

First Nations University of Canada (Fidji Gendron, Assistant Professor of Biology)

The Native Prairie at the First Nations University of Canada

Plants have always played a primordial role in the First Nations culture. Traditional knowledge on how to use these plants is passed from generation to generation with grandparents, parents, and children spending time together in the outdoors learning about the plants and the land. Unfortunately, with more First Nations community members living in urban areas, this traditional knowledge is less accessible. The general public is also interested in learning more about native plants and their traditional uses, but their access to this knowledge is limited. The goal of this project was thus to have a place where Elders can share some information about plants in a culturally appropriate way and where the public can learn about native plants.

In order to bring back some of this traditional knowledge, a southern Saskatchewan native prairie was established at the First Nations University of Canada in Regina. The 6000 m² restoration project was initiated in the fall of 2003 and the area is now a mature and successful native prairie containing over 25 native forbs, 12 native grasses, and 10 native trees and shrubs, and is used to educate people on native plants and their traditional uses. Interpretive signs were developed with the help of Elders. During summertime, monthly workshops are organised to help people grow native plants at home.