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



**City of
Saskatoon**

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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, a8025.

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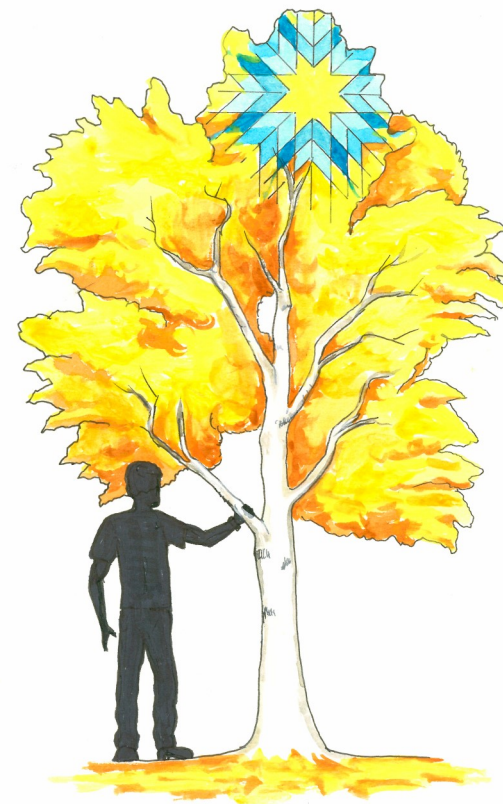
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Canada

SaskEnergy

Booklet 9

Trees and Turtle Island



I believe that unless we play fair to the earth and practise the law of return we cannot exist physically; unless we play fair to our neighbour we cannot exist socially or internationally; unless we play fair to our better selves we cannot live individually.

~ Richard St. Barbe Baker ^[3]

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.

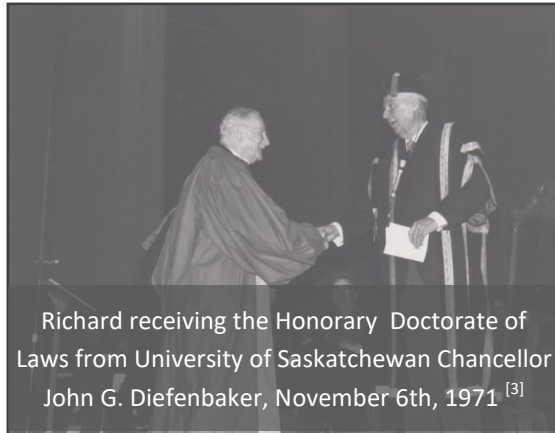
Season: Spring

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 protec-

tion 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 receiving the Honorary Doctorate of Laws from University of Saskatchewan Chancellor John G. Diefenbaker, November 6th, 1971 ^[3]

On-site or Outdoor Activity:

Spring is a busy time! The birds are nesting, the flowers are blooming, the bees are buzzing, and everything is in a state of growth and renewal.

The tree buds that you measured weeks ago may be full leaves by now. Have you measured to see how much they have grown?

Spend time near your tree to see the changes this season brings.

Describe, draw, or paint the young growth of the plants around you.

Reflection:

1. If someone asked you to come up with an idea that would make the world a better place, and said they would give you all the support and money you would need to make that happen, what would you do?

2. If you were to write a story about your life, when you are older, what kind of adventures would you like your future self to be able to write about?

Story: Trees and Turtle Island

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

In late 1929, when Richard went back to England, there were few jobs available due to the economic crash. Since he had no job prospects, he decided to travel around the globe, visiting the world's forests. He wasn't discouraged by the fact that he had no funds to do this. He had met so many people from all over the world through his work that he decided to call on friends. This led him to the opportunity for a free passage on an empty boat that would be stopping in New York. He arrived with very little money.

Before long Richard had a chance meeting with a friend from Kenya. This friend took Richard out for lunch, sitting with rapt attention as Richard spoke about his adventures in Africa. A fellow at the next table started listening to the stories closely, and approached with an offer. He said to Richard, "If you can write as well as you speak, I want your book!"

This is the type of serendipity that carried Richard through his life. He would jump into his goals and visions with faith that everything would work out alright. In this instance, the stranger turned out to be a well-known publisher who offered to pay Richard \$500 up front to start writing a book about his adventures. At that time this was a lot of money. It only took Richard 10 days to write his first book *Men of the Trees*.

Richard learned that the governor of the state of New York was a tree planter. He made an appointment to visit with him. Unemployment was becoming common all over North America. The stock market had crashed and they were at the beginning of a drought that would last a decade. So, during their visit, Richard and Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt started planning an employment program that would give millions of people jobs planting trees.

In 1933, Roosevelt became president of the United States and by 1935 the dream of planting a 'great wall of trees' was well underway.

It is estimated that the 'tree army', formally called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), planted 3 billion trees over the 7 years that followed.

While exploring forests in the United States, Richard became enamoured with the Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) of the west coast. These enormous trees could grow up to 100 meters tall and live to be 2000 years old or older. Today, these forests have shrunk by 95%, and less than 5% would be left if individuals and groups hadn't spoken up to protect what remained.

Students can speak up for the rights of nature and trees. Maybe you have heard of Greta Thunberg who speaks up for climate action, she is not the only student who believes in caring for the earth. Felix Finkbeiner at age nine learned about Richard St. Barbe Baker in school, and started the Plant-For-The-Planet trillion-tree planting organization.

Richard met with members of the *Save the Redwoods League* and convinced them that preserving single trees and small pockets would not be sufficient for their survival. All forests require the plant and animal communities they live among and enough space for each to function well.

Richard had observed how the redwoods water themselves by collecting the mists off of the ocean in their branches, creating a type of 'horizontal rain' as the drops gather and fall gently to the ground. He knew that removing too much could severely dry out the area and make it impossible for single trees to survive on their own.

A sufficiently large area had to be preserved for the balance of nature to remain undisturbed. The trees had to be allowed to flourish and reproduce themselves in the atmosphere they had created. My immediate concern was to save a large enough area to retain the local climate and I felt that at least twelve thousand acres would be required to be effective.^[2]

In his special love for the redwood forests and his efforts to protect them Richard travelled there on 20 different occasions in his life, the last time being the dedication of Redwood National Park as a World

Heritage Site in May, 1982.

The redwood forests were home to Indigenous peoples for millennia and they lived in harmony with these giant trees. From 1770 to the early 1900's most of the Indigenous populations were killed or forcibly removed from the land. These tribes include the Tolowa, the Wiyot, and the Yurok. Their genocide was not formally recognized by the state of California until 2019.

Truth and reconciliation in our era involves recognizing these wrongs and learning to listen to Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous people have historical knowledge, practices and beliefs about relationships between people, plants, animals, natural phenomena, landscapes, and timing of events that have been acquired over thousands of years. In general, their cultures have held great reverence for nature and viewed the earth as sentient. Richard advocated for this very perspective and wished everyone to acquire a tree sense—a sense of oneness with all living things, as vital for a sustainable future.

Indigenous people live in and use lands that cover more than 1/4 of Earth's land surface. Combined with adjacent ecologically protected spaces this maintains 80% of the planet's biodiversity. People are coming to understand that supporting Richard's goals & Indigenous people in guardianship of these lands is crucial globally.

