

Rod Stutt

Program head

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Rod Stutt sees the world through the eyes of an architect and someone who loves history. The prairie landscape of Saskatchewan and its built heritage tell a story, he says. You just have to know what to look for.



The premier hotel in Saskatoon, for instance, is the Bessborough Hotel. Those bricks were manufactured locally, at the heritage brick factory at Claybank, he explains. And Regina's magnificent Legislative Building is faced in cream-coloured Tyndall limestone from Manitoba.

When he moved to Saskatchewan in the 1970s, there was a building spree under way. Developers were tearing down everything in sight. New buildings were going up in a hurry.

Stutt was a recent graduate from the architecture school at McGill University. In Montreal at the time, architects were talking about the social value of buildings.

"It became second nature to be concerned about buildings and their fate," Stutt recalls.

In Saskatchewan he watched the destruction of beautiful buildings dating from the province's boom period in the early 1920s, and he knew that many people didn't realize what they were losing.

Rod Stutt is the program head of the Architectural Heritage and Building Renovation Program, at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology.

As a teacher and administrator, he has tried to educate new architectural and renovation specialists to see what is special and worth saving, even if they find themselves working on new construction projects.

The students start out with a strong interest in building and architecture. By the time they leave, they care about heritage too.

They come from different backgrounds, some straight from high school, others from work in contracting or real estate. Many are looking for a career change. Women count for 50% or more. Each year some 42 students enter the program.

The program has a diverse staff too—teachers skilled in interior design, contracting, architecture, and technology.

Over the program of five academic semesters and three work terms, students start to think and act like professionals.

Students have to put classroom theory into practice. Each year they study a building that is part of a construction site. Working in teams, they do a site analysis and design proposal, complete with an interior design plan appropriate to the building's age and style. Then they submit drawings, cost estimates, and information about building codes. Another requirement is to grade the building according to a heritage scoring scale.

"In theory, a person who does this course could manage a renovation project from beginning to end," Stutt says. "She or he would have the knowledge to make sure the building was structurally sound and the project comes in on budget. They could also ensure that the project would be sensitive to the heritage of the building and site."

Recently, students got to practice their skills when an Anglican Church parish in Moose Jaw approached them for help with background studies. The parish owned some vacant buildings and was not sure whether to preserve them or tear them down. The students assessed the buildings and their heritage value.



Rod Stutt's students conduct a site analysis

The final report—with design alternatives, drawings, budget estimates, and structural analyses—provided the information which the parish needed to proceed with the restoration of the stained glass windows and heritage façades.

Over the past twenty years there has been a huge shift in public thinking about heritage. People in Saskatchewan are now looking at their grandparents' generation—and what they built—with respect, Rod Stutt says with satisfaction.

By the time they finish the course, his students are well equipped to find jobs in architectural offices, engineering firms, and construction companies. No matter what field they work in, a knowledge of architectural heritage will serve them well.

Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology—
Architectural Heritage and Building Renovation Applied Certificate
program <http://www.siastr.sk.ca/siastr/educationtraining/appliedcertificate/technologyapplied/archheritage.htm>