

Reconstructing public history through European settler and Indigenous heritage and landscape

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Abstract: City planners and civic officials are delving into the implementation of actions for truth and reconciliation following the 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Dolores Hayden reminds us that when read as stories of our city-region's public memory, the landscape, with built, natural, cultural, and spiritual dimensions, can tie our individual identities into something larger, a community that has a powerful sense of place. This paper draws on archival research and site visits to understand the built, natural, and cultural heritage on an 11 hectare site in the city of Saskatoon, Canada, that was part of the Plains First Nations territory for thousands of years, followed by the Métis nation, European settler homesteads, later as a leisure space for urbanites in a growing city, then as a retreat for Catholic religious orders of Sisters. For the past 12 years, it has remained closed to the public, fenced off and awaiting re-imagination and re-use by a local conservation organization, the Meewasin Valley Authority. This paper concludes with recommendations on how to use the thousands of years, eras, and worldviews behind the heritage of the site to create a powerful place for urban truth and reconciliation.

Keywords: heritage; city-region; settler; Indigenous

Introduction

The Peggy McKercher Conservation Area (PMCA) is an 11 hectare site owned by the Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA) outside of the built-up area of the city of Saskatoon, but inside its northeast municipal boundary. The PMCA is situated atop the edge of the South Saskatchewan River valley, with roughly 1 km of beautiful river overlooks, at the end of what is referred to as the Small Swale, a native temperate grassland ecosystem intact for over 10,000 years with high biodiversity. Saskatoon's current population is roughly 250,000 people, with large Indigenous (First Nations and Métis), European-settler descent, and diverse international newcomer populations. It is the largest city in the Province of Saskatchewan at the centre of the Canadian Prairies. The MVA is a conservation organization created in 1979 with three partner organizations: the City of Saskatoon, Province of Saskatchewan, and University of Saskatchewan. Its mandate centres on conservation, education, and development for the purposes of protecting the river valley's natural and cultural heritage and enabling public access to it.

The history of European settler society in Canada has been characterized by colonial violence toward Indigenous peoples. A significant part of this process was carried out through the federal government-funded residential school system run by Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United churches, where Indigenous children were taken away from their families and home communities and taught – often violently – to reject their cultures and communities in favour of aggressive assimilation into a western settler and Christian society. Residential schools began operating in the late 1800s in Canada, and the last one closed in 1996.



Apologies have been issued by the Prime Minister and many church leaders in Canada. The effects of residential schools are multi-generational and reparations for this darkest chapter of settler colonialism will similarly take generations of work. As a way to acknowledge the true actions and impacts linked to residential schools and colonialism, and to try and move Canadian society, and the Indigenous nations within, in a direction of healing together, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created. For several years it gathered evidence and facilitated truth-telling and reconciliatory dialogue in communities across the country. In 2015 the TRC released its final report. As peoples, governments, and religious organizations across Canada take steps to implement change according to the TRC guiding principles and calls to action, in view of the truth told by Indigenous residential school survivors, it is critical to create opportunities for constructive engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples at the local scale. The local scale is created by unique place histories, relationships, and landscapes that have been witness to and constitutive of public memory, and it is a powerful scale at which to act in order to strengthen the bonds of society.

Using place, heritage, and landscape as a conceptual foundation, this paper examines how Indigenous and European-settler history are layered with the natural and settlement processes at what is now the PMCA site. This is done by appealing to literature and archival evidence relating to four historic phases of use on the site, supplemented by site visits. The archives at the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon were critical for this research, as were sources held by the MVA, the Local History Room at Saskatoon Public Library, and the Shortt Collection at the University of Saskatchewan Library. This paper argues that the PMCA is a powerful prospective site for heritage conservation, inter-cultural dialogue, and addressing some of Saskatoon's societal challenges relating to co-existence, natural, and cultural conservation. I argue that the strong shared place attachment across peoples and eras, and the environment itself, make this site invaluable for deploying heritage conservation, dialogue, and mutual learning, in the service of active reconciliation.

Conceptualizing place, heritage, and landscape as public memory

The interrelationships between physical setting (materiality, appearance), activities (programming, functions) and meanings (symbols, memories) – past, present and future-oriented – create a sense of place (Relph, 1976). Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) uses the concept of *topophilia* as a way to describe the qualities such as meanings, attachments, or memories that people develop for particular places. Place has a texture created by changing human-environment interactions and social relations over time, giving it depth and complexity beyond what is perceived on the surface (Adams *et al.*, 2001). At the time of European settlement in Canada, across Indigenous territories, newcomers did not typically recognise pre-existing Indigenous places on traditional lands and seek to humbly co-exist alongside them. Instead the colonial processes of planning, private and market-based land title, and homesteading policy and land parceling were directed at replacing Indigenous places with settler colonial landscapes (Nejad and Walker, 2018).

Tuan (2001) uses the terms “hearth” and “cosmos” as a metaphor for how places speak to our dual nature as humans, made up of what our body needs and desires, and what our minds long for and pursue. The hearth is local, warm, cozy, familiar, nurturing. The cosmos is large, abstract, and drives the excitement of exploring the unknown in the world beyond. Having places in our environment that satisfy our need for hearth and evoke the mystery of the cosmos is important for achieving a high quality of life and contentment. The hearth for one person or community might be the cosmos for another, and in this dynamic tension create a richer and deeper sense of place that is multi-layered, textured, where different specific affinities to the layers of place history and characteristics exist for different peoples, but where sufficient common ground drives joint stewardship. Learning how different people(s) experience the same place builds empathy and can strengthen social bonds.

Non-representational theories in landscape and heritage studies have brought new emphasis to the sensual human experiences of smell, sound, feeling, and emotional dimensions of place (Harvey, 2015). When the temporal past and future is kept prominent among affective dimensions which enliven the present, the dialogical

process of heritage conservation among public and experts, and among different cultures and worldviews, has great capacity for social and environmental impact. Dolores Hayden (1995) reminds us that when read as the stories of our city-region's public memory, the landscape, with built, natural, cultural, and spiritual dimensions, can tie our individual identities into something larger, a community that has a powerful sense of place, a shared hearth in the larger cosmos. Our urban and regional landscapes frame the lives of many generations and outlast many lifetimes. Their protection needs to be driven by a strong sense of guardianship, obligation, and reverence.

Rodney Harrison (2013) prioritizes materiality, connectivity, and dialogue in his approach to identifying, understanding, and conserving heritage sites and landscapes, emphasizing the bringing together of people(s) and creating space for different perspectives and worldviews. The heritage landscape and perception of oneself in it changes with the depth of temporality and cultural plurality that becomes subject to dialogue (Harvey, 2015). The nature versus culture, and monumental versus intangible dualisms in heritage discourse limit our ability to understand the actual lived experience in heritage landscapes, and the impact its conservation can have in critical societal change, addressing issues like cultural and environmental sustainability, economic inequality, social cohesion, urban futures, among others (Harrison, 2013; Winter, 2013). Indigenous ontologies have advanced our understanding of the kinship ties between human and non-human animals, plants, and the assemblage of living and non-living elements that make up our environment, expanding the notion of 'social relations' to include these human to non-human bonds (Harrison, 2013; Walker *et al.*, 2013). Trying then to draw lines between cultural, natural, monumental and intangible heritage seems deficient given our evolving understanding of the 'connectivity ontology' that infuses heritage with meaning in the midst of societal challenges like environmental degradation, species extinction, climate change, and fractured relationships between peoples (Harrison, 2013).

Using heritage to promote truth, justice, reconciliation and healing from conflicts emanating from the past, and potent in the present, has been a transformative tool in Northern Ireland (Crooke, 2010). Key to critical and transformative heritage is centring the 'sociality' of creating community, rather than trapping it in historic caricatures (Waterton and Smith, 2010). The dialogical aspect of heritage must be free to create or re-configure the contours of community through appeals to shared causes and interests in the present, and mutual understanding of one another's lived experiences. The dialogical process must be directed at producing a sense of place that is fluid over time, that acknowledges difference as much as unity, conflict as well as cohesion, and affinity in addition to separation among people(s). It must specifically avoid the tempting trap of seeking to patch over complex pasts (Burkett, 2001; Waterton and Smith, 2010).

First Nation and Métis territory – Treaty 6 – Temperance Colonization Society

The Saskatoon region has been inhabited by many different Northern Plains First Nations for thousands of years. The Cree and Assiniboine, followed by the Métis and Dakota, lived and hunted along the South Saskatchewan River prior to settlers of European descent arriving to establish communities in the Saskatoon region during the 1880s (Waiser, 2016). Just across the river from PMCA is a roughly 2.5 km² site called the Opimihaw Creek Valley, located for the past 30-40 years within Wanuskewin Heritage Park. As University of Saskatchewan archaeologist Ernest Walker (2016), one of the principal leaders who sought protection for the site points out, the Opimihaw Creek Valley was a gathering place in continuous use by successions of different First Nations for bison hunting, medicine gathering, habitation, sacred cultural and spiritual purposes as far back as 6,000 years ago (Walker, 2016). "Perhaps most extraordinary is that every cultural group that existed across the Northern Plains throughout the milleniums spent time at Opimihaw Creek" (Walker, 2016, no page). In 1876 Treaty Six was negotiated between the British Crown and Cree, Assiniboine, and other First Nations, setting terms for future co-existence in the Saskatoon region and beyond. First Nation use of the Opimihaw Creek site was overtaken by settler homestead parceling and private property rights, until reclaimed as Wanuskewin Heritage Park less than a century later, through efforts by the MVA and a number of First Nation

and non-Indigenous partners. In 2017 Wanuskewin Heritage Park was added to Canada's tentative list for designation by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

The Saskatoon region is a significant part of the Métis nation homeland, emanating west from the nation's heart at the Red River settlement (present-day Winnipeg). Part of this homeland includes the Round Prairie Métis settlement (La Prairie Ronde), which was one of the largest in the territory, roughly 30-40 km south of present-day Saskatoon, and located next to, with close community ties to, the Whitecap Dakota First Nation's reserve at Moose Woods. Round Prairie got its start in the 1850s when about 30 bison-hunting Métis families travelled there seasonally from the Red River settlement, and then in the spring of 1870 settled there permanently (Schilling, 1983; Troupe, 2009). Another important Métis settlement is Batoche, perhaps the most significant single community in the Métis nation's homeland regionally and provincially, and at the centre of the Northwest Resistance in 1885 led by Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. It is roughly 90 km to the north of Saskatoon. The historic Moose Woods – Batoche Trail, connecting the Round Prairie and Batoche settlements, was an important route connecting Métis and First Nations communities, and passed through the site that would become Saskatoon. Kinship ties between the Round Prairie and Batoche Métis communities led to them fighting alongside one another during the Northwest Resistance against the Canadian government forces sent to enforce the imposition of Canadian land title over the pre-existing Métis rights in the territory (Troupe, 2009).

Across from the Opimihaw Creek Valley, on the east side of the South Saskatchewan River, were grasslands, wetlands, and forest where First Nations and Métis peoples hunted, among other things. Here the Moose Woods – Batoche Trail passed through the quarter section of land immediately east of the PMCA site. There is a significant water spring on the PMCA site, which appears to be joined to the main trail by a secondary trail (Enns-Kavanagh, 2008). That water spring, referred to again in subsequent sections of this paper, was a likely spot for travellers to stop along the Trail, rest, and water their animals (Enns-Kavanagh, 2008).

In 1881 the Temperance Colonization Society formed in Ontario with a view to creating a prairie agricultural community following the principles of the temperance movement – believing alcohol was largely to blame for social and moral decline – led by a Methodist minister named John Lake. A land grant from the Canadian government which was aggressively pressing for (non-Indigenous) settlement on the prairies meant that after surveying the site in 1882, the first Temperance colonists arrived and settled in 1883 (Figure 1). They travelled by rail to Moose Jaw, and then overland for 250 km to the site of Saskatoon, a site chosen with advice from Chief Wapahaska (Whitecap) from nearby Moose Woods. The small settlement of Saskatoon, originally on the east side of the South Saskatchewan River (now the Nutana neighbourhood), served the agricultural homesteads orbiting it. Broadway Avenue, the main commercial street, overlapped with the Moose Woods – Batoche Trail for the in-town segment of it. During the Northwest Resistance in 1885, Round Prairie Métis and Whitecap Dakota First Nation peoples travelled past Saskatoon and north on the Moose Woods – Batoche Trail to join the Métis near Batoche, passing near to the site of the PMCA and at that time, the new homesteads of Temperance colonists.

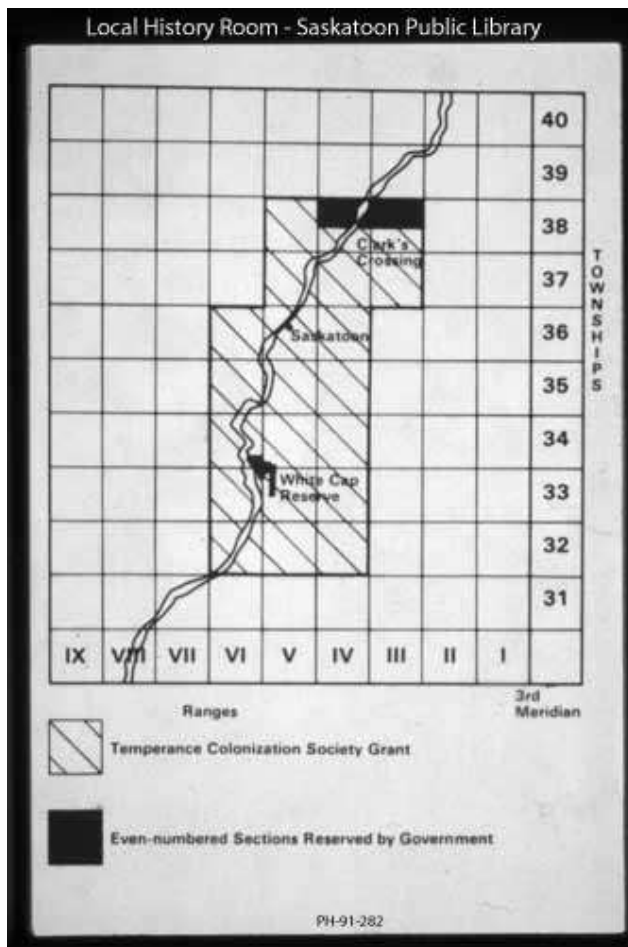


Figure 1: Map of Temperance Colonization Society land grant (Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library)

The written memoirs of an early Temperance colonist, Barbara (Hunter) Anderson (Anderson and Anderson, 1972) are invaluable for understanding the early relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples, from a settler's perspective. Her memoirs are all the more valuable for this paper given that her family's original homestead (on the Temperance Colonization Society land grant) was located only a short distance from the PMCA site. The following excerpt gives her view – as a 10-year old girl during her first summer since moving to the region – of the developing neighbourly relationships between settler and First Nations and tells an interesting story of hunting and household trade:

“During the summer of 1884 we were all very busy and on several occasions native Indians called on us. They were very friendly and had we been able to converse with them, would have enjoyed their comments. When they came to the house, they would come in quietly, without knocking, and were pleased when we were surprised. Once an Indian came in when we were eating dinner and Mother offered him the rocking chair to sit in. He sat down very carefully, but when the chair tipped backward he jumped to his feet, quite alarmed, and examined the chair from top to bottom, to see what had made it move. On another occasion an Indian [woman] came to our house, with a great armful of ducks on her arm. They had been hunting ducks at a nearby slough and had been quite successful. The Indians had not been used to having Rolled Oats and were very fond of it, cooked in many ways. They knew Mother had some, and the [woman] made signs to her that she wanted to trade ducks for oatmeal. Mother went to her bag of rolled oats and taking a bowl filled it heaping twice, and then took a small dip into the bag giving her only a little in the bowl the third time. When the [woman] saw this she picked out two of her largest Mallard ducks and a small Teal duck to give Mother in trade. Mother asked her for three Mallards, but she took the bowl and made signs that twice the bowl was heaped up and the third

time only a little in it. Thus the two large ducks and one small one was a fair exchange. Mother agreed and all were satisfied” (Anderson and Anderson, 1972, 57-58).

The first settler associated with the PMCA site itself was John Vance, followed in 1908 by Robert T. Luker, and then passing shortly after to Cleeve William Taylor, a bachelor who built a house on the land in 1909 (Enns-Kavanagh, 2008). All settlers to this point seemed to be short-term and doing little to transform the land, which was notably stony and irregularly configured along the river valley’s meandering edge. In 1916 William R. Hutchins received the patent for the land and he and his family lived there for some time. The Hutchins homestead has a significant heritage imprint on the PMCA site. For context, the population of neighbouring Saskatoon by 1916 was roughly 21,000. While William Hutchins appears to have died before 1936, and his wife Caroline moved away in 1937, what is believed to be their infant’s marked grave is still present on the PMCA site (Figure 2). Buildings from the Hutchins homestead were no longer on site by 1944 (Enns-Kavanagh, 2008). What remains today attributable to Taylor’s and then mostly the Hutchins’ homestead are depressions associated with their settlement of the site, a stone boat (i.e., a small sled with a box on top to haul stones out of the field by horse)(Figure 3), trail remnants linking the site to the Moose Woods – Batoche Trail, and the infant gravesite. The materiality and arguably a spiritual imprint from the Hutchins homestead combine with temporal pathways left from the era when colonial settlement was parceling and privatizing land tenure for homesteaders of European descent, displacing Indigenous communal hunting and patterns of life. Altogether this transitional period created texture to this place that is central to the PMCA’s heritage landscape (Adams *et al.*, 2001; Harvey, 2015) and vital to the public memory of the Saskatoon city-region (Hayden, 1995).



Figure 2: View over South Saskatchewan River from site of Hutchins infant gravesite, PMCA (Ryan Walker)



Figure 3: Stone boat from homestead site, PMCA (Ryan Walker)

The Ranch – a country place cherished by the Lamarsh family (1945-1963)

MacDermid Lamarsh is one of Saskatoon’s oldest law firms and when Archie Lamarsh joined the practice in 1930 the city and province were entering a decade of depression and drought, the most difficult in Saskatchewan’s history. According to his son, Jack, Archie Lamarsh was a farm boy at his core, and though his ambitious law practice in Saskatoon required an urban base, which he and his family had in their home at 314 – 9th Street East, Archie was determined not to raise his family entirely in an urban setting (Lamarsh, no date). Following the difficult economic period of the 1930s, and then WWII, Archie Lamarsh bought from the Hutchins family estate in 1945 the land parcel that had been their homestead since 1916 (Enns-Kavanagh, 2008). By 1945 Saskatoon’s population had reached roughly 45,000 people.

Archie contracted a friend and client of his, a retired Scottish joiner, to build a log cabin which took a couple of years to build at a modest pace, all the while enjoying the beautiful landscape (Lamarsh, no date). One wall of the cabin had built-in double bunk beds; there was a “huge natural stone fireplace and a beautiful pine dining table which could seat 20 people at a time” (Lamarsh, no date). Archie and his family would affectionately call this land outside the city, and the cabin on it, ‘the Ranch.’ Jack’s recollection of his and his sisters’ place-connection to the Ranch in their upbringing reveals the magical impact of this site overlooking a beautiful bend in the South Saskatchewan River with silhouettes of Saskatoon’s skyline in the distance; note also the reference in Jack’s recollection below to the riverbank spring, a persistent feature from the time when it would have been a stop for travellers along the Moose Woods – Batoche Trail.

“We kids came to love the Ranch as my father did. The riverbank provided wonderful hideouts, trails and play areas. We could watch the crows and magpies build their nests and raise their noisy youngsters in the spring and summer. A prodigious riverbank spring was plumbed by my father with an old sunken barrel and stone sluiceways. In addition to providing a bountiful water supply, it attracted all kinds of birds and animals for us to

observe. The river provided fishing for goldeye and periodically we would see a giant sturgeon breach in midstream” (Lamarsh, no date).

To capture some of the beauty of the place, in 1948 Archie asked his client and friend Robert Newton Hurley, a watercolour painter that was rising to fame in Saskatchewan, living in the nearby town of Sutherland (annexed by Saskatoon in the late-1950s), to come out and create a painting of the Ranch (Lamarsh, no date). Jack recalls watching the artist work and enjoying his stories about his own childhood in England, before immigrating to Canada in the 1920s. The Hurley painting became a treasured family heirloom for years afterward in Lamarsh homes.

It would seem that the Ranch was a special nexus of hearth and cosmos (Tuan, 2001) in the sense of place held by the Lamarsh family in the Saskatoon city-region, venturing from their home in one of the most dense and ‘urban’ neighbourhoods in Saskatoon into the nearby regional landscape with a natural setting that inspired awe and a sense of grandness. In 1963 when Archie Lamarsh sold the site to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, it was with 18 years of imprinting between the natural landscape, its non-human and human patterns, material and intangible (Harrison, 2013), building depth and complexity into the texture of this place (Adams *et al.*, 2001). Like the Hutchins family before them, the Lamarshs left the land mostly unbroken and in its natural state, to become similarly inspiring for the next stewards of this site, adding to its place memory (Hayden, 1995).

***Maryville* – a retreat for congregations of Catholic women religious (1963-1995)**

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Saskatoon, Francis Klein, after recovering at St. Paul’s Hospital from an acute heart attack the year before (Robertson, 1982), wrote to the Sisters Superiors of all the congregations in Saskatoon on May 8, 1963, indicating that he had acquired the property that would become Maryville, named after Mary, mother of Jesus (Klein, 1963). The Episcopal Corporation of Saskatoon had purchased ‘the Ranch’ from Archie Lamarsh with the Lamarsh log cabin still on it (Figure 4). Bishop Klein blessed the land (Stengler, 2004) that would be used “so that the Sisters of the diocese might have a place, close to the city, where they could go for a few hours or even days to enjoy the country quiet” (Klein, 1963, 1), an idea suggested to him by Father (later Monsignor) John Robinson. He described the property as “undeveloped”; “[h]owever, there is a club house on it, lots of stone, wild grass, cliffs, some bush and a spring of fresh water” (Klein, 1963, 1). Bishop Klein called a meeting to be held five days later, for all Sisters Superior, each with one companion, to attend a meeting at the new ‘summer resort’ to see it and brainstorm ideas on how to best appoint it (Diocese of Saskatoon, 1963). Roughly 40 Sisters attended. Dinner was served. At that meeting the Bishop conveyed his view that the Sisters, having done so much for the Diocese, deserved a retreat space specifically for them as a thank you, remarking that they rarely get to fully relax and very “seldom enjoy the beauty of nature” (Diocese of Saskatoon, 1963, 1). Also important to this endeavour was the sense that the communities of Sisters were working typically in isolation from one another, and this place was to bring them together. It was for Sisters of all the congregations in the Saskatoon diocese. As context, the nearby city of Saskatoon’s population was roughly 100,000 people in 1963.

Summer fields PHONE 24214

STATEMENT
172 Second Avenue South
SASKATOON, April 9 1963

M Episcopal Corporation of Saskatoon purchased NE 1/4-14-37-5W3
from Archie G. Lamarsh for \$8,000.00 Cash.
In Account With All adjustments to April 20th, 1963.

McCLOCKLIN REAL ESTATE LIMITED

CITY PROPERTY
OUR SPECIALTY
REAL ESTATE, LOANS AND
INSURANCE
BUSINESSES FOR SALE
RENTS COLLECTED, ETC.

April 9	63	To - Purchase Cottage and Land	8,000.00		
April 19	63	To - Land Titles Office - Transfer fee	24.50		
April 20	63	By - Cheque paid		8,000.00	
April 20	63	By - Balance required		24.50	
			8,024.50	8,024.50	

April 20/63
Pd. 24.50
[Signature]

Figure 4: Statement of sale – Archie Lamarsh to Episcopal Corporation of Saskatoon (Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon archives)

Incorporating the log cabin (referred to above as a club house by the Bishop) that Archie Lamarsh had built in the 1940s as their central ‘Common Lodge’ at Maryville, each religious community of women was encouraged to have their own cabin built or moved to the site, if they wished. Those that did not were always welcome to use the Common Lodge which, as noted in the previous section, had bunk beds built into one wall, a stone fireplace, and a large table to seat 20 people. At that first meeting they talked about a swimming pool being built shortly, a chapel, a road to the cluster of cabins, water system, gas, and eventually electricity (Diocese of Saskatoon, 1963). Later on phone service was added to some cabins, but at the start, a two-way radio system from the Common Lodge was used. The site was “strictly private for the Sisters use” (Diocese of Saskatoon, 1963, 2). If you imagine at the time, in the early 1960s, Sisters wore full habits and a commitment to modesty made recreation in public places difficult or impossible (Figure 5). A private retreat like this was wonderful, in their view. The minutes of that first meeting with Bishop and Sisters on site sets out a question for all to ponder: “What name should be given to the place? Not a worldly one.” And the site itself, as captured in the closing line of those minutes, “is beautiful....a corner of heaven!” (Diocese of Saskatoon, 1963, 2).

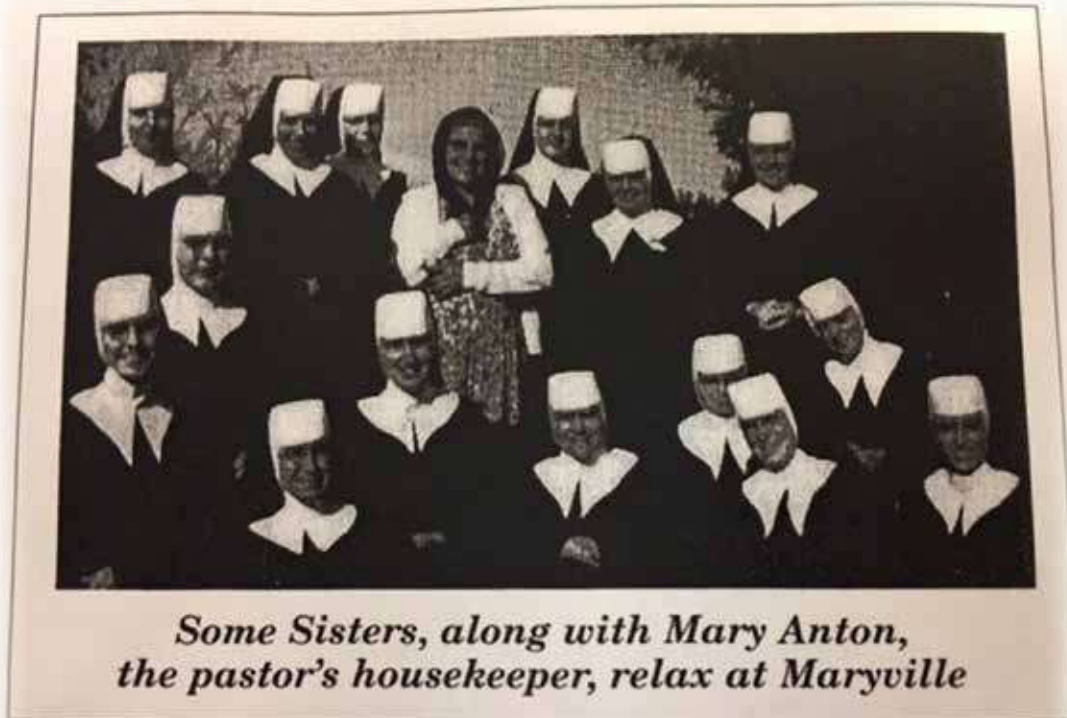


Figure 5: Group of Sisters at Maryville (Stengler, 2004, 40)

Letters and cards of thanks came in throughout the summer of 1963 as Sisters expressed their gratitude and captured some of the initial excitement of the time (Figure 6). The place was referred to variously as a retreat, camp, resort, country house, but did not have a name quite yet. The first suggestion of a name seems to be in a letter from the Sisters of Sion in July, where they suggest “Maryvale” (Edeltrude, 1963, 1). In the letter they note that joy from the swimming pool has “gone beyond all expectation.” In another letter from St. Mary’s Convent (Catherina, 1963, 1), the Sisters write to tell Bishop Klein of “the wonderful evening we spent and how we enjoyed the balmy air and beautiful view of the winding river.” Another note from an older Sister Superior talks about how much the younger Sisters enjoyed the Common Lodge and exploring the natural beauty of the site. By 1964 it was referred to clearly as ‘Maryville’, and in its statement of accounts, you can see that volleyball, basketball, baseball, swimming, and a barbeque were all part of the recreational experience. There were at least 14 religious communities of women using Maryville, some now with their own cabins on the site. There were reportedly six cabins moved onto the site for different congregations of Sisters, plus a chapel, and the Common Lodge built by Lamarsh and his retired Scottish joiner friend (Figure 7). A shower house was built. The Maryville Association Executive was struck, with a President, Treasurer and several other Directors, all Sisters from different congregations in the Saskatoon diocese (e.g., Maryville Association Executive, 1967). And the Executive Director was Monsignor John Robinson. Maryville would typically open for the summer in early June and then close in early September. Three horses were at Maryville for horseback riding, during some years, which was exceptionally popular among some of the Sisters. Time and again, picnics, potluck dinners, sing-songs with musical instruments, Mass and celebrations in the chapel, and organized group events among the congregations of Sisters were advertised and formed the seasonal highlights (Figure 8).

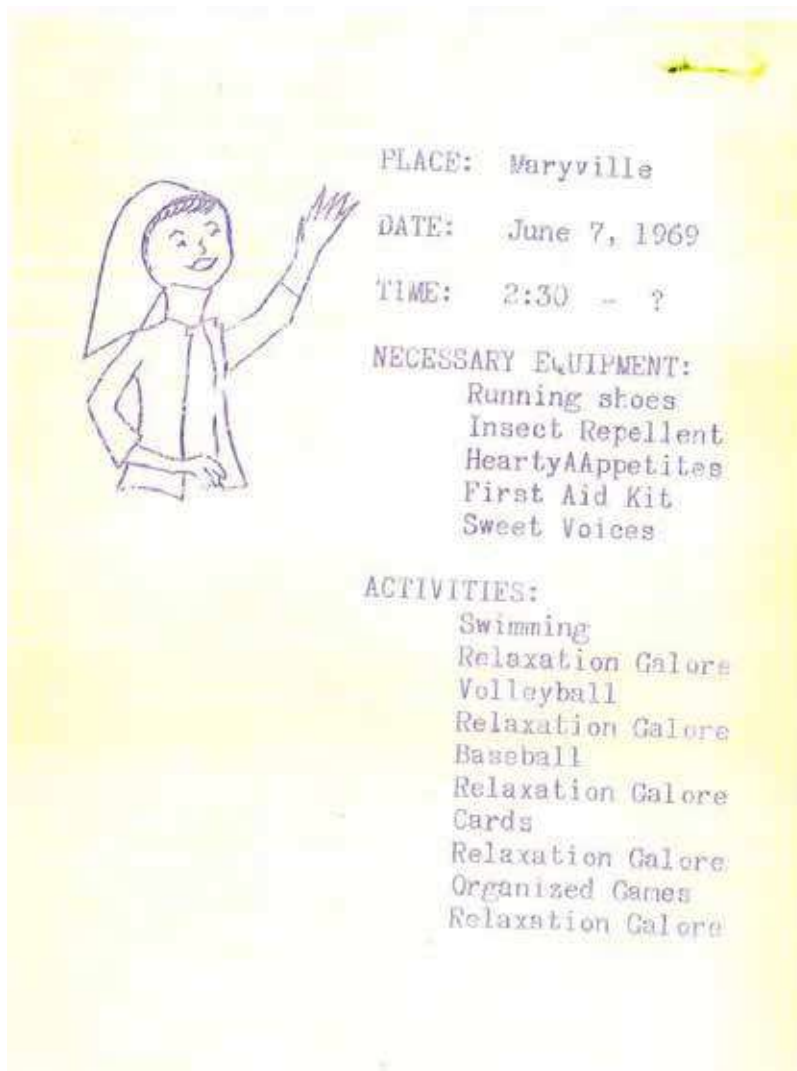


Figure 8: Handbill advertising one of the regular community gatherings at Maryville (Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon archives)

The Maryville Chapel was renovated in 1977, and improvements were made to the Common Lodge in the Spring of 1978 (Diocese of Saskatoon, 1978). In the early 1980s the Sisters of the Saskatoon diocese were growing concerned about the City of Saskatoon's urban expansion plans and how these would impact the Maryville site (Stang, 1981, 2). After some inquiries with the City, they were assured that the growth plans for that northeast area were 25 to 50 years out into the future. The Sisters re-visited the original vision for Maryville from 1963, pondering, now in the 1980s, the prospect of opening it to lay groups for weddings, retreats, and charging for use of the facilities. Invoking the original purpose of Maryville articulated by the now both deceased former Bishop Klein and Monsignor Robinson, and the group of Sisters Superior at that critical first meeting in May 1963, consensus was reached among the current Bishop, James Mahoney, and the Sisters, that Maryville was not set up to make money, and that "[i]t should be maintained as **a summer resort for our sisters**" (Stang, 1981, 2).

By the early-1990s, a high level of vandalism was causing terrible concern and the 1994 season was an important one for taking a big picture look at the future of Maryville. A letter in April 1994 calls for a meeting of the Sisters in the Saskatoon diocese to create "a plan for where to go next" with the future of Maryville (unknown author, 1994). It appears that the meeting resulted in some decisions around actions to be taken because in the late-summer and Fall of that year a trailer was moved onto the site to house a year-round

caretaker, a new garage for storage of site equipment was constructed by the Saskatoon diocese at Maryville (AMEC Earth and Environmental, 2008), the last building to remain on the site, still present in 2019, and the shower house by the pool was upgraded. It seemed that this new investment signalled the renewed determination to keep Maryville as an operating summer retreat for the Sisters of the Saskatoon diocese. But Bishop James Mahoney, who had been a champion of the purpose of Maryville according to the vision of his predecessor, passed away in 1995, and shortly after he died, an administrator of the Saskatoon diocese was put in place to oversee operations of the Saskatoon diocese until a new Bishop was appointed in 1996. Under the temporary diocesan administrator, Father Leonard Morand, Maryville was closed permanently in 1995 during the brief interregnum period between Bishops. The diocese held the land for another 12 years before selling it to the MVA, in March 2007. Father (then Monsignor) Leonard Morand passed away three months after the sale of land to the MVA. Remnants of the basketball court and the grotto for the shrine, which was a statue of Saint Joseph, are present on the site (Figures 9 and 10).

The congregations of Catholic women religious from the Saskatoon diocese were important stewards of this landscape for several decades, and in their enjoyment and care of this environment, created a sense of place at the PMCA site rich with material and spiritual texture (Adams *et al.*, 2001). Part of the heritage of this site is embodied by the immaterial blessing of it, the motivation behind creating a community of congregations here, and the dialogical process of making decisions, revisiting the purpose of this community retreat, and exercising care for it (Waterton and Smith, 2010; Harrison, 2013).



Figure 9: Remnant of basketball court, PMCA (Ryan Walker)



Figure 10: Grotto that housed shrine, a statue of Saint Joseph, PMCA (Ryan Walker)

Toward the conservation of public memory – Applying a connectivity ontology and dialogical process

In 2007 the MVA bought the former Maryville site, by then closed for 12 years, from the Roman Catholic Diocese (Episcopal Corporation) of Saskatoon, aiming to link the site eventually to its network of river valley trails, with interpretive signage, and offer “environmental education and recreational programming that promote conservation and stewardship” (MVA, 2009). In 2009 the MVA named the site after its first and longest-serving board chair, Margaret (Peggy) McKercher. McKercher, a prominent and well-respected community leader in Saskatoon, served the inaugural role as MVA chair from 1979 until 1995 (coincidentally the year Maryville was closed). When MVA purchased the land the resource conservation manager at the time, John Gerstmar, remarked in the Saskatoon StarPhoenix newspaper (2007, A6) that “[i]t’s an absolutely beautiful natural area along the bank. There’s a little bit of disturbance, but really about 90 per cent of it is in its natural state.” The population of Saskatoon was around 200,000 in 2007, and new neighbourhoods were being planned and opened up nearer than ever before to the site, though still a significant distance away.

The concern raised by the Sisters of the Saskatoon diocese in the early 1980s about the risk to the Maryville site from encroachment of urban development was prescient and will materialize over the next decade according to the City of Saskatoon’s growth plan for new neighbourhoods referred to in its University Heights Sector Plan, unless the City’s leadership alters the path of future development. The City has already recently opened a new high capacity roadway and bridge through the ecologically sensitive native grasslands habitat of the Small

Swale and Northeast Swale, not far from the PMCA site. The Province of Saskatchewan has located a right-of-way to build a new Saskatoon Freeway as a city bypass route in roughly 10 years which would also cross the Swale ecosystems. Yet even in the face of these challenges, the PMCA holds out the possibility for a site of great heritage significance for Saskatoon and the surrounding region. Its natural integrity, beauty, and humble human and non-human interaction with the prairie landscape that is still part of a functioning ecosystem intact after more than 10,000 years, has generated a spirit of place worth conserving. The critical role that heritage can play is precisely to jump into the midst of society's pressing challenges, such as the need to build stronger intercultural relationships between peoples, to arrest environmental degradation, and to generally draw clearer connections between culture, environment, history, spirituality, and peoples.

This heritage landscape has been created by the coming together of the land, human activity, reverence, and joy – a stopping point for repose at the water spring, hunting grounds and part of the larger homeland and territory of Indigenous communities, a site where new land tenure laws were imposed by the European settler government, displacing Indigenous peoples, given local effect by the Temperance Colonization Society in their land grant. The PMCA was home to the Hutchins family, cherished and protected by the Lamarsh family, a recreational and blessed retreat for the Catholic Sisters of Saskatoon, and now under the care and stewardship of the MVA, a publicly-funded local conservation organization focused on the South Saskatchewan river valley, protecting and interpreting its (natural and cultural) heritage. As if to come full circle and reconnect more powerfully with the Indigenous culture that forms part of the deepest texture of this place – a foundational element for millennia – the MVA recently entered an agreement with the Saskatchewan Health Authority to have Elder and Métis Knowledge and Ceremonial Keeper, André Letendre, from the Batoche community, conduct Sweat Lodge ceremonies at the PMCA over (at least) the next year.

At a Pipe Ceremony led by the Elder, André Letendre, to start this new relationship with the MVA staff and board of directors in May, 2019, I took away from the ceremony a message of the importance of unifying the region's peoples, worldviews, and futures, in a shared reverence for the 'great mystery' shared by peoples of different cultures. Guided by the societal goals emanating from Canada's TRC, and given the nature of the PMCA's layering of natural diversity, First Nation, Métis, European settler, urban and rural connections, Catholic faith, Indigenous ceremony, and MVA's mission to conserve and educate about the heritage of the river valley landscape, it would seem that a powerful heritage landscape is presenting itself for conservation and interpretation. Guided by a connectivity ontology and dialogical process (Harrison, 2013), an enduring need to conserve the public memory (Hayden, 1995) particular to our shared hearth in the cosmos (Tuan, 2001), and to address our most pressing environment and society issues (Winter, 2013), the potential is great for the MVA to work with Indigenous nations, City of Saskatoon, Province of Saskatchewan, Roman Catholic diocese, and local citizens to protect, interpret, and program the continuity of the site's heritage. At top of mind is that, in doing so "[h]eritage is not a passive process of simply preserving things from the past that remain, but an active process of assembling a series of objects, places and practices that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the present, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future" (Harrison, 2013, 4).

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