

# *Culture Builds Community!* Engage

Spring 2021  
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 2

Sask  
Culture

Finding Bresaylor: Museum Shares Métis History

New Action Groups Help Focus on Reconciliation in Saskatoon

Living Through History: Documenting COVID-19 Culture in Saskatchewan

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## Engage

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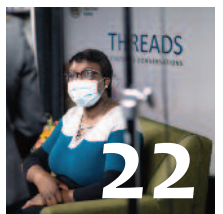


### ON THE COVER:

Phyllis Poitras-Jarrett is one of three artists working with SaskCulture to provide online arts instruction videos for young people in Saskatchewan.

Photo by Mark Greschner

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## Message from the CEO

It's hard to believe that it has been a year of living through a global pandemic. As we look back on the past many months and try to process how fundamentally things have changed, it is important, although sometimes difficult, to search for the positive. This issue of *Engage* is a true testament to the resilience and innovative nature of Saskatchewan's cultural community.

For many of us, there can be a contentious relationship with technology, online platforms and calls for change in our daily routines. Perhaps this past year has pushed us to engage more diligently in these new technologies and to embrace change, even if it has been merely based on the need to survive. As we emerge from the impacts of COVID-19, we will be stronger and undoubtedly our routines will become a hybrid of the past and the present.

The articles in this issue of *Engage* feature just a small sample of creativity and community outreach during an age of social distancing. Reconciliation Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Band Association and CARFAC are among the many groups utilizing online video platforms to engage with their members and citizens. The Global Gathering Place in Saskatoon engages their community on the issue of racism through fitness. Artist Phyllis Poitras-Jarrett is using her talent to create a series of online videos to help the Dream Brokers engage youth in creative endeavours. The Bresaylor Heritage Museum is working towards a new website in hopes of expanding their reach



“SaskCulture is continuing to work to ensure that funding is available to support the wide range of cultural activity still taking place amid COVID-19 conditions. While there has definitely been challenges, it is the resilience of the cultural community that continues to shine through and make Saskatchewan a great place to live, learn and grow.”

- DEAN KUSH

to others, beyond just having their museum doors open in the summer. Nipawin Oasis Centre found ways to safely reach out to provide craft supplies and instruction to community members. The community members and organizations featured in this issue of *Engage* saw a need and moved forward with innovative and COVID-friendly ways to promote and support cultural activity in their communities.

SaskCulture is continuing to work to ensure that funding is available to support the wide range of cultural activity still taking place amid COVID-19 conditions. While there has definitely been challenges, it is the resilience of the cultural community that continues to shine through and make Saskatchewan a great place to live, learn and grow.

To all those who found the energy, creativity and strength to stay motivated and focused over the past year, I express my deepest thanks to you. Your work is not only important as it likely has provided much joy and fulfillment to others, but also because you were the first in this period to show all of us that life could move on – that creativity always prevails and that no one should ever doubt the tenacity of the cultural community.

Dean Kush

SaskCulture Staff gets creative with office holiday party in 2020. Photo by Shawn Bauche.

# NEW ACTION GROUPS FOCUS ON Reconciliation in Saskatoon

BY NICKITA LONGMAN



**R**econciliation Saskatoon's newly formed Action Groups bring together diverse voices to strategize on future steps for the ongoing work in addressing Reconciliation in the community. This new initiative, which builds off its previous project, Pathways Forward, will focus on key areas of newcomer relations, youth and families, business engagement and Two-Spirit identity.

"It was the evolution of our organization to continue towards tangible action," explains Carrie Catherine, coordinator, Reconciliation Saskatoon.

Members of Reconciliation Saskatoon include non-profit businesses, Saskatoon Police Service, public library workers and faith communities who are all committed to the ongoing work of Reconciliation. "Our members really informed this new endeavour, as well as getting input from Elders and residential school Survivors,"

“What I think is really exciting about these early stages is having such diverse voices sitting around a circle every month, talking about tough conversations and trying to identify where we can have an impact and where we can spark real change.”

- CARRIE CATHERINE

Catherine says. Through their consultation, the organization has narrowed down the focus to the identified Action Groups.

While the Action Groups are still in the early phases, around 70 members are spread out

throughout the overall project. Catherine says members' work in each area continues to grow. "What I think is really exciting about these early stages is having such diverse voices sitting around a circle every month, talking about tough conversations and trying to identify where we can have an impact and where we can spark real change," she says.

Some concrete goals in the next year include providing spaces where people can come together and grow. Catherine says an example of that has been identified in the newcomers' group where Indigenous Awareness training will take place for fellow newcomers that will include Indigenous history and culture.

Additionally, members working in the Business Engagement Action Group hope to see more businesses commit to anti-racism training and Indigenous Awareness training for their employees.



advocate for this kind of training, as it gives confidence to people to move forward and not take a back seat when it comes to racism.”

As the Action Groups solidify their working foundation for the year ahead, Catherine says Reconciliation Saskatoon continues to find ways to engage youth. “As the youth component continues to build, I am confident that young people will create necessary connections and have their voices heard in the ongoing work of Reconciliation.”

*This project received support through SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund, funded by Sask Lotteries.*

“Ideally, this will also result in equitable hiring and inclusion strategies while creating Indigenous-specific positions where people can succeed,” Catherine adds.

The pandemic has shifted the way the project will roll out, explains Catherine, but it hasn’t been entirely negative on its progression. “It has been quite easy for members to hop online and participate up until this point,” she says. “The challenges will come when we’re trying to build relationships. The change and inspiration that comes from being in a room together does not compare [to online meetings.]”

As far as larger community reach goes, Reconciliation Saskatoon has recently started a book club and talking circles that are open to community. The organization started noticing the need for a space for people to come together and ask honest questions while learning and growing together. While these conversations are less formal, Reconciliation Saskatoon continues to deliver anti-racism training sessions to organizations and community groups. “This kind of training helps us have the proper foundation and an understanding of necessary terms so that we know how to be good allies in this work,” Catherine says. “I am such a huge

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Reconciliation Saskatoon has been creating opportunities for diverse peoples to build relationships and stay committed to Reconciliation. Photos are from 2018 event. Photos by Arvid Kuhle

**Share and Learn from other Cultures!**

The MIF-Project grant provides funding to community-based organizations to support ethno-cultural, multicultural, First Nations and Métis initiatives, projects and activities in Saskatchewan.

**Deadlines: March 31 and October 15**  
Visit [SaskCulture.ca](http://SaskCulture.ca) for more information, to confirm deadline dates and to apply.



## RACING TO END RACISM

# Community on the Right Track

BY SASHA GAY LOBBAN

**T**ough conversations can happen anytime, even while staying active. As communities all over the world are coming up with ways to fight back against racism, this past year, runners in Saskatoon had the chance to accept the challenge and join an important race - a Race Against Racism.

Race Against Racism is a five-kilometre race with the hope of encouraging positive relationships in the community. The event, hosted by the Global Gathering Place (GGP), usually sees over 600 participants annually. Held for the past ten years, the Race had significantly reduced participation this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite COVID-19 challenges, organizers say the event's impact was nothing short of effective as the run still met its objectives of engaging the community in discussions about racism, how to become advocates, promoting positive relationships, and staying active.

“Throughout the route, there were five checkpoints where runners would stop, scan the sign with their phone, and gain an educational resource about stopping racism.”

- CARLIE RUSSELL

Carlie Russell, program coordinator at the GGP, says the Race Against Racism is an initiative that, “facilitates a positive environment that brings people of diverse backgrounds together to promote an active, healthy lifestyle while encouraging positive relationships in the community.”

Participants are also able to receive useful, engaging resources on how they can help to foster diversity and inclusion.

“Throughout the route, there were five checkpoints where runners would stop, scan the sign with their phone, and gain an educational resource about stopping racism,” Russell explains. “We were lucky that the sun was shining, and the river was in full fall colours over the race weekend, so it was a treat to get outside and enjoy our city while being active and learning something new.”

She goes on to say that the Run is a metaphor for the endurance and the intentionality it takes for people to work against racism. “A fun run also brings diverse groups together in a unique setting,” she adds.

Russell shares a comment from one participant who says, “I got to learn quite a number of different things about racism



“ In Race Against Racism, runners were able to gather resources to learn about racism and anti-racism initiatives in our city, but we still saw a need to create space to have meaningful conversation. It was important to have a local conversation about racism in our context and provide a starting point and common understanding for those who want to be engaged. ”

– CARLIE RUSSELL

and its ongoing impact on society while being active. So I’m really glad to have participated in the event.”

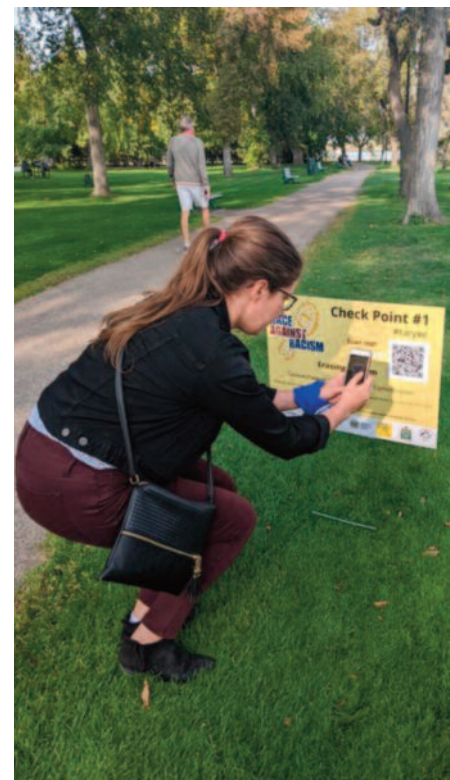
After the event, participants were encouraged to continue having conversations about racism. GGP invited participants to join another event they called Train Against Racism. This event provided a chance for dialogue via Zoom.

“In Race Against Racism, runners were able to gather resources to learn about racism and anti-racism initiatives in our city, but we still saw a need to create space to have meaningful conversations,” she emphasizes. “It was important to have a local conversation about racism in our context and provide a starting point

and common understanding for those who want to be engaged.”

Both events were held in partnership with other community partners such as the Saskatoon Police Service and several other settlement organizations. There were about 175 participants, over the four-day running period. There was a maximum of 30 runners within a three-hour timeslot over the duration of the race, and organizers made sure participants followed COVID-19 guidelines. Another 50 people participated in the Train Against Racism webinar.

*This event received support through SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund, funded by Sask Lotteries.*



Runners in Saskatoon took part in a "Race" event aimed at strengthening relationships and promoting a positive environment. Photos by K. Doupe.

# FINDING BRESAYLOR: Museum Shares Métis Story

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING



“ The Bresaylor Heritage museum often provides a physical connection to the community’s proud Métis history. ”

The community of Bresaylor and the Bresaylor Heritage Museum story is a Métis story: a story of successes and tremendous challenges as families living there build a new life, from the ground up. This past year, the museum explored new ways to build awareness of, and increase accessibility to, the community’s rich heritage.

The Bresaylor Heritage Museum, located in Paynton, Saskatchewan, features artifacts from the original “Bresaylor settlement” formed in 1882. The settlement’s name was a combination of three of the first families’ names - Bremner, Sayers and Taylor. Its history precedes its founding in 1882, with connections to the Red River Settlement in Manitoba. By 1901, most families in the area identified as Métis, with a mother-tongue of Cree. Yet, only a generation later, many families were denying their Indigenous roots to avoid the racism that came with the colonization of the West.

In 2020, the museum began a project, known as “Finding Bresaylor”, to help reclaim the rich culture and identity of the community, particularly the heritage that may have been lost. As settlers flooded west, many Indigenous peoples, both First Nations and Métis, were displaced, and their heritage often ignored in settler communities. This new project provided an opportunity to build a more inclusive story, and create an online presence for the museum.

Since many descendants of the Bresaylor settlement still live in the area, and many others travel home to visit, the Bresaylor Heritage Museum often provides a physical connection to the community’s proud Métis history. An online presence has become an important way to extend its accessibility to others.

The current pandemic has forced many museums to think of new ways to showcase their collections. While the current public health restrictions have limited in-person options, the COVID culture has created a huge interest in history online. The museum board, with





several new members, feels these times call for a more accessible museum by utilizing the Internet. It is hoped that by creating both a web page and social media presence, the rich and amazing history of Bresaylor can be discovered by a much larger community. There is evidence that the museum will be of interest to people world-wide.

The Bresaylor Heritage Museum has come a long way from its origins. “Little Joe” Sayers, who descends from the original settlers, operated the house as an informal museum, making his intention clear for the collection to be available to the public after his passing. When he died in 1982, the Bresaylor Heritage Museum Association formed within a year to take responsibility for the building and the collection.

The Bresaylor Heritage Museum continues to function today on the original site, thanks to decades of work by Velma Foster. As the museum’s long-term curator, Foster’s dedication and artistic talent has allowed the museum to continue and flourish.

Foster and the museum board hope to have a website up and running in 2022 where visitors world-wide can view artifacts, share stories and connect with



one of Canada’s early Métis settlements. The board members say the site will explore further collections of Bresaylor’s history, introduce Bresaylor’s stories to a world-wide audience, and spur on support, relationships and understandings for all

those seeking an awareness into early Métis life in Saskatchewan.

*This project received support through SaskCulture’s Métis Cultural Development Fund thanks to funding from Sask Lotteries.*

Board members are going online to showcase collections at the museum. Photos courtesy of Bresaylor Heritage Museum.



## CARFAC MENTORSHIP Continues Connections Online

BY DAVE MARGOSHES

**M**entors provide “one-on-one encouragement, advice, information, and resources to mentees, who are aiming to achieve specific goals across a range of career stages.” The essence of mentorships is a one-on-one, usually face-to-face relationship. The pandemic, of course, changed everything.

For CARFAC, its mentorship program provides opportunities for artist pairs to meet for a minimum of seven hours per month for the duration of the program. In 2020, interactions were mostly at a distance via the Internet.

Though the program has carried on, the pandemic certainly extracted a price.

Terri Fidelak, CARFAC Saskatchewan’s program and outreach director, says the program “creates opportunities for productive and supportive relationships between established creative professionals and artists wishing to develop and enhance their practices.” One of the most valuable aspects of the program is the opportunity for all the participants to get together, she says. “That relationship building leads to all sorts of possibilities.” COVID-19 took those gatherings online, and “we are grateful to still find some connection,” she says.

Holly Fay, assistant professor of art, University of Regina, who is currently mentoring a young artist, Patrick Fernandez, comments that, “it is much

better to view art in person” than online. Fortunately, though, Fernandez had an exhibition up at the start of the mentorship program so she was able to view some of his work in person.

“Ideally, we would be discussing his work in progress through studio visits.” Instead, “Pat and I have been looking at, and discussing, drawings he is making via Zoom...It’s not the best way, but it works and I believe it’s been effective. The other focus of our mentorship project has been on professional practice (the business side of art), which we are able to work on over Zoom and email quite well.”

Fernandez says “the absence of in-person mentorship has its pros and cons.” He regrets not being able to have in-person meetings, but “the experience for me so far has been all positive and I am very much satisfied with the results.”

Aside from the mentorship program, CARFAC has been able to continue its operations relatively smoothly through the pandemic, though many plans “had to be postponed, cancelled, rescheduled, rethought, or otherwise significantly adjusted,” Fidelak says. As an example, Saskatchewan CARFAC partnered with its Alberta counterpart to host a series of webinars for artists and arts organizers.

In the early days of the pandemic, CARFAC made small offerings of financial assistance to Saskatchewan’s artistic community through distribution of an Emergency Relief Fund. “We’re doing our best to support artists and arts organizers, who’ve been dealt a heavy blow over the last year,” Fidelak says.

The Saskatchewan chapter of CARFAC, the organization for visual artists - an abbreviation for Canadian Artists’ Representation/Les Front des Artistes Canadiens - began its Mentorship program in 2000. Over the 20-year period, some 350 artists and curators have been involved as mentors and mentees, usually with eight pairs of artists each year.

*CARFAC receives support from SaskCulture thanks to funding from Sask Lotteries.*

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Mentee Patrick Fernandez (left) and Mentor Holly Fay (right) have found new ways to work together during the pandemic. Photo by Patrick Fernandez.

# TRADITIONS AND LANGUAGE: Oasis Programs Adapted During Pandemic

BY NICKITA LONGMAN

In 2019, the Nipawin Oasis Centre (Oasis) had experienced an incredibly successful summer of programming, but in 2020, as winter rolled around and the global pandemic hit, the Oasis staff had to re-evaluate the way they would deliver their programming for the unforeseeable future.

The Oasis has been a cultural hub for the northern community, providing programming, cultural support, family and housing support, and employment services for the past 28 years. Under normal circumstances, programming such as traditional teachings, beadwork, traditional parenting, Cree language and Elder Services, operated under a drop-in, open-door basis. Weekly traditional beadwork and after-school programs saw plenty of visitors through the door.

Oasis organizers noted that last summer, the programming and supports offered growth in cultural development for youth while strengthening relationships with Elders and Knowledge Keepers around the community. According to Joy Hanson, executive director, perhaps the most thriving areas of programming were in traditional pow wow singing and dancing, where youth were able to showcase their skills throughout the summer pow wow season.

However, like many cultural organizations, the centre has continued to adapt the way it delivers its support as the community came under lock-down while COVID-19 cases were on the rise.

Supporting the Elders in the community became a priority for the Oasis, Hanson explains. “We have stayed engaged with the Elders and continued to provide nutrition, regular check-ins, and any supplies they need.”

As far as community efforts go, Hanson says the Oasis staff have been delivering craft supplies to members who are engaging in traditional crafts.

“We provide hide, needles, thread, sherpa and printed patterns,” she says. “Several



of the women and children have been sewing cloth masks. We have been helping support the sales of these during this financially challenging time.”

Hanson explains that social media has been a useful tool in continuing the cultural support of the Oasis. “Facebook groups have allowed us to keep in contact, share ideas, and connect with the youth as well.” The Oasis has created specific groups to meet cultural needs, such as a beadwork group and a drumming and dancing group.

Although meeting in the centre’s space has been restricted, Hanson says the organization will continue to adapt to the needs of the community. “When the community has a request for something, we try our best to meet it, and that usually starts with finding a cultural leader to get that request met.”

*The Nipawin Oasis Centre received support through SaskCulture’s Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Grant, with funding from Sask Lotteries.*

Top: The Nipawin Oasis Centre offered a moose-hide tanning program for the youth in 2019. Bottom: Elder Harriet Burns shows a sample of beadwork and sewing pattern she is making at home. Photos courtesy of Joy Hanson.



## Engaging Youth in Creativity Important to Métis Artist

BY SHELLEY FAYANT

*“My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back.”*

- LOUIS RIEL

This famous Riel quote resonates deeply with Phyllis Poitras-Jarrett, a Métis artist from Regina, who is working to create a series of online videos designed to engage school-aged participants in creative projects during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of her art instruction, she has focused on building cultural understanding. “Louis Riel was a visionary, and he knew that the Métis

would eventually begin to reclaim their beautiful culture, and that is exactly what I am doing through my art,” she says.

Poitras-Jarrett is one of three Saskatchewan artists working with SaskCulture to provide online arts instruction videos designed to develop an ongoing interest in young people, who may have limited exposure to this type of training, particularly with

COVID-19 public health restrictions. This project, coordinated as part of the Culture Days movement, is working in partnership with the Dream Brokers program operating in different schools throughout Saskatchewan.

“The past year (with COVID-19) has been devastating for so many, and I can feel their pain, but for me, it’s provided an



“I was a teacher for 28 years, and art was always one of my students’ favourite activities - this opportunity gives me a chance to offer some fun and creative ideas for youth to explore during the pandemic, while also sharing some of my Métis culture.”

- PHYLLIS POITRAS-JARRETT

I am grateful for the opportunity to connect to youth once again and the online tutorials are a perfect way to reach them right now.”

The other two online projects are led by two more Indigenous women: fibre art instruction by Regina artist Melanie Rose, as well as sewing and beadwork lessons by Saskatoon student and emerging cultural worker Amber Bellegarde. The project is anticipated to be complete and online by the end of March 2021.



opportunity to reflect and focus on my art,” explains Poitras-Jarrett “I began painting my Métis Spirit Animals in January 2020 and over a year later, I have nearly completed my series of 25 paintings.”

That body of work is the foundation for her instructional video series. “I was a teacher for 28 years, and art was always one of my students’ favourite activities - this opportunity gives me a chance to offer some fun and creative ideas for youth to explore during the pandemic, while also sharing some of my Métis culture,” Poitras-Jarrett says. She adds that art provides an avenue of escape for young

people from any worries or stressors they may be experiencing during these times, and is excited about the reach that the Internet can provide.

The series is aimed at building participants’ creative skills through each successive video. They begin with basic drawing lessons, which then leads to instruction in illustrated beadwork symmetry, arranging animal and floral collages, and ultimately, the creation of a mobile with the Métis spirit animals. In addition to sharing her creative process, Poitras-Jarrett also shares important aspects, teachings and inspiration from her Métis background.

“As a child, my Kokum’s (grandmother’s) intricate floral beadwork designs drew me in,” says Poitras-Jarrett. She describes how her Kokum would get her grandchildren involved, and credits this with instilling within her a love of art, a joy in teaching, and a deep pride in her culture. Her experiences growing up on a farm is also a well for her creativity. “My art highlights both flora and fauna - my way of respecting and celebrating the gifts nature provides for us - while paying tribute to the Flower Beadwork People (a term that references the distinctive beadwork of the Métis).

Poitras-Jarrett looks forward to finding exhibition venues so that people can enjoy her art in-person and learn more about her beloved Métis culture. “In the meantime,

Previous page & top left: Phyllis Poitras-Jarrett is one of three artists working with SaskCulture to provide online arts instruction videos for young people in Saskatchewan. Photos by Mark Greschner.

Bottom left: Celina Poitras is Phyllis Poitras-Jarrett’s Kokum, and she inspired her granddaughter’s love of art.

Top right : A rare example of Celina Poitras’ beadwork from her early beadwork days. She sold most of her beadwork to support her family. Photos courtesy of Phyllis Poitras-Jarrett.

# LIVING THROUGH HISTORY: Documenting COVID-19 Culture in Saskatchewan

BY SCOTT STELMASCHUK



Recognizing that the pandemic would impact people's lives in different ways, three provincial cultural organizations decided to collect people's stories as part of an innovative living heritage project. These stories, a snapshot of COVID culture, were compiled into a collection at the end of 2020 that will remain accessible to future generations.

Working with the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society, Heritage Saskatchewan took the opportunity to capture the COVID-19 experience as part of the province's living heritage. The timing for this work fit, since the pandemic required most of these organizations to modify their programming to address growing challenges.

According to Kristin Catherwood, Director of Living Heritage, Heritage Saskatchewan, "We saw in March 2020, when life started to change for us all, that we were collectively living through an historic event, and thought it was important to capture people's initial experiences as close to the beginning of the pandemic as possible," says Kristin Catherwood. "In

essence, we've captured stories of the first wave of the pandemic, since as we're seeing now, this pandemic and its consequences are far from over."

As COVID-19 impacted the province, Heritage Saskatchewan reached out to people across Saskatchewan to document their experiences during the pandemic. "We contacted six Community Coordinators to collect interviews from communities they belonged to or knew well. It was really important for us to gather stories from demographically and culturally diverse individuals, and to reach as many corners of our vast province as we could," she explains.

The diversity in stories collected highlighted many of the unique challenges faced by those in different areas of the province. "Depending on where people were in the province, whether in the city or on reserve, or in a rural area, their experiences differed, especially in terms of basic things like access to grocery stores, availability of supplies, access to health services, and so on."

But despite the differences, many commonalities also came across in the

“ We saw in March 2020, when life started to change for us all, that we were collectively living through an historic event, and thought it was important to capture people's initial experiences as close to the beginning of the pandemic as possible. ”

- KRISTIN CATHERWOOD

stories that were collected. "Almost everyone spoke about the shock of the sudden changes, and the effects that had on their overall wellbeing," Catherwood says. "Many spoke about the challenges of loneliness, anxiety, and isolation. Across the board, people remarked that the pandemic forced them to consider what they valued most in life, and that was usually people – family, friends, and community."

A number of positives began to emerge as more stories were told. "Many people saw benefits in the slowed down pace of life, which made them realize how busy they had been before the pandemic. The pandemic gave many the opportunity to take care of themselves, and to spend more time outside and on favourite hobbies," she explains.

The collected stories also found a common theme: "We asked questions to see if culture and heritage played a role in helping people cope with the changes brought by the pandemic, and we found this was very much the case."

Top: Decorated exterior window to show support during COVID-19. Photo by Gloria Pawliuk



“From spiritual practices to traditional food procurement, the pandemic gave people the opportunity to reflect on their values, which are usually sourced from their cultural backgrounds and the living heritage passed down through their families and communities.”

- KRISTIN CATHERWOOD

According to Catherwood, people turned to cultural practices and their living heritage to help make sense of this event and get through it. “From spiritual practices to traditional food procurement, the pandemic gave people the opportunity to reflect on their values, which are usually sourced from their cultural backgrounds and the living heritage passed down through their families and communities.”

The partners worked together to publish a special edition of their magazine, *Folklore*, entitled *Covid-19 Culture: A Living Heritage Project of the Pandemic in Saskatchewan* — and compiled video interviews that are available for streaming on the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan YouTube page. The magazine is available on on Heritage Saskatchewan's website at [heritagesask.ca](http://heritagesask.ca).

“We want this project to show the importance of ongoing documentation of the firsthand experiences of Saskatchewan people, the relevance of culture and living heritage in our everyday lives, and to provide an example of how communities can coordinate their own documentation projects,” says Catherwood. “We also want to highlight how essential the Provincial Archives are for safeguarding Saskatchewan’s collective memories into posterity.”

Catherwood emphasizes that the project would not have been possible without the work of the six Community Coordinators — Louise BigEagle, Joey Donnelly, Christine Fiddler, Marcel Petit, Pierrette Settee, and Holly Toulejour — who collected the bulk of interviews from Saskatchewan communities.



Top: Family gathered around the computer to watch video messages from family and friends that celebrates parents' 40th wedding anniversary. Photo by Nichole Huck.

Bottom: Simon (left) and Theresa Sapp (right) share stories and experiences during the pandemic as part of the COVID-19 Culture project. Photo by Christine Fiddler.

# ROOTED IN TRADITION: How Dream Brokers Created a Medicinal Plant Teaching Project

BY SCOTT STELMASCHUK



Looking for a way to engage students safely in cultural activity, a Dream Broker in Prince Albert came up with an innovative medicinal plant project for students at W. J Berezowsky Public School. Learning about medicinal plants provides an opportunity for students to connect to their Indigenous heritage.

The Dream Brokers program, which is dedicated to sustaining the involvement and participation of inner-city children and youth in sports, culture and recreation activities and programs in the province, was particularly interested in finding ways to increase culture-based activities that would appeal to students of Indigenous heritage.

“First Nations traditional medicine has healed people in the past and it has been a part of the First Nations circle of life,” says Neru Franc, Dream Broker Consultant. “The land is where food, medicine, clothing, tools, etc. came from. Teaching students about the land in which they live, and what they can harvest from the land to help themselves is part of their culture. First Nations students will hopefully gain a newfound respect for their home, and throughout the teachings, possibly fuel a desire to learn more about themselves and their culture.”

The program reached out to Elder Liz Settee from Peguis First Nations in Manitoba, to fulfil the cultural aspect of the project. “Aboriginal students today are so far from understanding themselves,

that they need reconnection with culture. These teachings will go with the different medicines, so knowledge is passed on from one generation to another. Once they start learning about medicine, it may spark a fire within to learn more about their culture and who they are,” says Settee. “Medicinal teachings helped fuel my desire to learn more about my culture and who I am.”

While school closures due to COVID-19 posed some additional challenges at the start of the project, “It has been a challenge setting the tents up,” says Franc. “While students were away online learning before and after Christmas, everyone took time to familiarize themselves with the tents and gained an understanding of how





**For those wishing to pursue a similar program, Franc notes:**

Speak to an Elder before you get started so both the Elder and yourself can discuss the vision you have for the project.

Research and price out all supplies ahead of time to determine your cost from start to finish. A project like this can be costly and you want to make sure you have everything you need so there aren't any surprise costs later that can affect the outcome.

Also, gain some prior knowledge about horticulture in general and the First Nation medicinal plants you will be working with to make the most of the teachings and the activity for your students.

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Students from Prince Albert are learning more about their heritage and culture.  
 Photos by Neru Franc.


they functioned.” In addition, a few staff members are now taking a horticultural class to gain more experience for this project and future projects. “That’s commitment!” remarks Franc.

Despite the challenges, students have connected well with the project. “The hands-on experience of seeding and caring for their plants has been essential to their learning,” says Franc. “This activity has been welcomed with curiosity and excitement. Students can check the progress of their plants regularly as each classroom involved in the project has their own growing tent. The great thing about having their own tent is it keeps them engaged and participation is strong.”

In addition to the hands-on experience, Franc sees a tremendous benefit in the additional lessons and knowledge imparted by Elder Settee. “My hope is that this

program has a lasting impact on our students and they will continue to use the many life lessons spoken by Elder Liz Settee that may not have necessarily been taught at home or in the community,” she says. “I feel this activity will reduce barriers between the many cultures in our school with students developing an understanding and respect for each other. I hope the teachings and what they have to offer the body, mind and spirit impacts our students by strengthening their respect for the land on which we live as well as respect for themselves. Programs like this reduce the stigma associated with First Nations culture and strengthens our school and community.”

*The Dream Brokers Program is supported through a partnership between SaskCulture, Sask Sport and the Saskatchewan Parks Recreation Association, thanks to funding from Sask Lotteries.*





## Build a Future of Creativity!

**Creative Kids Northern Cultural Fund helps fund programming that provides cultural and creative activities for children and youth ages 4 to 19 in northern Saskatchewan.**

**Deadline: June 1**

**Visit [SaskCulture.ca](http://SaskCulture.ca) for more information, to confirm deadline dates and to apply.**



## New Program Brings Poetry and Stage into Students' Homes

BY DAVE MARGOSHES

If life gives you lemons, so they say, make lemonade. (Or, if preferred, lemon meringue pie.)

The Saskatchewan Drama Association (SDA) and the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association (SMFA) came up with "a tasty pie" this past year, in response to having to cancel festivals across the province due to the pandemic. "We didn't switch to an e-program," says Darlene Briere, executive director, SDA, "rather this was a brand new program."

Last April, as the pandemic was taking hold in Saskatchewan, SDA approached the music festival group asking if it would be interested in partnering in a new e-program to provide students with a learning experience in drama. Carol Donhauser, executive director, SMFA, and her drama counterpart Darlene Briere "had discussed partnering in the past and this was the perfect opportunity to initiate it," Briere recalls.

Both organizations are festival veterans and were feeling frustrated at the prospect of a year without any events.

The music festival people had experience with poetry, storytelling, and dramatic presentations, making for a good fit with the

drama group, so both organizers felt "sure we could partner and devise a program," Briere explains. It was also their intention to give e-programs a try to work out some of the 'bugs' of providing e-programs.

As Briere tells it, "We quickly put together a plan and a budget for the program, launched it, and really hoped for the best, as there wasn't much time left until the end of the school year." The virtual festival was held in June, with 20 students from all age groups, "and we learned a lot about e-programming."

A second festival, planned for early 2021, didn't have as good of a response this time around, and will be offered again later in the school year. "We are still testing the water with regards to when to offer the program and what the value of the program is for our members," Briere says.

Among the many objectives of the e-festivals is the desire to build awareness of various forms of stage and poetic arts, enhancing acting and speaking skills, and developing confidence.

Donhauser notes that "the fear of public speaking has long been understood as the number one phobia among individuals

across society, which can make it difficult for even the most skilled, talented, and innovative individuals to express themselves before an audience."

Speech arts and spoken word studies "help students to channel and control that fear and give them the confidence that will make them stand out among academic, personal, and professional settings."

So the spoken word festival was a natural.

Throughout the pandemic, the SDA has produced, and continues to produce, webinars that address various topics, including virtual theatre and playwriting. While many programs designed for young people have been put on hold due to the disruption in schools caused by COVID-19, SDA continues to provide library service and virtual workshops.

The SMFA, one of the oldest cultural organizations in Saskatchewan, has been in the forefront of musical development in the province for over 100 years. The pandemic, of course, has had a huge impact on its activities. In addition to the spoken word festival, its centrepiece Shurniak Concerto Competition has gone online, via YouTube.

*The Saskatchewan Drama Association and the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association receive Annual Global Funding from Sask Lotteries.*

Students at a Speech Arts Workshop held by SMFA a few years ago. This past year, programs were shared via Zoom to encourage at home participation. Photo courtesy of SMFA.



## Webinars Increase Connection to Language and Culture

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING

**T**he Elders foresaw that this time (of pandemic) was coming – and that the Earth is taking a deep breath.

The Elders have also shared that this is the time to be in prayer, practicing culture and languages.

“If we translate that into the Cree or Dene or other Indigenous languages, it has a deeper meaning. In terms of what we say in the language, it is broad and sacred,” says Jessie Sylvestre, interim president, Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC), adding that while non-Indigenous people may interpret this differently, the Indigenous understanding is that, “The Earth represents our mother.”

In taking the Elders’ words of advice to heart, SICC has engaged in online sessions with various knowledge holders since last summer 2020, to learn and share information both about language and culture with others. SICC is a leader in helping First Nations peoples connect to their languages and cultures. Their mandate is to protect, preserve, and promote cultures and languages of the First Nations peoples in Saskatchewan.

SICC’s Language and Culture, Connected webinar series is keeping First Nations people connected to their heritage during the pandemic. Photo courtesy of SICC.

Sylvestre says that language and culture is a niche she’s been working on for many years. She explains how the organization is following the Elders’ teachings regarding the best way they can revitalize language. “Some of the most effective teachings and best practices are the land-based approaches, which are not new and have been happening for many years,” she notes, adding that some programs have been westernized and are trying to re-implement the Indigenous form of land-based education.

“There are a lot of areas that we can touch upon in terms of documentation, in terms of using audio and technology - it’s pretty broad in terms of some of the things that can happen,” Sylvestre explains, adding that it’s key that they cover the four domains — physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. “We’re reminded not to forget the four domains in the teachings of the language and the culture.”

Prayer, practice, culture, and language are essential in pandemic times, she notes.

“Right now with everything happening with COVID-19, I know many people are in isolation. We’re reminded by our Elders that we cannot forget ceremonies,” Sylvestre explains.

“When we talk about the four domains, whenever we’re in ceremony, all four domains are interconnected. It is right in the prayer that our medicine people, our Elders, say that everything is connected — land, sky, sun, moon, four-legged, two-legged — everything has a role to play in prayer.”

The online sessions, which she describes as very effective, features webinars that cover all these elements. The first part of the webinar series started in 2020. The organization hopes that this second part, which will start in the year 2021, will continue to help keep First Nations people connected to their languages and cultures during the pandemic.

“It’s been a huge challenge during pandemic times — most of our sessions have been through Zoom teleconferencing because we don’t want to be compromising anyone’s health. We haven’t had any face-to-face or on-site interactions with anyone. In addition, she says, “We’re losing many Elders, so we have to be cognizant and mindful of who we’re protecting — including ourselves.”

*This project received support through SaskCulture’s Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Grant funded by Sask Lotteries.*

The logo for SaskCulture, featuring the word "Sask" in a white, sans-serif font and "Culture" in a white, script font, set against a background of overlapping orange and red circles.

## Nurture Young Leaders!

The Aboriginal Arts and Culture Leadership Grant supports the sharing of cultural skills and knowledge to young people through participatory cultural activity with First Nations or Métis arts and culture leaders.

**Deadline: April 15**  
Visit [SaskCulture.ca](http://SaskCulture.ca) for more information, to confirm deadline dates and to apply.

A photograph of five young people riding horses in an open field. They are wearing various riding gear, including helmets and jackets. The background shows rolling hills under a clear sky.The logo for Sask Lotteries, featuring a stylized "S" icon followed by the words "SASK LOTTERIES" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.



# ONLINE BAND CONCERTS

## Keep Music Lovers Engaged

BY DAVE MARGOSHES

**T**he Rolling Stones did it: Mick, Keith, Ronnie and Charlie, each in their own homes, got together to belt out their classic “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” as a gift to a plague-ridden world.

So why not sing from Saskatchewan? Using essentially the same Internet technology, and orchestrated by the Saskatchewan Band Association (SBA), over one hundred musicians – from elementary school students through high

school and adults, and from all over the province – joined forces for a provincial virtual holiday band concert in December 2020.

At the start of October, as COVID-19 public health restrictions made it clear that many school programs and community bands were on hold, Suzanne Gorman, CEO of the SBA, had begun to consider what such a virtual concert might look like.

Holiday concerts are “a much-loved band tradition,” Gorman says. The association “wanted to provide the band community with an opportunity to still celebrate the season and share the music with their family and friends.”

The concert, which took many hours and many people working together to pull off, “was a major project and much larger than originally expected,” Gorman says, “but incredibly fun and rewarding to put together.”

The result was a province-wide celebration of band music with five different Christmas tunes. Over 2,000 people have viewed the video between December 2020 to January 2021, on SBA’s website at [saskband.org](http://saskband.org).

Almost immediately after the pandemic began in March 2020, the SBA began to adapt its programming “and has not stopped adapting,” Gorman says. By fall, with the holiday season approaching, its staff was already quite familiar with the



technology needed to pull off the holiday concert.

“The overarching goal for the SBA during the pandemic has been to keep band musicians of all ages and levels engaged and practicing,” Gorman says. “The long-term objective has been to help musicians and bands be prepared, ready and able to play again when restrictions allow. As an added benefit, the altered programming has increased networking opportunities and connected musicians of various ages and locations like never before.”

Last summer, the Association offered virtual band camps and into the school year were producing instructional videos and a free webinar series – “Tune Up Tuesday” – which offered a mix of practical, motivational and skill-based topics for band musicians, directors and leaders.

“The series began with an all-important session on the International Performing Arts Aerosol Study outlining how band programs could be resumed safely,” Gorman says. “The session provided bands, schools and decision-makers with evidence-based research to guide ‘back to band’ programming.”

In the new year, the SBA is continuing to offer support in a virtual environment,



including free master classes and an After-School Online Band Program for students in grades 7/8 and 9/10 with specific focus on serving youth where school band programs have been either entirely cancelled or significantly altered. The after-school program was made possible

by a grant from the G. Murray and Edna Forbes Foundation Fund offered by the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation.

*The Saskatchewan Band Association receives Annual Global Funding from Sask Lotteries.*

The SBA continues to engage bands in Saskatchewan through several programs. Photos courtesy of the SBA.



## Help Saskatchewan Kids

# Shine, Grow and Belong!

Creative Kids removes or reduces financial barriers to arts and cultural activities for Saskatchewan kids ages 4 to 19 to help enable them participate in art, drama, music, dance and other cultural activities.

Give a Saskatchewan child the gift of creativity by donating today.



Call toll free 1-855-277-9469 or find out more at [CreativeKidsSask.ca](https://CreativeKidsSask.ca)

\*100% of your donation goes directly to helping kids in your community.

# CULTURAL THREADS: Event Sparks Cultural Conversations

BY SASHA-GAY LOBBAN

Anita Ogurlu's mother shared the story of why she kept a jar of leftover threads for the past 50 years. Raised during WWII, she had to learn to save everything. Each of the threads—carefully plucked out of older garments—was stuffed into an old jar for re-use, to be re-sewn into new garments for her children.

This family story, sparked the theme of a new online conference, hosted by Saskatoon Open Door Society (SODS), held in January 2021. Despite the pandemic, SODS, one of Saskatchewan's largest settlement organizations, was able to weave together an inclusive event called *Threads: Cultural Conversations*, a two-day online cultural experience that brought together close to 1,000 people from across Canada and over 20 other countries to participate in this innovative virtual event.

The family story behind *Threads* was shared to kick off the conference. Anita Ogurlu says that, "*Threads* represented the history of humanity and migration; each thread a culture, a journey, a unique story, removed from one garment or place and sewn into another garment or place. It was established to create broader shared experiences and narrative representing our interconnectedness as humans and promoting diversity, inclusion, equity and building positive race and community relations."

According to Ali Abukar, Chief Executive Office, SODS, the main message of the conference is that, "we're more alike than we are different".

The premiere event is a welcomed opening to SODS' annual calendar and an impressive kick-start to the year as the organization is also celebrating its 40th anniversary. *Threads* hosted over 30 speakers and performers from across Canada, featuring keynote speaker Andrea Menard, and special guests Kamal Al-Solaylee, Omayra Issa, and the Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson.



“*Threads* represented the history of humanity and migration; each thread a culture, a journey, a unique story, removed from one garment or place and sewn into another garment or place. It was established to create broader shared experiences and narrative representing our interconnectedness as humans and promoting diversity, inclusion, equity and building positive race and community relations.”

— ANITA OGURLU



Originally planned as an in-person event, when the pandemic hit, Anita Ogurlu, cultural bridging facilitator, SODS, says the organization had to, “re-think what the event was going to look like”. However, after careful planning, SODS was able to give online attendees a unique cultural experience, which not only highlighted shared understandings but explored the issues, challenges, and desires of newcomers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and cultures.

*Threads’* attendance showed that, locally, nationally and globally, people needed a platform where they could share their stories and have meaningful cultural exchanges; learning, sharing and inspiring hope.

Basking in the success of this amazing virtual event, organizers received a lot of positive feedback. According to Abukar, “there are plans to make it an annual event to continue to have this dialogue. We got a lot of engaging feedback about the speakers and participation and people



are already asking about 2022. People enjoyed creating relationships and sharing experiences and that was our intention.”

Those who donated \$50 or more to *Threads* are able to access *Threads’* Archive, where all the talks will be

available online for one year, along with updated material for personal and professional development.

*This event was supported through SaskCulture’s Multicultural Initiatives Fund with funding from Sask Lotteries.*

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SOD's *Threads* event brought about 1,000 people - across Canada and other countries - together virtually.  
 Photos by Amy Thorp.



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The collection from the Bresaylor Heritage Museum helps share Métis Culture. Photo courtesy of Bresaylor Heritage Museum.

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