

The Megaphone

September 29, 2011

meg·a·phone [meg-uh-fohn] –noun

1. a cone-shaped device for magnifying or directing the voice, chiefly used in addressing a large audience out of doors or in calling to someone at a distance.

www.dictionary.com

Hello everyone,

In this month's Megaphone we talk about Culture Days! Culture Days has the cultural community buzzing and we are proud to announce that many museums all over Saskatchewan have chosen to participate and be a part of Culture Days this year! MAS fully supports this wonderful 3-day cultural event and encourages everyone to go out in their communities and experience Culture Days this coming weekend!

This year is the 2nd annual Culture Days. Culture Days is a voluntary movement that represents the largest-ever collective public participation campaign undertaken by the cultural community in Canada. It is a free annual event designed to invite the public to celebrate and explore culture in every province and territory in Canada. The celebration takes place in Saskatchewan this weekend: **September 30th to October 2nd**.

Culture Days aims to help the people of Saskatchewan understand:

- the importance of cultural activity to their community's quality of life;
- different cultures, cultural workers and artists that make Saskatchewan home;
- the many opportunities available to participate in cultural activity in Saskatchewan;
- the economic impact of culture in Saskatchewan;
- and the benefits for an individual's well-being when involved in cultural activity.

Background Information on Culture Days

Culture Days was launched in September of 2010 in every province and territory. It was a direct response to the growing recognition that a vibrant cultural sector that contributes directly to a healthy and stable society.

Québec's annual Journées de la Culture inspired the initiation of Culture Days and will be a part of the annual celebration, as will Alberta Arts Days.

2010 Culture Days considered a success!

More than two-thirds of people who participated in Culture Days activities in 2010 reported that Culture Days raised awareness of the range and quality of arts and cultural activities in their community. They also said they were inspired to attend more locally-based events in the future (7 out of 10). Two-thirds said they were "somewhat likely", and one quarter said they were "very likely," to attend Culture Days 2011.

Culture Days 2011

For Culture Days 2011 SaskCulture helped the initiative with the addition of a Culture Days Project Coordinator and 4 Culture Days Animateurs. These positions were on hand to answer questions, provide consultations, presentations and workshops as well as to help with the development and facilitation of Culture Days.

Culture Days Animateurs

We recently caught up with the Culture Days Animateurs: Darlene Williams, Johanna Bundon, Mindy Yan Miller and Paul Wilson. They all seemed enthusiastic and pleased to talk about their experiences of being a Culture Days Animateur.

Darlene Williams is the Founding Artistic Director of White Birch Ballet Company, Saskatchewan's Ballet Company. She travelled to eight communities over the past three months: Rosthern, Prince Albert, Melfort, Melville, Wadena, Lumdsen, Watrouse and to the Back to Batoche Festival.

As she reflects back on her time as a Culture Days Animateur she mentions that she was happy to find that people were genuinely pleased to have someone on behalf of SaskCulture come and take an interest in their community.

“I made sure I took as much time as possible to listen and to honestly hear what each person wanted to share with me. I always went in to town early to meet people in person, to walk around and get to know a little bit about the community before the meeting.

I was astonished to see how each community expressed interest to take the opportunity of Culture Days to show pride in the cultural diversity of their town. In each community people noted how their towns were expanding.”

She also took the time to contact some of the museums and noted that even if some of the museums didn't register a Culture Days event this year, many would like to for next year.

“I must say I have found all the museums excellent participants in Culture Days! All staff and volunteers who I have contacted with the district Museums were all so enthusiastic of this annual event. Almost all of the museums knew of Culture Days before my telephone call; and many had already begun Culture Days event planning in their community. I found the museums to be great community players often taking a leadership position with other smaller cultural groups.”

She still encourages everyone to find something to register, “Culture Days participation is one way to continue to inspire one another to just keep doing what we are doing for our communities. Art and culture is in our daily lives and the more the better!”

Johanna Bundon is an independent Saskatchewan artist whose practice includes choreography and a physical approach to theatre creation. She is a graduate of LADMMI: Les Ateliers de Danse Moderne de Montréal, Globe Theatre's 2008 Actor Conservatory, CARFAC Saskatchewan's 2007 mentorship program, and is currently pursuing a BA in Arts & Culture at the University of Regina.

“My experience as an Animateur for Culture Days has been an affirmation of the cultural richness that exists within Saskatchewan.

Whether or not people are referring to the creative engagement they have within their communities as Culture (capital C), this is undoubtedly a place where both art and heritage -- in all of their expansive forms -- are being expressed through daily life and work.”

Mindy Yan Miller is an artist and teacher from North Battleford.

“Don’t tell anyone but I’m from Toronto. The closest I’ve been to a small town is *Little House on the Prairie*. The best part of being a Culture Days Animateur for me has been the road trips – going to all the communities that have so much going on: rodeos, books stores, Chinese food restaurants, agricultural fairs and pizza. I’m learning a lot: it doesn’t take too much digging to find the artists and cultural types – sometimes they look a little different or they’re not where I might expect them to be, but they’re there – in fact, they’re everywhere, and they welcome you with open arms.

I notice things as a newbie that are probably commonplace for locals: the number of historical museums stands out. It seems almost every little town has one. I love these places for the stories they tell – you can feel the love and pride behind so many of the displays. As an artist I’d love to work there. I can imagine these museums having artist-in-residence summer programs that might cater to all disciplines – dancers, musicians, painters, and video artists - taking inspiration from the collections. This is what I would like to work on for next year’s Culture Days.”

Paul Wilson, is a poet, publisher, editor and cultural worker living in Regina. Paul has reached out to a number of museums and galleries and noticed how each has been very supportive. He shares a story of a day spent with one our member museums, Wood Mountain Rodeo Ranch Museum.

“My experiences and journeys as Artist Animateur have been full of enjoyment and discovery. I have been very fortunate to visit and meet with the staff of several galleries and museums. One of highlights of the summer was the afternoon I spent with Thelma Poirier one of the founders of the Wood Mountain Rodeo Ranch Museum the Regional Park and Rodeo Grounds. The annual Wood Mountain Rodeo was about to kick off and the museum was packed with visitors including a CBC French TV crew, and yet Thelma took time out of her busy afternoon to tell me about the museum.

Neatly displayed in the ranch house styled museum building are many displays that illuminate the lives of cowboys and ranchers who came to south-east Saskatchewan as far back as the 1880’s. I saw western artifacts, rodeo artifacts and artifacts of ranch life, above me on the ceiling were ranch brands representing the founding ranchers in the Wood Mountain area. Thelma informed me that there were over two thousand artifacts in the museum’s collection as well as over twelve hundred historical photographs.

In addition to the main building I visited an adobe, a turf club building and a pioneer kitchen - authentic reminders of early ranch and rodeo life. One of the out buildings was pioneer building devoted to celebrating Romanian and Ukrainian settlers. It was very moving for me to see within the building a display honouring one of my mentors, Andy Suknaski, a poet

who immortalized his home town in *Wood Mountain Poems*.

During the Wood Mountain Rodeo the museum offered museum patrons' opportunities to engage in activities that were central to ranch and rodeo life: rope making, bannock cooking (followed by bannock eating) and the production of lye soap.

In talking to Thelma and a few of the old timers who have been coming to the Wood Mountain Rodeo for decades I learned a great deal about a way of life that seems to be slipping away. It was indeed a pleasure to discover the Rodeo Ranch Museum and spend time with Thelma. It seemed to me that in every village, town or city I have visited in my travels as Artist Animateur place a great deal of importance on preserving the heritage of their community. The enthusiastic participation of Saskatchewan museums in Culture Days is evidence their commitment to their patrons and to their communities."

MAS would like to thank all of the Culture Days Animateurs for sharing their experiences with us. Each Animateur had a unique story to tell and we thank them for sharing their thoughts with our organization and the museum community.

SaskCulture Supplementary Support

This year SaskCulture also offered Supplementary Support through the Museum Grant Program specifically for museums to be able to participate in Culture Days this year. Over 20 activity ideas received funding or sponsorship from SaskCulture which went directly towards putting on an activity during Culture Days.

Culture Days Museum Event Listing

Would you like to know which museums are putting on events for Culture Days 2011? MAS has put together a listing of the museums who have registered Culture Days events this year. The legend in the listing reflects who are MAS members, who received funding and who received sponsorship. Please click on the link to view the listing: [Culture Days Museum Event Listing](#).

Please note that the listing is made up of only events that we were made aware of and is by no means a full listing of every museum's Culture Days activity in Saskatchewan.

On September 14th SaskCulture announced that over 160 activities are registered in Saskatchewan! You can now plan out and create your own personal schedule for Culture Days using the Culture Days Bright Spots Schedule available on the Culture Days website: <http://culturedays.ca/en/about-culture-days/bright-spots>. This schedule is printable or you can access it from your mobile device.

For more information about Culture Days please visit: www.culturedays.ca

