

Big Culture Days in a small town

BY DANICA LORER



With the cooperation of local organizations they offered a range of activities for all ages. There was an interactive music program for toddlers, a local Aboriginal storyteller, an improvisation workshop, a window decorating contest, a museum scavenger hunt, and for the competitive-minded-a creative lawnmower race.

An international food and artisan fair offered guests an opportunity to taste dishes including bannock, perogies, cabbage rolls and Korean fare. Spectators enjoyed colourful costumes and regalia as they watched the dance groups and musicians.

"All events allowed participants to try new things, but probably the best example was the Aboriginal round dance, which pushed people of different cultures out of their comfort zones in a fun and unusual way," says Lachambre.

Her favourite activity was the Old Time Photo Booth. "It was so much fun to see young families and elderly people alike enthusiastically playing dress up and then posing for a photo shoot. There was a lot of laughter in the museum that day," she says.

The annual Kamsack Rodeo occurred the same weekend and this overlap helped to increase attendance at both events.

Organizers were pleased to see more participants than they had expected attend the events in 2012 and are looking forward to Culture Days 2013. "We are participating in Culture Days this coming year and are currently brainstorming ideas for new and unique events as well as bringing back the most popular ones. We've got a really creative bunch of volunteers working behind the scenes," she says.

"While last year's events were highly interactive, our upcoming program will take the interactive aspect and take it to the next level. We're prepared for an energetic and entertaining celebration of arts and culture in Kamsack that will leave participants having learned something new about their community and hopefully about themselves at the same time," says Lachambre.

The Kamsack Community Arts Council didn't start out with baby steps. They wanted to introduce themselves to the community and be seen as a strong presence from the very beginning. In its first year, the group exceeded expectations by coordinating a busy Culture Days weekend.

The community, with a population of 2,000, hosted 15 events during Culture Days in 2012.

Nikki Lachambre, president of the arts council says, "The fact that we were able to host so many activities and create so much buzz on our very first time out is a real success story. We must have come close to hosting the most Culture Days events per capita in Saskatchewan!"

"We learned about Culture Days through SaskCulture and were immediately motivated to participate on a large scale," she says. "Our arts council members not only had a bunch of great ideas, but also the energy and motivation to implement them. All the local organizations we contacted about participating jumped on board." She was excited by the concept of the nationwide movement. "Culture Days is a wonderful way to bring members of communities together, especially, I think, in small towns, where there aren't a lot of opportunities locally for focusing on the arts and recognizing the cultural diversity in our own backyards."

The Kamsack Arts Council launched their community's first Culture Days experience with many activities including Aboriginal storytelling with George Musqua and cultural dance performances.

BUILD INTEREST.

In 2012, hundreds of children had the opportunity to try out musical instruments at the Mini-BreakOut West event, which received funding for Culture Days.



MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!

Funding available from the
Culture Days Funding Assistance Grant

Supports interactive cultural hubs, projects and activities taking place the last weekend of September during Culture Days in Saskatchewan.

Deadline: May 15



Visit www.saskculture.sk.ca for details.