



**Kristin Catherwood**

Born and raised on a family farm near Ceylon in Treaty 4 territory in southern Saskatchewan, Kristin Catherwood until recently lived in Radville. She holds a Master's Degree in Folklore from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Kristin is the Director of Living Heritage at Heritage Saskatchewan. Previously, she worked for SaskCulture and the National Film Board's *Grasslands Project*. She is a storyteller and filmmaker who is passionate about the cultural landscape of the prairies and the continuing resilience of Saskatchewan communities.

For a video version of this testimonial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWLMSozHN0Q>.

1. What is your name and current occupation/job title?

**Kristin Catherwood, folklorist**

**Current job title: Director of Living Heritage, Heritage Saskatchewan**

- a. (Optional: Where were you born and where did you live as a child?)

**I was born in Saskatchewan and raised on a farm on Treaty Four Territory in southern Saskatchewan.**

2. What is your training/education and where did you receive it? Is/was the training you took available in this province?

**I initially did a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Regina, with a major in Classics & Medieval Studies, completed in 2012. I then earned a Master of Arts in Folklore from Memorial University of Newfoundland in 2014. [Folklore Studies is not available in Saskatchewan as of 2021.]**

3. How did you develop a passion for heritage\*? Was it something that you always wanted to pursue?

*\*As per Heritage Saskatchewan's definition of heritage as "those values, beliefs and ways of living we inherit from past generations that we still use to understand the present and make choices for the future" as well as history, community involvement, and cultural background.*

**I always had a love for the past. I liked to play "Pioneer Days" as a kid and always gravitated towards books and movies set in the past. From a young age, I had a desire to be a professor in History. I worked as a newspaper reporter in my hometown and often sought out stories related to heritage in some way, and also worked at my town's local museum. When I went to university, I learned how many different ways there are to access the past – History is one discipline, but there are many others, from Anthropology, Archaeology, Literature, Art History, etc.**

**When I found the discipline of Folklore, I decided it was my favourite way to access and learn about the past – I enjoy learning about the past through what is sometimes referred to as living heritage. Rather than just studying written sources, folklorists interview people about their knowledge of the past, the ways they do things that have been inherited from past generations. We also study the landscape and everyday objects to understand more about the past and how it lives on in the present.**

4. How do you integrate heritage into your work?

**I am fortunate in that my job is directly heritage related. I work for an organization that promotes and educates about heritage and how it impacts our daily lives – as individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole. I help communities identify their unique living heritage and then document it, celebrate it, figure out ways to make sure it is passed on to the next generation, and ways that it can be used in community development.**

5. Why is heritage important to you? Why is heritage important to our society?

**Living heritage is important because it influences almost every decision we make – whether we’re aware of it or not. I think being aware of it makes us capable of making better choices for the future. Living heritage also enriches our lives – it’s often what gives meaning to our lives. The ways (another word could be traditions) we use to celebrate birthdays and holidays, the kinds of foods we eat, the skills and knowledge to create things, like handmade crafts and the knowledge to interact with the natural world – these are important, and they are also endangered. Every year we lose more of this knowledge that has been passed down for generations. It’s important to me to do what I can to help keep our living heritage safe.**

6. Is the career path that you took (or are undertaking) still a viable option for students today? Are there different options that you would recommend that were not available to you?

**I have a unique career path – in fact, I’m the only person with this kind of job in all of western Canada. It didn’t exist when I was in high school. I think our world and the way we work is changing a lot, so I would suggest that students not be so worried about what job they want (unless it is something specific like an architect), and think more about that they are really passionate about, and be open to the many options that are available.**

**As well as my job at Heritage Saskatchewan, I also have a career as a documentary filmmaker, which incorporates a lot of the skills I learned training to be a folklorist. So, I would say I am a folklorist, but I’ve had several different jobs where the skills I learned in school have come in really handy. I’d also say take advantage of opportunities wherever you find them – volunteering, interning, joining an organization that is related to your interests. Building connections and getting real world**

**experience is just as important as education and will help you out a lot in whatever career path you choose.**

7. If you could do (or have done) anything differently, what would that be?

**Nothing! Every mistake or failure along the way (and there have been plenty) have taught me something about myself, or how the world works (usually both). I've taken jobs over the years that didn't work out, but I always took something valuable away from the experience. Projects I've started have failed, but again, I always learned something important. I have to say that going to study Folklore was the best decision I ever made. It was hard to do, and there were times I almost didn't go because I didn't want to be so far from home, but going changed my life for the better.**

8. What advice do you have for high-school-aged students?

**Follow your interests, be willing to work hard, build your skill set, and find your own path. Make friends along the way and be open-minded about what's possible.**