



Multicultural  
Council of  
Saskatchewan

*From Many Peoples Strength*

## **MCoS 2017 AGM Summary**

This year MCoS held our annual general meeting, member development and consultation in Regina in Treaty 4 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We are grateful for the ongoing support of SaskCulture and Saskatchewan Lotteries and for Canadian Heritage's Canada 150 fund that is supporting our educational session today as part of our Welcoming and Inclusive Communities project.

It is time to move multiculturalism forward. The current understanding of multiculturalism formed around the time of the Centennial and has become a predominant feature of Canadian identity over the past 50 years. We know from recent polls that this symbolic acceptance of difference has not translated into substantive change in reduction of negative attitudes, racialization, or discrimination. Multiculturalism is often thought of as simply entertainment or immigration. We have articulated our values and streams of work to demonstrate that it is much more than this. The Celebrating Diversity beyond the Surface session in the morning focused on how we can use celebrations of diversity to share our cultures in meaningful ways that build community, contribute to dispelling myths to counter racism, build relationships across cultures, and demonstrate the value of cultural diversity in our communities.

We shared examples from staff, board and MCoS supported projects to demonstrate practical ways we can more fully engage audiences and participants in learning about how and why cultures do what they do, and how to create opportunities for interaction and sharing. These build relationships and create opportunities to understand similarities and difference. We used the Culture as an Iceberg model, adapted from that of Edward T. Hall (1976) to show that most awareness and activity happens above the surface, but the base is the foundation and explains particular expressions. In the base we can almost always find both similarities and differences. Each section is related - so the visible cultural expressions are expressing what is down below. We enjoyed examples regarding food, clothing and other aspects of appearance, music, dance, language, literature, storytelling and popular culture. MCoS is grateful to Mary Chipanshi, the Ranch Ehrlo Pow Wow Drum and Dance Group, Clark's Clan of Highland Dance, and Chef Mariana Brito of Malinche for demonstrating the high interest

created when insight into culture is shared along with the surface. Mariana not only shared a video about her relationship with her grandmother and her journey to creating authentic Mexican food from healthy, local ingredients in Saskatchewan, she also demonstrated the making of the torta sandwiches that we all enjoyed for lunch. The presentation is available upon request.

After this delicious lunch, we had the pleasure of welcoming Hasan Syed to address the gathering. He is young man from Toronto who emigrated from Pakistan as a boy and learned recently about the crisis of clean drinking water in many First Nations communities. He is currently running across Canada to raise awareness and money on this issue. MCoS was able to help him find speaking opportunities, visit Piapot First Nation, and connect to community. For more information, please see <https://www.a2cw.org/>

Jamal-e-Fatima Rafat updated us on the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities project and led us through the Welcome Home Pledge. You can do this at <http://mcos.ca/welcome-150-pledge/> and share your photo or video with #welcomehome150.

We reviewed progress on the 2016-19 strategic directions. In order to connect to and learn from our members, board members led small group conversations. The input provided is very helpful to the board's important job of setting direction for MCoS. We will be creating a fresh 2019-23 plan in May 2018. Please share any relevant information with Executive Director, Rhonda Rosenberg.

We concluded the day with our annual general meeting, including reports and elections. The annual report is available at <http://mcos.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/mcos-2016-2017-annual-report-low-res.pdf> or in hard copy at the office. We are proud to share our accomplishments and those of our members. MCoS is a learning and growing organization; this has been particularly notable in education this year. We have trained facilitators, developed engaging public education campaigns, and multiple tools to make communities more welcoming and inclusive. These areas continue to expand in 2017-18.