

CHAMPIONS

FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Ordinary people taking extraordinary action

Conservation Learning Centre: Committed Citizens Driving Change

Many people heading north into Prince Albert on Highway #2 have seen the roadside sign for the Conservation Learning Centre (CLC), but likely only a few have considered finding out about the CLC. Had they done so, they would have discovered a 439-acre agricultural field laboratory nestled among hills, forest stands and sloughs that does research, education and demonstration projects supporting small, local farmers.

More than thirty years ago, local producers started conversations with the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association and other stakeholders about the need for agricultural research and information that addresses the unique needs of producers who farm in the boreal plain—a region that includes forest stands, marshes, meadows, peatland, and diverse wildlife. In 1993, the CLC was established with the intention of researching and demonstrating practices relevant to small, local farms. With the financial support of Ducks Unlimited, land was leased (and later purchased) from local producers Orest and Sylvia Kinash.



Since then, CLC's work has included a diverse mix of research projects, many of which focus on soil and water conservation. For instance, the CLC was a provincial leader on both shelter belts and no-till farming. The research is either self-initiated or is done on contract. Research initiated by the CLC is based on the feedback of local producers and board members, many of whom also farm. Contractual research is done on behalf of organizations such as commodity groups and post-secondary institutions. The CLC is also part of Agri-ARM, a network of producer-directed applied research and demonstration sites in Saskatchewan.

The CLC's small-plot and field-scale research has included projects on grain crops, forages, organic production, soil fertility, fruit and vegetable trials, wetland drainage, cover crops, and mechanical weed control, among others. Research findings are shared

through social media, field days and research publications which can be found on the CLC's website at: <https://saskclc.ca>.

Beyond research, the CLC also engages with the community in ways that support its mission to promote sustainable agriculture and land stewardship. Its school program helps students connect with the environment and learn where food comes from. Its Community High Tunnel, an unheated greenhouse, lets school and community groups grow gardens. Produce harvested from horticultural trials and gardens, including sweet corn, cabbage, raspberries, haskaps and fresh-cut flowers, is sold

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at the Prince Albert Farmers' Market. A two-kilometre interpretive public nature trail features local flora and fauna, shelterbelts, and wetlands. The Centre also acts as a collection point for grain bags destined for recycling.

Like all the staff at CLC, Zoe Galbraith, the Acting General Manager, is motivated by helping local producers while also protecting the environment. She grew up on a grain farm in north-central Saskatchewan and understands the challenges of farming. For Zoe, the satisfaction of working at the CLC comes from being a connector—someone who connects farmers with research that they can translate into action on their farm.

The Conservation Learning Centre exemplifies the saying *Think Globally, Act Locally*. It recognizes the global context of the issues facing both agriculture and the environment but focuses on advancing local solutions. As Bishop Desmond Tutu said, "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

This column is a collaborative project of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – RCE Saskatchewan.



**Saskatchewan
Environmental
Society**

Saskatchewan Environmental Society is a non-profit, registered charity that is committed to supporting sustainable living and sustainable resource use in Saskatchewan. We work with, and on behalf of, communities, organizations, businesses, and policy makers to encourage

informed decision-making that moves us towards sustainability. SES's current action areas include sustainable energy and climate solutions, water protection, resource conservation, biodiversity preservation, and reduction of toxic substances. Our work in Saskatchewan is carried out in Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and our office is in Saskatoon on Treaty 6, the traditional territory of Cree peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation. Learn more at: www.environmentalsociety.ca



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RCE Saskatchewan is a voluntary network of individuals, organizations, and experts advancing sustainable development in Saskatchewan. Founded in 2007, RCE Saskatchewan's partners are the University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Luther College at the University of Regina, First Nations

University of Canada, Campion College at the University of Regina, the City of Regina, City of Saskatoon, Craik Sustainable Living Project, and United Nations University. Our honorary patron is Her Honour the Honourable Bernadette McIntyre, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. There are more than 190 RCEs around the globe. Learn more at: www.saskrce.ca