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



City of
Saskatoon

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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. Box 33 K Negatives 2-6 Transparencies 008.
4. Weiss, Gaea Laughingbird. New Age. November 1982.

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

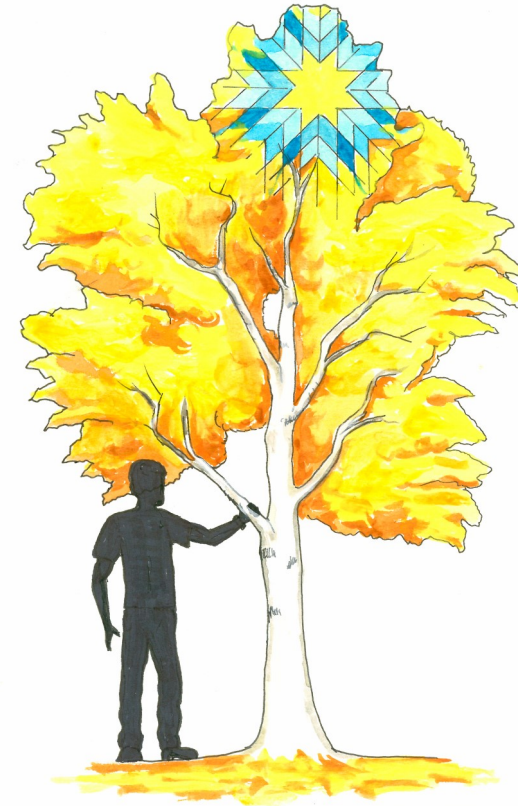
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier
du gouvernement du Canada.

Canada

SaskEnergy

Booklet 8

Feast of the Trees



*"...if the armies of the world...
could be redeployed in planting the desert, in eight years
a hundred million people could be rehabilitated and sup-
plied with protein-rich food grown from virgin sand."
~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.

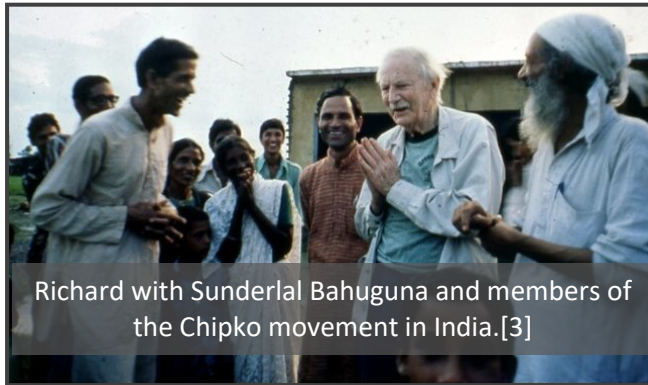
Season:
Spring

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



Richard with Sunderlal Bahuguna and members of the Chipko movement in India.[3]

On-site or Outdoor Activity:

Go for a walk looking for any signs of animals preparing to nest. Are there birds that have come back from the South?

Draw or describe some of the changes you have noticed since your last visit.

3. In the story, the feast includes the fruit and nuts from 15 different trees. As a class, can you name 15 fruits and nuts that are provided by trees?

In School Activity:

At this time of year many animals are preparing to have their babies. The birds are migrating to their nesting areas. The squirrel babies are already growing inside their mamas. The fawns may already have been born and are just getting to know how to balance on their long narrow legs.

Choose 1 animal from the list your teacher will provide you and learn everything you can about what they need for reproduction.

Animal:

1. How long is mom pregnant? This is called gestation, the period of time from conception until birth.
2. Do they nest? If so what material do they use?
3. What is their nesting habitat? (ground, tree, cattails...etc)
4. How many young can they have? What do the young eat?
5. Do the parents take care of the young?
6. What are the babies called? (i.e. pups, kits, etc.)

Story: Feast of the Trees

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

Richard was invited to Palestine in 1929 to organize tree-planting projects. The original landscape and lush forests of this area had been exhausted over thousands of years of misuse, leaving much of the land barren desert.

Richard knew that for tree planting to be successful he would have to recruit many people. In Africa, he went to the Chiefs and Elders for advice. He had to determine who would be most influential in Palestine. It seemed as though everyone followed the leaders of the different religions. The only problem was that these leaders wouldn't even speak to one another, so planning a project together seemed almost impossible.

Thankfully, impossible was not a word in Richard's vocabulary. The main religious groups he would have to bring together were the Muslims, Christians, and Jews. As no stranger to bold action, Richard visited each leader in person to invite them to a meeting about forest restoration in the region. He neglected, on purpose, to include that all the leaders would be there.

Each leader was given a different time to arrive, and when they did they were brought into a room where curtains separated each of them from the main hall. Once everyone was present and seated, Richard opened the curtains and began his presentation swiftly, before anyone could leave. This was the first time these religious leaders had ever gathered in the same space.

Here, for the first time in history, were gathered the principal religious, venerable leaders of the East and West—"never the twain shall meet." The truth of these much-quoted words of Kipling was being challenged. Clad in their patriarchal and ecclesiastic robes and insignia, they were waiting for a pronouncement from me. I was no ecclesiastic or patriarch. I was no high official in the administration of Palestine under the British Mandate, but simply a forester—a planter of

trees. Here I was standing on “holy ground.”^[2]

Richard gave a lively presentation and invited everyone to join Men of the Trees. The leaders agreed to support starting tree nurseries and large-scale tree planting.

While in Palestine Richard was able to be part of the revival of an ancient Jewish festival known as the New Year of the Trees, a day on which people would gather and eat the fruits and nuts from 15 different trees. New settlers were interested in reviving this tradition and incorporating tree planting by children. This fit with his thinking about celebrating and creating a culture around tree planting. Richard was present for the first Feast of the Trees planting day.

I ...took part in the tree planting ceremony in which four thousand school children came out from the city of Jerusalem to plant avenues along the roads in this new residential quarter. So keen was the interest that sixteen thousand grown-up persons—parents, uncles, aunts and friends of the children—attended the ceremony.^[2]

Along the new roads holes had been dug, and four hundred trees were in readiness. To each hole were allocated ten children, who, with the assistance of their schoolmaster, set the trees, which were well and truly planted. As soon as they were all firmed in and carefully staked, the young planters were each given a bag of refreshments. Soon they were scattered into little groups and joined their parents, and along the hillside I saw small picnic parties enjoying the after feast.

Palestine and Israel increased their tree cover throughout the 20th century, inspired, in part, by the work and positive coercion of Richard. He was always advocating for peaceful, collaborative, earth-healing work that would bring all people together to replenish forests and soils. Richard saw the interrelationships between trees, protecting and regenerating soils, holding water in the landscape and building community.

Richard loved working with children and started a group called Children of the Green Earth, through which a global network of youth and educators learned about the benefits of trees and shared stories of

lessons and successes in tree-planting.

When planting trees with children they would recite the organization’s motto combined with actions. It went like this: From our hearts (hands on heart), with our hands (hands out), for the Earth (kneel and touch the earth with hands), all the world together (rising up and forming a circle with the arms).

This simple motto summed up his message. Planting trees is a practical, hands-on action that also involves our heart and our spirit because the trees will serve others in the future and benefit both the locale and the whole earth. Many children and youth around the world plant trees on Arbour day and as service projects and so can unite in a shared purpose.

Reflection:

1. What did you think about the strategy Richard used to bring together the leaders of the different religions? Do you think unity is important for solving environmental problems which affect everyone?
2. A motto is a simple statement that creates a sense of unity and purpose. Do you have a motto that helps you live better or do better? If you created a motto for protection of trees and nature what would it be?

