

Culture Builds Community! **Engage**

Spring 2020
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

Sask *Culture*

Promoting Cultural Diversity Through Food

Creating a Village in the Spirit of Reconciliation

Reconnecting Youth to Mother Earth

Engage

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highlight
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ON THE COVER:

Participants build a tipi during 2017 Culture Days in Martensville. Photo by Kevin Hogarth

Contents

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Message from the CEO	3
Biggar Takes Step Towards Reconciliation.....	5
Learning Cultures and Building Literacy Through the Arts ..	6
Promoting Cultural Diversity Through Food.....	8
How One Newcomer Youth is Championing Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action	10
Gathering Opens Conversation on Care of Ancestral Objects and Knowledge.....	12
Creating a Village in the Spirit of Reconciliation.....	14
Centralizing Traditional and Holistic Birthing Practices in First Nations Communities.....	16
Creating Platforms for Language Revitalization.....	18
Walking the Path to Reconciliation	19
Incorporating Land-based Learning into Programming....	20
Reconnecting Youth to Mother Earth.....	22
Advancing Reconciliation Beyond Words	23
Gathering Focuses on Reconciliation and Relationship-Building.....	26



Direct Inquiries to:

Diane Ell, Editor
dell@saskculture.ca

Busayo Osobade, Publishing Coordinator
bosobade@saskculture.ca

404, 2125 11th Ave., Regina SK S4P 3X3
Tel: (306) 780.9284
www.saskculture.ca

Graphic Design:

J. Lauder Publishing & Design
joanne.lauder@sasktel.net

Contributing Writers:

Andréa Ledding, Chinenye Anokwuru, Kerry Benjoe,
Nickita Longman, Penny Smoke, Sabrina Cataldo,
Shaunna Grandish, and Shelley Fayant

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Message from the CEO

This will be my last message in *Engage* as the CEO of SaskCulture and I find that both exciting and frightening. The work of SaskCulture has been part of my identity for more than 20 years, so while I look forward to not having the challenges of this role, I know I will miss the people as well as the learning opportunities and personal growth that it provided to me. The most profound of all of the learning opportunities would be the education I received around Treaties and the lives of Indigenous peoples in this country and, in particular, the provincial landmass known as Saskatchewan, which includes lands covered by Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10, the traditional lands of the Nêhiyaw, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, Dene and Nakawê peoples, as well as the homeland of the Métis. This article gives me an opportunity to share some thoughts with you on the subject prior to my departure.

SaskCulture's Reconciliation journey actually began prior to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) report being released in June of 2015. It started in 2004 when Mary Rose Boyer, the first Aboriginal Initiatives Coordinator at SaskCulture, was hired. Mary Rose was with SaskCulture for a pilot project that included the establishment of a First Nations and Métis Cultural Advisory Circle. At the conclusion of the pilot, we knew that SaskCulture needed to hire a full-time, long-term First Nations and Métis Coordinator. Mary Rose decided that was not an option for her and we hired Damon Badger Heit. Damon's passion, along with the stellar knowledge of the Circle,

informed much of our work over the next few years and led to the establishment of the Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Grant program, greater clarity around the Métis Cultural Development Fund, as well as a review and revision of the organization's policies and programs from an Indigenous perspective.

Around the same time, SaskCulture's Board no longer had to find individuals to appoint to the First Nations and Métis Board positions; instead members of those communities came forward as part of the nominations process and went through the regular election process. In 2007, Louise Oelke was elected onto the Board as a member at large; it was the first time an Indigenous person was elected into an open position. The input from First Nations and Métis directors at the Board table, along with that of the Circle, challenged SaskCulture's way of thinking and doing business.

At present, SaskCulture's Board of ten has four members who are Indigenous.

About 40 per cent of its peer assessor volunteers have Indigenous ancestry and SaskCulture has three staff out of the 17 who are Indigenous. It takes changes like these to change perspectives and educate the rest of us to look at our colonial practices and make significant shifts. And, to support its volunteers and staff in initiating those changes, SaskCulture has invested in training and education to provide opportunities to learn the truth, or the true history of this land.

When the TRC report with its Calls to Action was released, SaskCulture took the time to learn what was in the report and to give consideration to the Calls to Action. The report, in my opinion, laid Canada's history bare for all to see. We learned that much of the history we had learned was not the truth. Hearing the many stories of the pain caused to those attending residential schools, as well as the subsequent challenges to them and their families, is not easy to hear, but this truth must be heard and taken to heart. We must acknowledge and accept that the colonial legacy continues to this day, making the Reconciliation, at times, feel like an unlikely prospect. We shouldn't let this deter us in our work to find a new way forward, one that is grounded in respect, understanding and partnership with First Nations and Métis people.

In 2018, SaskCulture celebrated 20 years. Just prior to entering that year, the Board and staff gathered for a retreat to look at the results of the first 20 years and what the organization needed to focus on when thinking about the next 20 years. Many successful outcomes were discussed and many challenges were on the table; however, the first piece of work that was identified for the next 20 years was changing SaskCulture's Constitution to address the TRC report, as well as the

“ We must acknowledge and accept that the colonial legacy continues to this day, making the Reconciliation, at times, feel like an unlikely prospect. We shouldn't let this deter us in our work to find a new way forward, one that is grounded in respect, understanding and partnership with First Nations and Métis people. ”

- ROSE GILKS



United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). At SaskCulture's AGM in June 2019, those changes were passed and now guide all of SaskCulture's work. The key changes to those principles and values include:

- Indigenous peoples' cultural revitalization and sustained cultural exchange;
- Supporting Indigenous peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and relationships to the land as an essential part of the Reconciliation process;
- Taking constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Indigenous peoples' cultures and languages as part of Reconciliation;
- Sharing responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships as Treaty people.

[As noted above, these changes to the Values are specific to the TRC report and UNDRIP. There are other changes that address other parts of the cultural ecosystem in Saskatchewan but for the purpose of this article that addresses the theme of Reconciliation, I have only included the constitutional changes specific to the topic.]

This spring, SaskCulture will release its new five-year strategic plan. Much of that plan is devoted to living these values. The TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP are not a "hot topic", or something that we can address then check off to say "been there, done that, what's next?" The Calls to Action require substantial and sustained changes to the way we do business and

“ The TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP are not a “hot topic”, or something that we can address then check off to say “been there, done that, what’s next?” ”

• ROSE GILKS

interact with one another. This means that funding programs and funding decisions, as well as leadership and capacity building in the cultural ecosystem of Saskatchewan, will undergo change. In establishing the strategic directions within its new strategic plan, the SaskCulture Board of Directors used the word 'transformational' in describing the changes that need to take place over the next five years. As a cultural ecosystem, we must be ready to make those changes. The cultural ecosystem can be a leader when it comes to embracing change because we know that 'culture defines us, and that culture builds communities'.

In conclusion, I want to say “a very heartfelt thank you” to the many SaskCulture staff, board members (past and present), committee volunteers, members and stakeholders that I have worked with during my life-changing journey at SaskCulture. Your commitment and passion to the cultural vibrancy of this province brings joy to my heart. Although I will miss you in a work capacity, I know we will connect in other ways in the future.

Thank you.

SaskCulture CEO Rose Gilks (Right), SaskCulture Outreach Consultants Catherine Folstad and Damon Badger Heit receive gifts from the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC) after participating in SICC's spring round dance in 2019. The round dance was to acknowledge the work that has been achieved through the partnership between the two organizations. Photo courtesy of Damon Badger Heit



Biggar Takes Step Towards Reconciliation

BY KERRY BENJOE

Reconciliation means the return to friendly relations and the Town of Biggar has taken its first step in that direction.

"It's a work in progress," says Delta Fay Cruickshank, executive director of the Biggar Museum and Art Gallery. It all began when she and the economic development officer for the Town of Biggar got together to discuss Reconciliation and heard about the KAIROS Blanket Exercise. Once they

received a SaskCulture grant for the project, the pair split up the duties and made it happen.

"The year prior, I had been to a blanket exercise the Museums Association of Saskatchewan had put on and I thought it was a very good teaching tool," says Cruickshank. "It was important to get as many people from the town involved." Although she didn't have an exact number of participants, she says the turnout was overwhelming and attracted high school

students and seniors alike from different backgrounds such as non-Indigenous, newcomer, First Nation and Métis.

"Eventually I want to make sure Biggar takes further steps down the path of Reconciliation," she says, adding that the KAIROS Blanket Exercise can be an emotional experience because it not only introduces the harsh realities of Indigenous history to those who never knew it, but it sparks tough conversations about race and discrimination.

After each exercise people had an opportunity to debrief and share their personal experiences, which brought some to tears. Although Cruickshank is not Indigenous, she has made it her mission to build a bridge between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the area simply because it's time.

Biggar, located 98 kilometres west of Saskatoon, has a population of around 2,000 people. It's also about 30 minutes from the Red Pheasant First Nation. Both communities were thrown into the spotlight during the Gerald Stanley murder trial. Cruickshank says the court case created an atmosphere of division, which is why Reconciliation work is so important.

Her motivation stems from her personal experience. The daughter of a soldier, her family moved often, so she was constantly the new kid in school, which made her the outsider. However, it was another childhood incident that taught her about the unfairness of discrimination. Her best friend's father was Indigenous and in the 1950s times were very different. One day, the two girls both five-years-old at the time, went to the park to play. "We got beat up really, really bad by big kids and we were called, 'dirty Indians'," says Cruickshank. "I learned from a very early age what it was like to be discriminated against for things you have absolutely no control over."

Having lived in Europe and throughout Canada, Cruickshank arrived in Biggar 11 years ago and fell completely in love with it. She's working to make sure it is the best it can be. She plans to do more work in the area of Reconciliation because it is needed and is thankful the journey has started.

This project was supported through SaskCulture's Community Cultural Engagement Planning Grant.

Delta Fay Cruickshank (Left) hopes to help the Town of Biggar take further steps down the path of Reconciliation.
Photo by D'Shae Bussiere



Learning Cultures and Building Literacy Through the Arts

BY SABRINA CATALDO

Some young Regina students are learning and getting immersed in cultures through an innovative art program.

When Terrance Littlelent showcases his hoop dancing to youth, he also shares traditional Indigenous teaching. As part of a pilot program funded through the Artists in School grant, artists such as Littlelent introduced students from St. Kateri Tekakwitha School in Regina to the use of art forms – music and dance – to experience and understand other cultures.

The students were completely engaged and built confidence over the course of

the program. One of the students said, “I was nervous about dancing with five hoops. I didn’t think I could do it. But, look, I can use all the hoops!”

Not only did the program help the students express and engage with other cultures, it also created a learning opportunity for the teachers. For example, each of the hoops involved in Littlelent’s dance has a traditional Indigenous teaching associated with it. One of the teachers, Michelle Dizi says, “Since I am not First Nations, I often struggle to find the best ways to teach my students about First Nations culture. I learned as much as my students did during this project. I wish

that every class that I teach would have the opportunity for such deep learning.”

Dizi adds, “The learning that occurred during this project cannot be mandated by curriculum or planned in a long-range plan. This is learning that happens through the magic of music and dance. This is learning that touches the soul and changes a child. This is the difference that art makes.” She goes on to say, “When a child says, ‘Dancing the Gahu dance makes me feel brave,’ when something like that happens, it’s magical.”

The Regina Catholic Schools Arts Education collaborated with local artists to provide diverse dance and music programming to the Kindergarten students with the goal of supporting literacy outcomes. There were five modules with lead artist Chancz Perry delivering a cultural awareness and sensitivity workshop for teachers; a creative dance, featuring Regina Symphony Orchestra violinist Katie Gannor; a First Nations hoop dance with Terrance Littlelent; Ghanaian



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- MICHELLE DIZY.

dance and drumming with Godknows Kummasah; and a training in international Orff Pedagogy barred instruments, such as the xylophone, with Sophia Yannitsos, who is also the Regina Catholic Schools Arts Education Consultant.

Perry says, “We’re not teaching students to be actors or singers or dancers or hoop dancers, but we’re using art forms as a vehicle for physical expression, for building social relationships, for gaining knowledge and understandings.”

Artists in Schools is a Saskatchewan Arts Board program supported by funding from the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Government of Saskatchewan through the Ministry of Education, and Sask Lotteries, thanks to a partnership with SaskCulture.



Students from St. Kateri Tekakwitha have the opportunity to learn about cultures through an innovative Artist in Schools program. Photos courtesy of the Regina Catholic Schools



Promoting Cultural Diversity Through Food

BY CHINENYE ANOKWURU

A new wave of young chefs are getting trained to build bridges and connect with other cultures by cooking. Coming from different cultures, these chefs are able to bring different ideas, flavours and stories to this culinary experience.

The Chefs in Training program, an initiative of the CHEP Good Food Inc. in Saskatoon, incorporates strong cultural components that allow its young participants from a diversity of backgrounds to connect through food.

The participants are elementary and high school children within the ages of ten to 14, and 16 to 18, selected from schools in Saskatoon's core neighborhood. Most of

the participants are from Indigenous and newcomer backgrounds, looking for an interesting new way to explore culture.

Jean Goerzen, interim director, CHEP, says the initiative is tailored to helping newcomers and Indigenous students to engage with other cultures while also encouraging cultural diversity.

The program recognizes that the students and their families have diverse food traditions and practices and encourages them to learn about different food and beverage options and practices in Canada, as well as those from around the world.

"Typically about one third of the participants are Indigenous and one third are newcomers. This is an initiative that





celebrates diversity through food,” she explains. “It promotes inclusion and sharing of culture through food. Students are able to learn about foods from other cultures and are able to make healthy food choices from diverse cuisines and traditional food practices to help their families.”

Goerzen says CHEP is committed to promoting food security in the community by building skills to grow food, make good food accessible and affordable, and by building skills ‘using’ food - through kitchen and food safety, budgeting and cooking.

She says that this after-school program gives children an opportunity they might not otherwise receive. “A life skill, such as this project, also focuses on training them on how to prepare budget-friendly and nutritious meals that they can replicate at home. They (the students) are really opening up. For example, students are talking about the impact of residential schools on their families and requesting wild meat such as caribou, elk and moose for the cooking sessions”.

According to Goerzen, the program’s vision for the future transcends the training. There are plans to spread the word about diversity and inclusivity through a CHEP cookbook, which will reach a wider audience in the province. Some of the recipes created by the students will be featured in the cookbook.

The project was launched for the first time in February 2020, and has 12 participating schools in Saskatoon. The students participate in a 90-minute session once a week for five weeks, and are facilitated by CHEP-trained facilitators and volunteers.

“Students are able to learn about foods from other cultures and are able to make healthy food choices from diverse cuisines and traditional food practices, to help their families.”

- JEAN GOERZEN.



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

Some Indigenous and non-Indigenous students learn about different cultures and gain food skills at CHEP's training held this year at the Pleasant Hill Community School in Saskatoon. Photos by Jean Goerzen



How One Newcomer Youth is Championing Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

BY CHINENYE ANOKWURU

When Dany Muembo moved to Canada, he had one goal in mind — to get educated and settle down. Today, he is one of ConnectR's Youth Champions, leading conversations about Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action using ConnectR's online tools.

Launched in January 2019, ConnectR was set up to help people on their journey to understanding Reconciliation. Last year, it launched a website hub offering lots of content and information about Truth and Reconciliation depending on visitors' interests. People can search for a variety of topics and find answers to questions they may have about Indigenous peoples.

Christena Conrad, program manager, ConnectR, says the tool is for people who

don't know where to turn for information. "Often these people are scared or feel intimidated about Reconciliation work. It is an easy route for people to go in and be confident that the information they are getting is accurate and has been reviewed and approved by survivors. They know they are not getting third person information."

Muembo, 27, came to Canada six years ago as a refugee after fleeing crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo. His interest and passion to support the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action began with a chance encounter during a cab ride. He had just arrived in Canada and the cab was taking him to a shelter when an Indigenous person crossed the road without watching out for oncoming vehicles. This, he says, prompted a remark

from the cab driver who told Muembo his views about Indigenous peoples. He now knows these views were all wrong.

He says that encounter left him with a negative impression of Indigenous peoples that stuck with him for many years until he met his first Indigenous friend. Muembo then became a frequent visitor to his friend's community and was able to learn more about residential schools and the history of Indigenous peoples. "I can say for me that was a pivotal point in my life, regarding my relationship with Indigenous peoples. I started seeing that I am more similar to them than I was even aware."

Through his interactions, Muembo learned about ConnectR and says he was immediately drawn to the project because



“ I have learned that there is a long way to go for Reconciliation in Canada and everybody has a role to play. It is high time that most people acknowledge it. ”

- DANNY MUEMBO

of the warmth and connectivity he felt from his Indigenous friends. He says the ConnectR's Youth Champion Initiative employs Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and newcomer youths and empowers them to take action to further educate themselves and share their Reconciliation experiences on a more public platform. Muembo has been playing a huge role in ensuring its success.



“We have gone around to schools, high schools mostly, and we have talked about Reconciliation and cleared the way for conversations that were difficult to have,” says Muembo. “I have learned that there is a long way to go for Reconciliation in Canada and everybody has a role to play. It is high time that most people acknowledge it.”

Muembo says his plan for the future is to

continue the Truth and Reconciliation advocacy even beyond ConnectR. He has his eyes set on visiting reserves in northern Saskatchewan to learn from Elders in the community. Then he will go on to share his knowledge with newcomers to Canada.

This project is supported through SaskCulture's Multicultural Initiatives Fund.

Danny Muembo is leading conversations about Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action using ConnectR's online tools.
Photos by Danny Muembo

Gathering Opens Conversation on Care of Ancestral Objects and Knowledge

BY SHAUNNA GRANDISH



“It’s time to take care of our ancestors because they take care of us from the spirit world.”

This statement, which came from Elder William Ratfoot, was the idea behind the theme of a gathering that delved into the issues surrounding cultural preservation and protecting sacred Indigenous objects.

The ē-micimināyakik Gathering was hosted by the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC) in May 2019, in Saskatoon. This event brought together various professionals and participants with the goal of sharing issues, ideas, progress and solutions for First Nations museums, cultural centres, archives and libraries. This gathering was also a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #67.

Jessica Generoux, chair, 2019 ē-micimināyakik, says through discussion, SICC realized that many Indigenous communities in Canada were in the same situation as her

organization when it came to caring for, and protecting, historic materials and intellectual property. It was identified that there was a gap between museums practices and Indigenous peoples’ views in ensuring the protection, preservation and return of Indigenous cultural heritage and knowledge. It was evident that changes needed to be made.

“It was felt that perhaps other First Nations might also be interested in training, networking, and resource building too, in a way where we could all teach each other and learn together through the sharing of learned experiences, education, and critical discussion,” she explains.

Hundreds of people registered for the gathering, from local groups such as the Saskatchewan Archaeology Society to groups from further away such as Thunder Bay Public Library, Mohawk Nation, Ktunaxa Nation Council, the Canadian Museum of History, as well as many



Top left: Participants listen to various speakers at the ē-micimināyakik Gathering in 2019.

Above: Cultural items shared from the workshop *Birchbark, Memories & the Act of Listening: Exploring Museums Collections Containing Anishinaabek Materials* led by Naomi Recollect.

Photos courtesy of SICC



Top: Participants listen to various speakers at the ē-micimināyakik Gathering in 2019.

Centre: Dr Robin Gray (left) and Sean Young (right) with SICC President Wanda Wilson (middle) after leading a discussion on Indigenous Collections: Valuing Our Cultural Heritage and Intellectual Property.

Bottom: SICC Staff Chevez Ezaneh and Jessica Generoux at the ē-micimināyakik Gathering in 2019.

Photos courtesy of SICC

others. This gathering provided an opportunity for organizations to work together to develop strategies to “Indigenize” the policies and procedures used in addressing Indigenous sacred objects and knowledge. The implementation of strategies in repatriation was also discussed.

Generoux says from this gathering SICC wanted to see Nations working together on a collective vision on Indigenous sovereignty in approaching the care and management of ancestral objects and knowledge.

“Museums and collections across the globe hold information that doesn’t belong to them – many nations suffer from this systemic injustice,” she explains. “We are responsible now to discuss these issues for the empowerment of our communities and future generations. We do this by providing support on cultural preservation and building capacities on repatriation efforts.”

The ē-micimināyakik Gathering helped open discussions within Treaty nations on how ancestral objects are understood and preserved.

Generoux says SICC would like to seek future partnerships for a 2021 gathering. The organization is directly working with First Nations communities on applying the knowledge they gained as an organization in protecting, preserving and promoting language and culture through sacred items and knowledge.

“This is where we are at now,” she continues. “Empowering our communities with these ideas associated with sovereignty. We would like to pull together all of these experiences we are working through now and present an even stronger position on protecting cultural heritage in 2021 from a perspective of our Saskatchewan Treaty Nations.”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #67 states: “We call upon the federal government to provide funding to the Canadian Museums Association to undertake, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, a national review of museum policies and best practices to determine the level of compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to make recommendations.”

This event was supported by SaskCulture thanks to funding from Sask Lotteries.



Creating a Village in the Spirit of Reconciliation

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING

When David Garneau was growing up in Edmonton, he and his siblings, along with the neighbourhood children would play an imaginative game they called “City”, which has become the basis for a game of Reconciliation and community called Océans - “The Village” - teaching children about First Nations and Métis principles concerning gift and trade economies, social order, honour, and justice.

“In the 1980s I was studying art in the University of Calgary and worked summers with their art and recreation department, including kids programming. One day we were overbooked and had six or seven groups. There was no way to manage that size of group, so we did a game of “City” from my childhood, printing play money and combining art activities. It was a lot of fun,” Garneau recalls. From there the idea has grown. Garneau partnered with

Frédéric Dupre to help bring some students from French immersion schools in Regina such as École Monseigneur de Laval to the Reconciliation projects, “so everyone could learn the principles of justice and economy, before colonization.”

Garneau says the best games involve 90 to 110 children who all come into a space and are given a description by a Knowledge Keeper of what life was like on the prairies prior to colonization. They are then separated into four lodges or groups, each working together to create a group identity before receiving more teachings about environment, honour, and other subjects. Periodically they meet again for their “night teachings” and to honour various individuals, groups, or activities. In the meantime, if something goes wrong, or there is a teachable moment, the game stops so everyone can discuss situations. Trade becomes part of the economy and groups decide on services they can provide for barter, such as tea, beauty salon, hair and nails, or artwork. Starting around 9 a.m., the students will have made different things before mid-day. Three members from each group work in the kitchen to create a collaborative lunch. After the feast, there is a clean-up often followed by a fashion show where they show off various creations.

“My favourite part is when the teachers come,” Garneau notes. “One of the most wonderful comments was when one of the teachers said ‘I don’t have to teach that much!’ - the kids, on their own were doing math, negotiation, logic and creativity.”

Garneau loves the way it overlaps with their education; there may already be some knowledge of Treaties or the Métis. This not only shows how things were, but how things could be once again with good relations.

Joely BigEagle-Kehquahtoway is one of the Knowledge Keepers, along with her husband Lorne Kehquahtoway. “We are called upon to come and share anything that we can, and our whole focus has been about buffalo. We tell stories related to the buffalo and whatever is relevant at the time,” says BigEagle-Kehquahtoway. “There are teachings about resilience, culture, perseverance and community, sustainability, not wasting any part of the buffalo, and just how we still rely on the buffalo in our culture. Combining the past to present and gaining an understanding of how we can carry that into the future, that’s our role. We like to incorporate art...



“It’s done in a gentle way and with kindness, sharing the truth about what happened and it’s this moment in time where we want the kids you help one another build a village ...it’s just an opportunity for them to go for it.”

- JOELY BIGEAGLE-KEHQUAHTOOWAY

it’s up to the kids to create and tap into their creative resources or energy to create something and to have fun.”

She likens the game to a huge art store that they can access and gain inspiration from the stories, the buffalo robes and the teachings, but the underlying idea is it’s a community made up of Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and newcomers, all working together to create this village.

“It’s done in a gentle way and with kindness, sharing the truth about what happened and it’s this moment in time where we want the kids to be engaged. How do you help one another build a village...it’s just an opportunity for them to go for it.”

This project was supported through SaskCulture’s Métis Cultural Development Fund.

Students from different immersion schools participate in a game of Reconciliation called “The Village”. Photos by Frédéric Dupre.

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RESTORING WORLDVIEW:

Centralizing Traditional and Holistic Birthing Practices in First Nations Communities

BY NICKITA LONGMAN

LeslieAnne Wilson's interest in the birthing process grew with every invitation she had to be present with family members going through labour over the past few decades. It wasn't until she came across a group of Indigenous women practicing in midwifery and Doula training that she decided to expand her knowledge base and obtain a formal education in the process. Now she practices as a Traditional Birth Worker.

With Nakota and Cree ancestry, it became a priority for her to incorporate traditional practices in her training. "I wanted to start addressing wellness in a holistic way, and that can only begin at birth," she says.

She returned to her home community of

Kahkewistahaw First Nation and decided she wanted to share her knowledge within the community. Tapping into her knowledge base of formal Doula training and traditional practices, she decided to apply for SaskCulture's Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Grant to assist her with organizing a two-day workshop and camp for Indigenous women this past summer.

"It was the first time something like this happened in Kahkewistahaw. I wanted to explore programming that promoted health and wellness within our women and the family system," she explains adding that the project received great interest and support from Kahkewistahaw Health Centre, as well as community members,

Elders, nurses and pre-natal workers from surrounding reserves. She calls the cultural gathering "Restoring Worldview."

She says the gathering experienced fluctuating participation, but averaged 30 participants per day from Kahkewistahaw, as well as surrounding reserves. Each day started with a Women's Water Ceremony, and each day closed with a Pipe Ceremony. "Women brought their children in for the day, so I ensured there were always Elders present," she recalls. "Maintaining the balance between youth and Elders was an important element to this gathering." Further, she explains the complicated relationship to cultural and traditional practices faced by some Elders in her



community. “A lot of Elders who attended residential school weren’t given a chance to learn holistic teachings in this way,” she says. “So we were aiming to build the community back up in this way, starting at home with the family and beginning at birth.”

LeslieAnne Wilson says men were also welcome to attend, and a few were present throughout the gathering as well as many youth. She says this opened up the opportunity to talk about menstruation cycles in a ceremonial way. “It is the younger ones that are continuously coming back to these kinds of cultural teachings,” she says. “And it is the youth that will carry on these teachings.”

She reflects on the eagerness and willingness from participants, and describes the gathering as “a wake-up call for those wanting to learn more about their culture.”

The gathering had the exact impact she was hoping for, which was specifically to centralize the natural and holistic

“A lot of Elders who attended residential school weren’t given a chance to learn holistic teachings in this way,” she says. “So we were aiming to build the community back up in this way, starting at home with the family and beginning at birth.” — LESLIEANNE WILSON

importance in birth, as opposed to centralizing the process in terms understood through Western medicine and practices.

She is already in the planning stages of the upcoming cultural gathering within her

community. “Next, we’d like to see something take place in a natural setting,” she says. “This way, we can explore the important relationship in our teachings that take us back to the land.”



Participants at Restoring Worldview, a two-day workshop learn about health and wellness within Indigenous women and the family system.

Photos by LeslieAnne Wilson



Creating Platforms for Language Revitalization

BY KERRY BENJOE



Belinda Daniels, founder and co-director of the nehiyawak Language Experience, believes reclamation of traditional languages is possible. If she didn't, she wouldn't have dedicated nearly two decades of her life to language revitalization.

Daniels organized her first Cree immersion camp on the Sturgeon Lake First Nation 16 years ago. It was small, but has gained popularity ever since. So much so, that last year they began offering week-long mini language workshops.

"We realized how hungry the community wants to learn Cree. Our summer language camps would fill immediately, like within the hour and then there would be a long waiting list of people wanting to come to

our summer camps and then we thought, 'Maybe we create more and call them mini language workshops,'" says Daniels.

In addition to that work, Daniels and her team offer Thursday night conversational Cree classes and professional development opportunities for Cree language instructors. The language work has branched off into research opportunities and a book is in the works. "We have been growing in all kinds of ways," says Daniels.

As someone who is passionate about revitalizing and reclaiming the Cree language, she finds it encouraging that others are equally interested. Daniels understands that desire because it's something she felt herself. Although she lived with her grandparents and grew up

hearing them converse in Cree, she herself was not fluent. Daniels knew a few words, but not enough to understand what her grandparents were saying. As she got older, the interest in Cree never faded instead it grew. She received her education degree and during one of her first teaching jobs she was asked to teach Cree. Daniels began taking language classes to help her teach Cree and it ignited her desire to learn as much as she could. She left teaching to further her education and the first Cree Language camp was part of her Master's thesis.

"I created the Cree language camps to reclaim that missing piece of myself," says Daniels, adding that her passion to learn has not stopped because the more she learns the more she realizes how much work still needs to be done when it comes to language preservation. Daniels is now proficient in the Cree language and is able to converse in Cree, but still does not consider herself fluent. She believes anyone can learn Cree if they are committed to learning, but knows how difficult it can be to access resources and teachers.

"Language is identity," she says. "To practice speaking language out on the land (where) language and land meet, it's like my whole being lights up."

Every time a new learner thanks her, Daniels knows she is doing what she was meant to do and is grateful to organizations such as SaskCulture for helping her make Cree accessible to others.

Information on the summer immersion camps, workshops and professional development opportunities can be found online at nehiyawak.org.

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



Top: Participants at the nehiyawak Language Experience Camp in 2019. Left: Belinda Daniels and her team offer week-long mini Cree Language workshops for anyone who wants to learn Cree. Bottom: Cree Language Camp site in 2019. Photos by Belinda Daniels



Walking the Path to Reconciliation

BY SHAUNNA GRANDISH

Archives exist to preserve the full history of our province and Indigenous peoples are a crucial part of that story. The Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists (SCAA) has been hard at work aligning its strategic direction and planning towards addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action by ensuring the organization and its members have the capability to preserve this history, and are aware of the cultural significance of doing so.

Jeremy Mohr, president, SCAA, says, as the professional society and chief advocate for archives in Saskatchewan, he believes archives are all about preserving all of our history – both the good and bad – and providing people access to these records. To those addressing Reconciliation,

these topics have become a crucial issue in the archiving profession.

Mohr says SCAA is working to champion Reconciliation within the organization and encourage its individual and institutional members to follow suit.

“We recognize that it is often best that the history is accessed, reviewed, analyzed and curated by Indigenous peoples. They should have more direct control over their own archived history,” he explains. “To help build that capacity we want to work with Indigenous organizations to join our organization where we can more readily provide assistance to them. We have waived institutional membership fees for Indigenous organizations.”

Mohr adds that SCAA recognized that its board as well as its members needed the

tools to better understand Reconciliation. SCAA has partnered with several organizations, such as the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, KAIROS and the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS), and created Reconciliation workshops for SCAA's members who work with Indigenous records, as well as First Nations and Métis peoples and communities.

“We want to equip members to better understand how to build working relations with Indigenous peoples, as well as to be aware of the cultural sensitivity that may exist in some of the records we keep,” he notes.

SCAA is working to address the TRC Calls to Action surrounding goals to ensure that archived Indigenous history is available to Indigenous communities, as well as promoting it to others in the spirit of fostering understanding.

According to Mohr, SCAA has tried to address this Calls to Action by encouraging its members to make their Indigenous records and collections more accessible. Furthermore, Mohr says, the organization prioritized diversity-related projects in its institutional grant program to help with these initiatives, such as funding a project for a tribal council to get shelving and boxes to safely store their records in order to get them off the ground.

“Our members are very interested in [Reconciliation] as a whole and are looking for guidance on this topic. While we have had many people attend our workshops, we know more training is needed and certainly desired in the Saskatchewan archival community,” he adds.

Mohr adds that Reconciliation is important for all Canadians to work towards. “If we don't understand how we got to the point of needing Reconciliation, we won't be able to actually fix the problems of the past that continue to impact us now,” he explains. “I'm glad that SCAA members and archives across Canada are taking steps to make sure that we can help with Reconciliation and work towards a better future for all of us.”

SCAA receives funding from Sask Lotteries.

Rhonda Rosenberg, executive director, MCoS, is one of the facilitators at the Reconciliation workshops organized by the SCAA.

Photo by Cameron Hart



Incorporating Land-based Learning into Programming

BY PENNY SMOKE



Participants learn how to make porcupine quillwork and moccasins at the two-day workshop.

Photos by Theresa Walters

The Royal Saskatchewan Museum (RSM) is once again expanding its Elder in Residence program. Now in its fourth year, the program that was created to promote Indigenous knowledge sharing, now includes land-based learning from even more Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders.

Theresa Walters, First Nations Program Specialist with the RSM, says the program has a deep connection to Mother Earth through cultural workshops.

“The land-based teachings are incorporated throughout the programming

such as through traditional stories explaining our relationship with plants and animals,” says Walters. “The land-based philosophy is based on a ‘good way of life’ through sacred teachings, ceremonies and songs. The response from the participants has been very positive.”

Some of the programming that has taken place over the years with the Elder in Residence program Elders- Hazel Dixon and Harold Lavallee- includes relationship teachings, significance of smudging as well as storytelling. The Elders at the RSM also smudge and pray over the exhibits within the building daily.

Other workshops include moccasin-making with Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway, facilitator, and creator of Buffalo People Arts Institute, and workshops with other artists that involve quillwork- an Indigenous art technique where the quills from a porcupine are dyed and used to lace intricate designs on leather and other materials.

“ The land-based philosophy is based on a ‘good way of life’ through sacred teachings, ceremonies and songs. The response from the participants has been very positive. ”

- THERESA WALTERS



All the classes are taught by Indigenous people who bring their own knowledge such as Indigenous filmmaker Chris Ross, and Jayda Delorme, an upcoming artist, who has travelled the world to showcase her own painting and beading talent.

The various programming is offered throughout the year at the RSM, with each class supplying the material and instruction free of charge to those interested. Others included throughout the year are: National Indigenous History Month in June, Truth and Reconciliation day in September, and Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling Month in February.

"We want participants to come away with a better understanding of Indigenous peoples. The program supports the connection between the generations - youth and Elders," says Walters.

Not only is the RSM offering opportunities for cross-cultural learning to the public, it is also supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #63, which is about building capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

Walters says there are more workshops being developed and different storytellers being lined up, and they also plan to hold more public blanket exercises.

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

Top left: Elder Harold Lavallee and Chris Ross, director of "Keep Going My Daughter", and some participants (bottom) at the screening of the film for Orange Shirt Day in 2019.

Top right: A Dreamcatcher Christmas Wreath made by one of the participants at the workshop.

Photos by Theresa Walters



Reconnecting Youth to Mother Earth

BY PENNY SMOKE

A new program on the Onion Lake Cree Nation is pairing at-risk youth with traditional Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders. The program is called “Introducing Cree Laws for Resolutions”.

Tara Waskewitch, Youth Prevention Worker with Onion Lake Native Justice says the program was created in partnership with the Onion Lake Native Justice and the Onion Lake Community Healing and Wellness Centre in an effort to keep youth out of the courts and connected to traditional Cree laws.

“We see and know the importance of land-based healing and natural laws,” says Waskewitch. “When residential schools were running, a lot of our people had lost their ways and their language. Through land-based healing, there is hope to bring our people back.”

Onion Lake Cree Nation, located 51 Kms north of Lloydminster has a population of just under 4,000. The community is using land-based learning to strengthen the bond between the young people and their traditions.

“Land-based healing takes the individual away from all distractions like technology, drinking, drugs, gossip, people,” states Waskewitch. “It’s a time where they’re alone with the land to reconnect to Mother Earth.”

Camps are held each month for participants and Elders in northern Saskatchewan. Currently youth who are on probation with conditions for community service are involved with the program. They are taught traditional Cree ceremonies such as sweats, and smudging, and given traditional



“When residential schools were running, a lot of our people had lost their ways and their language. Through land-based healing, there is hope to bring our people back.”

- TARA WASKEWITCH



teachings on the importance of being able to survive while on the land.

Groups are taken to the bush for three days where they are immersed in trapping, ice fishing, and camping, cooking and general understanding of living in the wilderness.

“My old man had told me ‘I don’t tell you what to do, you watch me and learn,’” says

Onion Lake Elder Brent Dillon. “And that’s the importance of the program being hands on.”

The program’s goal is to help the youth learn and retain their own cultural ways as an alternative to the courts. This allows youth to complete community services to their community while learning from Knowledge Keepers and Elders.

“The camps are to show each individual that they are capable of living on their own, to break away from our dependence on technology, running water, electricity - to be humble and reconnect with the land,” says Waskewitch. “It’s touching their inner beings and awakening their inner-selves.”

Waskewitch says she can see how the program is helping the youth with the amount of participation they are seeing from them. She says it’s a preventative strategy on its own with more youth coming forward and wanting to be involved.

“The more people that attend, the more people will be away from drugs, drinking, gangs,” says Waskewitch. “The next trip is being planned for next month and will continue until November of this year.”

With numbers of participants rising, both Onion Lake Native Justice and Onion Lake Healing and Wellness hope the program will continue to create positive change it is seeing in the youth already involved.

This program is supported through SaskCulture's Multicultural Initiatives Fund.

The Onion Lake Native Justice and the Onion Lake Healing and Wellness Centre are making efforts to reconnect youth to traditional Cree laws.

Photos courtesy of Tara Waskewitch



Advancing Reconciliation Beyond Words

BY SHELLEY FAYANT

Rhett Sangster is Director of Reconciliation and Community Partnerships with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC), where he works to bring Saskatchewan people together in the spirit of the Treaty relationship. He draws upon his experience working in international mediation and conflict management, to be a neutral facilitator, creating safe spaces for people, leaders and organizations to get to know each other and to build trust, with the goal of advancing Reconciliation in the province. Here are his thoughts on Reconciliation in Saskatchewan.

What is “Reconciliation”?

I like Senator Murray Sinclair’s (Chief Commissioner of the TRC) explanation: “I want to be your friend and I want you to want to be my friend, and if we’re friends we take the time to respect each other, and to understand each other and to learn from each other in a true friendship”. I think this is an easy way to think about it.

Why is this important?

We’re all here because of Treaty – a promise to share this land and to benefit equally as long as the sun shines, the grass

grows and the rivers flow. This hasn’t happened. Everyone understands that when you make a promise, it’s a contract and we have a responsibility to keep that contract. There’s also a self-interest argument – it’s in everybody’s interest – socially, economically - that we all do well. I mean we have differences and we need to understand each other better but we’re all in this together – we’re all Treaty people. No one is leaving so we have to figure this out and I think people are realizing this.

What is the OTC’s role?

Our work is grounded in the fact that we are all Treaty people. We work with champions and leaders to bring First Nations, Métis and non-Indigenous people together to learn about each other; to talk about our common goals and objectives; and to build mutual trust and relationships with the aim to find a way to move forward together in a good way.

How is this done?

We talked with hundreds of Saskatchewan leaders, residents, Knowledge Keepers and residential school survivors, and these conversations led to *A Vision for Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation*, where people identified four overlapping and continuous areas of work:

- shared understanding of our history;
- authentic relationships;
- vibrant cultures and worldviews; and
- systems that benefit us all.

How can people and organizations use this in their own work?

It is meant to inspire people to think about themselves, their organizations and their communities, and ask: What am I doing to build a shared understanding of our history in my organization or community? Do I have a sense of my own Treaty history? When and why did my ancestors come here and do I know the story of how they settled? What am I doing to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous

Michael Heimlich (Left) and Rhett Sangster (Right) guide SaskCulture members through the Reconciliation Mapping Exercise during the Annual General Meeting in 2019.

Photo by Busayo Osobade



people in my community or area of work? What am I doing to encourage vibrant cultures and worldviews? Am I engaging with diverse people?

Some of the systemic stuff includes: Do you have a budget line for Reconciliation? If you endorse it, resource it. Do you have employees, management, and board members who are Indigenous? Do you have bereavement policies that take into account Indigenous concepts of family? Do you have relationships with Elders who can guide you?

What is the most interesting thing you've learned along the way?

There is so much wisdom and strength in First Nation and Métis cultures and ways of knowing and I've had some very generous teachers. I've also learned a lot about my home province, the land I grew up on and love – about its different histories – stories that are quite different from one community to another. As a non-Indigenous person, one of the most interesting teachings I got came from a Métis Elder who pointed out that Reconciliation is about reconnecting to our ancestors. She said that policies like Residential Schools and the 60's Scoop had aimed to disconnect Indigenous peoples from their cultures, their languages, their ancestors. And she also said that many non-Indigenous people had also lost links to their ancestors. While I'm not equating the experiences of Residential School Survivors to that of settler farmers, because they're obviously not, this Elder noted that all newcomers had been strongly encouraged to

assimilate, that few kept the languages of their home lands, and that this assimilation has created a loss of identity in non-Indigenous communities as well. In Saskatoon, we have annually organized a "Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation" where everyone is encouraged to showcase their cultural heritage and I struggle with that. I've lost that link to my ancestors to some degree and reconnecting to those family stories of where we came from and why we came –

reconnecting to my ancestors – is part of my own personal Reconciliation work that I try to pursue.

Where can people find information to begin or continue working on Reconciliation?

There is a wealth of information and resources available:

- The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is a good place to begin; it houses the final TRC report, Calls to Action and Principles of Truth and Reconciliation along with other valuable resources. (www.nctr.ca)
- The OTC website (www.otc.ca) is also informative with links to our Speakers Bureau, newsletter sign-up form and our social media channels – all which are meant to share information and encourage people to come together and get to know each other.
- www.beaconnectr.org is a great entry point, too. It is categorized by quadrants and by themes to make it easy for people to jump into Reconciliation through activities such as reading, watching videos, trying new recipes, going to a powwow or round dance, etc.



SaskCulture members participated in a Reconciliation Mapping Exercise, presented by Rhett Sangster and Michael Heimlich from the OTC, during the Annual General Meeting held in 2019. Photos by Busayo Osobade

Shared Understanding of Our History

- We will understand and honour the history of this land, including past and present wrongs
- We will have respectful relationships with our ancestors and with the land
- Individuals, families, communities and nations will be strong and healing

Systems that Benefit Us All

- We will have quality of life for all and systems will reject racism
- We will have representative leadership and workforce
- Treaty promises and Indigenous sovereignty will be honoured

Authentic Relationships

- Strong relationships, partnerships and trust will exist among all people
- We will have greater skills for communicating and managing conflicts

Vibrant Cultures & Worldviews

- Our cultures and languages will be strong; worldviews respected
- Our social experiences will be woven together; we share and learn from each other

- Those looking for advanced knowledge can familiarize themselves, and then hopefully champion, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- It is an international instrument that establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous people of the world. (www.un.org)
- Other resources include:
www.4seasonsreconciliation.ca;
www.kairosblanketexercise.org; and
www.circlesforreconciliation.ca.

Will Reconciliation ever be achieved?

I am seeing good work. There is more engagement on these issues than ever before, thanks to the survivors of residential schools. It was their stories and truth that made people sit up, take notice

and want to do better. And so I'm very thankful for the courage of Residential School survivors in telling these difficult truths. However, there is a long way to go; the Gerald Stanley trial and other recent events show us that. But my work has brought me to spaces where there are farmers talking with Elders, visiting neighbouring reserves for the first time in their lives because they want to know more and find common ground.

We did a survey last year where we asked Saskatchewan people if they thought Reconciliation is important and whether they think it's possible and 91 per cent said "yes it's important" and 87 per cent said "it's possible". To me this is very hopeful – there's a lot of people out there that want to make change.

I know that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can connect, work together and be friends like Senator

Sinclair talks about because I've seen it in my work. We have a lot of history and legacy that is there that will take time to work on so that we have equal quality of life. I come from an international peace-building framework. It is as much about the process as it is about the end game. So maybe, in some ways, this work may never be done.

It's all about the relationship (the Treaty relationship) and learning how to get along and work together. And like any relationship, it takes work, and if you neglect things they start to fall apart. But, I do think that, in terms of getting to a point where people understand each other, are healthy, and are understanding, celebrating and learning from each other – we'll get there – it may take some time but we'll be a fantastic society because of it.

OTC's Vision for Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation. Photo by OTC



Gathering Focuses on Reconciliation and Relationship-Building

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING

For its 50th anniversary, the Métis Addiction Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (MACSI) threw a party – a Métis Kitchen Party and Community Gathering aimed at bringing the community – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous together in a free, accessible, alcohol-free celebration that emphasized Métis culture, and Reconciliation.

The Regina event took place at the māmawēyatitān centre on July 27, 2019 and between 200 and 300 people attended the dry dance and community gathering focusing on Indigenous culture and entertainment in a healthy substance-free environment.

“In Métis culture, people have had kitchen

parties with fiddling and jigging and food for many years,” says MACSI spokesperson Shayne Lazarowich, adding that it fits well with the Calls to Action focused on education. “All elements of society need to take part in events like this. Traditional Métis culture focused on jigging and jigging lessons; the music, and traditional foods.”

The event took place in the North Central neighbourhood where people from more modest economic households might not have access to this kind of free entertainment and social gathering on a regular basis, he added. “It was accessible to those in the core neighbourhood. Some of our advertising reached a wider demographic but a lot of people came from hearing word of mouth in that area. And, māmawēyatitān let clients and people in the community know, as did our partners in the area, such as All Nations Hope Network.”

Partnership was key, not only with SaskCulture, māmawēyatitān centre and All Nations Hope Network, but many other organizations. “Those kind of partnerships were what we wanted to do with all our activities throughout the province, reaching both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.”

They plan to continue with these Métis kitchen parties, community gatherings, and larger Métis cultural festivals going forward, as well as celebrations on June 21st, National Indigenous Peoples’ Day, and November 16th, which commemorates Louis Riel. The next dance is already being planned in Regina for July 2020, alongside successful events in Prince Albert and Saskatoon.

“Regina had a lot more little kids and families than Prince Albert for example, and the families were happy with watching the professionals, such as the Qu’Appelle Valley Square Dancers led by Courtney Anaquod, and Terri-Anne Strongarm performing with Highway Express.”

Lazarowich notes that not only did it provide Reconciliation in action, but promoted a positive message, with lots of compliments from those in attendance. “So many people said it’s so nice to have events like this, entrance by donation, where there’s no alcohol involved,” he said. “You can come and have fun in a safe environment with no booze. We need more events like that, that people can feel



comfortable at, and there's no stigma attached. We do that because we're a treatment centre and don't have alcohol at any event: but it does lend itself to a nice environment."

They also reached out to newcomers to Canada.

"The new immigrants really enjoyed it. It was an opportunity for them to learn directly, not second-hand or through a textbook, about Indigenous culture," Lazarowich says. "All events were successful to the point that we're doing them again. We've built partnerships and infrastructure. It was a huge success and it means you can build on what you've already done moving forward. We've strengthened our capacity as an Indigenous organization."

Often people hear about MACSI under less celebratory circumstances, he noted, such as someone needing access to addictions and treatment counselling, which is "the bulk of our work and very important, but it's nice to have other exposure too." This is a chance for the organization to instead celebrate the resilience and joy of the Métis culture. "Clients came to the events and it's an opportunity for those doing serious work in healing and rehabilitation to enjoy positive cultural events too."



Most of all, "everyone needs culture and healing, whether or not they're afflicted by drugs and alcohol. We succeeded in making Indigenous entertainment the focus. In mainstream events you don't see that," says Lazarowich.

He goes on to express his appreciation for organizations that supported the event such as SaskCulture. "Without this kind of

“Without this kind of support, it is not possible to offer high quality entertainment to the general public for free. Some people just don't have that \$50 to attend a live music event, or if they do they need to prioritize it for groceries or rent. That's Reconciliation in action.”

— SHAYNE LAZAROWICH

support, it is not possible to offer high quality entertainment to the general public for free. Some people just don't have that \$50 to attend a live music event, or if they do they need to prioritize it for groceries or rent. That's Reconciliation in action."

This project was supported through SaskCulture's Métis Cultural Development Fund.

The Qu'Appelle Valley Square Dancers entertained attendees at the Métis Kitchen Party event held July 2019.
Photos courtesy of MACSI



SaskCulture

404 - 2125 11th Avenue, Regina, SK S4P 3X3
info@saskculture.ca • www.saskculture.ca

Moccasin-making workshop led by Lorne, Joely and Rebecca BigEagle-Keequatooway from the Buffalo People Arts Institute.

Photo by Theresa Walters

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