

Culture Builds Community! Engage

**Bridging Understanding
Between Cultures**

Film Opens Path to Healing

Connecting Youth to Traditions

**Lessons Learned Through
Dance**

Saskatchewan
Culture

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ON THE COVER: Lorin Gardypie performs at Wanuskewin Heritage Park during Culture Days 2015. Gardypie was the artistic director for the *Silent Survivors* production featured in this issue of *Engage*. Photo courtesy of Shaunna Grandish.

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Truth & Reconciliation:

Reflection and Action Needed in Saskatchewan's Cultural Community

BY ROSE GILKS AND DAMON BADGER HEIT

**“This is not an Aboriginal problem,
this is a Canadian problem.”**
- The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair

On June 2, 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) produced its final report, culminating over six years of testimony from nearly 7,000 witnesses of Residential Schools in Canada. According to the final report, the 100 years of Canada's Aboriginal policy, in which the “establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element,” can best be described as “cultural genocide”. The release of the report was an historic moment when, finally, the “truth” of what occurred at residential schools in Canada was laid bare for all to see.

When the report first came out, our SaskCulture team sat down together to talk about it, in order to better understand the impact of the TRC report. We also reflected on the actions that we, at SaskCulture, have taken in the past few years that have a connection to the report's recommendations, as well as to consider future actions. It is evident that the TRC report and the subsequent Call to Action speaks to areas of our own work.

Of the 94 recommendations outlined by the Commission, a significant number land squarely on matters pertaining specifically to “culture”. As we work towards the development and implementation of our own diversity and inclusion strategies, SaskCulture acknowledges this report challenges all cultural groups and Saskatchewan residents to not only be aware of these recommendations, but to also consider how to be a part of the reconciliation process.

The Commission's recommendations impact many areas of Canadian policy. It is our job, as leaders in the cultural community, to ensure that change is made where needed in our organizations, and that reconciliation is not ignored. Calls to Action have been made to governments, at all levels, to work with Aboriginal peoples to enact changes, however as the Commission noted, “This is not an Aboriginal problem, this is a Canadian problem.” In order for reconciliation to occur, we must all recognize our part in it. We acknowledge that there is more to do

as we work towards reconciliation in Saskatchewan, but SaskCulture is pleased that some of our efforts of the last several years are validated by the report. We have made modest movement already on some of the Calls to Action identified in the report. Much of that work is identified in our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. It is baby steps, but it is incremental success toward these ends.

SaskCulture has made gains in securing Indigenous peoples in leadership positions at all levels of our organization: on our board, within our staff, as program volunteers and on juries. Of all our volunteer jury members, nearly half are Indigenous peoples. Our project funding has also closed the gap and roughly, half of all project funding is allocated to the cultural priorities identified by Indigenous peoples in communities across the province.

Externally, we have begun to impress the importance of diversity and inclusion to all groups that we support and have begun a process of assisting cultural organizations with their own inclusion and diversity planning.

We have seen a steady uptake from First Nations Bands, Tribal Councils and Indigenous cultural agencies who are accessing funds to address the action items of the TRC in their own communities. We have seen an uptake of cross-cultural programming designed to build cultural awareness for everyone. There is still more to do; in this issue of *Engage* we are sharing examples of some of the initiatives that SaskCulture has funded through the Culture Section of the Trust that support the reconciliation process.

The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Report is a pivotal moment in going forward as Canadians. How Canadians now handle the reconciliation portion of the report and the recommendations that come with it will be very important if we are to be a truly diverse and inclusive place. Let's work together to actively engage in that process.


Rose Gilks


Damon Badger Heit

Top photo: SaskCulture Outreach Consultant Damon Badger Heit and SaskCulture General Manager Rose Gilks



Truth and Reconciliation Recommendations

The Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Actions listed 93 recommendations that impact all areas of society. The following is a summary of recommendations that the cultural community should be aware of and may help in address reconciliation process.

Language and Culture:

- Acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal languages rights;
- Enact a federal *Aboriginal Languages Act*, with the following principles;
- Appointment of a federal Aboriginal Languages Commissioner;
- Creation of post-secondary programs in Aboriginal Languages; and
- Ability for Residential School Survivors to reclaim original names.

Museums and Archives:

- Complete a national review of museum policies and best practices, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to determine the level of compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

- Establish a national funding program, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian Museums Association, which supports commemoration projects on the theme of reconciliation as part of the 150th Anniversary of Canadian Confederation in 2017;
- Ensure that the Library and Archives Canada keeps the historic findings with regard to human rights violations, and ensure that they are accessible to the public, along with resource for public education and programming; and
- Provide funding to ensure that Canadian Association of Archivists to undertake, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, a national review of archival policies and best practices.

Education:

- Draft new educational legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples with a commitment to sufficient funding;
- Close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation;
- Improve education attainment levels and success rates;

- Develop culturally appropriate curricula;
- Protect the right to Aboriginal languages including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses;
- Enable parental and community responsibility, control and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems;
- Enable parents to fully participate in the education of their children;
- Respect and honour Treaty relationships;
- End the back log of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education;
- Develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families’;
- Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten for Grade 12 students, including support for enhanced teacher training and resources; and
- Establish community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices.

Commemoration:

- Develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration in collaboration with federal government, survivors, Aboriginal organizations and the arts community;
- Amend the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* to include First Nations, Inuit and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat;
- Revise policies, criteria, and practices of the national program of historical Commemoration to integrate indigenous history, heritage values and memory practices into Canada’s national heritage and history;
- Develop and implement national heritage plan and strategy for commemorating resident school sites, the history and legacy of residential schools and the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada’s history.



- Establish a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour survivors, their families and communities and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process;
- Collaborate with survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement agreement, to commission and install publically accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools National Monuments all capital cities to honour the survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities; and
- Funding to support a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

Media:

- Restoration and increases to funding to CBC/Radio-Canada to enable Canada's national public broadcaster to support reconciliation and be properly reflective of the diverse cultures, languages and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to: increasing Aboriginal programming, increasing equitable access for Aboriginal peoples to jobs, leadership positions and professional development, dedicated news coverage and online public information resources on issues of concern to Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians;

- Aboriginal Peoples Television network called upon to support reconciliation through leadership in programming and organizational culture that reflects the diverse cultures, languages and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples and continuing to develop media initiatives that inform and educate the Canadian public and connect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians; and
- Canadian journalism programs and media schools to require education for all students on the history of Aboriginal peoples including the history and legacy or residential schools.

Newcomers to Canada

- We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools.

The summary is meant to provide a glimpse into some of the changes that may make a difference. The full list of Calls to Action can be found at:

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English_2.pdf

Some of the requests to the federal and provincial governments are very specific, but they reflect acknowledgement and respect for the diversity of Indigenous culture in Canada. By being aware of the changes needed for reconciliation, cultural leaders can envision changes to their own organizations. While we hope for the federal government to make a response, leaders at the local level can reflect on their own programs and services, build new relationships with Indigenous groups in their communities, and work towards a more culturally inclusive province. This is an opportunity for cultural groups to be part of positive change for the future.





Finding Common Ground

Project aims to bridge cultural differences between Saskatchewan residents

BY SARAH FERGUSON

Barriers to connections are being removed as cultural groups find common ground in northern Saskatchewan.

Made possible by SaskCulture's Multicultural Initiatives Fund, Common Ground is about removing barriers to connections so Indigenous and newcomer participants can learn about each other. "It is important that newcomers meet members from the First Nations community. By building relationships, participants can reject stereotypes and see each other as neighbours, allies and friends," says Rhonda Rosenberg, executive director, Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS).

Based out of Prince Albert, Common Ground is another name for the second phase of BRIDGES, (Building Relationships Interculturally through Dialogue and Growing Engagement in Saskatchewan) is a three-way partnership between MCoS, the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (AFCS) and the Saskatchewan Association for Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA). The project includes three local

partners: the Prince Albert Multicultural Council, the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre of Prince Albert and the YWCA of Prince Albert.

Rosenburg explains that the Prince Albert partnership chose Common Ground as a name for the pilot project because they felt it would appeal to that city. The three local organizations know the community's context best. "We trust them and respect their opinions," she says.

"[Misunderstandings] are based on perceptions of both groups," says Karen Cay, project coordinator. "The best way to overcome dehumanization is to learn about each other. Then 'them' becomes 'us', and there is no racism/discrimination in 'us'."

To accomplish their goals, Rosenberg says that provincial and local partners are planning two series of monthly gatherings from November to March (excluding December); one aimed at the staff/organizational level, with the three local partners, and the other at a social/community level, to get people to connect.

The community gatherings have already started. The first was Tapestrama, a yearly

festival of cultural diversity put on by the Prince Albert Multicultural Council in September. "There were some interactions between newcomers and long-term First Nations residents at the festival," says Rosenberg.

The second gathering was on October 24, when the friendship centre held an annual round dance. "They're using it as a good way to start getting people in the same place," she adds.

While the first phase of BRIDGES that took place last year was research-based, the second part is about evaluating its impact. Dr. Joe Garcea, a political science professor from the University of Saskatchewan, is helping with the research. "The idea is to put a concrete framework in place so we can do this type of work across the province," says Rosenberg.

She goes on to explain, "Outcomes we would hope to see coming out of these community gatherings would be people choosing to work together on other community action projects. Our intention is to build a provincial BRIDGES initiative in the future."

SHARE CULTURE.

Spring Free from Racism organizers received a Multicultural Initiatives Fund grant that enables them to showcase the diversity of cultural heritage living in their community.

MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!

Funding available from the
Multicultural Initiatives Fund

Supports cultural activities, events or projects designed to enhance multicultural, ethno-cultural or cross-cultural awareness and participation.

**Deadline: Sept. 30 & March 31 for project funding
Jan. 31 for annual funding**

SaskCulture
Visit www.saskculture.ca for details.



Provincial Championship Question:

“This House believes that the Canadian government has failed First Nations students”.

Changing Attitudes through Debate

BY SHAUNNA GRANDISH

Students tackle tough questions during Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association’s (SEDA) annual provincial championship, and this year’s theme was no exception. Two teams of two students each examined the resolution: “This House believes that the Canadian government has failed First Nations students”.

The topic was very timely according to Wendy James, SEDA debate coach, and it coincided with the discussion taking place nationally that it is a big issue currently facing Canadian society, especially with the recent unveiling of Truth and Reconciliation recommendations.

“The other reason why we picked this topic is that we thought there was a moral obligation as an organization to encourage discussion around this particular topic because there is a social justice component around it that has remained unaddressed,” explains James.

In preparation for the debate, the students received a package of information that was composed of formal government reports and media coverage. The students also conducted their own research. Before the championship, the participants did not know which side of the topic they would have to debate, so they had to prepare for both sides of the issue. For the opposition side, the youth had to explore why the

government hadn’t failed First Nations students – based on the argument that the fault lies more so in systemic racism.

Leora Diakuw was one of the championship debaters. Diakuw, who is a Grade 12 student at Walter Murray Collegiate in Saskatoon, says she was really excited about the topic as it was very relevant and there has been lots of discussions taking place from all different sides.

“The good thing about the debate is that it forces you to see both sides of the topic

and argue for them in different rounds,” explains Diakuw. “Even if I have a personal opinion in one direction, I still had to learn the other perspective.”

Diakuw adds that her research didn’t result in a change in her opinion about the topic. “I feel as though the Federal government has a long way to go in terms of First Nations education.”

She also believes issues around First Nations education are very important for Canadians to discuss. “We are all affected by the actions of our country, and it’s easy to be ignorant about what happens within our own borders.”

James adds that young people should play an important role in the discussion. “Youth can play a very critical role in transforming how Canadian society views Aboriginal issues. Social and cultural organizations need to make decisions that will help us where, we as a society, want to position ourselves.”

SEDA receives funding support from the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.



(TOP: Left to Right) Hannah Costa, Dominic Ong, Jason Xiao, Leora Diakuw and Nasra Moumin made up the Provincial Championship teams.



RIIS to the Path of Healing

How a film about uncovering the past unexpectedly brings two filmmakers on a surprising personal journey

BY SHAUNNA GRANDISH

Two filmmakers have brought a little-known part of Saskatchewan back to life thanks to a new film that explores stories of discovery and healing.

Saskatchewan filmmakers Janine Windolph and Trudy Stewart were approached by the United Church of Canada to make a documentary about the Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS). Originally the film was to be made by a descendent from RIIS, a community member and by the United Church. However, given how difficult it is to look at one's own family history, the Church approached the Saskatchewan Filmpool to seek out Aboriginal filmmakers. The Filmpool then contacted Windolph and Stewart.

RIIS from Amnesia is a short but powerful documentary on Regina Indian Industrial School, its descendants and continued legacy. The school opened in 1891 and ran by the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Aboriginal students from 43 First Nations communities and all three prairie provinces attended RIIS, which was located on the outskirts of Regina on what is now Pinkie Road.

The school closed in 1910, and the building and ground became the city's jail, and then a detention centre for boys. A fire destroyed the wooden crosses used to make the deceased RIIS students' graves in 1921. The unmarked cemetery was almost forgotten about until questions arose about the security and re-memorialization of the site as it is now

threatened by development. It is also unknown how many students are buried on the land.

Both Windolph and Stewart were previously unaware of RIIS before making the film. "When I told my mom about the school, she said, 'You guys didn't know about it?'," says Windolph. "It is in some people's narratives and they've known about it this whole time. But I didn't know about it, and a lot of our peers didn't know about it. It seems that it was almost forgotten about over the generations."

Windolph and Stewart spoke to the school's surviving family members (the last living RIIS survivor passed away a year before the film was made) and began piecing together the fragments of the larger puzzle of the school's story. What the filmmakers didn't expect was how personally affected they would become from making this documentary.

"The film was the most challenging work I've ever done," says Stewart. "But it showed me I had strength. However, it was an experience I wouldn't wish on anybody." Stewart, who was raised by a white family, learned through the process of making this film how she was affected



“It was a tough journey to make this film.
We are all impacted by something that happened way
before we were ever born.”

by residential schools even though previously she believed she wasn't. “I'm impacted by the absence of stories – that I don't know my family's stories,” she explains. “I know who my family is but I haven't yet made that journey.”

Windolph agrees that she also went on an unexpected rollercoaster ride of emotions during the making of the film. Windolph's had family members who went through the residential school system (none attended RIIS) and considers herself a survivor. It was through making the documentary that Windolph came to better understand her family. Her stepdad, who's been on his own healing journey, has become more open to Windolph about his experiences, and the film started the journey for father and daughter to heal together. “It was a tough journey to make this film,” she explains. “We are all impacted by something that happened way before we were ever born.”

According to both filmmakers, the importance of healing – both personally and as a community – is the central message of the documentary. RIIS from Amnesia, which debuted spring 2015, was shown at Luther College where the audience makeup was primarily elderly white members of the Presbyterian Church. Stewart says the film moved the church members. “They had tears in their eyes when they came up to us,” says Windolph, “apologizing for not knowing the role the Church had played.”

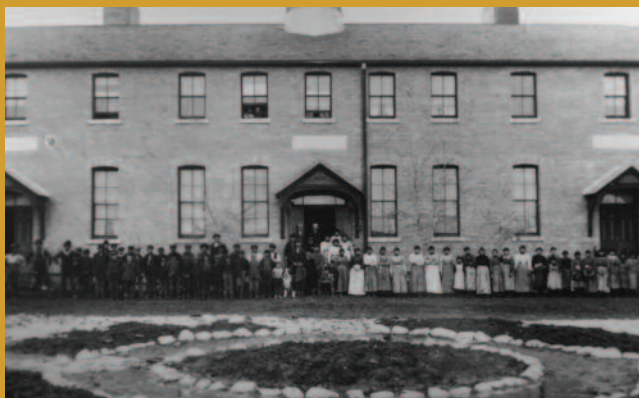
“We are all on a healing journey,” explains Windolph. “And that we can do this all together makes it more powerful.”

RIIS from Amnesia can be found on the RIIS Media Project website at www.riismediaproject.com

Although not directly funded, SaskCulture promoted and presented this work as part of the 2015 Membership Consultation.

▶ Check out **Engage** online at www.saskculture.ca to view excerpts of *RIIS from Amnesia*.





More to Discover

The website, www.riismediaproject.com also features more video stories not featured in the documentary. It also contains video of a short dance film inspired by the unmarked RIIS cemetery, a series of monologues based on a new Canadian's experience learning about Indian Residential Schools while reflecting on her own life experience with colonization in her home country, and other stories from documentary participants.

At the time of print, the future of the unmarked RIIS cemetery on Pinkie Road (as seen in the photo below) is still uncertain. A non-profit organization is hoping to have the land secured by the landowner. There have been talks of a commemorative stone placed at the location once the site is secured. Updates on the gravesite can be found on RIIS website.

TRUTH and RECONCILIATION

The Signalling of a New Era

It's time for us all to learn more and understand the impact on our families, neighbours, friends and colleagues. The Truth and Reconciliation Final Report was released on December 15, 2015, marking an important new era.

"A period of change is beginning that if sustained by the will of the people, will forever realign the shared history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada." - Chief Justice Murray Sinclair

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report is a detailed account, spanning nearly 4,000 pages, of the history, experiences and profound, long-lasting impacts residential schools have had on survivors, their families and communities, as well as on Canadian society. The final report is being published in seven languages: English, French, Mi'kmaq, Ojibwa, Inuktitut, Cree and Dene.

Learn more.
Visit www.trc.ca

Silent No More

BY SHELLEY FAYANT



“A compelling telling of our shared history – told without shame and in a manner that can touch us all and move us to a shared future. Bravo!”

Silent Survivors audience member

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEN GREENHORN



“Thought provoking and gives a vivid image of our history and the shared journey our community is currently on.”

Silent Survivors audience member



“Thank you for sharing this part of history. This should continue to be talked about – it happened and there is so much hurt and pain associated with residential schools.”

My hope is that reconciliation would bring healing and that this would never happen again.”

Silent Survivors audience member



This past summer, Dance Saskatchewan worked with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner to present *Silent Survivors*, a compelling take on the residential schools chapter in Canadian history, at Saskatoon’s Broadway Theatre.

The unique performance uses traditional dance and song to tell the story and pay homage to survivors of residential schools, a topic many are now aware of thanks to the efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). *Silent Survivors* illustrates, through creative expression, the impact of residential schools on First Nations peoples, families and entire community.

“The power of this performance is that it relays an incredibly hard story to hear but it offers such a hopeful way forward,” says Linda Coe-Kirkham, executive director, Dance Saskatchewan “Many in the audience were moved to share their thoughts afterward and it was uplifting to read so many encouraging messages of hope and reconciliation, which is what *Silent Survivors* is ultimately all about. The audience response was largely positive with many people expressing a commitment to reconciliation. It’s our hope that more Saskatchewan communities will invite us in to share these messages.”

The concept for *Silent Survivors* was inspired by Artistic Director Lorin Gardpie’s own experiences at residential school and his wish to help other survivors heal by sharing their own stories. Though the subject matter is difficult, the production carries a strong message of reconciliation that is delivered through elements like the Round Dance at the end of each performance, and post-performance workshops that incorporate First Nations Elders’ teachings, drumming and storytelling.

Silent Survivors was presented in partnership with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and Thunder Spirit Consulting. Dance Saskatchewan receives funding from SaskCulture, thanks to the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.



“The performance was powerful and the talkback essential. The show must go to schools.

Reconciliation will be driven by young people. Art is a safe way to do this and more powerful than a lecture.”

Silent Survivors audience member

Art Workshops Connect Youth to Indigenous Traditions

How SYCAP is transforming lives through creativity

BY SARAH FERGUSON



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CORY SCHEWAGA.

Creativity has the power to transform lives, and an educational program in Saskatoon is harnessing the power of the creative spirit to do just that.

Cultural Connections, a workshop program funded by SaskCulture's Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Fund, was established in 2013 by Saskatoon Youth Community Arts Programming (SYCAP) and uses the creative power of visual art to foster cultural sensitivity in youth ages 10 and up.

According to Project Manager Tammy Krueckl, Cultural Connections teaches young people about Indigenous cultural traditions through art-related activities and projects. "We wanted to put [the traditions] into a contemporary context for [the participants], so that they could build their own connections," she says. "The workshops are not just about

traditional [Indigenous] arts, they're about taking the traditional cultural aspects of those arts and seeing what the kids can do with them right now."

The workshops have produced projects ranging from totem poles, mini moccasin and dreamcatchers, to drawings of spirit animals and beadwork of corporate logos on canvases. "You get some good results," says Krueckl. "We get a lot of kids who



Check out Kevin Power's podcast of Cultural Connections by visiting saskculture/engage.





Art is a good way to connect with people. “There are things I never would have learned if it wasn’t for my interactions with the kids [in these workshops].”

participate saying they want to do more.”

Cultural Connections is primarily a classroom-oriented initiative. “We discovered a need that teachers and organizers were asking for,” says Krueckl. “First Nations and Aboriginal teachings are an important part of the curriculum, and they fit with all grade levels, from elementary to high school.” To help with the teachings, kits were made up that have instructions, background and examples, so anyone can teach the material.

The workshops are facilitated by Aboriginal art and cultural leaders, who are recruited through SYCAP’s nationally recognized Urban Canvas Project. They also consulted with Elders to ensure that things were done correctly.

Leaders researched their culture, and shared their history and artistic talent with workshop participants. “All of

them have Aboriginal ancestry but they aren’t necessarily familiar with their own culture, so through their research they learn a lot too,” says Krueckl.

Gerry Potié is one of three Aboriginal art and cultural leaders currently involved in teaching the workshops and enjoys sharing his artistic gifts with others. “The kids help me learn,” he says. “I learn more from them than I could ever teach them. Art promotes positivity and healthy forms of release.”

Krueckl agrees, “We’re bringing these artistic activities to a whole range of kids, not just Aboriginal kids, but everybody. It brings a lot of positivity to Aboriginal culture.”

Founded in 2001, SYCAP offers community art programming and initiatives to youth as an alternative to unemployment and crime. You find more information by going to their website at www.scyapinc.org.

BUILD LEADERSHIP.

In 2012, youth in Cumberland House, SK, participated in a Media Arts & Traditional Storytelling Workshop, as part of a project supported by an Aboriginal Arts & Cultural Leadership Grant.



MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!

Funding available from the
**Aboriginal Arts & Cultural
Leadership Grant**

Supports opportunities for First Nations and/or Métis youth to demonstrate leadership skills through cultural mentorships.

Deadlines: Oct. 15 & April 15



Visit www.saskculture.ca for details.

The SaskScapes Podcast: The Sixties Scoop Series

BY KEVIN POWER, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANIMATEUR & PRODUCER/
HOST OF SASKSCAPES



From the early 1960s through late 1980s there was a mass removal of First Nations children from their families into the child welfare system, often without the consent of their families or bands. An estimated 20,000 were “scooped up”, an act that has been referred to by some as cultural genocide. And, sadly the impact continues today. This has become known as the “Sixties Scoop”, and when I learned about this part of Canadian history earlier this year, I remember thinking, “how could I have not heard about this until now?” I don’t think I’m alone in that.



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has brought to the foreground the cruelty of the residential school system. And I’d like to believe that healing has begun. I feel that the “Sixties scoop” stories deserve attention as well.

Since creating the SaskScapes podcast series, I am humbled by the honesty of my guests. There have been many laughs along the way. But I wanted to do my part by providing a platform by which some of the survivors of the sixties scoop could share their stories. Clearly I could dedicate years to this topic alone and never hear everyone’s story, but this was a start.

Episodes 57 through 60 feature the stories of Dr. Raven Sinclair, Wayne Smoke-Snellgrove, Lauren Reid and Carol Daniels. There is a “thru-line” in all four of these stories: the need to find cultural identity by connecting with ones family of origin; the ability of the human spirit to triumph over great sadness; and the joy to be found on the other side of that journey. While we all may not have the Sixties Scoop as part of our story, there are lessons to be found for us all.



A comment from a listener after hearing episode 57 with Dr. Raven Sinclair reads: “This is heart wrenching... A wrong was done. So glad you did survive Raven, to speak, to witness, to inspire. What is really present is your consistent generosity of spirit! This belongs on the school curriculum. Nothing mundane here.” Episode 57 was featured on CBC’s national radio program Podcast Playlist, which aired in November 2015.

The SaskScape Podcast Series was originally sponsored by SaskCulture as part of the Culture Days Animateur program.



 The SaskScapes podcast series can be heard for free via the SaskScapes app., iTunes, Stitcher, Tuneln Radio and at www.iheartculture.ca

(Left to right) Raven Sinclair, Lauren Reid, Wayne Smoke Snellgrove and Carol Daniels.



Language Key to Culture

Dene Language Immersion Camp teaches the importance language preservation

BY DANICA LORER

For First Nations peoples living in traditional societies, culture is embedded in the language. Learning a First Nations' language can help build an important connections for non-Aboriginals working with First Nations communities.

Melody Wood, Indigenous Knowledge Systems Researcher, Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre (SICC), says, "Our language is very descriptive and it explains a lot of things that can't be quite properly translated into English. If you know your language then you can better understand culture and the First Nations way of life." The SICC partnered with NORTEP/NORPAC, the Northern Teacher Education Program and the Northern Professional Access College, to offer a Dene Language Immersion Camp in La Ronge from November 2-6, 2015, with the funding support from SaskCulture's Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Grant.



“If you know your language then you can better understand culture and the First Nations way of life.”



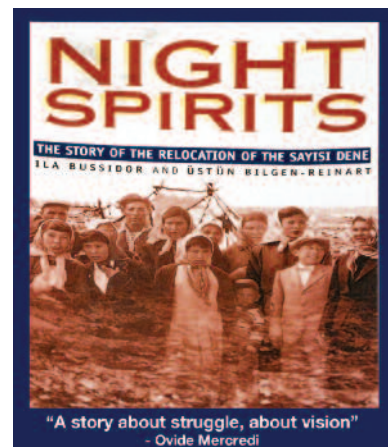
PHOTOS COURTESY OF MELODY WOOD.

“Dene is one of the smaller populations in Saskatchewan,” says Wood. She explains that the language is stronger in more remote communities and for those who have stayed in their communities instead of moving south and to urban centres.

The Dene Language Immersion Camp was designed for non-Dene speaking professionals from all cultures. The participants include educators, health professionals, people who work in industry and police officers, people

who work with Dene people. “There are a lot of people who are working with Dene people who can’t properly communicate with them, after consultations and discussion it was decided that we would try to address that problem,” says Wood.

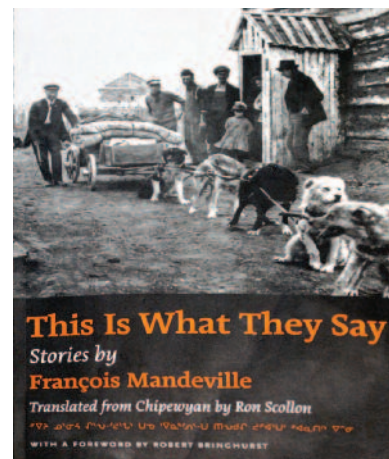
The program was modelled as a ‘language nest’. “The idea is that for the entire time you are in the program that you use as little English as possible, preferably no English, fumbling through it as a child would,” adds Wood.



Get to know some words from the Dene Language

Boy	deneyuaz
Clothes	yú
Fish	łue
Girl	ts'ékwaz
It is Good	nezy
River	des
Thank you	mąsi chok
Yesterday	tthidzinék'e

* More Dene words and phrases can be found at www.firstvoices.com





“It is important for people to take a few seconds and learn somebody else’s language and culture, to walk in their language footpath for a bit, and to learn who they are.”


An intensive workshop offers a chance to learn greetings and the questions people need to ask in everyday interactions. “They will practice every day with fluent Dene speakers. Because it is the north we will also have land-based learning. One day there will be a Dene Sweat Lodge and Feast, and another day will be a cookout and a chance to sample some of the northern foods. They will bring in Knowledge Keepers and Elders to provide more in-depth information,” says Wood.

Instructor Allan Adam brings experience in broadcasting, interpreting, First Nations leadership, and traditional lifestyle. He is passionate about language and has travelled the world to learn. “I study languages all the time. I don’t dissect them. I just try to practice them. I try to hear them and feel them so I can start learning to speak them,” he says.

He adds, “For a period we feared we’d be losing the language. In some cases the usage is diminishing. Even in some of the northern communities you’ll hear the kids only speaking English so we want to make sure we touch as many people as we can. I’m living proof you can learn it even later in life if you have the determination and willingness to do it.



“It is important for people to take a few seconds and learn somebody else’s language and culture, to walk in their language footpath for a bit, and to learn who they are,” says Adam.

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Learning Language from Each Other

An annual Indigenous celebration brings school kids together to restore language and culture

BY CHRIS TYRONE ROSS

Every year, the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) hosts the Indigenous Language and Culture Celebration, where over 500 elementary students from Saskatoon and surrounding reserves take part in a variety of cultural and language activities. The annual one-day event is held at a different school each year and is made possible through partnerships with the Saskatoon Public Schools and Greater Catholic Schools (along with some key funding provided SaskCulture's Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership grant). This

past year's event was held at City Park Collegiate on May 22, 2015.

"Each celebration has a different theme. Last year's theme was 'Honouring our Elders', so we brought in extra Elders from the communities," says Albert Scott, Language and Culture Coordinator, STC.

Scott works with three language groups, Dakota, Cree and Sauteaux, which also represent the seven bands of STC. These languages (including Michif) are all essential parts of the Indigenous Language and Culture Celebration every year.

For a day like this, a lot of planning goes into it, says Scott, who explains what the day entails.

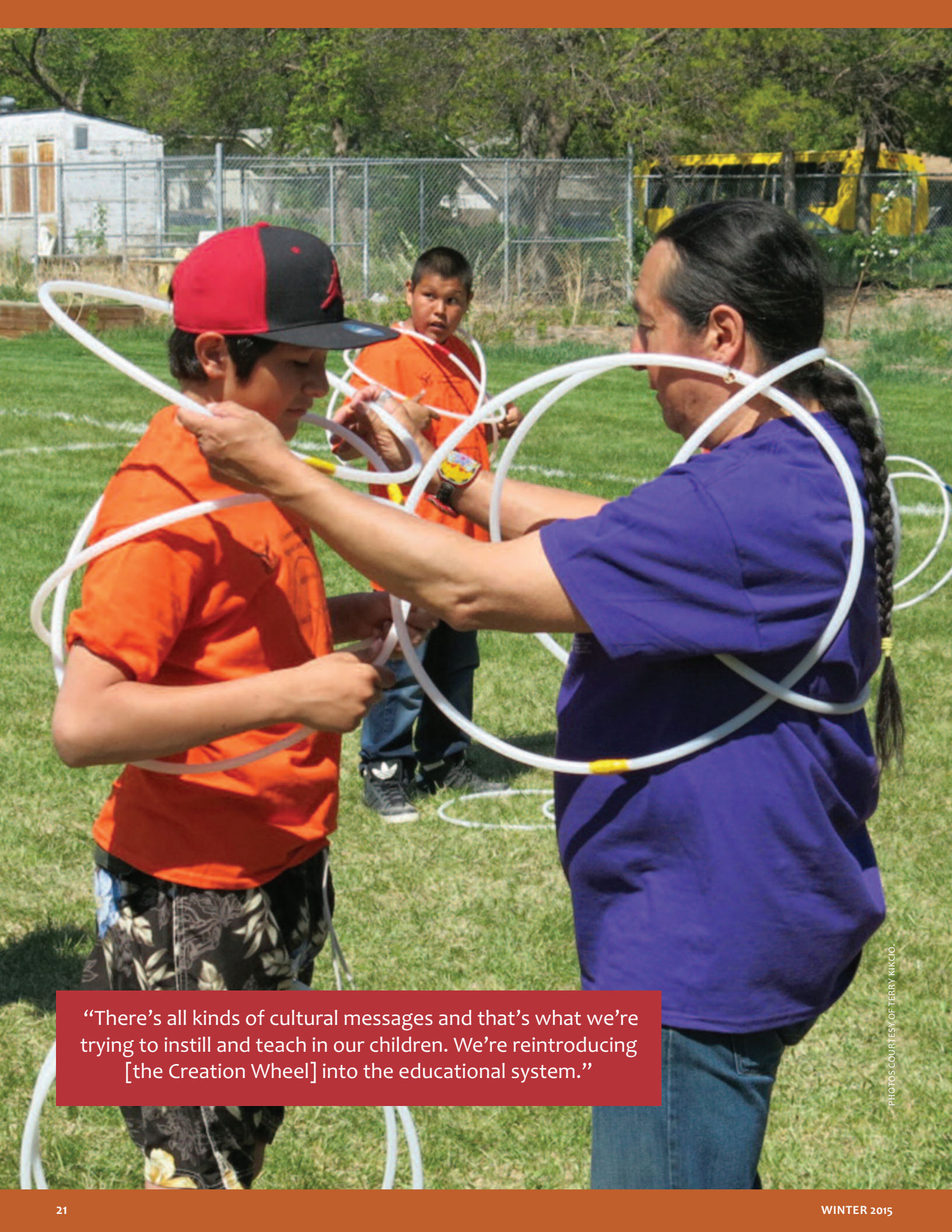
"What usually happens, is we get together as a partnership. Last year, we brought in the language instructors, then from there, we planned the exact details of the things we need to do," he says.

They start at about 9:30 am with registration, and at 10:00 am, the drum group is brought in. There is also a grand entry celebration, and the dignitaries speak: This past year STC Chief Felix Thomas, and Directors from the Saskatoon Public and Greater Catholic Schools were in attendance.

From there, the group breaks into workshops -- last year, there was held 25 mini-workshops at 30 minutes long each. All the groups of children rotated through three or four workshops in the morning.

The celebration is unique in how organizers mix up the students in different language workshops in an effort to make them learn from other culture and language groups.

"If you come from a Sauteaux band, we



“There’s all kinds of cultural messages and that’s what we’re trying to instill and teach in our children. We’re reintroducing [the Creation Wheel] into the educational system.”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TERRY KIKCIO.



“The biggest reason for me, is it’s going to benefit all of our students and to change the picture of what education looks like for our First Nations, Metis, and Inuit youth. That’s one of the key pieces as to why events like the Cultural Celebration are important”.

would channel you to a Cree or Métis workshop. If you came from a Cree band, we would channel your children to get exposed with a Sauteaux culture and language as well as the Métis and so on. This is done respectfully so that it is acceptable that there are other cultures and languages around. From there we gather at noon. Last year, we had Phillip Dallas Boyer come play fiddle music, then we had a mini-play and in the afternoons. We had various schools perform on stage in their own language, whether in Cree, Sauteaux or Michif,” explains Scott.

Partnerships are key for any successful event, as all parties involved play vital

roles in this annual celebration.

“In the partnership, we rotate hosting. Greater Catholic Schools will host one year, the Saskatoon Public Schools will host and then we host.”

Scott also notes that it helps kids get used to different schools. “For the children that come from the band schools, they sort of look at the (city) schools - how they run and operate – and they get used to that atmosphere in case they have to move to Saskatoon or further their education”, explains Scott.

Darryl Isbister, coordinator, First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education, Saskatoon

Public School Board, sits on the planning committee and speaks about the value of such partnerships.

In the division, there’s a Cree language and culture program operating from one of our schools, we also have a Michif language and culture program taking place in a another school, he explains. “It ensures that the languages stay alive and ensuring that all of our youth have the opportunity to speak and learn their language. That’s one of the crucial aspects to helping our students understand who they are and that they belong in this system.”

Scott also adds that the partners do contribute; however, they still have limited funds. Because of this, they applied for SaskCulture funding, which has provided some much needed benefits.

“The SaskCulture grant is used to bring in our traditional cultural experts, to come and show and tell the children how important our language and culture is. Some of the things they discuss include plants and the importance of mother earth. They talk about values like respect, honesty, humility - all kinds of cultural ideas you can find at the First Nations level,” says Scott.

As for the overall importance of language and culture, Scott says that long before Europeans arrived, First Nations had their own education system, which he says the Saskatoon Tribal Council is now trying to restore.

“We’re developing a cultural curriculum guide, based on our Indigenous world view. As a language and cultural coordinator, I always felt we had our own educational system. We had our own way of educating our students before Christopher Columbus came,” says Scott.

“In the cultural curriculum that we’re developing, it’s called the Creation Wheel, where there’s 48 items in that wheel. There is a purpose and a reason why the Creator made these things,” adds Scott. “There’s all kinds of cultural messages and that’s what we’re trying to instill and teach in our children. We’re reintroducing them into the educational system.”

Next year’s Indigenous Language and Culture Celebration will take place at E.D. Feehan Catholic High School. (For more information you can contact Albert Scott at 1-306-659-2561).



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TERRY KIKCIO.

“[This program] ensures that the languages stay alive and ensuring that all of our youth have the opportunity to speak and learn their language.”



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Participants from all backgrounds were invited to learn how to raise Tipis at First Nations University of Canada during the latest Culture Days weekend.
Photo courtesy of Gail Chin.