

# Saskatchewan's Heritage

## ...why should the public care?

Since its inception, SaskCulture has been working with its partners in the heritage community to help nurture the development of a heritage strategy. Dialogue has occurred and some steps have been taken to advocate heritage issues to decision-makers. However, more still needs to be done.

SaskCulture's Heritage Community of Interest Committee will be working with members of the community to help build the tools that you can use to advocate for culture in communities, or at the provincial and federal levels.

It's important to work together. Heritage is a multi-disciplinary field that encompasses a diverse range of individuals and organizations with an equally diverse range of interests, skills and abilities. Through SaskCulture and the Heritage Community of Interest, the heritage community has the opportunity to develop a unified voice to advocate on behalf of the heritage community and to provide a support structure that enhances communication among and beyond the community itself.

The following information is an assortment of statistics and comments that can help demonstrate the value of heritage to the less informed public. There is a lot more information that needs to be collected. This is only a start.

### What is heritage?

Heritage is what we have received from the past. It shapes our present identity and provides insight for our future. Within the scope of SaskCulture, heritage includes a range of activities in the areas of stewardship, preservation, research, education and engagement. Within this context these activities must exhibit sensitivity to: the indigenous natural environment, the impact of the interaction between human activity and natural environments, and the differing perspectives regarding objects, ideas, places and traditions. (*SaskCulture Cultural Policy, 2003*)

### Why should heritage be important to me?

"Using the past...is a common human activity. What we have in common as human beings is that we employ the past to make sense of the present and to influence the future." Further, "the most powerful meanings of the past come out of the dialogue between the past and the present, out of the ways the past can be used to answer pressing current day questions about relationships, identity, immortality and agency." (*Rosenzweig and Thelen, The Presence of the Past Popular Uses of History in American Life, 1994*)



**CULTURE BUILDS COMMUNITY**

Heritage activities necessarily explore memories; documenting, interpreting and re-creating them, thereby perpetuating both individual and collective identities within their communities. Heritage activities provide opportunities for social interaction and learning that facilitate and support human development and by extension, the development of the community as a whole. Heritage activities allow people to re-evaluate the past, enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the present, and enabling them to make real choices about values, beliefs and ways of living in the future. (*S.L.Massey, Report to SaskCulture, 2003*)

### Why is heritage important to communities?

Healthy communities find the right balance between creation and destruction, between change and stability. Every preserved structure is a slice of an era: each is full of stories that can be unearthed and retold. Seeking out stories is how we locate ourselves in our own time. The desire to learn new stories also drives cultural tourists to travel, to experience someone else's past, to slip on someone else's style. (*Toronto's Culture Plan, 2003*)

Heritage conservation is also a wise municipal investment. “Heritage restoration work sets off much higher job and investment economic multipliers than new construction, and heritage sites are a draw for tourism and the film industry” (*Preservation Pays: The Economics of Heritage Presentation*” *Procedures of the Heritage Canada Foundation Conference, Toronto, October 2003.*)

Heritage conservation not only makes our neighbourhoods even more attractive, it also increases their desirability and value.

Museums serve to strengthen sense of community. The drive to preserve and share local heritage brings people together. The museum is the catalyst – it serves as an icon for community pride and is the cultural centre for many segments of the general public. (*Saskatchewan Museums Funding Review, 1998*)

## **Why is heritage important to the province?**

Heritage buildings and landscapes are the physical foundation of the “creative community”. The more we intelligently preserve them, the greater sense we will have that (our community) is not like any other place in the world. (*Toronto’s Culture Plan, 2003*)

As our population grows and our communities expand, we risk crowding out the archaeological sites, historic landscapes, monuments and places that give our country character. In the last 30 years, 21 per cent of pre-1920 heritage buildings have been demolished. (*Canadian Heritage, 2003*)

Research indicates strong growth in heritage tourism across North America. Research in Saskatchewan shows that roughly one-third of provincial residents indicate they are more interested in history, heritage and culture than they were five years ago. Moreover, as Baby Boomers age, their interest in attending museums is expected to increase. (*Saskatchewan Museums Funding Review, 1998*)

There were over one million visits to Saskatchewan museums in 2001. This total includes 390,000 visits by tourists, 585,000 visits by local residents and 11,360 attendees with schools and other groups. (Museums Association of Saskatchewan, (*MAS 2001 Report: Survey of Saskatchewan Museums, 2003*))

The 2,500 museums and other heritage institutions in Canada contribute more than \$1 billion to the Gross Domestic product each year. More Canadians visit

museums in a year than attend sports events. Heritage institutions employ 35,000 people, either directly or indirectly and are supported by the efforts of 55,000 volunteers. (*Canadian Heritage, 2003*)

Beyond tourism, the preservation of history buildings is good for the environment. Not only does the renovation of existing properties reduce the drain on natural resources, it also reduces the amount of demolished buildings and waste materials ending up in landfills. (*Canadian Heritage, 2003*).

The disappearance of a language is accompanied by the departure of a whole body of knowledge and ideas that in many cases have thrived for centuries, not to say thousands of years. A language policy which favours the practice and transmission even of little-spoken languages helps to preserve the world’s linguistic wealth and contributes to safeguarding cultural diversity. It should go hand in hand with multilingual education from an early age so that each and everyone may be a link in the chain of transmission of these cultural traditions besides being able to communicate with the rest of the world. (*UNESCO, 2003*)

According to 1996 research, close to half of the 50 to 70 Aboriginal languages in Canada are near extinction or endangered, and 10 once-flourishing languages have become extinct over the last 100 years. Currently, only three Aboriginal languages are considered viable: Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut. Also, more than 90% of residential school claims allege loss of languages and cultures. The province must do its part to help ensure this vital aspect of our culture is preserved. (*Canadian Heritage, 2003*)

The core resource of many rural museums is its volunteers. In total, Saskatchewan museums receive roughly 300,000 hours of volunteer service annually. The value of service has been estimated at over three million dollars... The aging of the volunteer group, and the declining pool of younger and/or replacement volunteers is a key threat to museums’ operations and to public accessibility. (*Saskatchewan Museums Funding Review, Final Report, 1998*)

An understanding of what archaeology tells us about the long human adventure on the Saskatchewan landscape can help modern and future Saskatchewan people achieve a sense of place and “rootedness”, as well as an appreciation of the genuine accomplishments and intelligence of past cultural groups who have lived in a harsh land. (*Saskatchewan Archeological Society, 2003*)





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