



### **Gloria DeSantis**

Gloria has a very keen and longstanding curiosity about "community". From her early childhood growing up in a village in northern Ontario, to her undergraduate university years focusing on community psychology and geography, throughout her graduate school training in social planning and then into the real world, her interests and subsequent skills development, have focused heavily on building communities. These communities have been geographic (e.g. neighbourhood development), psychological (e.g. shared interests such as a commitment to social justice) and cultural in nature (e.g. shared identities).

The main feature of her life work over the past 30 years, has been the nonprofit sector. She worked as the Executive Director of a nonprofit community-based research organization, the Manager of an urban self help centre, the Director of Research at a community planning council, and a Senior Socio-Health Planner. In these various jobs, she facilitated participatory action research, program planning and public policy development for the purpose of building healthier communities. More recently, her interest in the sustainability and vitality of the sector led her to facilitate the development of the Voluntary Sector Studies Network and a new undergraduate certificate, Certificate in Nonprofit Sector Leadership and Innovation, at Luther College at the University of Regina. Based on these experiences, she has skills and knowledge that she can bring to the Heritage Saskatchewan board.

Her main areas of interest include: the nonprofit sector, community well-being/cultural continuity,

community development, social movements and collective public policy advocacy for social justice.

The courses that Gloria teaches at the University of Regina in the Justice Studies Department as an Assistant Professor focus on these concepts. She has worked and volunteered at national, provincial, and local levels and is currently the President of the Association for Nonprofit and Social Economy Research. It is the only national scale association of its type in Canada. At the provincial level, she has done advocacy work with Museums Association of Saskatchewan and was a founding member of Poverty Free Saskatchewan.

At the local level, she has worked with organizations such as the Indian Head Grand Theatre and the Regina Regional Intersectoral Committee regarding the determinants of community well-being.

All of these experiences shape Gloria's interest in heritage for the benefit of Saskatchewan residents. From the beautiful prairie landscape in the south to the Boreal area in the north, to the rural and urban communities, to the diversity of people and cultures, she sees much to be preserved! More specifically, she is fascinated by the potential role of ecomuseums as a newer movement for preserving communities. Further, she has begun to wonder about the role of the nonprofit sector within the realm of cultural heritage. There is a very long legacy of this sector in Saskatchewan; her historical research in this area shows some interesting patterns of behaviour – both good and bad - that persist today. She cares deeply about "community" and believes in the vision: "Heritage is a valued and dynamic legacy that contributes to our sense of identity, creates an understanding of our past, is used to build communities in the present, and informs our choices for the future."