

FEATURE STORY:



After School Free Art Drop-in, SCYAP Clay Shaw, Operations Manager

The [Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming Inc. \(SCYAP\)](#) addresses social, educational, and economic needs of young people facing barriers. SCYAP offers street-level and youth-oriented solutions to prevent and address youth crime, homelessness, substance use/abuse, mental health issues, low self-esteem, unemployment and education. SCYAP utilizes youths' artistic interest and inclination as a tool to engage young people in programs designed to provide the basis for personal development and redirection, ultimately leading them to experience healthier, happier and more productive lives. One of SCYAP's principal goals is to foster a sense of community, belonging, integration and equality for young participants within the Saskatoon community.

SCYAP has been holding after-school and drop-in visual arts classes at its downtown centre since 2002. The drop-in and after school program is intended to work against social marginalization, gang involvement, crime and substance abuse among Saskatoon's children and youth, especially First Nations, Métis, diverse ethnic and street-involved young people.

All ages are welcome and the program aims to provide a safe, welcoming environment where young people can receive mentorship, skills and positive direction from caring adults; to encourage personal development and education by providing youth with an opportunity to explore their creativity and experience the benefits derived from art- and culture-based activities; and to encourage community integration and positive bonds between Saskatoon's young people regardless of economic, social, cultural or racial differences. SCYAP continues to enhance and expand drop-in programming by including cultural art activities and projects.

The program provides a safe environment and a constructive, holistic approach that can build self-confidence, social and cognitive skills and promote a healthy interaction between social groups and communities. The sessions are held in a fully equipped studio with large tables, art supplies and a clean-up area. Weekday activities can include instruction in art techniques, group projects, and individual projects. Some participants join in group projects in collage, painting, making puppets or sculpture. Others are aspiring artists who lack the space, resources and guidance to carry out their own projects.

"SCYAP has provided me with confidence and a new sense of hope"— Program Participant

How has your program been modified since the onset of COVID-19? Were there any obstacles you had to overcome? Any tips or lessons learned?

There have been many changes to SCYAP's programming as we navigate the pandemic.

During the COVID lock-down, we wanted to reach out to the community, as we could not be a place to gather during that time. SCYAP made individual *take-and-make* art kits for young people to do art activities at home. We recognize that art is not only fun, but a way to improve mental health, and stay active, during a time where young people had limited opportunities due to the lock-down.

We have followed all the provincial guidelines for COVID-19 in order to provide a safe and healthy environment for staff and participants, ensuring socially distanced program space, PPE for participants and facilitators, as well as limiting the number of participants and staff in our building.

