

# intangible cultural heritage

## AN INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICH)?

ICH encompasses the underlying fabric of our lives -- stories, skills, traditions, ways of doing things, ways of speaking, and ways of interacting with each other and the environment. It does not always leave a material record behind, but rather is passed from person to person and from generation to generation. It is so deeply embedded in our cultural identities that we oftentimes take it for granted.

ICH does not reside solely in the past. It is those elements of the past which continue on in the present. It informs who we are and what we want to be. Due to increasing reliance on technology, globalization, and other factors, many elements of our ICH are endangered.

### INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IS...

traditional, contemporary and living  
of the same time

inclusive

representative

community-based

“Intangible cultural heritage includes: oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.”

UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Saskatchewan's cultural landscape is as diverse as its geography. The way we speak, the foods we eat, how we celebrate traditions, all tell a story, the story of who we are.

By exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), individuals, communities and organizations can develop our understanding of our place(s) in the world and nurture our Living Heritage, thus improving our quality of life and the vitality of our communities.

## SAFEGUARDING ICH – FOUR GOALS

**1 Document** ICH and living traditions (audio/video recordings, interviews, photographs, written narratives, et cetera).

**2 Recognize and celebrate** ICH with festivals and community events.

**3 Support and encourage the transmission** of knowledge and skills (workshops, mentorship, classes, et cetera).

**4 Explore the potential of ICH as a resource for community development.**

# SOME EXAMPLES OF ICH IN SASKATCHEWAN

- **Language:** languages, local dialects, word usage, place names, figures of speech
- **Food:** family recipes, use of local ingredients in food preparation, fowl/fall suppers, potlucks, feasts, funeral lunches, holiday meals
- **Customs and traditions:** shivarees, trick or drinking/mumming, local community customs, weddings, graduations, funerary customs, powwows, festivals
- **Environmental knowledge:** hunting and fishing practices, foraging (mushrooms, herbs, etc.), berry picking, trails and wilderness knowledge, farming and ranching practices, gardening lore
- **Play:** practical jokes, playground games, card games, dances, community drama/theatre, parks and recreation
- **Work:** chores, traditional knowledge of hunting/trapping/fishing and ranching/farming, mining, domestic work, and craft production
- **Music and dance:** folk songs, shanties, fiddling, drumming, square dancing, jigging, two-stepping
- **Belief:** worship, ceremonies, superstitions, supernatural beliefs, divination, prayer

## IDEAS FOR WORKING WITH ICH IN COMMUNITIES

- Compile a list of traditions and customs (brainstorm with community members).
- Identify tradition-bearers and elders.
- Consider which traditions, customs, or knowledge are under the greatest pressure.
- Celebrate/incorporate ICH in existing community structures (eg. museums, cultural centres, festivals/events).
- Create workshops, events, programs based on identified ICH in the community.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- This kind of knowledge is rarely documented, and is often lost or diminished by the increasing influences of globalization and mass media.
- Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage is vital to sustaining a community's innate creativity and sense of identity.

“Communities themselves must take part in identifying and defining intangible cultural heritage: they are the ones deciding which practices are part of their cultural heritage.”

UNESCO

## COLLABORATE WITH HERITAGE SASKATCHEWAN

Heritage Saskatchewan's Director of Living Heritage is available to work with communities or organizations on ICH focused projects. Successful collaborations require community investment. Contact us today to discuss how your community can benefit from a collaboration with us.

Contact Heritage Saskatchewan to find out how you can work with ICH in your community

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