

LEADERSHIP PROJECT

Kids learning hip-hop at U of R

By KERRY BENJOE
Leader-Post

Youths from northern Saskatchewan are at the University of Regina (U of R) for the next couple of days to learn hip-hop fundamentals.

The youths are participating in the second phase of 55 Parallel Northern Saskatchewan Hip Hop Leadership Project that runs until Saturday.

The project is led by Charity Marsh and her research assistants in partnership with the Northern Sport, Culture and Recreation District.

"There's this sense around hip hop as an oral tradition — a new, contemporary oral tradition, or ritual or practice that allows young people to tell stories," said Marsh.

In July, Marsh and her assistants visited the five northern communities of Sandy Bay, La Ronge, Pinehouse, Ile a la Crosse and La Loche. She said this phase will involve bringing two or three youth leaders from the five communities to learn more about hip-hop fundamentals from rapping to dancing while incorporating the Interactive Media and Performance (IMP) labs at the U of R.

Marsh hopes passing along the skills to the youth leaders will help young people begin to express themselves more freely. Marsh realized about a year ago that such a program would benefit young people in the north.

"Especially for young people, who need an outlet to tell stories and to connect across communities, which are sometimes isolated from one another," said Marsh.

She said there are many layers to the program because it's about connecting with young people, mentoring youth leaders, breaking down barriers and connecting young

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— Marsha Janvier,
youth co-ordinator

people with the university and their own creativity.

"The best part of the experience for me is having young people tell stories and be able to find a voice," said Marsh. "Whether they're telling a story through dance and using their bodies or whether they're rapping and actually conveying things through words or whether they're creating beats."

Marsha Janvier, a youth co-ordinator from La Loche, brought three young people with her to the workshop because she knows young people have a real interest in hip hop.

"I know a lot of kids back home in La Loche are into rapping and wanting to learn how to hip-hop dance," said Janvier. "So, I thought it would be a great program to start up because it's new and with the times."

She hopes that once she's able to get the equipment and space in place back home, it would help reach more young people. Janvier said her goal has always been to provide programs for youth that would draw them away from negative activities.