

Top News

Green Lake resident featured in new book

By Joel Cherry
Progress Staff

Saskatchewan has a history of folk healing as rich and diverse as its populace. Saskatoon writer Jacqueline Moore has spent the last several years on a pilgrimage to cast light on this mostly unexplored aspect of our culture.

Armed with her lifelong interest in the supernatural and a grant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Moore met with 13 mystics and healers from across the province.

She collected their stories in her new book "The Saskatchewan Secret: Folk Healers, Diviners, and Mystics of the Prairies".

Moore said she set several criteria for her prospective subjects. The individual must have had no formal schooling in the healing arts, they mustn't advertise or do commercial business, and their name had to have come to her from someone that had been helped.

"I was looking for those people who are just very humbly out there helping others," Moore said.

"Sort of the unsung heroes."

Finding all of her subjects wasn't easy. Moore networked where ever she could, posting notices in healthfood stores and weekly newspapers. Ultimately names started coming in.

"Saskatchewan is like that, word of mouth travels, and if a person is good then that's gonna get out there," she said.

One of the stories that came to her was about a Métis woman in Green Lake that was advised by spirits on how to make medicine from indigenous plants.

The woman's name is Rose Richardson, and her story is the subject of the chapter in Moore's

book entitled "Into the Mystic."

Richardson related her philosophy and some striking experiences to Moore through meetings at the now-closed Keewatin Junction Museum that she ran with her husband Ric.

"I was honoured when I was with all of these healers, but Rose I felt was special and maybe it is because she is more of a mystic than some other people, that she sort of has one foot in a different realm perhaps," Moore mused.

Richardson was not immediately sure if she would even grant Moore an interview, but after some time together the two began to feel a kinship with one another.

"Her search and wonderment seemed to resonate a spirit of honesty directed at understanding some of her own experiences," said Richardson.

"Into the Mystic" culminates with Moore describing a mystical experience that she has at Richardson's home.

"The book ended up being really personal, not only about the healers but about me," Moore explained. "I ended up being sort of the interface between the healers and the readers."

Although Richardson admits that she is never entirely comfortable publically sharing personal elements of her life, she said that it is necessary according to her cultural upbringing and beliefs.

"If you are given a gift it is necessary for you to share the knowledge, skill especially to your



Rose and Ric Richardson of Green Lake.

Progress file photo

own people," she explained.

Richardson said she enjoyed reading about all of the other people in the book, and expressed the hope that they could all meet one day.

"The Saskatchewan Secret" was the number one selling paperback at Saskatoon's Macnally Robinson bookstore when it was released. The author sees the book's success as part of a trend towards openness to the concepts she explored.

"I think people are more willing to read about it or look into it than even five years ago when I started this project," she said.

"I really see that people are willing to talk about it, hear a bit more about it, and pick up a book even."

In an author's note at the start of the book, Moore states that she is not advocating or advertising any particular set of beliefs, and that the reader will relate to the stories according to their own experience.

Richardson agreed.

"It is up to the individual who reads the book or hears the stories to make a judgment based on their own perception," she said. "How you see it is what's important."