

SOS Trees News



Newsletter No. 33, December 2019

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Web Site: www.soselms.org

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NEW NAME! NEW LOGO!

SOS Elms has become SOS Trees!

Linda Moskalyk

Our name changed to **SOS Trees Coalition** this month, and we have a **fresh new logo** (see above) designed by one of our members, Caroline Dinter. Attendees at our AGM last spring voted unanimously to change our Name and Logo, to better reflect our focus on the whole urban forest. SOS Elms Coalition was originally set up to protect the American elm from Dutch elm disease (DED) which was (and still is) devastating elms across the continent. In Saskatchewan (see article below) DED has now spread as far west as Outlook.

Thanks in large part to lobbying and educational efforts by SOS Elms in the 1990s, provincial and municipal governments greatly increased budgets and efforts to fight DED. Here in Saskatoon, we persuaded City Council to greatly increase support for Urban Forestry to launch an aggressive surveillance and maintenance program for our elm trees, and Saskatoon remains one of the lucky communities that managed to keep DED at bay. Since that time other invasive insects and diseases have arrived, along with increasing infill development

pressures in a rapidly growing city. Our focus of concern expanded to include the other threatened tree species. Diversity of species is key to a healthy urban forest. It became clear that our name should better reflect every species within the urban forest.

Change in Membership Fees

In 2020 regular memberships will be \$20 annually. Students may join for free. We hope the increase will be met with enthusiasm – more resources will help us launch new initiatives next year – stay tuned!

President's Report

Linda Moskalyk

Our city's suburbs continue to expand outwards. Residential infill in our older treed neighborhoods is good in that it helps to slow urban sprawl. However, construction of houses, apartments and other buildings can be hard on mature trees. Your board is keeping a watchful eye on the developers and their efforts to protect the trees during construction. Sometimes we are pleasantly surprised when they conform to the City's Tree Protection Policy, but at other times we need to send reminders to the developer and a heads up to the Urban Forestry department about infractions. You could say we are watchdogs and sometimes even bulldogs! We make it loud and clear that the tree protection policy - as spelled out on the yellow signs stapled to city trees at risk - must be followed. We encourage YOU - our members - to also become watchdogs. If you see city-owned trees being abused, call the Urban Forestry department, talk to the developer, and your City Councilor. Let them know that we appreciate it when trees are hugged and not mugged!



This year we were delighted to add fresh new faces to our board – see their bios below. Michelle Liota brings enthusiasm, and inspiring ideas for education about trees. Alina Ostrowska just finished her master's degree at the U of S and has lots of great connections through student organizations at the university. Alina convinced us that we need to attract more student members to provide a voice for the future of the urban forest. As a result we decided to make student memberships free.

Other things that our board members have been doing in 2019:

- We attended the City of Saskatoon's Green Infrastructure Strategy meetings to support a solid management plan of the urban forest.
- We attended several of Meewasin's trail expansion meetings, ensuring that trees will be considered and conserved whenever trail expansion plans are made.
- We are working with Meewasin and other stakeholders on how to protect selected trees on the river banks from beaver use and damage.
- We participated in the U of S EcoHack event – an exercise for students of varied disciplines to solve environmental and sustainability challenges through innovative ideas. SOS Elms was one of 10 community groups who presented a challenge for the students to work on. Our problem statement was: How can we promote the renewal and preservation of our urban forest? We received lots of interesting solutions from the students, e.g. More education about the importance of trees in our community, and a Heritage Tree Program that would be both educational and fun to follow for residents of Saskatoon.
- Our website is in need of a total overhaul. We will be working on this throughout the winter.
- We have been happy to be invited to participate in the development of City of Saskatoon's new Urban Forest Management

Plan. Many of our board members and members attended the first meeting, voicing our concerns and ideas for the plan.

- Some of our board members attended the Global Climate Strike in Saskatoon in September. Trees are an important part of climate mitigation and the solution to saving our planet!



Linda Moskalyk, Tom Gode and Michelle Liota taking part in EcoHack with students from the U of S.

I would like to thank our members for their continuing support through volunteering at events such as Gardenscape and Living Green Expo, as well as being our eyes and ears in the community for trees at risk. Also thank you for your financial support through memberships and donations that helps us carry on with our work. Like the Lorax says: *"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not"*.



We speak for your community trees

Tallest building in Saskatchewan going up on the site of the Gathercole Elms

Richard Kerbes

Nutrien Tower, now being built on Parcel Y at River Landing, is expected to reach 88 metres in height (18 storeys) when completed in 2021 ("Saskatoon building set to be tallest in province"- Saskatoon StarPhoenix, Dec. 12, 2019). The article notes that the project, first approved by Saskatoon City Council in 2005 as a \$40 million hotel and spa, underwent many changes over the years, until a local developer and a group of companies worked a deal to purchase the land from the City in November 2010.

Not mentioned is that Parcel Y was the site of the historic Gathercole building, whose grounds included mature 80 year old American Elms and other trees. SOS Elms took part in the unsuccessful campaign to save the Gathercole and its trees. The building was torn down in 2004 by the City. The trees outlived the building, but their fate was sealed when Council decided to sell them and the land they occupied, asking for proposals for a multi-million dollar project on that land, with no stipulation to keep the elms as part of the project. The elms continued to stand tall and healthy while prospective developers failed to prove they had the money to get the City's approval to proceed with the project. SOS Elms continued to lobby City Council to preserve the stately row of American Elms near the south end of the Traffic Bridge.

After getting the land in late 2010, for about half its previously assessed value, the developers wasted no time removing all elms and other trees in January 2011, promising to begin construction in the spring. But what actually was built? Just like in the Joni Mitchell song – they cut down the trees and put up a parking lot!

The parking lot functioned for about 5 years before construction of buildings began. Ironically, the short street on the south side of Parcel Y was officially (and quite suitably) named The Joni Mitchell Promenade.

Why I plant trees - Tom Gode

As a recent addition to the SOS Elms board of directors I was asked to talk about why I plant trees. I have planted trees throughout my life starting as a Boy Scout and continuing annually on both public and private land. 14 years ago I retired and was able to focus my energy on planting trees in Costa Rica. I coordinated international volunteers and local workers to restore degraded agricultural land back into a cloud forest at the Cloudbridge Nature Reserve. Now Cloudbridge has seen the return of the forest and the flora and fauna that call it home. Why do I do it? I find peace and personal satisfaction from the forest. And now science has shown that it is one of the simplest ways to address our escalating climate crisis. When I am in Canada I also want to be involved with trees. SOS Elms is an advocacy organization that makes a difference in our urban forest and I felt that I needed to do more than just plant trees but become a stronger advocate for our forests.



New board member Michelle Leota

Michelle is a creative maker-turned-construction project manager. She is passionate about the environment, reducing consumption and seizing the day. She's also a planner of road trips through the mountains, a gardener, and a multi-sport adventurer.

Michelle moved to Saskatoon from Vancouver to be close to family, but she misses the great forests, mountains, oceans and all the west coast greenery!

In terms of community involvement, Michelle takes care of membership for SOS Elms and is a volunteer Compost Coach specializing in Bokashi for the Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council. She also enjoys sharing information with groups and individuals interested in the value of trees, composting, active transportation, and any fun stuff to do from here to Vancouver Island and beyond.



New board member Alina Ostrowska

Alina Ostrowska was born in Moldova and lived on the Emerald Isle of Ireland for 16 years before coming to Saskatchewan in 2018. She grew up near a large forest park and 3 beaches on the west coast of Ireland, developing a keen interest in nature and trees, partly from her father, also a nature lover.

Alina earned a Bachelor's degree in Biomedical Science, as well as a Diploma in French at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Following her passion for nature after moving to Canada, she earned a Master of Sustainable Environmental Management from the University of Saskatchewan in 2019. Her non-academic

pursuits have involved studying and teaching piano, badminton, kickboxing, and volunteering for a wide array of organizations.

In Canada, Alina has been an active volunteer in the U of S School of Environment and Sustainability student committees and events. She was one of the proposal reviewers for the EECOM 2019 Conference and took part in the inaugural U of S environmental hackathon. Her team won the 2019 EcoHack tackling a problem relating to Saskatoon's North East Swale. Her involvement there led her into volunteering at the NatureCity Festival and she now sits on their steering committee. She is also one of the Sustainability Speakers Series coordinators for the SES.

Alina volunteered with SES at their Living Green Expo in 2019 and bumped into the SOS Elms booth there, whereupon she attended their AGM and subsequently joined the board. She has been influential since in getting the revised membership fee structure to include a no fee category for students.

Alina has made Saskatoon her home. She is eager to begin her career in the Environmental field and was recently granted the Environmental Professional in training (EPt) accreditation from Eco Canada. While she searches for an employment opportunity within the field, she strives to continue to contribute to her community and learn from those around her. She has great aspirations for the future of SOS Trees, is grateful for the opportunity to sit on their board and looks forward to a productive year!



Dutch Elm Disease – 2019 Provincial Update

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment's 2019 Dutch elm disease (DED) program included: identifying and removing DED-infected trees in eight rural zones; surveying six provincial parks; providing scientific and technical support to individuals and communities dealing with DED; enforcing DED regulations; and reviewing applications to utilize elm wood or to import elm seedlings.

In 2019, surveys removed 538 DED-infected trees in buffer zones around eight communities – Regina, Moose Jaw, Melfort, Estevan, Indian Head, Balcarres, Wolseley and Tisdale – to help protect elms within the communities. This is very similar to last year, when the ministry removed 544 trees from these areas. Outside of the buffer zones, urban and rural municipalities are responsible for DED management within their jurisdictions.

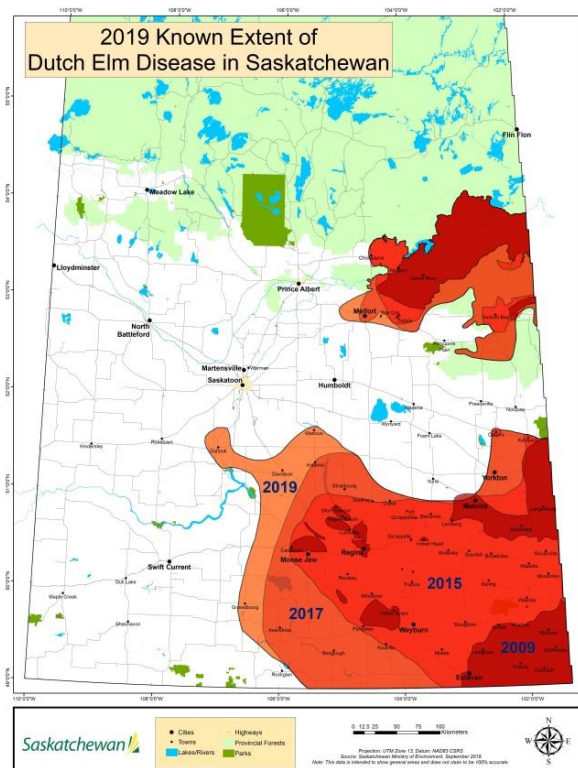
DED continues to spread rapidly in some parts of Saskatchewan; Outlook, Kyle, Gravelbourg, Tugaskie, and the RM of McCraney all identified their first confirmed DED infections. Throughout the infected zone, the disease continued to kill elms in farmyards and shelterbelts. Several smaller towns continue to experience significant tree loss. The affected rural area is expected to expand, but for now, the western side of the province remains DED-free.

The Ministry of Environment continued to co-operate with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport (PCS) to manage DED within provincial parks, with Environment identifying infected trees and PCS coordinating tree removals. In 2019, the ministry identified 103 elms for removal within Katopwa, Echo Valley and Rowan's Ravine provincial parks, and the Regina Beach recreation site. Greenwater Lake Provincial Park was again free of DED this year.

The province's Crop Protection Lab continued to provide free sample testing to communities and the public. In 2019, the lab received 541 samples for testing, confirming 351 as DED. Another 16 samples tested positive for Dothiorella wilt.

The Ministry of Environment encourages people to take positive actions to prevent the spread of DED into their communities, including proper elm pruning done outside the annual ban period and the appropriate disposal of elm wood. It is also important to respect regulations prohibiting the transportation, sale and storage of elm firewood, and establishing standards for tree care professionals. Communities can help to enforce these regulations by appointing municipal DED inspectors.

For more information about DED or other ministry programs, please contact the Ministry of Environment's general inquiry line at 1-800-567-4224, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Update on Saskatoon's Psyllid infestation of black and mancana ash

Jeff Boone, Saskatoon Urban Forestry

Cottony ash psyllid, *Psyllopsis discrepans*, is an invasive insect that was first discovered in Saskatoon in ~2005, coming here on infested nursery stock. It was not a serious problem till 2015. It lays small eggs behind buds, along bud scales and other crevices on the twigs of black ash and mancana ash trees. Nymphs hatch in the spring and feed on newly emerging leaf tissue. Extensive feeding causes distortion of

the leaf tissue. There are two generations per year and the second generation adults lay eggs in the late summer and early fall.

The recent outbreak has significantly impacted the population of susceptible trees. Beginning in 2015, the outbreak was noticed in downtown Saskatoon. By 2016 psyllids had spread throughout the city, with a higher concentration in the neighbourhoods surrounding downtown. In 2017 many of the susceptible trees declined so much that they had to be removed. Removals will continue into 2020 as the number of trees affected was substantial: Our 2019 assessment showed that, of the City's total of approximately 7000 black ash and mancana ash, only about 1,474 Black ash and some Mancana ash trees have survived the psyllid attack. Black ash had 70% mortality from 2015 to 2019. Psyllids are currently in very low numbers despite there still being host trees, so, hopefully, the infestation is tapering off.

Psyllids appear to be affected by winter temperature. Psyllid populations dropped markedly related to something experienced during the winters of 2008-09 and 2017-18, based on survival of eggs from fall to the next spring.

Researchers at the University of Saskatchewan have discovered that cottony ash psyllids are vectoring (transmitting) *Liberibacter* bacteria within their population. It is not known if the bacteria are the cause of decline. *Liberibacter* bacteria are capable of causing decline in other systems elsewhere, e.g. a psyllid-vectored *Liberibacter* is responsible for decline of psyllids in citrus trees.

Joan Browne Bequest to SOS Elms

by Cliff Speer

Joan Browne, a member of SOS Elms during its earlier days, passed away in Dec. 2017 at the age of 95. We wish to gratefully acknowledge her generous bequest to our organization, received in October 2019.

Quoting from her obituary, "...Earning both BA and B.Ed. degrees from the University of Saskatchewan, Joan taught in Perdue, Sask and then many years at Walter Murray Collegiate Institute in Saskatoon. As such, she mentored many fortunate students. Joan is remembered for her kind, giving and hospitable nature. Her

many friends include former students and neighbours. She took delight in her home and garden and especially the many dogs who shared her life over the years..."

Founding SOS Elms member Richard Kerbes, who lives close to Joan's former home, remarks that Joan's love of animals involved more than her canine companions. A couple of years ago while on a stroll down the back lane he came across Joan and a friend with Joan's parrot in her back yard. They insisted the parrot could talk, but it didn't give out any words of wisdom that day.

The name Browne will probably ring a bell with anyone who has studiously read through the archival notes in our publication "Saskatoon Tree Tour". Joan's father Alfred Browne became Saskatoon's first Parks Superintendent in 1911, and got Saskatoon's urban forestry rolling with importing and planting city trees for the next 44 years! Joan's love of nature and trees was obviously in her genes!

Another SOS Elms founding member, Judith Benson, recalls interviewing Joan when she was producing a video on the legacy of Saskatoon's elm trees. Joan recalled helping her father with his tree work and how it was such an important part of her time growing up. Judith described Joan as a devoted member and supporter of SOS Elms.

The board is considering various options of how to manage Joan's bequest. One suggestion is to create a memorial fund which would be open for further donations in future years. The fund could accept grant applications for tree-related projects in Saskatoon. More research and discussion will take place in 2020 to realize the final form that Joan's bequest will take.



Photo: Greg Wiks

Ninth Avenue North In-fill Saga

by Cliff Speer

Saskatoon's North Park area has recently been a bee-hive of in-fill activity as developers snap up small lower value homes and turn the properties mostly into two-storey duplexes. Ninth Ave North, the street where I reside, has not escaped the onslaught of construction.

A church hall and accompanying parking lot near my place was turned into a multi-in-fill site about three years ago. A 2-storey duplex came first, followed this year by two more single 2-storey homes and more to come.

That was all okay, but the snag as usual is how to work around those pesky city trees! Three mature American elms occupy the "boulevard" portion of the in-fill site. The developer had protected the two most southerly ones according to city guidelines, so no problem there initially. However, with construction starting on the two adjoining lots this year, I noticed that street access to the construction site was conveniently created by a makeshift driveway between the one lonely elm separated from the first pair that the developer had originally protected with snow-fencing.

Heavy construction equipment regularly accessing the site close to the unprotected elm was raising the spectre of root compaction and damage. Since the developer had done such a nice job protecting the first two trees, I thought they might be agreeable to completing the job for the remaining one, although I suspected it could be a tough sell because the existing "default" option was just too convenient!



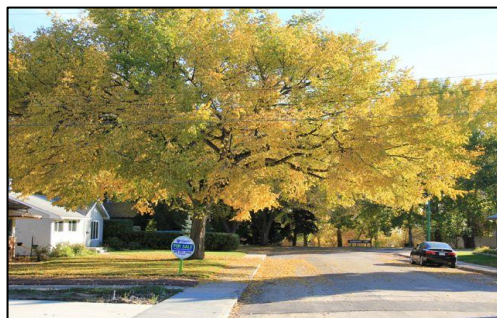
I emailed the developer with a c.c. to the city Superintendent of Urban Forestry, explaining the problem. I received an immediate reply from the developer confirming their respect for city trees, but they felt that they had abided by all the city

guidelines. I sensed the tone was positive and possibly open to more "education". I phoned to find out. The upshot of that was we ended up talking about other access possibilities via the back lane.

In the next day or two, yellow "caution tape" had been installed across the driveway and a new access was "bulldozed" from the back lane! The tape was eventually replaced with an extension of the initial snow fencing to now close off the street access and fully encompass all three elms. So, overall a good news story on getting developer co-operation on the sticky issue of tree preservation versus in-fill construction in Saskatoon!



Incidentally, I don't know if the co-operative response I got was due to developer good will or pressure from Urban Forestry or a combination of both. I have yet to receive any feedback from Urban Forestry or response to my voice mails!



Photos by Cliff Speer

New Saskatoon Afforestation Areas Group

Julia Adamson, as documented in recent SOS Elms newsletters, initiated and led a group of volunteers and supporters to better manage and protect the St. Barbe Baker Afforestation Area (RSBBAA). This year she succeeded in expanding the group to become a non-profit

organization: Friends of the Saskatoon Afforestation Areas Inc. Formed to protect and advocate for the beautiful trees and habitats on the RSBBA and its associated afforestation areas, they raise funds to help install barriers (which prevent vehicles from driving into the trees and wetlands), maintain park signs, garbage receptacles, and benches. They also carry out forest related educational activities and events.

Julia Adamson advises that membership is open to people who share a love of these forests, and who want to learn more about them and desire to protect and enjoy them. They welcome new members and volunteers. Membership is \$20/year. You can find a membership form online at:

<https://stbarbebaker.wordpress.com/memberform/>



**“Saskatoon’s World Famous
Conservationist: Richard St. Barbe Baker,
the Man of the Trees”**

January 25, 2020 at 7:00 pm.

A presentation by author Paul Hanley and ecologist Robert White, sponsored by the Friends of the Saskatoon Afforestation Areas Brainsport community room 616-10th St. E., Saskatoon, off Broadway Ave. (enter on the east side at the back)

A Nutrien WinterShines satellite event
Admission is free – for information see

<https://stbarbebaker.wordpress.com/>

SOS Elms Coalition Inc. Board of Directors

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Member at large: Alina Ostrowska	
Member at large: Tom Gode	

This newsletter edited by Richard Kerbes and Kathy Meeres

SOS Trees new/renewal membership form:

- ☐ \$20.00 Annual membership per household
- ☐ \$0.00 Student membership
- ☐ \$_____ Donation
- \$_____ Total - (tax receipt will be mailed to you)
- Money order or cheque enclosed
(Payable to SOS Trees Coalition)
- ☐ Yes! I wish to help out as a volunteer

Name _____

E-mail _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone _____



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