

24th Stegner House Dinner celebrates the legacy of Saskatchewan's Métis peoples

BY TIM KALINOWSKI

On Saturday, March 19 I had the good fortune to attend the 24th annual Wallace Stegner House Dinner in support of the Eastend Arts Council. As some readers may recall I have twice now stayed at Stegner House as Writer in Residence, and have also done several profiles of artists from the Eastend area for the paper. I feel as though Eastend is, in some ways, an extra home in southwest Saskatchewan for me — well perhaps spiritually-speaking anyways. There is something about being in the company of artists that is very stimulating. In some ways, they are people like myself following their own internal vision of the way they feel the world should be and manifesting that in their art work, but without having to deal with the gritty reality of traffic accidents, the sludgy world of politics or without having to look into the eyes of horror and madness manifested by floods, tsunamis, wars or crimes as I do. Artists are really, when it comes down to it, the keepers of human innocence, wonder and imagination. Stegner House is a great institution in the community of Eastend, but would not be the place of artistic and spiritual retreat it is without the hard work, dedication and support of Eastend area artists — who are numerous and talented.

About 100 people paid \$50 per ticket to attend the event. Eastend artist Trea Jensen served as MC for the evening. The theme of the evening was paying tribute to the Métis legacy of Saskatchewan. Reproductions of red river carts and beautifully crafted, parti-coloured Métis sashes adorned the tables. During the evening people had a chance to purchase raffle tickets for these items and six lucky winners were chosen by the end of the evening to each take home a cart and a sash. In keeping with the Métis theme of the night, a reading of from Wallace Stegner's epic work "Wolf Willow" pertaining to the Métis red river cart was read by Shelley Morvik, the meal served was Tourtiere, Métis beef and pork pie, and the entertainment for the evening was Saskatchewan Métis singer/ songwriter Andrea Menard with her long time collaborator songwriter/ producer Robert Walsh. Menard and Walsh gave an enthusiastic, multi-lingual (English, French and Cree) performance for a very appreciative audience.

Local Eastend artists and area businesses donated items and art works which were auctioned off in a silent auction. The bids on items such as original paintings, sculptures, local food hampers, donated books and baked goods were hot and furious all evening long with many people having to up and re-up their bids many times to ensure they got the items they wanted. All proceeds went to support the Eastend Arts Council.

But of course the nicest element of the evening was just having a chance to socialize with so many creative and interesting people, to forget all the troubles going on in the world for a little while and to have a spiritually uplifting and rewarding experience. For me, as a reporter, it was also a chance to meet new people and make new contacts for possible future story ideas.

Being in the company of artists always reminds me that there are still people in our world who understand what it means to dream, people who still have reverence for the wonder of Creation and people who understand the importance of refuge and solitude in a chaotic and busy world. We cannot hide from the ills of the world, but what artists teach us is how to keep our sanity and sense of self in the face of the most challenging and fear-evoking circumstances. North Americans are increasingly losing their emotional coping skills, and with the world set to become a more challenging place in the decades ahead there is much to be learned from artists.



Songwriters Robert Walsh and Andrea Menard sing some crowd pleasing tunes at the 24th Annual Stegner House Dinner on March 19th. PHOTO BY TM KALINOWSKI

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To help meet the growing electrical needs of Saskatchewan's oil and gas industry, SaskPower is proposing two new transmission line projects in the Swift Current area.

A 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission line is required to supply service to the TransCanada Corporation (TCC) Keystone Pipot site and a 138 kV line is required to supply service to the TCC Keystone Grassy Creek site.

Consultations are underway with local municipal officials, landowners, Aboriginal groups and the general public to gather the input needed to determine the best routes for these new transmission lines.


SaskPower invites anyone interested in these projects to attend one of the following open house information sessions and offer comments to the project team. For additional information, please call SaskPower Environmental Programs at 1-800-667-4749.

Tuesday, March 29, 2011
Noon to 7 p.m.
Gull Lake Hall
7275 Lake Avenue, Gull Lake

Wednesday, March 30, 2011
Noon to 7 p.m.
Credit Union iPlex Auditorium
2001 Chaplin Street East, Swift Current

Thursday, March 31, 2011
Noon to 7 p.m.
Royal Canadian Legion Hall
157 - 1st Avenue East, Shaunavon

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