



Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples Fact Sheet

“Welcome the stranger then, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” – Deut. 10:19

- Receiving strangers and caring for them is the theme that runs through the history of Sacred Heart Parish from its beginnings to the present day.
- Sacred Heart Parish grew out of Immaculate Conception Parish, which had been erected in 1906 to accommodate immigrants to Edmonton.
- By 1911, Immaculate Heart Church was bursting at the seams, so Immaculate Heart Parish was reserved for francophone Catholics and Sacred Heart Parish, with the same parish boundaries, was erected for all other Catholics.
- For the first year of its existence, while Sacred Heart Church was being built across the street, the parishioners were accommodated through services in Immaculate Heart Church.
- Construction of Sacred Heart was completed in 1913. The beautiful structure was designed in the French Gothic Revival architectural style.
- Sacred Heart is one of the oldest churches in Edmonton
- Sacred Heart Church opened December 25, 1913. It was, and is, a beautiful structure in French Gothic Revival style, spacious and lofty but with an atmosphere of warmth and light.
- Several ethnic groups wanted to set up parishes which would reflect their origins, and Sacred Heart provided a base for them as they gathered resources to build their own churches.
- Over the years, the Italian parish ([Santa Maria Goretti](#)), the Spanish parish ([Our Lady of Guadalupe](#)), the Portuguese parish ([Our Lady of Fatima](#)), the Croatian parish ([Nativity of Mary](#)), and possibly others got their start at Sacred Heart.
- The welcome to be found at Sacred Heart Parish included people of all faiths and backgrounds, as the needy and hungry were received and helped. Food was given out informally at the door for many years, and then from a food bank in the church basement from 1980 till 1988, when the food bank relocated nearby.
- Every Christmas, volunteers from all over Edmonton vie for a chance to serve at the annual Sacred Heart Christmas dinner, which began in 1971.
- Much of the church was destroyed in a fire on November 16, 1966. Although a disaster, the fire's timing was a blessing: the Second Vatican Council, ending in December 1965, had updated the Roman Catholic liturgy, requiring each parish to remodel the body of its church to accommodate the new style of communal worship.
- The parish became Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples on October 27, 1991, when Archbishop Joseph MacNeil declared it Edmonton's First Nations, Métis and Inuit parish.
- In 1991, Archbishop Joseph McNeil officially designated Sacred Heart as Edmonton's First Nations, Métis and Inuit parish.

- The exterior of the building is unchanged in its classic lines and muted colors, but the church interior is now transformed with the vivid color and movement of our First Peoples parishioners.
- Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples continues the tradition of welcoming others and making them feel at home. People of all backgrounds are welcome to join in worship at the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Mass on Sunday mornings.
- The parish identity as a “nursery” of new ethnic parishes is also still strong. The Ethiopian Orthodox presently have a spiritual home at Sacred Heart while they build a church of their own.
- Edmonton Fire Rescue has determined that smouldering sage and ashes from a traditional smudging ceremony caused a devastating fire on Aug. 30, 2020.
- The rebuilding of Sacred Heart Church began in November 2021 at a cost of approximately \$3.5 million
- The church will be substantially completed by mid-July
- Archbishop Smith will consecrate the new church at that time
- A fundraising campaign is underway to raise approximately \$1.5 million to \$2 million for the rebuild
- The new look of the church will better reflect indigenous cultures. It will consist of teepee poles over the altar; a new natural look Altar that will include a tree trunk as base and natural edges; an ambo with natural live edges; a Baptistry and chapel have been added; and a new heating system has been installed. These features will greatly enhance the indigenous worship. A stained glass medicine wheel will be installed at the entrance of the church.
- Several additional features will include an Altar servers’ room, elders’ washroom, improved accessibility, and building code upgrades.