural experiences.

As we look ahead to the 2025–26 season, our greatest source of pride isn't just what's being built — it's who is building it with us. Werklund Centre has become a living ecosystem powered by artists, organizations, community partners, audiences, donors, teachers, students, and volunteers — the people who breathe life into our vision every day. This report offers just a glimpse of how much creativity, courage, and collaboration take place within these walls, as we continue to evolve into a home where Calgarians can shape and celebrate their own definition of cultural experiences. By creating space for all of these voices to thrive, we are not only democratizing access to the arts — we are helping redefine Calgary's place at the heart of Canada's creative landscape.



REVENUES EXPENSES



The heartbeat of Werklund Centre lies in the people who make our work possible: staff, artists, and donors whose passion and generosity bring every performance, workshop, and celebration to life.



It is through the generous support of government agencies, foundations, corporations and individuals, that Werklund Centre activates one of Canada's largest arts centres. We are here for Calgary — bringing people together through the arts to celebrate the many cultures that shape our city. By stewarding our cultural spaces and civic gathering places, we uplift artists and organizations, like the resident companies and more than 200 community groups, as they amplify Calgary's voice within Canada's cultural story.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the following supporters who have made it possible for Werklund Centre to contribute to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of our community.

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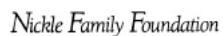
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National Geographic Live brings the world to Werklund Centre through an international community of Explorers who drive new knowledge, advance innovative solutions, and inspire transformative change.

We are grateful to the members of the Explorers Circle, whose support helped Werklund Centre present this unparalleled program for Calgary's student and public audiences.

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Founders Circle members help us foster dynamic spaces where audiences, artists, and community organizations thrive—on stage and behind the scenes. Their support enriches Calgary's vibrant arts community by directly supporting world class performances and our wide-ranging programs for children, educators, and emerging artists.

We are grateful to the following members of Founders Circle who helped make these exceptional arts and cultural experiences accessible to all Calgarians.

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We pursue artistic leadership through shared cultural experiences — creating opportunities that bring people together to celebrate who Calgary is today and spark the conversations that will shape our city's future.

OUR MANDATE

We are here for Calgary — bringing people together through the arts to celebrate the many cultures that shape our city. By stewarding our cultural spaces and civic gathering places, we uplift artists and organizations as they amplify Calgary's voice within Canada's cultural story.

OUR RECONCILIATION PRINCIPLES

Validated by an Elder Advisory Circle, our work is guided by: Ethical Space, Sanctified Kindness, and Making Relatives. Learn more by visiting werklundcentre.ca/reconciliation

Werklund Centre

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In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that Werklund Centre is located on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Iyarhe Nakoda (Chiniki, Goodstoney/Kichipwot, and Bearspaw First Nations). This territory is also the home of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Districts 5 and 6. We thank these Nations for sharing this land with us and commit to being good stewards of this land while we are here. We welcome all who work, live, and play in, as well as honour and celebrate this historic territory.

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(Cover image) Yu Chen participating in Art Party activities. ©Sara Kuefler

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