



2021 ANNUAL REPORT
TO
MEMBERS AND
MUNICIPAL PARTNERS



March 2022

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Red River North Tourism (RRNT), it is my privilege to offer a synopsis of the activities and achievements of 2021.

This report provides an overview of the initiatives that were undertaken within the Red River North region in 2021, highlighting current programs, and summarizing results and new initiatives under consideration for the future.

A full reporting for the 2021 fiscal period will be provided at the Annual General Meeting on 30 March 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Wales
President
Red River North Tourism

RED RIVER NORTH TOURISM

Board of Directors 2021

Executive:

Lois Wales, Community Volunteer, Selkirk; *President*
Brook Jones, Community Volunteer, Winnipeg; *Vice President*
Bob Turner, Community Volunteer, St Andrews; *Vice President*
Merilee Mollard, Community Volunteer, Selkirk; *Treasurer*
Marilyn Williams, Community Volunteer, St Andrews; *Secretary*
Laurel Sarginson, Community Volunteer, St Clements; *Past President*

Directors:

Brent Bayluk, World of Water, Selkirk
Ken Kuryliw, Director Library Services, Gaynor Family Regional Library, Selkirk
Darlene McArdle, Community Volunteer, St Clements
Rob Sarginson, Community Volunteer, St Clements
Patti Tomko, Poplar Forest Lodge & Campground, St Clements
Sean Thompson, Harvester Outdoors, Selkirk

Municipal Appointees:

Sandra Strang, Councillor, RM St Clements
Kristin Hoebee, Councillor, RM St Andrews
Vanessa Figus, Municipal Staff, Selkirk

Ex Officio:

Gail McDonald, Hospitality Plus, *Tourism Advisor*
Teresa Howell, Recreation Director, RM St Andrews

INTRODUCTION

Tourism programs and promotions were severely affected by public health restrictions beginning in the spring of 2020, with many activities being cancelled or postponed indefinitely, and others becoming virtual. A number of tourism recovery grants were announced through provincial and federal programs and wherever possible, RRNT has made applications to these.

As in the previous year, the one opportunity arising from the disruption was the public's focus on exploring the many treasures in their own backyards. Working in partnership with other local agencies and community groups, Red River North Tourism continued to explore innovative ways to attract new visitors to the region and offer safe alternatives for families to explore, learn, and participate in their home province.

Through liaison and partnership with other organizations and agencies RRNT seeks to coordinate cost-effective promotion of attractions and events throughout the region. In 2021, promotions increasingly focussed on reaching audiences through electronic media and the RRNT social media presence was significantly increased.

The primary roles of Red River North Tourism are promotions and the facilitation of programs that will attract visitors. RRNT addresses tourism initiatives through two streams:

- a) Broad-based Tourism: promotions and programs targeting audiences residing outside the region and inviting discovery of the area;
- b) Hometown Tourism: activities inspiring pride of place for those living or working within the region.

A) BROAD-BASED TOURISM:

RRNT works with other tourism agencies and regional partners, chiefly Interlake Tourism Association and Travel Manitoba, to reach audiences beyond the region. The primary focus is on two main all-season themes unique to Red River North: fishing and regional history.

Interlake Tourism Association

RRNT has participated on the **Board of Directors** of the Interlake Tourism Association since 2019. Wherever possible, cooperative advertising opportunities are used. In 2021 this included **digital billboard** advertising in Winnipeg and a half-page print ad in the **Interlake Travel Guide**.

Travel Manitoba

An advertising placement appeared in the **Winter Explorer Guide** issued by Travel Manitoba. This guide is circulated to Manitoba households through the Winnipeg Free Press and direct delivery.

driftscape

RRNT continues to participate on the **steering committee** for the development of content for **driftscape**. There are annual costs for participation in the app so a coordinated planning and presentation of attractions throughout the RRN region is required to avoid overlap and duplication. In 2021, the regional heritage group posted an extensive tour and the Marine Museum also has a presence on the app. Other presentations are in preparation including murals and the St Andrews Rectory.

**THERE'S LOTS
TO LOVE IN
RED RIVER NORTH!**

Just minutes north of Winnipeg, there are ski and hiking trails, skating, snowshoeing, geocaching, and some of the best ice fishing in Manitoba! Plus! A cozy fireside library, great cafés and restaurants, colourful murals to discover, a regional history that predates Canada, and so much more to explore and do.

redrivernorthtourism.com



Travel Manitoba *Winter Explorer Guide*

Signature programs

RRNT presents signature programs to act as an introduction to the region: inviting visitors to take part and encouraging return visits. Up to 65% or more of participants to these activities are attracted from outside the region. These are strong economic

drivers for the community. A data base of participants is maintained and ticket purchasers are invited to other events and in subsequent years.

Holiday Alley

This exciting program celebrated its fifth year of presenting light, sound, entertainment, children's activities and activities. Rather than provide detail here, a full report on the 2021 event is appended to this document.

Homes for the Holidays – House & Heritage Tour

This popular program has been suspended since 2019 due to public health concerns during the pandemic. This program requires a minimum of 15 months planning and preparation in advance and planning is now underway for the 2023 event. Since first offered in 2014 this program has attracted 500-700 visitors to the region each year, 50% of whom were visitors to the area. Over that period of time, this program donated over \$140,000 to local, affordable housing charities including starting up a special fund at the Selkirk & District Community Foundation called Homes for All.

Garden & Art Tour

This tour is unique in that it places artists, authors, and musicians in various private and public gardens. Again, due to public health restrictions the tour was suspended in both 2020 and 2021.

Despite extreme heat, drought, smoke, and the pandemic, a partnership was forged with Cambrian Credit Union, the Selkirk and District Horticultural Society, Communities In Bloom, local artists, authors, and youth musicians. The result was a virtual tour, now available free of charge to the public. Included in the video are promotional advertising spots for local businesses.

In addition, RRNT plays an important partnership and advocacy role with third party programs that attract visitors and enhance the region:

Murals

RRNT continues to support and partner with the **Interlake Art Board** in mural projects. Murals are created on specific themes and impact in the community goes beyond beautification: youth artists receive 400 hours of instruction and work along side the muralists. Three new murals were unveiled in 2021. RRNT is credited on the plaques that accompany each mural and in print materials such as colour books and other promotional items. Videos on some of the murals are available on YouTube.



Fishing

For the third year, Red River North Tourism was a sponsor at the **Winnipeg Ice Fishing Show** at the Winnipeg Convention Centre in early November. Over the 2 days of the show more than 400 interested anglers stopped at the RRNT booth to learn more about fishing opportunities in the region. Participation in the Fishing Show offers RRNT an opportunity for a greater role in promoting fishing education, promoting sustainable fishing practices, safe fish handling techniques, and safe boating. In turn, this offers the opportunity to link anglers to local suppliers and outfitters, and accommodation options.

A weekly **fishing photo contest** ran on social media for a period of weeks in the summer, raising local profile and providing images for the photo bank.

Planning and coordination for the **February Fishing Frenzy** began in October. This competitive tournament was coordinated by Anglers Atlas through the Interlake Tourism Association in partnership with numerous municipalities along the river and the lake.

Boating, Trails, and Sport

Recognizing that regional active transportation networks bring local economic and tourism opportunities, RRNT participated in the development of the **Lake Winnipeg Regional Trails Strategy**. Advocated by Urban Systems, an interdisciplinary consulting firm, the intent is to coordinate the development of cohesive active transportation and recreational trails among rural and municipal partners, and map the regional network to provide connections with local events and attractions, shopping opportunities, and other key destinations.

The **55+ Games**, a provincial event promoting healthy lifestyle activities for seniors, was originally schedule to take place in Selkirk in 2020. As a gold sponsor of the Games, RRNT planned to greet participants, welcoming them to the community, and encouraging return visits through a variety of promotions during events. Postponed for the second time in 2021, the Games will now take place with a more limited scope in 2022 with RRNT participating as previously planned.

RRNT was a lead partner of the **Red River Paddle Challenge** in late September, providing planning guidance and some assistance with on-site management for a second year. With participation limited due to the pandemic, paddlers from out of province and out of country were largely unable to attend in 2021. Still, 145 participants completed the 44km course from St Vital Park in Winnipeg to *The Half Moon Drive In* at Lockport. This program is expected to grow in 2022 when more participants from out of province can attend.



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Summer students collected data on boat launching and docking facilities, outfitters and guides, and boating and fishing suppliers in the region, and produced an **online map** of locations and related information. This data requires annual updating.

A feature on the **Selkirk Canoe Club** was added to the RRNT website highlighting the paddling program for those with mobility limitations. These programs operate from the lagoon and can accommodate individuals in wheelchairs.

Promotional support was extended to the **Brokenhead Wetlands Trail** and **Oak Hammock Marsh** through social media posts and presence on the RRNT website. These important conservation areas attract visitors to the region and provide opportunity for public education on protection of sensitive habitats and biodiversity.

Regional Heritage

Several years ago RRNT assisted the regional heritage group in the preparation and publication of three **self-guided tour booklets**. In 2021, the guides were edited and new advertisers obtained. They will be available on the website and at markets events. They are also used prize and gift packages.

RRNT continued to advocate for the reopening of **Kennedy House**. Discussions with the Province throughout the year culminated with the announcement in December of a commitment of \$350,000 for the initial repairs recommended by the independent engineering firm, Crosier Kilgour & Partners Ltd.



Kennedy House media announcement 17 December 2021.

The Instant Wine Cellar successfully raised over \$4700 for the restoration project at **Old St Jude's Church** in Grand Marais and other RRNT initiatives. More than 150 bottles of wine were shared between three winners who, remarkably, all resided in the St Clements and East Beaches areas. The raffle had the added benefit of establishing connections in the **Beaches of 59** community for membership and future cross promotions. St Jude's Church was erected in 1896 and is one of the oldest Métis log churches in Canada.



Promotions

A **Stay & Play** program was introduced during Holiday Alley and met with favourable response. This offers an opportunity to partner with local businesses for accommodation and food services with packages created to entice visitor to come and stay in the area while taking part in key events and activities. Initially offered through the City of Selkirk, these packages will be sold on the RRNT website in future.



Another **promotions partnership** was initiated in 2021: this pilot project was with a local Airbnb. RRNT provided some support towards the production of promotional materials in exchange for prominent placement of the RRNT logo and information. The program will be available for partnership with other local businesses in future.

An information rack card was prepared and printed promoting the **Marine Museum** and **Selkirk Park**.

B) HOMETOWN TOURISM:

RRNT supports activities that encourage businesses to be partners in local promotions, raising their profile in the community. By exploring and becoming more familiar with the many features and attractions within their home territory, individuals can support broader tourism initiatives as ambassadors for the community.

Home decorating contests

Seasonal contests encouraged residents to decorate their yards, houses, windows and balconies. These included promotions at Easter, Canada Day, Hallowe'en as well as an autumn scarecrow contest, and *Holiday Yards of the Season*, the annual lighting contest in December and January.

Markets and Community Events

Many markets were restricted, including those at the Selkirk waterfront, and some were unable to be presented. The ***Skinner's Locks Market*** was suspended due to bridge reconstruction. RRNT was present at the ***Selkirk D.O.G. Days*** markets and an ***evening market*** held during ***Culture Days*** in September where more than 150 people stopped at the RRNT tent to learn more about our activities.

The ***annual open house events*** normally held by St Andrews and St Clements were cancelled. RRNT traditionally participates at these events when offered.

In October, representatives of RRNT attended the unveiling of the new mural installation in the ***Gaynor Family Regional Library's Prairie Garden: Manidoonag Imaa Mikinaako-Mininiing / Sacred Spirits of Turtle Island MMIWG2S***. The site was filmed for inclusion within the *2021 Virtual Garden & Art Tour* video.



In support of ***Holiday Alley's*** theme "Dancin' in the Streets (again)" RRNT hosted three ***flash mob*** events at locations around the region encouraging the public to participate. Over three consecutive weekends groups gathered at Lower Fort Garry, the Marine Museum, and at the Chuck statue on Main Street. Video footage was submitted to *Holiday Alley* for inclusion in an overall compilation posted on YouTube.

Photo Contests

While open to anyone anywhere, these contests allow RRNT to build a photo library of people, attractions and activities in the region. Contests on various themes were held throughout the year.

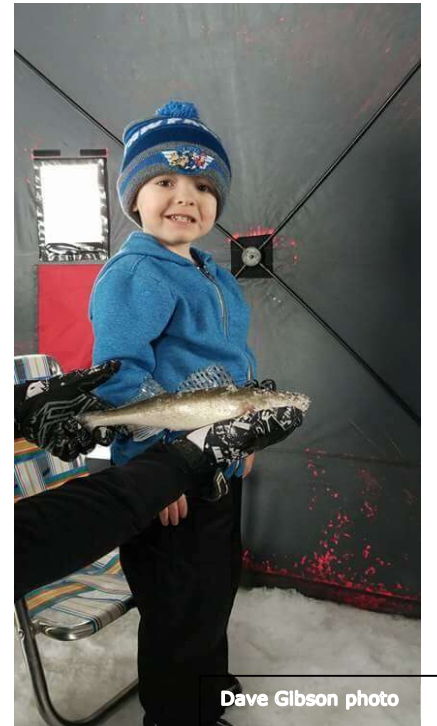
Digital Media

Construction began on a new **website** highlighting program priorities.

A more intensive use of **social media** took shape with a formatted look and an increase from weekly to daily posts. There was also increased collaboration with other regional agencies.

Materials Distribution

Another means of communication that was disrupted by the pandemic was distribution of print materials. In the past, RRNT maintained over 40 brochure racks throughout the region and these were supplied through a contractual arrangement with **Inclusion Selkirk**. Use of print materials was suspended and some racks were removed from several locations.



Also disrupted for a second year were in-person meetings and the distribution of print materials through the **Gaynor Family Regional Library**, another important partner in reaching visitor audiences.

C) ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Tourism Coordinator

Meredith Boerchers was hired as RRNT Tourism Coordinator in a job share opportunity with St Andrews. Meredith works from the St Andrews Rectory and Heritage Centre and is responsible for RRNT social media presence, updates to the website, and coordination of RRNT contests and public outreach programs, and distribution of information. She quickly established a consistent presence on Facebook and Instagram and has launched other programs. It is expected that her curatorial background will be helpful in developing future visitors services programs at Kennedy House

Grants

In 2021, RRNT applied for any available grants related to our programs and services. These included:

Digital Manitoba Initiative

The Province of Manitoba announced an opportunity for non-profits to integrate digital technology into their operations. The program offers a digital adoption investment of up to \$5,000 for fundamental digital tools, which could include a range of applications., such as supporting marketing and promotional activities, website development or enhancement, e-commerce

capabilities, accounting, events and project management software. The program is managed by Manitoba Chambers of Commerce (MCC) on behalf of the Province.

Western Economic Diversification Tourism Relief Grant

This Federal grant became available to tourism organizations in the autumn. An application, along with 11 supporting documents, was submitted in October. The application outlined the loss of revenues from the cessation of tour programs and activities due to health restrictions, and requested a grant amount of \$10,000. Application information was later updated and submitted.

Selkirk Community Renewal Corporation – Small Grant

A Small Grant application was submitted to the Selkirk Community Renewal Corporation on seeking support for the *2021 Virtual Garden & Art Tour*. If successful, this could provide up to \$2500 for the program.

Community Futures – North Red

In April, an estimated cost of \$6000 for website refurbishment was submitted to Community Futures – North Red.

Constitutional Review

The RRNT Constitution was adopted in 2016. Since that time a number of omissions and items requiring clarification had come to light. A Primary concern was the incorrect reference to RRNT as an association rather than a non-profit incorporation, which prevented successful application for some grants. Recommendations for amendments to the Constitution were prepared for review by the general membership and ratification scheduled for March of 2022. The Constitution is available on the RRNT website.