



About the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts

In January 2003, the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts opened in rented space on the busy corner of 111 Avenue and 97 Street in Edmonton's inner city. It was a project of the SKILLS Society made possible by a modest grant from the Clifford E. Lee Foundation and local volunteers who came together to renovate the long-vacant space.

During this critically vital start-up phase, we had the generous support of the Stollery Charitable Foundation, Edmonton Persons with Developmental Disabilities PDD Board (PDD Edmonton) and the Edmonton Community Foundation, along with the ongoing support of SKILLS Society. The Allard, Muttart and Robin Hood Foundations were also important early contributors.

On September 22, 2006, the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts was incorporated as a non-profit organization with charitable status. This allowed the Centre to receive operating support through the Edmonton Arts Council and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

When it became clear that a bigger facility was needed, we began to explore opportunities to purchase space in the neighbourhood just north of our original location, where there was a grassroots effort to revitalize the community through the arts.

With the help of the City of Edmonton, the Nina Haggerty Centre was able to establish a relationship with the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society, a group interested in developing a project in the revitalization area along Alberta Avenue. An 11th hour grant from the Province of Alberta and a generous purchase agreement with the City of Edmonton allowed the Centre to achieve its ten-year dream of owning purpose built space well ahead of schedule: in 2009, the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts moved into its current home, a 7500 square foot studio and gallery space in the heart of Alberta Avenue.

Throughout our entire history, the vision of the Nina has remained the same: "All people have the right to achieve their highest potential, which includes the right to creative expression. Creativity lies within everyone and can be powerfully expressed through the arts. The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts believes in the importance of the creation and exhibition of art by those who face barriers to artistic expression."

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About Nina Haggerty

We are proud and fortunate to be known as the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts because Nina Haggerty's story, her triumphant fight against all odds, is an inspiration for every prospective artist who steps into our centre for the first time.

Her story begins in the early 1900s, in Alberta. She was the second of two girls and, like her sister, contracted polio. She was also abused by an alcoholic step-father.

On the advice of friends, the girls' mother placed them in an institution for "mental defectives." The girls spent the next half century behind the walls of that institution, left to believe that nobody cared and nobody would help.

But somebody did care. An organization called SKILLS Society was able to provide the support Nina and her sister needed to live together in a home in community—the same way they did as children. They were also able to travel and celebrate Christmas together. Nina took an art class and found her passion. The process of creating art gave her a way to express herself and she spent the next decade creating many paintings, most of which she gifted to friends and support workers.

Four years after Nina's death, a centre was opened in Edmonton to allow others with developmental disabilities to become artists and experience the joy Nina felt when she put paint to canvass. And it was only fitting that this center would be called the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts.

For interviews or more information:

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