

FAQs

Why is the amalgamation taking place?

There is a real opportunity to focus the existing resources of both the Portage & District Arts Council (who runs PDAC, Portage and District Arts Centre) and the Portage Community Centre Inc. (PCCI, who runs the William Glesby Centre) to maximize facility utilization and create a destination centre that all citizens will want to visit.

Bringing the two organizations together will expand our human resource capacity at both a board and staff level to create the opportunity for us to improve and expand existing programming and introduce new programming and other opportunities.

How did we arrive at this decision?

PDAC and PCCI, after preliminary discussions with the City of Portage la Prairie, decided in early 2016 to investigate the feasibility of an amalgamation of the two organizations. As a result, the PDAC/Glesby Centre Amalgamation Feasibility Committee (the Committee) was formed.

The Amalgamation Feasibility Committee was chaired by Roberta Christianson (a past board Chair of both organizations), Brent Gilbert (Board Director of Southport and the Portage la Prairie Mutual Insurance Company), and the current Chairs of each organization.

The Committee confirmed the current reality that there were two compatible organizations operating separately within one large subdivided building which was not being utilized to its potential capacity even though both staff groups were fully deployed and working hard.

The mandate of the Committee was to study the feasibility of creating one centre of excellence for both the performing and visual arts in Portage la Prairie and surrounding Districts. Significant due diligence and community consultations were performed ahead of a combined meeting of board directors and staff and management of both organizations on Saturday September 23, 2017. It was agreed to pursue amalgamation if the biggest challenge was addressed.

What was the biggest challenge?

The Glesby Centre is forced to spend a disproportionate amount of money, staff time and board attention on physical plant issues instead of program development to benefit the community. They have been successful in raising these necessary dollars to deal with facility issues, these efforts take away from being able to focus on more programming and a better experience for all stakeholders.

What was a key question?

How do we focus the existing resources of both PDAC and the Glesby Centre to maximize facility utilization and create a destination centre that all citizens want to visit?

What was the answer?

The City of Portage la Prairie, owner of the building, will assume responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the physical plant to allow the creation of an amalgamated entity that focuses its combined resources on programming for the benefit of the community at large. The City has agreed to assume this responsibility as of January 1, 2018; thus removing this huge barrier.

Who is looking after all the amalgamation details?

A Transition committee has been established, led by Delnora Rice and Jeff Dubois as co-chairs and comprised of 2 board members from both PDAC and the Glesby Centre. Mr. Dave Omichinski of Portage la Prairie agreed to serve as a facilitator for the Transition Committee when asked by the Amalgamation Feasibility Committee. Clear terms of reference have been approved to guide the committee.

What are some of the benefits?

We are envisioning an exciting and vibrant new entity that focuses on the arts. Our new entity will have one board and one staff team solely dedicated to arts programming development and delivery. Both organizations will no longer be in competition for funding and visibility. We are confident that this amalgamation will result in efficiencies and will provide one unified voice to advocate for the arts. Both organizations feel that by combining our efforts we will be able to focus our existing resources and maximize the use of our facility to create a destination centre that all citizens will want to visit. Bringing our two organizations together will help us to improve and expand existing programming and introduce new programming and other opportunities to benefit the community at large. For example, we hope to increase our reach to our community schools and Aboriginal populations.

We are planning a Rejuvenation Project. This project would breathe life into our current facilities and make them into a cultural centerpiece for Portage la Prairie now and for years to come. The new centre would become fully accessible to people of all abilities. It would house an enhanced dance studio, studio spaces for artists, a functional classroom/pottery room for art instruction, a performance theatre with improved seating and optimal open exhibition spaces for visual art. The theatre and the classrooms would contain the essential equipment required to provide professional instruction in the arts. This renovation would enhance the appeal of our new site. It would not increase the size of our combined centres, but would make better use of our current space. Having an accessible site with the appropriate technology and equipment, and studio, classroom and performance spaces is essential to the production of masterful art and community engagement in the arts. We strongly believe that it is our role to provide this service to our community. We also intend to pursue matching funding for this project through municipal, provincial and federal grants and community fundraising.

What type of programming changes might happen?

To be determined – but programming should be improved and expanded, not decreased. Combining resources creates a real opportunity for expanded programming in the future. One goal will be to reach out to the School Division to see what opportunities may exist for much greater use of both the Theater and Arts Centre by our youth.

Why now?

This is not a new issue as there have been many preliminary discussions over the last 10 plus years but those discussions did not go anywhere for a variety of reasons. The work of the Feasibility Committee clearly shows there is a real opportunity for these two compatible organizations to more effectively work together for the good of art throughout the area.

Discussions with key community supporters (business, government and individuals) also showed strong support for a combined entity.

Is this a take over?

No – it is an amalgamation of two similar entities interested in joining all resources into one stronger more vibrant organization for the benefit of the community.

How will staff be impacted?

There will be no job loss because of this merger. Current staff will be retained in positions that will best use their unique skill sets. Margaret Bernhardt-Lowdon will be Executive Director reporting to the Board of Directors and Keith Hutlet will assume the role of Artistic Director. Work will be completed over the next few months on all job descriptions to clarify the roles of all staff.

What will the name be?

The new Board will work through a process to brand a new identity for the new entity and expects this will include input from stakeholders.

From a technical perspective, the legal entities Portage and District Arts Council (who runs PDAC, Portage and District Arts Centre) and the Portage Community Centre Inc. (PCCI, who runs the Glesby Centre) will merge under a new legal name which is a separate issue from how the new entity brands itself.

How will the board structure work?

The amalgamated organization will have a 9 person board, three from each PDAC and PCCI existing boards and three new board members from the community with varied term lengths to ensure continuity.