

THE SÎHTOSKÂTOWIN PROGRAM · 2026

Lifting each *other up*

Gifts to Indigenous community-led work in rural and remote Saskatchewan, decided together by Elders and practitioners from the communities.

Sîhtoskâtowin (see-tos-ka-toe-win) is a nêhiyawêwin (Cree) word that means "to lift each other up." In Dene, eɬts'éts'edi means helping each other.

sihtoskatowin.org

Sunset at kâniyâsihk Culture Camps, Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation.



NÊHIYAWÊWIN · CREE

sîhtoskâtowin

SEE-TOS-KA-TOE-WIN · TO LIFT EACH OTHER UP

Gifts to Indigenous community-led work in rural and remote Saskatchewan.

The program was created, and is governed, by local Indigenous people. At each seasonal intake a Working Group of Elders and practitioners from communities across the province decides the gifts by consensus. MakeWay facilitates the program, and its staff act as helpers.

HOW IT BEGAN

In 2020–21, forty-two people in Saskatchewan contributed knowledge to a learning journey that explored what communities need, what a good partner looks like, and if there was encouragement to build a support program for Indigenous-led work. Direction was given to create an Indigenous-led program that centres community voices, listens more than talks, and takes a steady and humble approach. After two in-person gatherings it was decided the program would be locally overseen. The Working Group formed in 2023 and has since decided gifts and supported program direction.



GIFTS TO THREE PRIORITY AREAS

- **Indigenous food systems**
  Gardens, farms, harvests, equipment and community food programs.
- **Health and healing**
  Healing spaces, wellness and youth programs, support in emergencies.
- **Cultural reclamation**
  Land-based camps, language, and cultural gatherings.

EIGHT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Holistic
Support mental, spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Collectivity
We live to support and encourage each other and create collective benefit.

Diversity
Plant lots of seeds to see what grows. Support communities to try, experiment, do and learn together.

Connections
Build relationships between communities, and between funders and communities.

Indigenous-led
Grassroots, local agency and Nation-led work. A direct relationship with the Band is not required.

Non-interference
Respect for individual will.

Celebrate together
Celebrate the good work.

Friendship
The relationship comes first.

'Saskatchewan' includes Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10 and is the traditional territory of the Nêhiyawak, Nahkawininiwak, Nakota, Dakota, Lakota and Denesuline, as well as the homelands of the Métis Nation. We honour the many Indigenous languages spoken in rural and remote Saskatchewan. Above: northern lights over the cabins at Home Away from Home camp, Frobisher Lake. Left: the cabins at Home Away from Home by day.

THE PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

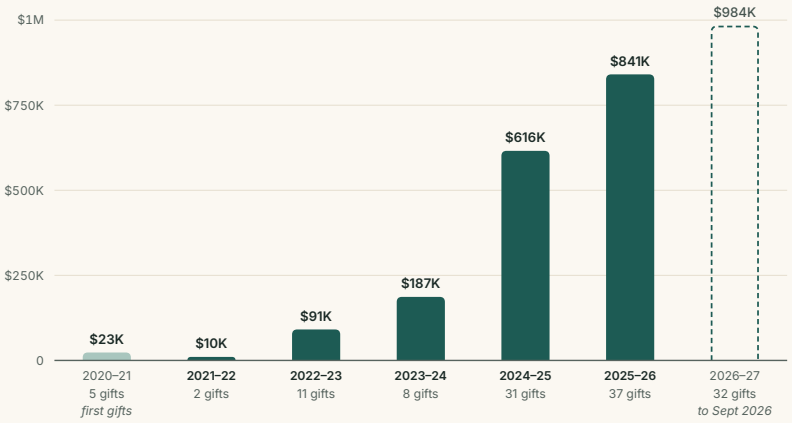
Three years of planning and building trust.
Then the giving grew.

$2.75 million gifted to community work in rural and remote Saskatchewan, nearly all of it Indigenous-led

May 2020 to September 9, 2026 · $2,751,668 in 126 gifts

Dollars gifted to community, by fiscal year

Fiscal years run April 1 to March 31. 2026–27 is shown to September.





The 32 communities where funded work was based, 2020 to March 2026. Gifts to travelling programs and to wildfire evacuees are not mapped.

126 gifts; 108 since the Working Group began in 2023

61 partners; 24 supported more than once

32 communities, mapped to March 2026

$24,000 median gift; range $500 to $50,000

Where the dollars went, by each gift's main priority area

46% Indigenous food systems
$1,279,765 · 55 gifts

23% Health and healing
$630,075 · 35 gifts

31% Cultural reclamation
$841,827 · 36 gifts

Each gift is counted once, under its main area; 70 gifts touch two or more.

The year under way. From April to September 9, 2026, 32 gifts worth $983,796: already more than any full year before.

THE ROAD SO FAR

2020 — First gift
A community-led wild harvest at La Ronge.

2020–21 — The Learning Journey
42 knowledge contributors say what communities need.

2022 — Prince Albert and Muskoday
A two-day gathering affirms the program and recommends forming a Working Group.

2023 — The Working Group
Elders and practitioners take on gift decisions.

2024 — Seasonal intakes
Community Engagement staff is hired; four intakes per year.

2025 — Frobisher Lake
Wildfire gifts, and a four-day partners' gathering.

2026 — A public launch
With the Saskatchewan Indigenous Community Foundation, October 20.

HOW A GIFT IS MADE

A conversation first. *The form comes later.*

1
Meet and visit
Staff meet interested groups and take time to learn about the work and the people behind it.

2
Share the form
The proposal form is shared only when there is a strong fit.

3
Talk it through
The Working Group weighs each request against the guideposts, the priority areas and what members know of the place.

4
Decide together
Gifts are made by consensus. There is no scoring sheet.

5
Share back
Partners send photos, stories and what they learned. Standardized reporting is not required.

GIFTMAKING GUIDEPOSTS

What the Working Group looks for in every request.

- The work addresses one or more priority areas
- The project supports community, not just individuals
- The project is Indigenous-led
- There are local people dedicated to the work
- It builds up community; it is not a "one and done"
- It supports youth, Elders and families

THE WORKING GROUP AND STAFF

Decided here, by consensus.



Elder Chuck Thomas
Beardy's and Okemasis' Cree Nation



Elder Joe Munroe
Muskoday First Nation; Elder Advisor



Rebecca Sylvestre
Turnor Lake and Birch Narrows



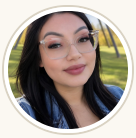
Megan Miller
Prince Albert Grand Council



Jarret Nelson
Weyakwin, Montreal Lake Cree Nation



Juandell Windigo
Muskowekwan First Nation



Sherilyn Clarke
Kinoosao



Jason Cardinal
Program Manager, Sîhtoskâtowin



Taylar Belanger
Community Engagement, Sîhtoskâtowin



Julie Price
Director, Manitoba and Saskatchewan Programs

Four seasonal intakes a year. When an emergency strikes, gifts can go out between intakes.



Cooking over the fire at Camp Nelson Knowledge Keepers Camp, Montreal Lake Cree Nation.



The food forest at Muskeg Lake Cree Nation.



Dry meat at the land-based camps of the Turnor Lake & Birch Narrows Community Food Centre.



A tipi under the moon at Spirit Trails, Big River First Nation.

START WITH A CONVERSATION

Get in touch

Taylar Belanger
Community Engagement
taylar.belanger@makeway.org

Jason Cardinal
Program Manager
jason.cardinal@makeway.org

FACILITATED BY

MakeWay

MakeWay is a national charity and public foundation that works to enable nature and communities to thrive together. makeway.org