

# *Culture Builds Community!* Engage

Winter/Spring 2019

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1

Sask *Culture*

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**LOTTERIES**



Diversity of Voices on Cultural Boards

Culture Days: Small Town Doing Big Things

Sharing Métis Culture as Part of Reconciliation

# Engage

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is designed to

highlight  
the work of  
cultural leaders,  
volunteers

and the

diversity  
of activities

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for Sport, Culture and  
Recreation.



## ON THE COVER:

William Prince performs at the Regina Folk Festival Sunlit Stage during the free daytime programming.

PHOTO BY CHRIS GRAHAM.

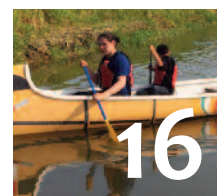
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## Direct Inquiries to:

Diane Ell, Editor  
dell@saskculture.ca

Shaunna Grandish, Publishing Coordinator  
sgrandish@saskculture.ca

404, 2125 11th Ave., Regina SK S4P 3X3

Tel: (306) 780.9284

[www.saskculture.ca](http://www.saskculture.ca)

## Graphic Design:

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

## Contributing Writers:

Shelley Fayant, Miranda Hanus, Busayo Osobade  
and Myrna Williams

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## CEO's Message

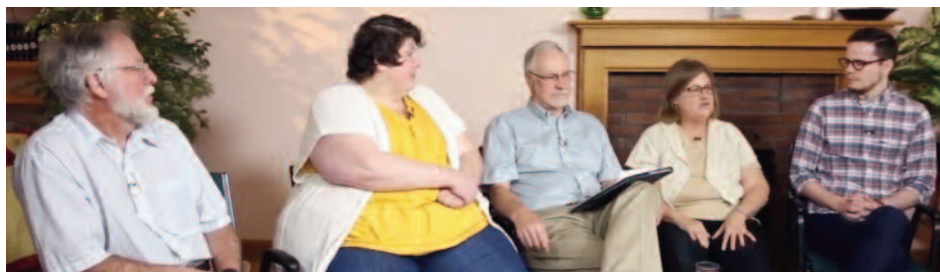
**T**he theme of this *Engage* magazine is leadership. Having been in my current position for 21 years has given me many different perspectives as to what leadership is as well as many opportunities to practice leadership and see it in practice.

For this article I have chosen to speak about the practice of leadership from the perspective of the leadership I have witnessed on the volunteer Board of Directors of SaskCulture. In particular, that of the several individuals that have held the role of President. Only 21 years old, SaskCulture has only had 11 different individuals in that role. All of them, except for the late Ken Sagal (who was the first president,) are still actively invested in SaskCulture's work. Even Bryan Foran, who has moved to BC, keeps in contact.

The interest of the Past-Presidents has been nurtured by myself, in conjunction with the Board of the day, because the individuals that took on the role of board leadership for the organization provide a wealth of knowledge to SaskCulture. Since the organization was so new and at a different stage of growth during each of their tenures, they each played a unique role in its maturity.

In the spring of 2018, as part of SaskCulture's 20th anniversary celebrations, we completed a series of three videos of the Past-Presidents in discussion about the organization. The discussions reflected on the history, growth and future of SaskCulture. The three videos, which can be found at [SaskCulture.ca/about/our-role/other-resources](http://SaskCulture.ca/about/our-role/other-resources), include:

1. In the Beginning
2. The Big Picture
3. What's Next?



“ If you are involved with a nonprofit organization in the cultural sector, or any sector, their words of wisdom will be of inspiration and guidance to you. ” – ROSE GILKS



These videos contain a wealth of information about SaskCulture, in particular its history and its future. They also provide valuable insights on what makes a strong leader:

- commitment
- passion
- openness to learning
- willingness to share responsibility
- willingness to leave personal agendas behind
- constantly looking back, to move forward
- not being afraid of big/challenging discussions and decisions
- focus on "big picture"
- focus on Ends (organization's strategic direction)

As I watched the videos prior to writing this article I became even more keenly aware of how these wonderful individuals: Cheryl (SaskCulture's inaugural Past President), Ken, Ann, Herman, Bryan, Jan, Peter, Reggie, James I., Pat, Joanne and James R. (current president) have inspired me by



their example. If you are involved with a nonprofit organization in the cultural sector, or any sector, their words of wisdom will be of inspiration and guidance to you.

Rose Gilks

TOP: SaskCulture Past Presidents (left to right): Bryan Foran, Jan Seibel, Herman Slotsve, Cheryl Bauer Hyde and James Ingold.  
CENTRE: SaskCulture Past Presidents (left to right): Reggie Newkirk, Joanne McDonald and Pat Grayston.  
ABOVE: SaskCulture Past Presidents (left to right): Ann Kipling Brown and Peter England.





## Karon Shmon: ‘I feel like I am innately a teacher’

**K**aron Shmon, the Director of Publishing at the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), has a deep background in education. For over three decades, she has been involved in the cultural and education community in the province.

Shmon was born and raised in Saskatoon with strong connection to Chitek Lake, Saskatchewan, where her mother was raised. Her great-grandparents are Métis from Red River, in what is now Manitoba and her father is from The Pas, Manitoba. Shmon spoke to *Engage Magazine*’s Busayo Osbode about her work in the communities and what leadership means to her.

“Social justice issues have always been important to me. It is also important to me that Indigenous cultures and languages, those of the Métis, the First Nations, and the Inuit, are sustained and revitalized.” — KARON SHMON



Participants of the Michif Language Banking Gathering. This project was part of the Resilience and Respect: Canada 150 and Beyond partnership with SaskCulture.  
 BACK ROW (left to right): Karon Shmon, Harvey Pelletier, Larry Fayant, Norman Fleury, Mervin Fleury, Gerald St. Pierre, George Fleury, Mervin Pelletier, Edwin St. Pierre.  
 FRONT ROW (left to right): Verna Demontigny, Dorothy Aubichon, Irma Klyne, Marie Schoenthal, Harriet St. Pierre





**Q What made you decide to work at GDI?**

**A** I feel like I am innately a teacher, so after becoming one and doing classroom teaching for 12 years, I made the decision to try and have a broader impact systemically, so I transitioned into being the consultant for what was, at the time, called Aboriginal Education. Social justice issues have always been important to me. It is also important to me that Indigenous cultures and languages, those of the Métis, the First Nations, and the Inuit, are sustained and revitalized. This is our country of origin, so there is nowhere else to get these from should they be threatened by extinction.

**Q What are some of the projects you've worked on?**

**A** I served on the Awasis Special Subject Council for many years, which provided the much needed support for Indigenous educators. Once I was able to work with Elders and resource persons of Métis and First Nations ancestry to create learning resources, I found something I really loved. I have served on advisory committees and other groups to advocate for this as well.

During my work as the manager for Leadership Saskatchewan, I was able to raise the participation of First Nations and Métis participants up to 66 per cent in two years. Many of them were already leaders, but I feel the program also gave a boost to those who needed it in order to go on to become community leaders.

**Q GDI was also involved in the *Resilience and Respect: Canada 150 & Beyond* project, which delivered important and impactful cultural programming that highlighted the resilience of Indigenous peoples, cultures and languages. How do you feel about the project?**

**A** A big hand goes out to SaskCulture for listening respectfully to the groups and for taking our advice. We saw Canada 150 somewhat differently than many non-Indigenous Canadians do. We saw it as the anniversary of the formal process which legally made Canada a country. We wanted to emphasize that Indigenous peoples were here before 1867 and that we have had many disappointments and losses during this process and since. Indigenous peoples lost land, freedom, and the right to self-determination, while most non-Indigenous Canadians benefitted from the policies and practices we now recognize as colonization.

**Q What does leadership mean to you?**

**A** I believe the best leaders build capacity in others by encouraging and guiding them to their fullest potential and by removing any obstacles the leader has the influence to remove, "clearing the path" so to say. Leaders should do such a good job that when they leave, no one notices.

**Q So far, has there been any challenges?**

**A** I find it challenging that the term "Indigenous" is now in vogue. I consider it a pan-Aboriginal term that doesn't require people to use distinctions-based language. This is problematic because even among the three, officially-recognized Indigenous groups of peoples in Canada, (the Inuit, the First Nations, and the Métis), the First Nations have tremendous diversity. People are confused because we've gone from "Native" to "Aboriginal" to "Indigenous" and none of them are suitable except in a very specific context. Non-Indigenous Canadians are often proud of their roots. If you asked most of them if they would be satisfied being called "Non-Indigenous Canadians," most would say, "of course not. I am a (country of origin) Canadian."

**Q How have you been able to overcome these challenges?**

**A** Some of the best advice I was given was "you can still only eat an elephant one bite at a time." There will be small victories most of the time, big victories some of the time, and setbacks once in a while. As Victor Frankl remarked, "Hope is the last thing to die."

I find my work a good fit, very interesting and fulfilling, and filled with hope. I must also mention the support and guidance I have received from so many co-workers, mentors, friends, and family members.

**Q Please tell me a little bit about the Métis culture. How important it is for Canadians and newcomers to learn from the history of Canada?**

**A** This is very important because the Métis were nation builders. As a people who originated in Canada, we played an important role in bridging trade and commerce between the First Nations and the newcomers. The Métis were once known as "Canada's Forgotten People." While the Constitution recognized the First Nations and the Inuit, Métis were not recognized until 1982. I like to remind people that the last five letters in the word "history" are S-T-O-R-Y. What gets validated as history depends on who gets to tell it and from whose perspective what took place is told. The TRC is called Truth and Reconciliation for a reason. Truth must precede reconciliation. Reconciliation is not an event either – it's a process and it's going to take at least as long to achieve as it took to be required.

**Q How important is it to connect people to their culture?**

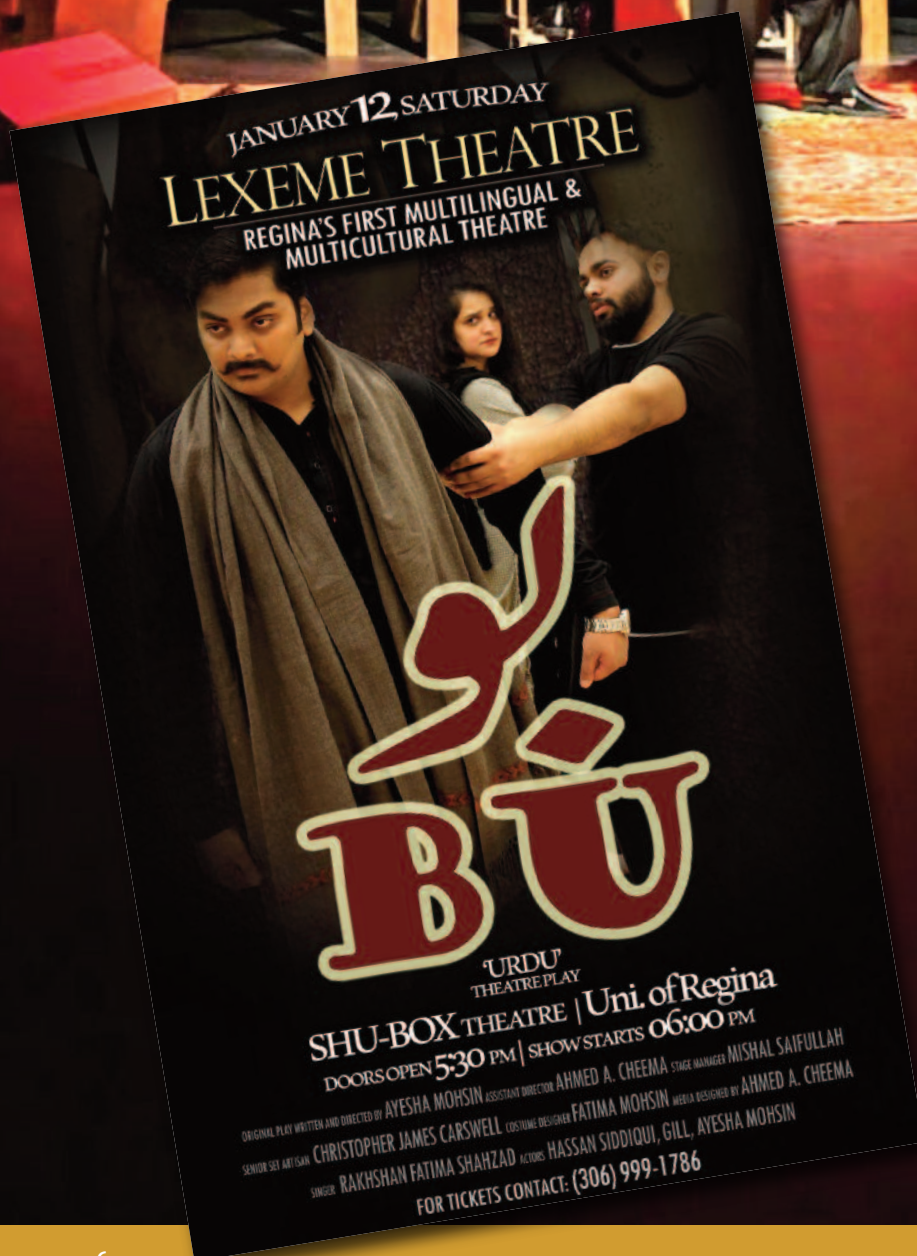
**A** It's very important because we all want to know where we belong. There's a sense of satisfaction and of pride in knowing that those who preceded us struggled so we would remember. We honour our ancestors by remembering and passing our heritage on to the future generations.



# New Theatre Company Shares Stories of Newcomers

BY MIRANDA HANUS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AYESHA MOHSIN.





**A** new Regina theatre company wants to shine the spotlight on stories that have, until recently, gone unheard.

As a theatre student at the University of Regina, Ayesha Mohsin noticed there was a large population of students from Bangladesh, India and her home country of Pakistan.

"I wondered to myself, who was telling their stories?" she asks. This was the inspiration behind Lexeme Theatre – Regina's first immigrant language/multilingual and multicultural theatre.

A Pakistani-Canadian playwright, creative artist, and now artistic director, Mohsin wrote the play *Bu* ('shoe' in Urdu), which debuted with Lexeme Theatre. This past December, it played to a sold-out audience at the University of Regina Theatre (Riddell Centre).

The inspiration for the play, occurred after Mohsin was watching the news one night. The news piece showed images of shoes scattered on the road after an explosion.

The entire play is performed in the Urdu language. Mohsin says, the audience reacted

very positively to the universal themes of family and the introduction of outside forces. The story is about a sister and brother living in isolation until a stranger comes in and disrupts their lives. Mohsin says she has had requests for a showing of the play in the English language.

She adds the production took a year to put together, including six months of rehearsals. She notes she is grateful for her enthusiastic, hard-working crew, most of whom were new to the stage.

For the future, Mohsin says she would like to produce three plays a year, with two in other languages: one with a famous playwright from Pakistan, as well as a play in English. She also would like to produce a comedy.

*Lexeme Theatre is a member of Theatre Saskatchewan, which receives funding from Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Cultural and Recreation, and will be partnering with the organization for the upcoming play Saadat Hasan Manato, which is about the legendary Urdu playwright.*





# Working Hands, Working Minds

## at the South East District continue to promote Community Engagement



From providing consulting services, and enhancing awareness to leadership development, the South East Sport Culture and Recreation District (South East District) is a “one-stop shop” for culture, sport and recreation information and resources in Saskatchewan’s south east region. Executive Director Joni Hagen works with her team to create and implement activities that will help move the community forward towards a more inclusive culture, sport and recreation system.

Hagen says the District is working towards promoting and increasing the awareness of its works with equity groups, and to motivate the system and community to embrace the benefits of diversity. She recently spoke to Busayo Osobade of *Engage* magazine about herself and how the District promotes cultural activity and diversity at the grassroots level.

“I truly believe that vibrant, healthy communities depend on engaged community citizens, these are people who feel a sense of belonging, feel respected and valued for who they are.”

JONI HAGEN

The District has a new name and contact information:  
South East Sport, Culture & Recreation District  
100A - 18th Street, Weyburn SK S4H 2W4  
[ed@southeastdistrict.ca](mailto:ed@southeastdistrict.ca)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JONI HAGEN.





**Q What does leadership mean to you?**

**A** Creating meaningful relationships with people that are rooted in trust is my guiding insight that I aspire to when it comes to leadership. I feel it's imperative to have the skills such as respect, empathy, listening and communication when interacting with people or working with teams.

**Q What is the District doing to promote cultural activity, awareness and diversity in the community?**

**A** We are currently working with SaskCulture to build our own internal diversity plan for our organization. We are partnering with provincial agencies, such as Common Weal Community Arts, to bring Ally Affirmations workshops to the South East, which are focused on reconciliation and bridging. We also offer a mini-workshop to community boards on the topic of inclusive programming among other things.

**Q What is the importance of culture and diversity in the District?**

**A** I truly believe that vibrant, healthy communities depend on engaged community citizens, these are people who feel a sense of belonging, feel respected and valued for who they are. To me, it's all about acceptance and respect and recognizing that we are all different! We have such a diverse population, and I believe there is a lot of negative perceptions and misconceptions, and that we can move past these if we focus on education, and having those difficult dialogues, etc.

**Q What cultural activities do you enjoy?**

**A** I love photography! I enjoy being creative with my camera! I also love to cook and bake – just recently I learned a culinary family tradition from my mom, on how to make Norwegian potato lefse! My dream is to someday be able to play a musical instrument - the drums would be awesome!

**Q What are the future directions and goals you'd want to achieve for the District?**

**A** We want to offer meaningful and valuable services for our member communities.

We continue to build relationships with the eight Indigenous communities in the District, and ensure that groups and organizations know who we are and have an understanding of what we have to offer.



*The South East District is one of the seven Districts supported through the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund that help local groups and organizations ensure that culture, sport and recreation programming thrive in the province.*





# Sandra Butel - Value-Based Approach to Festival Experience

BY SHELLEY FAYANT

**S**andra Butel's involvement with the Regina Folk Festival (RFF) stretches back far beyond the time she has been at its helm as its CEO and artistic director. She recalls attending RFF with her parents as a child. Even then she knew the event was so much more than just an outdoor music festival. She's spent the last 21 years shaping it into an expansive experience that educates and enlightens audiences, as well as entertains them.

"I think my background in sociology has given me a bit of a different perspective on how I look at things," says Butel. "I started out by trying to figure out how I can best serve the RFF community because after all, they're the reason we exist. Over time though, I realized that the audience perhaps wasn't necessarily a true reflection of the entire community and that there was room for a wider diversity of people in our audience, so I started applying a more values-based approach to my work."

This new focus included emphasizing that folk music is, in fact, world music, and in its

**"I've always said that I'm not in love with the music – I'm in love with the audience. I'm trying to create and nurture an experience for people and the music is a tool for me to do that."**

- SANDRA BUTEL

broadest sense a form of human expression that allows people to share stories and experiences that ultimately brings the audience together in a profound shared experience that is both enriching and entertaining.

"I've always said that I'm not in love with the music – I'm in love with the audience. I'm trying to create and nurture an experience for people and the music is a

tool for me to do that. So I don't stand there watching the artists, I stand there watching the audience watching the artist."

Her values-based focus is also evident in her leadership style, and has become increasingly so over the past few years. "I'm at the stage of my career where I'm asking myself what I want my legacy to look like. I certainly don't want to be one of those leaders who take up too much room or air, preventing others from growing, so I'm learning to let the ego go, and it's been such a beautiful and liberating lesson."

Butel has pulled back from managing the day-to-day operations, allowing her team to lean in and share a sense of ownership for the RFF. This shift has allowed her to concentrate on creative funding opportunities; finding ways to make the

*Sandra Butel flanked by her team of staff members for the 2018 festival.*

PHOTO BY ARTHUR WARD.



RFF more welcoming and inclusive of a more diverse audience; and, planning for the future of the festival.

“I’ve learned that my role isn’t to micro-manage the entire operation but to instead help move it forward, grow, thrive and succeed. I want to ensure there is room for the next generation because this

is what is going to ensure the RFF remains strong and ultimately, more sustainable.”

*The Regina Folk Festival receives support through SaskFestivals, a Saskatchewan Arts Board program supported by funding from SaskCulture through the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.*



TOP: Young RFF patron plays amid hula hoops and tipi at free daytime programming. PHOTO BY DANIELLE TOCKER

ABOVE: Hoop Dancer Nimkii Osawamick performs at RFF Sunlite Stage 1. PHOTO BY DANIELLE TOCKER

LEFT: Festival team celebrates during finale with Buffy Sainte-Marie. PHOTO BY RAE GRAHAM

BELOW: RFF team of lead volunteers and staff. PHOTO BY CHRIS GRAHAM





# Curiosity, Engagement and Listening Key to Innovative Program and Leadership

Risa Payant and her team at Common Weal are creating innovative approaches to foster community engagement and address social issues.

BY BUSAYO OSOBADE



**R**isa Payant grew up on a farm outside of the town of Rouleau, 25 minutes south east of Regina.

Although she had minimal opportunities in the arts, she has always been interested in its capacity to foster connection and understanding. Now, she's leading Common Weal Community Arts, an arts organization dedicated to bringing positive change across the province.

At the age of 16, Payant moved to the United Kingdom through a foreign exchange program, but eventually made her way back to Canada, pursuing an Art History degree at the University of British Columbia.

"I started my career in the gallery world in Vancouver," she says. "I was most interested in the way that people engage with the arts and found myself drawn to conversations about why people were in the gallery. What brought them there? How did the art make them feel? I was excited about finding new ways to make people feel welcome and immersed in the arts."

After working and travelling abroad in the Caribbean, Europe and Central and South

America, Payant returned to Regina in 2008. She worked in various capacities at the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Regina Folk Festival, and MacKenzie Art Gallery. Payant remained deeply invested in utilizing arts and culture to create dialogue and connect communities. When she received the offer to work as the Executive Director of Common Weal Community Arts in 2015, she knew it was a perfect fit for her.

"I'm driven by a sense of curiosity. I want to understand where people are coming from and how they want to be engaged, what they want to explore," she explains. "There are a lot of people who feel like they don't belong and I think the arts has a unique capacity to mend that kind of disconnection. To me, it's about understanding the stories of the people around you."

Common Weal Community Arts is an arts organization that engages professional artists with communities to promote social change and cultural identity through creative expression.

Payant continues, "We put professional artists into marginalized communities to do social justice related projects. Specifically, we focus on creating opportunities for participants to tell their stories, encouraging a dialogue that will hopefully shift the social consciousness." An important aspect of its work is that it's entirely community-driven, guided by the interests and needs of the communities.

Payant says the idea for their most recent program, *Respond to Racism*, came during the Gerald Stanley trial, which took place from January 30 to February 8, 2018.



*The Respond to Racism workshops, facilitated by Zoey Roy and Joely BigEagle-Kequahtooay, are an example of the community work of Common Weal. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RISA PAYANT.*





“I remember what it was like to be in the office and watch the trial play out nationally and to see the huge amount of hate that was coming from people,” Payant notes. “It’s almost embarrassing to admit how shocked we were. The trial really shed light on how bad things are in this province. We felt that we had a responsibility to speak up against hateful and racist rhetoric.”

The *Respond to Racism* program, which received partial funding from SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund, explores how the arts can provide tools to address the issue of racism across southern Saskatchewan. In one stream of the program, Common Weal Community Arts has partnered with Indigenous professional artists, Zoey Roy and Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway, to hold workshops in rural areas of the province.

“We’ve really taken our time in developing this program because this is a personal and emotional thing for people. We didn’t want to go into communities and say, ‘here, this is what you need, this is how you should feel, this is why this is important,’” she says. “We really wanted it to be driven by where the community was at, while also challenging people to get a little uncomfortable and push beyond their usual conversations. We landed on an Indigenous-led, settler-supported model (a term coined by Roy) to get communities that are specifically settler-based to start understanding their inherent biases. Racism isn’t always obvious. What exists in their communities that they might not have been acknowledging?”

(continued on page 14)





“ There are a lot of people who feel like they don't belong and I think the arts has a unique capacity to mend that kind of disconnection. To me, it's about understanding the stories of the people around you. ” - RISA PAYANT

Payant says this work is also being done within the organization, through ongoing efforts to decolonize. Most recently, the senior leadership team spent three weeks in Australia, whose colonial history runs parallel to Canada's. There, they learned from peers who are committed to similar action.

“We are taking time to listen,” she continues. “We are investigating our own biases and figuring out how what we learn

will reflect into the organization in really tangible ways. We want to make sure that the organization itself is in line with the inclusivity that we promote in our programming.”

As the leader of the organization, Payant says she's learned she is more powerful when she “steps back and creates conditions for people to be empowered to take action, rather than thinking I can do it all myself. I'm so lucky to work with an

amazing and incredibly capable team of staff and artists.”

Payant adds that Common Weal Community Arts will continue to deeply integrate itself into communities across Saskatchewan to understand what is necessary, ensuring that ongoing and future projects are community driven.

*Common Weal staff travelled to Australia to learn from Australians who are committed to changing colonial systems. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RISA PAYANT.*





## Diversity of Voices on Cultural Boards

### INVOLVE prepares newcomers and Indigenous volunteers for leadership roles

BY MYRNA WILLIAMS

For decades, many organizations have increasingly recognized the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in their workplaces. The notion that “diversity is strength” is becoming a common and accepted belief for community and cultural organizations and the boards that guide them.

Recognizing this, INVOLVE (Integrating New Volunteers with Opportunities to add Leadership Value through Education) program helps prepare newcomers and Indigenous leaders for serving on volunteer boards. First piloted by the Regina Open Door Society (RODS) in partnership with the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS) and SaskCulture, the program has been running since 2015.

Originally, the program’s goal was to support and prepare new Canadians to be welcomed as volunteers on boards. Part of the program involved preparing the existing cultural boards to understand how to welcome and support newcomers as they participate in board decision-making and policy development. “It was important to eliminate discomfort on all sides, so that the new Canadians could feel confident about contributing their ideas to strengthen the boards, and the existing



“Indigenous people face similar challenges as newcomers when it comes to board representation. Both are under-represented on cultural and community boards.”

DOMINGA ROBINSON

board members would welcome them and their new ideas,” says Rhonda Rosenberg, executive director, MCoS.

Recently, Dominga Robinson, Outreach Consultant, SaskCulture, worked with consultant Heather Ritenburg and Rosenberg, to adapt the existing INVOLVE program to include an Indigenous component. “Indigenous people face similar challenges as newcomers when it comes to board representation,” she says. “Both are under-represented on cultural and community boards.

“So we have expanded the program to support all people of colour to learn how to find and use their voices – and how to have their voices heard. This program is a push to encourage and support boards to diversify.” The Indigenous component has grown the INVOLVE program, which now has expanded partnerships to include the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan and the North Central Family Centre in Regina.

INVOLVE also offers training and orientation for organizations that are interested in recruiting newcomers, including mentor/mentee sessions that link people to organizations. “I call it ‘Board 101,’” Robinson explains. “INVOLVE not only supports and trains the newcomers to be participants, but the program also prepares the organizations and existing board. Then, it all is brought together through the mentorship piece.”

Community organizations, large or small, can benefit from in the INVOLVE program by training local facilitators. Local partner requirements are:

- Strong connections to newcomers and organizations in the community;
- Ability to recruit 12 to 20 participants who meet the requirements of the program;
- Space for training; and
- Staff coordinator or capacity to recruit and manage a contract for a coordinator (4 hours/week for 3 – 4 months).

According to Rosenberg, participants benefit by gaining volunteer experience that employers value, by developing networks and establishing community connections, and developing leadership skills. The cultural and community organizations benefit by gaining new and diverse perspectives and increasing their volunteer base. Everyone benefits from this win/win program!





# Leonard Montgrand: Leading Youth in Discovering of Métis Culture

How a canoe trip can teach youth about teamwork and leadership

BY MIRANDA HANUS





Leonard Montgrand is the executive director of the La Loche Friendship Centre – a position he has held for the past 14 years. His work at the Friendship Centre has focused on providing programs and resources for this Northern Saskatchewan community. One such program is an annual canoe trip for community youth that Montgrand has supervised for the past eight years.

Ten youth and two guides travel in two voyageur canoes along the North Saskatchewan River. Leaving the ferry launch from the town of Hague, the group travels to the Métis historical site of Batoche. He said the trip is two or three days, (including one night of camping at Batoche), depending on how fast the river current is flowing, (“Sometimes we can travel in eight hours,” says Montgrand); or if the water levels allow for passing without the canoes getting stuck on the river bottom. Montgrand said he’s noticed the water levels are lower than in previous years.

Montgrand says the trip stresses the importance of teamwork and having the youth experience what it must have been like for the Métis voyageurs back in the day, including rationing food for the trip.

“We start the trip with an Elder giving a water blessing. The river is fast flowing and a novice canoer can be intimidated.”

Montgrand says the youth in his community are mostly Dene ancestry. The first language of La Loche is Dene for approximately 80 per cent of the population. The school provides land-based activities like fishing and trapping. The canoe trip in mid-July is the first time on the North Saskatchewan River for many of the youth.

But Montgrand, who humbly considers himself a sharer of cultural information rather than a leader, wanted to share Métis history with them. “I’m Dene and Cree and call myself Métis. I wanted to share the Métis culture and perspective of history, the history of the voyageurs and the fur trade.”

The river is marked with historical landmarks and plaques along their journey. Montgrand notices the excitement in the youth when they arrive at the Batoche landing and see the Métis flag flying.

“It’s not about paddling 40 strokes a minute. I want the youth to have fun, to enjoy themselves. It’s an opportunity for leadership for the youth. It gives them a sense of accomplishment to say they canoed to Batoche.”

*This project has received funding from SaskCulture’s Métis Cultural Development Fund.*



Leonard Montgrand (bottom photo, second to right) helps with the annual canoe trip for community youth.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LEONARD MONTGRAND.





## Elbow's Small Town Charm Big Part of Culture Days

How Elbow is promoting community unity through Culture Days

BY BUSAYO OSOBADE

**M**usic and dance, part of Elbow's small-town charm, is at the heart of what makes cultural celebrations a special and amazing experience for the community.

Elbow is a small village in the province of Saskatchewan with a population of under

350 people that has been holding cultural celebrations and activities since 2013, before formally registering a Culture Days event in 2016. Culture Days is an annual national celebration of arts and culture in Canada held on the last weekend in September.

Anne Wilson, event organizer, says, "In the

olden days, there used to be regular dances here. The first time we had an event during the Culture Days' time frame, our goal was to resurrect dancing. We brought in a gospel group - a crowd pleaser in our area. Then we cleared the chairs out of the way, and the group became a 'dance band'...and not one person left without looking forward to the next time!"

Elbow is a very musical and artistic community with several art galleries. It was important to bring people from diverse backgrounds together to promote pride, heritage and culture. She adds that funding was available for these events through SaskCulture's Museum Grant Program. "We applied for funding for our museum (Elbow & District Museum) and it was through that program that Shelley Fayant, Communications Consultant and SaskCulture's Culture Days Coordinator, became aware of our event. She encouraged us and helped us register for 2016 Culture Days - which was great because the advertising provided was awesome!"

The celebrations were always super colourful and successful, also bringing people from other communities.

She recalls one year which was themed 'Take a Trip to Different Lands'. "What we did was set it up like an airport as if you were travelling to experience different cultures. There were even 'duty free shops' where local artisans could show their wares. Every square inch of our little Civic Centre was used," says Wilson. "People were so interested, interacting with each other. It was amazing! People came out to share their different cultural backgrounds.

# CELEBRATE CULTURE... BUILD COMMUNITY!







The next year we had to add another venue! The event grew!"

This year, the organizers are hoping to start earlier on the Friday in order that school age children can participate in the activities.

"Most kids have not been able to participate in the weekend events because of their extracurricular activities," she says. "Also another change - rather than having the artists bring their art to one big venue, this year we want to schedule visits to other venues - their galleries, so that people will go there to interact and meet more artists and artisans."

Culture celebrations have become a huge part of the community continuing throughout the year, not just in September.

"Participating in Culture Days has been so good for the community - working together and being proud of our accomplishments," she says. "Community needs unity. We need togetherness. We need to be welcoming. We might be a sleepy little small town but we need to celebrate the culture that we have - and we do!"



Elbow residents celebrate their community culture and pride during Culture Days. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHELLEY FAYANT



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# Jennifer Fitzpatrick's Leading Role in Telling the Stories of Humboldt

BY MYRNA WILLIAMS



From spoken word stories in oral cultures to the most rigorous printed historical tomes: stories are how humans remember, understand, and share culture. Since ancient times, those who tell stories in a memorable way are highly valued in a community.

In Humboldt, Jennifer Fitzpatrick is passionate about ensuring the "stories of Humboldt" are shared. A Director of Cultural Services for the City of Humboldt, she has been involved in curating *Stories of Humboldt*, an exhibit featuring stories collected from local residents that showcase some unique aspect of the community.

In fact, the *Stories* exhibit marks the

culmination of an ongoing strategy Fitzpatrick has led to modernize the Humboldt and District Museum. She explains, "Our long-term goal is to re-design the museum to show the evolution of the Humboldt area by telling the stories that have impacted our community's development along the way. We focus on those stories unique to the Humboldt community."

To determine those stories, she initiated community engagement and opportunities. "We asked people to identify traditions, people, and events for further research. It's been ongoing for years. People continue to donate artifacts and share stories, and we continue to move toward reflecting everyday life in the community through culturally relevant exhibits."

The first series features 13 far-ranging local stories – some from years-gone-by, others are contemporary and include the history of the Humboldt Broncos. Another series will launch in 2019.

"History is happening now, and museums are contemporary places that can share the evolution of their communities. Local events, whether past or present, affect the lives of the people here in many ways, including how our city develops," Fitzpatrick

says. "Taken as a collective, the *Stories of Humboldt* represent the community's story, and it's exciting to know the community is telling that story for themselves."

The *Stories* exhibit is just one of several active projects on Fitzpatrick's plate. The Humboldt Gallery, another feather in the community's cap, just celebrated its 50th anniversary. In addition to already supporting the work of 588 artists, the Gallery is a popular venue that hosts concerts, author readings, workshops, fashion shows, award presentations, and receptions. It's become a cultural hub in the community.

Also ongoing is the development of the Original Humboldt site: "In just ten years, an 80-acre parcel of prairie land has been transformed into a fascinating living heritage site. We created metal art installations with interpretive storyboards, so that visitors can experience the essence of multiple stories.

"The community's reaction has been fantastic – so many people have expressed excitement to see new artifacts and stories from their past. Some don't consider an event from the 1980s to be historical enough to be in a museum, but we aim to change that perception.

Fitzpatrick is the Director of Cultural Services for the City of Humboldt. She started working at the Humboldt Museum as a summer student, becoming its Director/ Curator in 1989. With a degree in Anthropology and a diploma in Cultural Resource Management, she has a long-term vision for her work.



# Sharing Métis Culture as part of Reconciliation

BY MIRANDA HANUS



A festival focusing on Métis culture brought together the community in the spirit of reconciliation.

The Western Development Museum's (WDM) 'Boomtown' and Prairieland Park served as the ideal settings for the first annual Métis Days Festival that took place in Saskatoon during the 2018 Culture Days weekend, September 28 – 30th.

According to Michelle LeClair, an organizer for the non-profit Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI), the event "provided an opportunity for Saskatoon residents to participate in Métis cultural activities." She adds it was also a way to share the Métis concept of reconciliation. "It's about opening (our Métis culture) to a wider inter-cultural community, and sharing the beauty of Métis culture through our history, our music, while bringing reconciliation to the forefront."

The festival featured many highlights from Métis history and culture. Visiting historical figures from "Kayas" (a Cree word for long time ago) made Prairieland Park come alive. Actors portraying Louis Riel, his wife Marguerite, and others, were accessible to present day guests. There were outdoor activities as well including king trapper events such as animal calling and Métis voyageur games.

The 'kitchen stage' hosted all kinds of performers, from Michif language storytelling, to Métis fiddlers and Métis musicians from across Saskatchewan and Canada. Audiences were also entertained by jigging contests.

According to organizers, more than 7,000

people attended the three-day event. Over 1,200 school students attended the first day for an interactive, engaging, live educational experience. On the second day, the attendance count was more than 2,000 guests. The Sunday events also coincided with National Orange Shirt Day, a commemoration to residential school survivors that is held on September 30th.

The third day was an interfaith service and gospel jamboree, hosting 1,500 community members from many denominations. In addition to members of the Christian faith, members from the Jewish faith and Muslim faith were also in attendance.

Following the success of their first Métis Days, LeClair says organizers are already applying for grants and planning the second Annual Métis Days, for Culture Days, which is scheduled for fall 2019.

"The legacy includes the sharing of the rich Métis culture with community members. The goal was, in the spirit of reconciliation, to not only to share Métis culture and history within our own community, but also with new Canadians and the settler community. We believe that we accomplished this goal and look forward to next year being bigger and better," she explains.

*Métis Days Festival received funding from SaskCulture's Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership fund.*



The Métis Days Festival brought together Métis culture, including 'visiting historical figures' such as Louis Riel, and the community in the spirit of reconciliation.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BANG UP PRODUCTIONS.





# Awards Recognize Individual Contributions to Multiculturalism in Saskatchewan

BY MYRNA WILLIAMS

**T**he Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS) held its annual gala to honour the recipients of its 2018 Multicultural Honours awards. Two awards were given: Barb Dedi won the Betty Szuchewycz Award for outstanding contributions to multiculturalism in Saskatchewan; and Nour Albaradan won the Multicultural Youth Leadership Award for significant contributions from people 29 years and under. MCoS receives funding from the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Cultural and Recreation.

## Commitment to Supporting Newcomers

From helping to find housing and build language skills, to teaching newcomers how to vote in elections and participate in

politics, Dedi takes on any-and-every-thing she can to help newcomers navigate the new systems and challenges, so they can get settled as comfortably as possible.

Born and raised in Saskatchewan, not only has Dedi worked extensively at the local level, but she has also worked with provincial, national and international organizations focused on human rights, employment equity, labour and anti-racism. Retired from her career as a psychiatric nurse, Dedi currently serves as the president of Spring Free From Racism, and also for the Saskatchewan Association on Human Rights Inc., an organization she's been active with for nearly 40 years.

When asked what inspired her volunteer work for newcomers, Dedi explains that her father was a Ukrainian immigrant who struggled with language, employment, and

other barriers while settling in their new country. Looking after rooming houses, her parents literally opened doors to many newcomers from around the world, so she grew up realizing she too could support newcomers who struggled with barriers and discrimination.

She also provides bridges for newcomers to supportive organizations, bringing people together to build relationships and enjoy mutual benefits. This year, Dedi's years of work the Mosaic board, Regina's multicultural festival, have led to her successful lobby for an innovative new pavilion. It will feature five different cultures that have smaller populations in the community, but want to participate: they will share the venue, the stage – and the costs. According to Dedi, it's an innovative opportunity for them to



showcase their traditional culture to their new neighbours in Regina.

Her commitment never ends, Dedi donated her \$500 prize, from the Betty Szuchewycz Award, to Spring Free From Racism, an organization that does vital work for newcomers and holds an annual multicultural event in Regina every year. Indeed it's difficult to imagine anyone whose work is more deserving of the Betty Szuchewycz Award.

### Student Shares Stories to Create Connections

Nour Albaradan arrived to live in Regina with her family three years ago, after three years of living in a refugee camp in Jordan. Now a 17-year old student at Regina's Sheldon Williams Collegiate, Albaradan loves

living in Saskatchewan and is especially happy that her family – her parents and five siblings – are all here together.

Last year, Albaradan, an English as Additional Language (EAL) student, participated in the first Mindful Creative Writing class the school offered. The program, led by innovative teacher, Kyla Wendell McIntyre, gave Albaradan the opportunity to share her life experiences through poetry and public speaking, all in English. "I have always loved creative writing. I love sharing my feelings and telling my own story," she says.

The class is inclusive and diverse, with students from many cultures writing and sharing their stories, giving each other feedback and learning to revise their own words. She says that poetry and stories are her favourite forms to write because "a

poem is a small thing that can mean a lot."

Not only does Albaradan write poetry, she also shares her story through public speaking. She's taken lead roles to organize and perform at Sheldon Williams' multicultural events, encouraging her peers to ensure that all the cultures of the school are represented. She has also spoken to professional groups at several events.

When asked if she enjoys performing for a crowd, she says she may feel a little nervous, but she knows it is an opportunity for her to gain experience and to hone her language skills. "The best thing about writing and practicing for an event is that I listen to myself, and focus on my own voice."

Albaradan's award included a \$500 prize, which she is saving for post-secondary studies.



PREVIOUS PAGE: BACK ROW L-R: SGEU President Bob Bymoen, MCoS President Neeraj Saroj, The Honourable Gene Makowsky Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, and The Honourable Thomas Molloy Lieutenant Governor. FRONT ROW L-R: MCoS Executive Director Rhonda Rosenberg, MCoS Director and Chair of the Recognition Committee Muna De Ciman, 2018 Betty Szuchewycz Award Recipient Barb Dedi, and 2018 Multicultural Youth Leadership Award Recipient Nour Albaradan. ABOVE: Barb Dedi and Nour Albaradan. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MCoS.





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