

Culture Builds Community! **Engage**

Fall 2021

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1



Families Honour Former RIIS Students

Learning first-hand from Cultural Ambassadors

New Network of Landholders Upholds Treaty Rights

Engage

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ON THE COVER:

Some landholders in Saskatchewan are working in partnership with Indigenous peoples and groups to remove barriers to accessing land.

Photo by Valerie Zink.

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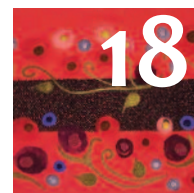
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“ We encourage all those that support a culturally vibrant Saskatchewan to consider how they too can support anti-racism efforts and bring about change. ”

– DEAN KUSH

Message from the CEO

Imagine, if you will, that there is a modern day Canada, that, for centuries, had valued and respected Indigenous cultures. Imagine that all settlers that arrived embraced this land's First peoples. Imagine that all those who arrived from afar were welcomed and accepted by other settler cultures. No residential schools. No internment camps. No head tax. No Indian Act. A nation without racism. It is really difficult to comprehend what Canada would look like now without colonialism, which is based on power, racism and an overwhelming sense of superiority.

Not being able to imagine a Canada without racism shows how racism, although sometimes overt, is insidious at the same time. Systemic racism creeps through time and changes structures, outcomes and impacts people's lives for decades, even centuries.

Obviously, we cannot turn back the clock. We do not have that luxury to push the reset button. However, there are those in our province that are doing their best to combat racism by providing opportunities for truth telling, sharing and learning.

SaskCulture, with support from Sask Lotteries, is steadfast in its support for initiatives designed to build understanding and end the impacts of racism, like those that featured in this issue of *Engage*. By providing learning opportunities, organizations such as the Regina Multicultural Council and the Saskatchewan Association of International Languages, are impacting the hearts and



minds of Saskatchewan's youth. The Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS) Commemorative Association is documenting and honouring stories of descendants of RIIS students. The Treaty Land Sharing network, in coordination with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, is doing innovative, respectful work with an aim to enable safe land access for Indigenous people and uphold the Treaties. These stories, along with many others, will help preserve and share the truth.

SaskCulture, itself, is looking inwards at our own programs, services and policies. Over the upcoming year, you will hear more about how SaskCulture's Funding Renewal Project will review funding programs and needs through a lens of inclusiveness, diversity, equity and access in an effort to help decrease colonial and systemic issues.

In addition, we continue to develop partnerships with Indigenous and newcomer groups to help us gain a better understanding of the changes needed.

We tip our hats to all those who are putting their hearts, minds and hands into combatting racism on a daily basis, and applaud those who wish to share the true historical portraits of this land. We encourage all those that support a culturally vibrant Saskatchewan to consider how they too can support anti-racism efforts and bring about change. SaskCulture will continue to do its best to support you in your work. Your work is valued. Your work is vital.

Dean Kush

The Regina Multicultural Council is connecting Grades 5 to 8 students in Regina Public and Regina Catholic school Divisions to different cultures. Photos courtesy of the Regina Multicultural Council.

A photograph of a white picket fence running diagonally across a grassy field. In the background, there are trees and a clear sky. The fence is made of white-painted wooden pickets and rails. The grass is dry and yellowish-brown. A large tree with green leaves is on the right side of the frame. In the distance, some industrial structures are visible under a clear blue sky.

Honouring the Voices of Descendants of Regina Indian Industrial School Students

BY NICKITA LONGMAN



The Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS) Commemorative Association is preparing to honour the stories of the children who rest in the cemetery, located on the land of a former Industrial school, with a project called Sharing and Gathering Oral Stories of RIIS Descendants.

In June 2019, RIIS Commemorative Association was successful in securing the cemetery from previous public land ownership, to being full stewards of the cemetery located on the west side of Regina's outskirts. Throughout the last decade, the organization has had numerous volunteer members and board members with various skills ranging from archival support, to event planning, to landscape maintenance. For the first time since RIIS was formed in 2011, the association is eager to welcome a Cultural Researcher/Producer and Engagement Coordinator to assist with a new project that will honour the descendants of those who attended the Regina Indian Industrial School.

"Now that we have some of the logistics of the site solidified, the educational component is our next endeavour," says Sarah Longman, the association's Board Chair. "We want to ensure that young people are aware of the significance and impact this [site] has on our history, and we want to provide them with the knowledge to share with their family and peers. It's transferring the knowledge down to the next generation of people who will carry this forward."

One of the primary goals of this unique position is to build connections and relationships with the family members of the students who attended the Regina Indian Industrial School, as well as creating a digital platform and space for descendants from all over Canada to gather and share their stories. A digital space will help build a better understanding for the community as a whole. Based on documentation and word-of-mouth, the former attendees' home communities are spread across Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, and even areas south of the border.

Janine Windolph, a member of the association since 2013, believes this project, especially in a virtual format, will act as the start of a legacy for community members in the area to begin to share their stories. "The role, projects and

events support the organization in developing deeper relationships with communities already involved, and to build and foster relationships with Residential School Survivors."

As far as a starting point, the organization will tap into their archival support. "We are fortunate to have archival information from the school and it puts us in a really unique position," Longman says. "We have names, health conditions, home communities, names of parents and other documentation that will help lead us to the storytelling component." And while the archives will help a great deal, there are also some hurdles the organization will have to overcome, such as navigating the misspelling of family names, community names, and reserve communities that no longer exist.

Once stories are gathered, the association envisions a means to distribute these in virtual and accessible formats such as podcasts, virtual Sharing Circles, and an online symposium. "We are engaging with Elders in a safe, virtual way that we never imagined before that has pushed us to adjust to a contemporary way of sharing knowledge," Longman says. "This project will continue to share these traditional stories by teaching in a contemporary and accessible way that can reach a wide scope of descendants and reach an even bigger audience." Echoing a similar sentiment, Windolph feels confident that building a concept of community and shared responsibility, as well as connection and support, are all possible with virtual platforms. To follow along with the project's progression and keep up with upcoming events, follow RIIS Commemorative Association on Facebook.

This project was supported through SaskCulture's Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Grant.



The Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS) Commemorative Association is creating an online platform for RIIS descendants to share their stories. Photos courtesy of the Regina Indian Industrial School Commemorative Association.

Workshop Helps Preserve Métis Traditional Art Form

BY BUSAYO OSOBADE



Beading and storytelling are part of many Indigenous cultures – and are often key to sharing traditions with new generations. This year, Gabriel Dumont Local #11, a Saskatoon Métis organization, offered a new beading workshop to its members, with the aim of sharing stories and reviving a traditional art form.

Cheryl Troupe, member of the Local #11, says the biggest goal of the Sewing Circle: Octopus Bag and Storytelling Workshops was to bring people together to learn how to make these types of traditional bags, because there are not a lot of people still around that make them.

Cheryl Troupe incorporated personal stories while designing her Octopus Bag.
Photo courtesy of the Gabriel Dumont Local #11.

“By making these bags, we are reviving an age-old cultural practice. We wanted to make sure that skill and knowledge was preserved and that people who gained this knowledge could continue to share,” she says adding that the workshop has given 12 Métis beaders and sewers the “skills to make them, a step-by-step guide on how to make them and the history behind the bags.”

Troupe explains that the Métis traditional bag is influenced by Anishinaabe fire bags and are named “Octopus Bags” due to the eight legs hanging at the bottom of each bag.

“Historically, the bags were decorated with beadwork, embroidery or quillwork. They were usually decorated in similar but different patterns, on both sides,” she says. “These were commonly used by Métis men

in the 18th and 19th century to carry tinder, flint, tobacco and other necessities.”

The virtual workshop, which ran from February to May in 2021, was supported with funding from the Métis Cultural Development Fund. Participants learned the skills to make these bags, which took at least 300 hours to complete. The training was led by Greg Scofield, a talented beadworker, who is also poet and a storyteller. Scofield shared historic pieces from his personal collection, as well as the history of traditional Octopus Bags, sewing techniques and beading designs. “There were lots of good storytelling and laughter,” says Troupe. “Everybody that was participating shared their own stories about learning to sew or bead from their grandmother, mother or someone in their family. Through sewing, all of those kinds of stories came out.”

Many personal stories were also sewn and beaded into each traditional bag. Troupe says she was thinking about wildflowers she grew up knowing while creating her Octopus Bag.

“Each bag is unique and has its own story. Many of us will teach others and by this, we are rejuvenating this art form,” she says. “We had a member of our Local, who looked at a design that her great grandmother had beaded and incorporated similar designs into her bag.”

The bags created were featured in an arts exhibit at the Batoche National Historic Site and the Motherwell Homestead National Historic Site.

“Everybody was really pleased with their bags. Some were surprised they could do something so elaborate and so beautiful because it was a tremendous amount of work.”



The Métis Cultural Development Fund is now delivered by Gabriel Dumont Institute in partnership with SaskCulture.

Visit saskculture.ca/mcdf for more information.



Room for Exploring Cultures

Together at the Reading Place

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING



A new interactive program, Exploring Cultures Together, is helping to increase children's cultural awareness through access, exposure, instruction, displays, hands-on activities and appropriate culture-based readings in an environment that helps share aspects of different cultures.

Exploring Cultures Together offers a range of culturally-themed rooms at The Reading Place, Child and Youth Development by Reading Inc., located in the Battlefords, engaging participants in different cultures. Children can select culture-based books at The Reading Place and read them in the culture room of their choice, allowing them to really immerse themselves in that culture, including visual exposure to all the cultural items in the room. The rooms, currently under development, will be open fall 2021.

According to Cheryl Carley, president, The Reading Place, at this point a room that celebrates First Nations cultures is close to completion, with the focal point being a real tipi, complete with artificial grass, campfire, 3-d effect trees, bushes, animals and a creek. Extensive partnership has already taken place with Indigenous organizations and individuals and will continue. Other rooms include the journey New Canadians have made and what they have left behind. "It is about honouring everyone's journeys," she explains.

The Exploring Cultures Together program hopes to teach children to share, learn, appreciate and respect their own and other cultures in a way that is very real for them and embeds in their minds and hearts for a lifetime. The resources are aimed at children Grades 1 to 4. "By entirely focusing on children in these grades we are catching them in their formative years by immersing them in different cultures in a very realistic manner," Carley notes. "Children are still learning about their world and it is amazing how fluid they can be regarding acceptance of others if given the right environment. We aim to guide children to



a deeper cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of other cultures.”

Reading is a key part of this learning experience. “There are so many cultures and they all have amazing things about them that are exciting to learn. That is what we want to bring to the children,” says Carley. She anticipates that individual and group visits to The Reading Place during the year will be in excess of 3,000 children or more. “We will be highlighting First Nations and Filipino cultures for the entire year. Specific cultures will be highlighted for a month each.”

Besides reading, children will also create cultural items they can take home; listen to stories; learn dances and songs; learn about specific holidays; participate as assistant presenters; and directly interact with culture leaders. Through interaction and dialogue, creating projects together and exchanging ideas, Carley explains that, “children will become a big part of the presentations. The experience will become a part of them and something they value.”

During Culture Days in 2021, the group plans to take cultural presentations into schools and the local Boys and Girls Club, encouraging students to trace their own ancestry. Children can mark their country or place of origin on a large map, which will become part of a display in the Celebration of Culture room at The Reading Place.

“Covid-19 definitely slowed us down, but did not stop us,” says Carley. “Currently we are retrofitting the rooms into their cultural themes. Exploring Cultures Together will be an ongoing project.”

The Reading Place hopes to open children’s eyes to other cultures. “If we can help children to admire and respect other cultures at a young age, there will be way less likelihood they will grow up with racist opinions. Knowledge is such a huge element in changing people. Focusing on children in grades one to four will help combat racism and create a deeper cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of cultures. Only by sharing and learning will these individuals come to appreciate and respect their own and other cultures.”

This project was supported through SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund.

Alvin Baptiste shares the process of creating a tipi, which is set up in The Reading Place.

Photos by Cheryl Carley.



Connections to Others Key to Common Ground

BY SCOTT STELMASCHUK



When newcomers arrive in Canada, their first impressions of Indigenous peoples are often based on myths and coloured by the negative stereotypes of others. A project in Prince Albert aims to break down these stereotypes and help newcomers connect directly with First Nations and Métis peoples to hear their stories and learn the truth.

The Common Ground project, which started as a pilot in Prince Albert in 2015, has continued to make headway, bringing different agencies together and helping to foster awareness and understanding among different cultural groups, with a particular emphasis on connecting recent newcomers with Indigenous peoples. While it started with the Building Relationships Through Intercultural Dialogue and Engagement in Saskatchewan (BRIDGES) project, Common Ground has continued to develop new programs that address misconceptions and support anti-racism education.

Much of its work is designed to build cultural understanding, particularly the understanding that newcomers have coming to this country. “Getachew Woldeyesus, a Settlement Services

Manager from the Regina Open Door Society, recognized that newcomers were chronically misinformed about Indigenous peoples and cultures,” says Lemoya Lorensen, project coordinator, Common Ground Project. An effort to dispel myths, coupled with the TRC Calls to Action, guided the formation of the project.

“The ethnocultural landscape that comprises Saskatchewan is continually changing,” says Lorensen. “With this change, the BRIDGES project was born to promote intercultural relationships, culture sharing, and reduce biases between recent newcomers and Indigenous communities. Common Ground represents the local organization of the provincial BRIDGES work.”

As part of its work, Common Ground has focused on building interagency partnerships that could contribute to the creation of a more cohesive and inclusive community. This includes bringing together the Prince Albert Multicultural Council, YWCA Prince Albert, and Indian Métis Friendship Centre to organize activities.

According to Lorensen, “The pilot project focused on building the interagency partnership relationships and developing activities to foster deeper-level intercultural relationships, with a focus on Indigenous and newcomer communities. These connections help to reduce biases and preconceptions between the target communities and develop opportunities to share, understand, and find ‘Common Ground’ with one another.”

Besides events held in part with the Tapestrama Cultural Festival, standalone events such as Round Dances and Potluck Suppers, Common Ground increased its focus on anti-racism and Reconciliation with its Creative Connections for Youth project, as well as an Anti-Racism Forum.

This past year, Common Ground has made a particular focus on activities centered on recognizing the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. “We held two ‘Colonialism on Canvas’ sessions, one as part of the Creative Connections for

Youth program, that featured a local artist and activist. Each offered a perspective on racism within the city and the province,” explains Lorensen.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to offering more traditional programming. “Throughout the project, we’ve often held live events that featured speakers, activities, and food. These types of events could not be held under ever-changing COVID guidelines,” says Lorensen. “In adapting, we tried to develop activities that were highly interactive. This included sending out painting kits for our Colonialism on Canvas sessions, the use of icebreakers and breakout rooms in Zoom sessions, and integrating new platforms such as Facebook Groups, Microsoft Teams, and Google Hangouts.”

“The BRIDGES project was born to promote intercultural relationships, culture sharing, and reduce biases between recent newcomers and Indigenous communities.”

LEMOYA LORENSEN

Despite these challenges, Common Ground continues to find room to grow. “Ad hoc relationships have been the key to ensuring representation that reflects different communities. Our agency partnership has grown to include the Lakeland District for Sport, Culture & Recreation and the Métis Central Northwest Region, allowing us to increase our capacity to deliver activities and services that involve the whole community.”

As it evolves, Common Ground continues to provide the connections that benefit the community as a whole. “It is important to remember that no one individual is an expert on a whole culture, but only of themselves. These one-on-one opportunities to communicate on a human level or as peers paves the way for deeper connections with others.”

This project received support through SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund, funded by Sask Lotteries.

Métis Point Painting and Finger Weaving event held in December of 2019. Photo by Trevor Dubois.



Embracing Differences:

Learning first-hand from Cultural Ambassadors

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING

Building on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, in particular Call #63 to "build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect", a unique program brings cultural ambassadors into classrooms, helping students connect directly with different cultures and add to their individual understanding of diversity.

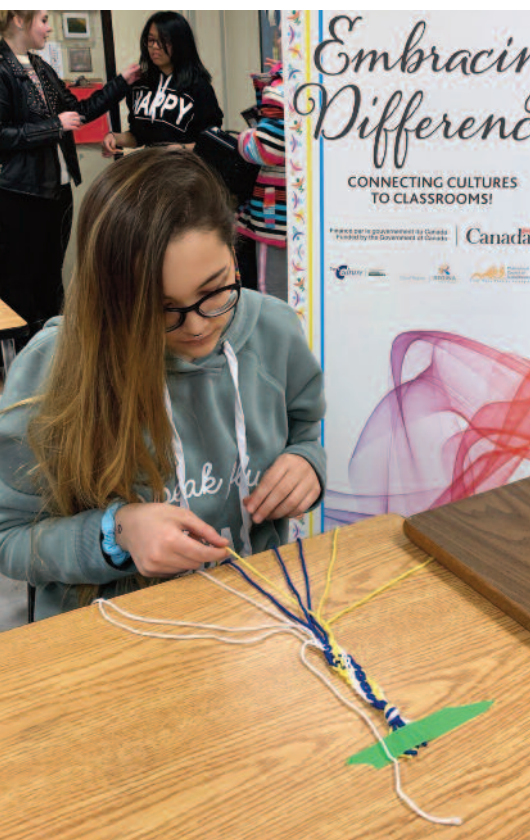
Embracing Differences, a multi-year project coordinated by the Regina Multicultural Council, connects Grades 5-8 students in Regina Public and Regina Catholic School Divisions with cultural ambassadors from a diversity of backgrounds. Currently recognized as a one-of-a-kind program in Canada, the project's objective is "to build an

“Participants share how much they've learned or appreciated or things they didn't know ... its trying to reach and have that connection with one another in a community where we all feel safe and have an opportunity to thrive.”

HOLLY PALUCK

integrated, socially cohesive society through building bridges to promote cultural understanding via participation, engaged learning, and relationship-based experiences with people from diverse backgrounds who would otherwise not have the opportunity to meet”.

The direct contact makes a difference. “Students were able to tap into community resources, instead of finding information on the internet that may or may not be reliable; this program supports learning in the classroom, in the ambassador's own voice, experience, and teachings about the culture,” explains Holly Paluck, co-chair, Regina Multicultural Council Embracing Differences Planning Committee. “It's even more successful than we could have hoped or dreamed.”



According to Paluck, the project has grown each year, reaching almost 1,000 students in the first year. Now, in its third year, attendance has almost doubled, proving that there is a hunger for this kind of educational opportunity. The project currently works with ambassadors from First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Romanian, Chinese, East Indian, Pakistani, Ukrainian, German, and Turkish cultural backgrounds and continues to seek new ambassadors to meet the growing demand.

The program promotes understanding of each other, equality versus equity, complex issues around refugees and newcomers, First Peoples, and other cultures from around the globe, exposing participants to ideas they maybe haven't thought of before. Cultural teachings are provided with an interactive activity, which provides a memorable way to engage with the culture.

"This changes the hearts, minds, and behaviours of students and teachers," says Paluck, adding they also reach families

when kids share their learnings at home. "It's a far-reaching impact. Participants share how much they've learned or appreciated or things they didn't know...it's trying to reach and have that connection with one another in a community where we all feel safe and have the opportunity to thrive."

She explains that providing authentic teachings from members of another cultural group helps to counter stereotypes and inaccuracies while promoting diversity and inclusion.

The pandemic required that Embracing Differences programming move online, but adapting to remote delivery, with live video conferencing and pre-filmed content, was very successful. The program currently receives federal funding from Heritage Canada, along with funding support from Sask Lotteries (via SaskCulture's Multicultural Initiative Fund), Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan and the City of Regina.

Grade 5-8 students in Regina are learning how to accept and embrace different cultures. Photos courtesy of the Regina Multicultural Council.

Program Helps Heritage Languages Thrive

BY DAVE MARGOSHES



This is a land of many languages. From the diversity of languages of the First Peoples to those of the many newcomers who have arrived over the years, Saskatchewan brings together a wealth of different linguistic cultures. Work to encourage the use and preservation of languages is an ongoing challenge. This is why the Saskatchewan Association of International Languages (SAIL), recently rebranded from the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages (SOHL), is dedicated to helping heritage languages thrive in the province.

For the last 35 years, SAIL has been supporting knowledgeable volunteer language teachers throughout the province, giving students training in international languages and culture.

Gord Zakreski, executive director, SAIL, explains that while the federal government has responsibility for Canada's two official languages, English and French, the grassroots' demand to pay attention to, what were then referred to as "heritage" languages, led to the organization's creation in 1985.

Its Mini-Language Lessons Program (MLLP), which delivers eight hours of language and cultural lessons to classrooms, was designed "to help students learn about the other languages and cultures of other countries and societies," Zakreski says. "This in turn was aimed at promoting multiculturalism and a better understanding here in Saskatchewan of other cultures around the world."

Of course, students can't actually become fluent in a language in eight, one-hour sessions, but they can learn some useful words, like "hello", days of the week, months, time and so on and develop an interest in language learning from a young age.

SAIL is currently offering mini-classes in 12 languages: Arabic, Chinese, German, Tagalog (Philippines), Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Ukrainian, Yoruba and Cree. Interestingly, in the last few years, Cree has been the language most in demand, often in schools that have few or no Indigenous students, Zakreski says. "We feel this is a positive carryover from the Truth and Reconciliation Report and its Calls to Action."

In the 35 years of its operation, over 10,000 students across Saskatchewan have benefitted from the program.

Over the years, the program has played an important role in assisting and facilitating the integration of recent immigrant students within the school system. According to Zakreski, the mini-language lessons introduce the language of newcomer students to their classmates, leading to a breakdown of barriers and promotion of inclusion throughout the school.

"If there's a new student from Afghanistan or Syria, it really helps if other students can say hello and 'my name is so-an-so, what's yours?'" Zakreski says.

And, he adds, "If you can reach out to children, it usually spills over to the parents." The experience for the majority of the students "has been awesome," he says. "The classroom feedbacks have been great and both the classroom teachers and students always look forward to having the MLLP program for the next session."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the program has been delivered via a hybrid of in-person and on-line classes. The on-line classes "aren't as good, but it's still a great experience for the kids."

SAIL, which is funded through SaskCulture and Sask Lotteries, in turn provides financial assistance to individual language schools operated by various ethnic groups. These schools have become increasingly popular, with more than 50 operating throughout the province. In Saskatoon alone, as an example, there are 28 such schools, teaching 21 different languages, from Arabic to Yoruba.

Students from many of these schools take part in other SAIL projects, including annual Heritage Language Day celebrations, which showcase the diverse languages and culture being taught with displays, singing and dancing.

Students from Saskatoon's Heritage Chinese Language School perform at the City's 2020 Heritage Day celebration in Saskatoon. Photo courtesy of the SAIL.

Building an Anti-Racist Workplace: SHFS Board and Staff Commit to Training

BY BUSAYO OSOBADE



From statements to pledges to actions, cultural groups are exploring authentic ways to address racism. Like many organizations, the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) created statements to express their solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) people on issues — such as the confirmation of children’s graves at former Residential schools or key issues in the Black Lives Matter movement — but they did not stop at the statements.

The SHFS board and staff felt it was important to commit to concrete actions by committing to anti-racism training. “We wanted something that would help us start to acknowledge and address the ways systemic racism operates within our own organization,” says Kristin Enns-Kavanagh, executive director, SHFS. “We hope to come away with an action plan for our organization that is specific to what we do as a non-profit history organization... there is much that can be done around historical narratives that promote and sustain the status quo.”

The training, Anti-Racism – Complete Curriculum, is offered through the Saskatchewan Anti-Racism Network. Enns-Kavanagh says the team has been through

the first two modules of the training, which explored basic concepts, and the structures that support racial injustice. The next module will be about strategies to challenge racism in different spaces.

“For me, it really helped to have an external facilitator come in with excellent data on the impacts and outcomes of racial injustice in Saskatchewan,” she says. “Much work has been done to name and understand the specific structures and processes of racism, and getting access to that information, for me, was really helpful — to fix something, you have to be able to name and describe it, particularly when we are talking about the systemic level.”

When asked for tips that other groups could consider in the fight against racism, she says the right place to start for one group might be different from another.

“For us (SHFS), education has been helpful. For me, too, I think what has been helpful is not seeing anti-racism work as something you do once in a session or event. It’s been helpful to see it as a practice that is ongoing in the life of the organization,” she says, adding that as a history organization, they’ve been thinking hard about what their specific role is in this

work. “Choosing The Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action that applied to us helped. For us, the Calls that made the most sense were those directed at museums around ‘education for Reconciliation.’”

She notes that not every initiative has worked out well for the organization — there have been successes, and failures “But we try to acknowledge our mistakes, do what is needed to correct the situation, learn from the experience, and keep going.”

For SHFS, the overall goal is to have a changed organization, to operate more authentically in the world. Enns-Kavanagh adds, “For too long history has only told part of the story, so to truly be our authentic selves, we have to operate with the full understanding of where we have come from and how we got here, the good and the bad. It’s not about feeling guilty, it’s about acknowledging the past, learning from it, and moving forward with a different, better legacy for the future.”

SHFS receives funding from Sask Lotteries.

The SHFS Board (as of September 2020) and staff committed to anti-racism training with the hope of having a changed organization. Photo courtesy of SHFS.

Working to end Racism One Step at a time

While many organizations are speaking out and taking actions against racism, others still find it difficult to truly integrate these actions into their workplace.

To work to end racism, it is important to take a systematic approach: understand the issues; be able to identify it when you see it; deepen personal awareness; learn to accept and celebrate cultural differences; and step up to stop racism when it appears.

Racism can be embedded in many different policies, relationships and operations, and may not always be obvious. This is why organizational leaders must be intentional about what they are doing to tackle the issue systematically. Change requires commitment from leaders and engagement of all team members. An article on Harvard Business School's website, written by Becca Carnhan, recommends some actionable steps to support anti-racism within an organization.

Have conversations about anti-racism:

Build understanding of what racism is and what it looks like in an organization. Learn more about different cultures and support increased understanding. These conversations should not be a one-time thing. Be consistent. Be intentional. Set up regular meetings to have conversations around anti-racism with your team.

Audit your policies: Some organizations' policies are still reinforcing the marginalization of some groups. Go over your policies, audit and assess how the decisions your organization has made years ago could be impacting some of your staff members.

Find ways to hold your organization accountable: Be an anti-racist organization in action, not just in words. Include Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) in your organization's key goals and attach metrics that will define its success.

Set the tone as leaders: It is never going to be easy. You are going to make mistakes.

Ensure you hold yourself accountable and learn from those mistakes.

Building an anti-racist organization and creating racial equity is ongoing work. It never really ends. Not every step you take for your organization will be successful. You'll make mistakes but that's okay, it's part of the learning process. Like the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society, organizations can also engage staff and board in anti-racism training – this training is aimed at teaching people and organizations to recognize ways that white privilege and implicit bias are a part of their behaviors and organizations. There are many anti-racism training programs available to help individuals and organizations address the changes needed.


The Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan offers resources and workshops designed to help organizations take necessary steps to be part of the change needed to end racism.

Stop **BAHD** Behaviour

It is important for cultural leaders to be aware of BAHD behaviour, which includes **Bullying, Abuse, Harassment and Discrimination** – how it can occur, how it can be prevented, and how to handle it when it turns up in your organization.

Steps include:

1  Learn more about BAHD behaviour.

2 Understand how to prevent and handle BAHD behaviour. 

3  Call the SaskCulture Respect Line: 1-888-329-4009 for advice.

4 Access Training. 

Visit www.saskculture.ca/programs/respectline to understand, access resources and be part of the solution to preventing bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination in cultural programming.

Moose Jaw

On Track with its Culture Plan

BY DAVE MARGOSHES



Many cities with checkered pasts do their best to erase and forget the sordid details. Not Moose Jaw. Saskatchewan's fourth largest city (just a hair behind Prince Albert) revels in its notoriety, proudly calling itself "Canada's most notorious city."

That notoriety includes a history of rum-running, gangsters (Al Capone was reputed to have been a visitor) prostitution, police corruption, the Zoot Suit Riot and the infamous tunnels that, so the legend goes, sheltered persecuted Chinese immigrants as well as bootleggers. Some of this is depicted and celebrated in the city's famous murals (almost 50 strong). Of course, there's not much notorious stuff going on in Moose Jaw now – its history has become part of the city's vibrant culture.

Now, Moose Jaw is attempting to capitalize even further on that culture. With the aid of a Community Engagement

“The Plan “will help the city better support cultural vitality, creativity, and economic sustainability.”

DEREK BLAIS

and Planning Grant from SaskCulture, the city's Parks, Recreation and Culture department has embarked on a several-year project to develop a Culture Plan. Work on it began in June following a green light from City council.

Derek Blais, department director, City of Moose Jaw, explains that the purpose of the Plan “is to develop a strategic approach that integrates the community's cultural resources into a wide range of planning activities.” Partnering with a wide array of community groups representing arts, cultural, heritage, business, social and

environmental sectors, the Plan “will help the city better support cultural vitality, creativity, and economic sustainability.”

The commitment, interest, “and buy-in from community stakeholders has been tremendous,” he adds.

The first step was formation of a committee made up of community members representing 14 different organizations including: Moose Jaw Pride, Moose Jaw Residents Against Racism and Discrimination, Wakamow Aboriginal Community Association and New Southern Plains Métis Local #160. During the summer, the committee worked with a paid consultant to gather background data. In the fall it “will begin developing a map of our community's key cultural assets,” Blais says. The map, he noted, “will be a great benefit for tourism and economic development in our city, especially as we begin the COVID-19 recovery process.”

Many of the committee members were surprised to learn how many cultural assets, resources and organizations there are in Moose Jaw, “and all the opportunities that currently exist,” Blais says. “This has led to many discussions on how these opportunities can be expanded through the collaboration of organizations.”

The fruits of that research will be used to draft a report on the state of culture in Moose Jaw. The goal, Blais says, is to have the Phase 1 research report presented to City Council early next year, and then to move into the “Engagement Phase,” with development of short and long-term strategic goals.

Among the goals of the total project are the enhancement of community pride and “to create greater inclusion among groups that have traditionally faced marginalization.” Blais says. “It is anticipated that the relationships formed through the cultural planning process will greatly improve communication and collaboration between community organizations and enhance community pride.

“One of the comments made at our initial committee meeting that really caught my attention is that ‘Culture and diversity are a fact and inclusion is necessary.’ I personally think this statement will be one of the core values of the committee moving forward.”

The Moose Jaw Trolley is part of the City's history. Photos courtesy of the City of Moose Jaw.

Re-Imagining Cultural Intersections: Exploring connections between Indigenous and Newcomer artists

BY SCOTT STELMASCHUK



Making cross-cultural connections can, not only help bring about shared understanding, but it can help identify solutions to bigger issues. By bringing together artists from different backgrounds – Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), as well as newcomers to Canada, On Cue Performance Hub wanted to create a space for discussion about shared ideas, or intersections, relating to decolonization and socio-cultural realities.

“The project was envisioned to ignite a discussion around collaborations, and practices of working together, from a position of diversity and multiculturalism,” says Rania al-Harthi, project coordinator, On Cue Performance Hub.

Another On Cue Project Coordinator, Taiwo Afolabi adds, “Understanding the need to have deeper conversations about both the immigrant community of artists and Indigenous communities, how we could come together and speak about issues that are important to both communities, is what sparked all of this.”

al-Harthi explains that “The main goal was to find new ways to re-imagine together on this land. Some of the questions they discussed as performing artists included: What opportunities for shared experience do Indigenous, BIPOC, newcomer and immigrant performing artists encounter here? and why do or don’t artists want to challenge labels or boxes that characterize their creative work as ‘multicultural’ or ‘traditional arts’ and tend to determine venues or organizations that host their work?”

She adds that the project participants also explored more fundamental questions, such as, “How do First Nations artists and their experiences and insights connect with artists from settler communities (new or longer term) or other racialized minorities. In particular are there common experiences of genocide and enforced cultural assimilation? And what role do they think performing artists and live performance can play in Truth and Reconciliation?”

The project hoped to create a safe space where artists could have challenging conversations around similar, and different, situations that were facing BIPOC artists and how artists could help to move Truth and Reconciliation forward in addressing these challenges. Project participants included: Joseph Naytowhow, Rania al Harthi, Taiwo Afolabi, Mustafa Alabassi, Ayesha Mohsin, Bongani Musa, and Skyler Anderson.

“The opportunity to have a forum where you can have connections with one another, regardless of background, allows artist to connect with one another and share,” says Afolabi. “Joseph [Naytowhow], in particular, was someone I was able to connect with and build this creative, professional network that expands the experience of all who took part in it.”

The project, which received funding from SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund, was impacted by the closure of venues due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which lead to adapting conversations and connections to digital platforms, such as Zoom. “The pandemic helped us explore the creation of virtual spaces and how to work outside of the in-person experiences,” says Afolabi. “The project has grown beyond what was originally intended, to find ways to ensure that it remains an educational piece that people can use and watch after the fact.” A video resource will be the next step of that project.

An in-person forum is scheduled to take place in October 2021, inside an exhibition at the Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina, which highlights inclusion and diversity.

At the end of the project, al Harthi is hopeful that the experiences shared through these conversations will serve as starting point for better cross-cultural understanding.

“Encouraging the community to leave colonial-segregated ways of thinking and working behind us and move together with goodness for all. Believing that we can start again, the right way.”

This project received support through SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund, funded by Sask Lotteries.

Carmen Papalia with Vo Vo and jes sachse under a sound-reducing dome, surrounded by an upward spiraling scaffolding ramp. The two are looking at each other, one sitting on sandbags and the other in a wheelchair. Photo courtesy of Nicolle Nugent.

New Network of Landholders Upholds Treaty Rights

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING



Treaties are negotiated agreements that define the rights and responsibilities between Indigenous groups and governments. The numbered Treaties were signed in Saskatchewan nearly 150 years ago. Since that time, many barriers to exercising Indigenous inherent rights and Treaty rights have been created. Today, a group of dedicated landholders are working together with Indigenous groups and peoples to address these barriers and share land as Treaties intended.

The Treaty Land Sharing Network (TLSN), which receives support from SaskCulture's Community Cultural Engagement and Planning Grant, is a group of settlers in Saskatchewan who came together, in partnership with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, to begin the crucial work of honouring and implementing Treaties, primarily by committing publicly to make land use safe for Indigenous peoples. In part, discussions about Treaty Land Entitlement, the selling of Crown lands, the enactment of the Trespassing legislation and the death of Colten Boushie, a 22-year old Cree man who was

shot and killed by a non-Indigenous farmer near Biggar, have led to this work.

Since February of 2019, organizers have been approaching ranchers, farmers, and other rural people around discussions of safe access to land for Indigenous peoples.

In November 2019, these settler land holders came together with Indigenous Elders, hunters, and other land users at the Treaty 4 Governance Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle. They spent a full day together, sharing experiences and perspectives on barriers to land access, as well as concrete solutions.

"Many Saskatchewan settlers came forward who were ready to live up to their responsibilities as Treaty people," notes Hillary Aitken, member of the TLSN Coordinating Committee, adding that nearly 320 committed farmers, ranchers, and other landholders are now part of the network. "In the spirit of sharing the land, members commit to list their name on the online directory and post signs on the land they hold title to, stating "Indigenous land users welcome", with a contact phone number. Members are found throughout the province in Treaty 4 and 6."

The Treaty Land Sharing Network plans to continue to expand land access through public communication, direct outreach to Indigenous people, and educational relationship-building opportunities. Educational sessions will include bringing together all participants to share lessons learned and enhance collective understanding of colonization in Saskatchewan and the responsibilities of settlers.

"We were overwhelmed with the positive response to the public launch of the network on July 15, 2021. Media coverage poured in from across the province, even reaching the *Globe and Mail*, *CBC National*, and *Toronto Star*," notes Aitken.

Financial support from SaskCulture has meant three in-person land-sharing events thus far, in-person gatherings, and numerous on-line educational opportunities such as book clubs or seminars. Indigenous land users already have Inherent and Treaty rights, but the network connects users and landholders to support safer use. Described as "tangible reconciliation in action", Indigenous land users can access the farmland in the network to gather plants, medicines, hunt, and hold ceremonies.

"We have also launched a website with an online directory, created promotional materials, and distributed nearly 50 signs to landholders," Aitken adds. "We look forward to continuing to grow the network. We want to focus on direct outreach to Indigenous land users so that they are aware of the network and the land that is available for safe access. We look forward to furthering our goal of enabling safe land access and upholding Treaties."

Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson notes that it is the people who will lead the way in terms of upholding the Treaties at a grassroots and land-based level; everyone is encouraged to participate.

Further information for both land-holders and land users can be found at TLSN's website. A quote from Angela Roque on the website notes "we require access to land in order to exercise Treaty rights and meet the needs of the communities".

TLSN has not only opened access to privately held land, it has opened a possibility to build respectful and positive relationships based on the Treaty principles of mutual respect and mutual benefit.

Landholders work together with Indigenous peoples and groups to address land barriers.

Photo by Valerie Zink.



Art as a Story:

How Melanie Rose Uses Art as Expression

BY SCOTT STELMASCHUK

Melanie Rose has always been an artist. “Both sides of my family, Métis and Ukrainian, are very creative in music, writing, and making. I come from a family of makers, it’s always been part of my roots.” Melanie and her sister took this family tradition and turned it into microbusinesses, making and sell natural jewelry. She has since gone on to explore the colourful and creative discipline of fibre arts and share her talents with others.

Rose was one of three artists who worked on SaskCulture’s Culture Days project, held in partnership with Dream Brokers, to create a series of instructional videos that walk children and youth through art creation. With her background and experiences as a facilitator, she was intrigued when she heard about the Culture365 opportunity. “Education, and arts education particularly, is very important to me, so I saw it as a good fit to give children a unique art experience during the pandemic.”

She created needle-felting and wet-felting videos, along with instruction sheets, available online, which will be of interest to students and at-home crafters. “Felt is a unique medium, one that is not something children would have gotten to use often before, so it’s an experience for them,” she says.

In the videos, Rose provides her cultural perspectives and hopes that the instruction will help those who have been disconnected from their cultures, reclaim them. “When I was younger, I was involved in my mother’s Ukrainian heritage and culture and was able to express myself creatively through that lens,” says Melanie. “As I got older, I started to connect more with my Métis ancestry.



“Art is a powerful tool to learn about our shared histories. It can inspire us to create, but it can also inspire us to learn.”

MELANIE ROSE



“A large part of the reason I hadn’t done so when I was younger, which is true for a lot of Métis people in Saskatchewan, is that a lot of our ancestors hid their Métis ancestry for the sake of safety. So being able to openly talk to that, to connect to that history in a way that my grandmother, Olive Rose, never had an opportunity to do, is such a gift.”

While Rose was excited at the chance to share her knowledge in a digital format, she did admit that it was not without its challenges. “There was definitely a learning curve when it comes to recording videos by myself,” she says. “There are little tricks you learn as you go, and the pandemic has definitely made it so a lot of us are having to learn these new skills.

“In the end, being able to provide this project digitally is awesome,” she adds. “Hopefully all the skills and techniques we’ve learned over the last year will produce even better and stronger projects going forward.”

She also hopes that the workshops will allow participants to connect to art and their own cultures in personal ways. “I hope that the projects help others identify

what inspires them,” she notes. “Their history, or their culture, or other works that help them tell their personal stories. We all have our own cultures and histories, and art helps us tell those stories.”

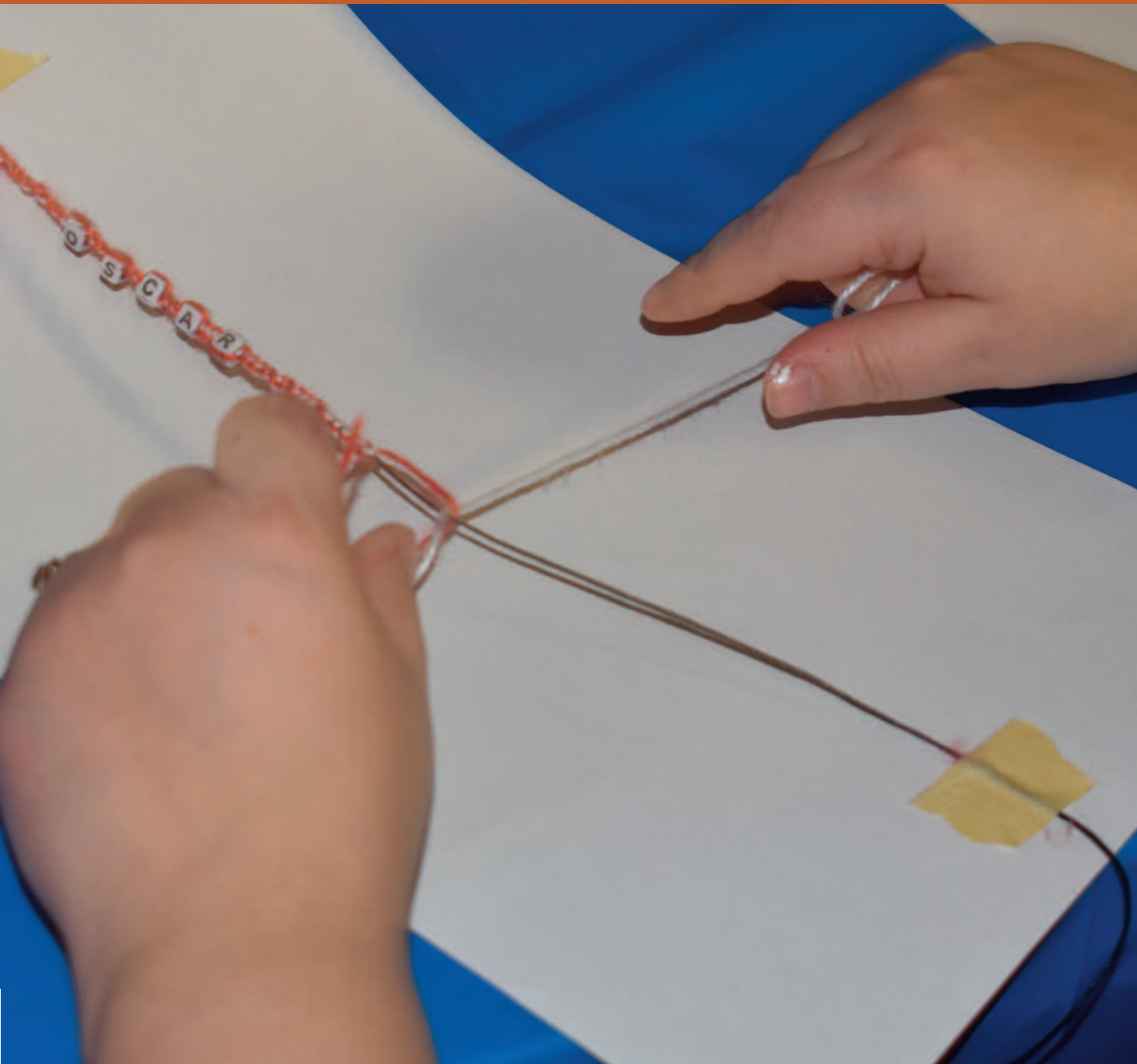
She adds that, “Art is a powerful tool to learn about our shared histories. It can inspire us to create, but it can also inspire us to learn.”

Rose continues to keep herself busy and provide artistic instruction within the province. She is also working on an exhibition through OSAC called “tepakohp” (the Cree word for seven). “I felt inspired to create after the activism of Tristen Durocher last year,” she says, “I wanted to amplify the voices of Indigenous women and help them tell their stories.”



For years, Artist Melanie Rose has been sharing her talents with others. Her needle-felted work channels ideas from her Métis heritage.

Photos courtesy of Melanie Rose.



SaskCulture

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Métis Point Painting and Finger Weaving at
Common Ground event in 2019.

Photo by Trevor Dubois.

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