



PRAIRIE BREEZE

THE LIVING PRAIRIE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2019

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SPRING INTERPRETIVE CENTRE HOURS

May - June
Sundays, 10:00 - 5:00

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Prairie Planting
Workshops**

Prairie Plant Sales

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Museum](https://www.facebook.com/LivingPrairieMuseum)



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Celebrating Prairie Conservation

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY
**Living Prairie
Museum**

MARCH 6 | CLUB REGENT EVENT CENTRE
Tickets at winnipeg-chamber.com

The Chamber
The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

A circular inset photo shows a young girl in a pink dress running through tall grass, with other people in the background.

We were thrilled to be finalists for a Spirit of Winnipeg Award in Environment and Energy. The organizations nominated were making efforts to improve the environment through sustainable business practices and efforts that promote ecological stewardship.

The work that inspired our nomination includes our prairie conservation efforts, environmental education, biofuel heat, native seed production, repurposed building materials, green office supply policy, and our goal of getting the community involved in growing prairie habitat.

We were honoured to be celebrated alongside Fort Whyte Alive and Mother Earth Recycling. Fort Whyte

was acknowledged for their solar panel installation, urban food production, composting program, and conservation of natural habitat. Mother Earth Recycling was nominated for their great work keeping e-waste out of landfills and providing local employment. Their new mattress recycling program includes dismantling in-house. They're also looking to find ways to make old plastics into new building materials. Their organization took first prize for the category.

The award celebration was a wonderful opportunity to see the amazing work being done in Winnipeg. Our city's community spirit is thriving.

Bringing the Prairie Back to Agriculture

“How do we bring prairie back to the prairies”? This was one of the persistent questions at the Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference (PCESEC) held here in Winnipeg last month. “Prairie” is sometimes used as a blanket term for flat, forage grass or farmland areas in central Canada. But to a prairie ecologist, “prairie” represents complex, diverse, grass-dominated ecosystems.

Dr. Christy Morrissey (University of Saskatchewan) referred to 1960s prairie agriculture as a project for simplifying landscapes. This simplification turned prairie habitat into rows of straight, weed-free, monoculture crops. This was a source of pride for my farm family and others. However, there is now a growing movement away from that simplicity. What if de-simplifying, or bringing prairie ecology back to the land, could help reintroduce complex interactions, biodiversity, and resilience - those characteristics of healthy tall grass prairie?

Ranchers, Indigenous conservation groups, scientists, farmers, writers – many people from many perspectives – all suggested ways of diversifying the landscape at the conference. Ranchers are looking for ways to use their cattle to administer the ecosystem services once provided by herds of bison. Landscape architects suggested reclaiming abandoned oil skipjacks for pollinator habitat. Farmers and ecologists were working together to show how margins, ditches, wetlands, and wind rows were yielding unexpected benefits and synergies. Cattle producers were partnering with Bird Studies Canada and Nature Conservancy Canada to bring rangeland, bird, and pronghorn habitat together.

A de-simplifying project from Iowa State University is called STRIPS (Science-based Trials of Rowcrops Integrated with Prairie Strips). This project is showing producers how

by converting just 10% of their farmland to prairie perennials, they can gain positive benefits to their land. Strips can reduce soil erosion by 95%, help the soil retain valuable phosphorus and nitrogen, and increase the population of pollinators and other beneficial insects that can increase yield. There is still work to be done to determine the monetary value of the ecosystem services provided by increased biodiversity: The birds, insects, and amazing civilizations in the soil (fungal, bacterial, and invertebrate) that promote crop health must be considered. Once they are, the hope is that the idea of messy fields giving higher yields will catch on, and will stimulate de-simplified farming for conservation and food production.



Photo by Iowa State University

Other de-simplified solutions included intercropping, cover-cropping, zero till, and maintaining living roots – all with the aim of mimicking the prairie’s complex interactions.

The goal of many of the farmers and scientists at this conference was to show that ecological farming is economic farming. As more producers take part in these practices, more models for land use can be realized on the prairies, providing stable, resilient farms and ecosystems. Wouldn’t it be encouraging to see more ag-ecosystem hybrids in the Prairie Provinces? It’s an exciting prospect for sustainable farming.

Trailhead Interpretive Sign for 2019

We think there's something missing on our site, and we're working to fix it.

When approaching a hiking trail in a provincial park or nature preserve, you typically see a trailhead sign. These signs are intended to prepare you for the walk ahead. They offer you background information about the site, a trail map, and in some instances, information about upcoming public activities. Our museum has a roadside sign announcing our location and events, and a commemorative plaque presenting our status as a City of Winnipeg Nature Park. But we don't have a central, welcoming source of information about our habitat and trails out on the preserve.



"Isn't this just a field?" We want to increase our guests' understanding of this prairie.

We're happy to say that we'll be able to provide the public with a trailhead sign in spring 2019. The Living Prairie Museum and the Friends of the Living Prairie Museum came together to secure funding for development and installation, and plans are moving forward. We're currently working with Public City Architecture to determine the design, materials, and functionality of the sign. Public City Architecture has been involved with many projects throughout Winnipeg, including the

Assiniboine Park washroom boxes, the Buhler Centre, and the St. Vital Park toboggan shelter. The landscape architect leading our project designed our annex and shade structure, so already has an understanding of our habitat and the current design elements on site.

Museum staff are working on content that will help site users understand the importance of our preserve. While we will be sharing information about the tall grass prairie ecosystem, we also want to emphasise how those concepts relate to our location. We would like to share the history of how our site was conserved, how rare it is, and how it is managed. We want to link the prairie to our ecological and cultural heritage, and invite the public to use the site in a sustainable way.

The addition of this sign will involve reversing our trail system. Our self-guiding trail currently begins at the back exit (east side) of our building. This design was intended to allow guests to walk through the museum and exit to the start of the trail. The reversal would now allow guests to prioritize hiking the trail first, then ending their visit with the information about the site within the interpretive centre. This attention to the trail system is timely, as a complaint we receive is that it's difficult to determine an official trail from the desire paths we wish to avoid on this site. The addition of a new map on the trail sign, as well as a new metal, fire-proof trail numbering system, should assist with solving this issue.

The primary purpose of this sign is to create awareness of the rarity of this preserve for local residents and tourists. By bringing more attention to how this location is one of the last remaining remnant prairies in Canada, we hope to see greater care and respect for this ancient habitat. We also hope that it will educate our users in prairie ecology and history, empowering them to become stewards of prairie conservation.

Thank You

Our Winter Speaker Series has become quite popular! All of our sessions hit capacity, with over half of the attendees Friends members. A perk of membership is early registration and we were happy to see it utilized! We hope you enjoyed the topics and information.

We would like to thank the Friends Board of Directors for volunteering to assist us with Snowshoe Sundays and the Winter Speaker Series.

MUSEUM STAFF

Sarah Semmler
Lois Grieger



Thank you for receiving your newsletter electronically.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Prairie Planting Workshops

Instructor John Morgan, prairie ecologist and restoration expert, will help you increase biodiversity in your backyard. Find out how prairie species can be included in your landscape designs, and why using native plant material is important for conservation. Our workshops guide you through site preparation, seed germination, and planting for flower beds or larger prairie restorations. Call the museum to register!

Fee \$35.00 plus GST, or \$25 for Friends of the Living Prairie Museum members.

Register in advance for one of the following workshops:

Sunday, April 7th	1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Saturday, April 13th	9:30 to 12:30 p.m.
Thursday, April 25th	6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 30th	6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Special Field Workshop - Managing Your Native Landscape. See management in action during a field trip to a native prairie site. This session targets those with existing restorations or native plantings. Learn how to maintain biodiversity and reduce invasive weeds. *The date of this workshop will be dependent on seasonal conditions and will take place in mid to late April.* Please register to receive updates from the instructor.

Prairie Plant Sales

Join us for our annual round of prairie plant sales with Prairie Flora! A variety of wildflower and grass seedlings will be available for purchase. Please see **PrairieFlora.com** for a list of species.

Friday, May 17th	3:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Saturday, May 18th & Sunday, May 19th	10:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 26th	10:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Sunday, June 23rd	10:00 - 4:00 p.m.



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