

Meewasin Valley Authority

2022 - 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Messages from our Participating Parties

The Government of Saskatchewan is proud to support the Meewasin Valley Authority and the great work they do to conserve the beautiful surroundings of the South Saskatchewan River Valley. Your continued efforts will enhance opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan to enjoy Meewasin for many years to come, while maintaining the beautiful natural features and rich history of the river valley.

- The Honourable Laura Ross, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport

The Meewasin Valley is the heart of our City, a place of restoration, reconnection and fun for residents throughout the City, and visitors from around the world. There is no question the river valley plays a huge role in the quality of life here. I am proud of the partnership between the City of Saskatoon and Meewasin to continue to provide leadership and innovation in balancing conservation in a growing urban environment, increasingly guided by Truth and Reconciliation.

- His Worship, Charlie Clark, Mayor, City of Saskatoon

The University of Saskatchewan applauds Meewasin on their work to conserve the river valley in the Saskatoon region. This allows our students access to a significant natural asset for research in a variety of disciplines, improves the physical and mental health of our students, and highlights the sustainable nature of our community. Work completed by Meewasin in 2022-23 has been substantial, and we are proud to be contributors to such an integral organization in our community and to continue our work together in the coming years.

- Dr. Peter Stoicheff, President, University of Saskatchewan

Mission

The Meewasin Valley Authority exists to ensure a healthy and vibrant river valley, with a balance between human use and conservation for the benefit of present and future generations.

Vision

A world class corridor.

***Healthy and Vibrant
Sense of Community
Protecting the Legacy***

Meewasin is located on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We humbly acknowledge the traditional caretakers of the land and honour the First Nations and Métis people of this place.

Message from the CEO and Board Chair



This year we completed 44 years of continued hard work, dedication and support. We are grateful for the opportunity to have led Meewasin through this year. On behalf of the Board of Directors and management of Meewasin, we would like to sincerely thank everyone! With more use of the Meewasin Trail, we know the importance of its development and the conservation of the precious habitat around it. This year, Meewasin continued with trail enhancements to support the ongoing need. We would like to thank everyone who was involved including the Meewasin staff, board, donors, advisory committees, volunteers, participating parties and our community.

Meewasin strives to balance human use and conservation for the benefit of present and future generations. Meewasin is more than a trail. We offer a variety of unique tourism experiences guided by local experts which showcase the beautiful Meewasin Valley. These experiences give residents and visitors the opportunity to connect with the river valley, learn about its history and significance and enhance its use. With the help of amazing partners we have piloted new experiences, made important trail enhancements and invested in the cultural and natural resources of the Meewasin Valley.

Meewasin relies on the amazing community where we work and live, and we thank you for your dedication to maintaining this vital space. Within the next year, Meewasin will continue to introduce new opportunities for our region driving thoughtfully and ambitiously to expand benefits for residents, tourists, educators and the environment. Reach out and learn more about how to volunteer, donate or get involved with upcoming projects; there are incredible times ahead!

Keep healthy and see you in the Valley!

Andrea Lafond, CEO

Ryan Walker, Board Chair



Board of Directors

Government of Saskatchewan

Mark Feader
Marv Friesen, MLA
Gurpartap Kals
Nydia Pobran

City of Saskatoon

Charlie Clark, Mayor
Bev Dubois, Councillor
Sarina Gersher, Councillor
David Kirton, Councillor

University of Saskatchewan

Angela Bedard-Haughn, Vice-Chair
Julian Demkiw
Peter Stoicheff, President
Ryan Walker, Board Chair

Advisory Committees

The Meewasin Board of Directors is advised on matters of policy by four committees comprised of members of the public appointed by the board. Public participation in decision making is one of Meewasin's five guiding principles.

Development Review

Twyla Bergstrom
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William Hrycan
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Kevin Mathison
Tyson McShane
Mitch Strocen, Chair
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Jonathan Bennett
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Erica Quiring, Chair
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Education Advisory

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Dean Newton
Jeff O'Brien
Nydia Pobran
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Susan Lamb
Pauline Melis
Dave Neuburger
Sandi Schultz, Chair
Michael Voralia
Ryan Walker
Sheri Willick

Healthy and Vibrant



European Buckthorn Control

For over 20 years, Meewasin and the City of Saskatoon have worked to control European Buckthorn. Found in urban parks, natural areas, and in backyards within Saskatoon and surrounding area, this invasive species crowds and shades out native understory plants, eventually displacing native trees and shrubs. This year, Meewasin treated 81,919 European Buckthorn stems in the Meewasin Valley, with a significance focus in the Saskatoon Natural Grasslands. All controlled sites are revisited to manage any fruit-bearing trees present.

Species At Risk Habitat Assessment Tool

Meewasin's Resource Management team has been involved in testing a new monitoring method to assess the suitability of habitat for multiple species at risk on Meewasin sites. The trial methodology was developed by the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP). The proposed PCAP method aims to advance the effectiveness of species at risk recovery and conservation efforts through the prioritization of overlapping habitat quality characteristics. The assessment method indicates areas of overlapping habitat preferences and requirements for twelve provincially at risk species. The recommended monitoring technique involves intensive status assessments of various ecological habitat features to predict which species have the best potential to inhabit a natural area. PCAP presented the methodology to an audience of conservation practitioners in Calgary this past February at the 13th Annual Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference.

During the 2022 field season, the Meewasin Resource Management team applied the trial assessment to a series of locations across Beaver Creek Conservation Area. Meewasin provided the resulting series of habitat assessment data to PCAP to help advance their valuation of the proposed methodology. Meewasin intends to use the data to determine which species at risk have the best potential to inhabit the Beaver Creek site and provide direction for the continued management and conservation of species at risk habitat.

81,919

European Buckthorn
stems treated



7,072

Native plants, wildflowers
& grasses planted



Canadian Prairies **PRESCRIBED FIRE EXCHANGE**

427+ hectares
burned



The Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange (CPPFE), in collaboration with its many partners, aims to increase the capacity for agencies and landowners alike to use fire as a grassland and parkland ecosystem management tool.

The CPPFE and partners also organized the first Canadian Prairies Training Exercise (TREX) in Saskatoon, allowing partners to gain skills and build capacity to achieve fire management and ecological goals. There were 40 participants from 11 agencies/organizations, representing the four western provinces and the United States.

CPPFE has delivered, together with the University of Saskatchewan, the **CPPFE 001 Online Course: Introduction to Prescribed Fire in Grassland Ecosystems**, with 24 participants in 2022. CPPFE also launched the **Grassland Fire Research database** on the CPPFE website to provide access for partner agencies to access the most relevant information on grassland fire research.



Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin



Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin (PFSRB) has a mission to promote awareness, linkages, stewardship, knowledge, and respect for the Saskatchewan River Basin ecosystem and heritage that will encourage sustainable use of the basin's natural resources and nurture cultural values. PFSRB has been delivering programming, professional development, and has supported individuals and organizations in maintaining the health of the Saskatchewan River Basin since 1993.

Programs delivered on behalf of City of Saskatoon (Yellow Fish Road™ and Prevent Irritable Sewer Syndrome) and Nutrien (Caring For Our Watersheds) empower youth of all ages to make changes in order to ensure a healthy river system and healthy water sources.



Caring For Our Watersheds Program

Through Caring For Our Watersheds, students propose ways to improve the health of our watersheds to protect and conserve our precious resources. This past year, students implemented numerous projects including a community watershed cleanup and a children's book. The annual Caring for Our Watersheds program is now offered through the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds.



Sense of Community

Interpreting the Rich Culture & History of the Meewasin Valley

Visitors to the Meewasin Trail and sites within the Valley will see some new signage during their travels. As part of trail improvements undertaken in 2022-23, new interpretive signs were placed in Meewasin Park, Kinsmen Riverfront and along the Southwest Trail. The signs highlight points of interest, as well as natural and cultural features of the Meewasin Valley. Each sign includes a QR code that allows visitors to explore additional information on the Meewasin App.

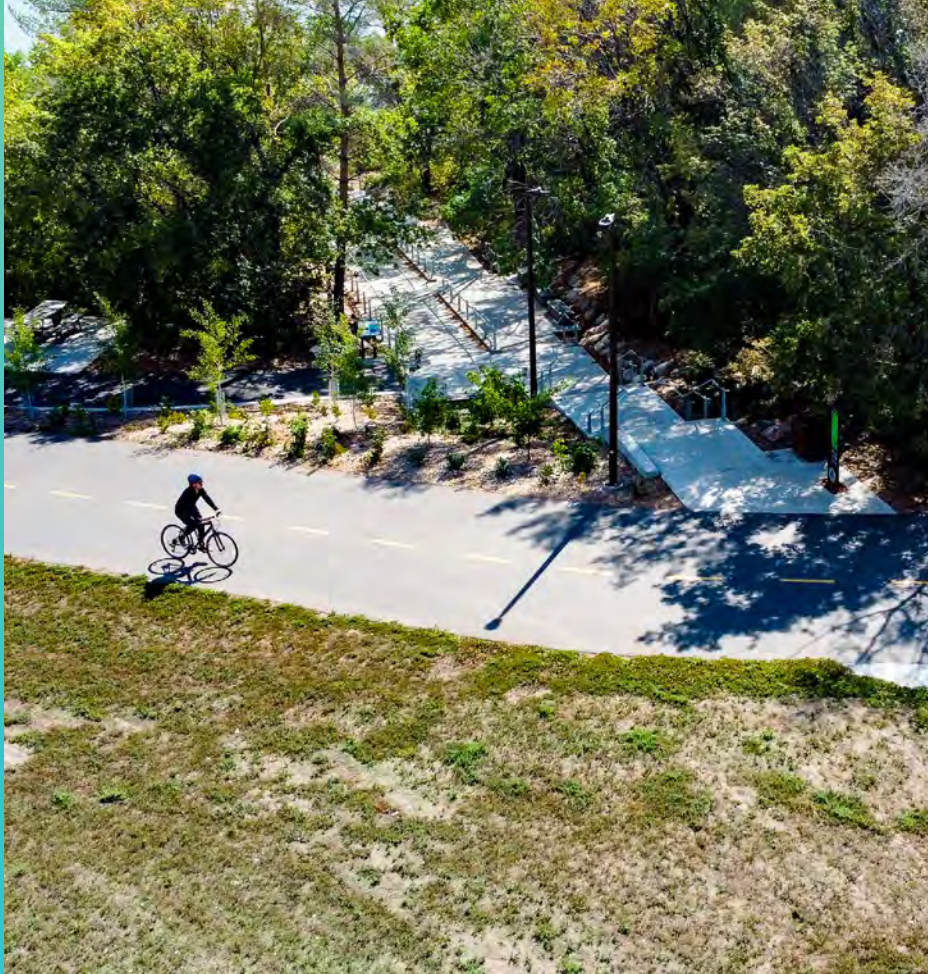
Explore the Meewasin App

The first of its kind in our region, the Meewasin App provides interactive and educational content for both visitors and residents. Available on the Apple App Store or Google Play, the Meewasin App can be used on its own or to interact with QR codes located on signage throughout the Valley. New content is added regularly. Explore the history and culture of the river valley on the Meewasin Trail or from the comfort of your home or classroom!



Download the
Meewasin App today!





Trail Enhancements

Accessibility is a priority as Meewasin continues with site and trail enhancements. In 2022, enhancements to the Meewasin Trail were undertaken at Kinsmen Park, including widening the trail to accommodate more users, bench bases for wheelchairs or strollers, new accessible picnic tables and new stairs and ramps from the Nutrien Wonderhub down to the Prairie Lily dock (replacing the former stairs). Trail connection to the new washroom facility and significant new planting areas were also included in this project.

Detailed design is underway for the next priority area in downtown Saskatoon. The area spans from the Traffic Bridge to Kinsmen Park. This project will be completed in phases, starting with Kiwanis Memorial Park South, from the Broadway Bridge north to the Bessborough Gardens in 2023. Future construction phases are planned in 2024 and beyond, subject to funding.



2.32 million

visitors to the Meewasin Trail in 2022



Education in the Meewasin Valley

Connecting with students and teachers in the Meewasin Valley continues to be a highlight for our organization. Our Education & Experiences Team worked closely with local school divisions in 2022-23 to provide outdoor learning opportunities in all seasons at Beaver Creek Conservation Area, the Northeast Swale and the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink @Nutrien Plaza. These curricular-connected programs reached over 3200 students, and we are grateful to SaskPower for their major sponsorship of Beaver Creek programming and all other supporters of our education programs.

New in spring 2022, Meewasin piloted a guided school program at the Northeast Swale with support from the Saskatoon Community Foundation. The program focused on the concept of “two-eyed seeing”, which is learning to recognize both an Indigenous worldview and a western science perspective. A student remarked:

“*I learned that two-eyed seeing is seeing the world in two ways...if you only see one way you won't learn that other perspective.*”

- Program Participant

Many of the concepts shared with students during this pilot can be found on the Meewasin App. We encourage you to download it and learn from the teachings of the Elders and Knowledge Keepers highlighted within it. Meewasin continues a number of collaborative projects to advance reconciliation.

Public Facilities

Beaver Creek Conservation Area and the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink @Nutrien Plaza continue to be popular attractions for residents and visitors.

This season, the rink opened to the public on December 7, 2022 and operated until March 19, 2023 for a total of 73 days of operation with 12,154 visits. New this year, a number of free community events were held at the rink with support from Heritage Canada's Commemorate Canada – Reopening Fund. Throughout February and early March, skaters enjoyed free snacks and beverages provided by local vendors such as Road Coffee, Prairie Grazer and Style and Graze.

Beaver Creek operated Wednesday to Sunday year round and saw 18,042 visitors in 2022-23. This beloved site continues to be a hub for Meewasin's public outreach and featured programs such as EcoAdventure camps, grazing demonstrations, guided tours, volunteer events and tourism experiences.



12,154
visitors to the rink

18,042
visitors to Beaver Creek





Volunteers are the Heart of the Valley

This year we had impressive growth in our Volunteer base, as it surged from 823 to 1,062, marking a remarkable increase of 239 volunteers. Over the course of this period, more than 700 dedicated volunteers generously contributed their time. Their invaluable assistance included tasks such as tree planting, willow staking, beaver tree wrapping, and removing nodding thistle. Together, they played a vital role in safeguarding the natural environment we cherish while fostering a strong, interconnected community. This outstanding growth and impact would not have been possible without the support of the Grandey Family Foundation, whose generous funding has enabled the coordination of this program. We express our heartfelt gratitude to the Grandey Family for their unwavering support and commendable contributions to our community.

“

We enjoy volunteering with Meewasin as it helps us see the nature and learn about the plants in our own backyard. Since volunteering we have learned a lot and enjoy coming out to all different types of events.

Plant identification is our favourite!

”

- Meewasin Volunteer

9,234 volunteer hours

+239 increase in volunteers





Meewasin's 42ND Annual Clean Up Campaign *Presented by Nutrien*

The 2022 Clean Up Campaign once again made a significant difference in enhancing the well-being of our community and the ecosystems it encompasses. With the active participation of nearly 2,800 volunteers, 50 organizations including schools and corporate stewards in Saskatoon, this campaign aimed to remove litter from our natural areas.

A thank you to Loraas Disposal, for the generous donation of additional garbage and recycling bins set up throughout the river valley. Over 11,000 kg of litter eradicated from vulnerable locations such as endangered or sensitive habitats, wetlands, and the river.

Meewasin is immensely grateful to the exceptional partners who made the 2022 Clean Up Campaign possible, including Nutrien, Loraas Disposal, Trans Canada Trail, and the City of Saskatoon. Their support and collaboration have been instrumental in ensuring the success of this impactful initiative.



5,590+ Volunteer hours

Protecting the Legacy

Exploring Our Potential in the Tourism Sector

Since 2021, Meewasin has been developing and piloting a series of sustainable, authentic and high-quality outdoor tourism experiences with the goal of expanding our reach and generating revenue to support our valley-wide education and conservation efforts.

Building on the success of these pilots, we received support from PrairiesCan in 2022 to explore Meewasin's potential in the tourism sector.

This work focused on articulating the organization's role and ambitions in delivering year-round tourism and experiential programming for visitors in the Meewasin Valley. It demonstrates that Meewasin is well-placed to develop and deliver unique, authentic, experiential tourism programs that generate net revenues for the organization and introduce new opportunities for thoughtful growth.

Our vision for Meewasin in the tourism space is to transform visitors through meaningful experiences.

More broadly, Meewasin's participation in the tourism economy supports municipal and provincial economic goals, specifically those of Discover Saskatoon and Tourism Saskatchewan, and elevates the story of our region and its sustainable tourism efforts.

This process was insightful for Meewasin and we look forward to exploring future opportunities for our organization in this sector.



Meewasin Contributes at COP15

Postponed from 2020, in December of 2022, Meewasin had the pleasure to attend the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal. This landmark conference was a chance for Canada to showcase its continued leadership and work with international partners and Indigenous Peoples to take action to conserve nature and halt biological diversity loss around the world. Meewasin participated in and led a number of sessions to highlight our conservation efforts alongside many of our partners.

Meewasin achieved the following by attending COP15:

- Share the story of prairie conservation on a global scale
- Share the profile of Meewasin and its work
- Connect with national conservation organizations on best practices
- Appeal to potential foundations and funders for support
- Announced the recognition of 9 Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures and 7 Protected Areas (OECMs & PAs) into both the Canadian and World Protected Areas Databases

Meewasin participated on
Four Expert Panels



National Urban Park

With participation from a regional steering committee, Meewasin is working with Parks Canada to explore the potential for designation as a national urban park.



A steering committee was formed in January 2022 to discuss the consideration of a potential national urban park in the Saskatoon region. The steering committee has representation from Meewasin, Parks Canada, Government of Saskatchewan, City of Saskatoon, RM of Corman Park, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth, and Wanuskewin Heritage Park.

We expect that designation of a potential national urban park in the Meewasin Valley will be governed under a version of the existing model used by the Meewasin Valley Authority. The park's vision, boundaries and governance, the role of Parks Canada, and other key considerations related to the operations of a national urban park, will be informed by close collaboration with local partners and stakeholders by 2025.

There is an expectation that Meewasin would act as 'Site Manager', leading coordination and delivery of park operations with a new committee focused on overseeing requirements to earn/maintain designation as a national urban park. With recommendations from a new committee focused on the objectives of the national urban parks program, Meewasin's Board would continue to hold legal and governing authority for Meewasin's jurisdiction and operations, and Parks Canada would hold decision-making over the decision to designate and maintain designation, as well as any related federal funding.

Potential benefits to the Saskatoon region of national urban park designation include:

- Economic benefits for jobs, recreation, tourism, and cost savings on built infrastructure by supplementing with natural infrastructure
- Conserving nature and enhancing climate resilience
- Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
- Connection and inclusion
- Increased partnerships

Next steps include developing a business plan for the potential park so that a cost/benefit analysis of potential designation can be completed.



More Than A Trail

Meewasin is the heart of our region, and lives in the hearts of our citizens who stroll, roll, jog, play, cycle, paddle, ski and skate their way through the Valley. Families bond on the Meewasin Trail and at natural areas, delighting in the magic of chickadees in their palms, snowflakes on their tongues and the wildlife they discover. Graduations, marriage proposals, weddings and other celebrations and ceremonies happen on the shores of the river and in Meewasin natural spaces everyday.



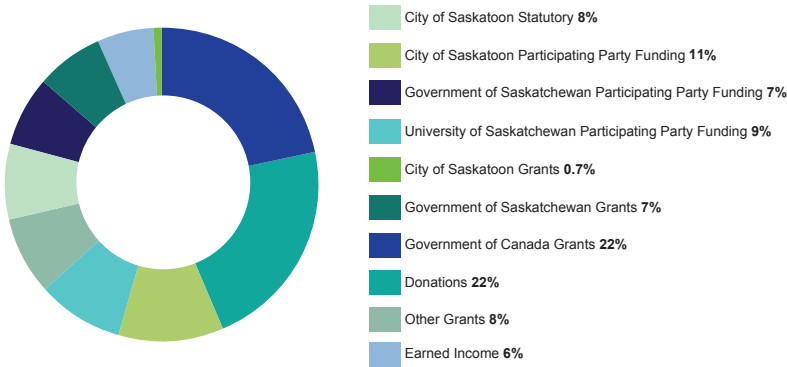
Our community relies on our Meewasin Trail network, natural areas and educational programs to decompress from urban life, connect with friends and family, and relax in nature. Levels of use are increasing — in 2022 we saw an additional 80,000 visits to the Meewasin Trail. In the past 3 years we have all gained a new appreciation of the importance of outdoor experiences for our mental and physical health.

We are preparing to respond to demand. Our current fundraising campaign supports all three of our pillars to conserve, develop and educate through trail enhancements, a new greenhouse and seed bank facility and upgrades to programming. Our goal is to build capacity to satisfy future stewardship responsibilities so our river valley and community can thrive.

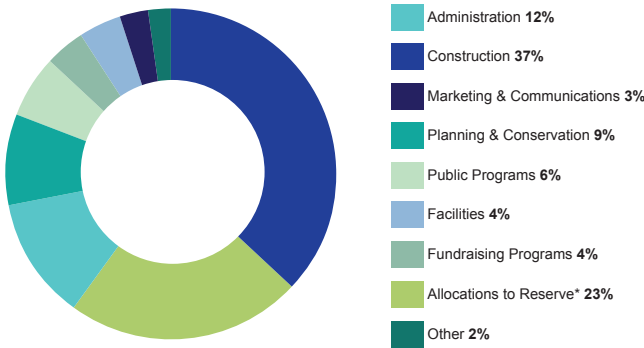
Financial Highlights

Statutory and Participating Party funding for Meewasin remained relatively steady for the 2022-23 fiscal year; however almost \$5 million of the total funds came from short term funding sources. Based on the growth in population within the Conservation Zone, Meewasin increasingly relies on donations, grants and other opportunities to generate revenue. This has been a major strength of Meewasin, especially in regard to capital projects and campaigns. Increased resources would help Meewasin to keep up with capacity challenges. We continue to strive to maximize and leverage core funding for the benefit of community projects.

Meewasin Source of Funds \$7,217,503 for the year ended March 31, 2023



Meewasin Expenditures \$7,217,503 for the year ended March 31, 2023



Endowment Funds

The endowment funds for the benefit of Meewasin are managed by the Saskatoon Community Foundation. At December 31, 2022, the endowment funds and balances were as follows: Meewasin Naturally Fund \$1,097,813; the Susan Lamb Fund \$34,406; and Wes Bolstad Fund \$25,365; for a total of \$1,157,584. These funds continue to grow through generous contributions from individuals and planned gifts. Revenue from endowment funds for Meewasin are currently being used to support strategic operations and priorities in our three mandate areas.

*Allocations to Reserve include results of fundraising activities allocated to future projects



Donors

we thank you!

2022-2023 Donors (over \$250)

Patricia Albers
Dr. Darwin Anderson
Andgo Systems
Rose Andres
G.N. Arnett
Sue Ashburner
Balloonfish
Scott & Tracey Banda
Phyllis & Ernie Barber
Barbershop Creative Studios
BASf
Helen Baulch
Jane Benjamin
Barry Benson
Thomas Benson
Reid Bews
Sherrie & Jason Bews
Shannon Bews & Grant Bryden
Geraldine & Moishe Black
Anne Blakeney
Ron Boden
Lindsay Bonin
Boomlag
Doug Borrowman
Braid Flooring and Window Fashions
Cameron Broten
Caitlin Brown
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Canadian Transplant Association
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Chesterfield
City of Saskatoon
Estate of David Clarke
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Jill Cowan
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Melissa Cunningham
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Andy & Jean De-Beer
Brenda Dean
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Estate of Marcia Keeseey
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Grandey Family Foundation Inc.
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Terri Lemke
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Lloyd & Heather Rowson
Albert Running
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Madhav Sarda
Saskatoon Co-op
Saskatoon Community Foundation
Saskatoon Gold Fins Master Swim Club
Saskatoon Road Runners Association
Saskatoon Search and Rescue
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Ron Sekulich
Susan Shantz Gifting Fund
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Mervin & Dorothy Sorensen

Myrna Sprecker
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Rawlco Radio
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TD Bank
The Jubilee Investment Club
Weston Family Foundation
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Patrick Timmons
Molly Trecker
UnitedWay
Daymond Volk
Kristine Waddell
Brenda Wallace
Ryan Walker & Saache Heinrich
Amy Wall
Ross Wallster
James & Sharon Werbicki
Kevin Wilson
James Yuel
Estate of Mr. Harry Zacharias
Andrea Ziegler
Gail Zink
Douglas Zolinsky

Participating Party Funding

City of Saskatoon
Government of Saskatchewan
University of Saskatchewan

Special Friends & Planned Givers

Dr. Darwin Anderson
Ina & the late John Brockelbank
Gwen & Guy Charman
Susan & Ron Lamb
Anita & Graham Langford
On Purpose Leadership Inc.
Terri Lemke
K.W. & Dora Nasser
Paul Lavoie & Bill Peterson
Estate of Frank J. Roy
Saskatoon Road Runners Association
Jack & Sylvia Vicq

Grants

ASUPCA
Canadian Institute of Forestry
City of Saskatoon
Gabriel Dumont Institute
Government of Canada
Government of Saskatchewan
RBC Foundation
Saskatoon Community Foundation
SK Community Initiatives Fund
SK Parks and Recreation Association
TD Friends of the Environment
Tourism Saskatchewan
Trans Canada Trail
Tree Canada Foundation
Weston Family Foundation

Corporate Sponsorships

Downtown Saskatoon
Nutrien



Join these community
champions and support
a healthy and vibrant
place for generations
to come, where people
connect with the
land, with the cultural
history, and with each
other.



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