

Progress continues:

SaskCulture's Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy

By Rose Gilks, CEO, SaskCulture Inc.

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*For the upcoming issue of **Engage** I was asked to write an article around the theme of multiculturalism. I quickly looked at that theme and thought there's more to discuss. My reasoning goes back to the change that SaskCulture made to its own strategy from that of a Multiculturalism Strategy, to a Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy a few years ago. In preparing the article I realized I could not condense the full story on SaskCulture's work in this area into the available space in the magazine. As a result, I opted to do a short article talking about SaskCulture's values regarding the strategy and prepare a longer article for the website.*

SaskCulture's most recent issue of **Engage** magazine focuses on multiculturalism, inclusiveness and diversity. These three terms are significant to the work of SaskCulture and have been since its incorporation 20 years ago. From the start, its Constitution has contained the following values:

- accessibility, inclusiveness, equality and democratic processes;
- respect the diversity of the people of Saskatchewan; and
- multiculturalism within the context of the current provincial and federal legislation.

Given where our organization, province and country are today I would say, "SaskCulture got it right", in its Constitution. Those values have driven the organization's work and are very significant to its progress over the past 20 years. In the last six years, SaskCulture has placed more effort on its Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy. Initially, the strategy was a Multiculturalism Strategy; it was then changed to ensure that the work of SaskCulture, and the name of the strategy, was inclusive of First Nations and Métis peoples. First Nations and Métis peoples, as the original inhabitants of this land, do not see themselves as part of multiculturalism and SaskCulture respects that perspective. As noted in the *Engage* magazine article our strategy contains the following values:

1. Recognition that Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis cultures have an active part in the strategy and that their history and culture as founding peoples are distinct.
2. SaskCulture recognizes the significance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action as a foundational document to understanding the need for change and understanding.
3. Recognition that the Diversity and Inclusiveness strategy of SaskCulture moving forward is inclusive of Saskatchewan's past history of peoples coming to the province (turn of century, pre- and post- World Wars immigration), as well as the increasing number of new citizens arriving in the last ten years and into the future.
4. That SaskCulture's Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy will maintain the values and principles of the two Acts (The Multiculturalism Act of Saskatchewan and The Canadian Multiculturalism Act).
5. SaskCulture views multiculturalism as inclusive of many diverse cultures but also as the interaction between cultures - interculturalism.

6. A key element of SaskCulture's belief in terms of multiculturalism is that it is seen within a positive framework that contributes to Canadian society.
7. That SaskCulture's Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy is inclusive of all organizations within SaskCulture's network, not just those organizations with a multicultural or ethno-cultural mandate.
8. That the focus of SaskCulture's Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy will be the social capital aspect of building community and civil society.
9. That SaskCulture's Principles and Values, as defined in its Constitution (1997), speak to the importance of Multiculturalism within the work of the organization:

Through a cooperative and consultative approach with various players from the cultural community, SaskCulture is, and has been working toward:

- Increasing awareness and understanding of the value of cultural diversity among the SaskCulture membership;
- Building a more inclusive and diverse cultural sector;
- Encouraging and facilitating more collaborations, partnerships and conversations designed to build inclusivity;
- Developing a training system, or a series of training workshops, relating to culturally inclusive services; and
- Helping Saskatchewan communities to be more inclusive of cultural diversity.

Read on to find out more...

In 2016, SaskCulture began to think about what it might do in 2017, Canada's Sesquicentennial. In doing so, it very quickly recognized that if it truly believed in its values and wanted to live those values, it could not get on the bandwagon of seeing the country's 150th birthday of Confederation as a celebration. Doing so would not recognize the importance of the many Indigenous cultures within Saskatchewan, peoples that had thrived for thousands of years before colonization. At the same time we wanted to take advantage of some of the resources being made available for Canada 150 and, we wanted to celebrate the resilience of Saskatchewan's Indigenous cultures whom, despite many historic strategies of assimilation, are now growing stronger in their cultures and in numbers.

SaskCulture was fortunate to receive support to take on an exciting project entitled **Resilience and Respect: Canada 150 and Beyond** from the Department of Canadian Heritage Canada 150 Fund. Throughout 2017, our project partners – the Buffalo People Arts Institute, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Writing Circle Inc., and Saskatchewan Arts Board – delivered important and impactful cultural programming that highlighted the resilience of Indigenous peoples, cultures and languages.

As partners in this project, we are contributing to an ongoing journey - one that engages the spirit and strength of those working toward a new era. The Canada 150 Project is finishing up with the completion of six short videos profiling the work and effort of each partner in their respective areas of work, as well as two gatherings that are intended to bring closure to the year's work and to set the foundation for relationships moving forward. On Friday, January 26, 2018 the first Gathering will take place in Saskatoon (located in Treaty 6 territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis). The second

Gathering will be held in Regina on February 1 & 2, 2018 at the māmawêyatitân centre in Regina (located in Treaty 4 territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis).

These events will: provide the opportunity to network with the project partners; learn about the work they have carried out in 2017; and direct focus to “the beyond” part of the **Respect and Resilience** which is youth engagement. They will also ignite discussion, inspire and set some strategies on how we can move forward together respectfully, collaboratively and meaningfully. *For the specifics on the Gathering in each centre please refer to the details for both events here:*

<https://www.saskculture.ca/news/2017/12/7/save-date-resilience-respect-canada-150-beyond-gatherings>.

Although SaskCulture did not have actual strategy in its early years, its values and outcomes drove its work. It initiated the Multicultural Initiatives Program (MIF) in 2000. A few years later it implemented a Métis Cultural Development Fund (MCDF) and, since 2007, it has been delivering the Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Leadership (AACL). The Culture Section of Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund, for which SaskCulture is the manager, now includes support for Wanuskewin Heritage Park and the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan, the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages, as well as a number of ethno-cultural organizations. SaskCulture hired its first Indigenous coordinator, the late Mary Rose Boyer, in 2005. A year and a half later Damon Badger Heit, who is still with us today, took over that position. As of 2017 our Indigenous staff complement is three people out of 18 and we are also now placing a priority on hiring more people from diverse backgrounds, including newcomers to the province. SaskCulture’s commitment to a diverse workforce is one of leading by example.

Over the years, SaskCulture’s volunteer board of directors has had actively engaged board members from both the First Nations and Métis communities of interest, as well as those from culturally diverse backgrounds who came from arts, heritage, and multiculturalism. For the past number of years, close to 45% of SaskCulture’s volunteer peer assessors for its numerous funding programs have been of First Nations or Métis heritage. These diverse perspectives, both at the staff and volunteer level, provide the organization with a dynamic exchange of ideas that lead to thoughtful and progressive decisions.

Of the 30 eligible cultural organizations (ECOs), those that receive direct operational funding from the Culture Section of the Trust, all but five, with support from SaskCulture, have developed their own diversity strategies, strategies that support them in becoming more inclusive. For that past few years, SaskCulture staff have attended the Wîcihitowin conference in Saskatoon - a conference to create increased understanding of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC’s) Calls to Action, as well as activities to support their implementation. SaskCulture sponsored the conference in 2017. SaskCulture has also devoted time and resources to providing education and training for both its volunteer board members and staff to help them gain a better understanding of the TRC Calls to Action. That training has given the organization a better capacity to move forward in support of Saskatchewan’s First Nations and Métis peoples.

SaskCulture has also worked very closely with the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS) on a number of initiatives that support the participation of Saskatchewan’s newcomer population in cultural activities throughout the province as well as work to dispel racism. In 2014, we supported the first INVOLVE (Integrating Newcomers with Volunteer Opportunities to add Leadership Value through

Education) project, which provided newcomers with training on participating as a volunteer board member in non-profit organizations. Later that year, SaskCulture provided support to the “BRIDGES” (Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement in Saskatchewan) project, an initiative that enables the Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA), the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS) and the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (AFCS) to bring newcomers and First Nations people together to foster dialogue. In 2017, SaskCulture participated in MCoS’s **Canada 150 Project: Building Inclusive Communities**. A number of other projects have also been undertaken in the newcomer area and, like our work with First Nations and Métis peoples, that work is furthering our efforts towards diversity and inclusiveness.

All of the initiatives that I have described so far, in terms of SaskCulture’s work toward being a more diverse and inclusive organization, are only a small portion of the ongoing work that an organization must undertake if it truly wants to have a successful Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Such work takes ongoing and rigorous commitment. What follows, shows, in detail, the work of SaskCulture toward this endeavor over the past few years. We hope this work inspires your organization to move forward on its path to diversity and inclusion.

Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy Actions

The following information provides an understanding of the work that has been done over the past several years. It also addresses some ongoing and future initiatives that SaskCulture is interested in. The timeline and list of activities and initiatives is not a complete and exhaustive list of the work being done by SaskCulture but it does capture many important aspects of the strategy. The more current 2016/17 activities have laid out more detail.

- November 2017 - Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: LIVE Arts 150 Broadcasts featuring Indigenous artists and national partnerships
- October 2017 - Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: SICC’s Dene Language Camp
- October 2017 – SaskCulture sponsors Wicihitowin Conference in Saskatoon, staff attend.
- October 2017 – Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: SAWSI’s Anskohk Festival
- October 2017 - Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: LIVE Arts 150 Broadcasts featuring Indigenous artists and national partnerships
- August 2017 - Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: SICC’s Dakota Language Camp
- August 2017 – Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: Outreach to Sherry Farrel-Racette re: Indigenous art work for SaskCulture tobacco pouch.
- August 2017 – Outreach to Prairie Spirit Cultural Camp for Foster Families at Buffalo Pound
- August 2017 – Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: Buffalo Peoples Arts Institute (BPAI) event- Buffalo Parade
- July 2017 - Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: BPAI event - Buffalo Festival
- July 2017 – Implementation of Cultural awareness panel discussion with partners SWG, Sakewewak and SAB in Regina on the theme of ‘Cultural Appropriation’.
- July 2017 - Outreach to FSIN VIP Event at FSIN’s Pow Wow and Cultural Celebration in Regina
- July 2017 – Outreach to Regina Indian Industrial School gravesite Heritage Designation ceremony

- July 2017 – Outreach to Poundmaker Cree Nation and Poundmaker Museum and Historic Site grand opening.
- July 2017 – Outreach at Pheasant Rump Language Camp (SICC 150).
- June 2017 – Staff involvement in Buffalo Peoples Arts Institute’s Resilience and Respect planning process- Sweat Lodge at Sakimay land outside Regina
- June 2017 – Staff involvement at the Rock Your Roots walk for Reconciliation in Saskatoon
- June 2017 – Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: Staff involvement at GDI 150 Event- Michif Language Bank
- May 2017 – Staff involvement in Sakewewak and History and Folklore ‘Story Share’ event
- May 2017 - Staff involvement in judging Saskatchewan Heritage Fair with robust participation from Saskatoon Tribal Council
- May 2017 – Outreach and Consultation with Executive Director of Gordon Toostoosis Nikaniwin Theatre
- May 2017 – Saskatoon Tribal Council Language Celebration (Saskatoon)
- May 2016 - Staff attendance at Saskatoon Launch of the Film- “Birth of a Family” by Tasha Hubbard
- May 2016 - Staff Webinar on Cultural Diversity
- May 2017 - Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: 150 Videographer hired- IndigenX
- April 2017 – Outreach Heritage Saskatchewan- Kristen Catherwood, re: La Loche Outreach and Film Project
- April 2017 – Outreach Calvin Racette re: Métis Cultural Development Fund
- April 2017 - Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: Sakewewak First Nation Artist Collective outreach re: 150 partnership
- March 2017 – City of Saskatoon Outreach with Recreation and Community Development Staff- Lois Standing and Cathy Allen
- March 2017 – Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: partners meeting (GDI office Saskatoon)
- March 2017 – Outreach Winona Wheeler – re: the late Tyrone Tootoosis’ oral history collection project
- March 2017 – Staff attendance at TRC Presentation (Saskatoon) by Dr. Wilton Littlechild.
- March 2017 – Prairie Central District Cultural Gathering at Treaty 4 Centre in Fort Qu’Appelle with MCOS/Jamal (Building Inclusive Communities), MAS/Emma (Eco Museums) and SCES/ Carol Daniels (Artist workshop tours).
- March 2017 – SE Connection District Cultural Gathering in Forget with MCOS/Jamal (Building Inclusive Communities) and SCES/ Carol Daniels (Artist workshop tours).
- February 2017 – Heritage Week coordination of session with Eugene Arcand and Zoey ‘Pricelys’ Roy
- February 2017 – Staff Cultural Awareness session with Eugene Arcand and Zoey ‘Pricelys’ Roy on TRC Calls to Action
- February 2017– Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: Ongoing outreach with partners
- February 2017- Outreach with SAB Indigenous Arts Consultant Lindsay Knight
- January 2017 – Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: Outreach to partners- GDI, SICC, BPAI and SAWCI

- December 2016 – Outreach to Muscowpetung on community celebration and recognition event on receiving support from SaskCulture
- December 2016 - Outreach and engagement with Eugene Arcand in securing support and guidance for the Resilience and Respect project.
- November 2016 - Staff Webinar- Cultural Awareness- Ontario Arts Presents: 'Avoiding Tokenism'.
- November 2016 – Outreach (conference booth) and attendance at SICC Language Keepers Conference
- November 2016 – Grant Workshop with Battlefords Agency Tribal Council
- November 2016- Tri-global meeting with FSIN Sport, Culture, Recreation and Youth Director- Ken Thomas
- October 2016- SaskCulture presentation on Community Engagement Animateurs and cultural diversity at Creative Cities Network conference (Surrey, BC)
- October 2016 - Wichihitowin Conference - staff attendance (Saskatoon)
- September 2016 SaskCulture Board and Staff cultural awareness workshop with Office of the Treaty Commissioner Liaison Lyndon Linklater
- September 2016 - Staff attend Animateur Buffalo Hide Tanning Workshop ant Neal Balwkill Arts Centre (Regina).
- September 2016- Sakewewak Grant Workshop
- September 2016- SaskCulture Panel Discussion on arts and diversity at the Moveable Feast through event planners at Common Weal and Curtainz Razor.
- August 2016- Engagement Animateur Project: five-day Buffalo Hide Tanning Workshop with Lorne Kequahtoway in partnership with SICC on Saulteaux First Nation
- July 2016 – Engagement Animateur Project: five-day Buffalo Hide Tanning Workshop with Lorne Kequahtoway at the Summer Games in Estevan.
- June 2016 – Lyndon Linklater, from Office of the Treaty Commissioner, presented his workshop to the membership at SaskCulture AGM.
- June 2016 – Diversity Plan Training: All Eligible Organizations involved in organizational diversity planning session to discuss the progress and challenges to date. They also discussed many aspects of how SaskCulture and the organizations can move forward to build on the successes already achieved.
- June 2016 – SaskCulture, along with Sask Sport and SPRA, organized a meeting with Tribal Council Coordinators and representatives from the Districts for Sport, Culture and Recreation.
- June 2016 – Respect and Resilience - Canada 150 Project: SaskCulture, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, Gabriel Dumont Institute and the Saskatchewan Arts Board, applied to Canadian Heritage for the Canada 150 Grant. This application focuses in on the preservation of Indigenous languages and reconciliation.
- April 2016 – Diversity Plan Training: Six more Eligible Organizations are selected to participate in organizational diversity planning. These organizations include the Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange Society, the Saskatchewan Choral Federation, the Saskatchewan Music Educators Association, the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils, the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association and Theatre Saskatchewan.

- *April 2016* – Engagement Animateur Project: two animateurs, Marcel Petit, a Métis film maker and photographer, and Lorne Kequahtoway, a First Nations entrepreneur, are chosen to represent SaskCulture.
- *February 2016* – SaskCulture worked with the Regina Open Door Employment Network to hire a temporary Grant Administrator Assistant.
- *December 2015* – SaskCulture, in its winter edition of *Engage*, focuses content on Truth and Reconciliation.
- *August 2015* - SaskCulture reaffirms sponsorship support for the Saskatchewan Indigenous Culture Centre’s Language Keepers Conference.
- *June 2015* - A presentation was also provided to the Eligible Organizations at SaskCulture’s AGM to bring awareness to the recommendations and their implications to the Culture sector. Trudy Stewart presented on her work as a witness during TRC meetings here in Saskatchewan and in Ottawa as well as her work in a Film- RISS Media (Regina Industrial School).
- *April 2015* - SaskCulture’s staff were also given the opportunity to learn about TRC by participating in a guided tour of the *Moving Forward, Never Forgetting* exhibit at the Mackenzie Art Gallery in the winter of 2015. Staff were engaged in conceptual ideas of reconciliation/conciliation as presented by the artists and animated by the Story Keepers.
- *Spring 2015* – SaskCulture consultant makes further connections and holds meetings with Tribal Council Coordinators.
- *October 2015* - SaskCulture works with SAISIA and MCOS to hold an integration forum
- *Winter 2015* – Diversity Plan Training: Five more eligible cultural organizations sign up for Diversity Training through SaskCulture’s incentivized training program. (*The Saskatchewan German Council, the Saskatchewan Drama Association, the Saskatchewan Archeological Society, the Museums Association of Saskatchewan and Nature Saskatchewan*)
- *January 2015* – SaskCulture staff and board attended an Aboriginal Awareness session.
- *Fall 2014* - SaskCulture supports the INVOLVE project, which allows newcomers to receive training on participating as a volunteer board member with non-profit organizations.
- *Fall 2014* - SaskCulture offers support to the “BRIDGES” project, an initiative that enables the Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA), the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS) and the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (AFCS) to bring newcomers and First Nations people together to foster dialogue.
- *August 2014*: SaskCulture staff member attending a week-long “Facilitating Diversity Training” course offered by the University of Manitoba.
- *July 2014*: SaskCulture provided \$70,000 of support to the Cultural Village at the North American Indigenous Games. SaskCulture also provided a significant amount of staff time to mentoring some NAIG staff and providing support to NAIG’s Cultural Village project.
- *July 2014*: Diversity Plan Training: Five Eligible Organizations were chosen to be part of a pilot project for diversity planning. SaskCulture, in cooperation with Common Ground Consulting, is now in the process of working with these Eligible Organizations to move the planning process forward.
- *July 2014*: Sponsorship of a Language Keepers Conference in Saskatoon (Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Center).
- *June 2014*: A meeting with City of Regina officials was conducted to discuss their plans on diversity in the cultural sector.

- *May 2014:* SaskCulture led the Tri-globals in a two-day discussion around the changing demographics of Saskatchewan and the resulting responses on behalf of the tri-globals. Doug Elliot of *SaskTrends Monitor* provided the tri-globals with valuable demographic information.
- *March 2014:* Diversity Plan Training: An Eligible Organizations meeting was held to discuss the importance of addressing the diversity of Saskatchewan's population. Eligible Organizations wishing to participate in the pilot project were invited to notify SaskCulture of their desire to participate.
- *March 2014:* Meetings were held with the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild on the development of the SWG's Diversity Planning (pilot project).
- *October 2013:* SaskCulture's Annual Gathering focused in on the themes of multiculturalism and inclusion.
- *Fall 2013:* Assessment of our primary network: SaskCulture, through an intensive consultative process initiated with our eligible organizations and a large sample group of our members, assessed our network's capacity and ability to provide culturally inclusive services to the people of Saskatchewan. (Report: Addressing Saskatchewan's Emerging Demographics – prepared by Roy Anderson and Associates in collaboration with Terry Schwalm and Associates).
- *Fall 2013:* Feedback gathered through Ethno Cultural/ Multi-Community Consultations: Nine community consultations sessions were held in different communities around Saskatchewan to shed more light on how the cultural sector can more successfully provide culturally inclusive services. The Northern District for Sport, Culture and Recreation assisted Roy Anderson and Associates by incorporating some integral consultation questions into the District's existing consultation process in several communities in the North.
- *August 2013:* A First Nations Elder / First Nations and Métis Advisory Circle Member met with SaskCulture staff members and the participating consultants prior to the start of our community/sector consultations.
- *July 2013:* SaskCulture sponsored the cultural component of the Muskoday First Nations Summer Games (\$40,000).
- *June 2013:* A request for proposals was put forth to consultants to conduct sector/community consultations.
- *October 2012:* SaskCulture was successful in conducting its 2012 Annual Gathering, which focused on the changing demographics of Saskatchewan. Conference attendees responded enthusiastically to the conference and provided SaskCulture with valuable feedback.
- *September 2012:* SaskCulture staff and board attended an Aboriginal Awareness workshop at Wanuskewin.
- *June 2012:* Consultations on multiculturalism were included as part of the Annual General Meeting consultation session.
- *May 2012:* Regina Open Door Society provided a cultural awareness session for SaskCulture staff.
- *May 2012:* A board/staff retreat was held to discuss SaskCulture's Multiculturalism Strategy.
- *May 2012:* Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan added to the Culture Section of the Minister's Eligibility List.
- *April 2012:* SaskCulture completed some initial research on the general concept of multiculturalism and its relevance to SaskCulture's Ends, our lottery agreement and our current role within Saskatchewan's cultural sector. (Report Commissioned: Multiculturalism: Seeking Definition – prepared by Ken Alecxe and Associates)

- *April 2012:* Staff attended an Aboriginal Awareness session provided by the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre.

Ongoing

- SaskCulture recognizes the importance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.
- SaskCulture continues to work with the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan to ensure our plans and actions are relevant to the people of Saskatchewan.
- Conversations take place with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport in relation to its role in a more inclusive cultural sector.
- Continued informal consultation with our members and community representatives continues to be a priority.
- Continued work with our Tri-globals partners to further inclusion in the sector.
- Approximately 45% of our adjudication jurors come from First Nations, Métis or visible minority background or ancestry.
- SaskCulture's board members are a rich and diverse reflection of the people of Saskatchewan.
- Discussions are taking place to possibly create specific employment opportunities within SaskCulture's current structure for newcomer or Indigenous people (internship/work placement opportunity).
- As part of its work in increasing the awareness of cultural diversity and inclusiveness, SaskCulture shares the stories, ideas and images of Saskatchewan's diverse cultures through its publications and promotional tools, reflecting the benefits and the importance of diversity and inclusivity to building sustainable cultural organizations and a culturally vibrant Saskatchewan.