



## Saskatoon Indian & Métis Friendship Centre

Supporting Saskatoon's Indigenous  
community during the coronavirus pandemic

April – September 2020



# Table of Contents

- Transitioning through the pandemic ..... 3
  - Working together with the federal government during the pandemic crisis ..... 3
  - Marking a new era for the organization ..... 4
- Food security becomes #1 priority during coronavirus lockdown ..... 4
  - Developing outreach capacity ..... 5
  - Métis Western Region 2A partners with SIMFC on hamper drive ..... 5
  - Breakfast fundraiser for children’s lunch hamper program raises \$1,900 ..... 6
- New ways of helping in the community ..... 6
  - Elders’ Oskawipewis program launched in August ..... 6
  - Options for counselling services ..... 7
  - SIMFC continues partnership with USask on Hep C study ..... 7
- Getting things done differently ..... 7
  - National Indigenous Peoples Day goes virtual ..... 8
  - 450 views of Virtual Annual Aboriginal Grad Celebration by end of summer ..... 8
  - SIMFC debuts CityScape on-line newsmagazine ..... 8
  - SIMFC’s FolkFest 2020 features traditional and contemporary Indigenous food and recipes ..... 9
- “We’re all in this together” ..... 9
  - Staples donates big in support of student success ..... 10
- Back to a new normal ..... 10
  - Centre activities resume in September ..... 10
  - Men’s healing groups begin ..... 10
  - Parenting program assists families ..... 10

The Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre (SIMFC) is a non-political, autonomous, and non-profit organization that was incorporated in 1968. It is a part of the Friendship Centre Movement of 120 Friendship Centres across Canada. The SIMFC supports Indigenous cultural distinctiveness by providing community development services that holistically support all ages.

Membership to the Saskatoon Indian & Metis Friendship Centre is open to anyone over the age of 16. Memberships cost \$2/year. All members of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit descent are invited to vote at the Annual General Meeting and participate in the election of the Board of Directors. Non-Aboriginal people can join as Associate members, but have no voting rights.



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## Transitioning through the pandemic

Working within the pandemic restrictions, the Centre was able to assist the Indigenous community in a number of ways. Over the past six months, SIMFC was able to:

- Garner community support for the roles it has played during the pandemic;
- Produce numerous special cultural projects for a digital audience;
- Complete renovations and new office spaces for a new era at the Centre;
- Create a new website for better information sharing with its membership, sponsors, donors, funders, and community supporters.
- Respond to new possibilities while continuing to apply for coronavirus-aware cultural programming funding for the fall and winter of the 2020-2021 year.



After three months of the virus lockdown, based on provincial guidelines, SIMFC opened its doors to restricted public access, with person-to-person business being done in a limited fashion. Following provincial guidelines, protocol continues to be in place for staff and those visiting the Centre.

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## Working together with the federal government during the COVID-19 crisis

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.



## Marking a new era for the organization

SIMFC took the opportunity to renew the lobby, do some renovations, and add new office spaces while it was closed to the public. Thanks to the staff, who mostly undertook the transformation, for clearing out years of clutter, giving it a good cleaning, and upgrading some spaces..

New offices were built in the lobby to accommodate client intake and other meetings, and a new activity room provides a fresh location for cultural activities.



## Food security becomes the #1 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. In mid-April, SIMFC began addressing the issue of food security in our community by moving from a twice-weekly supper to providing a brown-bag lunch daily, Monday through Friday. 4:30 and 6 p.m. Some 50 meals are assembled and then distributed between 4:30 and 6 p.m. by our great SIMFC staff!

In May, SIMFC joined up with CHEP's New Horizons Program to help deliver food to seniors with food support needs. The service was 100% free for any Saskatoon community member and each delivery included a variety of fruits and vegetables, bread, eggs, and some basic pantry items. Deliveries were made weekly or on a one-time basis.

In June, the federal government's Emergency COVID-19 Relief Fund allowed SIMFC to assist families, individuals, and Elders with food hampers to address their food security concerns.

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 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.



## Developing outreach capacity

The Centre instituted an outreach food program during the pandemic so that we could reach those in need without them making the trip to the Centre.

Our weekday outreach Breakfast Program takes a route up 20<sup>th</sup> Street from Idylwyld Drive to Avenue P, and then across 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to the Lighthouse in order to ensure that those in need are not left hungry and have other resources to assist them in their everyday lives, including hygiene products and warm clothing. Although some can still come to the Centre to grab a breakfast with coffee or a late afternoon brown-bag lunch, the outreach program has enabled us to expand our ability to reach and support a greater number of people. Thanks again to Cobs Bread, Tim Horton's (22<sup>nd</sup> and Avenue F), and SaskEnergy for their donations towards these two programs.



## Métis Western Region 2A partners with SIMFC on hamper drive

On July 29 and 30, 2020, volunteers from Western Region 2A (WR2A) descended upon the SIMFC 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. The impressive operation took over the entire SIMFC gymnasium and most of the lobby.

Elders and children also received bags with items to help them stay home and stay safe during the continuing lockdown. .



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.

## Breakfast fundraiser for children's lunch hamper program raises \$1,900

Almost 120 supporters came out to champion the SIMFC breakfast fundraiser with all proceeds going towards the Children's Lunch Hamper program.

The fundraiser brought in close to \$1,900 which will go a long way towards ensuring that inner-city children have a nutritious meal to keep them going during the school day. The silent art auction brought in \$1,026.00!

Special guests included Sheri Benson, CEO of the United Way, members of the Saskatoon Police Service, Mayor Charlie Clark, members of the Rotary Club, members of the office of MP Brad Redekopp, Dr. Ryan Meili, leader of the Saskatchewan NDP, along with NDP candidates Ashlee Hicks and Betty Nippi-Albright, as well as members of the Thunderchild First Nation.

Our generous sponsors were River View Hutterite Colony, Saskatoon Food Bank, Prairie Meats, and Boyskis Butcher Block. And, it was all made possible by the hardworking staff of SIMFC who braved the cold outside and worked their magic in the kitchen!



## New ways of helping the community

### Elders' Oskawipewis program launched in August

The Oskawipewis ("helpers") program moved forward in August to keep Elders and their extended families safe, connected, and supported during the continuing pandemic. Its holistic approach addresses the four pillars of well being by focusing on the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs of the Elders. The program

is expected to assist Elders and some 3,000 extended family members. An application process helped to identify the kinds of supports that are now being provided. Games and activities for children help Elders keep these members of their extended families engaged and secure. Staff members regularly convey news on events, activities, and information pertinent to Elders interests. The program is made possible thanks to the partnership with the United Way of Saskatoon & Area and the Government of Canada, and funding through the federal government's Emergency Community Support Fund.



## Options for counselling services

In light of the mental health issues associated with life during a pandemic, SIMFC began offering counselling services on Thursdays. The Centre's two 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.



## SIMFC continues partnership with USask on Hepatitis C study

SIMFC continued its partnership with the University of Saskatchewan's Hepatitis C study by providing the office space for its activities on Tuesdays and Thursdays mornings once the Centre reopened under restrictions. 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.

## Getting things done differently

For the first three months of the lockdown, staff shifted their ability to provide services away from in-person communication to assisting members on the phone and on-line.

With funding from the Community Initiative Fund and the National Indian Brotherhood for fabric, skilled staff members made upward of 500 protective masks for distribution to Elders, vulnerable people, members of SIMFC, and anyone who didn't have access to one.

To help keep children engaged and safe during the lockdown, the SIMFC put together, and distributed for free, bags full of fun craft items to more than 64 families.

The SIMFC increased its on-line presence in the community through its website and Facebook page, keeping the Centre connected and relevant.

SIMFC staff members really stepped up for special occasions with on-line productions for National Indigenous Peoples Day, FolkFest, and the Annual Aboriginal Graduation to ensure that our members could still celebrate with us.

## National Indigenous Peoples Day goes virtual

SIMFC staff ensured that the Centre celebrated NIDP during the pandemic by producing an online production of Métis and First Nation entertainment, fun Indigenous facts, and greetings from dignitaries. More than 800 viewers have enjoyed the June 21<sup>st</sup> celebrations that can be viewed on the SIMFC YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNkxhF82II4>.

## 450 views of Virtual Annual Aboriginal Grad Celebration by end of summer

Some 160 grads registered for the 36<sup>th</sup> 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 debuts CityScape on-line news magazine

SIMFC launched its new publication to keep community members, sponsors, donors, and community supporters informed of the Centre's activities and events.



The summer edition which was released in early September outlines what this hard-working organization did over the summer to support Saskatoon's Indigenous community. Find it at <https://www.simfc.ca/publications-resources>



## 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.

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>.

## "We're all in this together"

The Centre received an outpouring of support from individuals, businesses, corporations, and government agencies during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown. Thanks to:

- Association of Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan
- Breakfast Clubs of Canada
- Canada Helps
- Canada On-line Giving
- Citizen Café & Bakery
- Cobs Bread
- Downtown YXE
- Government of Canada
- Individuals
- Nestors Bakery
- Ninetimes Skateboard Shop
- 100 Men Who Give A Damn
- Rotary Club Saskatoon
- Saskatoon Food Bank
- Staples (Circle Drive)
- Tim Hortons, 22nd & Ave F
- UNIFOR
- United Way Saskatoon & Area
- White Buffalo Youth Lodge



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## Staples Canada donates big in support of student success

The SIMFC was amazed to receive six pallets of schools supplies in early September from Staples Canada on Circle Drive in the River City Centre in support of students returning to school. From backpacks, lunch bags, binders, to other supplies, the generous donation made a big difference to the four schools SIMFC shared it with.



## Back to a new normal

### Centre activities resume in September

Cultural and sports classes resumed in September with workshops in beading, dance, and traditional cooking, as well as a Co-Ed Volleyball League. The Centre's Bingo Days returned on September 11 thanks to Saskatoon Twin Charities and staff members.

SIMFC hosted the SUNTEP/GDI Saskatoon Student Orientation which was an opportunity for students to meet in person in a physically distanced venue to review the student handbook, learn course delivery details, and get an introduction to SUNTEP/GDC staff and faculty.

### Men's healing groups begin

SIMFC is offering two men's groups in the evening to assist men who have suffered through traumatic experiences as boys or young men, the pain of which they have carried into their adult lives. Taught to hold that sadness inside, to not express it in any way except as anger, has resulted in a toxic masculinity that affects their lives in many ways. The men's groups assist participants to learn new healthy ways to deal with the negativity they may be facing in their daily lives.

### Parenting program helps mothers to gain parenting skills

Keeping the Fire Parenting Program is assisting mothers to gain parenting skills and tools, including coping mechanisms, emotional regulation for children, identity formation, and grounding techniques. It is an insightful and experiential sharing program which finds the traditional teaching of reciprocity alive and well between counsellors and participants. Due to the restrictions around the COVID-19 virus, participation is limited but it is expected that the program will be offered seasonally.



# Statement of Operations and Members' Equity

Year ended March 31, 2020 with comparative information for 2019

	Revenue	Expenses & Amortization	Excess	Equity Apr 1, 2018	Transfers	Equity Mar 30, 2019
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Building & Family Services Reserve Fund				120,000	-	120,000
Building Fund	108,242	76,652	31,590	408,783	-	440,373
Core Fund	381,520	371,778	9,742	(32,628)	-	(22,886)
Program Fund	1,259,948	1,248,667	11,281	120,596	-	131,877
Family Services	347,716	347,259	457	33,435	-	33,892
Youth Victims Restitution Fund	222,722	230,168	(7,446)	73,104	-	65,658
Internal Admin. Allocation	(153,583)	(153,583)	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,166,565</b>	<b>2,120,941</b>	<b>45,624</b>	<b>723,290</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>768,914</b>

	Revenue	Expenses & Amortization	Excess	Equity Apr 1, 2018	Transfers	Equity Mar 30, 2019
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Building & Family Services Reserve Fund				120,000	-	120,000
Building Fund	133,486	95,973	37,513	371,270	-	408,783
Core Fund	437,885	432,170	5,715	(38,343)	-	(32,628)
Program Fund	1,176,652	1,182,404	(5,752)	126,348	-	120,596
Family Services	251,337	251,890	(553)	33,988	-	33,435
Youth Victims Restitution Fund	219,030	219,030	-	73,104	-	73,104
Internal Admin. Allocation	(165,180)	(165,180)	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,053,210</b>	<b>2,016,287</b>	<b>36,923</b>	<b>686,367</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>723,290</b>



168 Wall St, Saskatoon, SK S7K 1N4  
Phone: (306) 244-0174 Fax: (306) 664-2536  
Email: [reception\\_simfc@shaw.ca](mailto:reception_simfc@shaw.ca)