

MAS En Masse

Message to Members - Winter 2008



*Museums Association of Saskatchewan
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*Royce Pettyjohn
President*

Report from the Board

Greetings to everyone from the Board of Directors. I'm pleased this second MAS En Masse communication update will be making its way to you in time for the start of the new year.

In this message, I'd like to answer some member questions that have arisen in the past couple of months, and also tell you about MAS funding and plans for 2009.

Ends, Advocacy and Community Relevancy

Following our last member communiqué, there were some questions about some of the terminology that was used, particularly related to the terms "Ends," "Advocacy" and "Community Relevancy." There was also a question as to how the MAS Board identified "Advocacy" and "Community Relevancy" as priorities.

The term "Ends" simply refers to what things will be like in the "end." That is to say, when we have accomplished what we want to accomplish, in the "end" it will look like what has been articulated in the "Ends" statements/policies.

With regard to "Advocacy" and "Community Relevancy," those priorities did not come out of the visioning session at the AGM in Maple Creek this past spring. The session, as was stated, was a reaffirmation of the message that the MAS Board of Directors has been getting from the membership over the course of the last decade - that message being that museums need more funding and more volunteers, and that we want our museums to have a broader public appeal and a greater base of public support.

Therefore, implicit in these desires is the requirement for increased work in areas of "Advocacy" and "Community Relevancy." Funders and volunteers generally only support those causes for which they understand the importance, or for which they feel a personal affinity.

"Advocacy" is elevating the understanding of the important role that museums play, and influencing decisions related to the public support museums receive.

"Community Relevancy" refers to the actions and programming that forge those feelings of personal affinity towards museums, and subsequently broaden museums' base of public support.

Ultimately "Advocacy" and "Community Relevancy" activities are those initiatives that are going to make our museums more sustainable and better enabled to survive into the future.

Advocacy and Community Relevancy Build Sustainability

Drawing from my experience with the S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Museum in Maple Creek, we learned in recent years how critical advocacy and community relevancy activities are to sustainability.

Our focus at the S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Museum for many years was on our internal operations (cataloguing, collections management, exhibits, etc.), as well as figuring out how the museum was going to pay the power bill. Although the museum was working diligently towards meeting museum standards, due to our internal focus, our profile outside the walls of the museum was suffering (and we weren't getting any closer to being able to pay the power bill either).

The S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Museum first realized that it had a relevancy crisis on its hands when the Town of Maple Creek organized a community committee to plan the town's centennial celebration. Although it was a community heritage celebration, neither of the local museums were originally invited to participate. Around the same time, the town proposed the demolition of one of the community's landmark heritage buildings, and a rumour was circulating that the Town Council was wishing that they could repatriate the lot they had provided to the museum so that it could be re-developed for commercial purposes!

That was six years ago, and although the S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Museum still has more work to do in the areas of advocacy and community relevancy, the museum's efforts in these areas over the course of the past six years has resulted in a more stable financial picture for the museum as well as a heightened awareness of the value of heritage within the community. An indicator of this is the museum's success in advocating for the creation of a Heritage Advisory Committee that advises the Town of Maple Creek on issues related to heritage preservation.

The S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Museum is not alone in its sustainability challenges, and is certainly not alone in undertaking advocacy and community relevancy work at the local level. During the MAS Board of Directors' recent meeting with the MAS Network Representatives, the board had the opportunity to hear about other exciting examples of community relevancy activities that are being undertaken by museums across the province.

We learned about the Herbert museum hosting the community's Christmas celebrations, the Mossbank museum's cooperative work with the local rink, the Main Centre museum's geo-caching initiative, as well as other terrific activities that are taking Saskatchewan museums outside of their walls in an effort to more effectively engage their communities. It is hoped that these museums and others will share their inspiring advocacy and community relevancy success stories through the MAS Megaphone!

So, quite to the contrary of the suggestion that there is a desire to see smaller museums fold (heaven forbid!), MAS wants to see museums flourish. The priorities of "Advocacy" and "Community Relevancy" are seen as the means by which all museums will be able to achieve sustainability and flourish into the future. In support of this, MAS staff are in the process of revising programming and developing new programming related to "Museums and Sustainability." In this way MAS will be better able to support its membership in their efforts to become more sustainable within their communities over the long-term.

MAS Funding for the Coming Year

When we recently defended the MAS application to the SaskLotteries Trust, the board of SaskCulture indicated that they were "excited" about the direction that MAS was taking. They very much liked the idea of "Museums and Sustainability," and the idea of museums becoming more involved in their communities. They likened the role of community museums to that of community rinks, but rather than being a place for sport and the celebration of athletic achievement, they could see museums serving as a place where the community comes together for cultural purposes and the celebration of heritage. A very interesting notion indeed! Following a very positive discussion about MAS' trust application, we were happy to later learn that SaskCulture approved a \$10,000 increase to MAS' core funding!

It is very important that MAS continues to demonstrate its relevance to SaskCulture as it is our core funder. MAS has, over the years, also received project funding from the Museums Assistance Program (MAP) through the Department of Canadian Heritage. However, the MAP is becoming more stringent about how its funding can be used, and MAS will no longer be able to use the funding to support activities that MAP feels are core operations. In the future, only special projects that go beyond normal operations will be eligible for funding. It is difficult to tell at this point how this new expectation will impact MAS; however, the Executive Director and MAS staff have been working on budget scenarios to ensure that MAS will not be adversely impacted by the changes.

New Initiatives Planned for 2009

The MAS Board of Directors is very much looking forward to our January meeting as the MAS staff will be discussing the new "Museums and Sustainability" initiative with us. As more concrete proposals come forward, MAS will be seeking feedback on more specific elements of the initiative. The development of advisory councils is also currently being discussed.

As you are already aware, MAS has been advocating for the creation of a provincial cultural policy for quite some time. We were therefore pleased when the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport announced that the government was working on a new cultural policy for the province. Recently, we have also been quite pleased that the province has been consulting with MAS on the development of the new policy, as well as with regard to funding for infrastructure.

In addition, MAS has been cooperating with SaskCulture and its Heritage Community of Interest on the development of a new provincial heritage advocacy organization. This organization will work cooperatively with MAS and other provincial heritage organizations on unifying and strengthening the advocacy voice for heritage within the Province of Saskatchewan. This group will work to influence political policy related to heritage, as well as influence political decisions that will ultimately impact heritage.

A specific example of a heritage issue that needs to be addressed, and which could be brought to the attention of this new organization once it is up and running, was discussed at the recent meeting between the MAS Board and the Network Representatives.

Currently there seems to be no provision at the provincial level for the identification and protection of heritage landscapes. Recent resource extraction activities approved by the province have significantly impacted part of the battlefield at the Battle of Frenchman Butte National Historic Site, and are also threatening Boundary Commission and NWMP sites near Estevan. As community museums are often placed in the role of being the heritage advocates for their communities, issues related to heritage preservation at a local level tend to be of great concern. Hopefully, through working collaboratively with the province, other heritage organizations and the new Saskatchewan Heritage Advocacy Organization, museums can help influence the provincial cultural policy to include provisions for heritage landscapes.

Communication Opportunities

There is never a dull moment in MAS and we hope that your museum has the opportunity to learn about all the interesting things that are happening through not only this communication piece, but also through the Ephemera e-newsletter and the MAS Megaphone.

If your museum does not have access to e-mail, Ephemera and MAS Megaphone updates can be sent to any (or all) of your museum's Board of Directors that have personal e-mail accounts. Simply contact the MAS office with their e-mail addresses and ask that they be added to the distribution list. E-mail remains the most timely method of distributing

information, so in order to ensure that your museum is getting the news while it is still hot, we encourage each museum to identify someone that can receive e-mail updates on behalf of your museum. If that is impossible, please contact the MAS office to discuss alternate arrangements.

The MAS Board of Directors wishes everyone a very happy holiday season and we look forward to seeing you all in the new year!

Sincerely,

Royce E. W. Pettyjohn
President - Board of Directors
Museums Association of Saskatchewan



Brenda Sherring
Executive Director

Report from the Executive Director

Happy Holidays Everyone

I sincerely wish each one of you the best that your particular dreams for this holiday season can bring you. Every cultural group and every family has its own set of traditions that they use to celebrate. Because of this, I am especially aware of the valuable role that museums play in community development.

It is our traditions, customs, beliefs and personal history that form who we are today. It is how we interact with each other and celebrate and learn from our distinct characteristics, that leads us into the future. Museums, because they represent the cultural heritage of their communities, are easy for me to think of at this time of year. For example, did you know that there is an aluminum Christmas tree museum? It was established in North Carolina in 1997; it is now a virtual museum at <http://www.aluminumtree.com/>

MAS Budget for 2009-10

Since I last wrote, there has been much going on at MAS. We have completed the application to both the SaskLotteries Trust and to the Museums Assistance Program (MAP).

The result of our Trust application is an award of a budget increase of \$10,000, to \$378,000 for the operational year beginning April 1, 2009. In 1991, MAS was receiving \$362,000 in operational funding; if this amount were prorated to today, MAS would have \$500,000 to spend on delivering programs and services to museums. Although we asked to be put on par with this amount, the total additional funding available this year for eight provincial cultural organizations was only \$60,000.

And so, though we will continue to advocate for increased funding so that we can increase what we offer to you, we are also pleased to be given financial endorsement for the goals that the board has put forward and also for the programming and services that we have outlined for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Museums Assistance Program covers strictly defined projects outlined for purposes of furthering training and educational programming, as well as Aboriginal cultural heritage initiatives. It is not to be considered for any on-going basic operational services.

We have applied for projects to upgrade the Certificate Program to contemporary content (it has never undergone a systematic review in its entirety) and to review Standards to ensure that it is also as up-to-date and pertinent to Saskatchewan as possible. Wendy, Audrey and Jessica applied for funding for the projects that the Networks, First People's and Saskatchewan Museums' Committee and the Special Interest Groups have identified that they each would like to work on. We expect to have news from the MAP applications in July 2009. These results will impact our programs and services beginning in the fall of 2009.

Museum Grant Program

We have met with Jon-Paul Suwala, SaskCulture, a few times to learn how the Museum Grant Program will unfold now that it will be administered by SaskCulture.

Mr. Suwala has indicated that it is likely that the application process will be updated to be more streamlined. Although we do not know yet what the application forms will look like or when they will be re-designed, the indication is that everyone will have advance warning of changes, as well as that MAS will have input into re-designs. SaskCulture will be choosing the juries for the Museum Grant Program from a pool of names that MAS will be contributing to.

It is very likely that those museums that have been applying for what was called Stream 1 funding could very well see a shortened application form. I suspect that this will be appreciated! We do not yet know how the other application forms will be designed except that the goal is to have the application forms less lengthy and more focused on how museums engage their communities in museum programming. MAS will be kept informed of the results from the MGP applications so that we can, in turn, develop any programs and/or services that would help museums better their opportunities to receive funding. We won't receive this feedback from SaskCulture until later in spring 2009.

Museum Infrastructure Funding

I met with two people from the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport to provide feedback on their questions regarding a proposed funding program for infrastructure. They were given the message that the proposed funding program should be available to museums that are requesting small amounts (the last program stipulated a \$1 million investment).

They were told that museum infrastructure needs consisted of things like: roofing; climate controls; windows; doors; extra storage space; retrofits of heritage buildings; signage; elevators; and grounds/landscaping upgrades. There is some need for brand new facilities as well. We illustrated that Saskatchewan has more communities supporting museums, per capita, than any other province; in a way, heritage support is a characteristic of a Saskatchewanian!

They were also informed of how museums are often the community centres of activity providing information on local genealogy, family history, community history and heritage and historical sites (natural and man-made) in the surrounding area. They were also advised to find a way to encourage support of culture and heritage through this funding program. We acknowledged that all communities have a need to develop sports facilities; however, it is also important to encourage and support heritage and culture so that there is at least a balance to community life.

They also heard about the valuable contribution volunteers make to museums and that the infrastructure funding program should consider in-kind donations of supplies and/or labour, at the going rate, as the museum's matching contribution to the project. A big thanks to those of you who were able to get your information to us so that we could give the ministry this feedback. We will be writing a summary paper to the ministry and sending it in mid-January, so for those who would like to add some concrete descriptions to this, please feel free to send in your thoughts to me.

New Provincial Heritage Advocacy Organization

Royce and I met with the consultant, hired by SaskCulture, to determine a direction for a new provincial heritage advocacy organization. We suggested that this organization should be as inclusive as possible and be a tool which heritage organizations can use to speak with one voice about needs, values and relevance.

Because there will need to be a Board of Directors to start it up, an interim board might be comprised of members of the current heritage organizations. With this interim board, incorporation will be applied for and membership terms established. Naturally, heritage advocacy will be its priority.

From MAS' perspective, we would like to see the vital role that museums play in community development and sustainability as one of its key messages. We also would like to see consideration for heritage on the table when it comes to community/municipal planning. We feel that this Heritage Advocacy Organization will be successful when people realize that culture and heritage is how we live our lives and that the museum reflects the culture and heritage that grows within its identified community; it is this recognition that creates the sense of pride and confidence that is needed to positively impact economic growth and community well-being.

SaskCulture is hosting a Heritage Forum to collect your thoughts on what the key purposes of this Heritage Advocacy Organization should be. Announcements and registration forms are included with this package.

MAS' Tourism Saskatchewan Involvement

Two years ago, SaskCulture and the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance appointed me to the Board of Directors of Tourism Saskatchewan in the seat of Arts, Culture and Heritage. As many of you know, the first two years on any board is a steep learning curve especially for organizations going through changes as Tourism Saskatchewan has been.

This past year, the tourism board appointed me to chair the Board Development Committee and to participate on the Policy Review and Regulatory Committee. Because my term was ending December 31, 2008, I re-applied for the tourism board position and was re-appointed to another two-year term. Both SaskCulture and the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance would like to strengthen the bridge between tourism and culture; they hope to see the cultural tourism task team, or something similar to it, revitalized with greater direction and impact. I will keep you posted on our linkage with tourism.

MAS Operational Plan, Networks and SIGs

In the office, we have begun to design an operational plan to follow the direction set by the board.

In order to make sure that we have heard the suggestions that have been made to us, we have reviewed the notes from the Future Search Conference (2001), the 2003 Jackfish Lodge Advisory Council, the Environmental Scan and the Visioning Session conducted at our last AGM.

As well, Jessica has received great suggestions from the Special Interest Group (SIG) Representatives; some of the board and I attended one of those meetings. Wendy has brought back a gamut of ideas from the Network meetings; board members were thrilled with the information provided to them from the Network Representative meeting in November. Audrey has communicated the feedback that she has been receiving from the First People's and Saskatchewan Museums' Committee, as well as the various other group meetings that she has attended. All of your suggestions and advice have been taken to heart and we are preparing a list of ideas that we are looking forward to presenting to you in person during the first half of the new year.

The first thing that I want to do is to assure you that we will definitely be consulting with you in regards to these ideas and suggestions. This spring it is my intention to go to each of the Network meetings. By then, it will have been two years since my last visit. This time, the purpose will be to present you with the ideas and suggestions for programming that we have received so far and to hear your views. I truly look forward to meeting with each of the Networks again.

I also want to meet with Past Presidents and Vice Presidents as early in the new year as possible; the aim is to learn the history of the organization so that any future leader of this organization has the corporate knowledge of what has been done and tried before, and what past directions have been; this might help new board members and staff be better oriented to the needs of museums in Saskatchewan. Past Presidents and Vice-Presidents, please watch for an invite!

I also am looking forward to discussions with the Museum Managers SIG regarding an advocacy strategy for MAS and to participating in as many discussions about future direction as I can. We are looking for feedback on ideas on programming, advocacy, and communication needs.

The Special Interest Group Representatives have had tremendous impact on the programming and services provided to mid-size and large museums. They have met several times a year to determine training needs for Educators, Conservators, Virtual Museums, Family Sites, Researchers, Interpreters and Exhibit Designers. They have also been the thrust behind the Future Search Conference and in the Advisory Councils that were held up to 2003. They have also led the development of the Coaching Program and the Peer Exchange.

In November, five of the eight members resigned from their positions as representatives of their specific Special Interest Group for a variety of reasons. Many had been holding the position of Special Interest Group Representative for more than 10 years and deserve a loud round of applause for their generous donation of time and expertise.

A very special heartfelt thank you to:

- **Jennifer Hoesgen** (Humboldt Museum and Art Gallery) co-representing the Museum Managers SIG;
- **Laurel Kinzel** (Mendel Art Gallery) representing the Education and Public Programming SIG;
- **Christa Nicolat** (Gabriel Dumont Institute) representing the Research SIG;
- **John Snell** (Saskatchewan Science Centre) representing the Exhibitions SIG; and
- **Andrew Whiting** (Beavercreek Interpretive Centre) representing the Interpreters SIG.

Although these representatives have stepped down, programming will continue to be developed and delivered specifically to assist with the professional development of personnel in mid-size to large museums. Almost all of these former representatives have agreed to continue to participate in upcoming advisory councils, Future Search discussion groups and other planning and consulting sessions that will arise. The first Future Search discussion is tentatively scheduled for January 2009.

Thank you as well to the Special Interest Group Representatives that are continuing in their positions: **Dean Bauche** (Allan Sapp Museum and Art Gallery) representing the Museum Managers SIG, and **Jannette Hamilton** (Saskatchewan Provincial Parks) representing the Family of Sites SIG. **Elaine Rohatensky** (Fort Walsh Historic Site) will continue to help Jannette Hamilton with the Family of Sites SIG and is looking for a replacement representative for the Conservators SIG.

Holidays and Heritage

As we enter the holiday season, I imagine that we each have our individual family traditions that we honour and uphold. Some are waiting for family to come home. Some are travelling to visit family and friends. Some will engage in quiet, reflective meditation. Some will be surrounded with much activity, laughter, and active celebration. Whether lighting candles, sharing a meal or simply watching the moonlight on the snow, it does seem that it is a season that my father always said was a good time to sit down and count our blessings.

As we celebrate the traditions of the season, it is easy to appreciate the valuable role that heritage plays in our sense of who we are, where we have grown from, and what it is we want to keep in order to travel forward into our future.

Since my last note to you, there have been significant changes that might impact museums in Saskatchewan. Where we see a questionable financial future, we also have seen the first time that culture has made it to the federal political arena. Where we see the potential of a new-style federal government in the form of a coalition, we also see our own provincial government engaging in conversation and consultation with heritage groups on important things like a cultural policy and funding for infrastructure. In this atmosphere, MAS has been looking at its own history, reflecting on suggestions and advice that you have been providing over the years, and trying to determine a programming model to present to you, that will both guide and sustain you, during these turbulent times.

I have more thanks as I reflect on this year. I have thanks and loud handclaps for those who rescue tour buses, those who are compassionate and understanding, those who provide advice on a better way to do things, those who have a sense of humour in difficult times, those who are passionate and energetically enthusiastic, those who ask questions, those who are forgiving, those who say ‘Hi how are you?’ (and you know that they mean it!), and those who are just plain nice and want us all to be the best that we can be. And now, it is time to go home to our families and friends and de-stress a little bit. I have been learning to play a Celtic harp; my 14-year old, Maple, is fairly accomplished on flute. The two of us are trying to get together a little seasonal repertoire under our belts. (Actually I have a big hunk of fruit cake under mine!) My eldest daughter, Ember, has been busily knitting scarves for presents. This weekend we will get the tree. This will be the 54th year of putting up a real one. Aren’t traditions absolutely wonderful?

Have a very very Happy Holiday Season everyone. I sincerely hope that your wishes come true.

Slainte!

Brenda Sherring
Executive Director

Reports from MAS Staff



Jessica Leavens

Programming & Museum Development Assistant

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

My name is Jessica Leavens and I am the Programming and Museum Development Assistant at MAS. I started on September 22, 2008 and it has been quite the learning adventure for me.

Although I have met some of you, through phone, e-mail, and in-person (e.g. Network meetings, Standards Workshops, and Special Interest Group programming), I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and tell you a bit about myself.

I grew up in Kingston, Ontario and moved to Vancouver Island, British Columbia in 2000. While I was there, I worked on a Bachelor's degree from the University of Victoria (anthropology, intercultural education, and cultural resource management). I have worked as a research analyst/assistant in government, academic, and non-profit settings, coordinated workshops and art shows, been a heritage interpreter in a rural B.C. museum, and lived on a farm learning how to be a beekeeper, chase cows, and build fences. After a visit to Saskatchewan in May 2008, I decided that prairie life (and prairie skies!) appealed to me – and here I am!

I accepted this position because the opportunity to work for MAS, its members, and the Saskatchewan community was an ideal way to use my skills and education, explore and expand my passion for heritage, arts, and culture, and to learn new things – which I have!

This fall has been very busy, and I appreciate your patience as I gained a clearer understanding of our diverse membership, the many training and professional development programs and opportunities MAS provides, and how to coordinate, develop, and evaluate these programs.

If you have ideas, input, and/or feedback, please let me know! I can't promise to be able to do everything, but I can promise to listen, respond, and act on ideas when possible.

So what has been happening here at MAS in terms of education and professional development programming?

Requests for **Standards for Boards workshops** (the half-day workshop for museum boards regarding Standards for Saskatchewan Museums) have been rolling in! For more information on hosting a workshop at your museum for the board, please visit our website (under Education) or call and/or e-mail me for more info. Fees apply.

In the new year, I will begin coordinating **An Introduction to Saskatchewan Standards full day workshop** – unlike the Standards for Boards, this workshop is open to all

museums and provides an overview of the Standards documents. Space is limited. Watch the website and our next mail-out for location and date. Fees apply.

Two Community Trainers facilitate each Standards workshop - these individuals are integral members of our museum community and participate in training/professional development (Train-the-Trainer workshop) every one to two years in order to strengthen their facilitation and teaching skills. If you would like more information about becoming a Community Trainer, please speak to me.

Like many of you, we also submitted grant applications for our educational programming for 2009-10 – this kept me quite busy. Our Museums Assistance Program (MAP) application asked for funding for some new initiatives focusing on sustainability - environmental, social, and economic - as a theme for our programming, and maintained our existing programs such as the Network Knowledge Exchange, Special Interest Groups, and Certificate Programs.

This past fall, MAS hired Gloria DeSantis, a University of Regina Ph.D. candidate and community-based researcher/planner, to develop **The Advocacy Toolkit**, a resource designed to provide basic advocacy knowledge and skills. We will keep you posted as this project develops.

Certificate Programs

Thank you for your patience regarding communication around courses for 2008-09. Usually, you would have seen a calendar of programming by now; however, it had been decided (before I came on board) that a calendar was not effective because it was often out-of-date by the time it arrived. In the future, we will post this information on-line and send out brochures detailing course information.

If you want more information about the Certificate Programs, please check on-line and/or call or e-mail me – I am happy to help.

Certificate in Community Museum Studies

In spring 2009, two courses will be offered: **Research**, and **Exhibit Design and Planning**. Locations and dates TBA in the winter – check on-line and in the mail.

Certificate in First People's Museum Studies

We are actively working on completing the **Community Context/Re-thinking the Museum** course, and my goal is to offer this course in spring 2009. Location and date TBA in the winter – check on-line and in the mail.

Special Interest Program

This program is developed in consultation with the Special Interest Representatives group and is specifically geared towards the needs of mid-to-large sized museums. It consists of Special Interest Groups (SIGs), discussion groups, workshops, the Coaching Program, the Inter-Provincial Peer Exchange, and SIG Representative meetings.

What happened this fall?

- *Virtual Collections discussion group* (September 12, 2008 –Hosted by Prince Albert Art Gallery): An open forum to discuss issues, questions, and new versions of the software.
- *Conservator dinner/discussion group* (October 30, 2008 – held at Beer Brothers in Regina): Conservators from five provinces met to discuss challenges, issues, and successes.
- *A Practical Guide to Adhesives for Conservators* (October 29-31, 2008 – hosted by MAS and the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina): A two and a half day workshop brought Julia Fenn (Ethnographic Conservator from the Royal Ontario Museum) and conservators together in a very successful, hands-on, engaging and informative workshop on adhesives.

I am working on programming offerings for spring 2009 for the Special Interest Groups. Please check the website and the next mail-out for more information. I welcome your input, feedback, and new ideas and priorities for professional development – please call or e-mail me.

Professional Development Opportunities

The Coaching Program

This development program offers museum professionals the services of a coach who will provide short-term, on-site guidance and expertise in a specific area of need. The goal is to support museums in achieving their objectives by providing individualized coaching to staff over a period of one to two days without having to leave the museum.

Applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information, please call and/or e-mail me – I am happy to answer any questions and guide you through the application process. Fees apply.

The Inter-Provincial Peer Exchange

This is a peer exchange program designed to build on the knowledge and experience of museum staff thereby increasing expertise across Saskatchewan museums. This program provides museum staff with an opportunity to partner with a colleague for the purpose of exchanging knowledge, skills, ideas, perspectives, approaches, etc. The program is intended to support staff working in different institutions who believe they can learn from one another.

Applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information, please call and/or e-mail me – I am happy to answer any questions and guide you through the application process. Fees apply.

Thank you to all for offering your assistance, providing input and feedback, and your patience as I learn about MAS, our members, and Saskatchewan. I look forward to working with you over the coming year. Happy Holidays!

**Take care,
Jessica**



Wendy Fitch
Director, Museum Operation Service

The fall Network meetings have all taken place and I'm pleased to have been able to attend all but one of them. (The only reason I wasn't able to attend all 11 meetings was that two were scheduled for the same day and I had to attend the one where the Network Knowledge Exchange session was taking place.)

For the most part, attendance at the Network meetings was good – the nice weather may have had an impact, with some gardeners deciding to stay home and work in the yard rather than come to a meeting.

Traditionally, at the fall meeting, Network members report on their season, and this year was no different. Most participants reported having a generally good season with attendance levels approximately the same as the previous year. Many noted that new residents were visiting the museum as a way of learning about their new community. This is an indication of how the economic changes taking place in the province are having an impact on museums. For some this was an entirely new segment of the community they hadn't considered in the past, but will be looking at in the future.

I should note that the museums experiencing an increase in visitation also reported increased activity (hosting travelling exhibits, programs focusing specifically on schools and/or seniors) or better signage. Those that reported decreases in visitation were also reporting decreased activities often as a result of decreasing numbers of either paid (generally summer student) or volunteer staff, resulting in a lack of consistency in open hours and an inability to provide programs for visitors.

Most Network participants reported undertaking some capital projects, whether it was regular maintenance, major structural repairs or new construction. This information will help us to advocate on your behalf to the provincial government as it develops a proposed new infrastructure program for tourism, sport, culture and recreation.

Network members' main concern revolved around the impact the changes to the administration of the Museum Grant Program may have on their funding. This is obviously an issue which MAS will be following very closely given the importance of secure operational funding to the stability of the museum community.

Next year we will again be presenting a Network Knowledge Exchange training session at the spring meetings. The topic chosen by the Network Representatives at their May 2008 meeting is 'Using Stories in Interpretation.' We've been talking for some time about the need to collect the stories which give the collection meaning. This session is intended to provide an introduction to the ways of incorporating those stories into the exhibits, programs and activities of the museum.

In addition, members of the MAS Board will be attending the spring meetings to consult with this segment of the museum community regarding the new Museums and Sustainability initiative. They will be looking for feedback from the members based on the results of a joint board-staff meeting scheduled for mid-January.

MAS Executive Director Brenda Sherring also plans on attending these meetings with me in order to become better acquainted with members.

As we develop our operational plan for the coming three years, we will definitely be looking at how to include the member groups, including the Networks, within our new framework. There will be a strong emphasis on Networks as a member consultation mechanism. Both the board and staff will be looking at the Networks as a forum for discussing issues affecting museums. We will also be responding to the desire of members to have training more readily accessible by trying to hold as many training sessions as possible in regional locations and by looking at other possible ways of delivering learning opportunities to the museum community.

I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and hope we all come back in the new year refreshed and ready to work together to achieve our common goals.

Wendy



Audrey Dreaver
Director of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

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As Director of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage for MAS, it is my pleasure to present an overview of recent activities related to the association's Aboriginal initiatives.

My position is a term contract from September 8th, 2008 to June 30th, 2009. I began on September 8th, at which time I started the challenging task of organizing the historical information in preparation to complete the tasks identified in my contract.

Those tasks include:

- co-ordination of meetings for the First People's and Saskatchewan Museums' Committee and First People's Special Interest Group;
- scheduling consultation meetings with the First Nations and Métis communities on the development of a repatriation policy model;
- drafting of a Repatriation Policy Model;
- development of an Elders' protocol for use as a resource to MAS member museums;
- scheduling of repatriation and Elders' protocol training for non-Native museum workers;

- development of a plan to deliver the First People's Museum Studies certificate courses in the First Nations and Métis communities;
- revision of the Standards of Care for First Nation and Métis Collections; and
- writing the Museums Assistance Program (MAP) grant application for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

Since beginning the position, a substantial amount of historical information has been processed and organized, and preparations are underway for several tasks to be delivered.

The First People's and Saskatchewan Museums' Committee had its first meeting for the 2008-09 year on December 9th. The committee currently consists of the following five members: Evelyn Siegfried, Lyndon Tootosis, and Shawn Ahenakew representing the First Nations community; Calvin Racette representing the Métis community; and David Rohatensky representing the non-Native museum community. The committee reviewed previous projects and prepared for the revision of the Standards of Care document, the development of the repatriation policy model and protocol documents for MAS, and the continued development of certificate courses from an Aboriginal perspective.

More effort is being made to reach out to all areas of the province to identify First Nations and Métis people working in the museums and cultural heritage fields. This list of Aboriginal culture and heritage workers will receive invitations to join the First People's Special Interest Group meeting that will be scheduled for late January 2009. With the increase in cultural heritage work being done in the First Nations and Métis communities, the First People's Special Interest Group should grow significantly.

Meetings have also been scheduled with Aboriginal organizations throughout the province. These meetings are laying the groundwork for the development of partnerships that will benefit both MAS and the Aboriginal community. For example, my recent attendance at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre's Language Keepers Conference in Saskatoon provided an opportunity to learn about some heritage protection initiatives going on in the First Nations communities throughout the province.

A significant effort is being made to connect with MAS membership, and attendance at MAS regional network meetings has been a priority. Important introductions were made to the membership at Indian Head, Unity and at the Network Representatives meeting in Saskatoon. A recent presentation in Saskatoon helped Network Representatives in attendance to understand the association's Aboriginal initiatives and how my position supports MAS members as well as the Aboriginal community.

The MAP application was submitted in November. This application is based on previous areas identified by the First People's and Saskatchewan Museums' Committee as needing attention. The grant application includes a request for a second Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Symposium to be held in November 2009. As well, the application asks for additional support to provide more training sessions in repatriation and Aboriginal protocols. These training sessions will be scheduled closer to the membership at the

regional network level, alleviating the travel and funding barriers created by holding the training in larger city centres.

It has been a busy three months and MAS' Aboriginal initiatives promise to continue developing at an exciting pace into the new year.

I would like to take this time to wish the membership a safe and happy holiday season and a happy new year.

ekosi

Audrey

Do you have feedback on this issue of MAS En Masse?

What would you like to see in the Spring 2009 issue?

If you have suggestions or ideas, please e-mail them to:

*Lisa Thomson, MAS Communications Manager at
lisa.thomson@saskmuseums.org
or call (306) 780-9451.*

MAS wishes all of its members and stakeholders a wonderful holiday season.

Please note that our office is closed for the holidays from December 20 to January 4 inclusive.