



**Saskatchewan Arts
Stories for Canada
and Beyond**

arts

saskatchewan

Issue 2, Volume 1

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Photo credit: William Hales



4 Dark Chapters:
Garneau Shines Light
on Work

6 Dog Patch Music
Festival Delivers and
Protects

8 Of a Place

12 Sask Lotteries:
Supporting
Arts and Creativity

14 Finding Müveddet

16 Jacob Farrell 'Reels'
of Comedic
Saskatchewan
Culture

18 Artists for Artists at
SK Arts

22 Mario Lepage: Le
Canadien errant

24 Drama in the
Classroom?
Absolutely!

26 Reaching Out to
YOU: In Situ Program
Fostering Access

28 I-Ying Wu Inspired by
Qi and Daoism

31 Tic Toc TEN Time

33 Arts of Celebration
2025

34 In Memoriam

Friends, *Supporters* and Community

Photo credit: Mark Greschner



It's hard to believe we have already come full-circle to the second issue of *ARTS Saskatchewan*. As quickly as time has passed, much has been done, and much more is to come. Earlier this year, our new CEO laid out a bold vision rooted in accurate representation and equitable funding. That message resonated deeply within our organization and the broader arts community, sparking conversations, inspiring action and reminding us that change in the arts must be creative and structural. This issue continues that conversation.

Enclosed, you'll find stories and works by artists expanding what representation can look

like—artists whose perspectives are often sidelined. Yet, their contributions are vital to the full picture of culture today. You'll also see glimpses of how funding, when thoughtful and intentional, can be a powerful force for leadership, opportunity and innovation.

As Chair, I have the benefit and privilege of seeing the incredible work management and staff do behind the scenes to support this shift.

From policy changes to new programs and partnerships, we align our practices with our principles. And we are just getting started. We are deeply grateful for the continued support of the

Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, as well as our partnership with the Ministry of Education. Additionally, we appreciate the generous funding from Sask Lotteries, which we receive through our ongoing partnership with SaskCulture—both of which are crucial to our work.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Whether you're an artist, a supporter, or a reader engaging with these pages for the first time, your presence matters. Let's keep listening, learning and creating—together.

Ian Rea
Chair, SK Arts

Tansi, *Welcome* to ARTS Saskatchewan

Photo credit: Stobbe Photography



It is an honour to share this year's selection of stories with you as the new CEO. Art should hold a mirror to society—but too often, that mirror is selectively curated to exclude the diversity of voices. *ARTS Saskatchewan* is on a mission to be a true mirror.

As diverse as the applicants to SK Arts programs are, they represent the history of and reflect the growing demographic of our arts scene. We commit to ensuring that every artist,

regardless of background, discipline or medium, sees themselves reflected in the opportunities we create, the stories we tell and the communities we serve.

This publication is one of the many ways we reflect the image and beauty in our art. Within these pages, you'll find work that challenges, celebrates and reimagines embodying true inclusivity in our cultural landscape—just as great art and storytelling should.

Thank you for being part of this journey and sharing it beyond the borders of Saskatchewan and Canada.

With gratitude and resolve,

Lisa Bird-Wilson
Chief Executive Officer,
SK Arts

DARK CHAPTERS: Garneau **Shines** **Light** on Work

By Myrna Petersen



David Garneau, *Limits of Empathy*, 2024

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artist

Internationally recognized Métis artist David Garneau was born in Edmonton, Alberta and raised by a creative mother who was a "wonderful painter and calligrapher." As a youth, he became inspired by a 1977 Joe Fafard exhibit at Calgary's Glenbow Museum. This led him to work in clay, making and selling sculptures of people he saw around Edmonton. From sculpting, Garneau worked as a painter, curator, critical art writer, and media and performance artist.

These days, he paints primarily in acrylic, and his works can be found in public galleries and private collections nationwide, including SK Arts' Permanent Collection.

After receiving university degrees in art and writing, Garneau taught classes in Alberta before moving on to the University of Regina. A full-time Professor in Visual Arts, he primarily teaches students "how to draw and paint." He mentors graduates who are serious in their pursuit of art and presents classroom lectures in ART 100: Introduction to Arts, imparting knowledge on how the art world works.

Garneau's curatorial work, scholarship, and art are recognized internationally. In 2023, he was awarded Canada's Governor General's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Visual and Media Arts and was inducted into the Royal Society of Canada. In 2025, he received the Gabriel Dumont Silver Medal for his contributions to Métis culture.

“**Dark Chapters, as a body of work, is also an extraordinary gesture that deploys the genre of still-life painting to subtly pose a set of urgent questions.**”

Photo credit: Mika Abbott



David Garneau's *Dark Chapters* is a collection of highly realistic still-life paintings that metaphorically depict issues familiar to contemporary Indigenous people. The title

is a nod to the late Justice Murray Sinclair's description of the residential school system as "one of the darkest, most troubling chapters in our nation's history."

As a renowned artist and professor, Garneau intriguingly chooses to create 'still life' paintings, considered the lowest form of painting at one time. His choice to work in a genre often viewed as lower in the artistic hierarchy reflects both humility and confidence.

Every Monday for the past six years, Garneau has, and will in the foreseeable future, post a photograph of a new still-life painting on his Facebook account. This project has grown to over 300 paintings and is now a touring exhibition and a book.

Dark Chapters: Reading the Still Lives of David Garneau, published by the University of Regina Press, gathers 17 renowned poets and critical writers to engage with his still-life paintings. None of the contributors spoke with the artist before observing his works and writing their reflections.

John G. Hampton, Executive Director and CEO of Regina's MacKenzie Art Gallery, wrote, **"David Garneau's still-life paintings are seductive allegories for an era of tension: between knowledge and presentation, representation and existence, performance and identity, conciliation and assimilation. Western and Indigenous. He uses symbols in tension between Indigenous and Western understandings of knowledge, emphasizing yet complicating their distinctions."**

Jeff Derksen, a poet, critic, and scholar, says, **"Dark Chapters, as a body of work, is also an extraordinary gesture that deploys the genre of still-life painting to subtly pose a set of urgent questions."**

When asked how he gets so many paintings completed, David explains that, in addition to having a patient and supportive life partner, Sylvia Ziemann, who is also an artist, he had help from SK Arts and studio assistants.

In 2021-22, Garneau received a SK Arts Independent Artists grant for art supplies, stretchers, panels, frames, and crates.

"Studio assistants (including my adult kids, B and Cassandra, and Jesse Goddard and Mahdi Mahdian) assembled the stretchers, stretched and gessoed the canvases, saving me a great deal of time, enough to complete a painting a week, every week," Garneau says. "Jesse also made the crates, allowing me to tour the exhibition. Without the grant, my ambition would likely have been more modest."

Dark Chapters, the exhibition, opened in BC at The Nelson Museum, Archives & Gallery in spring 2025 and will continue its tour to five Western Canadian galleries, including the Yukon Arts Center (Whitehorse) from November 2025 to February 2026 and Dunlop Art Gallery (Regina) in fall 2026.

Garneau resides in a large historic house in Regina with Ziemann and their two children. Their home is filled with magnificent paintings, sculptures, crafts, instruments and books. On the top floor is Garneau's private studio, with easels, numerous canvases and painting supplies, a sanctuary where new creative ideas emerge and are sketched.

Regina is fortunate to be the city where Garneau and Ziemann established themselves and found success. A master artist, writer, teacher, and overall good human being, Garneau is a gift to Indigenous peoples, Saskatchewan and nations and countries abroad.

Dog Patch Music Festival Delivers and Protects

By Shandean Reid

Overhead shot of Dog Patch Music Festival in Loon Lake.

Photo credit: Alia McBain

Since 2014, the Whelan and Loon Lake, Saskatchewan communities have come alive each summer with the Dog Patch Music Festival, a three-day musical celebration of the land's roots and a tribute to the resilience of the people who arrived in the community and lived off the land during the Great Depression. The festival's name, Dog Patch, pays homage to the original nickname given to the land by the settlers. As the CEO, organizer and owner of the festival, Marc Butler had a vision to preserve the magic of the community and create an affordable, community-focused festival rooted in history, offering a rich, multicultural, family friendly experience.

"The festival is on the shores of original trapping grounds of settlers who arrived in the 1930s," Butler shares. "That's how they made a living. This place is special and filled with history."

Trapping is a fishing method that involves luring fish and crustaceans into a one-way trap, thereby capturing them. The practice is also deeply intertwined with Indigenous culture and livelihood, much like Loon Lake, home of the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation, a Cree First Nation band. In honour of preserving some of that history, the festival is working toward a museum that showcases the lifestyle of the early settlers, adding more layers to the experiences for visitors and youth in particular.



“With the museum, we’re going to tell the story of Dog Patch and the community. I grew up there in the 1970s, and we didn’t have running water,” Butler reflects, ***“so we lived a lot differently than kids do now, let alone in the 1930s. We want to showcase that, to tell the story of the people who settled in our community.”***

The festival has experienced steady growth since its inception. In its first year, it attracted almost 300 people; by 2024, the number had grown to over 700, a testament to its unique value. Initially, its music featured DJs and electronic music performances. Today, the festival has intentionally shifted its performance

lineups to favour singer-songwriters, country rock, folk, and bluegrass music, cultivating a reputation of authenticity as a safe, comfortable affair for all ages to enjoy.

The grassroots, volunteer-run festival has hosted numerous notable musicians throughout its nine-year history, including the popular folk and bluegrass award-winning band The Dead South in its early years, as well as singer-songwriters Colter Wall and Gord Bamford, blues duo Harpoonist & the Axe Murderer and folk and country musician Valdy.

Butler’s vision is to keep the community-centred summer Festival’s performances 100 per cent Canadian and at least

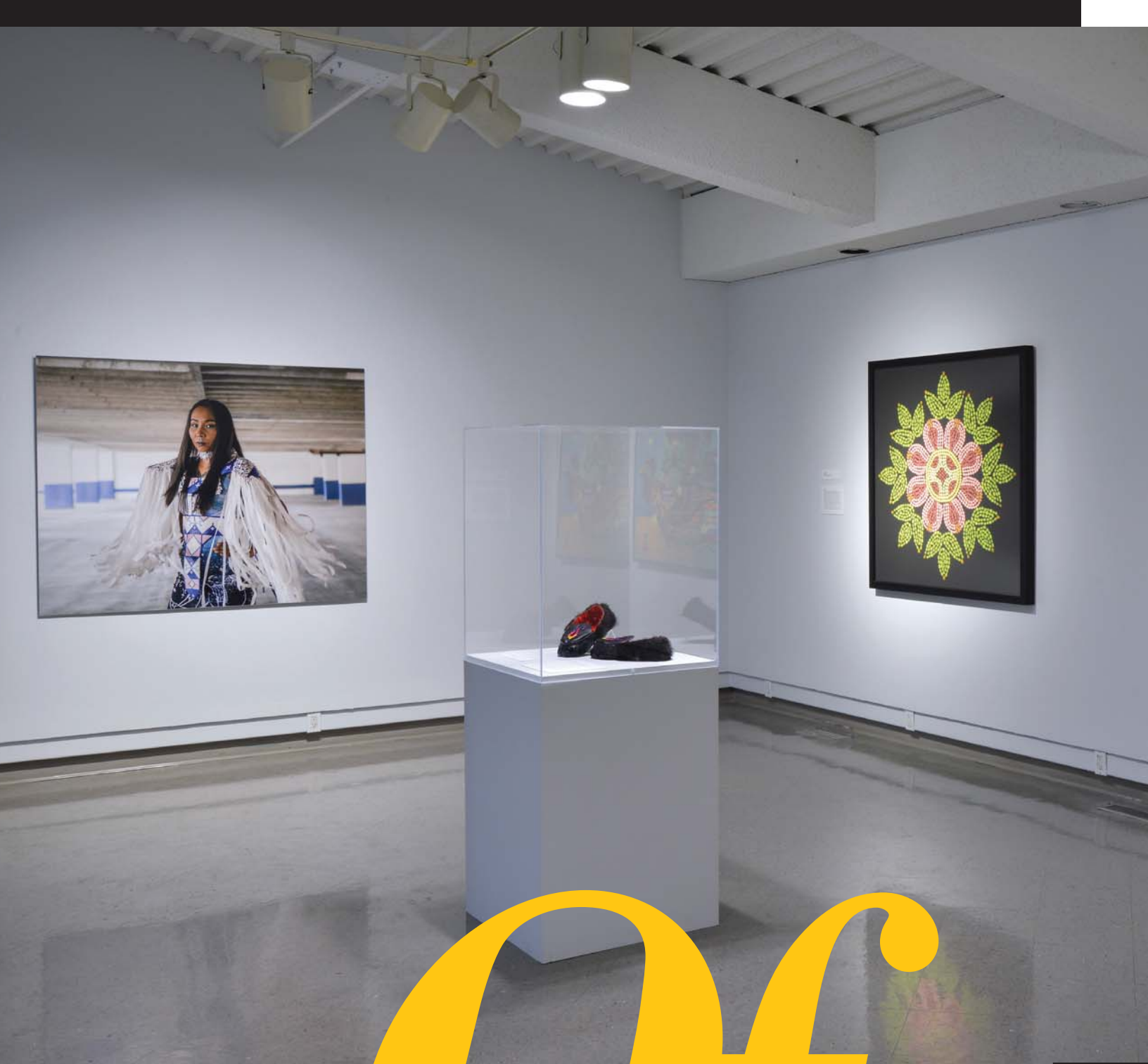
80 per cent Saskatchewanian. The festival is on track to reach 1,000 ticket sales soon, a cap Butler deems crucial to keeping the festival at a manageable, community-oriented size, limiting the impact on the environment that a large crowd would have in the boreal forest. A 1,000-ticket limit also has the added benefit of the festival becoming an exclusive event.

“If there are thousands of people into the forest, it’s upsetting the ecosystem,” Marc says. ***“I’ve lived in the bush my entire life; the festival grounds are literally my backyard. We would be upsetting the wildlife, the birds. I respect where I live, so I am conscious of that.”***

The Dog Patch Music Festival receives funding from SK Arts’

SaskFestivals program, which is funded by Sask Lotteries through its partnership with SaskCulture; funding, Butler says, is crucial to its existence. For several years, he has personally funded the festival. With its growth in size and impact, funding organizations like SK Arts and SaskCulture and community support for the arts, like that from Sask Lotteries, helps the festival cover its costs and give back to the community it calls home.





Installation of the *Of a Place* exhibition at the Dunlop Art Gallery, showing: (L-R) Catherine Blackburn, *Mother of Mobilization*, 2018; Kevin McKenzie, *Hot-Rod Moccasins*, 2023; Daphne Boyer, *Full Flower*, 2019; and DJ Tapaquon, *Mother Looks On (Her Good Old Stories)*, 2024

Photo credit: Don Hall

Of a Place



Place

By Shandean Reid

When she curated *Of a Place*, Wendy Peart, curator of education and community outreach at Dunlop Art Gallery, had much in mind. A joint exhibition featuring recent acquisitions from Regina Public Library's (RPL) permanent collection and works on loan from SK Arts' Permanent Collection, *Of a Place*, was installed at the Sherwood Village branch of the Dunlop Art Gallery between February and June 2025.

Peart shared that the artists included have a strong and interesting connection to the land, and the pieces selected for the exhibition are linked to the community. The bright, colourful and bold pieces attract children and families with young children, fostering a sense of comfort in the space and within the RPL community. The subject matter speaks deeply, creating dialogue around cultural and personal identity, as well as the cultural past.

Tied to the theme of place, specifically Saskatchewan, the exhibition featured ten Saskatchewan artists: Audi Atcheynum, Catherine Blackburn, Daphne Boyer, Carole Epp, Patrick Fernandez, Torrie Ironstar, Dani LaValley, Kevin McKenzie, Bailey Randell-Monsebroten and DJ Tapaquon.

“In all of these works, the artists focus on identity within the land, a community, family, a sense of belonging and communities,” said Peart.

HISTORY OF A PLACE

Catherine Blackburn's work in the exhibition, *Mother of Mobilization*, is a portrait that is part of a two-piece artwork, showing the artist wearing the second piece—a sculpture, *Armour, Mother of Mobilization*, made of beads and plastic (not included in Dunlop's exhibition). The work is part of the *New Age Warriors* series, which focuses on Indigenous women warriors and toured Canada for four years.

Blackburn is a multidisciplinary artist and jeweller, a Saskatchewan native and a member of the English River First Nation (Denesuliné) whose needlework explores Indigenous sovereignty, decolonization and representation, dominant to the themes of the exhibition and of the First Peoples of the land.

“**My whiteness and my roots wove a safety net that held me. When our idealism of the world is shattered, we start to see all the web of lies from which that net was composed.**”

Peart shared that another of the more apparent reasons RPL purchased Blackburn's portrait for the collection is that the figure in the photograph **“emanates such incredible strength and presence,”** making it a perfect fit with the theme for the exhibition.

“How I positioned this work in relation to DJ Tapaquon's Mother Looks On (Her Good Old Stories), she [Armour, Mother of Mobilization, late 21st century and Mother of Mobilization] presides over the whole space, eyes following wherever you go,” Peart said. **“They kind of look at each other, and I like that play in capturing and holding the space as matriarchal.”**

Ceramic artist and SK Arts Board Member Carole Epp's sculpture *Pennies from Heaven* shared a different perspective as a person of English and French descent growing up in the Prairies in a bubble of privilege. The sculpture is a jar showcasing interconnected pennies, with hands extending from an entanglement of snakes among fleurs-de-lis, reaching down toward a church or residential school built on top of skeletons on one side and, on the other, a broken-hearted angel crying over the skeletons.

“Pennies from Heaven” means buying someone off or providing an unexpected financial windfall. In her artist's statement to SK Arts when the work was purchased, Epp wrote **“My whiteness and my roots wove a safety net that held me. When our idealism of the world is shattered, we start to see all the web of lies from which that net was composed.”**

Wendy noted that Epp's powerful words, displayed next to the work in the exhibition supply an equally important connection to the place that is the Prairies

for settlers, particularly those present and unaware of the existence and history of residential schools.

SAILING TO THE FUTURE

Patrick Fernandez's work *Seed for New Beginnings* from SK Arts' Permanent Collection is a stunning representation of Peart's vision. The large painting represents Fernandez's journey as an immigrant from the Philippines to Canada. The colourful ensemble, which Peart describes as **“detailed and captivating,”** shows a canoe with an anterior Sarimanok arriving on a shore with a head, four beings: one holding a fishing pole with a fishing line, one holding a plant, one with fire protruding from an eye, and another nurturing and a light inside the canoe. Stars with fishing lines hooked fall out of the sky, while birds and a gopher gather on the shore.

Fernandez explains the intricate design of the artwork as a summary of his hopes and dreams of coming to Canada. The Sarimanok is “a bird in Filipino Mindanao mythology, a reincarnation of a goddess who fell in love with a mortal man. Today it symbolises wealth and prestige in the Filipino culture.” The head is a self-portrait, and the land is Saskatchewan. The plant is uprooted but can be transplanted, much like his life, and the angry gopher represents the inhabitants of the foreign land (Canada) being angry at his arrival as an immigrant.

“I used the gopher because they are considered pesky, but in reality, they are so cute and are an integral part of the natural ecosystem,” a reflective Fernandez mused. **“Similarly, people often view immigrants as a burden, taking from the resources available when, in**

Carole Epp
Pennies from Heaven, 2022

Photo credit: Don Hall

reality, we contribute so much to the well-being and prosperity of Canada.”

Patrick said that he feels **“surprised and honoured to be included in an exhibition where his narrative, as an immigrant, has been included as having a connection to the province, particularly among Indigenous work.”**

His feelings and perspective signal that Peart's work on curating *Of a Place* was spot-on.

SK Arts' Permanent Collection is the largest comprehensive collection of Saskatchewan art and craft. Its Loans program lends art pieces from the collection—over 3,800 pieces strong—to museums, galleries, institutions, and special partners across Saskatchewan and Canada, a few finding their way onto international tours.

RPL's permanent collection collects, researches, catalogues and preserves works of art of contemporary and historical significance for the people of Regina and Saskatchewan.

Dunlop Art Gallery is funded through SK Arts' Professional Arts Organizations Program (PAOP). Gallery and media arts grants in PAOP are supported by funding from Sask Lotteries through the partnership between SK Arts and SaskCulture Inc.

1. “Sarimanok – The Reincarnation of a Goddess,” Southern Wooden Boat Sailing, October 3, 2022, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://southernwoodenboatsailing.com/news/sarimanok-the-reincarnation-of-a-goddess>.



Advertorial

SASK LOTTERY

Supporting Arts Communities



In 2024 alone, SaskCulture's partnership with SK Arts supported nearly 140 applications and initiatives in over 35 communities across the province. These included everything from visual arts exhibits and youth-led music workshops to dance festivals, theatre productions, and artist mentorship programs.

IES: Arts and creativity



Attendees at *Portraits of Liberation* exhibition (2023) funded by SK Arts' Artists in Communities program offered in partnership with SaskCulture, with funding from the Sask Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.

Saskatchewan artists are the heart of the province's cultural landscape, sharing stories, sparking conversations, and bringing people together through music, theatre, dance, visual art and other forms of expression. Their creativity has inspired connections across communities.

For those who believe in the power of the arts to inspire, connect and transform, there's an unexpected way to show your support. It starts with a simple lottery ticket.

In Saskatchewan, every lottery ticket purchased contributes directly to nurturing the province's rich cultural landscape. Through the Sask Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation, a portion of proceeds helps fund everything from local galleries and theatre companies to Indigenous cultural programming, music festivals, and heritage preservation initiatives.

It's a quiet, meaningful impact: the kind that keeps artists creating, venues thriving and cultural traditions alive.

Sask Lotteries provides funding to SaskCulture, which uses those dollars to support cultural activity in Saskatchewan through grants, partnerships, and outreach. SK Arts, which supports independent artists and arts organizations, is a key partner in supporting those efforts.

"Thanks to funding from Sask Lotteries, SaskCulture can support arts and cultural activities across the province," says Dean Kush, Chief Executive Officer, SaskCulture. "Our partnership with SK Arts helps ensure that artists from all backgrounds can access funding and share their work with Saskatchewan communities. We hope artists in Saskatchewan understand and recognize the support of Sask Lotteries in the arts sector."

This partnership directly supports several SK Arts programs, including the Gallery Grant and the Media Arts Grant within the Professional Arts Organization Program (PAOP), Artists in Schools, Artists in Communities, SaskFestivals grant program, Share and Connect: Indigenous Community Arts Program and the Building Arts Equity: BPOC Program. These programs enable artists and arts organizations to create, engage with, and connect to their audiences.

In 2024 alone, SaskCulture's partnership with SK Arts supported nearly 140 applications and initiatives in over 35 communities across the province. These included everything from visual arts exhibits and youth-led music workshops to dance festivals, theatre productions, and artist mentorship programs.

LIVE Arts, a SK Arts program delivered in partnership with SaskCulture and the Ministry of Education, reached over 37,000 students in 135 communities during the school year in 2024. Presented in both English and French, the program brought live, virtual arts experiences into classrooms across Saskatchewan.

"We're grateful to SK Arts for their continued partnership in supporting Saskatchewan's arts sector," adds Kush. "And thanks to all artists in Saskatchewan for sharing your creativity, building connections in every corner of the province, and ensuring that arts and culture continue to build culturally vibrant communities."





Finding Müveddet

By Miguel Fenrich

Whether in the ancient city of Antioch in Turkey or her current home of over 25 years in Saskatoon, Müveddet Al-Katib has been searching for her identity. In her experience, her environment represents an essential building block in who she is as a person and an artist.

Müveddet moved to Saskatoon as a young adult with a freshly gained Bachelor of Fine Arts and little understanding of her new home or how to communicate in English. Still, her dream remained unchanged—committing herself and her craft to an MFA.

“Art is everywhere [in Antioch]... it’s in the buildings, and the books ... it’s a very rich culture. Exchanging culture is how I grew up,” said Müveddet. ***“I came to Saskatchewan [and] ...because of the limitations of my language barrier, I had no dreams ... I had no identity.”***

With her power to connect limited, Müveddet began to work with local artists. At that time, using Eastern elements, such as objects and inspirations from Turkey, was a focal point in her art. But art enthusiasts engaging with her work said that her art felt foreign, and Müveddet herself felt the same about how she

Photo credit: Stobbe Photography

ddet

“I am the happiest person... my eyes just get tears when [I think about] starting my MFA.”

laughed, spoke and expressed herself. This feeling of foreignness compelled her to create her first landscape painting.

Motivated to feel connected to her new home, Müveddet thought she had to fit in and be more Western. She did that by no longer using the 'ü' in her name. Though she found success as an emerging artist, she still wondered who she was. In 2016, she began moving away from landscape art to find herself again. Her next body of work, *Creating Bridges: East and West*, explored that division between her home country in Turkey and her new home in Saskatchewan.

“I was between two worlds,” she said, feeling foreign in both countries. So, she sought to combine them.

Following that exhibition, she said she was fortunate to find a place in her new home. Her work is represented in SK Arts' Permanent Collection, has been featured in provincial and national shows, and has been shown at Government House in Regina and the Turkish Embassy in Ottawa. Still, she sought ways to serve her new community through supporting immigrants coming to Saskatoon who needed help overcoming barriers or finding access to resources.

“All of my focus was [on helping alleviate] the same struggles immigrants have ... connecting to their new home, [their] new environment, through arts. Because my own experience mirrored [their] struggles.”

“My story wasn't unique,” Müveddet said, explaining that cultural biases continue to hold us back, giving us a false understanding that we must call only one place home.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she began taking a closer look at her culture beyond the Western lens she developed. Her craft—exploring identity, community, and self—are tied to one another. She's still searching.

“My practice as an artist, my journey as an immigrant woman, and my community art are woven into each other; I cannot separate them. All my experiences make me an artist or a woman. I cannot say that I'm a different person. I'm the same person in my studio; I'm the same person outside.”

Müveddet is working with CARFAC and the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance on a survey to locate and understand how

immigrant artists fall through the cracks. And, after 25 years of working in the province, she is pursuing her MFA. The artist shared that the 25 years of experience she's gained as an artist would have likely impacted her and her practice differently than if she'd taken the program as an emerging artist. After the investment and learning over her career, she now hopes she'll be able to give back to the community.

“I am the happiest person... my eyes just get tears when [I think about] starting my MFA.”

Müveddet remains mindful that she received extensive support from people who believed in her dreams and artistic potential, and she is grateful for their presence and spirit, which allows her to lovingly call Saskatchewan home.

Jacob Farrell

‘REELS’

of Comedic Saskatchewan Culture

By Shandean Reid



of art that communicates Saskatchewan culture and humour," shared Farrell, "specifically, Métis and Indigenous culture."

He shared that he particularly enjoyed conceptualizing, shooting and working hard on the film as a filmmaker. The movie is comedic and follows a failing part-time thief known as Menace; Farrell describes it as an ode to local dirtbags, Métis pride and the spirit of indie filmmaking.

8th Street Menace premiered at Saskatoon's Broadway Theatre and has since screened across Western Canada. Farrell also received a Micro-grant from SK Arts to attend the Reelworld Film Festival+Summit by the Reelworld Screen Institute in Toronto. The summit is a two-day event featuring conferences, workshops, and networking opportunities for filmmakers and industry professionals. It also spotlights issues surrounding diversity, inclusion, and equity in the Canadian film and television landscape.

At the same time, the Reelworld Festival is a four-day celebration of stories by Indigenous and racialized

Canadians, where Farrell's film, *8th Street Menace*, made its Ontario premiere, and Farrell connected with filmmakers across the nation.

Natalie Nadeen, Communications Manager at Reelworld Screen Institute, says, ***"The summit and festival are not only vital; they're also transformative. For 25 years, Reelworld has proudly championed the work of First Nations, Inuit, Métis creators and other underrepresented communities, ensuring their stories, cultures and lived experiences are accurately depicted on-screen in an industry where systemic barriers persist."***

Farrell found it amazing, particularly for his first film, to experience ***"taking in the spirit of BIPOC filmmaking"*** and being among like-minded filmmakers, seeing their work, and developing relationships.

"It was great to be there in person," Farrell expressed. ***"It's such a benefit to be able to attend film festivals through support and be there to talk about your project more in-depth and connect with the [film] programmers. It just really enhances the experience."***

8th Street Menace was also screened at the inaugural 2024 Ācimowin Film Festival in Saskatoon, where he is a programmer and event organizer. The festival champions Indigenous storytelling and filmmaking. Farrell's involvement with the festival aligns with his mission to immerse himself in independent filmmaking, producing and writing. More recently, he has been interested in comedy filmmaking and has taken on more producing roles in films, including *Klee*, a horror, sci-fi, and comedic period piece directed by Gavin Baird, and *Danceland*, a short film by Sara Carrier, based on the experience of being away from and then coming home to Saskatchewan.

Farrell wants to support more projects developed and executed locally, promoting the local film industry. He looks forward to telling more original, Saskatchewan-set stories inspired by the province.

Filmmaker Jacob Farrell (L) and Métis Filmmaker Gavin Baird (R) at Reelworld Film Festival+Summit screening of *8th Street Menace*.

Photo credit: Reelworld Screen Institute

Filmmaker and arts worker Jacob Farrell was born in Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, and is a member of the Peepeekisis Cree Nation. Jacob has always been interested in film. Nurturing his lifelong passion, Jacob pursued a BFA in Film and Media at the University of Regina and is the owner of Dorothy Studios, a media production company in Saskatoon.

He has always been inspired by storytelling and the idea of creating original stories about the experience of living in Saskatchewan. Pursuing his interest in ***"creating new worlds to investigate through filmmaking"*** and media, Farrell created and directed his first feature film, *8th Street Menace*, with Métis filmmaker Gavin Baird.

"The goal of the film was not just to film something in the province but to create a piece

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Artists for Artists



By Shandean Reid

SK Arts has been supporting Saskatchewan artists for more than 77 years. The Government of Saskatchewan established the agency following the end of the Second World War.

As artistic experimentation gained traction globally and local artists gained recognition, SK Arts' formation was timely in providing public support for local artists during that period.

Keen to provide Saskatchewan residents with access to the arts and support artists to practice their craft and showcase

their work, the agency fiercely continues to advance its mission of reach and accessibility, where Saskatchewan's very own artists are the SK Arts Advantage.

As a potent example of artists working for artists, SK Arts has established a legacy of being staffed with artists as administrators, providing a career path

SK Arts team snapshot (missing a few faces!) (L-R): Carmelle Pretzlaw, violinist; Geoff Smith (stage name Gunner & Smith), musician; Berny Hi, multidisciplinary artist and beekeeper; Deron Staffen, art enthusiast; Lisa Bird-Wilson, writer; Pauline Whitehead, screenwriter and Indigenous designer; Vanessa Wraithe (she/her), multidisciplinary artist; Joyten Shukla, hobby artist; Danica Lorer, oral storyteller, writer and singer-songwriter; Shandean Reid, writer and digital storyteller; and Renata Čosić, creative bystander.

Photo credit: Stobbe Photography

ists at SK Arts



within the arts and utilizing valuable skills that bring passion and a robust synergy to the organization's work. Almost 80 per cent of SK Arts staff, as well as six of the eleven Board Members, are artists: Michael Afenfia, writer; Carole Epp, ceramic artist; Barbara Meneley, visual artist; Cheryl Ring, visual artist; Lyndon Tootosis, sculptor; and Darcy Sander, musician. Two of four management team

members are also artists: Lisa Bird-Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, is a writer, and Berny Hi, Director of Programs, is a filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist.

THE TRADEOFF

Artists normally trade the opportunity to benefit from grants when they take on staff roles at arts funding organizations, particularly with a provincial arts funder

like SK Arts. While working a traditional nine-to-five provides a much-needed stable income and the opportunity to contribute to the artistic ecosystem at the administrative level, it also disqualifies the artist from applying for funding. There are invaluable benefits to the agency having artists at all levels within the organization, but the commitment to a full-time work schedule often

limits activities crucial to maintaining a practice, such as residencies, touring, networking and finding inspiration.

Recognizing that access to grants is materially crucial in sustaining artistic practice, contributing significantly to the freedom to pursue time-intensive and geographically variable projects, the trade-off is significant.



“Artists have always done other things in addition to their art to make a living,” says musician and SK Arts Programs Consultant, Geoff Smith. ***“I love working with artists in this way.”***

The artist acknowledges that the sacrifices are significant. ***“The time to keep the artistic practice going alongside being an administrator is just a part of it; it takes many sacrifices. I did not take a vacation for three years because I spent any time I took a break from SK Arts on my art practice.”*** Smith says. Throughout his time at SK Arts as an administrative coordinator and now as a program consultant, he has been a working musician and has received several nominations for the Saskatchewan Music Awards. He has toured internationally and in Canada and has recorded three full-length albums.

Smith was strongly impacted by administrators like the late Derek Bachman, who worked at SaskMusic and was an active member and mentor in the music community, providing grant-writing and industry-navigation support

through consultations. Smith wants to be a similar resource for musicians.

Staff sharing their lived experiences in policy and program development heightens impact, enabling equitable support structures and creating a funding environment that truly reflects the community it serves long before funds reach applicant artists.

PASSION AND EXPERIENCE MEETS PAPERWORK

Practicing artists like Chancz Perry, a performance artist, and Belinda Harrow who is a visual artist, also offer grassroots insight and knowledge of the challenges, needs, and realities of sustaining a creative practice, ensuring that funding programs are designed with on-the-ground information at their core. Their presence bridges the gap between funders and artists, fostering greater empathy, transparency, and relevance in the decision-making process.

Chancz Perry is the Program Consultant: Equity and Inclusion Focus at SK Arts and has been performing for almost 40 years. Throughout

his career, he has worked in several organizations in various capacities, including the Saskatchewan Drama Association, Dance Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan African Canadian Heritage Museum, the Saskatchewan Association of Theatre Professionals, On-Cue Performance, and the National Arts Centre.

Perry said: ***“As a practicing artist and program consultant at SK Arts, I know that policy shaped by lived experience builds the kind of trust, transparency and truth our communities deserve. That’s how we create lasting impact.”***

Belinda Harrow, SK Arts' Permanent Collection Consultant, has worked with the agency for over a decade. With a focus on public access, she manages the loan and rental programs, which provide opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan to engage with the collection. Throughout her time working at SK Arts, Belinda has maintained an active art practice, exhibiting her paintings and sculptures throughout Saskatchewan.

“As a practicing artist and program consultant at SK Arts, I know that policy shaped by lived experience builds the kind of trust, transparency, and truth our communities deserve. That’s how we create lasting impact.”

“2026 will mark my 30th year working professionally in the arts. My arts education has provided wonderful opportunities to work in New Zealand, China, and India. My art practice has taken me to residencies in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Scotland, and London,” shares Harrow. *“While it is not always easy to make art while working full-time, it is a privilege to work with SK Arts’ Permanent Collection and be a member of the vibrant Saskatchewan arts community.”*

As SK Arts strives to maintain its identity within the community, allowing artists to lead with the agency’s support, its people—artists like Geoff, Chancz, and Belinda—are the SK Arts Advantage.



Belinda Harrow, visual artist in her studio in Regina, SK

Mario Lepage:

By Myrna Petersen



Originating from the small Saskatchewan francophone community of St. Denis, Mario Lepage is an award-winning multi-instrumentalist, producer, composer, songwriter and performer. Lepage leads a collective called Ponteix, named after another French town in Southern Saskatchewan. Ponteix collective includes various creative people, musicians, photographers, and visual and graphic artists collaborating differently.

Lepage's family owns and still operates their fifth-generation family farm where Lepage grew up, located within a twenty-kilometre radius of Prud'Homme, Vonda, and St. Denis, referred to as the "French Trinity." These communities are key centres of francophone culture in the province and heavily influence Lepage's identity.

Connections to the land and to his French heritage are evident in Lepage's music and creative process. Lepage has spent years experimenting and mastering various instruments to create unique, colourful sound.

Lepage makes music that portrays a cinematic feel, opening the door for him to create music for visual media, film and television. In 2019, he won Producer-of-the-Year at the 2019 Western Canadian

Photo credit: Hannah Alex Photography

Le Canadien errant

Music Awards and Producer-of-the-Year at the Saskatchewan Music Awards. He has also been nominated for the Trille Or Producer-of-the-Year Award in 2021, and Ponteix was among the finalists with its song *Parti pour revenir*. His sought-after passion for sound design comes from his expertise in engineering and mixing.

Lepage describes himself as, ***“very much a Saskatchewan francophone boy, but I felt that spending time in Quebec would help move my career forward and now split my year between Montréal and Saskatoon.”***

Ponteix performs as a trio on stage, with Lepage on vocals, guitars, and synth. Ponteix’s performances showcase the experiences of francophones in a predominantly English-speaking region while having a unique cultural identity outside Quebec.

In 2024, Lepage worked with other musicians in Montréal to incorporate newly written material and produce Ponteix’s second album, *le canadien errant*. The title, translated to *A Wandering Canadian* in English, is taken from the anthem of ex-pat French Canadians living in exile. The original poem was written by Antoine Gérin-Lajoie to commemorate the Mackenzie-Papineau rebellion of 1837-38,

when several rebels were hanged, exiled, or fled to the U.S. The song has been covered by various artists including Leonard Cohen in his 1979 rendition.

Lepage co-wrote the text of his version of *le canadien errant* with his mentor, Louis-Jean Cormier, revealing Lepage’s inner conflicts while living in Quebec and experiencing Prairie nostalgia.

le canadien errant (extrait)
(Texte: mario lepage, louis-jean cormier)

“On m’prends pour un vagabond un canadien errant un anglais qui parle bon ou un français figé dans le temps.”

The Wandering Canadian
(excerpts)
(Text: Mario Lepage, Louis-Jean Cormier)

“They take me for a vagabond A wandering Canadian An Englishman who speaks well Or a Frenchman frozen in time.”

With that same longing, Lepage and Cormier’s song, *St. Denis*, expresses the emotional struggles of walking the bustling Rue Saint-Denis in Montréal and recalling his homeland. The song says, “Entre deux chemins, je savais pas que Montréal m’aurait tant pris” (I didn’t know Montréal

would have taken so much from me), and Lepage concedes that it is perhaps his destiny to live in the plains of St. Denis rather than the street of Montréal.

“It speaks about the contrast that I experience between the places with the same name. In Saskatchewan, there is barren landscape, huge skies, and time almost stops. Time never stops on Saint-Denis Street in Montréal, and the cultural landscape is so different.”

Lepage’s 2023-24 Independent Artists grant from SK Arts was used for the creation of the live show adapting *le canadien errant* recorded material for live performance on stage. It helped to translate the message and sound of the studio album for Saskatchewan musicians on tour.

“We listened to the message behind the songs to decide how we could best represent them. Since some of the recorded sessions in the album had up to 100 tracks per song, we approached the project as a blank slate, as if initiating a new album life,” shared Lepage. ***“We are three musicians: Jeff Romanyk from Regina is the drummer, Stacy Tinant from Ponteix plays guitar and sings, and I’m on vocals and other instruments. We didn’t give ourselves any rules nor play verbatim to the album.”***

In 2025, Ponteix went on tour for over a month, including solo workshops that Lepage conducted in schools. Their road trip ran through five provinces and one territory, in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Lepage concludes, ***“[The] SK Arts grant was so valuable to us, and thanks to the grant, we have performance shows lined up in France, Switzerland, Belgium, along with opportunities into 2026. While the demographics of French speakers is different, I have found that the story we tell, of being a ‘stranger’ and that identity crisis, applies to many different demographics.”***



Child learning to operate a professional camera during a LIVE Arts session.

Photo credit: LIVE Arts



Abhiroop Mookerjee teaching students in Street Hip-Hop Dance LIVE Arts program.

By Shandean Reid

DRAMA in the classroom? **ABSOLU**

For 20 years, the distance learning program LIVE Arts – delivered through a Ministry of Education LIVE Network (CommunityNet) has been collaborating with Saskatchewan artists to share their art practice with young minds of students in grades one through eight.

The SK Arts program has evolved throughout its history to fit changing classroom dynamics and the curriculum. It has allowed featured artists from every discipline to indulge and encourage students in every art form from videography to painting, comedy and dance, to name a few.

LIVE Arts Coordinator Dash Reimer is an educator, professional artist and Saskatchewan's fifth Youth Poet Laureate who utilizes his teaching degree and artistic experiences with fluidity while working with the program. He connects with artists, working closely with them to refine their instructional plan to fit the classroom-level audience. Additionally, teacher feedback helps make the program interesting and different, essential for a long-running program.

“Forming community is imperative to arts practice

for inspiration and networking,” Dash said. ***“So, in this role, it has been nice to connect with people, some of whom are administratively and artistically minded.”***

Dash stated that these connections are necessary to represent the community fully, including Indigenous and francophone students and artists.

Actor and educator Adreanna Gareau thoroughly enjoyed her LIVE Arts experience and shares how her 2023 presentation contributed to the growth of her practice. Motivated by passion and experience, Gareau grew up in Prince Albert and discovered her love of acting and comedy in elementary school following participation in a play where she spontaneously improvised and received a welcoming chorus of laughter and praise. After graduation, Adreanna got involved with improv theatre at the community level. She eventually started Off the Cuff Improv, a theatre company in Prince Albert specializing in interactive comedy to give herself and other artists more opportunities.

Gareau said that while LIVE Arts was a new experience for her, she leaned into her improv experience, balancing

the lesson plan with being present and in tune with the children's needs to ensure they get the most out of the lesson. She also wanted the children to take away an awareness of their ability to pursue their passions, even if those passions don't bring financial gain.

“I try to be hands-on and get right in there with them,” Adreanna said. ***“I feel like kids appreciate it when adults get down to their level and do things with them, and I think that contributed to their fun.”***

Improvisational or improv theatre is a form of theatre, usually comedic, where most or all of the performance is unplanned or unscripted, created spontaneously by the performers.

The LIVE Arts program is also an excellent, paid, professional opportunity for an artist to introduce their discipline to youth, to engage them as professional artists, and to make their practice visible through the broadcasts in 125 schools across the province.

The program for an upcoming school year starts with a call about halfway into the existing school year, inviting artists with interesting arts practices to submit

applications. A panel reviews the applications with a rubric assessing the arts practices and exposure to the youth, as well as the feasibility of the idea for programs, that is, whether it provides a good educational experience. The rubric also captures variety within the arts, the diversity in the Saskatchewan arts community.

Following the selection process, the LIVE Arts program moves into lesson planning and filming promotional content. The program schedule is complete by the end of summer, with schools booked and promotional material publicly available for the next school year.

“The students are often involved with the experience before the class takes place,” shared Reimer. ***“We get some student helpers that we teach how to run the setup and work the professional cameras, so they are not just learning on the day.”***

LIVE Arts Saskatchewan is made possible with generous, ongoing funding support from Sask Lotteries through its SaskCulture and SK Arts partnership and in collaboration with the Government of Saskatchewan through the Ministry of Education.

TELY!

Reaching **Out** to

In Situ Program Fostering Access



YOU:

By Shandean Reid

A Address systematic barriers to inclusivity, diversity, equity and accessibility. As part of its work toward this strategic goal, and to ensure access to funding is spread across all regions of Saskatchewan, SK Arts focused on supporting communities in underserved regions of the province. In 2024/25, Program Consultant with an Equity and Inclusion focus, Chancz Perry, along with other program consultants, was engaged in outreach campaigns in the Southeast region of the province, supporting communities such as Estevan, Weyburn, Wawota, Oxbow, Carlyle and Moosomin, by providing information sessions and grant-writing workshops.

The program has yielded several significant successes, including relationships with arts and cultural organizations that create opportunities that particularly reach newcomers, leveraging the arts as a bridge to cultural integration. Connecting with local communities has been essential, as people feel more welcomed when programs are tailored to their specific cultural contexts and needs.

Perry says, ***“Equity work isn’t one-size-fits-all—it means meeting people where they are. In the Southeast, we’ve seen how tailored outreach and meaningful engagement can open doors to artists and communities who’ve long been overlooked.”***

This vital push for holistic representation is already bearing fruit, with early successes demonstrating that some artists were previously unaware of the available support,

underscoring the need. Additionally, artists like Bethany Dittmann and Jill Ruep each submitted successful applications following workshops to launch new and meaningful projects.

Ruep applied for and received a Share and Connect: Indigenous Community Arts grant to support and advance a collaborative project with the Southeast College, developing software that supports Indigenous artists in beading and culture through education and additional resources. The grant supports keeping the project development within Saskatchewan, helping to foster innovation, job creation, and the preservation of local culture.

The grant supports keeping the project development within Saskatchewan, helping to foster innovation, job creation, and the preservation of local culture.

Dittmann received an Artists in Schools grant to execute a school-collaborated theatre process, creating space for students to self-express through inquiry, creativity and imagination while creating. By supporting both educational initiatives in schools and broader, community-based cultural projects, these grants not only keep development local but also foster innovation, job creation, and the preservation of culture. This holistic approach ensures that young people and communities alike benefit from artistic opportunities that build skills, strengthen identity and contribute to Saskatchewan’s vibrant cultural landscape.

These examples highlight the tangible impact of SK Arts’ renewed focus on equity and outreach. By addressing barriers and providing targeted support through workshops and consultations, SK Arts is ensuring that creative opportunities and funding reach communities and individuals who have historically been underserved.

While there are certainly obstacles to overcome in developing programming for newcomers, the successes we’ve experienced through community engagement, partnerships with arts organizations and targeted outreach are encouraging. SK Arts will continue to strengthen inclusivity and accessibility, making the province’s arts landscape vibrant and more representative of all its communities.

Above: Program Consultant with Equity and Inclusion Focus, Chancz Perry, and artist Ken Fredrickson chat during an information session at the Wawota Public Library.

Opposite: Information session at the Southeast College at the South East Summit.

Photo credit: SK Arts



I-Ying Wu

Inspired by Qi and Daoism

By Shandean Reid



As a child, Taiwanese artist I-Ying Wu was fascinated by and took improvisational dance. She recalls her dance teacher focused on creativity and improvisation. As she grew up, her interest in movement developed, laying the foundation for her practice. However, as she became an adult, societal and self-awareness crept into her dancing. The freedom of movement concept sparked a fire of curiosity about how to return to the innocence of movement as a natural reaction.

"I went to a dance studio as a child, and the teacher focused on a mix of contemporary dance and improvisation, and then in elementary school, I took an improvisation dance program. Since then, I have just loved it, and then I got curious," Wu fondly shared.

Now, as a professional somatic and improvisation practitioner, Wu uses her knowledge of Chinese and

Taiwanese culture to inspire creativity in performance art. Wu moved to Canada as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Regina after pursuing a PhD in the performing arts at the University of Northampton in the UK.

Daoism, the ancient Chinese philosophy that emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with one's environment, is a core influence in her work. Wu applies advanced Qigong, a Chinese practice that combines movement, breathing techniques, and meditation to achieve internal balance, based on the concept of Qi, to her improvisation practice. Qi is a Chinese philosophy that posits energy as a moving life force within living things.

Together, all three—Daoism, Qigong and Qi—explore and inform Wu's idea that movement should be free, unpremeditated and should

coexist with the environment without disturbing it. This approach, which involves disconnecting the mind from movement, offers numerous benefits for performance artists, enhancing their creativity and artistic expression.

Specifically, Wu's improvisation work informs her artistic medium, dance, as an exploration of space and movement. In a 2024 workshop funded through SK Arts' Building Arts Equity: BPOC grant, Wu shared her perspective on movement with a group of Saskatchewan artists, teaching them to remove decision-making from their movement and apply what they learned to their practice.

"The difference in practice from my cultural perspective is that in the Western context, there is more decision-making," Wu explained. ***"Even though you do it [move] intuitively, you make a***

decision in the moment and follow through. In my culture, the movement happens before you know what it is."

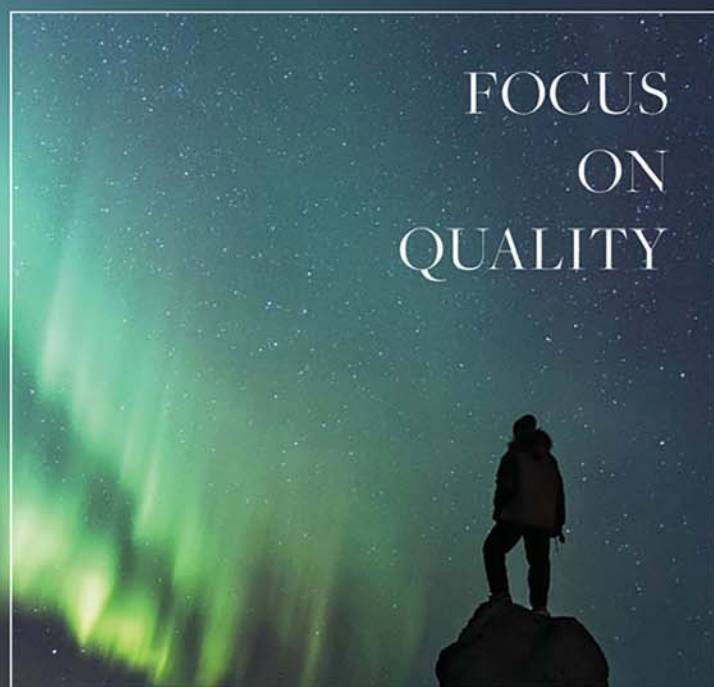
Wu enjoys improvisation immensely, as it allows her to focus on herself while in movement, retreating to the intuitiveness that we often learn to abandon as children. Nonetheless, she shared that "abandoning mental barriers and social confinement takes focus and practice." But once that connection is established and discipline about moving this way is developed, it paves the way for a more profound connection with one another and the environment.

Wu is working on a project to bring her practice into a performance form with her collaborators.

I-Ying Wu in *Interlude*, a trio improvisation performance.

Photo credit: Raymond Ambrosi

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Tic Toc TEN Time

By Shandean Reid

In 2019, theatre artists Gabrielle Dufresne, Abbey Thiessen and Robyn Sanderson conceived an idea: a performance festival featuring a series of new ten-minute performances to provide emerging artists with a platform to network, inspire creativity and share their latest work. Festival participants can be at any stage of their artistic career, allowing for greater diversity among artists and their range than is available in traditional performing spaces.

Dufresne and Thiessen's vision and the one-night festival have since evolved into a two-night event over the years. The goal was to create an opportunity in Saskatchewan to allow creativity to flourish, unrestricted by genre. The festival features theatre, spoken word, comedy and more, and it was a huge success. They shared that the festival allowed context, intention and conceptual framework found in performing arts to flourish. Sanderson has since left the province.

Theatre artist and composer Kaydence Banga was celebrated at SK Arts' 2025 Arts of Celebration and was one of the selected playwrights for the 2025 installation of Tic Toc TEN. She created a three-handed project, *A Job to Do*, featuring herself and actors Hope Van Viet and Jacob Sawatzky. A University of Regina graduate with a BA in Theatre and Performance; Media, Art, and Performance (music concentration); and a minor in Psychology, Banga shared that she was motivated to participate because formal playwriting was not part of her devised theatre program. Tic Toc TEN provided her with the opportunity to gain experience while working on a fun project with artists she was interested in collaborating with.

"One of the skills I didn't learn formally was sitting down and writing a play at a computer, and I have been interested in it for a while now and loved that I could start with a smaller play,"

Banga said about her experience with Tic Toc TEN. She also shared that working with the festival allowed her to recognize that, as a playwright, she would like to write plays in which she isn't cast and can objectively assess her work for improvements.

Pleased with Banga's feedback, Thiessen said that ***"this kind of opportunity for artists to pursue passion and foster introspection on smaller, more compact plays, to move forward with their craft by trying it in a smaller controlled play before going on to produce a bigger show"*** makes her happy and is what the founding trio envisioned for the festival.

Over its four stagings, the bi-annual festival delivered on its vision to be a fresh take on traditional art forms, executed with accessibility in mind, and free to the public thanks to grant funding and donations. The next one is scheduled for 2027. Dufresne also shared that the festival is bi-annual, allowing her and Thiessen to

pursue their artistic projects while producing the festival.

Tic Toc TEN performance festival received funding from Sask Lotteries through its partnership with SaskCulture; partnership, as well as the Independent Artists program. The festival duo expressed ***"a huge thanks to SK Arts and Sask Lotteries,"*** adding that they are ***"incredibly grateful for the support to the arts and ad hoc teams."***

Screenshot from live stream of Emma Eaton (L) and Rachel Walliser (R) performing *Colourless Ruby and the Fantastical Missing Shades* at Tic Toc TEN (2025).



Highlights from Arts of Celebration–CREATION 2025

Arts of Celebration 2025

As part of the Arts of Celebration—CREATION 2025,
SK Arts proudly honours the following:

EMERGING PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

Kaydence Banga, composer, theatre artist
Theatre, Regina

"I find one of the things that fuels me most is the constant ability to try new things."

Nathan Coppens, Mad actor, musician,
playwright, producer
Theatre, Saskatoon

"I am a Mad artist, telling a Mad story. Every piece of art is for everyone."

Jensine Emeline, theatre designer and arts
administrator
Theatre, Saskatoon

"There is something so special about being part of a circle that is bigger than yourself."

Ibukun-Oluwa Fasunhan, theatre artist and
researcher
Theatre, Saskatoon

"... driven by a deep commitment to truth-telling, social justice, and the pursuit of belonging."

Holly Gilroy, musician, community radio host,
volunteer, arts administrator
Music, Saskatoon

"I love making a small mark in the rich community we have in Saskatchewan."

Avianna Hudym, theatre artist
Theatre, Saskatoon

"... an unshakeable curiosity about the relationships we have with ourselves and each other."

Rooky Kamiz, artist and musician
Music, Saskatoon

"... a powerful blend of cultural heritage and global ambition ..."

ESTABLISHED ARTISTS AND ARTS LEADERS

Kathy Allen, Arts and Grants Consultant, City of
Saskatoon
Theatre, Saskatoon

"Creativity and the arts make my soul feel better."

Anna Marie Bekolay, musician, composer
Music, Saskatoon

"... the way the rest of the world's demands can slide away when I'm focused on practising or composing music ..."

Marie-Véronique Bourque, jazz flutist-singer-
songwriter
Music, Regina

"... [art] allows me to push my limits, express myself and feed my soul."

Tim Bratton, actor, sound designer, producer,
dramaturge, playwright, and director
Theatre, Saskatoon

"The deepest impulse that drives me as an artist is the desire to bring people together."

Marvin Tontiwachwuthikul Chan (Merv xx Gotti), singer-songwriter, Artistic Director,
Trifecta Sound Co.
Music, Regina

"I'll make and pray and fight for music until I'm dead."

Shawn Cuthand, writer, comedian, producer,
actor and director
Theatre, Saskatoon

"I strive for audience reaction in performing standup comedy and acting in theatrical plays."

Ray Deans, educator, director and actor
Theatre, Moose Jaw

"I am inspired by the opportunity to guide students as they grow as performers and individuals on the stage."

Lenore Maier, musician and arts administrator
Music, Saskatoon

"The momentum of a creative team is an incredibly powerful force."

Amanda McArthur, elementary band teacher
with Regina Public Schools
Music, Regina

"... making music requires vulnerability ..."

Jennifer Switzer, music educator
Music, Swift Current

"... driven to inspire students to pursue academic and personal excellence while promoting a challenging yet positive learning environment."

R. Corey Taylor, District Manager, Yamaha
Canada Music Ltd., freelance musician and
educator
Music, Regina

"... studying music is about experiencing the world from new perspectives and developing an inquisitive mind."

Marianne Woods, theatre artist
Theatre, Regina

"... grateful to be an arts worker, actor, and teacher in Treaty 4 territory."

ASPIRING YOUTH ARTISTS

Kateryna Grace, singer-songwriter
Music, Saskatoon

"... finding comfort and meaning in the lyrics."

ORGANIZATIONS, FESTIVALS AND COLLECTIVES

Burnt Thicket Theatre, theatre company
Theatre, Saskatoon

"... motivated by our vision of a world of hopeful people who know their immeasurable value."

Country at the Creek Music Festival, music
festival
Music, Big River

"... my passion for music runs deep, rooted in my upbringing in a family that celebrated it as a core part of our lives."

Curtain Razors, theatre group
Theatre, Regina

"... hungry to explore the outer boundaries of theatre ..."

The Dripping Honeys, music ensemble
Music, Regina

"... fueled by music and theatre, the creation of new work, coming together to rehearse, and performing the shows ..."

Warman Community Band, community band
Music, Warman

"... driven by a desire for keeping live concert band music thriving and accessible for Warman and the surrounding area."

In Memoriam

August 2024 - July 2025

BENTHAM, Bonnie

Bonnie Bentham, a visionary gallerist, co-founded The Gallery/Art Placement, a commercial art gallery, frame shop and art supply store in Saskatoon. Bentham shaped the gallery's identity as a vibrant hub for contemporary art. Through thoughtful exhibition design and artist-centred programming, Bentham championed, nurtured, and advanced the careers of gallery artists she encountered, fostering deep relationships between the community, collectors, and creators, leaving an indisputable impact on the arts community. Even after her retirement, Bonnie was an expected fixture at the gallery's receptions. She had a vast appreciation for art, architecture, music, nature and food. Bonnie passed away on May 16, 2025.

BOLEN, Melvin Carl

Melvin Bolen was a respected sculptor and educator for over 50 years, known for his functional sculptures. He was a founding member of the Saskatchewan Craft Council, and he helped established North Star Pottery, an artistic and social hub, which later became his home. His work is represented in private and public collections nationally and internationally. A nature lover, Bolen enjoyed its riches thoroughly in gardening and farming and has given back by planting thousands of trees. Mel passed away peacefully on September 13, 2024.

CICANSKY, Victor

Victor Cicansky was an influential art community figure whose work left an enduring mark on the art world, particularly his distinguishable garden-produce sculptures, that held a special connection in his personal life. He obtained a BEd, MFA and honorary doctorate from the University of Regina where he taught for over 20 years in the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of the Arts. He also taught at the Banff School of Fine Arts

(now the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity) and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD University). Victor received several prestigious awards for his contributions, including the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, the Lieutenant Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award, the Order of Canada and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal. Victor passed away in Regina on March 3, 2025.

DYCK, Aganetha

Artist and mentor Aganetha Dyck was born in Manitoba and moved to Saskatchewan with her husband in the 1970s, where she began her artistic career with studying in arts criticism, batik, pottery, and weaving at Prince Albert Community College. Later, Dyck and her family returned to Manitoba, where she studied art history. While her work spanned several media, her distinctive work with live honeybees, which she allowed to build honeycombs on objects over time (sometimes years) eventually afforded Dyck international recognition and a career that spanned several decades and awards, including the Arts Award of Distinction (Manitoba) and the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. Her work is represented in several collections across Canada, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Canada Council Art Bank and SK Arts' Permanent Collection. Aganetha Dyck passed away on July 18, 2025.

HOLYER, Grace Rose

Visual and literary artist Grace Rose Holyer earned a BFA in painting and drawing at the University of Regina and an MFA in painting at the University of Saskatchewan. Passionate about her work, she created paintings, drawings, scrolls, and interactive artist books featuring anecdotal texts and pastiches with distorted images and poems. Holyer was also interested in feminine issues. Her work is represented in private and public collections, including

SK Arts and Weyburn Art Gallery, the Canada Council Art Bank and the City of Regina art collection. Grace Rose Holyer passed away on July 26, 2025.

JEFFERSON, Kenneth Ian David

Kenneth is lovingly remembered by his many relatives and friends, including members of the music community in Regina where he was born. Ken worked in advertising for CKCK Radio during the 1960's, and his music career as a piano player, band leader, composer and educator spanned over 50 years. Ken composed music for films, events, talk shows and television series including the *Saskatchewan Summer Games*, *Celebrate Saskatchewan*, *Big Sky Country* and *Eye on Saskatchewan*. Ken is fondly remembered as an inspiring member of Saskatchewan's musical landscape. Kenneth passed away on January 24, 2025.

KOWALSKY, Olesia Alexandra

Educator, potter and painter Olesia Kowalsky was passionate about teaching and creativity. Olesia earned a BEd and a BFA from the University of Saskatchewan. She taught English at the Gabriel Dumont Institute and served on the boards of the Saskatchewan Craft Council and Saskatchewan Arts Board. She developed a pottery program for the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAT), where she also taught pottery in Prince Albert. Olesia had varied interests and was a passionate advocate for women's rights. Olesia passed away on July 26, 2025.

MCELROY, Anne

Artist, arts educator and mentor Anne McElroy moved to Saskatoon in 1973 where she pursued her artistic career. She earned a degree in psychology at Queen's University and completed an MFA, and later a degree in educational psychology. Anne's work has been exhibited across

Saskatchewan and Canada. Her paintings are identifiably abstract and playful, contributing beautifully to her style and children's books. Anne was also a popular art teacher and self-published a book, *Bewildered by Loss*. Anne passed away on December 21, 2024.

MITCHELL, Dorothy June

Dorothy June Mitchell, known as June Mitchell, was an accomplished educator, writer and poet from Manitoba who settled in Saskatchewan. She studied at Central Collegiate and Regina College, earning a degree in the arts and a certificate in education from the University of Saskatchewan. She was a staunch social advocate and special education consultant for the Regina School Board. In retirement, June wrote short stories and poems, and her work appeared in literary magazines such as *The Antigonish Review*, *Spring*, *Grain* and newsletters like *Grey Matters* and *Net*. She was also among SK Arts' 2024 Arts of Celebration honourees. At the age of 98, June passed away on December 8, 2024.

TOWNSEND, Doug

Doug Townsend was a talented photographer and a prominent member of the arts community in Saskatchewan. He was involved with the Photographers Gallery in Saskatoon, where he was a curator for several years. He also worked with the Saskatchewan Arts Board as a visual and media arts consultant in Regina and Saskatoon until retirement. SK Arts is deeply grateful for Doug's dedication, contribution and passion that permeated through the arts community and his colleagues during his tenure with the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Doug passed away on April 29, 2025.

MISSION

To provide funding and support to the arts for the benefit of all people in Saskatchewan.

VISION

Saskatchewan artists, their work, and their contribution to the province's quality of life are recognized and valued.

ABOUT SK ARTS

The Saskatchewan Arts Board, now operating as SK Arts, is the oldest public arts funders in North America. Governed by *The Arts Board Act, 1997*, SK Arts provides grants, programs and services to individuals and groups whose activities have an impact on the arts in Saskatchewan and ensure that opportunities exist for Saskatchewan residents to experience the arts.

SK Arts acknowledges that the land currently known as the Province of Saskatchewan is comprised of portions of lands from Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10, the territories of the Nêhiyawak, Anihšīnāpēk, Dene, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota nations and the homeland of the Métis. We give thanks to the host Indigenous communities in this province, as we bear the collective responsibility to honour and respect their protocols and homes and to engage meaningfully with their knowledges in our work.

SK Arts values an equitable, diverse and inclusive world, where all people have fair access to the tools and resources needed to realize creative and community endeavours.

OUR GRANT PROGRAMS

- Artists in Communities – support for artist projects and residencies in partnership with community organizations and businesses
- Artists in Schools – support for artist projects and residencies hosted in traditional school settings
- Building Arts Equity: BPOC Program – supports artists of colour who may have struggled to access funding from other SK Arts programs
- Independent Artists – Professional Development, research, creation and production and presentation funding for professional artists
- Indigenous Peoples Art and Artists – funding to support the development and continuation of Indigenous arts practices, including both traditional and contemporary work
- Micro-Grant Program – small grants with quick turnaround designed to support emergent opportunities and artists and arts organizations from underserved communities or that have not received prior SK Arts funding
- Prince Edward Arts Scholarship for Saskatchewan students pursuing post-secondary studies in an arts discipline
- Professional Arts Organizations Program – funding for arts organizations in Saskatchewan
- SaskFestivals – project grants for arts festivals in Saskatchewan communities
- Share and Connect: Indigenous Community Arts – grants that empower Indigenous communities to control and develop their own arts and culture

ABOUT ARTS SASKATCHEWAN

ARTS Saskatchewan is a collection of stories showcasing prairie artists' creativity, diversity and innovation. This publication is a vehicle packaging the history, present and future of Saskatchewan's artistic landscape for the province and Canada.

CREDITS

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