



Food security becomes the number one priority for SIMFC during the coronavirus lockdown

The Coronavirus' profound effect on the SIMFC's operations provided the Centre with the impetus to rethink how it could assist families, individuals, and Elders during this difficult time. Despite the pandemic restrictions, the Centre was able to assist the Indigenous community in a number of ways with the assistance of other community organizations.

The Tuesdays-in-August food hamper campaign issued 920 hampers of perishable and non-perishable foods to an estimated 5,726 people. SIMFC's hard-working staff systematically accommodated the hamper-providing process to help individuals get out of the heat of the day and stay COVID-19 safe during the campaign.

Thanks to our community partners United Way of Saskatoon & Area, Government of Canada, Rotary Club Saskatoon, Saskatoon Food Bank, Breakfast Club of Canada, CUMFI, Association of Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan, Ninetimes Skateboard Shop, Canada Helps, Canada On-line Giving, and White Buffalo Youth Lodge for their support of the campaign.

The Breakfast Outreach Program and the Brown-Bag Lunch Program continued to ensure that some of the more vulnerable members of the community stayed fed. Thanks again to Cobs Bread, Tim Horton's (22nd and Avenue F), and SaskEnergy for their donations towards these two programs.



Métis Western Region 2A partners with SIMFC for hamper drive

On July 29 and 30, 2020, volunteers from Western Region 2A (WR2A) descended upon the Saskatoon Indian & Métis Friendship Centre to attend to the delivery of food and organize hampers for 334 urban and rural Métis Elders and families in response to the continuing COVID-19 Virus crisis.

Between the food and the hampers, the impressive operation took over the entire SIMFC gymnasium and most of the lobby. The hampers included perishable food items, including produce, eggs, bread, and meat, and non-perishable staples such as rice, pasta, condiments, cereals, sauces, and beverages.

Elders and families also received bags with items to help them stay home and stay safe during the continuing lockdown. Bags for Elders included a cribbage board, cards, a set of dice, a CD movie, toiletries, and more. Children received a colouring book,

crayons, a wading pool, a puppet-making booklet, a kite, treats, a frisbee, and other fun items to keep them busy.

Delivery of the hampers was made possible through arrangements made by WR2A Local Presidents who ensured that pickups and deliveries were made for in-town and out-of-town recipients.



SIMFC launches Oskawipewis program in August thanks to United Way and Government of Canada

The Oskawipewis (“helpers”) program of the Saskatoon Indian & Métis Friendship Centre moved forward in August thanks to the partnership with the United Way of Saskatoon & Area and the Government of Canada, and funding through the Emergency Community Support Fund.

Of vital importance, the Oskawipewis program is keeping Elders and their extended families safe, connected, and supported during the continuing COVID-19 Virus pandemic. It uses a holistic approach that addresses the four pillars of well being by focusing on the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs of the Elders.

The SIMFC has identified some 600 Elders in need of some kind

of assistance which will in turn serve some 3,000 extended family members. An application process helped to identify the kinds of supports that are now being provided. For example, food hampers reflect the need for a balanced diet and attention to foods that support diabetes control. Games and activities for children help Elders keep these members of their extended families engaged and safe during the coronavirus.

Staff members regularly convey news on events, activities, and information pertinent to Elders interests, from government services, to community events and cultural opportunities. Information on discounted community programs, counselling services, and free food services is also being provided.



Counselling services helping during pandemic lockdown

SIMFC is offering counselling services to members on Thursdays between 10:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. The Centre's two Indigenous Approved Mental Health Therapists/Registered Social Workers provide counselling for a variety of issues, including complex trauma, anxiety and depression, domestic violence, and suicide or self-harm. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, counselling is being done by appointment only. Counselling options are available, including over the phone, on line, and in person.



Summer Children's program gives kids new fun in August

The SIMFC Children's Summer Program provided children ages 6 through 12 with the opportunity to take part in some fun arts and crafts in August. Ten children per day took part in the program. Summer student Terry Ann Randhile oversaw the activities along with program staff members.



Children followed COVID-19 protocols to ensure their safety as they enjoyed the activities.

Thanks to the Community Initiatives Fund, Community Grant Program, and Saskatoon Tribal Council for sponsoring the initiative.

SIMFC in ongoing partnership with U of S for Hepatitis C study

SIMFC has been a partner in the University of Saskatchewan's Hepatitis C study since March by providing the office space for its activities on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at the Centre.

The study is directed towards persons who have injected drugs and have been using or drinking heavily during the preceding six months. The study includes a blood test that checks for Hepatitis C & B, HIV, and syphilis and then provides results of the blood test along with treatment options for anyone who tests positive.

One of the goals of the study is to learn how healthcare can be better provided to study participants through their input. The study also offers a free Naloxone Home Kit with consultation on using it to protect friends and family from overdoses.

Working with the federal government during the coronavirus

The SIMFC is most grateful to the Government of Canada for the Covid-19 virus emergency funding it has received that has enabled the Centre to ensure that Saskatoon's Indigenous community is staying fed and staying safe.

SIMFC also worked with Service Canada and Indigenous Services Canada to keep members informed on the services available to individuals and families from the federal government during the COVID-19 crisis. Information on CERB benefits and on-line services available were provided in a timely manner on Facebook and the website to ensure members had up-to-date information.



Marsee, miigwetch to all who have donated!

Many thanks to Elizabeth and Gabriella (left) and Henry and Jan (right) for their unexpected donations to the Meal program!



A big shout out to our neighbours Citizen Café and Bakery for their donations of baked goods!



Thanks also to Wanda Wieggers and to Nancy Allan for their thoughtful monetary donations!

Downtown YXE, which promotes Saskatoon's central Business Improvement District, generously donated 20 litres of hand sanitizer to SIMFC on August 14th. Thanks to Downtown Saskatoon's Operations Supervisor, Jamie Marushak, for the special delivery!



Thanks to Mark Thunderchild and Trevor Davies for delivering a UNIFOR donation of \$1,000.



And finally, thanks to those individuals who together donated \$1,700 as part of the 100 Men Who Give a Damn initiative: Joe Willick, Sean Maw, Jeffrey Hryhoriw, Charlie Clark, Ken Kachur, Keith Martel, Chris Moore, Anthony Zuck, Shawne Hancock, Richard Kies, Michaela Michael, Orlo Drewitz, Edward Schweighardt, Boris Kishchuk, and Norm Fisher.



Virtual 36th Annual Aboriginal Grad Celebration garners some 450 viewers by end of summer

Some 160 grads registered for the 36th Annual Aboriginal Grad Celebration. Both the Saskatoon Public Schools and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools helped to produce the virtual celebration with assistance from the students themselves.

The video is a compilation of the students' photos, their aspirations, scholarships awarded to chosen grads, and entertainment by a select few of the graduates. It followed the format normally used, minus the banquet.

Vincent Wuttunee, a grad of Mount Royal Collegiate, was the winner of a new Ipad.

Many thanks to school board personnel, the grads themselves, and MP Brad Redekopp's office for its contribution of book-style certificate holders.

Thanks also to the Saskatoon Public Schools, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and Sask. Workers Compensation Board for their sponsorship.

The 2020 Aboriginal Grad Celebration can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/130CbDZvj8g>.



SIMFC's FolkFest 2020 features traditional and contemporary Indigenous foods and recipes

With food security being an important focus of the Centre's activities, the Centre's own FolkFest virtual celebrations took the opportunity to focus on Indigenous foods. Traditional and contemporary foods and recipes are featured, including in-house video productions and links to recipes and other food resources.

Elder Allan Morin's account of growing up Métis at Île-à-la-Crosse highlights his family's ability to live sustainably and the traditional Métis foods his family enjoyed.

Char's Muskeg Tea takes viewers through the traditional process of enjoying muskeg tea, telling stories from her family and discussing its protocols and benefits.



A link to the CBC series "Forage," takes viewers back to the land for the foraging of wild leeks by Anishinaabe chef Shawn Adler and into his kitchen where he creates his contemporary recipes.

Other links feature Wanuskewin's Métis chef Jenni Lessard, whose cuisine has a strong connection to the land, and Chef Brian Yazzie, a Diné/Navajo traveling chef, who takes Native non-colonized cuisine back home to the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

Thanks to all who tuned in for SIMFC's on-line FolkFest Indigenous foods celebration! The videos and other resources can be viewed on the SIMFC website at <https://www.simfc.ca/folkfest2020>.