

For more information on the Saskatoon Afforestation areas:

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**Friends of the
Saskatoon
Afforestation
Areas Inc.**



**City of
Saskatoon**

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Thanks to Dr. Rose Roberts for advice on Land Acknowledgements

References:

1. Gridley, K. (1989). *Man of the Trees: Selected Writings of Richard St. Barbe Baker*. Willits, California: Ecology Action of the Midpeninsula.
2. Hanley, P. (2018). *Man of the Trees: Richard St. Barbe Baker - the First Global Conservationist*. Regina, Canada: University of Regina Press.
3. University of Saskatchewan, University Archives & Special Collections, Richard St. Barbe Baker fonds, MG 71, St. Barbe Baker Box33 M1 10 Tree 1979 003.

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Literary Trustee of the Estate of Richard St. Barbe Baker

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This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada.

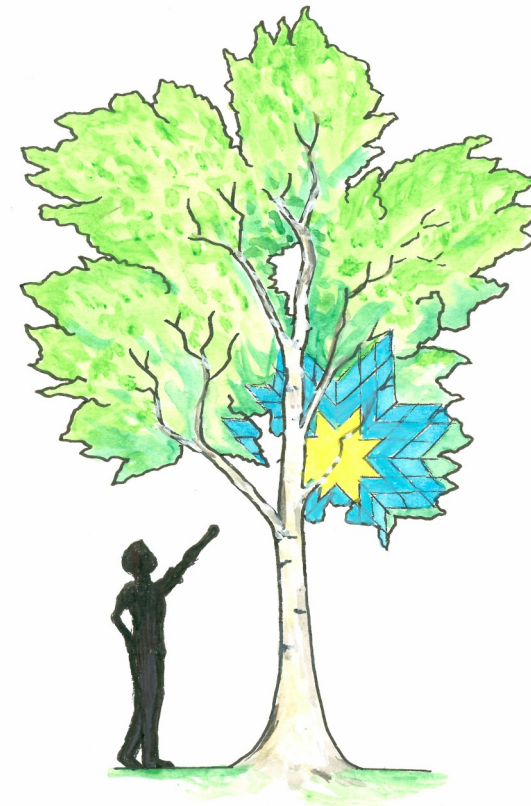
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada.

Canada

SaskEnergy

Booklet 2

Tree Friendships



We shall tread softly when we enter the
sanctuary of the woods, seeing we are in
company with tree beings who respond to
our love and care.

~ Richard St. Barbe Baker ^[1]

Land Acknowledgement:

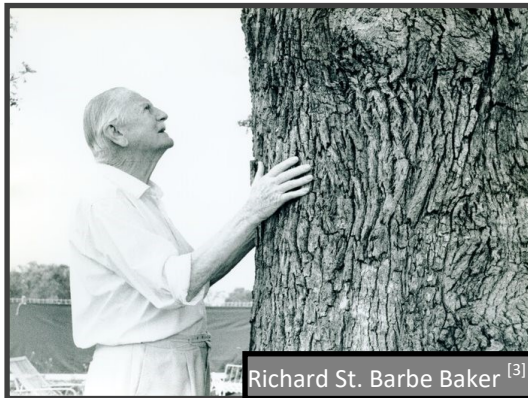
The afforestation areas are situated in the West Swale Yorath Island Glacial Spillway, a sacred site in Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Métis. Those who entered into Treaty 6 are the Cree *Nêhiyawak* (neh-HEE-oh-wuk), Saulteaux *Nakawē*, and Nakota the *Yankton* and *Yanktonai* people.

May our relationships with the land, standing peoples, forests, and waters teach us to honour and respect the past and invite us to move forward in harmony. May we all come together as friends, to find inspiration and guidance from histories, languages, and cultures which broaden our understanding and community collaboration for the present and future.

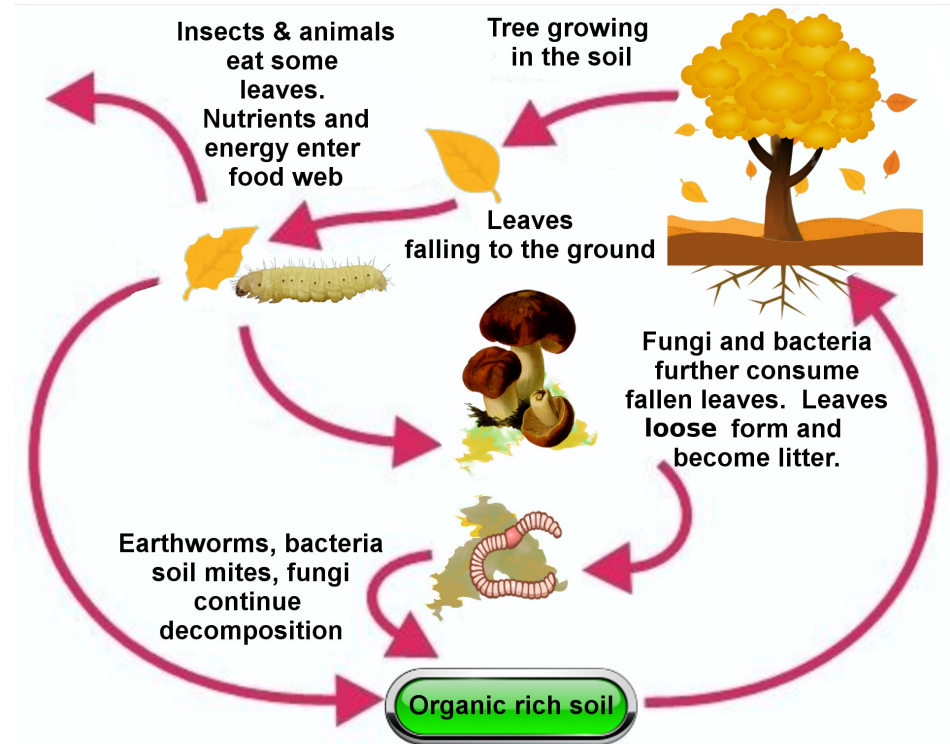
Season: Fall Introduction:

Have you ever heard of the Man of the Trees? He was born on October 9th, 1889, in England. He travelled the world, promoting tree planting, good forestry practices and the protection of special forests like the redwoods. His greatest ambition was to reverse the growth of deserts and he worked out a plan to reclaim the world's biggest desert, the Sahara, through tree planting. He understood 100 years ago that trees and forests influenced climate, protected soils and by holding water, prevented flooding.

Why is he so important to Saskatchewan? He studied at the University of Saskatchewan, lived near Beaver Creek, spent time in the forest near Prince Albert, and planted his last tree on the U of S campus before passing away at the age of 92. The afforestation area we describe here was planted in 1972 and named in his honour in 1978.



Richard St. Barbe Baker [3]



Fire

Life is only possible because of fire. The burning gases of the sun send just the right amount of energy in the form of light and heat.

Excerpt from The Firewood Poem by Lady Celia Congreve 1930

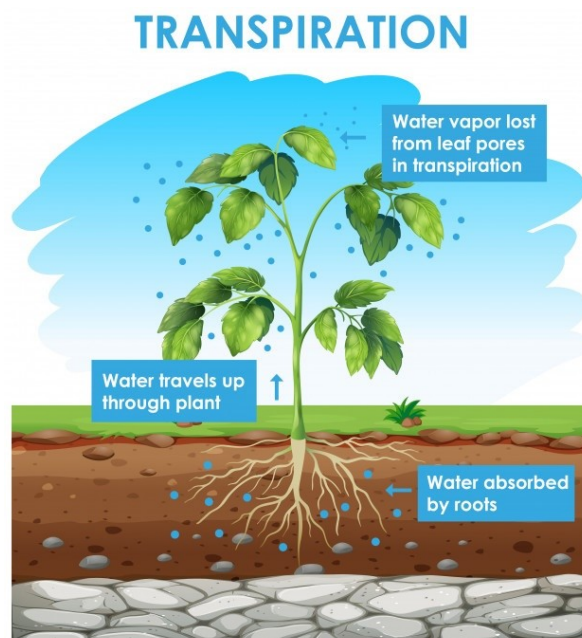
*Birch and fir logs burn too fast
Blaze up bright and do not last,
it is by the Irish said
Hawthorn bakes the sweetest bread.
Elm wood burns like churchyard
mould,
E'en the very flames are cold
But ash green or ash brown
Is fit for a queen with golden crown*

*Poplar gives a bitter smoke,
Fills your eyes and makes you choke,
Apple wood will scent your room
Pear wood smells like flowers in
bloom
Oaken logs, if dry and old
keep away the winter's cold
But ash wet or ash dry
a king shall warm his slippers by.*

Water

Take another deep breath and exhale onto your hand. Do you feel the moisture of your breath? When you exhale you not only release carbon dioxide, you also release water vapour, water in gaseous form. Plants also breathe out water vapour from multiple microscopic 'mouths' called stomata.

A single tree can release hundreds of litres of water to the atmosphere every day! This is one important way that clouds form to make rain. Plants are literally water pumps to the sky.



Earth

When leaves fall or plants and animals die in the ecosystem, scavengers and decomposers help to cycle their nutrients back into the soil. Gently look through the leaf litter on the ground. Make a small opening to the first soil layer. Pick up a small handful and squeeze it.

When you open your hand does the soil:

- A) hold it's shape and fall apart when you poke at it? (Loam soil)
- B) hold it's shape even when you poke at it? (Clay soil)
- C) fall apart? (Sandy soil)

Story: Tree Friendships

Note: Anything written in italics was written by Richard himself and quoted directly from his texts.

Have you ever had a chance to sit quietly on your own in nature? Or have you climbed a tree that became your good friend? When Richard St. Barbe Baker was 5 years old he was given permission to go, by himself, into the forest close to his house. He was exhilarated and had an experience that changed his life.

As I set out on the greatest of all forest adventures, at first I kept to a path which wound it's way down into the valley; but soon I found myself in a dense part of the forest where the trees were taller and the path became lost in bracken beneath the pines. Soon I was completely isolated in the luxuriant, tangled growth of ferns which were well above my head. In my infant mind I seemed to have entered the fairy-land of my dreams .^[1]

Although I could only see a few yards ahead, I had no sense of being shut in. The sensation was exhilarating. I began to walk faster, buoyed up with an almost ethereal feeling of wellbeing, as if I had been detached from earth. I became intoxicated with the beauty around me, immersed in the joyousness and exultation of feeling a part of it all.

Soon the bracken (ferns) became shorter, and before long it was left behind as a clearing opened where the dry pine needles covered the floor of the forest with a soft brown carpet. Rays of light pierced the canopy of the forest, were reflected in the ground mists and appeared as glorious shafts interlaced with the tall stems of the trees; bright and dark threads woven into a design.

I had entered the temple of the woods. I sank to the ground in a state of ecstasy; everything was intensely vivid – the call of the distant cuckoo seemed just by me. I was alone and yet encompassed by all living creatures I loved so dearly.^[2]

In the wood among the pines, it seems that for one brief moment I

had tasted immortality, and in a few seconds I had lived an eternity... I was in love with life.^[2]

Richard learned that if he had a hard day, he could go out to visit his tree friend and everything would start to feel better.

That beech tree with smooth bark was a Mother Confessor to me... Standing by the friendly beech, I knew in my heart that my troubles and my grief, as well as all that pleased me, were but for a passing moment. I would imagine that I had roots digging deep into Mother Earth and that all above I was sprouting branches. I would hold that in my thought for a few moments and then come back with the strength of the tree and a radiant heart, knowing that that was all that really mattered.^[2]

From that time on, Richard was able to let go of any troubles and feel recharged by connecting with nature. He used the words intoxicated and ecstasy to describe his experience of feeling loved, safe and at home in nature. These are feelings we all long for and Richard's experience of oneness with the essence of life shows how natural it is.

Richard was exploring forests on his own over 100 years ago, it is much more difficult now to find natural places that our parents will let us go to, so it is important to ask our parents and teachers to bring us to these places. We can also explore nearby nature in our own neighbourhoods. In Saskatoon we are so lucky to have a wild river valley with many places to explore such as George Genereux Urban Regional Park and Richard St. Barbe Baker Afforestation Area.

Reflection:

1. What parts of life are you in love with? What gives you the most peace and happiness to think about? This increases the positive life-force within you.

2. What or who would you want to have with you while exploring a forest or wild area for the first time? Why?

On-site or Outdoor Activity:

Just like 'the force' in *Star Wars* or the elementals in *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, we are all truly connected through the cycles and universal energies of life. **Take a moment near a tree to meditate on the connections between you, the tree, and the elements.**

Air

With part of your body touching the tree, **take a deep breath**. Some of the oxygen (O₂) molecules entering your lungs are from the plants near you and some are from plants and phytoplankton far away. **Exhale all of your breath**. You are releasing one of the main building blocks of life, carbon dioxide (CO₂). Your tree happily breathes this gas in to make sugars that become the solid form of carbon you see as the tree.

Put your hand up and feel the air around you. Most of the air, 78%, is made out of Nitrogen gas (N₂). Plants need N₂ to grow and we need it from plants and animals, but only bacteria and lightning have the power to give it to us in the forms we can take in.

