

Culture Builds Community!

Engage

Fall 2023

Volume 14 Issue 1



Nature creates safe space for kids to express themselves

Culture Camp helps participants develop cultural strength

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Fall 2023

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1

Engage

Published by
SaskCulture Inc.,

is designed to

highlight
the work of
cultural leaders,
volunteers

and the

diversity
of activities

supported by the
Culture Section of
Sask Lotteries Trust
Fund for Sport, Culture
and Recreation.



ON THE COVER:

Exploring nature and other land-based activities is an integral part of the Ness Creek Music Festival.

Photo courtesy of the Ness Creek Music Festival.

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Print copies of this publication are circulated for free to SaskCulture members, partners and through community outreach activities as determined by SaskCulture Inc. **Engage** is also available in PDF version on the SaskCulture website at www.saskculture.ca. **Engage** is published thanks to financial support from Sask Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation. The publication does not currently accept paid advertising. Article ideas for future publications can be submitted to info@saskculture.ca or by calling (306) 780-9284.

Published November 2023. Articles may be reprinted with permission.



Message from the CEO

Our relationship to the land is one that is unique to each one of us. It is part of our heritage, a connection to our culture and a key link to our shared stories. Over the years, these stories have continued to grow to be more inclusive.

In years past, people told stories of settlers and their struggles to learn to live on this land in our challenging climate. It is only in the last decade, in the mainstream, that more cultural sharing and dissemination of knowledge of pre-settler contact has come to the forefront of our relationship with the land. We are learning more about how the First Nations and Métis peoples have a deep relationship to the land and how it underpins the cultures themselves, much like languages. We continue to discover more about the land as those new to Canada also discover its unique connection to culture and identity.

Our appreciation of the land takes many forms. We may live our lives in one area where the land shapes our existence, or we may visit or move to a particular area, and its heritage is what inspires our lives going forward.

About 20 years ago, I started spending time in the Qu'Appelle Valley in the District of Katepwa. At first, being in the valley left me feeling a little out of place. I had come from east central Saskatchewan near the Porcupine Provincial Forest – lakes are different there – pine trees and small lakes are nestled in their own little sheltered enclaves. As time passed, I really and truly started to love Katepwa Lake. Besides its amazing sunsets and summer storms, I grew to appreciate the land's long and connected history. Through my work and personal experience, I learned more about the importance of that chain of links in the valley for the Indigenous people of our province. The signing of Treaty Four took place on land close by. One of our former board members, Calvin Racette shared with us the rich history of the Métis people in that part of our province.

Organizations and individuals from around the province (experts, Elders, and community members) all work to share valuable knowledge about the land. Thanks to these programs and activities, we are learning more about the importance of, and the connection to, the land. More importantly, we are moving past the settler narrative to discover a more rich and complete picture of the land we call Saskatchewan.

Dean Kush



Learning about land-based heritage helps us understand ourselves, our communities and the importance of the vibrant Indigenous cultures in Saskatchewan. Photos courtesy of (from top to bottom): Nature Saskatchewan, Ness Creek Music Festival and Wanuskewin.

Nature creates safe space

FOR KIDS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES

BY JOHN LOEPPKY



Nature is important to Saskatchewan's identity. Known as the Land of Living Skies, the province is also recognized for its flatlands, deserts, lakes and dense forest. Getting out into nature to learn about the province's land-based heritage builds understanding for youth, but experiencing these discoveries may not be easily accessible for inner-city classrooms.

Nature Saskatchewan, through its national NatureHood Program, is changing that narrative. Shannon Chernick, manager of conservation and education, Nature Saskatchewan, says that the program provides vital knowledge, especially for students from inner-city schools, who face barriers.

"There is evidence that when you incorporate land-based learning in programs, [student] attendance rates increase and their engagement increases." She adds that, "not only does it increase for those subjects [the students are] learning about that day, it increases in everything because they start to see learning as something authentic for them."

During each session, Chernick would accompany the participants to areas around Regina, places that she says, a lot of adults wouldn't look at twice. Sometimes activities would include bird-watching, going to a community garden, or going into a pond, dipping for minnows.

"One of the student's activities was to take what they found and lay on the ground. And, another person would put the objects around them," says Chernick. "They made their silhouette out of natural objects. Taking turns, they realized what they looked like, too, which was really cool."

Students use natural objects to create art and share their discoveries.



Experts share discoveries found in natural environments with students as part of the NatureHood Program offered through Nature Saskatchewan. Photos courtesy of Nature Saskatchewan.

Through the program, transportation and the educator are provided, eliminating those costs to the participant. Students get to experience nature by visiting ponds, engaging with natural elements and even playing in the mud.

"There is evidence that when you incorporate land-based learning in programs, [student] attendance rates increase and their engagement increases."

— SHANNON CHERNICK

Taylor Harris, manager of community programs, YWCA of Regina, established a partnership with the NatureHood Program. As a result, she says this summer

her participants, aged five to nine years-old, gained incredible value out of the activities.

"I didn't really know going into it what the advantage would be to bringing kids into nature and letting them explore openly," she says. "You saw growth in a lot of kids who weren't really open before. Those who hadn't really made those relationships with the other adults yet, opened up more."

It wasn't just the students who got to learn about the land around them, its history, and its culture. Harris says that being part of NatureHood helped her see spaces she's been in and around her whole life in a new way. "It's just little pockets of Regina that I didn't really know existed. And now I get to explore those new places with my kids."

The Naturehood program is offered through Nature Saskatchewan, which receives its Annual General Funding from Sask Lotteries, in partnership with SaskCulture.

Connecting to the land

INSPIRES INDIGENOUS ARTIST'S PRACTICE

BY JACKIE LEDINGHAM



Thanks to her connection to land-based experiences, Marcy Friesen, Wanuskewin's first artist-in-residence, has changed the way she approaches her art practice.

Her experience as Artist-in-Residence, which ran from July to August, allowed Friesen to learn more about her Swampy Cree heritage and increased her connection to her culture.

"Learning about silver berries on wolf willow bushes, I was able to harvest them and will use these beads in my future work," she says. "I learnt that it's a good thing to say 'yes' when given opportunities that will take you away from your everyday life, because good things can happen. I learnt that when an artist is supported in every single way, amazing works can be made during the residency and beyond."

According to Olivia Kristoff, the curator at Wanuskewin, the Olivia and Greg Yuel Artist-In-Residence program is an opportunity for emerging and established Indigenous artists from across Canada and the "medicine line" to spend a month at Wanuskewin, immersing themselves in all the unique aspects of the park and creating new works.

The land Wanuskewin is on, is also a part of the residency experience, as well as, access to Elders. Kristoff says, "The land has so much knowledge to share and the more that it informs the work they create at Wanuskewin, the more connected to this place the artist feels. People feel something special when they are here and that has resulted in some incredible art."

Friesen says she felt supported by this experience and it brought growth to her practice. "To have a peaceful feeling the whole time I was in residency made me feel energized and creative."

Moving forward the experience will continue to influence her art practice through the teachings she received. "I will go easier on myself and remember to enjoy the whole process of creating," says Friesen. "I will also think about those who came before me who paved the way for me to be here."

Kristoff adds that, "Wanuskewin offers so many one-of-a-kind experiences. We

have a conservation bison herd, 6,000 years of history with seven different Indigenous groups, petroglyphs, and daily programming that teaches visitors about the vibrant and evolving culture of the Indigenous peoples in the Prairies."

Many artists have found that creating in this environment is a meaningful experience. "There are very few galleries who exclusively exhibit work by Indigenous artists. The purpose is to create a valuable resource for all the artists we work with, regardless of the place they are at in their career, and that is why mentorship is at the centre of this program," she says.

Wanuskewin receives Annual Global Funding from Sask Lotteries, in partnership with SaskCulture.



Friesen created, My Family, during her residency at Wanuskewin.

"The land has so much knowledge to share ... People feel something special when they are here and that has resulted in some incredible art." — OLIVIA KRISTOFF



Artist Marcy Friesen found the nature and land around Wanuskewin, located near Saskatoon, inspired her creative work during her term as Artist-in-Residence. Photos courtesy of Wanuskewin Heritage Park.

Relationship-building key of

CAREFUL INTERPRETATION ON INDIGENOUS ARTIFACTS

BY ANA CRISTINA CAMACHO

As heritage organizations field more and more questions about Indigenous artifacts, the need for strengthening relationships with local Indigenous communities grows more evident.

The Saskatchewan Archaeological Society (SAS) is one group that has been working on including Indigenous perspectives in its resources.

Dr. Tomasin Playford, executive director, SAS, says that, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in the cultural significance of Indigenous artifacts in Saskatchewan. As awareness of the importance of First Nations and Métis cultural items grows, many are wanting to repatriate, or return, artifacts to local Indigenous communities. This is something that the SAS has seen firsthand, as people often turn to the organization with questions on the topic.

When dealing with Indigenous artifacts, “one of the biggest challenges is knowing who to talk to,” says Playford.

Gabriel Essauce Lamarche, a flintknapping expert and archaeologist of Anishinaabe descent, who has worked with the SAS in Indigenous engagement, says that being in contact with local Indigenous communities is of prime importance for organizations working with this type of findings.



Gabriel Essauce Lemarche, from SAS, helps others understand that building relationships with Indigenous partners is important to interpreting artifacts.

“An artifact is a tangible piece of Indigenous heritage,” says Essaunce Lamarche. “It is important to help build those bridges, so that Indigenous people can be more involved in interpreting sites, but also just have more of a say in what happens with artifacts or with sites in the future.”

“An artifact is a tangible piece of Indigenous heritage. It is important to help build those bridges...”

— GABRIEL ESSENCE LAMARCHE

However, heritage organizations may face some hurdles when building these connections, says Essaunce Lamarche, given the historical exclusion of Indigenous people from discussions in the sector. He recommends patience to groups, given that there is “a lot of hurt and distrust.

“There’s still a lot of reputation surrounding archaeology and heritage organizations,” says Essaunce Lamarche. “Be patient. It involves things like having coffee or tea together, sharing time together — just gradually build that relationship.”

Including Indigenous perspectives in the sector was a priority in the making of the book, *Points of View*, published by SAS last year. The book is a field guide for people interested in Indigenous artifacts in Saskatchewan. The book starts with

chapters by Indigenous contributors, including Essaunce Lamarche, giving cultural and technical perspectives on the creation of arrowheads and other projectile points.

Essaunce Lamarche feels “grateful and honored” to provide tools to reinforce people’s sense of pride in their heritage. As a flintknapping instructor in Indigenous culture camps, Essaunce Lamarche has seen a growing interest in archaeology among his students.

He hopes that by exploring these archaeological finds, Indigenous peoples will find a better understanding of their heritage. “I’ve really enjoyed seeing other Indigenous people be willing to explore ... and set aside some of the shame that was imposed on them through the Residential school process.”

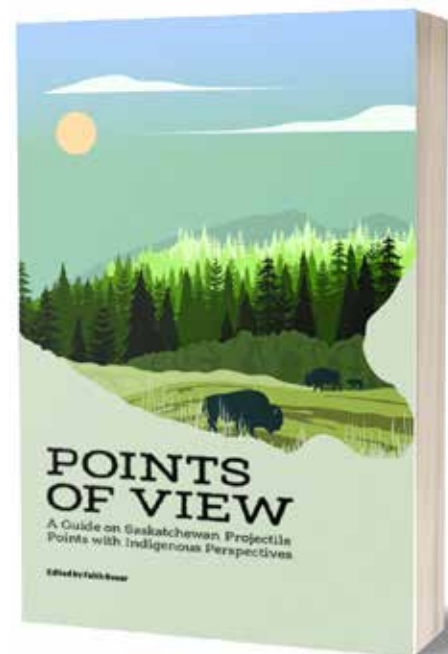
Given that *Points of View* is the first field guide to focus specifically on Saskatchewan, Playford says that, for SAS, there was “no way a book like that should be produced and put out into the world without including those [Indigenous] perspectives.”

She adds that, “Archaeology is one of the ways of reading that past in the landscape, but there are other ways. There are other perspectives that are valuable, and we are stronger together.”

The Saskatchewan Archaeological Society receives Annual Global Funding from Sask Lotteries, in partnership with SaskCulture.



Essaunce Lemarche helps people understand the Indigenous perspective on the creation of various artifacts, such as arrowheads. Photos courtesy of SAS.



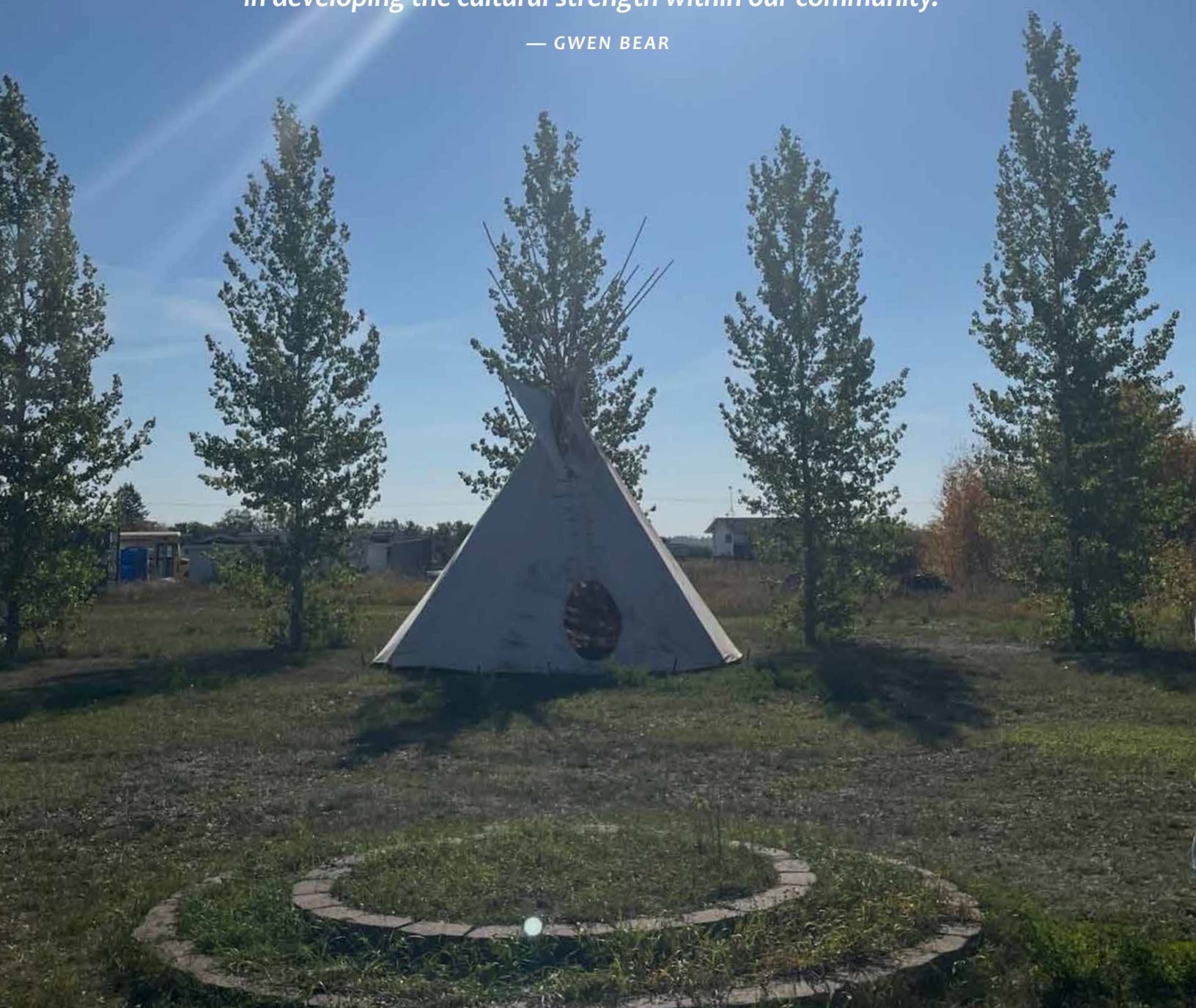
Culture Camp

HELPS PARTICIPANTS DEVELOP CULTURAL STRENGTH

BY NICKITA LONGMAN

“Utilizing the Elders during the Culture Camp is one of the ways we show we value our Elders and the knowledge they carry. Utilizing their knowledge is one of the most important actions in developing the cultural strength within our community.”

— GWEN BEAR





Elders and youth have opportunity to connect at the culture camp on Muskoday First Nation. Photos courtesy of Gwen Bear.

Organizers, from Muskoday First Nations, identified the need for youth to access the cultural teachings held by many Elders in the region, which led to the development of its multi-generational culture camp.

Now in its second year, the Culture Camp on Muskoday First Nation continues to bring youth and Elders together for a week of knowledge-sharing and land-based education. While the opportunity focuses on youth, the program involves many others from the community. It was created and executed by Elders with assistance from Elders' Helpers and community members. Organizers included: Chief and Council, Muskoday School, Muskoday Health Clinic, and Muskoday Elders' Club.

Elder Liaison Gwen Bear, says that "Utilizing the Elders during the Culture Camp is one of the ways we show we value our Elders and the knowledge they carry. Utilizing their knowledge is one of the most important actions in developing the cultural strength within our community."

Elder Suzy Bear, who was involved in the cultural activities and teachings, says that bringing together youth and Elders together is a powerful way to encourage relationship-building within the community. "Elders have plenty of stories and history to share with youth," she explains. "And the mere fact that our children are beginning to understand and learn their culture is a big step for them."

The Camp opened with a pipe ceremony each morning, followed by tipi-raising activities, and sweat lodge preparation. Youth were guided through tipi teachings, protocols, and necessary skills, such as gathering rocks and wood for the sweat

lodge ceremony. Additionally, youth learned oral traditions and teachings, fire teachings, hunting and gathering skills, cultural songs, as well as, medicine gathering and its uses. Youth also engaged in beading and regalia-making workshops that encouraged youth and families to prepare for the upcoming demonstrations and practices for Muskoday's 30th Annual Powwow during the summer.

According to Elder Suzy Bear, "Elders were involved from planning and developing, assisting in the activities, teachings, sweats, ceremonies, tipi teachings, pipe ceremonies, feasts, and the closing giveaway."

As the Camp continues to build momentum annually, more connections are being made with the school and the overall community. These connections increase reach to engage youth and provide continued learning outside of the Camp's timeline.

Elwin Bear, a K-12 and post-secondary education coordinator, Muskoday School, says the Camp is a space that provides youth with spiritual, emotional, physical and mental teachings that will transfer to overall well-being within the community. "These teachings need to be shared so they can continue being passed down to future generations."

The Camp brings people together over shared meals, and ends in a community feast and giveaway. This year, Gwen Bear was pleased to see nearly 100 attendees at the gathering. "During these times the Elders are looked after with great respect, they are the heart of our community and having them teach the youth and families during this week was valued, honoured, and respected."

Muskoday First Nation received support from SaskCulture's Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership (AACL) Grant funded by Sask Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.



Youth learn cultural teachings from Elders in a natural setting.

WALKING THE PATH TO RECONCILIATION, One Step at a Time

BY BUSAYO OSOBADE





(Left page) Participants prepare for a Reconciliation Walk in Melfort. Photo courtesy of Reconciliation Melfort. (Above photos) Saskatchewan communities held Reconciliation Walks to bring community together and build understanding of “Truths” and the Reconciliation needed to move forward. Photos by FSI Studio.

Education, many say, is the first step to Reconciliation. Apart from engaging communities in arts and culture activities during Culture Days, many cultural leaders planned Reconciliation walks to provide their communities with learning opportunities to reflect and foster unity.

Weyburn held a Reconciliation Walk as part of its Culture Days celebrations this year. The organizers put up a few signs along the walking path that shared the history of Indigenous peoples in Treaty Four territory from pre-colonization to the current day. Participants were able to pause to read and reflect on the signs and their content. Weyburn was one of the 20 Culture Days Hub Sponsorships, supported by SaskCulture, that prioritized Reconciliation activities on September 30, as part of Culture Days this year.

Regan Lanning, curator, Weyburn Arts Council, says that hundreds of residents, including students, have read the content on the signs since it was installed for the Walk. “We came together and showed our community that Reconciliation is important. The easiest takeaway is education.” She noted, “The wise Honorable Murray Sinclair said education got us into this mess, and education is going to get us out.”

Melfort also chose to engage people in a Reconciliation Walk. When Reconciliation Melfort started in 2022, its goal was to

support Reconciliation conversations and provide opportunities for the community to engage in the TRC’s Calls to Action. The group works with the community to organize events, such as its Culture Days Reconciliation Walk, to build awareness about Truth and Reconciliation and to honour the Residential Survivors, their families, and their communities.

Lori Constant, a member of Reconciliation Melfort, says that almost a hundred people participated in the Reconciliation Walk this year, with the Digging Bear Drumming Circle Drummers leading the way on the walk.

“It was beautiful to see older community members walking alongside the youth, along with members of our greater community walking with us. Business, health, justice, law enforcement, education, sports... we had people from all areas of our community participating,” she says, adding that she “felt hope for better days and better relationships. I also felt incredibly humbled and honoured to walk with the drum leading us and to walk with Survivors and descendants of Survivors.”

The path toward Reconciliation continues. Truth and Reconciliation is more than one day acknowledged in September, and a walk may be the first step to advance Reconciliation in communities. Lanning encourages communities to start small

and think about creating relationships. “Reconciliation is the path forward for us as Canadians. It enables us all to heal and to create bonds and families. It is the responsibility of all Canadians to educate ourselves and find new pathways to move forward.”

“Reconciliation is the path forward for us as Canadians. It enables us all to heal and to create bonds and families. It is the responsibility of all Canadians to educate ourselves and find new pathways to move forward.”

— REGAN LANNING

Two years ago, SaskCulture modified the Culture Days Hub Sponsorship criteria to prioritize community programming that advanced Truth and Reconciliation as part of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. In 2023, SaskCulture supported 31 Hubs. Over 20 Hubs, out of the 31, included a plan to raise awareness and educate their communities about Reconciliation.

Historic Trail Walks

SHARE STORIES FROM THE LAND

BY JOHN LOEPPKY



Historic trail walks not only help people learn about the history of the land, they help participants learn about themselves.

Since 2015, the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) has helped connect Saskatchewan people to the land via trail walks along some of the most important paths in the province's history.

SHFS has been supporting heritage tours for many years, but in 2015, they began a series of Historic Trail Walks. The idea was conceived after Concordia professor Matthew Anderson, who studied pilgrimages, asked why Saskatchewan didn't have a version of its own. That question inspired the first trek, from Wood Mountain to Fort Walsh.

Now Hugh Henry, president, SHFS, organizes these events for on average 30 participants every two years. Past walks have included Swift Current to North Battleford, Humboldt to Fort Carlton, among others. Participants can complete as much of the walk as they want.

Henry says part of the experience isn't just in learning about the heritage of the places that one travels to, but also lies in connection. "It's learning about the land, geography, local histories and so on. But a large part of it, I think, and it's what brings you back is learning about yourself as well. You're testing yourself physically and somewhat mentally."

Simone Hengen, a SHFS participant, was part of the walk between Fort Battleford and Fort Pitt, this past August 2023.

"By walking, you are moving quite slowly and you actually get familiar with the landscape." She adds that part of the appeal is the community that keeps coming back year after year.

"By walking, you are moving quite slowly and you actually get familiar with the landscape."

— SIMONE HENGEN

From a heritage perspective, both Hengen and Henry say that Indigenous knowledge has been vital to the walks from the beginning. Henry is hopeful that future

experiences can be done in conjunction with key historical anniversaries, such as working with the Indigenous community members to commemorate the signing of Treaty 4, which took place 160 years ago. Henry says that without these perspectives, there's a danger that only the dominant settler narratives of homesteading would be retained.

Alongside planning for areas of importance along the walk, such as local museums, organizers also consider places to camp. Overnight stays are often in towns and municipal camp grounds along the route.

The Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society receives Annual General Funding from Sask Lotteries, in partnership with SaskCulture.



The Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society hosts several walks every two years along different paths of the province's historic trails. Photos courtesy of the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society.



PROJECT CREATES UNDERSTANDING ABOUT Indigenous teachings from the land

BY JACKIE LEDINGHAM

A new “interpretive app” for the Saskatoon Afforestation areas, developed as a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, provides a richer learning experience thanks to Indigenous input.

The Miyo-wāhkōhtowin/Good Relations in Afforestation Areas GPS Interpretive App launched on September 22, 2023 during National Forest Week. The Global Positioning System Application (GPS App) allows visitors to the Richard St. Barbe Baker and George Genereux Urban Regional Parks in Saskatoon to learn about the ecology in the area through an Indigenous lens while navigating the park.

It also identifies the scientific, Cree, Michif and Dakota names for each species, as well as suggesting curriculum activities for elementary and high school students.

Julia Adamson, chair of the Friends of the Saskatoon Afforestation Areas (FSAA), says the reason for creating the App came out of a discussion with their board about how their work could protect the afforestation areas through interpretation of its ecological and cultural significance. “The Friends also recognized that integrating Indigenous philosophy and ways of knowing, which traditionally combined ethnobotany, culture and language as a whole, would be

valuable in providing new models of how to relate to the land to restore and help build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.”

Ethnobotany is the study of how people of a particular culture and region make use of indigenous plants.

The back end of the App was developed by students from the Computer Systems program at Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Saskatoon. They also helped identify the categories of ecological stories people could learn about such as, flowers, trees, wildlife, history, ecosystems and environmental protection.



Shortly afterwards, the FSAA began consulting with Indigenous community members to understand how to bring in their cultural perspectives in a respectful way, honouring the adage of “Nothing about us, without us.”

Karon Shmon, director of Métis culture and heritage, Gabriel Dumont Institute, says one of the reasons she became involved in the project was because FSAA recognized the Métis perspective was a part of the Indigenous perspective. She provided advice, support and permission to include the information from two of their publications. The publications, *Plants growing along the river: A learning guide for reconciliation through lands, plants and Métis culture* and *Medicines to help us: Traditional Métis plant use* by Christi Belcourt, offered the Métis ecological perspectives.

The group also hired Indigenous Educational Consultant Tammy Adair to write the interpretive stories. In her work, she spoke with Knowledge Keeper Linda Young on how to proceed to incorporate the Cree cultural perspectives into the project. Young’s input was greatly valued and helped create a better, more culturally respectful outcome.

Robert White, board member, FSAA, says involving Knowledge Keepers and Elders in projects is important to understanding, “what aspects of cultural teachings can be shared and what aspects are sacred and can’t be shared.”

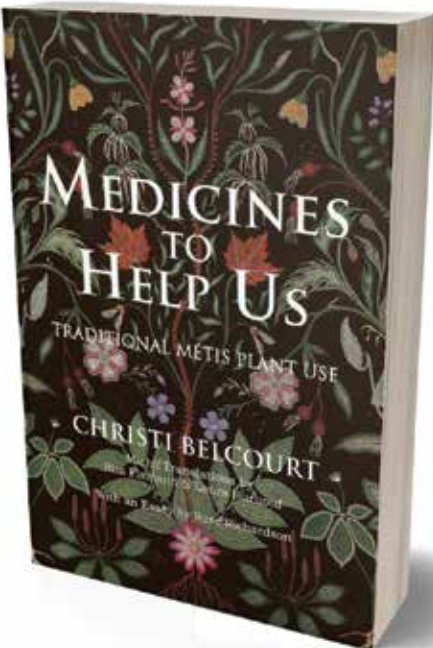
White says although they had to make adjustments from their original plan about what they could include, the input from a Knowledge Keeper and Indigenous-developed resources, “improved the App’s coverage of local plant and animal species. It connected users with Indigenous knowledge about the environment and its conservation, along with increasing understanding of the significance of the land, plants, animals, and historical landmarks from an Indigenous perspective.”

Shmon says the App helps people understand the Indigenous worldview, “in that the First Nations, the Inuit, and the Métis see ourselves as a ‘part of’ nature and not ‘apart from’ it. The term ‘all my relations’ includes everything and not just people or specific people. A sense of stewardship and gratitude is part of this view. To know that Indigenous peoples had their own names for various plants and

animals, in many Indigenous languages, helps those with settler origins understand that these names were there prior to contact with non-Indigenous peoples.”

She goes on to say, “This App will be especially helpful to those who like to use technology, which is often younger people, and for urban dwellers who have far less opportunity to appreciate the natural world. Valuing our natural environment, and seeing that we are part of a larger system that relies on natural elements such as air, water, plants and animals, may be instrumental in helping people take personal responsibility for caring for it. It may also encourage them to use any influence they may have to build support and sustainability for our natural world.”

This project received funding from SaskCulture’s Small Grant Accessibility Program, with funding from Sask Lotteries.



Visitors to the Saskatoon Afforestation areas can learn about the ecology of the area through an Indigenous lens on the newly developed GPS Interpretive App. Photos courtesy of the Friends of the Saskatoon Afforestation Areas.



BENEFITS TO INVOLVING DIVERSE CULTURAL Perspectives in Projects

BY JULIA ADAMSON,
FRIENDS OF THE AFFORESTATION AREAS

Forming respectful relationships between cultures takes time. It's a process that requires patience, open communication, and a genuine willingness to understand and learn from one another. Cultural exchange and collaboration aren't instantaneous; they involve building trust, breaking down stereotypes, and acknowledging historical contexts that shape each perspective.

Forming deep and respectful relationships sets the foundation for meaningful and sustainable partnerships. Not only does it lay the groundwork for effective collaboration, it ensures that all parties involved feel heard, respected, and genuinely engaged in the project's goals.

Through work on the Miyo-wāhkōhtowin /Good Relations in Afforestation Areas GPS Interpretive App, the Friends of the Saskatoon Afforestation Areas (FSAA) identified a number of ways the Indigenous input improved the project:

1) Enrichment of Insights: Integrating other cultural perspectives brings a wealth of insights, wisdom, and knowledge that can greatly enrich a project. Different cultures hold unique understandings of history, nature, and human interactions that can contribute to a more comprehensive and holistic approach.

2) Respect and Inclusivity: Involving other cultural perspectives is a demonstration of respect and inclusivity. It acknowledges that decisions and initiatives should not be made in isolation, but with the input and participation of the communities that will be affected. This approach fosters an environment of mutual understanding and collaboration.

3) Cultural Preservation and Sharing: Incorporating other cultural perspectives aids in the preservation and sharing of cultural heritage and contributes to the safeguarding of traditions, stories, and practices that might otherwise fade away. It's an opportunity to celebrate and learn from cultural richness.

4) Holistic Understanding: Different cultures often have distinct ways of viewing the world and interpreting landscapes. Involving other cultural perspectives allows for a more holistic understanding of the environment and its history. This can lead to more informed decision-making and a well-rounded project outcome.

5) Promotion of Reconciliation: Engaging with other cultural perspectives can be a powerful step towards Reconciliation, especially in contexts where historical injustices have taken place. It demonstrates a commitment to addressing past wrongs, fostering understanding, and working towards healing and unity.

6) Community Engagement and Ownership: When communities are actively engaged and their perspectives are integrated, they develop a sense of ownership and pride in the project. This can lead to increased community involvement, a higher level of support, and sustainable outcomes.

7) Innovation and Creativity: Different cultural perspectives can bring fresh ideas and innovative solutions to the table. Collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds sparks creativity and encourages the development of new

approaches that might not have been considered otherwise. Conventional interpretation may stem solely from a colonial mindset or point of view.

8) Learning and Growth: Working with other cultural perspectives is a valuable learning opportunity for all parties involved. It broadens horizons, challenges assumptions, and nurtures personal and organizational growth.

9) Long-term Impact: Projects that are sensitive to, and reflective of, different cultural perspectives are more likely to have a positive and lasting impact. They contribute to the overall betterment of communities and environments in a sustainable manner.

10) Alignment with Global Goals: Incorporating diverse cultural perspectives aligns with global goals of promoting cultural diversity, inclusivity, and sustainable development. It demonstrates a commitment to broader ideals beyond immediate project goals.

In essence, involving other cultural perspectives is not just a checkbox but a commitment to fostering a more inclusive, respectful, and harmonious society. It adds depth, value, and relevance to projects and lays the foundation for positive change that resonates with a broader audience.

Reprinted, with minor adjustments, with permission from the FSAA.

A photograph of a man with a beard and a blue jacket walking through a forest. He is gesturing with his hands as if speaking. Other people are visible in the background, also walking through the trees. The scene is lush and green, suggesting a summer or early fall setting.

Festival Site Inspires

TEACHINGS ABOUT THE LAND

BY JACKIE LEDINGHAM

Due to the Ness Creek Music Festival's Boreal Forest location, and the ecological mindset of its founders, a large part of the festival experience has always been about what you can learn from the land.

Since the Festival started in 1991, organizers have made sure that those who attend can not only listen to music and have opportunities to participate in artistic activities, but have experiences that connect them to the land.

“There is so much to learn about the Ness Creek land,” says Gordon Olson, one of the festival founders. “The setting and just the beauty of the place, and the creek that runs through it makes the whole experience.”

The idea for the Festival came also from those that understood that connection to the land. A number of tree planters in the area came together after the local ecological fair inspired the idea for a music festival. “We put together an A-Team, which included Cathy Sproule, and we formed the Ness Creek Cultural and Recreational Society,” says Olson.

The Ness Creek land was already in Olson's family. When his father retired from farming, his tree planting company purchased the land that ended up being the perfect place for a festival.

The evolution of the Ness Creek Music Festival was an organic process where everyone who attended, performed and organized the event provided input into what types of activities should take place.

Indigenous input and participation has always informed their programming, as well as, respect for land-based learnings. In honour of that relationship, the Festival now starts with an opening ceremony

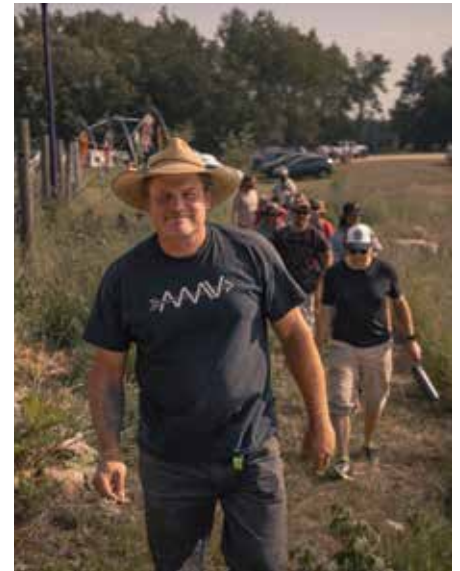
led by Elder Randy Morin from the Big River First Nation, and a daily sweat led by Raymond Masuskapoe from Sandy Lake. Other offerings over the years included medicine walks where people can learn about the medicines the forest provides and participate in activities such as birch bark basket-making and beadwork.

Olson often leads the forest walk at the Festival. Along the walk people learn about the creek and its importance in the ecosystem, what plants can be harvested to eat and how they can be used in different ways, how the forest can provide shelter, as well as, how the wood helps to heat some (10,000 sq ft) of the buildings at the site through their boiler system and

can be self-sustaining when used properly. In 2022, an artist installation provided stethoscopes along the route where people could listen to the heartbeat of the trees.

Olson says the Ness Creek land is a much needed connection for people especially after the pandemic, and encourages people to come out to the Festival or to experience the land through the trails and forest garden. "You will find a connection to something that is real and challenges you."

The Ness Creek Festival receives annual funding from SaskFestivals administered by SK Arts, thanks to funding from Sask Lotteries.



Forest walks take place every year at the Ness Creek Music Festival along with other land-based learning activities, such as the Forest Garden Tours. Photos courtesy of the Ness Creek Cultural and Recreational Society.



Youth Connect to

TRADITIONAL LAND USE AT WINTER CAMP

BY ANA CRISTINA CAMACHO

While spending a weekend outdoors during a Saskatchewan winter might not be everyone's cup of tea, for the participants of a traditional land-use winter camp, it was an opportunity to grow their personal connection to the land.

The Métis Nation Saskatchewan Eastern Region III (ERIII) kicked off 2023 by holding its second-ever ERIII Traditional Land Use Winter Camp at Kenosee Lake. For a weekend in January, participants, land-based educators, and Elder Calvin Racette, set up tents and tipis outdoors to spend the days practicing land-based activities such as trapping and dog-sledding.

Garrick Schmidt, a traditional land-based educator with ERIII, is amazed at the growth of the camp, and says that the first winter camp in 2021 helped build a good foundation.

“There’s a sense of pride and belonging that participants have, of being from here, and being able to do these traditional things that might have been lost and forgotten — due to Residential schools, due to the 60’s scoop, or even just with family members not passing on traditional knowledge,” Schmidt says. “The camps that we are running are on Métis homeland territory with families that have a historical connection to the area.”

Because many traditional activities take place during winter, the camp was also an opportunity to prepare participants for being outdoors in extreme weather. “We’re making sure that people are set up for success,” says Schmidt, by educating people about hypothermia and teaching survival skills.

“It’s a good test of your equipment, your gear, your clothing, and also of yourself.

It shows people in a controlled, safe environment what their limits can be,” he says. “They don’t have to read about it in a textbook — these are lived experiences.”

Schmidt, who grew up in Indian Head as part of a Métis family from Qu’Appelle Valley, says he was always outside, learning what he could from his mom and grandparents, since he was a kid. As he grew up, he learned from Elders, mentors and uncles about hunting, harvesting medicine and more. Now, as an educator, his goal is to pass on what he has learned to the next generations.

“It is so amazing to be able to see six, seven-year-old children, all the way to 25-year-old adults, learning how to trap, run dogs, work on hides, how to sew, and learning their language,” Schmidt says. “There’s that sense of pride. There’s that sense of reconnection to their culture,

their values, and who we are as Indigenous people. And then, they’re able to go and share that sense of belonging and pride with their friends.” Schmidt says, fondly, that the youth that came to the camp are “already bugging us about when the next one is.” His hope is that one day there will be Indigenous-led, land-based programs and schools all over that are government-funded, same as other education programs. He hopes that the kids he teaches now will be part of this dream for the future, as educators and facilitators themselves.

“I think that’d be pretty historical to see,” he says, “for kids to be able to say, hey, we were a part of this.”

The Métis Nation Saskatchewan Eastern Region III received project funding from the Métis Cultural Development Fund, administered by Gabriel Dumont Institute with funding from Sask Lotteries.



Participants in the winter camp at Kenosee Lake had the opportunity to learn about the land and connect to their Métis heritage.



Traditional teachings at the winter camp included harvesting medicine, cooking, dog-sledding, trapping and more. Photos courtesy of the Métis Nation Saskatchewan Eastern Region III.

“There’s a sense of pride and belonging that participants have, of being from here, and being able to do these traditional things that might have been lost and forgotten — due to residential schools, due to the 60’s scoop, or even just with family members not passing on traditional knowledge.”

— GARRICK SCHMIDT





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For years, Culture Days has encouraged participants to engage in cultural activities, which included those linked to nature and the land. Photo by Kevin Hogarth (2017).

Publication Mail Agreement #40063014

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