

MAPLE CREEK COMMUNITY CULTURAL PLAN

February 2013





Maple Creek Community Cultural Plan

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Maple Creek Cultural Planning Team

Town of Maple Creek

- Royce Pettyjohn, Maple Creek Main Street Program Coordinator

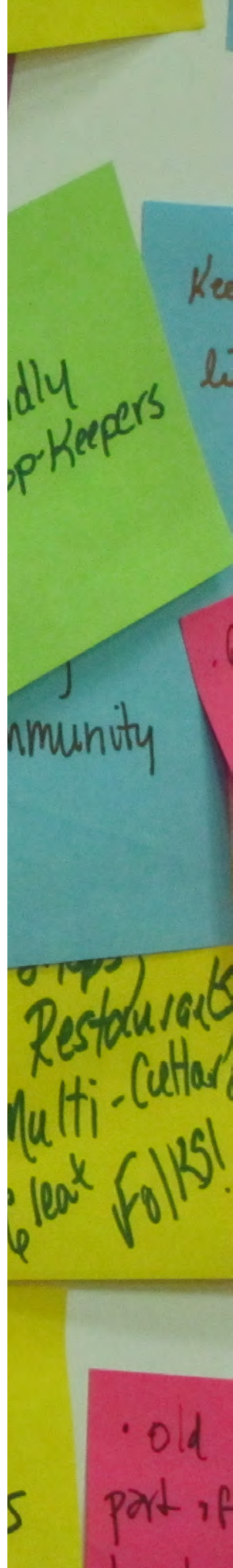
DIALOG

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We would like to thank the members of Council and the Town of Maple Creek, as well as the many other community leaders, stakeholders, and residents who helped to create this Cultural Plan for Maple Creek. This Plan has greatly benefited from the participation of the following groups in particular:

Town of Maple Creek
Mayor Rudd and Council
Chamber of Commerce
Nekaneet Pow Wow Regalia Group
Cypress Hills Métis Cultural Centre
Arts, Culture, and Heritage Coalition
Heritage Advisory Committee
Seniors Centre

Royal Canadian Legion
Communities in Bloom
Maple Creek Arts Club
S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Museum
Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre
Maple Creek Composite High School
Grade 11 Class





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1.0



PHOTO CREDIT: ROYCE PETTYJOHN

A Cultural Plan for Maple Creek

“In the landscape of the 21st century, nothing looms larger than culture. It’s the new infrastructure, the civic bedrock on which the most successful places are built. Culture is to the contemporary town what roads, sewers, and bridges were in the 19th and 20th centuries.” -Christopher Hume, Urban Affairs Columnist, Toronto Star

1.1 What is Culture and Why Plan for It?

Defining Culture

Culture is difficult to define, but it is what we share in common and it’s also how we celebrate our differences. It includes our values and beliefs, and how they manifest in our art, commerce, recreation, food, events, stories, rituals, customs, architecture, places, and spaces. It is informed by our histories and creates a vision for our collective future.

The culture of a community is an important part of a *place*, making it unique and distinguishable from other communities. By establishing a unique sense of place through tangible and intangible cultural qualities, culture helps create a sense of identity and meaning, and fosters community pride.

In addition to having intrinsic value, culture is important to economic development and community prosperity. Since it’s what sets us apart from other places and therefore makes us interesting and special, culture is critical to creating an environment in which people want to live, do business, visit, and invest. Culture can be considered a community resource - a raw material that requires stewardship, planning, and ongoing management.

For purposes of focusing discussion in this document, cultural resources generally refers to:

- Community cultural organizations (e.g. arts-based, multi-cultural);
- Spaces and facilities (e.g. galleries, performances spaces);
- Cultural heritage (e.g. historic buildings, streetscapes, and sites, museums);

- Natural heritage (e.g. natural areas, bioregional characteristics);
- Festivals and events (e.g. related to food, heritage, arts, multiculturalism); and
- Creative cultural industries (e.g. performance, architecture, sales).

Cultural Planning

Community cultural planning involves the strategic support and/or creation of conditions under which culture can flourish. It is a process through which the collective cultural assets of a community are leveraged to strengthen quality of life and prosperity.

In the past, cultural planning emphasized facilities and programming. Today cultural planning is far more place-based, recognizing the inextricable links between culture, economy, and social well-being.

Three key goals of cultural planning include:

- **To create livable communities with a high quality of life** - Culture has intrinsic value and is an important part of a community's sensory landscape. For example, artistic expression in all of its forms - including visual arts, musical arts, and performance arts - help enrich communities, creating



MAPLE CREEK HERITAGE FESTIVAL | PHOTO CREDIT - DARCY DIETRICH

sensory, emotional, and fundamentally human experiences that are essential to quality of life.

- **To promote economic development through culture** - Communities that are most successful at promoting development of both culture and quality of life are also economically successful. For example, the experience of communities across Canada has shown how investment in arts, culture, and heritage leads to significant returns. When local culture is enriched, a community becomes an increasingly attractive location for creative industries, professionals, and tourists.
- **To create vibrant, healthy downtowns** - Since its entwined with character and sense of place, culture - including cultural organizations, facilities and amenities, heritage assets, festival and events, artistic expression, and cultural destinations - is fundamental to the success of vibrant, distinct downtowns.

1.2 Project Background and Objectives

The Town of Maple Creek was the recipient of provincial funding, enabling the launch of a cultural planning initiative. Project objectives are to:

- identify the needs of arts and cultural groups, seniors and youth, and to identify opportunities to strengthen activity and engagement;
- evaluate the effectiveness of existing cultural facilities and make recommendations on how to better meet community needs;
- break down “silos” and identify an approach to increasing cross-organizational awareness and collaboration; and
- identify an approach for strengthening the impact and reach of community festivals, events, and concerts.

To deliver on the project objectives, a planning process was undertaken in conjunction with the development of the Maple Creek Main Street Implementation Plan. The latter’s objectives align with the Cultural Plan objectives, and there have been many synergies in terms of both content and process.

The Main Street Program’s objectives are to: make Maple Creek a more vibrant community in which to live, visit, and do business; enhance quality of life and sense of community pride among residents; and heighten the appeal of the community for tourism, strengthen the local economy, and attract new residents and visitors. The two planning projects were fully integrated into one process, which is outlined in Section 1.3.



1.3 Cultural Planning Process

The process for developing the Cultural Plan took approximately eight months, but it builds on a tremendous amount of work undertaken to date. The six key steps below outline the major elements of the visioning and planning process, most of which took place between March and August 2012.

Phase 1 | Taking Stock and Creating a Vision (March - June 2012)

The purpose of this phase was to: identify existing assets and resources; identify existing needs, challenges, and priorities; and generate interest and input from residents, businesses, community officials, and a wide range of cultural stakeholders toward the creation of a vision for culture in Maple Creek.

A - Project Kick-Off (March 2012)

- *Project Kick-Off Meeting* - This involved a meeting between the Maple Creek Main Street Coordinator - who is also managing the Cultural Plan process - and DIALOG (the consultant team), as well as a tour of the Heritage District.
- *Community Booth* - This was an interactive station at the Multicultural Mosaic, which allowed the nearly 300 attendees to learn about the project and share what they value about the Heritage District and Maple Creek more generally. As part of this interactive activity, participants of all ages had the opportunity to identify cultural values and assets.



MAPLE CREEK MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC AND CULTURAL PLANNING COMMUNITY BOOTH

B - Stakeholder Workshops and Background Research (April 2012)

- *Background Research* - DIALOG reviewed background materials, including local plans, policies, and reports that provided background information on culture and Maple Creek more generally. This research provided supplementary information to and in preparation for the Stakeholder Interviews and Workshops.
- *Stakeholder Interviews and Workshops* - Approximately 80 individuals representing diverse stakeholder groups were engaged in discussions about local assets, challenges, and opportunities. Some of the workshops focused exclusively on culture, while others combined discussion on culture and the Heritage District. The stakeholder groups were:
 - Town Council;
 - Tourism Coalition and Chamber of Commerce Executive;
 - Arts, Culture, and Heritage Coalition;
 - Maple Creek Heritage Advisory Committee;
 - Seniors Centre and R.C. Legion;
 - Maple Creek Composite High School grade 11 class (this involved a cultural mapping workshop in which youth identified cultural destinations and assets in Maple Creek);
 - Communities in Bloom group;
 - Art Club;
 - S.W. Sask Oldtimers' Museum;
 - Jasper Cultural and Heritage Centre;
 - Cypress Hills Métis Cultural Centre;
 - Pow Wow Regalia Group; and
 - Town Administration.

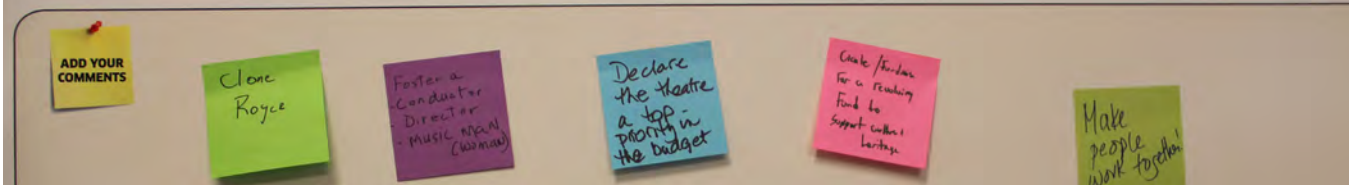
C - Community Visioning Forum (May 2012)

- Over 70 members of the community attended the public forum to: listen to a presentation from Jennifer Keesmaat (former DIALOG principal and community planner) about culture, heritage, design, and community revitalization; hear from local residents about community activities and local success stories (including representation from the cultural groups identified above); provide their visions and ideas on interactive boards about culture and the Heritage District; and socialize at this celebratory event. Participants also had the opportunity to review and comment on the draft goals, which are outlined in Section 3.0.



Mayor for a Day: What would you do to support arts and culture?

Imagine that you are the mayor for the day.
Where would you invest resources and raise awareness to support arts and culture in Maple Creek?



CULTURAL PLANNING EVENTS :
FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: YOUTH CULTURAL MAPPING EXERCISE; STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP; INTERACTIVE BOARD AT THE COMMUNITY VISIONING FORUM;
PAM LASHMORE, MÉTIS CULTURAL CENTRE, SPEAKS AT THE VISIONING FORUM; AND VISIONING FORUM PARTICIPANTS

D - Strategic Planning Workshop (May 2012)

- Approximately 15 people representing the previously consulted stakeholder groups participated in a workshop to revise the draft goals and identify key actions, roles/responsibilities, and priorities for each of them.

Phase 2 | Realizing the Vision and Developing the Plan (June - January 2013)

E - Draft Maple Creek Heritage District Implementation Plan (June - August 2012)

- This involved bringing together public and stakeholder input, best practices, and information about Maple Creek's existing assets, challenges, and opportunities into a set of actions and additional recommendations for implementation. While this is not a deliverable for the Cultural Plan process, it contains recommendations that have important synergies with the Cultural Plan.

F - Draft and Final Maple Creek Cultural Plan (October 2012 - January 2013)

- Building on all the work to-date, a draft Cultural Plan was developed. The stakeholder groups that had been consulted on the development of the plan were invited to the unveiling of the completed draft plan on December 17th at the C.M. Glascock Building. In the New Year, the stakeholder groups were given copies of the plan to review, and were requested to provide comments by February 1st, 2013. Edits were incorporated into this final plan.
- While the Cultural Plan was completed early 2013, the implementation process itself is ongoing and requires continuous investment.

2.0



Photo credit: Darcy Dietrich

Maple Creek's Cultural Context

“Maple Creek has something that is very unique and desirable.” - MAPLE CREEK RESIDENT AT THE COMMUNITY VISIONING EVENT

What makes Maple Creek different than other places? What sets Maple Creek's culture apart? The answers to these questions are difficult to pin-point, however when residents were asked about what they valued about Maple Creek's cultural core (i.e. Heritage District), they identified: the unique and historic character of the built realm; the friendliness and sense of community; the “small town feel” and “quiet easy living”; unique shops and businesses; cultural facilities such as the Jasper Centre; and other amenities and general character.

More generally, Maple Creek is home to a vibrant cultural community, with levels of activity in arts and particularly heritage that exceed those typically found in other prairie communities of similar size. Maple Creek is home to a variety of museums and historic destinations, many cultural organizations, and a myriad of annual cultural event. Section 2.0 outlines these and many other assets and aspects of Maple Creek's “cultural infrastructure”, which includes:

1. **“Hard” Cultural Infrastructure** - This refers to the tangible cultural aspects in the community, including cultural facilities, destinations, and built assets. In addition to contributing to Maple Creek's visual character or “look and feel”, hard cultural infrastructure provide the needed spaces, venues, and destinations that are important to supporting cultural vibrancy and prosperity.
2. **“Soft” Cultural Infrastructure** - This refers to the less tangible -but equally or even more important - cultural aspects of the community. These include unique and/or shared histories, traditions, values, events, organizations, economic qualities, and more. “Soft” cultural infrastructure focus more on people and social institutions, rather than bricks and mortar.

Building on the cultural assets and infrastructure that already exist in Maple Creek, Section 2.0 also identifies cultural needs that have been identified by residents and stakeholders in the community.

2.1 Hard Cultural Infrastructure

Maple Creek has many cultural facilities, destinations, and built assets that support both formal and informal cultural activities, and contribute to Maple Creek's cultural identity and vibrancy.

Cultural Facilities

Formal/official cultural facilities offer venues to participate in cultural activities and they include:

C.M. Glascock Building – Formerly Maple Creek Motors, this building was recently rehabilitated by local volunteers. It currently houses historical exhibits and offers a significant cultural programming space, including seating for 70 people. Users of the space include the Métis Cultural Centre, including offices and programming (e.g. jig classes), and the general community for special events. It was recently used for a series of stakeholder and community-wide visioning events for the cultural planning process, whereby the small open space at the building entrance was used as a community plaza.

S.W. Saskatchewan Oldtimers' Log Museum – The S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Association was founded in 1926 to preserve the frontier history of Maple Creek and the Cypress Hills area. In 1935 the group erected what is now the oldest purpose built museum building in Saskatchewan. This iconic log structure within the Maple Creek Heritage District was modelled after the log style of architecture that was common in the Cypress Hills and Maple Creek before the turn of the last century.



THE MINI "PLAZA" OUTSIDE THE C.M. GLASCOCK BUILDING DURING THE COMMUNITY VISIONING FORUM, WITH ST. MARY'S CHURCH IN THE BACKGROUND

Although it is undergoing extensive restoration and expansion work, the log museum has traditionally housed an extensive collection of artifacts and photographs that document the region's earliest days of trade and settlement. Its grounds also preserve one of the few surviving original green spaces in the downtown core

W.R. Orr Building – A prominent 1910 building that preserves one of the oldest furnished spaces in Maple Creek, this building houses original Union Bank furnishings as well as the Burnett & Orr Law Office collection (1903-2005). The building now hosts the Maple Creek Visitor Centre and the Maple Creek Main Street Program Office. A community boardroom is also available in this building.

Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre – Built in two stages in 1910 and 1913 as the town's school, this large brick building now houses a museum and cultural centre. It contains exhibits depicting pioneer life as well as the Prairie Sky Gallery, which showcases the work of local artists and artisans. Yoga, dance, and exercise classes are also offered there.

Maple Creek Seniors Centre – This modern building is an important social destination and community space for Maple Creek's senior citizens. For a modest membership fee, seniors (i.e. individuals over the age of 40) can use the facilities, which include shuffleboard, billiards tables, a kitchen, and an activity hall. There are currently approximately 60 members.

Maple Creek Elks Hall – This facility is owned and operated by the Maple Creek Elks & Royal Purple. These groups support community life through volunteerism, programming, fundraising, and charitable works. It is the smallest of the three community halls in Maple Creek.

Maple Creek Legion Hall – Located adjacent to the Heritage District, this is the second largest of three community halls in Maple Creek. It has served as the venue for the annual Multi-Cultural Mosaic, as well as many other community events and programs. The hall also exhibits artifacts and photographs associated with local involvement in Canada's war efforts.

Maple Creek Armoury – The largest of three community halls, this historic building is situated toward the south of town. In addition to offering community space, the Armoury building also houses a co-operative childcare facility.

St. Mary's Anglican Parish Hall – This small modern hall, which comprises part of St. Mary's Church, is often made available for non-church related cultural activities.



The Maple Creek United Church – Similarly, when it is not being used for religious purposes, this building is made available to youth groups (e.g. Scouts and Guides), and is also a performance venue for the Maple Creek Music Festival and Chinook Youth Musical Theatre.

Other Cultural Venues and Destinations

Other key cultural destinations that have been identified by stakeholders, particularly youth, include:

Other Spiritual/Religious Facilities – There are a number of churches and religious facilities in Maple Creek that have been identified as cultural destinations, in which residents participate in spiritual and other cultural activities.

Schools – For youth, schools offer cultural spaces and programs that range from music to drama to cultural education.

Rodeo Grounds – When asked where they participate in cultural activities, many youth identified the rodeo grounds, where they either spectate or directly engage in activities such as 4-H and rodeos.

Athletic Facilities and Amenities – Many youth identify athletic facilities as important cultural amenities. The activities most often identified include baseball, hockey, golf, and swimming. The Maple Creek Community Arena (skating rink) has also been used to support cultural activities such as Cowboy Poetry, the Nekaneet Pow Wow, and the annual Battle of the Little Big Puck.

Other Built Assets and the Public Realm

An overview of hard cultural infrastructure in Maple Creek cannot exclude its streetscapes and public realm. Indeed, while cultural identity is a continuously changing thing and is difficult to define, Maple Creek's motto - "Where past is present" - seems to capture many of the key community values and perceived assets, including how it relates to the community's historic character. Specifically, participants in this consultation process mentioned "the small town feel", and "the old looks and ways", and more. According to local businesses and the tourism industry, the community's historic character and identity are also what attracts tourists and other visitors. Specifically, these assets are concentrated in the Heritage District - which is Maple Creek's cultural core - and include:

Intact Historic Streetscapes - Maple Creek's streets are examples of increasingly rare historic prairie streetscapes, which are dotted with historic buildings that form an important part of Maple Creek's community and cultural identity. These historic buildings include many of the cultural facilities listed in this section, as well as the

Post Office, Jasper Hotel, and Commercial Hotel.

Public Realm - Where buildings provide the backdrop of public life in Maple Creek, the public realm provides the stage. Public life includes everything from day-to-day activities to special events, such as the Farmers Market, festivals, parades, and other community celebrations. The public realm includes sidewalks, streets, parks, and other public spaces. During consultation, residents and other stakeholders identified desirable attributes of community life and street culture, specifically in the community's cultural core - the Heritage District. Emergent themes include a strong focus on: vibrant street life; prosperous businesses; a beautiful and proud public realm; heritage conservation and celebration; a rich cultural and entertainment scene; places to gather and socialize; and a diversity of users and people.

Bioregion and Natural Landscape

Maple Creek's geographical landscape - including the Cypress Hills within the larger prairie bioregion - is inextricably linked to the community's culture and sense of authenticity through its history, identity, and economy. According to Maple Creek's Main Street Program Coordinator, the connection between Maple Creek and its natural landscape reinforce a sense of place, given that Maple Creek was a supply centre for ranching and farming throughout the community's history. The area also provided game and supplies to First Nations people, and the Nekaneet First Nation continues to keep many of its traditional customs and practices alive.

The nearby stockyards, grain elevator and train tracks are a constant reminder of Maple Creek's cultural connection to its unique pioneering and agricultural history, present, and future.



LEFT: LOOKING SOUTH OVER MAPLE CREEK, WITH THE CYPRESS HILLS IN THE DISTANCE
RIGHT: GRAIN ELEVATORS AND THE CP LINE ARE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF MAPLE CREEK'S CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE



2.2 Soft Cultural Infrastructure

Maple Creek is rich with soft cultural infrastructure, which primarily include its people and organizations, and the services, programs, and events that they manage. It also includes its ethno-cultural diversity.

People Assets and Volunteerism

Residents value the neighbourliness of Maple Creek's community and culture. Participants at the Multi-Cultural Fair specifically mentioned "friendly shop keepers", "people always ready to help", and "friendly, helpful people who remember your name."

Indeed, Maple Creek's biggest cultural resource is its people. There is a strong culture of volunteerism in which volunteers – both formal and informal – can be credited for enhancing the cultural life in the community, including by: organizing the Town's many cultural events; maintaining and/or rehabilitating its built assets; enhancing public places; providing cultural services and programs to residents, tourists, and other visitors; and generally promoting the community by increasing the level of education and awareness about Maple Creek's history and culture.

Ethno-Cultural Diversity

While Maple Creek is less ethnically diverse than Saskatchewan as a whole, there are several distinct cultures that form part of the community's valuable ethno-cultural tapestry. A few metrics (based on the most recent available data, from Statistics Canada's 2006 Census) give an indication of this diversity, including:

- **Aboriginal Identity** - Within Maple Creek, 10% of residents indicate they have Aboriginal identity; of this group, 10% are Métis. While the proportion of residents who identify as Aboriginal is lower than in Saskatchewan overall (16%), approximately 160 members of the Nekaneet Cree First Nation live on a nearby reserve. They play a critical and meaningful role in Maple Creek's cultural life and sense of identity.
- **Mother Tongue** - The mother tongue of 90% of Maple Creek residents is English, which is higher than Saskatchewan overall (86%). Nine percent of residents' mother tongues is comprised of non-official languages: German, Korean, Cree, Norwegian, Russian, and Ukrainian.
- **Immigration and Generation Status** - The percentage of first generation Canadians in Maple Creek - 6% - is similar to that of Saskatchewan's. Second



LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER ON JASPER STREET

generation Canadians comprise 29% of Maple Creek's population (compared to 18% of Saskatchewan's), and third or more generation Canadians comprise 65% of the population (compared with 75% of Saskatchewan's).

Indeed, for over a century, newcomers to Maple Creek from all parts of the world have been adding to the cultural richness of the community. For example, diverse ethno-cultural influences can be found in Maple Creek's businesses and industries, such as its culinary scene and furniture manufacturing sector.

Organizations and Initiatives

Many cultural organizations and initiatives in Maple Creek offer programming and services that provide diverse benefits, supporting the broad community as well as diverse demographics that range from newcomers to specific age groups such as seniors and youth. These organizations and initiatives offer volunteer opportunities, educate, foster social interaction, support community engagement and quality of life, celebrate Maple Creek's unique history and sense of place, and generally build community. They include:

- S.W. Sask. Oldtimers' Museum;
- Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre;
- Maple Creek Seniors Centre;
- Maple Creek Heritage Advisory Committee;
- Maple Creek Arts, Culture, and Heritage Coalition;
- Maple Creek Art Club;
- Leader School of Dance;
- Chinook Youth Musical Theatre;
- Maple Creek Musical Festival Association;
- Nekaneet First Nation Regalia Group;
- Cypress Hills Métis Cultural and Resource Centre;
- Maple Creek Newcomers Welcoming Committee;
- Communities in Bloom;
- Creek Classics Antique Car Club;
- Antique Tractor Club;
- Youth Groups (4-H, Scouts, and Guides);
- Maple Creek Rodeo Committee;
- Cowtown Rodeo Queen and Indian Princess Committee;
- Traditional Craft Groups (Quilting, Rug Hooking, and more);
- Ranch Rodeo Committee; and
- Cowboy Poetry Committee.

In support of this work, other organizations that serve to support and promote cultural activities include:

- Maple Creek Chamber of Commerce;
- Tourism Maple Creek; and
- Maple Creek Main Street Program Committee.

Events

Community events are a critically important part of culture. They provide the opportunity to collectively celebrate local culture, and they also support learning and cross-cultural appreciation and respect. Significant annual cultural events in Maple Creek include:

- Battle of the Little Big Puck (February);
- Maple Creek Music Festival (March);
- Maple Creek Multi-Cultural Mosaic (April);
- Maple Creek Ranch Rodeo (July);
- Maple Creek Heritage Festival (July);
- Cowtown Pro-Rodeo and Parade (July);
- Taste of Maple Creek Food Festival (August);
- Maple Creek Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Western Art Show (September);
- Nekaneet First Nation Pow Wow (October); and
- Cowtown Christmas (December).

Whether they focus on food, sports, music, literary arts, lifestyle, heritage, and/or cross-cultural elements, all of these events celebrate unique aspects and talents in the Maple Creek area. They instill a sense of belonging and pride among residents, while simultaneously attracting tourists and other visitors. For example, according to an informal door-to-door business survey, the 2012 Maple Creek Heritage Festival saw



LEFT: DRAMA PERFORMERS AT THE MAPLE CREEK HERITAGE FESTIVAL | PHOTO CREDIT: DARCY DIETRICH
 PERFORMING POET AT THE ANNUAL COWBOY POETRY GATHERING | PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.MAPLECREKCOWBOYPOETRY.COM

an increase in customer traffic and sales - of which 50-90% was tourism related - and three businesses reported that it was their most profitable day so far that calendar year.

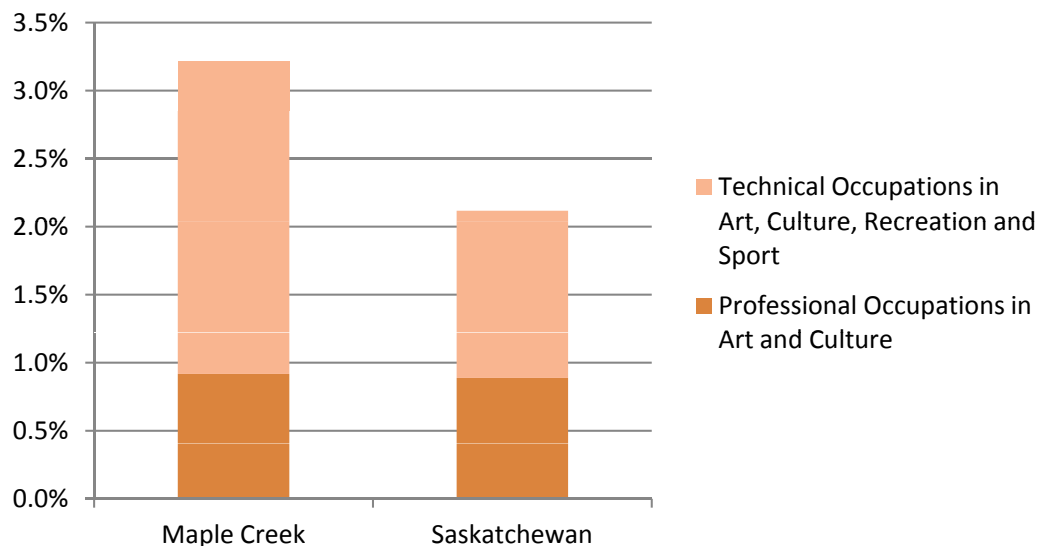
Residents note that cross-cultural events such as the Battle of the Little Big Puck and Multi-Cultural Mosaic help foster appreciation for and build relationships between different ethno-cultural groups.

Cultural Businesses and Industry

Businesses are a critically important part of a community's cultural infrastructure. As noted in Section 1.0, communities can no longer rely only on traditional industries to support sustainable, vibrant economies; they must also support cultural occupations and members of the "creative class", such as artists, musicians, designers, and entertainers. Cultural occupations are identified by Statistics Canada in its *Canadian Framework for Culture Statistics*, and include occupations in creative and artistic production, heritage collection and preservation, cultural management, and manufacturing, as well as technical and operational occupations related to art and culture.

In Maple Creek, the proportion of the labour force employed in arts and culture is higher than in Saskatchewan overall, with approximately 1% of the labour force over the age of 15 having professional occupations in arts and culture, and 2.3% having technical occupations more generally in arts, culture, recreation, and sport.

ARTS AND CULTURE LABOUR FORCE IN MAPLE CREEK AND SASKATCHEWAN
(ADAPTED FROM STATISTICS CANADA DATA)





LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER ON JASPER STREET

Finally, Maple Creek is also home to a number of unique businesses and cultural destinations that form part of the local retail and culinary tourism industry. These include businesses that focus on quilting, furniture manufacturing, antiques and historic collectables, culinary arts and training, and more.

Some of these retailers are identified as significant primary and secondary demand generators in the *Cypress Hills Destination Area Plan*, which indicates that nearly 275,000 visitors passed through the region in 2008 (up from 174,000 in 2004) between the months of April and September. With downtown merchants estimating that 50-70% of their business comes from tourists, the proximity to the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park and other regional destinations are most certainly cultural assets.

2.3 Cultural Infrastructure Issues and Needs

While it is rich with cultural assets, Maple Creek also has challenges and gaps in its cultural infrastructure. This cultural planning process identified these issues and needs through consultation with key stakeholders and the general public (refer to Section 1.0 for a complete list); emergent themes are described below, and Section 3.0 identifies strategic directions and recommendation on how to build on assets and address needs.

Visual and Performing Artists

- There are virtually no performance facilities for visual and performing artists to produce and practice their art, and effectively showcase it to the community. During the Community Visioning Forum, the most frequently identified desired gathering place was “arts and performance venues.” This lack of performance space is seen as a shortcoming from the perspectives of both artists and non-artists alike.
- Permanent gallery spaces for local artists are also needed. Costs are high for artists to rent or buy commercial spaces, and there are also accessibility challenges with current spaces.
- There seems to be a lack of knowledge or exposure to fine arts in the general community; there is an overall need to increase the visibility and vibrancy of the arts and cultural sector more generally, particularly in Maple Creek’s cultural core (i.e. Heritage District).
- Opportunities for education and skills development are needed.

Ethno-Cultural Groups

- While there are cross-cultural events in Maple Creek, there is otherwise limited opportunity for Aboriginal and ethno-cultural artistic and cultural expression in Maple Creek.
- First Nations and Métis people are under-represented in Maple Creek’s business community.
- According to the Newcomers Welcoming Committee, newcomers feel welcomed in Maple Creek, but they also feel isolated because there is a tendency to focus on the historic “Western” culture of Maple Creek, which generally includes only residents of Western European and First Nations descent. Also, more resources, including facilities and classes, are needed for newcomers.
- According to the Nekaneet Pow Wow Regalia Group, there is an ongoing challenge to ensure stories and traditions are passed down to youth, and that they continue to be a source of pride among youth. Youth involvement in First Nations cultural activity needs to be supported.
- According to the Nekaneet Pow Wow Regalia Group, non-First Nations residents

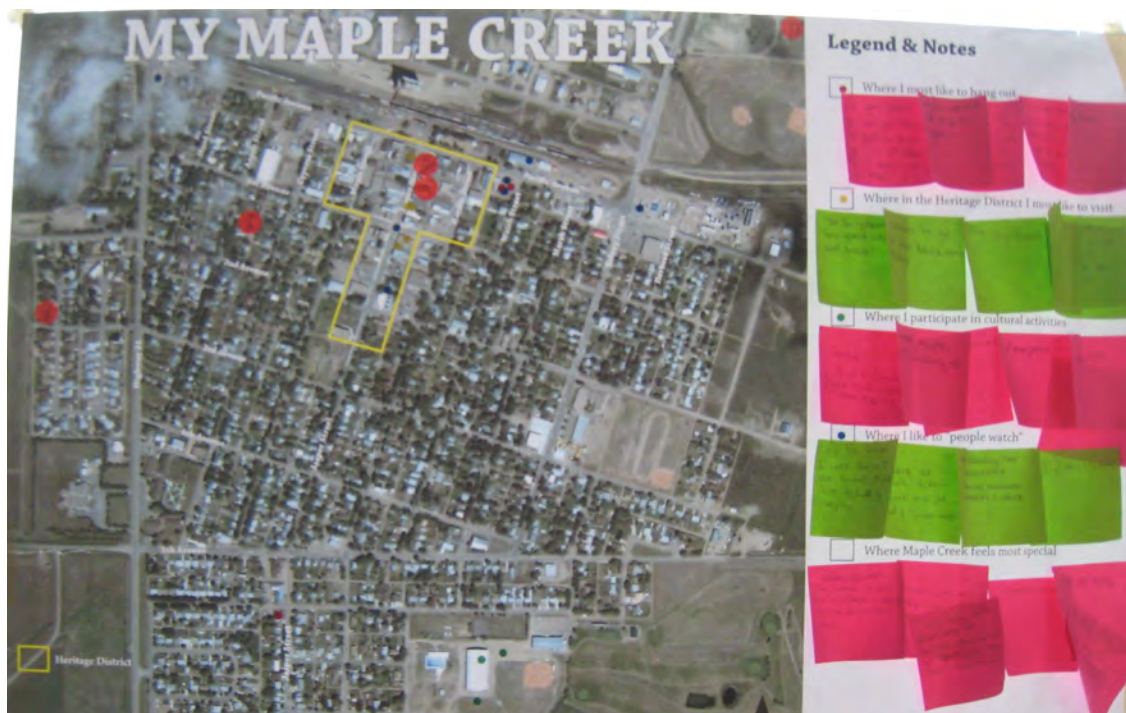
need to understand that Pow Wows and other Nekaneet events are intended for everyone's involvement.

Cultural Organizations

- A myriad of heritage, arts, spiritual, recreational, and other cultural groups regularly meet across Maple Creek, however much of this activity operates in silos, with little mutual awareness and collaboration between organizations. This has resulted in being chronically under-resourced (both human and financially), particularly as there are a number of cultural facilities that are under-utilized and/or have duplicate functions. Synergies and mutual benefits are currently not being fully realized.
- There is a lack of resources to organize and build a compelling case for strategic investments in art, culture, and heritage. There is also a general lack of funding, and the community runs the risk of experiencing “fundraising fatigue”.
- For historic assets, there is a need to raise awareness and fight the “let’s just bulldoze it” mentality.

Youth

- According to high school students, there is a strong desire to see more vibrancy and cultural vitality in the downtown area / Heritage District. Youth-friendly destinations are needed; examples identified include: a movie theatre; recreational and sport facilities; a youth centre; arcades and games; and generally “a lot of cool places to visit” and “places to hang out” such as restaurants.



ONE OF SIX INTERACTIVE MAPS UTILIZED BY YOUTH IN A CULTURAL MAPPING EXERCISE THAT IDENTIFIED ASSETS AND KEY DESTINATIONS IN MAPLE CREEK

- Non-youth identified a need to educate and inspire youth to champion cultural initiatives as older adults retire or move on.

Seniors

- There is a need for younger and more active members in seniors' organizations, such as the Legion, and in management of their facilities. Succession planning is important; for example, there is a general need for others to take on leadership roles such as sitting on Executive Committees.
- While a somewhat peripheral issue, housing is an important factor in creating a hospitable culture and environment for seniors to "age in place" in Maple Creek. In order for seniors to participate in the cultural life of the community, appropriate housing options - including smaller, multi-family housing types and/or assisted living - need to be made available to residents as they age.

Volunteers

- Volunteers are spread thin and often suffer from fatigue. Supporting volunteers and preparing for succession planning is a key priority as Maple Creek maintains and builds its cultural activities.

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3.0



Strategic Directions and Recommendations

“Make it viable and interesting for people who live here 365 days a year.”

MAPLE CREEK RESIDENT AND PARTICIPANT IN THE CULTURAL PLANNING PROCESS

During consultation and follow up implementation-planning, a number of cultural assets, priorities, and gaps were identified - which are outlined in Section 2.0 - that informed the development of key Strategic Directions for this Plan. They are:

- 1. Nurture Maple Creek’s Outstanding Culture of Volunteerism**
- 2. Integrate Maple Creek’s Cultural Organizational Silos**
- 3. Celebrate Diversity and Foster Inclusivity**
- 4. Continue to Work with Local First Nation and Métis Groups (Nekaneet and Métis Cultural Centre) toward Shared Cultural Goals**
- 5. Increase the Visibility of the Arts and Artists in the Community**
- 6. Support Existing and New Cultural Venues**

While these Strategic Directions offer a road map for all stakeholders in Maple Creek, the expectation is that local cultural organizations and clubs will champion their successful execution.



Strategic Direction 1:

Nurture Maple Creek's Outstanding Culture of Volunteerism

Maple Creek is a caring and “roll up your sleeves” community. Volunteerism and sweat equity have been key ingredients in local success stories, including: revitalization efforts such as Communities in Bloom; heritage projects such as restoration of the Glascock Building; planning and executing Maple Creek’s many festivals and public events; and multi-cultural initiatives such as the Nekaneet Regalia project. Indeed, Maple Creek’s volunteers are cherished, vital parts of the community’s cultural, social, and economic fabric.

However volunteers are spread thin and there is a need to educate and inspire others to champion projects as others retire or move on. Supporting volunteers and preparing for succession planning - which involves youth engagement and leadership - will be important in building social cohesion and sustaining (and growing) Maple Creek’s cultural vibrancy.

Actions

- Reward and showcase community volunteers through a monthly “volunteer spotlight” in the Maple Creek News and/or through an annual BBQ that celebrates volunteers.
- Include “volunteer sign up opportunities” during Community Registrations Night, encouraging volunteers to participate in specific projects that do not require a long-term commitment. (“Can you give an hour?”)
- Connect volunteer opportunities with a mandatory volunteer school program, focusing on initiatives/destinations that have been identified by youth during the visioning process (e.g. restaurants and other hang-out places in the Heritage District, public realm amenities such as benches, rodeo grounds, etc).
- Undertake a youth consultation in order to better understand and match youth interests with volunteer needs, and to maintain ongoing ownership and enthusiasm about local cultural assets to be enjoyed and maintained by all.

Strategic Direction 2:

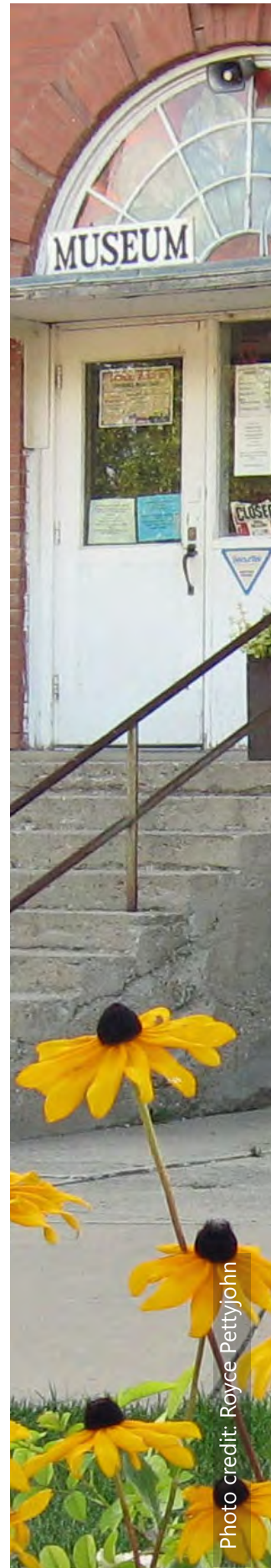
Integrate Maple Creek's Cultural Organization Silos

A myriad of cultural organizations - including heritage, arts, spiritual, recreational, and other groups - regularly meet and/or offer services to residents and visitors to Maple Creek. Many are working toward similar or comparable goals, but are working in silos. Many also have unmet needs for permanent or appropriate cultural spaces, which can be costly to obtain and maintain, while other facilities are left under-utilized.

There is an opportunity to find efficiencies and mutual benefits through integrated planning, marketing, service delivery, and funding efforts. Shared initiatives and spaces also serve to better connect diverse groups and demographics, bridging age, cultural, and other divides.

Actions

- Develop a publicly accessible “facility list” that identifies cultural spaces throughout the community - including churches, community facilities and clubs, and possibly businesses - that can be used by different groups on a rotating schedule.
- Ensure the Maple Creek Main Street Program continues to liaise with a range of heritage and other cultural groups to achieve shared objectives with respect to cultural vitality in the Heritage District (refer to the Maple Creek Heritage District Implementation Plan).
- Invite key leaders/representatives in cultural groups of all kinds to meet annually to identify synergies related to event planning, marketing, service delivery, and seeking grants, funding, and other financial resources.
- Work with Tourism Maple Creek and regional tourism initiatives to ensure marketing efforts are coordinated, leveraging as many cultural assets as possible.





Strategic Direction 3:

Celebrate Diversity and Foster Inclusivity

As noted in Section 2.0, Maple Creek is home to diverse ethno-cultural groups, including First Nations, Métis, and people of Asian and European descent. Some have lived in the region for many generations, while other are newcomers to Maple Creek and Canada. The community has identified a number of needs with respect to celebrating ethno-cultural diversity and supporting the needs of different demographics. These include encouraging the cultural and artistic expression of these groups in the public realm and more generally in the community, and to ensure ongoing support for newcomers.

Likewise, there are diverse age groups in Maple Creek with different cultural needs and preferences. As the demographic continues to age, it is important for seniors to be able to “age in place” while participating in Maple Creek’s cultural life. Youth also have their own interests and understanding of cultural vitality. Maple Creek’s cultural vibrancy hinges on an inclusive, multi-generational approach to cultural planning.

Actions

- Work with schools and/or youth groups to identify a youth space in the Heritage District that accommodates a range of cultural activities, such as film screenings, performances, music/dance/jam activities, and more.
- Support the creation of youth-friendly outdoor social spaces in the cultural core (i.e. downtown / Heritage District). For example, youth identified park benches and picnic tables as great places to “hang out”, people-watch, and socialize. Street furniture is also valuable for seniors, which provide resting opportunities for pedestrians and foster social interaction.
- Consider inviting youth to busk on the sidewalk on Jasper Street or Pacific Avenue in the Heritage District on a rotating weekend schedule; this could include playing music, performing drama, or other artistic/cultural performances.
- Support younger seniors in taking on leadership/committee roles in seniors’ groups and other cultural organizations, enabling succession.
- Support the establishment of seniors supportive housing, in order to

support seniors to “age in place” so that they can effectively participate in the community’s cultural life, and generally support arts programming for diverse age groups, abilities, and interests.

- Continue to promote and support Maple Creek’s annual Multi-Cultural Mosaic, which has been very successful in providing an effective way to educate about and celebrate different ethno-cultures in the community. This event is also important because it conveys that all people and culture are recognized and valued in Maple Creek.
- Consider how to incorporate activities at major events that represent the diversity of the community. Invite different ethno-cultural groups to participate in event planning and execution, and to lead or assist in the development of public realm projects involving artistic expression.
- Support the work of the Newcomers Welcoming Committee, and liaise with them to find opportunities for greater participation and cultural expression of newcomers.
- Connect volunteer programs, such as through the high school, to non-English speaking newcomers for language training. Both teachers and students develop skills and benefit from the cultural and learning exchange.



ANNUAL MULTI-CULTURAL MOSAIC



Strategic Direction 4:

Continue to Work with Local First Nation and Métis Groups toward Shared Cultural Goals

Relationships between the Nekaneet First Nation, Métis, and other Maple Creek residents have existed for over one hundred years. Indeed, the cultural identity of Maple Creek is incomplete without the stories and traditions of the Nekaneet and Métis people.

These important and unique connections are evident in many annual events, including the Heritage Festival, Battle of the Little Big Puck, Métis cultural programming, Pow Wows, and more. At the same time, participants in the cultural planning process identified the need for greater collaboration and relationship-building.

Actions

- Continue to support and build on the momentum of the Regalia group.
- Continue to support and build on the momentum of the Cypress Hills Métis Cultural Centre.
- Find more opportunities for Nekaneet and Métis involvement in other important events in Maple Creek, such as the Cowboy Poetry events and the Multi-Cultural Mosaic.
- Likewise, find more opportunities for the involvement of other Maple Creek residents to participate in or support/attend Pow Wows, Regalia and dance troupe events, tipi-raising, Métis cultural programming, and more.
- Explore the possibility of co-hosting events, such as a joint “Maple Creek Oldtimer and Nekaneet Elder Storytelling” event.
- Work with local Nekaneet and Métis groups to explore opportunities for the development of authentic tourism products and experiences. For example, experiential tourism opportunities identified by the Regalia group include exposure to and/or participation in storytelling, meat drying, Nekaneet cuisine, tipi-sleeping, and more. Experiential Métis tourism opportunities might include jigging, beading, finger weaving, capote making, potluck suppers, and more.

- Find opportunities in schools and museums to increase learning about local First Nation and Métis history and culture.
- Work with members of the Nekaneet and Métis communities to find ways to increase the visibility of Nekaneet and Métis cultural expression in Maple Creek.
- Ensure representatives from the Nekaneet First Nation and Métis communities are at the table for important discussions about identity/branding of Maple Creek (refer to the Maple Creek Main Street Implementation Plan).
- As a first step toward forging strong collaborative ties, find champions in Nekaneet, Métis, and Maple Creek communities.



ANNUAL HERITAGE FESTIVAL | PHOTO CREDIT: DARCY DIETRICH



Strategic Direction 5:

Increase the Visibility of the Arts and Artists in the Community

Maple Creek is home to visual artists, musicians, performers, and other individuals with artistic interests and skills. However the arts community has noted that artists do not have a high degree of visibility in Maple Creek, and there is a perception that many residents are unaware of the artistic abilities in the community. As such, there are opportunities to showcase local talent, offer resources to artists, and generally support the arts community in Maple Creek.

Actions

- Continue supporting Maple Creek's arts events, and continue integrating artist involvement/performances at other events, including other cultural and sporting events.
- Secure an at-grade, highly visible, physically accessible (i.e. for all mobility needs) gallery space in the Heritage District for the production, presentation, and sale of local art work and crafts.
- In the interim, find lower-cost ways to showcase local artwork; examples include rotating displays in shop windows, restaurants, and food menus. Explore other showcase venues such as schools, municipal buildings, churches, and key community facilities such as the curling rink.
- Work with the Town of Maple Creek and Tourism Maple Creek to create a virtual gallery on the town website and Facebook page.
- Support the establishment of a permanent "artist in residence" program.
- Host and support workshops and retreats for the ongoing learning, development, and networking among amateur and professional artists from both the Maple Creek area and beyond. "Art in the Park", a retreat at Cypress Park, is an example.
- Find opportunities for artistic expression in the public realm; examples include: murals and street banners created by local artists; permanent public art installations; street murals/painting (also known as "street

repair”); projecting photographic images of art or historic buildings onto existing building facades; and more.

- Adopt a “public works as public art policy”, whereby a Project Artist is hired by the Town to work on the initial planing phase of infrastructure projects. The artist researches the site from a cultural or historical perspective, and determines how to integrate an artistic element into the infrastructure project.
- Continue to find opportunities for local musicians to perform, and artists and crafts people to showcase and sell their work at annual festivals, the Farmers Markets, and other events.
- Continue supporting the “experiential” aspects of arts and crafts, including educational, live demonstrations of local arts and crafts at events.
- Set up and coordinate a rotating Saturday schedule for demonstrations and performances that can take place in the Heritage District, both indoors (e.g. Glascock Building) and outdoors (e.g. Post Office Pocket Park). Examples include cooking demonstrations by local chefs; local craft/industry demonstrations (e.g. quilting); and busking and other performances (dance, drama, etc) from a range of cultural groups.



CERAMICS DEMONSTRATION IN THE HERITAGE DISTRICT | PHOTO CREDIT: DARCY DIETRICH



Strategic Direction 6:

Support Existing and New Cultural Venues

With all of its historic assets and cultural vitality, there is no doubt that Maple Creek is well positioned to strengthen its hold as the “Hub of the Southwest”.

A top priority identified by the community during consultation for this process is to meet the need for a dedicated cultural venue, particularly for live music and other performances. The vision for such a venue was identified within the broader context of creating a vibrant cultural core in the Heritage District, with high levels of street life and cultural activity during both the day and evening, and on both weekdays and weekends.

Actions

- As a top priority, conduct a feasibility study for the restoration and use of the former Grand Theatre as a live theatre and performance venue. In the Terms of Reference, include a requirement to explore different shared ownership and management models.
- Ensure the maintenance of existing historic assets and community facilities in the community, namely those identified in Section 2.0 of this Plan. Refer to the Maple Creek Heritage District for a detailed road map. Encourage and promote a town-wide program of heritage interpretation.
- Using the Maple Creek Main Street Implementation Plan as a guide, focus planning and design efforts in the Heritage District, ensuring that it maintains its role as the community’s pedestrian-friendly, cultural heart and soul.

Case Study and Cultural Success Story: Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan

With a population of only 1100 residents, Gravelbourg was one of Canada’s smallest communities to participate in the Main Street revitalization project in the 1980s. A few key efforts have resulted in a tremendously successful outcome, whereby the town has been dubbed the “cultural gem of Saskatchewan”. Specifically, Gravelbourg is now home to rural Saskatchewan’s biggest open air music festival, a theatre venue for community and entertainment, restored historic buildings, and many other cultural events and visible artistic expressions throughout the town. Some of the key interventions with respect to design approaches, cultural initiatives, and venue investments are outlined below:



TOP: BOOK READING WITH A LOCAL AUTHOR.

BOTTOM: MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AS PART OF THE ANNUAL SUMMER SOLSTICE FESTIVAL D'ETE, WHICH COMBINES "CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND SPIRITUALITY".



TOP: THE RENAISSANCE GAIETY THEATRE, A COMMUNITY VENUE FOR ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMING, WHICH GENERATES REVENUE THROUGH FACILITY RENTAL FOR MOVIE NIGHTS, PROGRAMMING, AND SPECIAL EVENTS.

BOTTOM: "NEWCOMERS WELCOME" EVENT.



TOP: THE "PATH FOR PEACE" LABYRINTH

BOTTOM: GRAVELBOURG'S HISTORIC "TOUCH OF EUROPE" DOWNTOWN

PHOTO CREDIT (FOR ALL PHOTOS): TOWN OF GRAVELBOURG

