

About Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity

Founded in 1933, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity is a post-secondary institution built upon an extraordinary legacy of excellence in artistic and leadership development. What started as a single course in drama has grown to become a global organization leading in arts, culture, and creative decision-making across dozens of disciplines, from the fine arts to Indigenous Wise Practices. From our home in the stunning Canadian Rocky Mountains, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity aims to move everyone who attends our campus—artists, leaders, thinkers, and audiences—to unleash their creative potential and realize their unique contribution to build an innovative, inspiring future through education, performances, convenings, and public outreach. banffcentre.ca

Read Banff Centre's 2024-25 Report to Community, Reflections: [Document](#) and [Video](#).

Land Acknowledgement

We recognize, with deep respect and gratitude, our home on the side of Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain. In the spirit of respect and truth, we honour and acknowledge the Banff area, known as “Miniharpa” (translated in Stoney Nakoda as “the waterfalls”) and the Treaty 7 territory and oral practices of the Îyârhe Nakoda (Stoney Nakoda) – comprised of the Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Goodstoney Nations – as well as the Tsuut’ina First Nation and the Blackfoot Confederacy comprised of the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Shuswap Nations, Ktunaxa Nations, and Metis Nation of Alberta, Rockyview District 4. We acknowledge all Nations who live, work, and play here, help us steward this land, and honour and celebrate this place.

Banff Centre History

This history of Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity is the story of some of the most iconic and outstanding artists from across Canada and around the world who have helped forge our Canadian cultural identity.

Founded in 1933 by the University of Alberta, Department of Extension, with a grant from the U.S.-based Carnegie Foundation, Banff Centre began with a single course in drama. In the mid-1930s, painting and playwriting courses were added, and in 1946, under the leadership of Donald Cameron, Banff Centre was given a permanent home in Banff National Park. Betty Farrally and Gweneth Lloyd established the dance program in 1948, and Dr. Ernesto Vinci initiated the opera program one year later. In 1974, Oscar Peterson and Phil Nimmons founded the jazz workshop, and W.O. Mitchell helped formalize the literary arts program; in 1976 the Walter Phillips Gallery opened to exhibit contemporary art to the public. In 1978, the Alberta government granted Banff Centre full autonomy as a non-degree granting educational institution; in 1999, the Centre was recognized as a National Training Institute by the federal government.

Over the years, Banff Centre has grown to become the global organization leading in arts, leadership, Indigenous culture, and mountain culture across dozens of disciplines. From 130 students in its first summer program, the Centre now welcomes thousands of artists per year; from a few chalets in the woods, it now occupies 43 stunning acres in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Building on the spirit of creativity it was founded on, Banff Centre is now one of the world’s leading collaborative creative environments; encouraging artists, leaders, and thinkers to learn from each other, and practice at the highest level of excellence.

Notable Canadian alumni include: André Alexis, Margaret Atwood, Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, Aszure Barton, Shary Boyle, Measha Brueggergosman, George Elliot Clarke, Stan Douglas, David Garneau, Tomson Highway, A.Y. Jackson, k.d. lang, Jens Lindemann, Yann Martell, Loreena McKennitt, Joni Mitchell, Emily Molnar, Alanis Obomsawin, Michael Ondaatje, Oscar Peterson, Crystal Pite, Richard Reed Parry, Erika Raum, Adrian Stimson, Tanya Tagaq, and Madeleine Thien.

Campus Highlights

- Banff Centre is located on a 43-acre campus on the side of Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain.
- To facilitate the school's arts and leadership programming, campus features two theatres (Jenny Belzberg Theatre, Margaret Greenham Theatre); the Rolston Recital Hall; Walter Phillips Gallery; a cabaret performance space (CLVB '33); the Paul D. Fleck Library & Archives, artist studios; classrooms and lecture halls; visual art production facilities (from ceramics to photo darkrooms to paper-making); film and audio recording studios; a set, prop, and wardrobe shop; dance studios; and administrative offices.
- The Leighton Artist Studios, a flagship program at Banff Centre, consists of ten standalone studios in a forested area of campus, each named after the architect that designed it. These are home to self-directed residencies in writing, visual art, music, and more.
- To fulfill its conference services, Banff Centre campus hosts a wealth of meeting rooms, two large conference halls, two restaurants (Maclab Bistro, Vistas Dining Room), and two hotels (Professional Development Centre, Lloyd Hall).
- For the Banff community and hotel guests, Banff Centre campus runs the Sally Borden Fitness and Recreation centre, home to weight and fitness rooms, a climbing gym, and an aquatic centre.
- In June 2025, Banff Centre opened its first space dedicated to Indigenous programs, Îethka Mâkochî Ahogi Chi Pa Bi Ti: Îethka Territory House of Respect (formerly known as Farrally Hall).
- Public art on campus includes:
 - *The ghosts on top of my head*, Brian Jungen (2010-2011): three benches made of white, powder-coated steel in the forms of antlers—caribou, elk, and moose.
 - *Meet me in the woods*, August Klintberg (2010): two signs with handwritten messages—appearing vividly by moonlight and under certain daylight conditions—read “Meet me in the woods” and “Meet me in the town.”
 - *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother*, Rebecca Belmore (1991, 1992, 1996): the form of a large megaphone constructed primarily of wood and tanned moose hide, embedded with a loudhailer, inspired by the Oka Crisis and has come to be recognized internationally as a potent symbol of Indigenous rights through the amplification of voice, protest, and song. Fabricated at Banff Centre. Currently on loan.
 - *Vessel/Enclosure*, Peter von Tiessenhausen (1997-2022): a willow boat left exposed on campus (outside of the Professional Development Centre) to deteriorate for 25 years, photographed annually from the same position (displayed within Banff Centre).

Programming Highlights

- Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity delivers professional training and development programs in arts and leadership.
- Arts Program departments:
 - Indigenous Arts
 - Visual Arts
 - Literary Arts
 - Theatre
 - Dance
 - Opera
 - Music
 - Mountain Culture (writing, filmmaking)
 - Professional Training (technical arts)
 - Leighton Artist Studios (interdisciplinary)
- Leadership Program departments:
 - Indigenous Leadership
 - Cultural Leadership
 - Convening and Summits
- Arts programs often result in public-facing presentations for participants to showcase the work created during their residency: Bow Valley and Calgary locals often attend Banff Centre's public workshops, readings, concerts, and the popular Open Studios series.
- Banff Centre Presents also brings world-renowned touring artists to the Bow Valley, unrelated to a training program.
- Flagship festivals at Banff Centre:
 - [National Indigenous History Month](#): a collection of in-person and virtual events highlighting Indigenous cultures at Banff Centre, across the Bow Valley Corridor, and beyond.
 - [Banff Centre Summer Arts Festival](#): a tradition since 1950, Banff Centre welcomes audiences onto campus every summer for concerts, exhibitions, panels, and more.
 - [Banff International String Quartet Competition](#): Intended as a one-time special event, to mark the 50th anniversary of Banff Centre's 50th anniversary in 1983, the triennial BISQC is now one of the most renowned string quartet competitions in the world.
 - [Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival](#): Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025, the annual in-person festival in Banff celebrates mountain culture with epic adventurers, authors, filmmakers, and audiences before the World Tour takes a curated selection of films around the world.

Video Links

[Reflections 2024-25: Banff Centre's Year in Review](#) – June 2025

[Host a Meeting with Impact at Banff Centre](#) – May 2025

[Celebrating 50 Years of Indigenous Leadership with New Director Simon Ross](#) – January 2022