



# Office of the Treaty Commissioner

NEWSLETTER

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The Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) is mandated to advance the Treaty goal of establishing good relations among all people of Saskatchewan. The OTC continues to work with First Nations, provincial school systems, other educational institutions and the rest of Saskatchewan to raise the awareness and understanding of Treaties in Saskatchewan.



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### Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan

#### Mary Culbertson



There have been some incredible moments in the past six months, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and making the first trip to Fond Du Lac. There has also been stress, with the emergency of COVID-19.

At the OTC we are doing our part to stop the spread of COVID-19 by making our team available by phone and email, but closing the office to people walking in. We are also helping in the response. Staff members are volunteering their time to make masks, and linking people with sewing skills, masks, or hand sanitizer with communities that need these things. Whether volunteering or staying home we all must do our part.

We are looking at a change to what thought of as normal. There won't be large gatherings and events where we see our friends and relatives and meet new people. We won't be at Treaty days, and annuity payments will be available by mail or next season. We will keep you updated on Treaty 4,5, 6 and 10 gatherings that may be postponed. You will see our education continue through virtual options. We are revitalizing the Treaty Learning Network and if you are a Treaty Catalyst trainer and wish to be part of the network again please contact Charmaine ([cgardiner@otc.ca](mailto:cgardiner@otc.ca)) or Amy ([aseeseequisis@otc.ca](mailto:aseeseequisis@otc.ca)).

Our communities are changing to protect their Nations and people -- everyday heroes work at checkpoints, make masks, shop for the vulnerable, and cook and deliver food. We need to remember what our knowledge keepers have told us about our lives and our time here being like the breath of a buffalo. This is such a short time in our lives and we must be vigilant for our loved ones, elders, communities.

As we support each other socially, but from a distance, it is an ideal time for a newsletter. It's a chance to reflect on the great work of the OTC team on Treaty education, research, Reconciliation and with youth.

While we continue to grow as an office, I have done some personal growth recently, learning more about my Indigenous language by taking Nakwé through a program at the Hugh Cairns V.C. School in Saskatoon. I feel my heart being connected when I hear my language. It was amazing to be part of this massive change. My mom would always tell me when I was younger how they would get punished for speaking their language in school and today we have many of our schools embracing our languages through programs like this.

Stay safe during this time and we look forward to seeing you in person at events and meetings when we can go back to being together.



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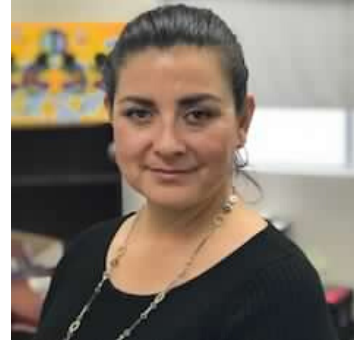
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### OTC Executive Director

#### Trish Greyeyes

One of the highlights of my role as executive director at the Office of the Treaty Commissioner is when we start new programs, and see the impact they make. In the fall we started Youth in Service - Moving Saskatchewan Towards Reconciliation. This project started as two, two-day conferences where we engaged with 100 youth from across the province. We engaged as a group with Elders and motivational speakers, through round table discussions, and group and individual activities.



From those two conferences we selected 36 youth to be a bigger part of our team as the Youth in Service. The youth became members of either the Youth Advisory Council, Youth Speakers Bureau, or the Youth Touring Cadre. Seeing how youth from all backgrounds want to work together towards Reconciliation is very moving.

We have had a few changes in our team since the fall. We were sad to say goodbye to our long-time Director of Education Brenda Ahenakew, who has moved on to become the principal at Muskeg Lake. During her time at the OTC, she saw Treaty Catalyst Teacher trainings become a reality and resources become available and used in classrooms across the province. We miss her, but her legacy on Treaty education continues.

We have also welcomed Sheldon Krasowski as our Research and Archives Coordinator. He started in January and we are excited to have someone in this new role.

I, like so many, am working from home at this time. I know it can be difficult and unsettling, but I take strength from knowing we all have a role to play as we get through COVID-19 together. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about the work or operations of the OTC.



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### OTC Director of Speakers Bureau

#### Amy Seesequasis

The Spring Solstice has come and gone with snow falling all across the Saskatchewan Prairies during our transition from one season to the next. In a time of change and isolation, we are yearning for warm weather, sunshine, growth and renewal after months of cold weather and weeks indoors. I look forward to the return of color; green leaves and grass, as well as the planting of gardens. As I write this, the forecast is for warm weather in the coming days, so I hope we will get a chance to see all those spring colours soon.



The Speakers Bureau has been busy with over 2,900 people made aware of their identity as a Treaty person through our various educational events, information sessions and interactive activities from March 2019 to March 2020. We have a commitment to ensuring that the public of Saskatchewan are made aware of their roles and responsibilities as Treaty people. If you wish to request a session from a Speakers Bureau member, please visit the website and submit a request form. During these changing times, we are adapting by offering presentations via Zoom and Skype. Please connect with me for more information.

We partnered in 2019 with the Saskatchewan Cooperatives Association to host a one-day information session in Saskatoon for their members. This event was well attended and had such great reviews that we decided to partner once again in 2020 and hosted another one-day session in Regina. We had a morning of Treaty information sessions by members of the Speakers Bureau followed by a collective impact activity that assists in assessing what an organization/committee/group/etc. have done to understand their roles and responsibilities as a Treaty person and ways to effectively move forward in implementing Treaty. Some of the positive testimonials we received from event attendees are; "Excellent topics and good sharing of practical ideas about what our co-ops are doing and can continue to do," "All the topics were relevant and flowed well to really drive at the vision for Truth and Reconciliation and what businesses can do," and " We were able to take away some very useful information - not just an understanding of the Treaty history, but how we can actually apply the Calls to Action in our workplace and start to move forward."

We currently have 18 active Speakers Bureau members, and are always looking to expand our bureau so as to broaden our reach and our perspectives on Treaty history, promotion and protection.



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### OTC Director of Speakers Bureau cont.

These members come from various Treaty territories and language groups, and have a wide array of knowledge and expertise on a variety of topics related to Treaty Awareness, Protection and Implementation. Please visit our website to see which topics our bureau members present on. In November 2019 we had nine youth join our bureau to assist us in ensuring that the Saskatchewan public is made aware of their Treaty history and identity. These youth come to us from various communities and language groups, and bring to the bureau a fresh and vibrant perspective from our province's future leaders. These youth are: Peace Akintade-Oluwagbeye (Saskatoon), Abby Blomquist (Nipawin), Logan Cook (Southend, Peter Ballentyne Cree Nation), Nautia Crier (Saskatoon), Bethany Lariviere (Pinhouse Lake), Joy Natomagan (Pinehouse Lake) Jasper Ninine (Southend, Peter Ballentyne Cree Nation), Jessica Sinclair (Saskatoon), and Hailey Stone (North Battleford).



### **OTC celebrates 30 years of Treaty work**

On Nov. 22, more than 100 people came together to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan.

The 30th Anniversary Round Dance and Feast was held in Saskatoon and provided an opportunity for celebration of past work and a look to the future including the unveiling of a new logo.

"As the fifth Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan and the first woman Treaty Commissioner, I am proud to celebrate 30 years of the office. It has been a catalyst for Treaty education both in the classroom and in the greater public," said Mary Culbertson, Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan.

"It has been a shining example for other commissions across Canada and is called on to share experience and expertise across the land."

Reconciliation remains central to the work of the OTC as the office looks to the future. There are Treaty obligations that have not been honoured, and work has to be done to make systemic change, said Culbertson.





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### Youth in Service – Project Coordination

#### Angie Merasty

The Youth In Service project was designed to engage youth from Saskatchewan, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in Reconciliation.

It started with two conferences with Elders, motivational guest speakers, round table discussions, group and individual activities:

Northern Conference held on October 21-23, 2019 at the Elkridge Resort, Waskesiu, SK

Southern Conference held on October 28-30, 2019 at the Travelodge South, Regina, SK



At the end of the two conferences, 36 youth were selected to continue working and traveling with the OTC:

20 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth will form a Youth Advisory Council;

10 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth will join the OTC's Youth Speaker's Bureau;

6 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth will form a Youth with Youth Cadre

The OTC created opportunities for youth to participate in Truth and Reconciliation events all over the province. One of the activities the youth engaged in were the speakers bureau events. The Speakers Bureau taught them about the history of the Treaties and Indian Act, Residential Schools, cultural and land based events such as feasts, round dance, Elder's teachings, and more. The you have also been involved in events that have a cultural exchange component i.e visiting the local Mosque and finding opportunities for them to participate in workshops that deal with race relations in Saskatchewan.

Helping youth to identify and use their strengths is critical; it is a way to motivate them to develop the skills they need to succeed because they certainly want a voice and be heard.





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### OTC Director, Reconciliation and Community Partnerships

#### Rhett Sangster



We are privileged to continue our work of Reconciliation. In the past several months we have been actively working alongside three Truth and Reconciliation Circles (Saskatoon, Yorkton, and the Battlefords), to undertake reflection and planning exercises to set out a future course for advancing Truth and Reconciliation in their communities.

In January, Reconciliation Saskatoon honoured long-time co-chair and community champion Gilles Dorval as he retired from the City of Saskatoon. In February, we celebrated alongside the Prairie Rivers Reconciliation Committee at their community MOU signing and pipe ceremony. The OTC partnered with Reconciliation Nipawin in March to gather 110 community leaders to discuss Truth and Reconciliation in the Nipawin region.

The OTC and many partners have been working to create a framework and tools for measuring progress on Truth and Reconciliation. These tools aim to inspire action, inform learning and increase our collective impact. Our work strives to include the voices of Survivors and Knowledge Keepers and to stay rooted in the Treaty Relationship, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner has been working with hundreds of partner organizations since 2014 to develop a common *Vision for Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation*. These four overlapping areas act as our guiding principles for the Reconciliation measurement and evaluation framework.

We aim to collect stories and data from multiple complimentary sources including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and our partners around the table to report on the progress of Reconciliation in Saskatchewan and ensure momentum continues in our collective Reconciliation journey.



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### Research/Archives Coordinator

#### Sheldon Krasowski



I am pleased to join the Office of the Treaty Commissioner as the new Research and Archives Coordinator. I have only been at the office a few short months, but already hard at work.

My primary responsibility is to catalogue and move the OTC archives online, making it accessible to more people. The starting point has been familiarizing myself with the collection. This is actually a re-familiarization, as the collection was at the First Nations University of Canada library (Saskatoon campus) when I was teaching there in the late 2000s. It is a great collection and includes records dating back to the first OTC office in 1989. When the First Nations University of Canada moved campuses, the collection was returned to the treaty commissioner's offices.

In addition to cataloguing the archival collection, I occasionally get to complete research requests. In early 2020 these included an environmental scan for Piapot First Nation, secondary sources on Ochapowace Nation, and primary sources on the Kinistin adhesion to Treaty Four and Chief's medal. I was also able to work on a long time OTC project to update the timeline of treaty history in Saskatchewan.

I am a non-Indigenous person and was born and grew up in Saskatoon. My parents are German on my mother's side, and Ukrainian on my father's side. My academic background is Indigenous Studies and History, with a BA from the University of Saskatchewan, a Master's degree from Trent University and a PhD is from the University of Regina.

My main focus throughout 2020 will be the archival collection, including document requests and the main catalogue. When time permits small research requests can also be accommodated. I can be reached at [skrasowski@otc.ca](mailto:skrasowski@otc.ca).



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### OTC News



#### OTC selects new logo

When the Office of the Treaty Commissioner decided to update the logo as we marked our 30th anniversary, we decided to look to the future of Saskatchewan - youth.

We sent a call for entries to all schools in the province and received well more than 100 entries.

"It was very difficult to pick the winner because there were so many amazing entries," said Trish Greyes, OTC executive director.

Tiegan, 18, from Medstead School had her design selected.

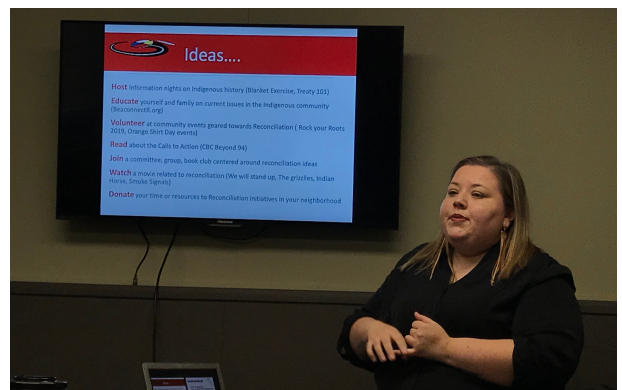
We were all impressed with Tiegan's entry not only because of how beautiful the drawing was, but her written submission. To us, her written submission was moving because she talked about the spirit and intent of Treaty.

#### Growing knowledge on Treaty relationships

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner through the speaker bureau continues to work with organizations, groups, government and individuals, across the province to continue to share knowledge.

The information session Annie Battiste presented was on how as financial planners employees could become more engaged in Truth and Reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

What started out as Sutton Pension and Benefits wanting to have a land acknowledgement and having desire to know more about why and who to acknowledge, became the organization requesting an education session by the Speakers Bureau. As a result of this information session, they will continue to work with OTC on this journey to become more aware of their roles and responsibilities as Treaty partners.





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### OTC in Fond du Lac



For a week in February a team from the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, including some of the OTC youth spent a week in Fond du Lac.

On arrival the team was warmly greeted by the newly formed Fond Du Lac Youth Council and Fond Du Lac Denesuline First Nation Chief Louie Mercredi to Treaty 8 territory. Chief Mercredi says the arrival of Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson was the first time a Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan had arrived in the community.

We saw the youth grow from the experiences, from driving on an ice road, to eating caribou, shopping at the local grocery store, working with other community youth, and attending blanket exercises.



"I believe they left with so much more than can ever be taught in a classroom, the cultural and traditional exchange is priceless," said Angie Merasty, Youth in Service project coordinator.

The Kairos blanket exercise was well attended by people in the community including RCMP and health workers from the Athabasca Health Authority and was very powerful, she said.

Meals prepared by our new friend Janelle at Hailey's Lodge. On some nights there were debriefing meetings with the youth and on others there was music, and then on the hunt for the Northern Lights!!

The OTC youth on the trip come from Sandy Bay, Prince Albert, Red Pheasant and Saskatoon, who are here from Nigeria and India.



The OTC Youth have been filming all week, interviewing other youth, taking beautiful photos of the community, the ice road and Elders. This work will be shared as part of our ongoing youth reconciliation programs.

