

Culture Builds Community!

# Engage



Culture Camp Nurtures Relationships

Jeffery Straker's Road to Success

Building Stories through Drama

Sask *Culture*

FUNDING PROVIDED BY

Saskatchewan  
**LOTTERIES**

**SPRING 2016**

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## Engage

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is designed to

highlight  
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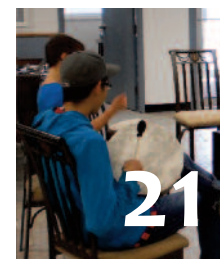
diversity  
of activities

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Recreation.



**ON THE COVER:**  
Young dancers perform at the African Dance  
Workshop during Culture Days.  
Photo by Matt Ramage.

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# The Rewards of Discovery



PHOTOS BY MATT RAMAGE AND SHAWN FULTON



**Y**es, I am a Math/Science major, so it is permissible to assume that I relate to scientific discovery. While I still appreciate the intellectual reward of finding my way through a mathematical problem, I continue to experience an even greater reward in the discovery of self through the practice of art. The rewards of science have been left in the classroom, both for myself and through students I taught. The rewards, of my participation in the arts, continue.

Art is not the only form of cultural activity that contributes to self-discovery and improvement. Heritage, ethno-cultural, multicultural, First Nations and Métis cultural activities also provide a form of expression that allows for personal growth and satisfaction. The degree of satisfaction is not dependent on the level of accomplishment, but on the level of participation.

Engagement in cultural activity creates commitments that reflect ethical and informed decision-making. Youth engaged in positive activities assume responsibility for their own actions and develop into life-long learners. Youth engaged in cultural activities learn to balance time allotments between educational demands, leisure time, and family commitments. Cultural activity leads to increased mental and physical health and overall well-being. Cultural activity addresses the needs of the human spirit. Individual happiness and fulfillment provide youth with the foundation required to lead them to their potential and will remain with them into adulthood.

I repeat, participation is the key. As parents we hold that key.

Yours truly,

Pat Grayston  
President, SaskCulture



# Choose Cultural Activities... Give Your Kids a Creative Life!

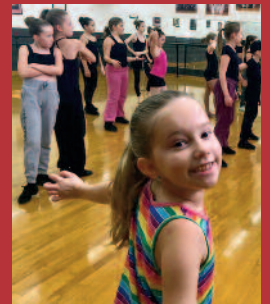
BY DIANE ELL

## What is cultural activity?

Cultural activity describes a wide range of arts, heritage, multicultural or cultural industry-related activities that help define us as people, keep alive our past, reflect our values, articulate our dreams and foster pride in who we are. Cultural activity includes, but is not limited to:

### ARTS

- DANCE
- THEATRE
- VISUAL ARTS / CRAFTS / PHOTOGRAPHY
- WRITING / PUBLISHING
- FILM / VIDEO MAKING
- DIGITAL MEDIA
- MUSIC / SINGING / INSTRUMENT / BANDS



- STORYTELLING
- ARCHIVES
- MUSEUMS / ARCHAEOLOGY
- GENEALOGY
- SCRAPBOOKING
- NATURE WALKS
- ARCHITECTURAL TOURS

### HERITAGE

### MULTICULTURAL

- LANGUAGES
- FOLK DANCING / SONG
- CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE
- CULTURAL IMMERSION
- FESTIVALS
- NEWCOMER WELCOME



- CULTURE CAMPS
- ELDER STORYTELLING
- POW-WOW DANCING / JIGGING
- REGALIA-MAKING
- FEASTS
- TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS
- BEADING

### FIRST NATION / MÉTIS



## Why get involved in cultural activities?

We all want our children to lead healthy, active lifestyles. Besides keeping kids safe and secure, parents must ensure they are educated, are connected to family, friends and community, and fill “out of school” hours with positive activities.

If that isn’t challenging enough, parents are also concerned about the amount of time kids spend watching or using television, video games, computers or mobile phones. Studies show that too much time spent in front of a screen leads to higher physical inactivity (which results in negative health outcomes) and increased isolation.

It is during “out of school” hours that we have the option, as parents and guardians, to add creativity and culture to children’s lives. Cultural activities help kids:

- Learn to think creatively, with an open mind;
- Learn to see, describe, analyze and interpret the world around them;
- Learn to express their feelings, with or without words;
- Practice problem-solving and critical-thinking;
- Discover there is more than one right answer;
- Learn to make decisions for themselves;
- Learn about cultures from different parts of the world;
- Learn acceptance and the importance of inclusiveness;
- Learn to collaborate and be part of a team;
- Build confidence and self-esteem;
- Discover new skills, and possible careers;
- Refine motor skills and coordination;
- Increase academic performance;
- Develop a passion;
- Lead others; and
- Be part of, and help build, their communities!

Start them young and make an effort to keep them engaged throughout their teens.



PHOTO BY KEVIN HOGARTH

## Where do you start?

Organized cultural activities are a good way to get started. Once you have identified an interest – such as to learn to sing, dance powwow, act in play, or learn a language – check out the opportunities in your community. Consider:

- **Your child’s interests** – Every child is different. Consider your child’s natural passions, talents and desires.
  - **Quality of experience** – Is there appropriate skill development and experience for your child? Is the instructor or teacher qualified? Is the experience respectful and inclusive of your values and your child’s needs?
  - **Competitive or non-competitive?** – Consider your child’s interest.
  - **Time commitment** – Can you commit to a few one-time activities or can you keep up with a regular class one or two times a week?
  - **Transportation** – Getting your child to and from an activity can be a challenge. Check with the activity organizer to see if transportation options are available.
  - **Cost** – Most lessons and ongoing sessions have a fee attached. Before committing, ask for an idea of the annual cost for the activity. Also, if cost is a barrier, check out Creative Kids at [www.CreativeKidsSask.ca](http://www.CreativeKidsSask.ca).
- **Consider a few different cultural activities** – Look for opportunities to try before you buy! Be open to exploring different options before settling on one or two cultural pursuits;
  - **Be encouraging** – Be present and give positive praise especially when starting out;
  - **Put it on a schedule** – To be good at something may require weekly classes and practice. Make it matter by putting important dates into a calendar so no one forgets.
  - **Set some milestones to keep kids motivated** – Highlight recital dates, parent-watch opportunities, etc.
  - **Celebrate achievement and creativity** – We are all creative. Cultural activities let us all shine in our own way;
  - **Talk to your kids about the experience** – Gain your own understanding of the cultural activity from teacher or instructors, but let your child be the expert;
  - **Stick to it – at least for the short-term** – Kids may not always like everything about the activity, but it is recommended that kids and parents not make quick decisions about quitting.

## How do you pick the right activity?

One size does not fit all – and this is especially true for cultural activities. Tips from other parents include:

## Why do kids choose cultural activities?

The top reasons for kids wanting to be involved in cultural activities are:

1. To have fun!
2. To make, and hang out with, friends;
3. To learn new skills;
4. To be good at something; and
5. To be challenged.



CULTURAL LEADER PROFILE

# Jeffery Straker...

## Getting from Then to Now

BY MEI SHAN WAN

Performing at sold-out concerts and sharing his gift of music to international audiences is not something that happened overnight for Jeffery Straker. The journey to becoming a professional musician was the product of a lot of practice, appreciating the smallest of experiences, and one defining moment.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFFERY STRAKER





“Perform as much as you can,” Straker says, “and before you ever invest in any amount of money in recordings or promotions, do it live as much as you can.”

“None of it feels like work,” says Straker, on working 18-hour days. “This career made me realize that you can actually spend your time doing what you love and that it can be your life.”

Growing up in a home that served as a congregation place for local musicians to gather to play Old-Time music, he would watch in awe as his mother played piano only by memory and ear. Straker also noted the significant impact of the local teacher in his small town. “She was an incredible enabler and without her, it all would have been impossible.”

However, even with the musical influences in his life, it was a visit to a seniors’ home that ultimately set Straker on his path to be a professional singer-songwriter-pianist. “I visited a great aunt of mine who had Alzheimers and it hit me that day that I might get it too,” he says. “I thought to myself, ‘if that’s the case, then why wouldn’t I give myself a chance?’ So, I quit my job the next day.”

Straker gave himself a year to pursue a musical career, and in that time found enough encouragement to continue following his dream. His success as a musician is the culmination of moments and milestones, big and small, throughout his life. Reminiscing back to his childhood,

it was the support throughout his years as a student that motivated him to continue his studies in music.

“When you receive recognition from adjudicators at the local music festival, or you receive recognition at local talent shows, it’s great encouragement. Then, the encouragement comes from getting invited back to an event. You might think it’s seemingly small, but it’s incredibly important because it means that you’ve done something as a performer that has resonated with people. The more I did it, the more momentum I had,” he says. “I continued performing and then one day, I got a call from CBC to record my first concert, and it was extremely meaningful to know that there were people out there that thought my music was worth listening to.”

For aspiring musicians, Straker emphasizes the value of getting feedback and navigating through the music industry. “Perform as much as you can,” he says, “and before you ever invest in any amount of money in recordings or promotions, do it live as much as you can.”

He also notes that, “If you ever run into someone who says they can show you

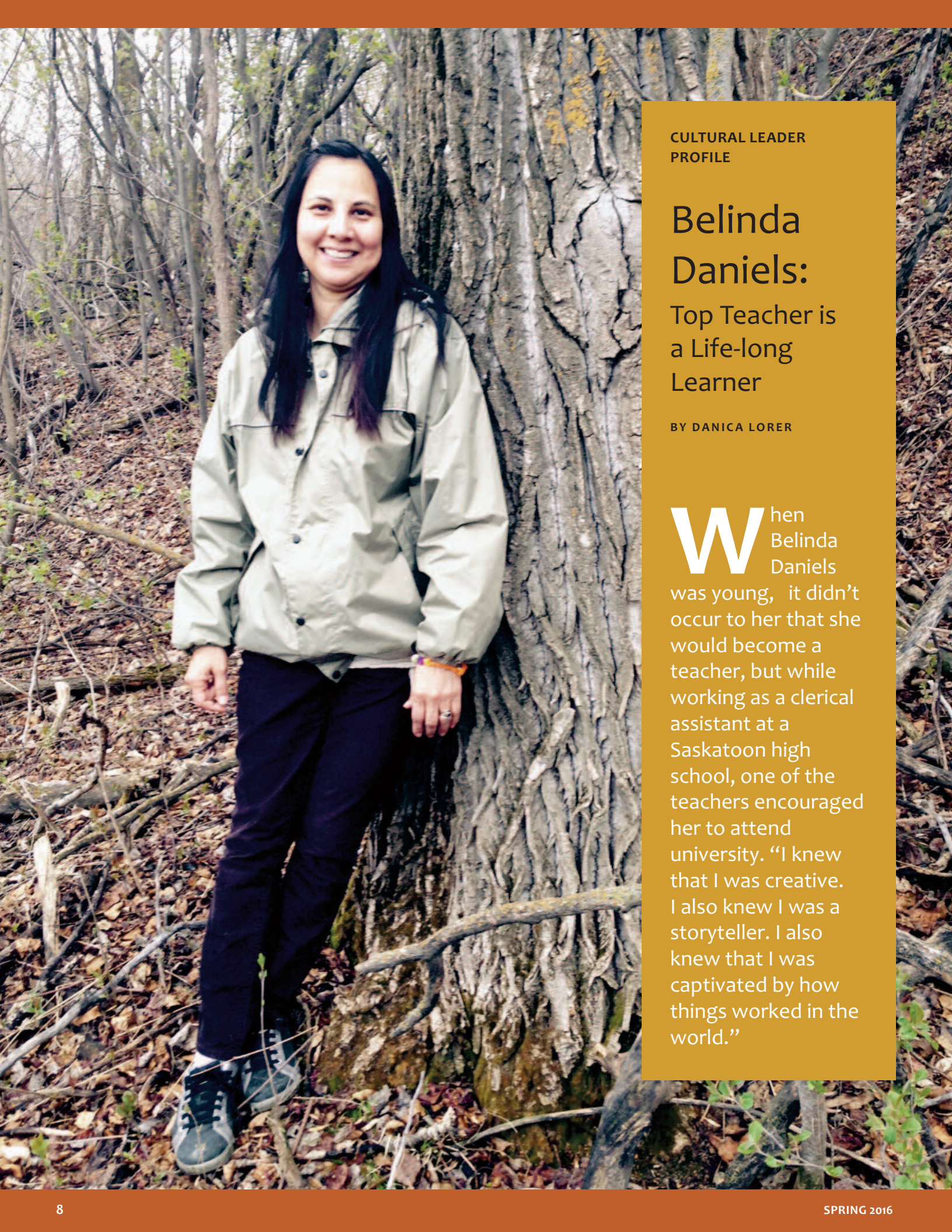
show you how the music industry works – run! Things are always changing and you never know what will come next.”

Along with touring internationally, Straker performs over 100 shows per year across Canada. His songwriting has received numerous accolades including placing twice in the Top 10 in the prestigious Mountain Stage Newsong Contest, placing as a national Top 10 finalist in the Canadian Radiostar Songwriting Competition, and a Top 20 finalist in the global Unisong Competition. Most recently, Straker won the prestigious Vina del Mar (Chile) song competition in February 2014, where he represented Canada.



Kevin Power speaks with the parents of two performers from Rosie and the Riveters, and the parents of Jeffery Straker. Learn about the key role parents and families can play in fostering music and creativity. Find the podcast, *It’s all about Family*, at [www.iheartculture.ca](http://www.iheartculture.ca).





CULTURAL LEADER  
PROFILE

## Belinda Daniels:

Top Teacher is  
a Life-long  
Learner

BY DANICA LORER

**W**hen Belinda Daniels was young, it didn't occur to her that she would become a teacher, but while working as a clerical assistant at a Saskatoon high school, one of the teachers encouraged her to attend university. "I knew that I was creative. I also knew I was a storyteller. I also knew that I was captivated by how things worked in the world."





“Language is culture. It's really important that language is intertwined with the meaning behind the dances, with the meaning behind the arts that we have as Indigenous people,” says Daniels.

we're not doing Indigenization justice. Language is culture. It's really important that language is intertwined with the meaning behind the dances, with the meaning behind the arts that we have as Indigenous people.”

Daniels believes in lifelong learning. "I was always taught that when you stop learning - when you stop exercising your brain - that is when you are done your existence."

As a child she had inspirational and compassionate teachers. She recalls the field trips and land-based learning where she learned how to fish, as well as snare and track rabbits. Daniels also recognizes her grandparents who raised her at Sturgeon Lake First Nation as important early educators.

In 2015, Daniels won the Canadian Teachers' Federation Outstanding Aboriginal Educator Award and is currently one of the finalists for the Varkey Foundation's Global Teacher Prize. She was selected as one of the top 50 out of 8,000 applicants and is the only Canadian finalist this year. The prize has been nicknamed “the Nobel Prize’ in teaching and the winner will receive one million dollars.

Daniels is going to Dubai in March to meet the other finalists. "The speakers are incredible, the judges are just phenomenal. Even if I don't win, this is an opportunity of a lifetime to learn from the best."

Daniels has said that if she wins, "I would use the proceeds to invest in Indigenous languages, Indigenous learning. I would do research in this regard. I would also want it to be about land-based education. We have

to teach our young people what a sustainable environment looks like. How do we address climate change? These are very real issues. It's such a dire, critical point in our humanity."

Daniels teaches Cree classes to people of all ages. She works with everyone from high school and university students to kindergarten students. As part of her work, she is preparing for the upcoming nehiyawak Summer Language Camp taking place in July.

Daniels is on a one-year education leave from her regular teaching job to work on her PhD in interdisciplinary studies. She is focusing on land, language and identity. "I'll be researching the idea of how our languages connect to our mental health and well-being."

She goes on to say, "I believe currently we are suffering from a type of mental and well-being illness because we don't have our Indigenous languages that connect us to a huge array of knowledge in the seen and unseen world.

"Language is culture. We talk like it's two separate entities, when actually they're not. When we focus just on the culture

## BUILD LEADERSHIP.

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



## MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!

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

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

Deadlines: Oct. 15 & April 15



Visit [www.saskculture.ca](http://www.saskculture.ca) for details.





# Love of Theatre Growing in the North

BY MARIE POWELL

**S**tudents in northern Saskatchewan look forward to the opportunity to learn theatre arts and compete for opportunities to showcase their work in the Northern Drama Festival. Thanks to the Northern Drama Mentorship Program many youth from different northern communities look forward to this theatre experience each year.

Getting involved provides real benefits for the students, says Levay Turner, a teacher at Twin Lakes Community School in Buffalo

Narrows, who is mentoring a group of 14-20 students, from Grade 6-9, in their work to compete in the Northern Drama Festival this April.

“They really love it,” she says. “At the beginning of the school year, I get 20 kids already asking, ‘When is drama club starting up?’” She begins in September, teaching basic skills from improvisation to technical theatre, and involves the students in choosing a play. Rehearsals take place from December to April.

“They take it pretty seriously. They work towards competition all year. They know the rules of competition and they really strive to do well.”

Each year, a northern school and town host the festival competition, Turner says, and all competing schools travel there to take part. In 2016, the Churchill Community High School in La Ronge will host.

“They feed us, they have activities for the kids, and the show in the evening is three or four plays back to back,” Turner says.





Students are encouraged to “build on their own traditions, and the storytelling they do in their community,” says Briere.

The plays are also judged, and the following day the judges meet with all of the school groups separately, go over the adjudication, and give them tips to improve.

“And they have all sorts of awards that the kids really like,” Turner adds, from acting to technical theatre, which Buffalo Narrows has won in the past few years.

Different groups in the north will work on plays, but not all groups compete in the festival, adds Darlene Briere, executive director, Saskatchewan Drama Association (SDA). For example, six to eight groups might take part each year, but only three or four participate in the festival. “The aim was really to be able to do a play for the community, and doing the festival is sort of the icing on the cake,” she says.

Northern mentorships began in 2008-09 when representatives from Northern Sport, Culture & Recreation District

(NSCRD) noticed the need for drama and contacted SDA.

“They were looking for opportunities for the northern youth, their community leaders, and communities in general to have experiences in drama,” Briere says.

“They wanted some mentorship - somebody to come out and work with them and develop leaders who could take it from there to become a part of the community. This is something that happens in the community all the time.”

Drama mentors travel to the northern communities, discuss the program, find out participants’ needs, help choose a play, and develop the process. Mentors spend two days in the community, either at one time or spread over a period of time determined by the participants.

Some groups write and develop a scripted play, while some create improvisational works. For example, some communities

where people were evacuated during last year’s forest fires are developing a play about the experience.

Students are encouraged to “build on their own traditions, and the storytelling they do in their community.” The program receives support from the Northern Sport, Culture & Recreation District (NSCRD) and the SDA, both supported with funding from SaskCulture and Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.



# Spirit Horse Project: Connecting Youth to Their Indigenous Culture

BY MEI SHAN WAN



"Participating in traditional activities, offers the opportunity to develop a healthy self, including developing self-esteem, self-confidence, self-respect, self-monitoring, and self-control," says Poitras.

**M**any Indigenous cultures believe the horse possesses great spiritual power and strength, as well as symbolic freedom as a teller of truth. Connecting Indigenous youth, particularly those at risk, with horses helps open the doors to healing and healthy living, as well as providing an important immersion in traditional Indigenous culture.

The Spirit Horse Project, coordinated through All Nations Hope Network, aims to provide a cultural immersion experience for Indigenous youth growing up in the inner-city of Regina. While the project includes mentoring and training in traditional Indigenous ways, languages and ceremonies – including sessions with an Elder who engaged the youth in storytelling, singing,

drumming and braiding sweet grass - a big part of the experience is learning about traditional horsemanship.

According to Margaret Poitras, "Learning to interact with a large and powerful animal, such as a horse, either by caring for, learning horsemanship skills, or participating in traditional activities, offers the opportunity to develop a healthy self, including developing





self-esteem, self-confidence, self-respect, self-monitoring, and self-control. It encourages the development of clear communication, healthy boundaries, assertiveness, empowerment, empathy and compassion. Also, a good dose of humility and humour are important when interacting with horses.”

The Spirit Horse Project is held in partnership with the Rock Ridge Riding Program located on Eagle Brothers Ranch, on the Muscowpetung First Nation. Renowned Indigenous horse trainer and owner/operator of the ranch, Kamao Cappel has worked with many different youth groups and is skilled at helping youth create a powerful connection with a horse.

“When I started this program 12 years ago, I wanted the children in the community to just enjoy the pure love of horses and give them the opportunity to know of the awesome experience that horses give,” he says. “I offered the program to everybody in the community, and from there it grew.”

Respecting the relationships with animals and nature are principles intrinsically woven in First Nations culture. The riding program finds success by nurturing the motivation inspired by the relationship between the horses and the young riders. Rock Ridge riders are taught to treat the horses with kindness and respect. They learn to respect the horse and learn to get along with them without being cruel or domineering.

“The horses are used as a venue to be able to speak to the children,” says Cappel. “We talk to [the young riders] about what’s coming ahead for them as teenagers and the responsibilities that they’ll have to grow into. We pass on the lessons of life that my grandparents gave to me.”

The Spirit Horse Project is one of many groups and individuals who have found

benefits at the Rock Ridge Riding Program. In fact, the Riding Program is now partially operated by graduates from the program. This focus on teaching work ethic and responsibility has resulted in the area’s reserves having some of the lowest gang participation rates around. And, for those who have moved on from the program, Cappel says, almost all of the program’s graduates are now part of the workforce. “What you put into the children is what you get out of them,” he says. “We as ranchers have an obligation to give back to the community and when we do, the children and youth benefit greatly.”

Cappel explains that the Rock Ridge Riding Program primarily focuses on giving the riders a fun and enjoyable experience. “Out of ten kids, you’ll have one that will fall in love with the horses and you can’t keep them away. From there, they start to learn horsemanship, and if they stick with it they are invited to come back in the fall to ride with the more experienced youth. When riders are invited back there is an expectation of work to earn back what they receive from the program.”

The Spirit Horse Project, coordinated by All Nations Hope Network, with funding from SaskCulture’s Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership grant, was able to take a total of 86 children and youth out over the course of 14 day trips to the ranch for the cultural and riding experience.





# Dance as a Gateway into Ukrainian Culture

BY DANICA LORER







"Creativity is a way to convey the emotions and the broader themes and ideas of these traditions. It is through this creativity that an artist can develop their own stories to include in the cultural narrative while finding their own voices in history," says Breckner.

"The 125 year celebration is a good way to explore the history of the immigrants coming to Canada. It is a good way to tell their story in a way that we as Ukrainians and Ukrainian dancers can share."

Thanks to SaskCulture's Multicultural Initiatives Fund, Breckner says, "these kinds of cultural workshops evolve and become a reality. These are the things that will get the young people and future generations involved in their culture, wanting to learn more, and sharing their passion with friends and family."

It has been 125 years since the first wave of Ukrainian immigrants settled in this province and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Saskatchewan Provincial Council (UCC-SPC) is planning celebrations throughout the year. One of the projects is an expansion its popular Ukrainian Summer Dance Workshop.

"Dance is very important in Ukrainian culture. It is one of the first ways people are introduced to our culture," says Adam Breckner, Ukrainian Dance Outreach Coordinator, UCC-SPC.

Held three times since 2011, the Ukrainian Summer Dance Workshop grew out of an interest by dancers, dance groups and instructors to further develop their art form.

Breckner explains that how in a regular dance class there may not be time to explore the roots of dance.

"The workshop allows us to dig a little deeper, find more cultural context behind the dancing," he says. "A lot of people don't really know where it comes from, or what the history is. The more the instructors and students know, the more they can pass on to those who are watching."

The 2016 workshop will bring in instructors from the famous Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company. "It will add a lot of excitement and inspiration for young dancers," Breckner adds. "We have a Canadian view of Ukrainian dance. It is a bit limited because it has been passed down and spread around. It will be nice to see [this new] perspective on Ukrainian dance."

Plans for the workshop also include crafting traditional headpieces, clay work, presentations about the provinces of Ukraine and how they differ from each other. There will be discussions about dance styles, steps, costumes, music, and where they come from. A presentation at the end of the workshop will celebrate what the students have learned.

Breckner has seen students from different areas of the province make lifelong friends and gain knowledge they can pass on to their own dance groups and communities. "Culture and traditions are often looked at in an academic way through books and encyclopedia. Creativity is a way to convey the emotions and the broader themes and ideas of these traditions. It is through this creativity that an artist can develop their own stories to include in the cultural narrative while finding their own voices in history.

The Ukrainian Dance and Culture Workshop will be held at St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster from August 8-12. It is open to dancers 13 years and up with an instructor mentoring element for older dancers and instructors. Visit <http://www.ucc.sk.ca/en/services/ukrainindance> for more information.

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# Youth Take Opportunities to Express Themselves

BY SARAH FERGUSON

More than just dancing and singing training, Saskatchewan Express offers youth opportunities to build confidence, work with others, and express themselves as individuals.







PHOTOS BY TONY CUYLIE

Since 1980, Saskatchewan Express has been nurturing and showcasing the talents of many young Saskatchewan performing artists by providing them the opportunity to be in a popular touring musical ensemble.

Moose Jaw resident Jessica Feist is in her second year with Saskatchewan Express. She came to the group with little in the way of formal training, but it hasn't held her back. "It's a big confidence builder. They're not strict about years of dance experience. You can come in not having a lot of experience but you learn you can do so much more with your body," she says. She has enjoyed the time on the road visiting communities and schools.

"It's great to see kids who don't have much contact with the arts get to actually do something like this," she says. The school visits include workshops demonstrating choreography and vocals, and performances. Her experience and connections have already helped her land a part in *Prairie Skies'* 2015 production of *Spamalot*.

Feist also feels that the experience was important to her emotional health. "Everyone needs some sort of outlet for their emotions, some way to relieve stress and share themselves. You can be very isolated if you stay within yourself if you are creative," she says.

Jillana Woloschuk, from Saskatoon, is in her first year of the winter tour. She started ballet at about five years of age and also liked to sing. Woloschuk joined Saskatchewan Express Musical Theatre

and Dance Studio in Saskatoon when she was about eight. She graduated from high school in June but has already had some incredible experiences. "With the Saskatchewan Express Studio we performed with the Canadian tenors, we opened for the Canadian Country Music awards a couple years ago, and we traveled to New York for workshops."

Young people from throughout the province audition each year for Saskatchewan Express's winter and summer casts. "I think it's really great to spend time with people who share the same interests and are willing to work hard too," says Woloschuk.

Carol Gay Bell, artistic director and general manager, Saskatchewan Express, founded the company in 1980 and is proud of its ability to engage young people in the performing arts, as well as helping to create audiences. "If you want to go into the performing arts you have to constantly keep learning and keep doing. To have the opportunity to learn and do here in Saskatchewan without having to go somewhere else is such an incredible opportunity," she explains.

Former members of the cast of Saskatchewan Express have gone on to perform at Stratford and on Broadway, on cruise ships and in Las Vegas, and in film and television. They have followed their dreams taking the experiences gained in this province with them.

Erica Hartman is another cast member from Saskatoon who says creativity, passion and enthusiasm are crucial to the

show. "Saskatchewan Express is a very good beginning step professionally if you want to get into the arts throughout Saskatchewan and Canada. It's a good building block to get used to the idea of what it is going to be like in professional theatre. It may not be the biggest name in the world, but it is one of the best names in Canada."

Nora Berg, promotion and marketing coordinator, Saskatchewan Express, explains that "If it weren't for the support of SaskCulture and Saskatchewan Lotteries, we simply wouldn't exist. It is their support that allows us to make such a difference in the lives of the young people who come through our program."



Saskatchewan Express dancers with founder/artistic/executive director, Carol Gay Bell (opposite page, second from right)



# Métis Cultural Camp Strengthens Youth Identity

BY MARIE POWELL

**F**or a group of Grade 8 students from St. Mary's Wellness and Education Centre in Saskatoon, the idea of "going camping" took on a special cultural significance last fall.

Jennifer Altenberg, a teacher at St. Mary's, believes in taking her students camping as a way of preparing them for the transition into high school, but she wanted to add culture to the experience. Thanks to funding from the Métis Cultural Development Fund, 19 students had the chance to attend a Métis cultural camp at Camp Kinasio at Christopher Lake, offered through the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). Altenberg, a SUNTEP alumnus, and her students participated in the camp along with SUNTEP student-teachers, various Elders and knowledge keepers.

Knowledge keepers are people from the community who share their gifts with participants, Altenberg says. During the camp, these knowledge keepers shared the Michif language, music, drumming, birch bark baskets, canoeing, cattail doll-making, making bannock, and other traditional teachings.

"The kids sat around them, and they got to talk about medicine and to hear stories," she explains. "That just doesn't happen in the classroom." The students were a mix of Métis, First Nations, and non-Indigenous students, including some newcomers to Canada. "We actually sat with adult learners for almost all of the sessions. There was a lot of time together when

we're taught by the Elders. Then the kids broke off into groups."

Spending the weekend outdoors was a treat for them too, she adds. "To a city slicker from St. Mary's, it was a pretty cool experience."

Previously, Altenberg had taken her students camping at the end of Grade 8 as an "earned" activity. "But the more I've come to know kids," she says, "the more I realize [this experience] is about so much more than that. It's about building positive, strong relationships with young people, so you can get them through the hard days. When things get tough, and they need someone to trust, just to count on, they have those [memories]."

"It's all about the relationship. It's all about the emphasis on culture. Anytime you focus on culture, it strengthens their identity. It affirms who they are, and it affirms that they're good enough or 'as good as'. And they go home and live that."

Altenberg gives credit to organizers such as Liza Brown and Jed Huntley as the "masterminds" behind the idea. It became a diverse partnership of SUNTEP Prince Albert and Regina students and teachers, the Pleasant Hill Community Association, St. Mary's, Elder Norman Fleury of Saskatoon, along with 15 other Elders and knowledge keepers.

"Anytime you focus on culture, it strengthens their identity. It affirms who they are, and it affirms that they're good enough or 'as good as'. And they go home and live that," says Altenberg.





# Youth Paying It Forward Through Fundraising

BY SHELLEY FAYANT



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANCE IMAGES BY BJ

dance-a-thon is planned and carried out by students at the dance studio. The more senior students are in charge of mentoring the younger ones on choreography, collecting pledges, lining up sponsors, and executing the fundraiser.

Jessica Froehlich, who originally came up with the “Kids Helping Kids” idea, says that her inspiration came from the personal enrichment she’s enjoyed because of her involvement in dance. “I’m definitely thankful for it... it has been such a big part of my life and it’s given so much to me. It’s a great way for us to be involved and give back to something, especially something that we have so much passion for and that we love so much.”

“Music just makes me happy, it helps with everything,” Parker Dale says. “I’m into piano, guitar, voice and clarinet through the school band – music has completely changed my life and I’m happy to help others have the same experience.”

It turns out that Saskatchewan has “creative kids” who are also very generous kids. Over the past few years, several young people in our province have stepped up to “pay it forward” to other youth with their efforts to raise money in support of SaskCulture’s Creative Kids program.

One of them is 13-year-old Parker Dale of Saskatoon, who became a “self-proclaimed youth ambassador” for Creative Kids after attending a Creative Kids fundraising event in 2013.

“There was this really nice guitar [in a raffle draw] and I said to my mom ‘I want to win that guitar and take guitar lessons,’” recalls Parker. “I didn’t end up winning it but a really nice man there actually gifted it to me that night so ever since then I’ve really wanted to give back to Creative Kids.”

And give back, he has. Since that fateful night, Parker’s been the driving force behind “Creative Idol”, a talent show featuring local youth performing for the audience in the Dale’s backyard. The event

has phenomenal support from family, friends, neighbours and people from the community. Over the last two years, Parker’s efforts have raised nearly \$6,000 for Creative Kids through admissions, raffles and auctions of donated items from local businesses and acquaintances, as well as from sales of cookies and popcorn at the talent show.

“Music just makes me happy, it helps with everything,” he says. “I’m into piano, guitar, voice and clarinet through the school band – music has completely changed my life and I’m happy to help others have the same experience.”

In Moose Jaw, students at Dance Images by BJ came up with a dance-a-thon in 2013 as an idea to raise money for Creative Kids. Last year they raised a whopping \$14,000 and over the three years that the dance-a-thon has been taking place, a total of \$36,000 has been raised.

Every aspect of the “Kids Helping Kids”



PHOTO COURTESY OF PARKER DALE





## Cultural Project Combines Arts, Biology and Design

BY SARAH FERGUSON

**M**aria Olafson has taught art classes for 20 years, but her year-long experience at Watson High School was the first time she met the challenge of combining art and biological concepts into creating the school's first-ever student lounge.

"That year, I was an art teacher who ended up teaching biology," she explains. "Then, it was discovered that the student body wanted a lounge." She quickly put all these diverse ideas together. "We had a school space that wasn't being used, and I thought, why don't we create a lounge that relates to human biology?"

Olafson's background in the arts served her well, and thanks to funding from ArtsSmarts Saskatchewan, a program supported by the Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture and Saskatchewan Lotteries, she put together a plan. Olafson had worked on ArtsSmarts projects in the past with Saskatchewan artist Jay Kimball, so she approached him to get involved again. "We applied for the grant, and once it was secured, we got to work."

"I called the project 'social installation architecture', because the objects created a social dialog with people in the space," says Kimball. Kimball explains how the four-month project began in February 2015, and involved approximately 60 students, ranging from Grades 5-12. "For the first two weeks, I did training and design work with the students," he explains, adding that he remained available afterwards for consultations.

Olafson is quick to assert that involvement in the project had a positive effect on students. "I had kids that weren't coming to school or participating," she says. "Suddenly they were coming to school early and staying after school."

Kimball also noted how, "Class participation went up, and students brought more enthusiasm into their learning." When complete, the school's blood red lounge housed a variety of biology-based artworks, including 144 tiles of human lungs, four sconces decorated with biological systems, a three-dimensional ribcage made from auto parts,

a ceramic bowl depicting human intestines, and a bench made from vehicle tailgates that represented the human muscular system.

"We made a mural with glow-in-the-dark paint, to represent neurons, and a painting of the genetic codon wheel," she says. The school's new lounge also sports drinking vessels adorned with carved human anatomy, depictions of DNA strands, a coffee table that resembles a human heart, and a ceiling-based sculptural replica of Stargardt's disease, a visual disorder, made from 6,000 zip ties. "We also installed four hexagon-shaped lockboxes with phone charging stations," she adds. "They represent the endocrine system."

"This project really shook up the school in Watson," Olafson claims. "It was a real community effort, with lots of in-kind support." Kimball adds that, "The installation was one of the most rewarding projects I've been involved with, because it will have a residual effect on the school community."





## Music Program Promotes Healing Through the Arts

BY SARAH FERGUSON

It is said that music speaks where words fail. So, when students at Turtleford Transitional School were shown different musical techniques, they also learned new ways to communicate, express themselves and heal.

In 2015, Turtleford Transition School embarked on an ArtsSmarts program that brought music into the classroom. Students participated in a variety of musical activities, including drum circles, as well as discussing music and how they related to it. The program centered on student-driven musical projects. Some of the students made musical movies, some played guitar, or did musical slide presentations of pictures from their lives. One student even wrote a song and recorded it.

“The concept for the project revolved around music’s ability to heal,” explains Jay Kimball, Saskatchewan artist and consultant, Saskatchewan Arts Board. “Music allowed students to connect with each other, and opened up creative avenues of self-expression. It was also recognized that music was more important to some of the school’s students than athletics, so the program was a good fit.”

Fred Hegelton, former principal, Turtleford Transition School, says that, “Typically our students struggle in regular classrooms for various reasons. Our main goal is to help them achieve high school graduation.”

The project evolved from a collaboration between secondary Music Teacher Kevin Martin and Music Therapist and Singer/Songwriter Carmen Loncar. “When we heard Carmen was available to do an ArtsSmarts music program, we jumped at the opportunity,” he adds. “She’d visited our school earlier, and performed, so a connection had already been made.”



Kevin Martin, music teacher, Turtleford Transition School, explains that, “The goal of the project was to engage students and keep them coming back to school through positive experiences.

“Creativity and student-directed learning are the main benefits when music is involved,” he adds. “Working with music is all about looking inside yourself. The students become engaged with something that has meaning to them, and they show up for school every day.”

Hegelton goes on to say, “The program was highly successful. I was worried that students would be reluctant to come out of their shells, but Carmen’s respectful approach led to enthusiastic responses. Carmen and Kevin were able to tap into students’ love of music and also convince them they could create it for themselves.”

The project, made possible by ArtsSmarts Saskatchewan, funding from the Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture and Saskatchewan Lotteries, wrapped up in April, with a celebration of music, where the students presented their projects, songs, and slideshows.

Martin notes that, the arts are a great way to inspire students. It’s important to give students opportunities to be creative, he says. “If you can get students to think ‘I can do this’, you’ve helped them succeed.”

The ArtsSmarts Saskatchewan program is now called Artists in Schools and is still funded through a partnership of Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

You can find the song mentioned in the story here: <https://soundcloud.com/kevin-martin-123/a-broken-house-master-edit>

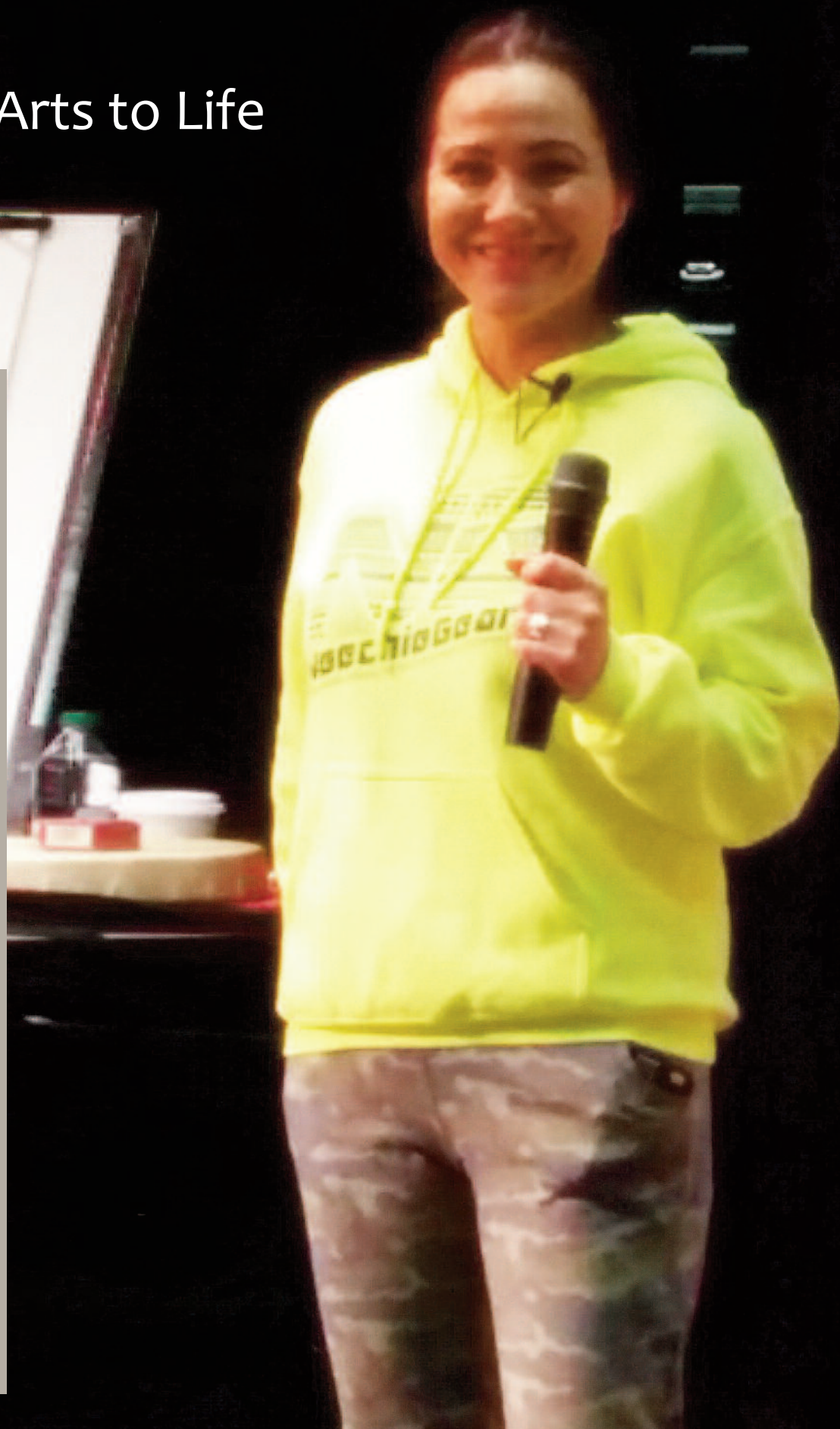


# LIVE Arts: Bringing the Arts to Life

BY SARAH FERGUSON

**A**n arts education is important for all children in Saskatchewan. Yet, training is not always available in remote areas of the province. Thankfully, LIVE Arts – a distance arts education program geared towards students from Grades 1 to 9 – provides students with access to a wide range of Saskatchewan artists and learning opportunities.

LIVE (Live Interactive Video Education) Arts is a fee-free program that connects classrooms with professional art makers, explains Laura St. Pierre, artist and manager of the program. “We invite all kinds of Saskatchewan artists-- musicians, actors, songwriters, dancers, and visual artists-- to be guest artists. Our programs are varied, from grass dance, to song-writing, to printmaking and more.”







"LIVE Arts introduces students to the idea that you can succeed as an artist in Saskatchewan," says St. Pierre.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAURA ST. PIERRE

Principal Sarah Phipps of Ecole St. Margaret in Moose Jaw, who participated in the program for the first time this year, says that, "Bringing in a 'real-life' artist to participate in workshops is always exciting for the students. The fact that the program is offered in French is even better for us."

Using a portable studio-in-a-box, LIVE Arts programs broadcast from host school

classrooms across the province. "This way, we have students on-site, participating in the broadcast," she says. "We also train older students—in Grades 7 and 8, or from a nearby high school—to be our crew."

Carmen Clothier, a teacher at Stewart Valley School, located just north of Swift Current, shares that when her students were brought on as crew during a broadcast, "It was a memorable highlight for them. They got the opportunity to show their knowledge through art."

Each LIVE Arts program has two parts. St. Pierre explains, "First, students and teachers tune in to a live broadcast and learn about the artist. Then they do follow-up activities related to the program." She also notes that 'Teacher Guides' are created for each program and made available on the LIVE Arts website at <http://www.liveartsaskatchewan.com>.

Lynda Oliver, arts education consultant, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, explains how originally, LIVE Arts began broadcasting in the 2005-2006 school year with programming delivered by Artist-in-Residence Heather Cline at St. Peter School

in Regina. "Today, the program continues to respond to the needs of teachers and the Saskatchewan arts curriculum," she says.

Clothier says her students have benefitted from LIVE Arts. "Thanks to the program, my students have written plays and raps, and have learned to jig," she says.

According to St. Pierre, 425 teachers from 160 schools across the province have been involved in LIVE Arts this year, and that number continues to rise. She also states that LIVE Arts programs have attracted over 25,000 student views online.

"It's a number we are very proud of," she says. "My hope is that students become curious about the arts, and participate in them. LIVE Arts introduces students to the idea that you can succeed as an artist in Saskatchewan. You don't have to move to Toronto or New York or Paris... you can have a rewarding career right here."

*LIVE Arts Saskatchewan is supported through the collaboration of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Government of Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Education, and SaskCulture with funding from Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.*





*Participants enjoy Medieval culture at the University of Saskatchewan's Museum of Antiquities event during Culture Days.*

PHOTO COURTESY KEVIN HOGARTH

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