



Impact Story:

Saskatchewan
Cultural Exchange +
CAMP

by
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Saskatchewan
Arts Alliance





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It's celebrated. "

Tapping into a musical tradition in Stanley Mission

Musician Eliza Mary Doyle sits in her cozy home music studio just outside of Leask, Saskatchewan, surrounded by paneled walls, instruments, and quilts. She picks up her banjo and addresses a small gathering who have joined her on Facebook from 400 km away in Stanley Mission, most of whom had been taking music lessons from Doyle up until a couple of weeks ago. Doyle lets everyone know how to keep in touch, promises to post lyrics and chords for the song she's just finished playing, and offers to continue lessons with anyone in the community she can connect with over a smart phone or wi-fi connection. It's a marked change from their meetings in the

buzzing classrooms of Keethanow Elementary School only weeks earlier – but much has changed in the time since COVID-19 has altered the way all of us engage with one another.

"I'm working on posting a song-of-the-week via video that will reach more of the community," Doyle says. "It's a very confusing time for everyone, and I'd like to be able to provide a little sense of normalcy – as well as something to look forward to."

As school districts across the province continue to grapple with tight budgets, local arts organizations have long scrambled to pick up the slack in arts education through workshops and residencies with visiting artists.

While typical artist residencies will often last between two and six weeks, too often when they wrap up, the question left for those living in smaller communities is how to keep the momentum going.

Stanley Mission has a long tradition of celebrating music through Métis jigging, fiddling, and square dancing, but fewer people in the area have continued the practice, and a dwindling source of instruction has meant fewer locals to pass along the tradition to younger people in the community. "They hadn't had the opportunity to play fiddles or guitars, but they'd heard it," Doyle says, "It's celebrated."

Last September, Doyle spearheaded a new music education program





in Stanley Mission; Community Arts Mentorship Programming (CAMP). With the support of the Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange Society, CAMP takes a two-fold approach – with lessons for students, as well as instruction for those who would like to learn how to teach music. “The fiddle teachers are just naturals — because they’ve grown up listening to the music,” Doyle says.

CAMP’s plans include developing a teaching position that wouldn’t require a teaching degree, and could be shared between four artists over a year. “I’m developing the mentorship aspect of it over three-to-five years, so if you get kids in grades nine or ten now, by the time they’re in grade 12 and graduating, they can actually

see a position in the community where they could be a music facilitator,” Doyle says. “You could have a career as a music instructor – so it’s an exciting time. What’s really important is building local capacity.” Based on the success of CAMP in Stanley Mission, Doyle was preparing to launch a five-week residency in Pine House with traditional fiddler Mitchell Dureault in late March – a plan that has been postponed until the pandemic passes. In the meantime, until she can get back to Keethanow Elementary, Doyle will continue to deliver lessons online as best as she can.

“I really want to convey to the community that we are still with them through this all, and that we will return.”



Wanda Schmöckel is a freelance writer, communications worker, and filmmaker based in Regina. Her writing has appeared in The Walrus, Prairie Dog, Broadview, and elsewhere.