

## SCIC Member Profile

### PCTC Calling Lakes Centre

#### FOOD AS GIFT

Food - where it comes from, what has been done to it, how it is prepared and eaten - affects all of us. Food offers the opportunity to connect the personal with the political at each step of its preparation. From its beginning as a seed or embryo, through its growing and harvest to its appearance in our plate or bowl, each choice that we make about food matters - to our communities, our earth, to ourselves, and our fellow creatures.

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, over 75% of the genetic diversity of crops has been lost worldwide. The distribution of seeds in North America is in the hands of just 250 seed companies. With threats like climate change, disease, and pests, genetic diversity in seeds is vital to all of us. What contributions can each of us make to encourage the old practice of saving seeds, and the growth of seed exchanges throughout Canada?

We hear a great deal about buying "local food" or the 100 mile diet. While we have many more opportunities to buy local food, there remain many challenges. Here in Saskatchewan, 90% of the fresh produce we buy is from somewhere else. The global market is so competitive that foods travelling across the continent in huge trucks are cheaper than food grown here. Nonetheless, the consumer desire for locally produced foods is growing, and the popularity of farmer's markets is just one strong indication. What can each of us do to support and encourage local producers?

We know that the foods we chose are important, and the way that we prepare that food affects our health and well-being. *How we eat our food also matters.* There is increasing interest in the rituals of eating, the "slow food movement", and the spirituality of food.

Do you want to join others in exploring how to translate your concern about food into practical everyday choices that can benefit the health of our global community, one bite at a time? Participate in the "Food as Gift " program at Calling Lakes Centre where we will explore food issues, prepare food together, and take to

the roads in the Fort Qu'Appelle area in search of local foods for a meal meeting a number of producers on their home turf. Our leaders for the weekend are: **Sandra Brandt**, who has worked as a natural foods retailer, and currently teaches holistic cooking classes in Regina where she also leads workshops about food and spirituality. As a young father, **Rylan Grayston** has been planting and eating seeds his whole life, and now he sells them, too. He is fascinated with DNA, and both excited and concerned about our ability to change the DNA that all seeds contain. **Sue Bland** helps her family in the production and sale of free range roasting chickens, eggs and honey. She has been re-learning how to "play" with her food, and to eat slowly and appreciatively.

"Food as Gift" will begin with supper at 6 p.m. on Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup> and continue until just after lunch on Sunday, March 21<sup>st</sup>. To learn about this program or to register for it, please check the Calling Lakes Centre website at [www.callinglakes.ca](http://www.callinglakes.ca) or call 306-332-5691 (Fort Qu'Appelle).

Calling Lakes Centre is a fully accredited educational centre of the United Church of Canada. Located on the north shore of Echo Lake in the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley, it provides a peaceful yet accessible "getaway" for retreats, workshops and conferences. Its purpose is to nurture growth in individuals, congregations and communities through programs, retreats and hospitality.