

**ILLUMINATING REGIONAL IDENTITY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY
EXPLORATION IN SASKATCHEWAN**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Both inside and outside of academia, people have sought to understand the “sense of place” of various regions, many times over and for many different reasons. The concept of regional identity is highly complex and surrounded by considerable contention. There are multiple bodies of research on regional identity theory in many different disciplines and even across sub-disciplinary classifications. Each discipline takes a slightly different angle or perspective on regional identity, resulting in a fragmented body of work on this topic overall. There is a need to consolidate this body of increasingly fragmented theory through interdisciplinary integration. For the purpose of this study, the province of Saskatchewan will serve as an exemplar for exploring regional identity in a concrete context. Saskatchewan can be thought of as a ‘functional region,’ with clear boundaries and clear residency, from which regional identity can be studied. This thesis shares the outcomes of a qualitative study grounded in a series of group interviews with Saskatchewan residents, from which it is concluded that the use of interdisciplinary theory is an appropriate approach to the study of regional identity. Regional identity cannot be compartmentalized; it is a web of characteristics, attributes, and feelings that are inextricably linked. The thesis thus concludes by offering lessons learned about how we might better understand regional identity, as illuminated through both interdisciplinary theory and the lived experiences and imaginations of people living in the region of Saskatchewan.

Keywords: regional identity, interdisciplinary, Saskatchewan

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to the province and the people of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is a big part of who I am today. I know what a special place it is and all I have ever wanted to do is to share it with the rest of the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	4
IDENTITY	4
PLACE-BASED IDENTITIES.....	7
REGIONALISM IN CANADA.....	10
COMMUNITY	13
PLACE-MAKING	15
TOURISM STUDIES	17
SUMMARY	19
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	21
PERSONAL BACKGROUND.....	22
METHODS	24
PARTICIPANT SELECTION	27
DATA COLLECTION	29
ANALYSIS	30
CHAPTER FOUR: MAJOR THEMES IN THE EXPLORATION OF SASKATCHEWAN	
IDENTITY	31
DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE.....	31
PRIDE FOR SASKATCHEWAN	39
PLACE ATTACHMENT	43
COMMUNITY SPIRIT	49
NOSTALGIA.....	53
CHANGE.....	57
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	60
DEVELOPING INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDINGS OF REGIONAL IDENTITY	60
THE ROLE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY	68
ABSENCE OF THE ABORIGINAL ELEMENT	70
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	73
LITERATURE CITED	76

APPENDIX A - QUESTIONS	80
APPENDIX B - ETHICS CERTIFICATE	81

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Nationalism in Canada is a vague and often an insubstantial concept because of the enormity of this nation-state's geographical boundaries, the youth of the country, its internal divisions (the provincial system), its policy (and sometimes troubled practice) of multiculturalism, and its colonial history with regard to indigenous inhabitants of the same land. The division of Canada into provinces and territories creates a smaller and more attainable area for place-based identity to be studied than would be possible on the national level. Provincial residents, to some degree, have a shared history, are under consistent legislation and social programs, and share similar environmental experiences with one another. The province of Saskatchewan serves as a 'functional region' with relatively clear boundaries and clear residency from which regional identity can be studied—at the very least, it is a place to start.

There are many different disciplines that seek to understand the nature of place. Many different branches of knowledge systematically analyse the social, historical, cultural, economic, political, and environmental processes operating in a geographic zone, studied in different combinations and with varying emphasis on particular areas in order to provide an integrated understanding of a place and its distinctiveness or character.

The concept of regional identity is highly complex and surrounded by considerable contention because there are multiple bodies of research on regional identity theory in many different disciplines and even across sub-disciplinary classifications. This interest is captured in varying terms, including sense of place, place identity, cultural identity, and place attachment. Various

disciplines take different angles or perspectives on regional identity, but on the whole, these bodies of research are highly fragmented.

Consider the name ‘Saskatchewan’; what exactly is being referred to? Are you speaking of the land mass or the marks that represent it on a map? Are you referring to its residents or its government? What about its resources or its culture? Generally, when you speak of a place, all these different components are combined to form a whole. Yet, when we study regional identity, we act as if we can surgically separate the components that make up a region. When we speak about what it means to be from Saskatchewan, we are really speaking about what it means to be a part of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan residents have both shaped the environment and been shaped by the environment; they are both a part of a symbiotic relationship. Similarly, Saskatchewan residents are connected to the government and social system of the province; the residents have formed and developed these political and social structures and at the same time are regulated by the same structures.

There is a need to consolidate the body of increasingly fragmented theory by an interdisciplinary exploration that can encompass different dimensions and considerations of regional identity. This is one of the main goals that I wish to achieve with this research. If regional identity is continually studied inside individual disciplinary perspectives, understanding will continue to be limited.

This research project aims to attempt to integrate previous ideas on regional identity using interdisciplinary theory to consider regional identity. It is my perspective that ‘place’ is a highly

complex system, where many different components such as land mass, natural resources, wildlife, residents, political bodies, social systems, cultural production, and athletic endeavors come together to form a great big, awkward concept. Identity is our interpretation and self-representation within this concept. In order to approach this elephant of a concept as a whole, rather than just describing its trunk or legs or tail, it is necessary to connect research and ideas from a variety of different disciplines.

This project draws on interdisciplinary theory for understanding place identity and regional scale, and then places this theory in conversation with the concrete context of the province of Saskatchewan—a deeply personal and special place for this thesis’ author. Chapter Two: Literature Review considers previous academic studies on the idea of regional identity. Identity theory, place-based identity, regionalism in Canada, community theory, the process of place-making, and contributions made by tourism studies are reviewed. In Chapter Three, the methodology of the research is detailed; the primary research as a part of this study was accomplished through a series of flexible and open-ended group interviews conducted with Saskatchewan residents. During the analysis, a series of recurring patterns or themes began to emerge. Themes were grouped under broader categories and finally summarized. These major themes are communicated in Chapter Four: Major Themes in the Exploration of Saskatchewan Identity. Finally in Chapter Five: Discussion, I highlight lessons learned regarding how we can better understand regional identity based on the interdisciplinary literature considered in Chapter Two and the empirical outcomes presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the search for understanding the meaning of ‘regional identity’ we must first break down the term. The etymological roots of ‘region’ point to both autonomy (region as a cohesive entity in its own right) and subordination (region as part of a larger entity); the term region is a reflection of the struggle between these two readings (Riegel & Wylie, 1997, p. ix). Identity refers to a way of describing or conceptualizing the self (Devine-Wright & Clayton, 2010, p. 267). Singular concepts of identity fail to reflect the actual complexity and multiplicity of their formation; therefore, this study has approached regional identity from an interdisciplinary perspective. This literature review involves the consideration of knowledge from sociology, anthropology, human geography, indigenous studies, and tourism studies disciplines. The concepts of identity, place-based identities, regionalism in Canada, community, place-making, and place branding are all considered in this exploration of regional identity.

IDENTITY

Identity may be defined as distinctive characteristics belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social group or category (Rummens, 2001, p. 3). Identities may incorporate personal roles and attributes, membership in social groups or categories, and connections to geographical locations. They are human constructions made by the combination of both social processes and individual processes (Nurse & Sackville, 2002). “Identity has more to do with becoming than with being, and it’s a process that starts right from birth” (Verhaeghe, 2014, p. 8).

From the minute we are born we begin the process of mirroring; babies mirror their parents' expressions and learn through hundreds of simple everyday interactions. "We learn what we are feeling, and more generally, who we are, through the other showing us" (Verhaeghe, 2014, p. 9). With age the messages sent and received between caregivers and children become much more complex and wide-ranging. We are told from infancy how we feel, whether we are good or naughty, stubborn like daddy or clever like grandpa, all of these combine to assist in informing us who we are. However, identity formation is not just an imprinting process, but "[...] is a balance of tensions; we are torn between the urge to merge with and the urge to distance ourselves from the other" (Verhaeghe, 2014, p. 10). Alongside the process of mirroring, there is also a natural impetus to strive for autonomy. This separation allows us to develop individuality through the process of opposition; we want to be a part of a greater whole, while at the same time we desire independence (Verhaeghe, 2014, p. 12). The process of identifying is the search for the meaning of existence and to find one's position in the world.

An individual will hold many identities simultaneously; one person can be a sister, a daughter, an accountant, a soccer player, a Canadian, and a Saskatchewan resident all at once. Identities can be held both individually and collectively. "According to Aristotle, the human being is a political animal. That is, the proper being of a human being is to be a member of some community or state" (Mutanen, 2010, p. 32). Within the multitude of identities that an individual holds there exists a tension between the notion of individuality and membership in a community.

Identity is inherently divisive. It exists as an interaction between self and otherness; hence, it only assumes meaning when it is contextualized within this dichotomy (Behera, 2007, p. 80). A

Canadian may struggle to describe what it means to be from Canada, but through use of comparative devices can say that we have a better universal health care system or a stronger emphasis on multiculturalism than the United States. Being faced with the “other’s” difference can make our own identity seem clearer. “The inherent essential attributes that form identity provide the resources for boundaries so that people can think themselves into difference” (Cohen, 1985, p. 117). Identity forms or defines a boundary that encapsulates a group or community (Behera, 2007, p. 80). For example, North America before confederation used to be one large territory with small areas of European settlements. Boundaries between what is now Canada and the United States were virtually nonexistent. The establishment of Canada and the United States as distinct nations created a more distinct boundary, and since that time the two nations have developed distinct histories, cultures, and therefore identities.

Identity interconnects several different kinds of factors into a single wholeness, which implies that the (semantic) structure of identity is very complex (Mutanen, 2010, p. 36). “The scope of the notion of identity is very wide. This does not imply that the scope has no limits at all” (Mutanen, 2010, p. 36). In order to be a useful concept, identity cannot be too flexible. It needs some kind of realistic basis; it needs a foundation which is both factual and conceptual or ideal (Mutanen, 2010). Much of what and how we experience the world is socially constructed, yet there still exists a physical basis. First there exists a physical reality, and upon that, society drapes different meanings and ideas (Verhaeghe, 2014, p. 10). A regional identity consists of ideas and meaning constructed by people, but they are at the same time defined by a physical zone and the interactions that exist within that space.

Identity is not a fixed entity; it is a continuous process. Hall states, "...we should think of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (1990, p.222). While identity is continuously being constructed and reconstructed, it is not easy to change or lose identity. "It belongs to the future as much the past [...] identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformations" (Hall, 1990, p. 225). The act of explaining or interpreting identity is also a process of construction. It is a continuous process, which must be done over and over again (Mutanen, 2010, p. 28).

PLACE-BASED IDENTITIES

There are many different elements that can contribute to identity, including place. It is clear that people form bonds with their physical environment and this attachment can become a core or minor component of self-identity.

As agents in the world, we are always 'in place,' much as we are always 'in culture.' For this reason our relations to place and culture become elements in the construction of our individual and collective identities. (Riegel & Wylie, 1997, p. ix)

The medium of place-based identity is the cumulative inhabitation of the region (Abalmasova & Pain, 2011, p. 277).

Place-based identity seeks to answer the question - who are we? Place identity involves the manner in which inhabitants identify themselves with a certain locality and the traditions and lifestyle that have evolved there (Abalmasova & Pain, 2011, p. 275). It is constructed from local myths, and attractive historical and cultural features of a territory. Krylov's 2010 study regarded embodiment of a place-based identity as consisting of three perspectives: self-identification, the

degree of identifying oneself with a territory; individuality, the combination of original cultural, natural, and historic characteristics; and regional self-consciousness, the degree of local patriotism, and the feeling that the inhabitants have roots there (as cited in Abalmasova & Pain, 2011, p. 276). Individuals can experience their locality as one, two, or a combination of all three perspectives, which is helpful in explaining varying strengths in place-based identity. Simon, Huigen, and Groote posit that actors often will experience a region differently because the region's qualities are not objective or 'natural,' but rather are socially constructed, and thus constantly subject to change (2010, p. 410).

Place-based identities cannot be assembled using a standardized process and formula; each locality has different sources and causes from which identity is formed. Each locality has its own unique history and political and economic factors, which inform its development. These factors are powerful in their ability to leave their mark on society; however, it is the qualities and characteristics of place-based identity that are anchored in peoples' everyday lives, which give those identities strength (Mutanen, 2010, p. 30).

"Identity markers" are characteristics or attributes used by people to distinguish one area from another (Simon, Huigen, and Groote, 2010, p. 411). These characteristics can include symbolic elements, historical events, traditions, and landscape features. "Actors use those elements of the past that they themselves interpret as interesting and binding to a region" (Simon, Huigen, and Groote, 2010, p. 411). These characteristics are often closely linked to the past because the future is still unfolding. Yet, it is a matter of becoming as much as it is matter of being, belonging to the future as much as it belongs to the past (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Identities come from somewhere,

they have histories, but like history, which is constantly unfolding, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

Far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and positioned ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall, 1990, p. 225)

Narratives, myths, and historical consciousness are three different terms to describe the same powerful tool in the process of place-based identity construction; our understanding of the past shapes our sense of the present and the future. Many describe myths as “...a way of making sense in a senseless world. Myths are the narrative patterns that give significance to our existence” (May, 1991, p. 15). Ideas and stories are passed down to us by our families and the people who surround us; this information combines to form a central narrative shared by a larger group (Verhaeghe, 2014). Why is it that people report feeling connected to each other within a specific community, province, or nation, even though the vast majority have never met and probably never will? “We believe we share a common past, have intertwined interests and we face a shared destiny. We are joined by what we believe about ourselves to be true” (Eisler, 2005, p. 71).

The construction of place-based identities also involves acts of power (Paasi, 2001). “Policy-makers, academics entrepreneurs, tourists and residents tell their own story based on their experiences, strategies and needs (for that reason different groups of people interpret and represent a region in different ways)” (Simon, Huigen, and Groote, 2010, p.411). Place-based identities tend to be articulated by the elites, who act as both participants and initiators

(Abalmasova & Pain, 2011). This power imbalance is the result of a disparity in resources; elites have the resources to impose the interpretation of the reality that they support (Abalmasova & Pain, 2011).

REGIONALISM IN CANADA

“Region” is a complicated and historically evolving concept. Regions were traditionally viewed as premodern; they gradually began to disappear with the development of the modern nation-state. However, regions have seen a resurgence since the 1960s as a response to globalization (Terlouw, 2009, p. 453). A renewed emphasis on the “local” is seen as reaction and countermovement to the growth of globalization. Global or transnational networks have caused the idea of “national” identity to become more problematic and has led to a rise in identities that are much more local (Mutanen, 2010, p. 35). Simon, Huigen, and Groote suggest that globalization has led to both a decline in variation between regions and an increased awareness and attention for regional characteristics (2010, p. 409). Globalization has led to a fluidity between national borders, where ideas, goods, and people are moving around the globe with more ease and frequency than ever before (Salazar, 2010). When music, for example, can be shared and listened to all around the world, it lessens the special connection that it has to a specific place, weakening variation between regions and producing cultural homogeneity. However, globalization is also responsible for a counter-reaction: a dynamic response or resistance to moving global forces, a need to be grounded and to feel imbedded or connected to a “home” type environment—this tension is captured in the neologism ‘glocalization.’

For most Canadians, identity is a complex mix of community; shared cultural, ethnic, and social background; and attachment to place—a mix that is much more localized than the feeling of being Canadian (Riegel & Wylie, 1997, p. ix). Regions provide a much more specific and centralized geographic, political, and social boundary in which a place-based identity can be formed and more clearly defined. Significant scholarly research on regionalism in Canada began in late 1960s early 1970s, as scholars began to question the focus of research into the dynamics of the Canadian experience within a national context (Berger, 1986). During these early studies, regionalism was considered both a problem to be overcome and a stereotyped homogenous regional cultures (Forbes, 1978). Regionalism was considered a problem to be overcome during Canada's initial era of development, cohesion and integration were considered important to the nation's development, and therefore regional differences and allegiances placed anywhere besides the nation-state were considered problematic and sought to be overcome. Regionalism was also often overly simplified during early studies, resulting in simplistic, stereotyped views of particular regions. Viewing Quebec simply as a French settlement in Canada, or Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba simply as farming provinces, grossly ignored the complexity of the different ethno-religious backgrounds of residents, the patterns of settlement, and other distinguishing developmental factors.

The concept of “limited identities” was initially developed by Ramsay Cook and J. Careless, where the framework was shifted from a focus of national analysis to regional analysis. The term “limited” suggests that there is a more fundamental and superior identity, and that regional identity is still a part of the overarching national experience. The guiding heuristic proposition for this theory was that Canada as a nation-state is considered to be lacking in a strong, singular

cultural identity; instead of a national identity, Canadians attach themselves to more “limited” identities or cultures, such as regional identities (Nurse & Sackville, 2002, p. 8). Local situations—organized around region, class, and ethnicity—were considered an important context within the development of a community as a political economic source took place (Nurse & Sackville, 2002, p. 9). Limited identities were considered useful because they helped to explain “regional variations in employment, ethnic relations, access to state services, the organization of the state, and demographic patterns [which] constitute an important context of life in different parts of Canada” (Nurse & Sackville, 2002). However, “limited identities” are considered problematic as a concept because they are bound by a narrow focus, which underestimates the complexity of regional identities (Nurse & Sackville, 2002, p. 9). Limited identities approached difference as a relatively uncomplicated matter; demographic data is not designed to assess the complexities of the affections of intersections and multiplicities involved in regional identity.

Historically there has been little agreement about where the lines for regional division should be drawn in Canada. Frequently we see Canada’s ten provinces collapsed into five regions (Atlantic Canada, Ontario, Quebec, Prairies, and British Columbia). There are geographical and environmental images that are often associated with these particular regions, but it is also clear that the commonly understood regions correspond poorly to the parameters of Canadian physical geography. While Saskatchewan is considered to be a part of “the Prairies,” less than half of the province is actually made up of a prairie ecosystem. Conrad goes further to say,

Canadian ‘regions’ are not a region in any academic sense of the term (formal, functional, and imaginative). These ‘regions’ do not exist except perhaps in the recesses of the Ottawa bureaucratic mind (2003, pp.161, 162).

The most common definition of region treats the formal boundaries of provinces as the designated boundaries and will serve for the purpose of this study.

As long as provinces are considered distinct entities and hold importance in Canada, the regional identities of those provinces will also be important. There is tension between the nation as a whole and the individual provinces. This tension feeds a sense of mixed loyalties within Canada. Fitjar found that the feeling of being treated unfairly is likely to lead to solidarity among people in a region, thus boosting regional identity (2010, p. 528). Contrarily, prosperity may create a sense of regional pride, also conducive to identity construction (Fitjar, 2010, p. 528). Inequalities between regions are likely to feed the dicomatic nature of identity construction, creating the mindset of coming up against one another and competing with one another for resources.

COMMUNITY

Community is another term that is bandied around in everyday conversation; it is used to sell real estate, market social technology, and appears in mission statements of most institutions. Although community can be spoken of with genuine feeling, it goes against the individualism embedded in our modern culture, representing longing more than reality (Cohen, 1985). Community is often used to express the experience of belonging, our interdependence, hospitality, social capital, and social fabric. However, when a word covers everything it loses utility (Cohen, 1985).

Cohen describes community as the expression of a “...relational idea; with a boundary that marks the beginning and the end of a community” (1985, p. 12); the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community. Boundaries may be physical, expressed, or enshrined in law. Boundaries are assigned meanings, which are made by people; this is the symbolic aspect of a community boundary. This suggests that they mean different things for different people; boundaries for some may be entirely imperceptible by others (Cohen, 1985, p. 13).

People are entrenched in a continuous process of meaning making. Geertz proclaims, “...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun...” (1975, p. 5). These webs constitute ‘culture.’ The analysis of culture is “...not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (1975, p. 5). Symbolism as the central concept of culture is particularly effective because symbols are imprecise, which allows individuality and commonality to be reconcilable. People are able to achieve a sense of individualisation, while still residing within the community body. Culture or ‘webs of significance’ are created and continually recreated by people through their social interactions (Cohen, 1985, p. 17). Culture is thus inherently antithetical: “...the vitality of cultures lies in their juxtaposition, they exaggerate themselves and each other” (Cohen, 1985, p. 116).

Our experiences function as a “model of reality” (Geertz, 1966); these models serve as a base from which to orient ourselves to new phenomena requiring interpretation. When we are unable to render the unknown into some familiar form, we will often become uncomfortable or even frightened. (Cohen, 1985, p. 100). As the physical and structural boundaries dividing the community from the rest of the world become increasingly tenuous and are more and more

blurred, the community may be imagined as being under threat. The prospect of change can be regarded ominously, as if change inevitably means loss (Cohen, 1985, p. 109). “A frequent and glib description of what is feared may be lost is ‘way of life’; part of what is meant is the sense of self” (Cohen, 1985, p. 109).

The traditional sense of a community was small and localized. Today the concept of community stretches beyond physical boundaries. An “imagined” community is different than an actual community because it is not based on everyday face-to-face interactions between its members. Anderson (2006) believes that a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves a part of that group. Regions are similarly constructed. While not the mammoth geographic size of Canada, the Canadian provinces are still too large to fit within the traditional model of community. Therefore an extrapolation from Anderson’s theory is necessary for us to consider a province or a region as an “imagined community”.

PLACE-MAKING

Scholars have written volumes on regional and place-based identity as a concept—a collective identity that is formed through clear boundaries and shared characteristics. However, there is also an importance in considering the connection of this process to place:

From an anthropological perspective, it is important to highlight the emplacement of all cultural practices, which stems from the fact that culture is carried into places by bodies—bodies are encultured and, conversely, enact cultural practices. Personal and cultural identity is bound up with place (Escobar, 2001, p. 143).

“Space” is considered the physical world, whereas “place” refers to a culturally meaningful site; place is space enriched with meaning (Tuan, 1977). As Rodman describes, “places are not inert

containers. They are politicized culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions” (1992, p. 641). Place-making is a cultural process, where places are not merely the localities of culture, but rather are mirrored reflections of history, values, interests, power relations, and meanings. Like cultural identities, place-making is both collective and personal. It is an emotional attachment and self-identification with a territory. In Canada the federal and provincial governments have viewed the land’s importance almost exclusively in utilitarian or economic terms. The perspective of place-making relates to the land as more holistic; it involves thinking of the ways of knowing and being in place inextricably (Elsey, 2013, p. 47).

Enfoldment, as a component of this theory, refers to the way land is enfolded into the senses of individual and collective identity. This is a non-compartmentalized perspective, which problematizes and transcends Cartesian dualities of “subject versus object” (Elsey, 2013, p. 47). It incorporates the land and humans into one unbroken unity of meaning and being (Ingold, 1996). “This means recognizing that place, body, and environment integrate with each other; that places gather things, thoughts, and memories in particular configurations...” (Escobar, 2001, p. 143). This philosophy is central in many North American indigenous cultures, but the fundamental theory is also applicable in the ways in which people experience and are impacted by place. “...The human experience is interconnected with features of the landscape such that people are spiritually inseparable from it” (Elsey, 2013, p. 48). Artists are able to express a “poiesis,” a poetics of existence; they have the ability to communicate the self’s symbolic expression and presencing (Elsey, 2013, p. 50). However, just because the rest of the population doesn’t have the ability to articulate this sense of place and sense of identity does not mean that they are incapable of feeling it.

Narratives are also regarded as being important in the place-making process:

In the case of body-world imbrication at a meaningful place of doing (such as a fishing site or berry picking patch) the nodal points of what has become a social and human world are encoded through folkloric, narrative descriptions; they have become embedded within a storyscape—the people's cultural memory (Elsey, 2013, p. 49).

The basis for place-based identification is in human activity and movement and ways of making a living within a place, which is established by the storyscape (Elsey, 2013, p. 49) The stories that are told about places are not just recollections of fixed sites on a landscape, but rather are expressions of senses of being in the world (Thornton, 1997). Development narratives demonstrate how the territory of a particular people depicts their collective life story (how they came to be).

Connectivity, interactivity, and positionality are the correlative characteristics of the attachment to place (Escobar, 2001), and they derive greatly from the modes of operation of the networks that are becoming central to the strategies of localization advanced by social movements (and, of course, by capital in different ways) (Escobar, 2001, p. 169).

TOURISM STUDIES

There is an importance in considering identity, the ways that it is formed, reformed, negotiated, and contested. Tourism is one of the defining activities of the modern world, shaping the ways in which one relates to and understands self and other, nation and nationness (Palmer, 2005, p. 8). The structures and resources within the tourism industry are useful in providing the means to consider or explicate regional identity. Identity may also be shared and experienced through

tourism; heritage tourism reminds people of core traditions through the stories of nationhood recounted at sites of national significance (Palmer, 2005, p. 22).

There is a desire within the cultural community (those dedicated to cultural preservation and empowerment) and the public sector to project imagery that represents an “authentic” identity of place, whereas commercial actors are keen to stage authenticity, to represent desirable activities or convenient commodities for consumption (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973). This process is called place branding. It involves establishing

...a network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design (Zenker & Braun, 2010).

The processes of branding and identity construction are interwoven (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 71).

However, there exists a tension between cultural identity and the commercial interests involved in the branding process. It becomes problematic when a region is treated as a product because a product implies that there exists some kind of ownership. Branding is also problematic because it often submits to a static view of identity, describing it as something to be tapped, defined, and manipulated, with branding being the attempt to communicate this place identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 74). Branding can be viewed as something that is forced upon people, insiders and outsiders alike, because it tends to be constructed by a small group of elites. It is important for the brand to resonate within the region in order to avoid brand alienation within the region. “The challenge of destination marketers is to make the destination brand live, so that visitors

experience the promoted brand values and feel the authenticity of a unique place” (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003, p. 286).

SUMMARY

The literature reviewed here offers a diverse background of theories that revolve around one central idea: how the people of a particular region construct and identify themselves as one people. The framework of identity theory states that identities are complex, fluid, multi-dimensional, multilayered, and processual (Storey, 2012, p. 11).

Place-based identity is a social construction, which requires its members to self-identify with that particular locality. Place-based identity has both a factual and conceptual basis; it is constructed from the historical, cultural, and natural features of a territory, but it is also concerned with how people think about themselves.

When considering regionalism within Canada, because of the sheer size of the country and the complexity of its composition, provinces are considered to provide a much more specific and centralized geographic, political, and social boundary in which a regional identity can be formed and more clearly defined.

Community represents a body of people, clearly defined by boundaries and entrenched in a ‘model of reality’ from which they are able to orient themselves in order to process new phenomena. Regional identities depend on “imagined” communities: socially constructed communities that are based on connections other than physical interactions between members.

Place-making concerns the inherent relationship that exists between people and the land they inhabit. It involves the integration of place, body, and environment. History is stored as memories that are reflected by place.

Tourism studies, as a field, makes important contributions to the study of regional identity because it provides both a means from which regional identity can be explicated and a medium from which regional identity is given importance and the opportunity to be appreciated by a wider audience. However, the traditional branding process that is central to the tourism industry's activities is problematic in its approach. It generally operates from the perspective of identity as a static and inherent attribute, which can be captured. This assumption is flawed; as previously described, identity is fluid and processual in nature. This study thus seeks to understand regional identity as a process and understands that the action of seeking regional identity will also contribute to its construction.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In approaching this research project it was important for me to first ground my own world view. I believe that people attach meaning to their words, thoughts, and actions, and that human action is defined as intentional and meaningful (Barnov, 2004). It follows then that studies involving or relating to human beings must consider the subjectivity that surrounds them. This perspective is in line with the hermeneutic approach. The human mind is built to creatively interpret, not to objectively reflect the world around it; therefore, to better understand the world, we must first seek to understand the process of interpretation. For the study of regional identity, this suggests an importance in seeking an understanding of how residents think and feel about themselves as individuals and as a collective.

Upon consideration of research strategy, it is important to consider how the problem is shaped and the particular questions that it raises. Because of the lack of prior studies that could be built upon, a qualitative approach seemed to be the most appropriate strategy. Qualitative research can be differentiated from other forms of social scientific methods because of its assumption that we must first discover what people think, and the reasons that they give for their perceptions and actions (Spradley, 1979). The emphasis that qualitative inquiry places on exploration and inductive analysis suits the information that is sought by this study.

From the realm of qualitative study I drew specifically from heuristic inquiry, a branch of phenomenological inquiry that focuses on the process of meaning-making. Heuristic inquiry emphasizes the inclusion of the researcher's personal experiences and insights within the

research process (Caton & Santos, 2008). This research perspective is appropriate particularly for me and for this study because of my life experiences accrued from growing up in Saskatchewan, as well as my time spent outside of the province, which has better allowed me to contextualize Saskatchewan's uniqueness. Dupuis (1999) believes that a more honest and authentic understanding and interpretation can be felt by someone who has previous experience with a phenomenon versus someone who has no such experience. I have embraced my experience as a Saskatchewan resident throughout the process of this research, both because the alternative of setting aside my personal biography and perspective would lack honesty and because it would compromise the research gains that can derive from the researcher's personal engagement and lived experience with her subject matter.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

The world does not exist in a bubble that can be examined at leisure, from the outside looking in. The researcher cannot be surgically separated from the research. Therefore, as the primary researcher involved in this study, it is important to acknowledge and to own my biography and world view.

I grew up in a small town of 1800 in south-western Saskatchewan. My family frequently made trips to Saskatoon, one of the urban centres of the province, and we spent our summers living at the family cabin in "northern" Saskatchewan (an area that is referred to as "northern" by the majority of the province, but is geographically just south of the central point of the province). My childhood involved frequent travel around the province for various sporting teams.

My parents met while travelling in Europe; my mom was born and raised in Saskatchewan and my dad was from Christchurch, New Zealand. Due to a voracious appetite for reading and an early opportunity to travel internationally to visit family, I grew up with a deep desire to travel and explore the world. Compared to the exotic and culturally rich stories in my books, I felt Saskatchewan was bland and far too familiar.

After finishing high school I took many opportunities to travel abroad and even spent a year living and travelling around New Zealand. I eventually found myself studying tourism at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia. I am now finishing my fourth year of study in Kamloops and I am desperate to move back to Saskatchewan. It feels like I am being called home.

While travelling I discovered affection for the little quirks and the unique qualities that are a part of Saskatchewan and its residents. There is nothing like being somewhere new to draw attention to the things that we take for granted and how they are not universal. I also discovered that Saskatchewan is internationally unknown. I can't count the number of times I was asked whether I lived in Vancouver or Toronto and then had to explain that I lived somewhere in the middle. Each time I returned home after time abroad, I came back with a greater appreciation for my home province.

My time in British Columbia has almost had a greater impact on my feelings for Saskatchewan than my time spent travelling. While studying in Kamloops I have been confronted by negative and dismissive stereotypes of my home province. I also have found the differences from living in

one province to the other to be far more dramatic than I ever could have suspected. It is this experience that has really cemented my interest in studying regional identities within Canada. I have experienced both superficial and deep-seated discrepancies separating the residents of Saskatchewan from the rest of Canada.

METHODS

This project began with a literature review, followed by personal reflection and active interviewing. This particular methodology was chosen because identity consists of both physical and cultural properties (Mutanen, 2010, p. 28). Regional identity has a factual basis, but it is also concerned with how people think about themselves. Qualitative data was pursued in order to provide richer and unrestricted insight into the manner in which Saskatchewan residents voice their identification as a province.

If someone were to look up Saskatchewan in an encyclopedia he or she would learn Saskatchewan is a prairie province in Canada, which has a total area of 651,036 square kilometres and a land area of 588,239 square kilometres, the remainder being water area (covered by lakes, reservoirs and rivers) (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Saskatchewan is bordered on the west by Alberta, on the north by the Northwest Territories, on the east by Manitoba, and on the south by the American states of Montana and North Dakota (See Figure 1 to see the province of Saskatchewan situated in Canada). As of April 1st, 2014, the population of Saskatchewan was estimated at 1,122,588 (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Residents primarily live in the southern half of the province. Saskatchewan consists of 16

cities, 146 towns, and 300 villages; the major cities of Saskatchewan include: Saskatoon Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Wynyard, Swift Current, North Battleford, and Regina, Saskatchewan's capital city (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2014).



Figure 1 Map of Canada with Saskatchewan highlighted

Saskatchewan has been inhabited for thousands of years by various indigenous groups, and first explored by Europeans in the 17th century, it was settled in the late 18th century, and it became a province in 1905. The name for the province derived from the Saskatchewan River; the river was

known as *kisiskāiwani-sīpiy*, translated as, swift flowing river in the Cree language. The province was recognized as a stronghold for Canadian democratic socialism early in the 20th century. Tommy Douglas, who was premier from 1944 to 1961, became the first social-democratic politician to be elected in North America and is widely recognized as the father of the first universal health care program. The province's economy is based on agriculture, mining, and energy.

This description of Saskatchewan is only what one would find in an encyclopedia, the blunt facts, and not somehow synonymous with the truth of Saskatchewan. It begs the question who decided that these characteristics are important and what do they mean within the greater context of Saskatchewan life.

Group interviews were chosen to create a favorable environment to discuss a collective identity. I was of the thought that collective identity should be explored collectively. The data collection was designed to create an environment in which a comfortable, informal group discussion could be generated, and which would offer the opportunity for ideas to snowball. Group interviews do offer the challenge that certain voices may be louder than others; however, with an awareness of these particular challenges there are methods of mediation that may be applied when leading these group interviews to ensure every voice is heard.

The group interviews were semi-structured, guided by a list of questions prepared through personal reflection and literature review (for a detailed list of questions see Appendix A). Because neither the exact wording nor the order needed to remain constant, the interviews were

able to flow with the ideas expressed through the course of the discussion, and to more fully explore the perspectives and ideas expressed by particular groups or individuals. To understand complicated ideas it is important to let interviewees to describe their thoughts and experiences in their own words and at their own rhythm (Rubins & Rubins, 2011).

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

In order to understand the cultural markers that distinguish the Saskatchewan identity, it was felt the most obvious and appropriate approach would be to obtain information directly from Saskatchewan residents willing to participate in the research. Ethics approval was obtained from Thompson Rivers University for the use of human subjects in this research process (see Appendix B). There were two distinct target populations, referred to as Type A and Type B. The Type A targeted population refers to individuals in targeted work environments, those relating to the tourism industry, such as destination management organizations, businesses, and organizations with professionals who spend time actively thinking about Saskatchewan. These particular work environments were targeted because within the regional identity construction process, it is widely recognized that some actors play a larger role than others. These actors have the motivation and means to put towards the task. Type B targeted population refers to a non-specific population including Saskatchewan residents from diverse backgrounds and in various careers and not particularly related to the tourism industry. I desired to include general residents, as well as tourism professionals, in order to offer a wider perspective to this study. Moreover, the research participants chosen from both populations were expected to satisfy particular criteria:

- be above the age of majority (for British Columbia this is 19),

- currently reside within the province of Saskatchewan, and
- have resided within Saskatchewan for a period of at least 10 years.

Residence within Saskatchewan for a significant period of time was an important qualifier in participant selection because the longer one lives in one place, the deeper the attachment that is formed with that place (Tuan, 1977). Gustafson's empirical study in Western Sweden found that that attachment is expressly related to the extensity of experience with place (2001).

Participants for Type A group interviews were recruited through a series of emails that were sent to targeted professional environments, which included the major destination management organizations within the province and featured tourism attractions in Saskatchewan that are well established. The interested organizations that responded were further narrowed based on availability during the time that I had allotted for travel and data collection in Saskatchewan. The result was four organizations that were willing to be involved and had employees who were interested in participating in the interviews.

Participants for Type B group interviews were recruited through convenience sampling, through a series of informal conversations. Personal contacts were used in various sectors of Saskatchewan society to recruit participants through snowball sampling. Examples of contacts that were used included a Town Administrator, a board member of the Shaunavon Arts Council, a senior employee of Greenslade Consulting group, an undergraduate student of the University of Regina, an employee of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, an undergraduate student of the University of Saskatchewan, a member of the Willows Golf and Country Club, a fellowship organizer of the Wildwood Mennonite Church, a participating member of the First Nation and

Métis Engagement, an employee of the Saskatchewan Alternative Initiative, an elementary school teacher of the Prairie Spirit School Division, and an organizing team member of the Regina Soccer Association. Each contact is connected to one or more significant social circles or sectors of Saskatchewan society and was therefore beneficial in being able to reach out and recruit other possible participants from a wide variety of backgrounds and occupations. There were two Type B group interviews held: these interviews were not the primary focus of this study, but were included in order to offer breadth and variation to the research.

I would not claim that the individuals chosen represented a full cross-section of Saskatchewan society. This study was not about achieving a perfectly statistical representation of Saskatchewan residents. It was about having a conversation with real people and attempting to understand how they reflect upon Saskatchewan's regional identity and how it is grounded in their day to day lives. That being said, the most notable gap in representation from this study was with the Aboriginal community. Although Aboriginal people were targeted in the email campaign, as well as through the snowball sampling, this study was only able to recruit one Métis participant. This is considered a significant gap within the research and is further addressed in the discussion section.

DATA COLLECTION

Interviews were collected in multiple locations during the month of July 2014. Locations for Type A group interviews were held in the boardrooms of the participating organizations. Type B interviews were held in casual, comfortable, accessible locations that were arranged by the

contacts who assisted in participant recruitment. There were a total of 6 group interviews (4 of Type A and 2 of Type B), with a total of 39 participants. Interviews ranged in size from 2 individuals to 11 individuals and lasted from 50 to 90 minutes, depending on the level of content offered by participants and their own particular time availability.

ANALYSIS

The data collection process was completed after six group interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed, and a set of field notes were assembled. As the interviewer, I audio recorded each interview (with the consent of my interviewees) and took shorthand notes. I transcribed the audio recordings into detailed notes and removed identifying information.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis was the approach used to examine and interpret the data. This particular approach was chosen because it involves a close examination of experiences and meaning-making. It is designed to be approached from a position of flexible and open-ended inquiry rather than focusing on hypotheses testing. I worked closely with the transcribed text, annotated it through the use of coding, and was attentive for insight into the participants' experiences and perspectives. The emerging codes were catalogued, and recurring patterns or themes began to emerge. Themes were grouped under broad categories and finally summarized. This inductive process is integral to elicit valid constructs, as the patterns emerge from the data rather than being predetermined by the researcher (Lewis & Sheppard, 2013, p. 210).

CHAPTER FOUR: MAJOR THEMES IN THE EXPLORATION OF SASKATCHEWAN IDENTITY

The group interviews provided a wealth of insight into how Saskatchewan identity is understood. The data acquired was of enormous breadth and consisted of both complex and trivial content. The material varied from interview to interview, as was expected; identity making is both a personal and collective process. However, there were many threads that occurred consistently across the group interviews. These common threads have been woven into themes. The central building blocks for Saskatchewan identity for these interviewees can be categorized as follows: development narrative, Saskatchewan pride, land attachment, community spirit, nostalgia, and change.

DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE

It was agreed by participants that there are multiple versions of the development narrative depending on who is being asked. This was apparent from the variety of responses during the group interviews. However, there were also common themes and threads that were consistent across all interviews. These are the developmental components that will be reviewed here.

While the geographic space that is now Saskatchewan has been occupied since long before European settlement and the formation of the province as a political entity, the strongest theme to be expressed by participants was the settlement of the prairies and the practice of homesteading. Expressed as the “west opening up,” the prairies were offered up as a promise of free land and a chance at a better life. Early European settlers did find the land here that was promised to them,

but they were also faced with a hard start and a harsh climate. The railroad was touted as playing a major role in the settlement of Saskatchewan and is largely responsible for the layout of the larger communities, which were built along the railway lines. The railroad was responsible for bringing in all outside supplies in those days. The province was formed in 1905; the participants described the immigration to the province as coming in “waves.” The process of homesteading in Saskatchewan involved visiting the local Dominion Land Title office, where you would be assigned your plot (160 acres of farmland to any man over the age of 18). Homesteading was an arduous process that involved clearing and breaking in the land. One interviewee recalls her grandmother’s homesteading experience,

They had to arrive in April because by arriving in April it gave them the opportunity to build their homes into the hills and what not, and if they arrive any later they might not get it done before the first frost.

Many of the participants had similar homesteading stories that had been passed down through their family. They spoke often of the “resilience of the people” who built the province. Another common familial story was that of a large families. One participant recounts,

My grandma was the oldest of twenty-one kids and she didn’t leave home until all the kids were grown. And she didn’t get married until she was thirty, which was really old back then. But yah, you stayed on the farm, you helped with everything from raising the kids to being out in the fields. It was a very hard life.

Farming was the dominant industry in Saskatchewan’s early years. The alternative occupations at that time were predominantly supporting services for the farmers. Teaching was one of the few careers that was an option for young women at the time. An interviewee recounts her mother’s career as a teacher at a country school or “teacherage”:

She was 17 and she was at a country school and the teacherage was two miles from the country school. And Mom had to ride the pony to the school every day to get the furnace

going in the school and what not and sometimes to shovel her way in to the door - and she was 5'2" and probably weighed under a 100 lbs at that time. She was 17 years old and out in the middle of nowhere. She had two pairs of underwear. Her stockings she made last as long as long as she possibly could. And every night she had to wash out a pair of underwear so that she had something to wear the next day.

English speaking teachers were placed in country school houses throughout the prairies. Many interviewees shared a similar story in which the first generation that had moved to Canada did not speak any English, but it was the children who became responsible for communication with the greater community.

Things transitioned from frugality to scarcity during the depression era in the 1930s, or what is referred to as the "Dirty Thirties" or the "Dust Bowl." This is a distinct era in the minds of Saskatchewan residents still today. High wheat prices and an increased demand caused by the war led farmers to plant land, which was previously set aside as grazing land. The combination of the disturbed soil and the drought that set in for nearly a decade led to the soil blowing off in great clouds of dust. One participant conveys a story that she had been told about life during the thirties,

I can remember a lady saying to me that she gave up trying to clean the inside of her house. [...] She said the dust was piled up halfway up her living room window outside. The desperation that they had...

The drought made farming during that era nearly impossible. Families were forced to stretch their resources. As another participant described,

During the Depression, I think that was quite a divisive period. There were those that did take, they called it the dole, that was the welfare. I remember grandma saying that grandpa kept the car up on blocks for years because he wouldn't take any money and so you know there was no money for gas, so it got sat up on blocks.

As a particularly difficult era, it seems to be emblazoned in Saskatchewan's memory. However, it does also feed into the resilience narrative of the Saskatchewan people that built and populated the province.

Heritage is considered significant in the development of Saskatchewan and is a quality that continues to be important to Saskatchewan residents today. Eastern European culture is a major influence and source of traditions in Saskatchewan; settlers from this region made up a sizeable percentage of incoming immigrants to the province during the first wave because they were particularly targeted by advertising campaigns made in their home countries. Often immigrants settled the prairies in blocs or colonies; those of a shared ethnic and/or religious heritage settled closely together to create a support network. This process led to the creation of towns in Saskatchewan that have particularly strong pockets of heritage and familial ties; some of these colonies still persist today, including several Hutterite colonies.

Participants expressed an appreciation for the celebration of heritage that continues to exist in Saskatchewan today:

I think it is really amazing that to see so many families and so many people holding so strong onto so much of their culture and heritage here. They don't give it up for anything. They still celebrate Ukrainian Christmas, and you know... perogies and cabbage rolls at every holiday...

Heritage is also enjoyed through particular events, celebrations, and clubs throughout the province. "In Regina and Saskatoon they have big celebrations to celebrate the different cultures, Mosaic and Folk Fest. German clubs and Ukrainian clubs, almost every kind of facet..." stated one interviewee. Along with the celebration of heritage, agrarian traditions and rhythms continue

to hold importance. Harvest is a crucial and a meaningful activity in Saskatchewan. Several participants spoke of the practice of eating meals in the field during harvest time. Thanksgiving as a Canadian holiday is a celebration of the harvest, and as such is a meaningful holiday in Saskatchewan. Although, farming no longer holds a prominent place in the majority of residents' lives, farming knowledge continues to be passed down in other ways. Agribition and Farm Progress are agriculture and livestock shows held annually in Saskatchewan. One participant spoke of her experiences attending Agribition through school trips: "Every little kid has to go to Agribition when they are little [...] and that is really written into the elementary school curriculum, that farming knowledge." Although no longer the dominant industry in Saskatchewan, farming continues to hold a place of importance in the province.

Many participants were able to rattle off key historical events that occurred in Saskatchewan, but there was a significant difference in points that were mentioned versus the elements that were expanded upon and discussed in detail. The narrative of pioneering and settling the prairies was spoken of with color and detail. Comparatively many important historical events were only briefly mentioned. It is important to consider the source of the knowledge and stories: most participants had personal family narratives of settlement that were still known and passed down through the family. In this case, pioneering Saskatchewan was learned from both family stories and school lessons or history books. In comparison many important historical events were only taught through school.

One particular storyline that was cited as holding importance in Saskatchewan's development was the signing of the treaties and subsequently the North-West Rebellion. The Canadian

government signed a series of eleven treaties with First Nations people. Tracts of land were traded by the First Nations in exchange for treaty rights. This allowed for the West to be opened up, thus beginning the European settlement of Saskatchewan.

The North-West Rebellion consisted of an uprising of the Métis people, under the leadership of Louis Riel against the Canadian Confederation; it began in Manitoba with the Red River Rebellion (1869-1870). Louis Riel was exiled from Canada, but re-entered, in 1880, into the region that was at the time referred to as the Northwest Territories, but later became Saskatchewan. Louis Riel fought to represent the Métis grievances against the Canadian government in terms of preservation of culture and rights to the territory. The rebellion consisted of several battles occurring in what is now central Saskatchewan, but eventually ended with the Métis being defeated in the siege at Batoche. As a result the Métis scattered and Louis Riel was tried for treason, convicted, and executed. The railway played a large role in the Canadian government's response to the North-West Rebellion, and as a result an increase in funding was put into further development of the railway in western Canada.

The Cypress Hills Massacre was also cited as holding importance in the development of Saskatchewan. The Cypress Hills Massacre occurred in 1873, involving American Bison Hunters, American Wolf Hunters, American and Canadian Whiskey Traders, Métis Freighters, and the Assiniboine people. The event involved missing horses, raised tensions, misunderstandings, and an excess of alcohol, but it ultimately resulted in the deaths of 24 people. The event in itself is not particularly important, but the resulting action made by John A. MacDonald has had a significant impact on Saskatchewan's and Canada's history. The result

was the building of Fort Walsh and the establishment of the North-West Mounted Police (which would later become the Royal Canadian Mounted Police). The fort was responsible for strengthening the sovereignty of the Canadian/American border and establishing order in the region. The North-West Mounted Police brought with them law and order to what was the “Wild West,” ultimately opening the province for settlement. In 1885 the RCMP barracks was established in Regina to provide police training; it continues to this day to train cadets from across the country.

The co-operative movement in Saskatchewan was also considered by participants as being an important factor in Saskatchewan’s development. The co-operative movement arose out of a sense of exploitation; individuals had little control over what they paid for goods, or the prices they received for their products. The farmers began banding together to make bulk purchases and later began to build their own system of elevators. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was one of the province’s most successful co-operatives spanning from 1924 to 2007. One of the participants discussed her father’s work in one of the “most Saskatchewan industries ever,” working in the elevators:

I mean that is Saskatchewan all over. Dad was an elevator agent. And so I spent most of my childhood [around elevators]. The smell of an elevator, if you have ever smelled it. People could take you blind folded anywhere and you would know that smell. It’s wonderful.

The popularity of the co-operative movement led to the development of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) political party. It was founded in 1932, and in 1944 formed the first social-democratic government in North America when it was elected to form the provincial government in Saskatchewan led by Tommy Douglas. Tommy Douglas led the CCF

through four more electoral wins, governing Saskatchewan from 1944 to 1961. Tommy Douglas has been Saskatchewan's most notable politician and is responsible for the introduction of Medicare in Saskatchewan, the first publicly funded universal health insurance system. The CCF later merged with the Canadian Labor Congress to form the New Democratic Party (NDP) that is known today.

Participants also cited several developments that have occurred in the last couple of decades that have the ability to make a lasting impact on the province of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool became a publicly traded company in the early 1990's, breaking from its roots with the cooperative movement; since then, it has lost its position as Canada's top grain handler due to increased competition from Agricore United, an amalgamation of Alberta's and Manitoba's wheat industries. Viterra was founded in 2007 when the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool acquired Agricore United; it has since grown into a global agricultural business.

The potash mining industry in Saskatchewan has also seen a significant transition in the last couple of decades. The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan existed as a crown corporation from 1975 to 1982, when it was privatized.

Also, participants discussed the increased importance of the oil industry within Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan's oil production peaked in the 1960's, a decade after the industry first developed in the province, and had a second peak in the mid-1990's carrying on in to the twenty-first century.

PRIDE FOR SASKATCHEWAN

The majority of those interviewed expressed a feeling of pride for being from Saskatchewan.

One participant observed,

I think prairie roots run deep. We used to have t-shirt with that saying on it and it always resonated with me. When I used to work on the phones and everybody that called no matter where they were from, they were either from Saskatchewan originally or they had relatives from Saskatchewan and they were always so proud to tell me.

The feeling of pride for the province involves the combination of various aspects, which differed slightly from person to person. Some aspects of pride stemmed from people and things that receive recognition externally, like the Saskatchewan Roughrider football team, Medicare, or our literary heritage. Other inspirations of pride come from characteristics that we imbue in the people of Saskatchewan, like being friendly. Lastly, pride in the province appears to also be in reaction to the negative views of Saskatchewan that come from outside of the province.

Participants in this study expressed a feeling of pride for particular Saskatchewan exports. Many participants lauded Saskatchewan's literary accomplishments; one participant stated,

We also have a very strong literary heritage. You know we have Yann Martel, Sharon Butela, Guy Vanderhaeghe... I could go on. For population our per capita of Can Lit Award Winners is higher than any other province. The joke is that there is nothing else to do when it's freezing cold but to write.

Along with the literary distinctions Saskatchewan was described as creating many top end athletes—those such as Bryan Trottier, Hayley Wickenheiser, Gordie Howe, and Sandra Schmirler, just to name a very few. Each group of interviewees named its own local contribution of successful athletes. Technology or other major developments made in the province was yet another source of pride discussed. Medicare was recognized as a development that has had a

major impact internationally. And farming in Saskatchewan has been held with high regard, especially in terms of the technology that has been developed.

The Saskatchewan Roughriders were recognized in an overwhelming, across-the-board response as a source of Saskatchewan pride; Saskatchewan residents stand behind their provincial team, cheer them on throughout the season, and even find pride in the strength of fandom and community that supports the team. “You can’t say Saskatchewan without thinking of the Roughriders,” stated one interviewee. Fandom surrounding the Roughriders surpasses ordinary sports following; the devotion surrounding the Riders has inspired such monikers as “Rider Nation” and “Rider Pride.” In fact the Roughriders extend beyond the typical sporting realm to be considered a contribution to Saskatchewan culture: “that would be our culture and it crosses all sorts of diversity and of course leads into other provinces, and it’s contagious.” Participants cited watching a game, whether in person or gathering at a bar or someone’s house, as being a unique experience in Saskatchewan. Part of game traditions also involve wearing a jersey or green clothing. It is a phenomenon that has stretched beyond Saskatchewan’s borders and marks you as having a connection to the province all around the country and the world. Many participants had stories of seeing a stranger wearing a jersey or some other form of paraphernalia while travelling and feeling an instant connection. One interviewee professed, “What a wonderful thing to be associated with. Immediately, anywhere in the world you wear that green shirt and you have someone coming up to you saying, ‘Go Riders!’”

Another inspiration of pride for the prairies is the feeling that residents are built from a hardy stock. The resilience of the people of Saskatchewan was repeatedly discussed throughout the

interview processes. One participant declared, “I think it is a badge of honor, if you can survive the winters and the mosquitos... We are made from hardy stuff.” The theme of resilience begins with the settlement of the prairies, “...that really is a Saskatchewan narrative; that really is the resilience of the people to build the province.” The strength and resilience of developing the province in such harsh conditions was also expanded by some participants into it being an act of stubbornness. One participant related,

I think it is was built on stubborn people. Just stubborn. It seems brutal—if you think back in the day living here. Being so isolated, having a horse to drive you to town, minus forty degrees in the winter, the “Dirty Thirties”...

This theme of “resilience” carries on to modern day Saskatchewan. Participants felt that environmental and climatic conditions continue to present an obstacle that must be overcome by the people living in the province. “I think we are tough, not as in rough and tumble, but, resilient. We are resilient and hardy. It’s because the winter has made us that way. Mosquitos aren’t going to stop us from going to a Rider game. Or torrential down pour... Or minus 40 weather...”

There is a very fine line in Saskatchewan between the feeling of pride for the province and the feeling of the need to defend the province from external perceptions. One participant expressed these feelings as, “Pride. It is like you are not going to talk about my province like that. Let me set you straight!” Another participant articulated, “I am never more patriotic about Saskatchewan than when I am somewhere else.” Regionalism ultimately involves being a part of a larger whole, but offers some distinction to be at the same time held apart. This external versus internal tension is essential to the distinctness of Saskatchewan.

Along with the sense of pride felt for Saskatchewan, participants also expressed feeling the need to defend Saskatchewan from external judgement. It is felt that the rest of Canada has a very negative view of Saskatchewan and its people. The external characterization of Saskatchewan is felt by participants to be polarized with the internal characterization of Saskatchewan. One participant jokingly represents Saskatchewan as “the little red headed step sister that no one likes in Canada.” Participants communicated this through examples of interactions that they had in the past with people from outside of the province. One of the interviewees remarked,

When I was in high school I went on this exchange to Ottawa and I was one of three kids from Saskatchewan. And the whole time it was either, “oh you should move to Alberta” or it was like “I should turn your entire province into a parking lot because it sucks”—and just getting made fun of the whole time.

Participants also used these specific examples to expand into further perceived characterizations. The general sentiment from an external perspective was that Saskatchewan was perceived to be flat, dry, barren, and politically insignificant; filled with red necks, hillbillies, hicks; only good for farming; boring; filled with prudes; old-fashioned and possessing a small town mentality; and predictable, simple, and generally behind the times. It is almost guaranteed every Saskatchewan resident has heard the joke about being able to watch their dog run away for three days.

Considering the pride for Saskatchewan, which was previously described, it is not surprising that these views are met with a certain level of scorn, as well as a strong desire to create change. One participant said,

I find sometimes, I’m almost—it’s a determination to make people know how wonderful we are. And I hate getting in that conversation where you have got someone where it’s just one put down after another. And that you are having to, not defend or explain yourself, but you are trying to get your passion through to them. And they absolutely are so ingrained in their misconceptions about the province that they don’t even... they won’t even entertain the idea.

The opposition that the province is up against is felt to be almost as insurmountable obstacle. It was agreed across all interviews that Saskatchewan was referred to as a “gap,” a “blip,” or a “fly over province.” These terms were referencing the external belief that Saskatchewan has nothing to offer visitors in terms of sights, scenery, activities, and so forth—that it is a void on the Canadian landscape. It feels like an overwhelming challenge to change external perceptions because it is felt that most Canadians will not even give Saskatchewan a chance by visiting the province. Participants wished to share the message that the Saskatchewan landscape does offer diversity and is more than just prairies, and that the province has a range of activities and its own unique experiences.

PLACE ATTACHMENT

Connection and sentiment directed towards the landscape of Saskatchewan was spoken of with passion and enthusiasm during the group interviews. One interviewee said,

I feel incredibly connected. There is a feeling of coming home... And I am sure other places have it, but somehow here it seems more intense. That feeling of stepping off the plane or taking that deep breath because you are home. And it's partially connected to the land and the sky, I think, as much as anything.

Many different participants associated the landscape with the frame of mind or consciousness that they have experienced there—for example, “peace,” “calm,” or “solitude.” It appeared that connection to the land evoked some measure of spirituality.

There is something about the unspoilt beauty of Saskatchewan, that it's—I remember when I first moved to Saskatchewan, that I have a recollection of when I was 14 and I cried because they (my parents) were taking me away from Toronto and I thought my life was over. And I remember travelling and my companion said, “you know someday you will look at these fields and they will make you feel wonderful and you will feel like you are at home.” And it's true. It takes a long time, but there is no other place that you have that total expanse.

Some of the particular physical components that participants spoke of during the interviews included the prairie landscape, the sky as a dominant feature, the impact of the weather, the diversity of the land, the multitude of activities that Saskatchewan residents engage in, and the built structures and infrastructure that are particularly recognized.

The prairies are clearly a dominant aspect of the Saskatchewan landscape; they are the quintessential image of Saskatchewan, frequently used both inside and outside of the province. Discussion about the prairies did stir up some mixed feelings. Several interviewees objected to having the landscape called “flat,” feeling that it was undeserving of that characterization. Others felt that the flatness was a virtue rather than an insult: “people always think we are really flat, which I think is really weird because people drive to the ocean to look at the view and I am like ‘we have it right here.’” Many participants felt it important to emphasize the diversity of the land in Saskatchewan with the awareness that the projection of the provincial image is often one dimensional.

However, the overwhelming feeling represented by the participants was of love for the prairies.

One interviewee notes a discussion she had with a visitor from the UK,

I was trying to get them interested in Saskatchewan and so I said, “you know we are more than just the prairies.” And I started to elaborate and the one fellow said, “I absolutely love the prairies!” And he was from England. The only other place in Canada that he has been to is BC. And he said, “I love the wide open spaces. I love the feeling of freedom. I love the skyline, being able to see the sunset.” And you know it was a lesson for me because [...] I love the prairies. But I often fall into that trap of thinking that people are looking for more in Saskatchewan. And I am sure they are and they’ll welcome more, but that doesn’t mean that they haven’t come here just for the prairies. That wide open space is not available many places.

The prairie landscape is often described as an allure that grows over time. It is a subtle beauty, but is capable of creating a strong attachment. Interviewees spoke of the fresh air and the seasonal scents, such as the smell of harvest, as being capable of stirring up feeling and memories. Also, the image of the rolling fields of bright yellow canola set against the bright blue sky was felt to be particularly vivid. Others admitted to taking the landscape for granted. They described watching travellers taking pictures at the side of the road and recognizing that they have become too normalized to the land.

Widely acknowledged, one of Saskatchewan's most dramatic features is its sky. Over the course of the interviews, the sky was introduced in many different manners. It was described as a "great expanse" of space and was often linked with the feeling of being able to breathe deeper and more freely. The sky is also observed as being dramatic, the intense color that comes with the setting of the sun and the thrill of watching storm clouds roll in with the sensation of a charge in the air. "Not hunkering down during a lightning storm, but hopping in your car and going out into the middle of a field and watching it—because we can," enthused one participant. Another image participants were keen to illustrate was that of the sky filled with birds; as the autumn days turn cold, Saskatchewan residents are treated to the sight of the annual migration. Saskatchewan's physical features have also created the ideal conditions for stargazing, and the province contains two designated dark sky preserves. When asked about what experiences they would like to share with visitors, many participants wanted to take them out of the city and expose them to the wide open spaces of the Saskatchewan prairies; they wished to expose them to the "essence of the space and the calm."

As previously mentioned, the diversity of land was a topic that was important to the interviewees. It was felt that the knowledge of Saskatchewan's landscape from outside of the province was severely lacking and misinformed. Saskatchewan is viewed as a prairie province, which is inconsistent with its actual geographic makeup. More than half of the province is forested and contains over 100,000 lakes. Interviewees observed the province as having a north/south division. The north is largely inaccessible, sparsely populated, and covered in forest and lakes, whereas the south is largely made up of a prairie environment and is where the majority of the province's population resides. Diversity of landscape was also expressed through examples of the particularly unique ecosystems that exist in the southern portion of the province, including the Big Muddy Badlands, the Great Sandhills, and Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park.

Saskatchewan is known for its extreme weather, including dry, hot summers and long, cold winters. Participants felt that the weather plays a large role in governing their day to day lives. The weather impacts the province in several ways. The weather has the ability to drastically change the outcome of a year's harvest; too much moisture or too little moisture at the wrong times, plow winds, hail, or an early frost all have the ability to destroy a farmer's harvest. Also, with a significant rural population, driving is a large component of life in Saskatchewan. The harsh winter climate can cause intensely treacherous road conditions. A more direct impact of the weather is the extreme cold temperatures, increased by wind chill, that occur throughout the winter. At minus 40 degrees, residents are faced with very real risks in performing day to day activities. One interviewee described Saskatchewan residents having a "healthy dose of fear but also are able to handle risks."

Although the weather in Saskatchewan poses challenges and real potential risks for its residents, that does not stop them from participating in a wide range of outdoor activities. Specific activities that were brought up in the interviews included swimming, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, berry picking, canoeing/kayaking, ATVing, boating, seadooing, gopher shooting, sledding, cross country skiing, golf, playing shinny (an informal game of hockey), snowmobiling, ice fishing, biking, whitewater rafting, and snowshoeing. One participant related that because the summer season is so short, she felt that the residents of Saskatchewan will do whatever they can to be outside and enjoy the weather during the summer months. Another felt that rurality played a role in this active outdoor culture: “I think it’s a rural thing that we just spend a lot more time outside. The TV magically broke each summer for a month.” When discussing the differences between life in the city versus life in rural Saskatchewan, another participant remarked,

I think another difference is just the hobbies that you do. In a small town versus a city, in the small town there is usually just one place to go out to the bar and stuff, where as in the city there are lots of options, so in small towns you usually have to get more creative and go like dirt biking and snowmobiling and ice fishing and quading and bush parties.

Whether in a city or in rural Saskatchewan, there were certain activities that seemed to have particular significance for some of the participants; both hunting and fishing were described as important seasonal activities. Fishing seemed to be a meaningful family activity; several participants spoke of the event of catching their first fish as being a momentous childhood experience. Likewise, hunting is a traditional activity that is often shared through generations of family. The connection that Saskatchewan residents experience with the land can be very utilitarian and include many traditional activities. As previously mentioned, hunting and fishing

are meaningful activities, but they also have the added outcome of providing a food source. Berry picking and gardening are additional activities that have a similar result.

While Saskatchewan is generally a young province and is largely recognized for its landscape, there are still particular built structures and infrastructures that are considered important and/or symbolic to residents. In the interviews it was generally agreed that the grain elevators are iconic structures in Saskatchewan. Elevators were traditionally built across the prairies and in many communities around Saskatchewan to store grain from the surrounding farms and also served as a distribution point where it was loaded into train cars to be shipped out. Although, the traditional wooden structure grain elevators are no longer in use, they continue to be widely regarded as a type of historical structure that holds symbolical importance. Additionally, participants reported the Saskatchewan Legislature building in Regina, the Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon, and the Thorvaldson building at the University of Saskatchewan to be particularly recognized. Infrastructure that was noted as important to Saskatchewan included the railways and the roads. The development of Saskatchewan's communities were largely dependent on the railways that were built throughout the province. The roadways of Saskatchewan were built in a grid pattern based around the division of Saskatchewan into one square mile sections for the purposes of agriculture. Because of this, dirt or gravel roads in Saskatchewan are known as "grid roads."

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Saskatchewan was frequently expressed as having a strong emphasis on the community during the group interviews. Community was imagined in terms of the local municipalities that make up the province of Saskatchewan, as well as in terms of the larger community that is the whole of the province. The people of Saskatchewan were largely characterized as being friendly, approachable, and welcoming. One interviewee used a personal experience to illustrate this feeling:

Although it is not a clear cut attraction, I think it speaks to the persona of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan people sort of welcoming you with open arms. A professional example: I hosted some media people last year and we went to a ranch in Lumsden and she made us dinner [...] We sat around her dining room table. It was myself and three travel writers. It takes a special type of person to open their heart and home. That was more powerful to them than anything that you could do to wine and dine them.

As a community, the interviewees discussed the people of Saskatchewan as being particularly connected to one another, of celebrating the good times together and banding together during times of trouble.

The desire to find or create connections was addressed by each group interview. The phrase, “who do you belong to?” was used to describe this phenomenon on several occasions. This question is meant to ascertain your family connections. A similar line of question can be the pursuit of connections based on common acquaintances. One participant said, “...it is just to put you into some sort of context.” It seems to almost be a reflexive reaction to globalization and the growth of Saskatchewan in order to maintain the intimate feeling associated with traditional social structures. One of the characteristics of a smaller population is there is an increased likelihood to find such connections. As discussed in one interview, the degrees of separation in

Saskatchewan are considered to be much smaller, “there aren’t six degrees of separation in Saskatchewan—there [are] two.”

Beyond finding connections and links to people, there was also a persistent theme of people coming together for social gatherings and celebrations. One example is the “coffee row” gatherings that occur in communities across the province. “Coffee row” refers to daily gatherings at particular coffee shops and diners to share a cup of coffee, breakfast, or lunch. The same people come out every day, always at the same time. They are there for companionship and will usually have a good gossip.

In terms of locations, there were discussion of several places within the community that were considered to be hubs for community activities and social gatherings. The community rink was widely regarded as one of those structures.

If you are in a small town, [...] your extracurricular life tends to revolve around the rink. It is very much the heart of the community, especially small town Saskatchewan, everything happened there. All of the community events...

Another important community gathering place is the community hall; it is generally used for a wide range of social gatherings. Community social gatherings include street dances, rodeo dances, fowl suppers, games of shinny, golf tournaments, curling bonspiels, car shows, fishing derbies, rodeos, church potlucks, fairs, and watching sports games, both local sport teams and gathering to watch big games at each other’s homes or the bar. The quality that designated these gatherings to be considered as distinct is that a great deal of the community comes out. As described by one interviewee,

I think that there is really just a sense of community support. I don't know if you can necessarily tie that to a specific thing, but I think that covers off a lot of what we are saying. If it is a festival and it's pushed through the community, the community will really rally behind it. That is where you get the celebration in Rider Nation mentality.

The Canada Day and Centennial Celebrations were described as encapsulating the feeling of community. Several participants said that these types of community celebrations would be something that they would like to share with visitors coming to the province.

Family was expressed as being another essential element of Saskatchewan. Close families, family time, and family gatherings are all considered to be important. One participant said, "essentially Saskatchewan is all about family." From the discussions, this appears to have developed from a couple of factors. Firstly, when discussing the province's development and their personal family stories, interviewees described their heritage as being from large families. The farming life of early Saskatchewan involved the family essentially working together to operate the farm because of the lack of farm equipment and technology available at that time. Large families (with ten or more children) were very common for this reason. Large families in previous generations have resulted in large extended families today. Many participants spoke of regular large family reunions. Additionally, close families appear to come from siblings being forced together by geography and circumstance. Growing up on a farm, living in a small town, or spending time at the family cabin created space where siblings had limited options for companionship other than each other. Holidays in Saskatchewan are viewed as an important time to spend together as a family, and whether it is Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter, you will often see people travelling home to share that time together. There were even several participants who felt that they were missing out in the familial sense because of their own particular family

situation. They recounted a sense of lacking because they were not surrounded by a big family and even sought that feeling of family elsewhere, such as sports teams or creating their own pseudo-family from a close group of friends.

Outside of the actual family unit, the community also has a way of stepping in to take care of one another. The manner in which Saskatchewan was built and populated was described by one interviewee as, "...they worked hard on their homes, their homes came in by rail and they were constructed by people coming together." The traditional sense of a barn raising was and is a very real way of being in Saskatchewan; the community comes out in order to support an individual or family. This phenomenon is very much an extension of early life in Saskatchewan. Immigrants came from all over and moved into this new landscape without the support of family and friends they had previously had in their place of origin. The empty landscape and the harsh climate were extreme hurdles to overcome for survival. It was necessary for people to come together and to support one another; this community philosophy continues today. Particular examples of this community behaviour are harvest or branding activities. For livestock branding (a technique of using a hot brand for marking livestock so as to identify the owner), generally a large group of family, neighbors, and friends will gather to expedite the process; the process often extends into a social gathering with food and drinking. Harvest is another time of year that people come together to assist each other. As described by one participant,

If you have a death in the family at harvest time you're going to see eight combines on that field. It is just automatic and those people haven't necessarily finished their harvest [...] or even if someone hasn't had a devastation in the family. You will be done and you will say I am done do you need a hand. And you will get four combines on the field because everyone knows that you are racing against the weather.

It is an understood reality in Saskatchewan that bringing in harvest before the first frost or some other damaging weather is crucial for farmers.

Another example of this type of activity is “storm staying”; this refers to being taken in by friends, family, or even strangers during periods of treacherous weather, such as blizzards.

...When your car gets stuck in the middle of the country and you find that light and you would go in and you are there for a day and a half because they can't even get their tractor to pull you out...

Also, it is the general respect and kindness that is shown to one another that cannot really be classified; it is,

pulling over to the side of the road for funeral processions. There used to be letters to the editor here constantly, people would write that they were overwhelmed that people would do that. They would be here for their parent's funeral where they would start to notice people pulling over to the side of the road and taking off their hats.

And it is also waving to the person in the truck passing you or saying hello to someone as you pass them on the sidewalk; the person may not necessarily be someone you know, but there is a general care and consideration shown to the people who share your space and life.

NOSTALGIA

It could be argued that many of the elements discussed thus far have had an undercurrent of nostalgia. Many of the traits discussed have a strong tendency towards the “rosy” aspects of Saskatchewan's past, as well as a focus on aspects of Saskatchewan that might have been more prevalent a generation ago.

A bulk of the material discussed has centred on life in rural Saskatchewan, which is contradictory with current statistics. Statistics Canada shows that, as of 2011, the rural population only makes up 33 percent of Saskatchewan, with 67 percent of residents living in cities (2011). These statistics are nearly the inverse of statistics from exactly a century before, which showed 27 percent of residents as living in urban centres and 73 percent living rurally (Statistics Canada, 2011). A lot of the characteristics described have a strong centring on small town life, which seems to leave out a significant portion of the population. One participant said, “...there is this perception outside that all of us are rural. And there is a very large population that is urban and that have never been on a farm and never will be on a farm.”

Participants characterized Saskatchewan as being slow to change, as if holding onto the past (a simpler time). However, upon further discussion it was distinguished that they believed that it is rural communities that are slower to change and less open minded, and that urban centres are less past-oriented. As vocalized by a participant,

...People from smaller towns and villages tend to be rather closed minded. And people from the city not so much because there is more to see and more to do there and you are just exposed to more people.

And yet the same city dwellers were eager to utilize the appeal of small town charm with the tagline, “big city amenities with small town feel.” Another participant felt that to be slow moving wasn’t always such a bad thing; when discussing the age to drink in Saskatchewan and the laws against strip clubs, one participant said, “I think that is something that we kind of embrace. To be slow moving in those areas, we are quite happy with that.”

While there were elements of nostalgia woven throughout the Saskatchewan narrative (as there often are when we reflect upon the past), the interviews demonstrated that nostalgia is clearly not the only basis from which they construct Saskatchewan identity. Participants displayed all through the interviews that they saw both the positive and negative aspects of their province. While most were quick to jump up in defense of their province, they were also the same participants who were the first to laugh at Saskatchewan and at themselves. “I think there is a great deal of pride, but at the same time there is a lot of self-deprecation in Saskatchewan. We laugh at ourselves a lot and tend not to push ourselves forward,” voiced one interviewee. One of the most standout observations was the amount of humor that permeated each and every interview. “We don’t take ourselves too seriously,” voiced a participant. Interviewees appeared to take real joy in laughing at themselves and found a great deal of humor in their lives in Saskatchewan. This interviewer’s interpretation of this behaviour was that they wouldn’t stand for outsiders putting Saskatchewan down, because that interpretation of Saskatchewan is far too negative and one sided. However, within the province, the residents have the mindset that the good comes with the bad, and therefore we might as well make light of some of the hardships.

Another example of the participants’ observations of the negative was during the discussion of the development of Saskatchewan; the hardships that the early settlers endured during the province’s early years were featured prominently in the participants’ portrayal of the development narrative. They spoke of the extreme challenge that homesteading in the prairies presented, and the years of meager living and destitution people had experienced. One participant describes settling early Saskatchewan: “I often think of our harsh climates in the winter. And about how a pioneer family would have to do everything manually... build their

structures. And often, when I am driving by a large field, imagine people picking up the stones...”

It is clear that the dominance of the agriculture industry in Saskatchewan has played a large role in shaping the province. Although, today’s population layout within the province does not match the dominance that rurality plays within Saskatchewan’s identity, the connection residents have to the farm or small town life continues to be felt.

...Our story I think is tied very much to agriculture and it was all the land. And when we talk about immigration and settlements, people came for freedom and for land. So it is most of us now aren’t tied to the land at all, but it is in I think most peoples’ history, in some way shape or form,

observed one participant. Another participant goes further to articulate the connection between people and rurality as having real strength in its ties:

My story fits into that farming model as well. When I am describing it to people I usually say, “you know we are only just a generation or two away from a farm.” I mean a lot of us are urban now, but, you know, my parents grew up in the city but my grandparents didn’t. And they moved in to the city, you know “big, bright, bold Regina future.” So, you know, I think as part of our narrative that is why we have such a strong sense of community because it is kind of in our heritage, our DNA. That we came from these farming communities that would get together and have these community events...

Additionally, many Saskatchewan residents have mixed experiences within their lifetime. A majority of the participants had experienced both life in a rural community and an urban centre; examples of this include moving to the city for post-secondary education, moving for job opportunities, or the reversal of moving out to a small town for a job opportunity.

While the discussions in these interviews ring with a certain level of nostalgia that does not quite match up with life today, it is the associations that are made with the province and the values that

are attached to them which forms the resulting identity that is discussed here. Although small town living may not be the dominant way of life currently in the province, that mindset and some of the characteristics resulting from that lifestyle continue to persist in residents, as reflected, for example, by the levels of volunteerism within the province.

CHANGE

Nostalgic and slow to change—for Saskatchewan that is a tune that is wavering. Saskatchewan has generally experienced waves of immigration rather than the steady entrance of new immigrants. In the time between these waves, the population of Saskatchewan has had very little fluctuation. This phenomenon is described by one participant,

For years we were just the people that were born here and procreated. There wasn't too much of an influx after that initial immigration, you know, probably three or four generations ago. But in the last ten years that has changed dramatically. The immigrant population has gone up—people moving from other parts of the country. Like people will actually ask, “where you are from?”

Participants describe Saskatchewan as currently being in the middle of another wave of immigration. With the influx of new residents, Saskatchewan is changing. This new population to Saskatchewan will not have the connection to the agricultural history of the province. Their roots will not be as deep, but they are also introducing new aspects to the province's cultural zeitgeist.

Many participants found the changes that they were observing to be exciting and very much welcomed. The new level of multiculturalism is recognized as bringing with it a greater variety of services and products. One interviewee added,

There are big city things here to do. You can check out a football game, then have some really nice shopping, then go out for a wonderful dinner, then sit out on the patio in the middle of downtown and have a fantastic beer. That there actually are big city things here to do, big city experiences...

New ethnic food options are another change participants are happy to have access to. Although increased numbers of people are moving to Saskatchewan, the province still has a relatively small population. With increases in services and products available and a small provincial population, there is a greater accessibility to events and attractions.

Other aspects of change in the province can be negative. One participant said,

I think the whole Saskatchewan identity is just shifting. My generation, I don't even remember a bunch of stuff from my grandpa and grandma, their stories. Like its history or story of development... I couldn't tell you.

With the introduction of new facets of identity, there must be some loss of other facets. Not all residents feel completely comfortable with the rate of change currently being experienced. As described by one interviewee,

My parent's generation that tends to be... has worked their whole lives, but maybe not as well educated, never really went on beyond high school. Really struggles with it. They are not doing it to be rude or to stereotype the different cultures. They just don't understand it. There is a real opposition to change. It has always been this way. It has always been Regina, so they are really struggling to see different cultures [...] They are not sort of coping with the change in a manner. Because for so long in their life they were in such a pattern that didn't see change and now we are in an economic boom. And we are starting to grow and evolved and because they are retired and they are just not really seeing the evolution of that.

However, it is felt by many that the general acceptance level of diversity in Saskatchewan is improving as the residents are exposed to more.

Saskatchewan was described by participants as being in a “period of change.” Identity making is an ongoing and never-ending process. It is clear from these interviews that people’s sense of Saskatchewan’s identity is evolving.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

DEVELOPING INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDINGS OF REGIONAL IDENTITY

After analyzing the data produced by the group interviews, I have concluded that an interdisciplinary approach was an appropriate choice for the exploration of the regional identity. Regional identity cannot be compartmentalized; it is a web of characteristics, attributes, and feelings that are inextricably linked. “The notion of identity interconnects several different factors into a single wholeness” (Mutanen, 2010, p. 36). Similarly, interdisciplinary studies aims to combine separate elements into a single unified entity. Unlike a multidisciplinary approach, which is the study of topics from more than one discipline in parallel to the other, interdisciplinary studies synthesizes multiple elements into one complex whole. To attempt to study regional identity from the perspective of a single discipline would be like looking at a region through a pinhole, a gross failure to see the bigger picture. Throughout this research, when participants spoke of “Saskatchewan,” they were referring to the people, the community, the landscape, the history, the cultural heritage, the political body, and the industries of the province as one inextricable entity.

This study has been a process of exploration from start to finish. It began with the sharp learning curve of a first attempt at designing and carrying out a primary research project. It transitioned into the exploration of what collective identity is and how it corresponds with place. It became the meeting point of theory and practice, as I experienced how regional identity is felt and expressed by real people. And now finally, I am examining how these many pieces fit together

and what it means about regional identity. I have drawn five key lessons on how to fruitfully explore regional identity from this work that I am taking away from this project.

Lesson one: Identification with the region is an important element to regional identity.

Identity is a choice. Individuals choose to identify with a particular community or to not. The majority of interviewees considered Saskatchewan identity to be important to them; they expressed a sense of pride in their province. It was powerful witnessing the passion with which interviewees claimed their province as their own and the ways that these proclamations of identification resonated amongst the group and with myself as a fellow Saskatchewan resident. However, it should be noted that not all participants expressed a strong sense of identification; some felt a stronger attachment to their Canadian identity. It is to be expected within a collective that identity levels of attachment will vary. Each individual may share a history or particular characteristics of the community, but identification is a choice, and each individual determines the level of importance that they place on that particular collective identity. Other participants expressed an identification with their home town or cultural heritage along with their identification with the province of Saskatchewan.

Through my research, I also discovered that there is a temporal element to regional identity. The collective identity of Saskatchewan was described as extending beyond the physical boundaries of the province in particular cases of expatriation. It was suggested that once you identify as a Saskatchewan resident you will continue to retain a connection with the province wherever you may live in the future.

Only a sense of shared identity can give people the conviction that, even if they were to spend decades living under umbrellas in the Fraser Valley, they would always be “from” Saskatchewan. When it comes to self-definition, to a personal vision of identity, that deceptively simple preposition is key (Abley, 2009, p.354).

The defined borders of the community do not exist as physical occupation of a region at this precise moment in time, but extend to those who have felt like they have belonged to the province at any point across time. They share the knowledge and feeling of shared experiences living in Saskatchewan with those who live there today. The boundary that exists separates those who “know” Saskatchewan from those who don’t.

Lesson two: Individuals are connected as a community by a model of reality. Regional identity, as I experienced it, operates using an extrapolation of Anderson’s “imagined” community, imagined by those who perceive themselves to belong to it (2006). These communities exist as a ‘model of reality’ continuously constructed and reconstructed through the social interactions of its members, forming layered webs of significance. From this ‘model of reality’, members of the community interpret and orient themselves to new knowledge and phenomena. Simply put, our world makes sense to us. As anyone who has travelled is sure to remember, it is often the small differences that we notice when we are away from home that jar us just enough to make us feel off balance and in a foreign land.

Saskatchewan’s ‘model of reality’ is impossible to articulate as a whole, as there are innumerable elements and these elements are continuously changing and evolving over time. The community and its ‘model of reality’ are essential for understanding regional identity, for everything moves through the social processes of meaning making, from historical consciousness to place-making.

Some examples of these social processes observed in the group interviews include the importance of harvest time (despite the fact that the majority of Saskatchewan residents now live in urban centres, it is still considered an important time of year in the province), the groundswelling support that surrounds the Saskatchewan Roughriders football team, and both the usefulness and the entertainment provided by the hobby of gopher shooting.

The development narrative is also a key component of the ‘model of reality’ and in the identity making process; our understanding of the past shapes our sense of the present and future. When asked directly about the province’s development narrative, many participants experienced difficulty in the articulation of the settlement and development of Saskatchewan, but when the topic was related to their family’s personal narratives, a distinct picture was created. Pioneering is key to the development narrative of the province. Because of the youth of the province, most participants were knowledgeable about their own family’s settlement in Saskatchewan. From the years of settlement, the province has created a clear path to where we are today. Events of the last fifty years were much clearer in the minds of participants, who cited major events that have impacted the important industries within the province and significant political shifts occurring in Saskatchewan.

Lesson three: Regional identity is a continuous process and not a fixed quality. This is perhaps one of the most significant challenges I had to overcome throughout the course of this research project. Intellectually, I understood that regionally identity is not a fixed entity that can be explicated and studied at one’s leisure. However, as a student brought up on the scientific method, I found it myself slipping into its factual, definitive, and unembellished language. This

language and resulting conceptual structuring worked against the central premise of my research. Identity is felt and expressed; it is not a static idea that can be identified or defined.

Research participants described the province as currently going through a period of transition; they were able to articulate phases and changes experienced over the past century. The way of life in Saskatchewan has evolved, and with it the identity of Saskatchewan has developed. With an influx of new residents to the province, the interviewees described a shift in identity. However, a shift to what, was not particularly evident. As expected, the elements of identity that were communicated had a strong focus on the past; it easier to see where we have been because we don't yet know how the future will unfold.

Lesson four: Regional identity making occurs in place, not in a vacuum. Places are the mirrored reflections of history, not as fixed sites on the landscape, but as expressions of a sense of living and existing in the world and the ways that we inhabit the land. I have experienced a strong connection to place before and particularly to Saskatchewan's landscape, but I had no expectation that this feeling would be shared with other Saskatchewan residents. However, the land attachment felt by participants (as well as other Saskatchewan writers, researchers, and artists) was expressed with verve and strong sentiment.

...The dramatic physical landscape of the Prairies is also an emotional or spiritual landscape, one that inescapably affects the consciousness of inhabitants. The experience of physical space in Saskatchewan is so overwhelming, the sky so huge and unscrapped, that even in the heart of Saskatoon and Regina, the urgency of landscape can make itself felt in a way that is not so evident for residents of large cities elsewhere (Abley, 2009, pp. 361-362).

Despite the landscape being stereotyped as being flat and boring by the rest of Canada, participants expressed strong ties to the land including an emotional and even spiritual connection to the land. Joni Mitchell described a memory in Saskatchewan as inspiration for her artwork:

We were driving on what might be considered the bleakest stretch of road, on the bleakest time of year. When I got out, crystals formed all over the inside of the windshield. There were the prairies, the stretch of the wind, the movement of the clouds, the skies, all lilac-y and yellow. The windbreak was burgundy, the snow was pink with the sun going down. It was such a rush of color. To be so cold it could kill you in fifteen minutes, and yet to look so warm. I felt like a salmon smelling its native stream (Brooke, 2000).

Many participants recalled a time when they felt an intense rush of emotions as they were welcomed home by the prairie landscape. This emotional attachment expresses an enfoldment of land and the people that live on it, a spiritual inseparability. During the interviews the name “Saskatchewan” was used interchangeably representing both the people and the land, one in the same. The land was also addressed as part of a “we,” implying that we are a part of the land and the land is a part of us.

I stare at the Saskatchewan landscape, mesmerized by a sense of space and feeling its impact on my whole being... A strange melancholy feeling washes over me. I feel this way every time I face the prairie expanse of motionless earth and sky, and the feeling always leaves me feeling cleaner and more peaceful. (Zrymiak, 2008, p. 13).

The physical makeup of the province was also described as having impacted the regional identity of Saskatchewan. “The harshness of the climate and the austerity of the land dictated that survival was literally a life and death struggle in the early going” (Zrymiak, 2008, p. 9). Many participants speculated that the struggle of the early years of the province of Saskatchewan has led to the characterization of the Saskatchewan people as resilient, hardy and, at times, stubborn.

The land was described as leading to a healthy amount of respect for the weather and the natural environment. Also, the prairie landscape led to a dominant agricultural industry and later the discovery of natural resources such as potash, uranium, and oil, which has impacted the economic, political, and social development of the province.

The lesson that I take away from the connection between the land and regional identity is that place matters; the environment we exist in touches us in ways that we often do not recognize. And it is not only the logistical habitation, regular interactions that we have with the land, or how we use the physical environment, but how a place makes us feel and the spiritual connection that we feel with the land.

Lesson five: Regional identity is both factual and conceptual. There are essential elements from which any regional identity is forged. Saskatchewan identity was developed on the factual basis of the physical landscape; the manner in which the province was settled; the dominant agriculture industry; the political ideology, including the social democratic movement; the harsh climate; and the province's role and place within Canada. The manner in which these particular elements unfolded and impacted the lives of the Saskatchewan residents, and the way that those residents chose to interpret and carry those meanings—this is where the construction of Saskatchewan identity occurs. In this way, the basis for Saskatchewan identity is both factual and conceptual: the act of meaning making that occurred with the corporeal elements within the territory.

The abstract element of regional identity is more difficult to communicate. Eisler construes the idea of Saskatchewan as,

...Exist[ing] in the minds of its people as a special place. There can be no denying the strength of this attachment Saskatchewan people feel towards their province. It has an emotional almost spiritual dimension to it (Eisler, 2005, p. 67).

It is something that is strongly felt, but that is difficult to articulate or categorize. Throughout my research, participants struggled to describe this abstract element or quality involved in the regional identity making process. Eisler elaborates on the abstract and emotional level of Saskatchewan identity,

Frankly it is not a consistently conscious sort of thing. It manifests itself as more a kind of underlying awareness of a special bond between the people and the community we call Saskatchewan. It is expressed in various ways: pride in the province; a deep attachment to the land; a strong sense of community; and a powerful belief in the potential for a better future (2005, p. 68).

However, it was made clear throughout the group interviews that regional identity thrives in its expression. Regional identity strikes me as an underlying and often underrated bond that exists in the background of our lives. As the group interviews carried on, I watched participants breathe life into this collective identity. The discussion brought out passion and highlighted the bond that tied us together.

Regional identity falls outside of the walls of disciplinary studies. It involves a model of reality that was developed by the people of a particular region and carried forward within them. At the same time this model of reality also occupies the physical landscape of the region. The land is marked by the people and the people are marked by the land; a connection exists between the two. The people of a particular region are also connected to one another as a community; their shared model of reality ties them to one another and creates a sense of belonging. The

experience of being a part of a region, of knowing what it is to live within its physical boundaries and as a part of the community, inspires a sense of pride in many; it is an experience that has the strength to stick with you even as you move outside of the region's physical boundaries, but it is also a choice from the beginning. It is a choice to engage with this process of meaning making and a choice to place significance on the region as your home.

THE ROLE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

While regional identity is constructed and experienced by the greater population of a region's residents, it is widely recognized that the elites of society play a large role in the construction and communication of regional identity. The elites are those who have influence, means, and/or motivation to impact the construction process. This study accepted this knowledge as a basic component of the regional identity making process and therefore sought out professionals within the Saskatchewan tourism industry to participate in this research project. This was done in acknowledgement of their role in the construction process of the Saskatchewan identity. However, this choice was also made because it was practical to involve individuals who were more practised at thinking overtly about their province. Nevertheless, I also included two group interviews with regular Saskatchewan residents to observe whether there were any obvious distinctions between the two types of group interviews. It was observed that while the general resident interviews took more time to gain momentum and fluidity of conversation, the central themes were still consistent throughout both types of interviews. I would suggest that the tourism professionals were simply more practiced at discussing the elements of Saskatchewan identity.

However, it would be necessary to perform more extensive research in this area to fully ground this knowledge.

Tourism was a useful source for both the development and execution of this research project. In the creation of this project I began from the perspective of tourism studies. I wished to capture the unique quality of Saskatchewan in order to be able to better promote the province. However, I acknowledged that one of the common failings of tourism occurs in the promotion of a message that fails to resonate within the community that is being promoted. As a result, I aimed to approach this topic as honestly and realistically as possible. The further I proceeded into the development of this project, the more I recognized the problematic nature of commercial interests when approaching this particular study from a tourism perspective. Tourism is promotional in nature, which means anything negative or unappealing related to Saskatchewan's identity would likely be overlooked or even ignored. It is unlikely that a Saskatchewan tourism organizations would run an ad campaign declaring, "You bet we're flat!" In order to approach this topic from a place of honesty I instead chose an interdisciplinary approach from which to explore the regional identity of Saskatchewan.

Going forward, the tourism industry in Saskatchewan may find the conclusions of this study to be useful for future strategy. While the tourism industry's agenda makes it problematic as a source for understanding how the broader population of a region makes sense of its regional identity, it does potentially provide an excellent platform for identity to be communicated and utilized going forward. Considering the results of this particular study, it appears that there is a need to better express and project the sentiments of Saskatchewan identity in an effort to correct

the misconceptions that exist outside of the province. Also, the development programming by the tourism industry to stimulate conversation regarding regional identity would assist in the strengthening of Saskatchewan identity and its expression.

ABSENCE OF THE ABORIGINAL ELEMENT

As previously acknowledged, the data collection process in this study was inherently flawed due to a lack of participants with Aboriginal heritage. What I failed to understand during the development of my research project was the complexity of the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and research activity. I had the best intentions from the outset, but I was blissfully unaware of my own ignorance on the matter. I wished to include Aboriginal people in the conversation of Saskatchewan identity because I believed that they had an important voice to contribute to the discussion. They were a part of my recruitment strategy and I assumed that there was no need for any difference in approach; however, with the benefit of hindsight's twenty-twenty vision, I now better understand why that wasn't an effective strategy.

The Aboriginal peoples have prominently experienced research in the past as Western discourse considering the "other." "Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized" (Smith, 1999). Western civilization took upon itself the power to define the world, and Aboriginal peoples as a result have faced a struggle of self-determination involving the Western view of history and how they as the "other" have been represented or excluded from various accounts (Smith, 1999). In the past the Aboriginal peoples have allowed their histories to be told and then have become outsiders as they listened to them being retold. As a result the Aboriginal peoples now want to tell their own

stories, write their own versions, and to seek to honor Aboriginal knowledge systems, for their own purposes (Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2010).

Going forward, new approaches and methodologies are being developed to ensure that research involving Aboriginal peoples can be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic, and useful (Smith, 1999, p. 8). The development of new Aboriginal methods, approaches, cultural protocols, values, and behaviours is an integral part of the methodology (Smith, 1999). And perhaps most important is the dissemination of results back to the people in a culturally appropriate manner as a form of empowerment and sign of respect for their traditional knowledge systems. It is clear that my mistake in this area occurred when I requested that Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan “buy in” to my research project rather than requesting to work with them in partnership.

The absence of the “Aboriginal element” in the Saskatchewan identity making process represented here is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the 2011 National Household Survey shows Saskatchewan’s population of self-identified Aboriginals as 157,740 or 15.6%, making up a significant portion of the population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Secondly, the Aboriginal peoples were the first occupants of the territory that is now the province of Saskatchewan and they have a large stake in the development narrative of the province.

The demographic profile of the Aboriginal population, in combination with its continued economic and social marginalization from the mainstream of Saskatchewan identity and Saskatchewan life, demonstrates a significant challenge that the province faces moving forward. Failure to incorporate the Aboriginal peoples within Saskatchewan’s identity making process

will mean that Saskatchewan identity will remain not fully inclusive, and therefore ethically limited.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This research set out to draw on interdisciplinary theory in order to explore regional identity. Saskatchewan was a testing ground used to bring this theory to life. It is my conclusion that an interdisciplinary approach is an appropriate choice for the exploration of regional identity. Regional identity cannot be compartmentalized; it is a web of characteristics, attributes, and feelings that are inextricably linked.

This study sought to understand regional identity as a process; the focus was placed on a diverse background of theories that revolve around one central idea: how the people of a particular region construct and identify themselves as a collective. I have taken five main lessons away from this research project. Firstly, place-based identity, is a social construction, which requires its members to self-identify with that particular locality. Secondly, community represents a body of people, entrenched in a 'model of reality' from which they are able to orient themselves in order to process new phenomena. Thirdly, identity is a continuous process and not a fixed quality. Fourthly, place-making concerns the inherent relationship that exists between people and the land they inhabit. And fifthly, regional identity is both factual and conceptual in nature; it is the act of meaning making that occurs in the context of the corporeal elements within the territory. I consider these lessons to be fundamental components for an interdisciplinary understanding of regional identity.

From this study, I hope that readers will gain a new appreciation for the province of Saskatchewan. For those who have spent some time in the province, I hope the outcomes of this

work have the feeling of familiarity and ring with some truth. One of the benefits that I have already observed from this research is that it has begun several conversations, particularly amongst the participants of the general resident interviews. It seems to have inspired a renewed reflection and appreciation for the province.

I began this study with many ambitious ideas and plans (as any young researcher is apt to do), and part of the learning process of this study was understanding my limits and the limits of this project. Firstly, during the process of this research, I absorbed an enormous amount of established concepts and research; however, because I was spread across so many different disciplines, my literature review lacks the density and integration that would be required to fully construct a formal framework for understanding regional identity.

Secondly, as this research was only an introductory foray into the exploration of regional identity, it lacks strength in terms of not drawing on a truly representative cross-section of residents. To achieve a more detailed and involved representation of residents' experiences of regional identity, the study would need to be significantly larger and incorporate a more varied group of participants.

Regionalism is growing in strength as a counter-reaction to the spread of globalization. Although there are many destinations that have well known and easily recognizable regional identities, it is clear from this study that regional identity can be studied anywhere that is occupied by people. Some regions around the world are incredibly popular as tourism destinations and are painted as foreign, exotic, or idyllic. While Saskatchewan struggles to gain attention on the national or global stage,

this does not translate to what it has to offer as a province; it simply means that there is a chink in the line of communication, a miscommunication between what is known of the province internally versus externally. The same can be said about other regions across Canada and around the world.

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APPENDIX A - QUESTIONS

May, 13, 2014

Group Interview Guiding Questions

Group interviews will be semi structured. These questions are designed to assist, but not limit group conversation.

1. What features natural or built do you feel is important or often associated with Saskatchewan? (For example: Alberta and the oil sands, the Rockies, hoodoos, ect.)
2. A cultural marker may be considered something very specific that distinguishes one culture from another. It is an identifying item and may include something physical, a practice or tradition, concept, a specific person, happening or landmark. Sometimes people are considered cultural markers as well as unique types of food. What do you think are cultural markers for Saskatchewan?
3. Can you think of any shared experiences that you have had that would be unique or common in Saskatchewan? (For example: everyone going down to the pub to watch a soccer match in the UK, or Americans playing football at Thanksgiving)
4. What do you consider major events in Saskatchewan's history?
5. How would you describe Saskatchewan's narrative or story of development?
6. Briefly describe your family's narrative or story. (For example, my Grandma's family moved from Poland bought farmland in central Saskatchewan, worked the land and had a very large family. The farm is still worked by my second cousins. On my Dad's side he immigrated to Canada to marry my Mom and was first generation Canadian.)
7. How would you characterize Saskatchewan residents?
8. How do you think the rest of Canada characterizes Saskatchewan residents?
9. Does being a part of Saskatchewan mean anything to you? Does it hold any importance for you?
10. What would you like to highlight or share with tourists visiting Saskatchewan?
11. Is there anything else that you think is important to note about being a part of the province of Saskatchewan?

APPENDIX B - ETHICS CERTIFICATE



June 24, 2014

Mrs. Anne Collins
Faculty of Arts
Thompson Rivers University

File Number: 100703
Approval Date: May 01, 2014
Expiry Date: June 23, 2015

Dear Mrs. Anne Collins,

The Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application titled 'Saskatchewan's Identity: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Regional Identity'. Your application has been approved. You may begin the proposed research. This REB approval, dated May 01, 2014, is valid for one year less a day: June 23, 2015.

Please confirm how you plan to select her 40 participants from those who agree to participate (for example is it the first 40 participants?) Also please updated the recruitment e-mail and consent form in the Romeo application.

Throughout the duration of this REB approval, all requests for modifications, renewals and serious adverse event reports are submitted via the Research Portal. To continue your proposed research beyond June 23, 2015, you must submit a Renewal Form before June 23, 2015. If your research ends before June 23, 2015, please submit a Final Report Form to close out REB approval monitoring efforts.

If you have any questions about the REB review & approval process, please contact the Research Ethics Office via [250.852.7122](tel:250.852.7122). If you encounter any issues when working in the Research Portal, please contact the Research Office at [250.371.5586](tel:250.371.5586).

Sincerely,

Carol Rees
Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board