Culture. History. Memories. The original École Connaught School served as the hub Regina’s Cathedral community for over a century and its stately masonry form resonated with generations of learners.

Due to looming structural failure, Regina Public Schools made the difficult decision to build a new replacement school in its place. Not only did the design team face a grieving community over the loss of their cherished school, it had a mandate to implement Regina Public Schools' relatively new Structural Innovation Framework that challenged the traditional paradigm of school design.

Facing considerable resistance from a highly motivated community with a strong emotional attachment to the original school, the design team implemented an immersive integrated design process to gain the community’s trust, learn about their unique community context, and transform their passion into constructive design input. The result is a unique and imaginative 21st century school that encapsulates the community’s hopes for the future while respecting and honouring its proud past.

“This was my elementary school. A beautiful building and a home for many. A place of learning, growth, and community. It is like the heart of Cathedral, as it nurtured its children for so many years.”

Abigail Frasz, Resident
École Connaught Community School

The new École Connaught Community School is a 57,092 sq. ft. dual-track English/French immersion school boasting a wide variety of flexible student and teacher spaces that can be customized to meet the needs of different learning and teaching styles.

The school is organized around three learning communities (grades K-2, 3-5 & 6-8) that share a central learning and gathering space called Heritage Hall. This common area connects the daily activities of students, teachers and the community and features reclaimed elements from the original building and a space called History Alley. An after-hours entry to the building provides a secure access point to the multipurpose room, gym and kitchen for community events.

Heritage Hall houses a large internal feature staircase with integrated amphitheatre seating for individual class instruction or all-school assemblies. The eastern end of the hall contains a carpeted learning space with a high glass wall near the location of the main entrance to the original school. The surrounding walls feature murals from renowned local artist Wilf Perrault, honouring the history of the original building that once stood on the site.
SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

The architectural team provided a full scope of prime consultant, architectural and interior design services. In addition to the typical architectural services, the team oversaw the selective demolition of the existing school and salvaging and repurposing of key historic building elements.

The design process relied heavily on community and stakeholder engagement to establish a project charter that outlined the vision for the new school.

KEY STATS

Size
57,199 sq. ft.

Type
K-8 dual track School (English and French Immersion), with Early Learning Centre (daycare).

Student Capacity:
425

Completion:
2017

Budget:
$16 million

Sustainability Target:
LEED Gold (CaGBC Evaluation in Progress)

Location:
Regina, SK
COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION
Regina’s Cathedral Village neighborhood is a mature, tree-filled community with a rich history. The community is passionate about arts and culture and the area has a distinct architectural style. The area gets its name from the more than 100-year-old Holy Rosary Cathedral, which is a significant focal point in the neighbourhood. The community contains a mix of turn-of-the-century houses, tree-lined streets, welcoming public spaces, well-maintained businesses, restaurants and boutique-style stores. Cathedral Village hosts numerous arts and culture related events throughout the year and residents take pride in the area’s rich historic features.

STAKEHOLDERS
School Based Design Committee
Cathedral Village Residents
Administrators
Teachers
Students

Regina Public Schools
Saskatchewan Ministry of Education
Local Business Owners
Branch Library

“Connaught is a central part of the Cathedral Community identity as well as the history of Regina.”

Jillian McLennan, Resident
School and Community Engagement

**OCTOBER 1**
Community Consultation and Gaming Session
6 site designs created

**OCTOBER 16**
École Connaught Teachers Tour
Teachers Tours of Seven Stones

**OCTOBER 21**
Student Consultation
"A Message to Our Architects and Visual Listening Exercise"

**OCTOBER 27 – NOVEMBER 4**
Thought Exchange "Share" Process
Meeting №2

**NOVEMBER 5 – NOVEMBER 17**
Thought Exchange Summarization of "Share" Process

**NOVEMBER 6**
School Based Design Committee Tour
Tour of Douglas Park, McClern and Seven Stones School

**NOVEMBER 21**
Detailed cataloguing and measurement of salvaged heritage elements

**NOVEMBER 17 – DECEMBER 18**
Thought Exchange "Sharing" Process

**DECEMBER 8**
School Based Design Committee Meeting
Meeting №3

**DECEMBER 18**
Community Presentation of Schematic Design

“Remembering and honouring our history is an important part of who we are.”

Jennifer Krall, Resident
School and Community Engagement

CHALLENGES

One of the most significant challenges involved handling a vocal group of stakeholders who were concerned that a new school might degrade the established look and feel of the neighbourhood. Residents were worried that the new school would be an ‘ugly modern glass box’ that would wipe out a vital piece of the community’s history.

Design Challenges Included:

- Celebrating the historic architectural character of the original school within the context of an innovative 21st century learning environment.
- Incorporating separation for English and French Immersion track learners, while also having shared spaces for the entire student population.
- Respecting the needs of a diverse user group and incorporating solutions that were suitable to all building users.

“It’s clear this school building holds a special place in the hearts of many in the Cathedral community.”

Regina Leader Post Editorial

École Connaught Community School
School and Community Engagement

HISTORY RECLAIMED

The design team prepared a detailed inventory of the reclaimed masonry elements that were saved from the school building. This inventory is shown at right, and would become the “building blocks” for heritage features within the school and site design as it developed.

As the design progressed and people felt like their voices were listened to and factored into the design, the passion of community members became a major asset. Some of the most vehemently opposed community members became the new school’s most vocal supporters.

A central feature called “History Alley” pictured below uses reclaimed masonry and three column bases from the original portico as the backdrop for the story of the original school including photographs, blueprints and the original dedication plaque.
Local Cathedral resident and artist Wilf Perrault's paintings of street scenes at dusk with yellow-orange glowing windows invoke a feeling of warmth in otherwise quiet alleys.
“When you think about the history of this province, this school, this site is deeply, deeply connected to it.”

Chris Keyes, Former Principal, Ecole Connaught
**THE VALUE OF THE PROCESS**

The consultation process aimed to listen and respond to the concerns of the community and educators. Most of those who were originally opposed to the new school and were not aligned with 21st Century Learning concepts wholeheartedly supported and appreciated the final design outcome. Careful attention was paid to creating a feedback loop that communicated the method of response to the majority of concerns or wishes of the community.

The passion and commitment of stakeholders ultimately led to a better project and a truly unique 21st century learning environment that immerses students and visitors in the community’s history.

“We had a man that came to our community tour that was 98-years-old and he had attended Connaught (original school) and all his family had attended Connaught. And he had tears in his eyes when he came up to me. He said ‘this is the hub of our community, and we were so worried that with new school design, it would sort of shut that hub down. The feeling of community in this building is like it had never been knocked down’. He just said, ‘I’m home’.”

Lori Daelick, Former Principal
École Connaught Community School
School and Community Engagement

FEEDBACK AND RESPONSES
In addition to the work of the School Based Design Committee and the Open Houses, feedback was also gathered online through the “Thought Exchange” platform, allowing all local residents to provide their feedback on the two emerging design concept options.

Sample question from the online Thought Exchange process

Q2 What are the positive things about the "Hub Hall" scenario?

Stars assigned by all participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>thought</th>
<th>click any thought for more information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Larger playground area with shared playground space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I like that it doesn't take up so much of the site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Maximizing green/play space is preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grades 3-4 separate from Pre-K - 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I like that the kids are all in the same area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Solar panels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The central location of the hall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Classrooms on two levels, maximizing play ground space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>thought</th>
<th>number of participants</th>
<th>average stars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflect the historic neighborhood
The school’s main entry and community spaces are all oriented towards the community spine along 13th Avenue, existing mature elm trees were protected, materials were selected to reflect and compliment the context.

Tell the story of the original school
The core concept of the new school is to create a central “Heritage Hall” inspired by the double-wide corridors of the original 1912 school. The student commons space is located where the original school’s entry stood, and a special wall at the main entry is dedicated to telling the story of the original school. Different areas of the school have also been “branded” with names based on the local Cathedral neighbourhood.

Balance traditional and modern expression
The school presents a traditional brick facade along 13th Avenue, featuring tall windows aligned in a regular rhythm to reflect the original school design. This transitions to a more playful expression on the south side using colourful window treatments and modern materials.

Maximize size of the playfields and outdoor public spaces
The school’s footprint has been minimized through efficient planning and a compact overall form. Locating the parking lot on 13th Avenue also allows the south side to be completely dedicated to student play, physical activity and community use.

Reduce impact of parking lot on 13th Avenue
The parking lot is set back from the corner of Elphinstone to allow for a landscaped entry plaza featuring a relocated Friendship Circle feature and protected existing trees, and the parking lot itself is broken down in scale with raised pedestrian “speed tables” and plantings.

Strong main entrance
The 1 1/2 story high covered main entry facing 13th Ave guides visitors through a wide entry hall with high windows bringing in natural light, opening directly into the Heritage Hall student commons.

Reduce drop-off & pick-up congestion
Drop-off and pick-up is handled entirely along the three existing streets of the full city block site, in keeping with the character and use of the surrounding neighbourhood.

Safe playgrounds for all age groups
The playgrounds and fields to the south of the school are designed to create “play zones” for the various age groups connected by pathways which lead to the dedicated learning community entries.

Respect the Friendship Circle
The Friendship Circle has been relocated to the entry plaza at the NE corner of the site amongst the mature existing trees on the site, creating an intentional place of pause along the entry experience.

Accommodate dual track French Immersion program
Learning Community One has six equally appointed spaces in order program autonomy for the younger years, while still providing access to shared amenities in the school. Learning Communities Two & Three have flexible learning studios that are connected at the heart of the 2nd floor, allowing interaction and flexible capacities.
École Connaught Community School

EDUCATIONAL VISION AND GOALS
École Connaught Community School's planning and design is founded on the Structural Innovation Framework developed by Regina Public Schools and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

The Structural Innovation Framework strives to achieve the following:
- Beyond One-Teacher, One-Classroom.
- Towards Improved Student Achievement.
- Professional Learning Communities.
- Intervention Problem Solving.
- Adaptive Leadership.

The key structural design innovations identified include:
- Flexible Teaching Arrangements and Instructional Grouping.
- Teacher Collaboration.
- Interdisciplinary and Inquiry-Based Teaching and Learning.
- Inclusive Practices.

Project Specific Educational Goals and Guiding Principles

General Qualities
- Inviting and welcoming character.
- A design that tells the story of the community.
- 21st century learning environment adapted to a dual-track (English and French Immersion) program.
- Adaptable and flexible spaces based on 21st century learning principles.

Student Safety
- Site-lines that allow teachers and supervisors to effectively monitor and protect students at all times.
- Home-like family-style washrooms.
- Creating a sense of community within the school.

Effective Teaching and Learning Spaces
- A variety of flexible teaching and learning spaces to encourage stronger learning outcomes and support different learning styles.
- Design facilitates team teaching and project-based learning.
- Quiet areas for individual learning.
- Large, open areas for group work and socialization.

Student Comfort
- Designed to be accessible and welcoming to all students and visitors.
- Ample natural light and use of well-designed soft artificial lighting where required.
- High quality acoustics to enhance sound performance and promote better concentration and learning.
- Soft flooring and flexible furniture to promote casual learning throughout the school.

Inspire Creativity
- Colourful and vibrant spaces to stimulate the imagination.
- A variety of wet and messy areas.
- Displays for student artwork.
- Art and science DaVinci Studios.
École Connaught Community School contains interesting and varied learning spaces including flexible spaces for gathering, play, storytelling, independent focused study, quiet work and collaborative project work. Interconnection and glazing between various learning environments allow students and staff to feel connected to each other.

An integrated wood amphitheater and stair connects Heritage Hall with the upper Cathedral Common learning space. The stair is the central spine and heart of the school and faces the beautifully treed view out to Elphinstone Street. Its position allows natural light to filter down to the media centre below and provides a variety of learning spaces for students of all ages along its path.

Special signage and graphics are also used to incorporate curriculum and school charter quotes directly into the learning environment. Examples include mathematics being displayed on stairway risers, and the naming of unique spaces like the “Learning Lounge” to help underscore the intended purpose of the space.
AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES

The design allows for ample break-out and collaboration spaces for both students and teachers. Each Learning Community has breakout and small group rooms that can be used by students for self-directed work or by specialized support workers and teachers for individual or small group activities and evaluation. Each space provides a balance of stimulating and quiet focus environments for students. Teachers in each learning community have individual professional workstations in a centralized space.

The central Heritage Hall and amphitheater provide a special presentation and performance space for the school and community, and are also well used as a quiet group break-out space. The Media Centre at the heart of the school opens onto one of the learning communities and includes a variety of furniture types and a series of quiet "cave" spaces below the amphitheater stair.

On the second floor, a rooftop exterior terrace is included with decking and furnishings to provide a special south-facing break-out space with direct views to the neighbourhood’s mature tree canopy.

École Connaught Community School
ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Since not all students learn the same, the school was designed with a wide range of flexible learning environments. Large glazed overhead doors connect the learning studio spaces, which allow teachers to expand their space when needed. Also, minimal built-in casework allows for flexibility in learning environments to a greater degree, relying more on with a variety of movable furnishings. In the Grades 6-8 learning community the lockers are clustered together in movable blocks with a counter height top, providing an additional work or display surface.

The gymnasium has also been designed with an adjacent fitness/ MPR space, which opens completely to the gym for an expanded physical education environment. This space can be accessed by the community independently as a meeting or fitness space in itself.

On the second floor, the two learning communities are connected with a linking corridor on both sides of the central teacher collaboration spaces in order to readily adapt to changes in student enrolment levels between the various grades and language programs.
PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

The school’s main entry is located next to the relocated Friendship Circle at the corner of 13th Avenue and Elphinstone Street. Community access and parking is located along 13th Avenue as well. Exterior playfields and student entries are located on the sun-filled south and east sides of the school. The building’s north side along 13th Avenue has a more traditional appearance using brick and stone in contrast to a more playful south elevation featuring colourful metal panels, windows enclosures, and overhangs. Connected to the main entry are the school’s shared community spaces including a large light-filled gymnasium, main reception and various administrative areas.

On the second floor, a south facing roof terrace provides an outdoor learning and congregation space. This terrace provides views to the sun-filled school yard, which contains a vast amount of open space, playing fields and native vegetation.

The south façade takes on a more playful character, exhibiting more contemporary expressions, colours and materials including large inset windows that draw natural light into the interior. Students benefit from separate dedicated entrances for each learning community that lead outside to the south side playfields. Existing mature trees help to delineate the outdoor amphitheatre and dedicated play spaces for each age group, which flow into a shared full-sized sports field at the south edge of the site.

École Connaught Community School
The school building itself has been organized into three conceptual "zones" –
Along the north edge are the most public, shared uses of the school addressing 13th Ave. This side of the school is more formal and traditional in its exterior treatment, relating more closely to the adjacent public Library and public life on 13th Ave.
Along the south edge are the Learning Communities and the Daycare with equal access to south light and views to the playground. The exterior treatment of this side will be more 'playful' and student scaled.
The Hub Hall zone in the middle is the primary public space within the school, featuring "The Portico" - the school's signature gathering place and heritage focal point.
1. Reception/Administration
2. Heritage Alley
3. Heritage Hall
4. Amphitheater Stair (bottom)
5. The Alley
6. Media Centre
7. Kitchen
8. Flexible Eating / Learning
9. Multi-Purpose / Music
10. Gymnasium
11. Fitness / MPR
12. Learning Community Common
13. Small Group / Break-out Room
14. Wet & Messy
15. Teacher Collaboration
16. Teacher Storage & WC
17. Individual Student Washrooms
18. Flexible Classrooms
19. Kindergarten Rooms
20. Cave Spaces
21. Independent Daycare
COMMMUNITY FIT
The design for École Connaught Community School is a direct result of the extensive community consultation process where the building’s overall fit in the neighbourhood was identified early as a key design driver that stakeholders were very passionate about. Site relationships, massing and overall design aim to celebrate the rich local culture of the Cathedral Village neighbourhood. Materials salvaged from the original school were used extensively to communicate the history of the site. These items include original bricks, portico steps, concrete frieze features, concrete rainwater leaders, wood slats from the gymnasium, wood handrails, and an interior building plaque. Various limestone materials were also salvaged including column bases and capitals, medallions, and pilaster bases. Student displays, art work by local artist Wilf Perrault and feature spaces such as History Alley also speak to the importance of the original school in the community’s history. These historic features and storytelling elements are woven into the fabric of an innovative contemporary 21st century learning environment that reflects the equally forward-thinking ambitions of the Cathedral Village community.
Physical Environment

A SCHOOL THAT INSPIRES AND MOTIVATES

Students and teachers love the variety of small nooks, flexible spaces, project studios and wet/messy areas that encourage more engagement and excitement in the learning process. The building also symbolizes the next chapter in the community’s history while honouring its proud past. The school serves as a versatile community hub, with public access to the commons space after school hours. It is also a popular location for PD days and other school administration events. The school also has an integrated early learning centre adjacent to the playfields on the south side.

The design blends classical and reclaimed elements with an abundance of welcoming and stimulating learning spaces that create a sense of both autonomy and community.

The east end of Heritage Hall terminates with full height curtain wall glazing that allows morning light and views to the mature tree canopy and residential neighborhood. Sunlight in controlled by deep vertical mullions and four painted steel frames that reach out from the curtain wall glazing. The steel frames restore the formality and rhythm of the original school’s historic entrance portico and provide enclosure for student gathering and entry.
ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project achieves the educational goals and objectives of Regina Public Schools in the following ways:

1. **Flexible Teaching Arrangements and Instructional Grouping**
   The school is organized into three Learning Communities (LCs), that act as a home base for approximately 100-150 students. Each Learning Community is organized by age group: LC-1: Pre-K to grade 2; LC-2: grades 3 to 5 and LC-3: grades 6 to 8. The school is also designed to accommodate a second use strategy, LC-1 Pre K to grade 3, LC-2 French grades 3 to 8, and LC-3 English grades 3-8. Large glazed overhead doors connect the Learning Studio Spaces, which allow teachers to expand their space if desired. Also, minimal built-in casework allows for flexibility in learning environments to a greater degree with movable furnishings. Other important design concepts include the home-like washrooms, teacher collaboration spaces, wet and messy areas, and media/resource areas dedicated to each Learning Community.

2. **Teacher Collaboration**
   Teachers in each Learning Community have individual professional workstations in a centralized teacher collaboration space. To make these desirable places to work together, they are positioned at the heart of each learning community and are connected to a shared teacher storage area and private staff washroom. The room includes both individual workstations and a central group work/meeting table.

3. **Interdisciplinary and Inquiry-Based Teaching and Learning**
   Each Learning Community has breakout and small group rooms that can be used by students for self-directed work or by specialized support workers and teachers for individual or small group activities and evaluation. Each space provides a stimulating environment for students.

4. **Inclusive Practices**
   The new school creates interesting and varied learning spaces to accommodate all teaching styles and student learning modalities.

---

We are a community of leaders who create excellence in life and learning! No excuses!

École Connaught Mission Statement
Results

“The design team strived to create a flexible teaching environment that promotes collaboration and interdisciplinary hands-on learning. The words that run through are school reflect a true “Community of Excellence” that promotes leadership in learning and in life.”

Dan Van Buekenhout, Manager of Capital Planning, Regina Public Schools
Results

UNINTENDED RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS
An unintended result of École Connaught Community School’s stakeholder engagement process was how it brought the community together in the face of adversity. At the beginning of the process, many community members were against the very idea of tearing down the original school and wary about how a new school design would impact the community. Through the course of the engagement sessions, these passionate community members would come to love the new school even more than the former school on the site.

Feedback from school administration indicated that they were surprised at how effective the 21st century environment was at improving the education experience of the school’s small but important at-risk student population. Their consensus was that the 21st century design is a valuable tool for working with at-risk kids and encouraging them to explore new ways of learning and personal growth. The design also makes it easy for teachers to keep an eye on students from all corners of the building to ensure their safety.

Another considerable achievement was the successful integration of a dual-track (English/French Immersion) program within an innovative 21st century learning environment. The design team was able to achieve effective separation between the two tracks while also accommodating for shared use through flexible and carefully planned design approaches. The high degree of flexibility, transparency, variety and connectivity of the spaces is a model example of effective 21st century learning design.

“They really listened to all of our concerns and all of the challenges and the things about our community that makes it special, and they really did a great job.”

Sarah Truszkowski
Cathedral Village Resident and Member of the School Based Design Committee
Results: What the Teachers are Saying

**Jacqueline Johnson**
@johnjacq10

Enjoying learning on our beautiful balcony today!  
@Connaughtcomets

**France Bedard**
@BedardFrance

Connaught is the best place to relax and read on a Friday

**Ecole Connaught**
@Connaughtcomets

What does it mean to be a ‘Community of Excellence’?  
Here is a snapshot that sums up what makes our community so special. We tackling joyful learning together.

**Ecole Connaught**
@Connaughtcomets

Co-lab mash-up getting clear about culture and planning how we will raise the bar on leadership and learning!  
#communityofexcellence #collabculture

**Ecole Connaught**
@Connaughtcomets

Growing, Learning, Collaborating. We are in this together.  
#communityofexcellence

**Ecole Connaught**
@Connaughtcomets

A snapshot into our Village Learning Community. Focused, transparent and engaged learning.  
#ILoveThisPlace