

**RED RIVER NORTH TOURISM**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**TO**

**MUNICIPAL SHAREHOLDERS**

**JANUARY 2019**





On behalf of the Board of Directors of Red River North Tourism, it is my privilege to offer a synopsis of the many activities and achievements of 2018.

Since last reporting to you, the year has been filled with exciting new programs and continued development for Red River North Tourism.

This document is also available on the RRNT web site and serves as a reporting of current programs. It also summarizes some plans for the future. Detailed financial information is provided separately as required.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Wales  
President  
Red River North Tourism

## **INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY**

This report provides a snapshot of the initiatives that have been undertaken on your behalf within the Red River North region in the second year of the constituted RRNT organization.

Beginning in 2012, all those directly or indirectly active in the provision of products or services to tourists, as well as interested members of the public, were invited to participate in an annual Tourism Stakeholders Forum to discuss opportunities and benefits of tourism throughout the Red River North region.

Through the annual Forums, members of the community had clearly expressed a desire for the coordinated and cooperative delivery of tourism services aimed at expanding current benefits and enriching the future.

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum, in the late autumn of 2016, Red River North Tourism reorganized, installing a newly elected Board of Directors and adopting a Constitution and By-Laws.

Early in 2017 four Standing Committees were established: Heritage and Culture, Marketing, Membership, and Product and Service Development. Committee Chairs were elected and priorities for each committee were identified. At some time in the future a fifth Standing Committee may be established to manage Communications, including public and media relations, web and social media, and all other forms of public information. This Committee would work in concert with the other standing committees to ensure public recognition of the organization and the successful achievement of stated annual goals.

The 2017 Annual General Meeting was held March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in the Gaynor Family Regional Library Theatre. Kyle Irving, Executive Producer and Partner with Eagle Vision, producers of the television series *Burden of Truth*, addressed the assembly, providing interesting statistics regarding the direct economic benefits seen by the region through film production and movie filming in the area.

## **CONSTITUTION AND MANDATE:**

Under this Constitution the stated **Vision** of the organization is:

*"To become Manitoba's premier tourism destination".*

The **Mission Statement** reads:

*"Red River North Tourism develops, promotes and coordinates activities that maximize regional tourism, by harnessing volunteer and stakeholder resources, and enhancing the assets of this unique region to provide welcoming tourism experiences and increased visitor numbers."*

The Constitution and By-Laws are available for reference on the RRNT web site.

RRNT is registered with the Companies Branch of Manitoba and has a Business Number. Banking, mail, and telephone accounts are managed by volunteers on the Board and contract personnel. In its formative years, financial management support was provided through the Gaynor Family Regional Library.

**Red River North Tourism  
Board of Directors 2017-2018**

***Executive:***

Lois Wales, Community Volunteer, Selkirk; *Chair*  
Jerry Culleton, St Andrews Realty; *1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*  
Marlena Muir, Community Volunteer, Selkirk; *2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Chair, Product and Service Development Committee*  
Lenora Klassen, Community Volunteer, Selkirk; *Treasurer*  
Laurel Sarginson, Owner, Evergreen Gate B & B, St Andrews; *Past President*  
Marilyn Williams, Community Volunteer, St Andrews; *Secretary*

***Directors:***

Ken Kuryliw, Director Library Services, Gaynor Family regional Library  
Brook Jones, River City Photography; Editor, *Selkirk Journal*  
Darlene McArde, St Clements Heritage Committee  
Terry Neplyk, Consultant and Owner, Juan More Thing, St Clements  
Rob Sarginson, Chair, Red River North Regional Heritage Group, St Andrews; *Chair, Heritage and Culture Committee*

***Ex Officio:***

Gail McDonald, Interlake Tourism Association, *Tourism Advisor*

***Municipal Appointees:***

Dave Sutherland, Councillor, RM St Clements  
Joy Sul, Councillor, RM St Andrews  
Ray Frey, Councillor, RM St Clements

***Municipal Staff:***

Vanessa Figus, Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator, City of Selkirk  
Teresa Howell, Recreation Director, RM St Andrews  
Roberta Anderson, Communications Co-ordinator, RM St Clements

## **PLANNING & FINANCES:**

A Strategic Plan was initiated in 2017, stipulating short term (annual) and mid-term (three year) goals. Goals are measurable and each is allocated a budget. Work on this Plan continues and it is intended that Goals will be reviewed and updated each year as part of the annual planning and budget process.

The **Mandate** of RRNT states:

*"Red River North Tourism shall act as a catalyst, encouraging visitation to the Region through strong partnerships and sound program strategies; and shall work to ensure financial efficiency;*

*"...the Red River North region shall be promoted as an all-season centre of commerce, heritage, and recreation, integrated within a diverse community with unique physical features and attractions;*

*"...Red River North shall be promoted as welcoming all visitors; highlighting the recreational, historical and cultural, commercial, residential, and other attractive and significant features along the historic Red River."*

This mandate was generated through more than six years of consultation with those influenced by regional tourism.

As tourism programs continue to grow and marketing efforts expand, it becomes increasingly clear that timely and sustained support from shareholders and community stakeholders alike is required to ensure accomplishment of identified goals.

While each partner in the region has unique features, individually the investment required to attract and grow a strong visitor base would be prohibitive and unlikely. By working together the vision of Red River North as Manitoba's premier tourist destination, one of national and international note, can be achieved. Over the past three years RRNT has indicated to the three Municipal partners that the most effective results can best be achieved through reliable annual per-capita funding. Following through on targets established in the Strategic Plan would see municipal contributions commence in 2020.

The income and expenses of the past year are provided in a separate document, with the expenditures from the contributions of each municipality detailed.

## **PARTNERSHIPS:**

The **Interlake Tourism Association** (ITA) and **Travel Manitoba** continue to be key partners. Guidance and in the past, advice, from both these agencies has proven invaluable. In particular, ITA is generous with time and counsel and this has greatly assisted in the growth and development of RRNT. Travel Manitoba conducted a place branding review and further discussions have been held with Selkirk Biz with a view to exploring how other Manitoba communities have pursued branding.

RRNT will continue to work directly with ITA and Travel Manitoba in the development, testing, and assessment of programs and new tourism products.

The **Gaynor Family Regional Library** also continues to be an invaluable partner: providing meeting space and assisting with distribution of public information materials. This support is deeply appreciated. Wherever possible, RRNT endeavours to promote the Library as a hub for the community.

In 2018, RRNT partnered with the **Manitoba Marine Museum** for events and through sponsorship. It is hoped that a more robust partnership will develop in 2019 through several new initiatives.

**Other partnerships** throughout the region are critical to raising awareness and contributing to the success of programs. RRNT encourages cooperative planning and joint participation in initiatives. Program and project sponsors are among the most valuable partners as they provide financial, logistical, and promotional support. These partners are identified in concert with those activities in which they participated, elsewhere in this report.

Positive dialogue continues with groups such as The St Andrews Rectory, Friends of Lower Fort Garry, Selkirk Biz, Manitoba Métis Federation, Canalta Hotels, and Selkirk Transit. RRNT also continues to explore possible opportunities with the RM of West St Paul.



These partnerships are critical to the growth of local tourism and ultimately contribute to regional, provincial, and national efforts.

Community Futures/North Red has been invited to participate at Annual General Meetings and the Tourism Forum, and to partner in other economic initiatives, but to date has not come forward.

## **2018 ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:**

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

As in past years, the administrative responsibilities of the organization were borne by volunteers on the Board of Directors. However, for the first time this past summer, RRNT contracted a full time summer student.

Through the assistance of a grant from the Manitoba Métis Federation, RRNT was able to hire a business student for flexible full time hours for a period of 10 weeks. In addition to maintaining current information on the web site and on social media, Amanda Hallson provided clerical and marketing support, represented RRNT at various events and activities (such as summer Markets), coordinated mascot appearances, and provided management assistance for the *Garden and Art Tour*.

While having a dedicated employee greatly alleviated the burden on volunteers, managing payroll and deductions did complicate financial reporting.

At the end of the summer term, another student was contracted to carry on the web site and social media maintenance. A web site developer is also contracted on an "as needed" basis.

As the activities of RRNT continue to grow the need for dedicated and consistent attention to the organization's affairs become more pronounced. Future opportunities to share an office and program manager with other not-for-profit groups are under consideration.

### **MARKETING:**

Most RRNT initiatives fall within the scope of the Marketing Committee. Initiatives are grouped within the following categories:

#### *Advertising*

RRNT takes full advantage of cooperative advertising opportunities offered by *Interlake Tourism Association (ITA)*. These may include newspaper promotions, maps, regional print guides, and other placements.

In 2018, RRNT was nominated in two categories for ITA awards in tourism excellence. A RRNT delegation attended the annual ITA awards banquet.

Advertising placements through the various programs offered by *Travel Manitoba* are also considered when possible within available budgets. In 2018 Travel Manitoba produced a YouTube fishing video in cooperation with RRNT. The video is posted on the Travel Manitoba and RRNT web sites.

RRNT delegates attended the Travel Manitoba AGM.



### *Promotions & Sponsorships*

RRNT invested in the purchase of a canopy tent, stand-alone banner, and other accessories for use at festival and events. These were put to good use on several occasions at the Selkirk waterfront, the St Andrews Open House, and other happenings.

Through the assistance of the summer student, an information booth was provided at the Locks Market every weekend in July and at the Selkirk Waterfront every Wednesday in August. These would not have been possible without the summer staff.

*Chuck the Channel Cat* made appearances at Canada Day celebrations, the Selkirk Parade, several summer markets, and events at the Selkirk waterfront. Again, this was coordinated and managed by the summer student. The costume is in need of repair or replacement and this will be a significant expense.



In early June, RRNT developed a tour and promotions package for the *Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs Convention* held in the region. The package included coupons and samples provided by local businesses. The tour opportunities and promotional items were very well received and kick-started the development of other package options to offer other visiting conference and convention groups.

Promotional packages were also provided to "Catch the Future" the District 64 (Manitoba, NW Ontario, NW Minnesota) *Toastmasters International* conference held in the RRN region in early September.

RRNT promoted the Netley Marsh information tours in September and supports the activities of the Red River Basin Commission wherever possible.

RRNT was a sponsor of the *Winnipeg Ice Fishing Show* at the Winnipeg Convention Centre in November and provided print and other materials throughout the show.

As a cooperative partner for *Holiday Alley*, RRNT sponsored the weekend event, providing volunteers and promoting activities on the web site and through social media.

In the past RRNT has advertised in the program booklet for the *Highland Gathering*. Ads were not placed in 2018 as it has been observed that very few of the printed programs are sold and the majority are discarded at the close of the event. RRNT committed to providing an information table for one day only.

### *Web site & other Electronic Media*

Contracted personnel are now responsible for web site and social media updates. This assists in timely and consistent delivery of information. The web site improvements made the previous year continue to provide ease of use for visitors to the site.

Facebook regularly attracts people to events around the region. Boosts continue to be used effectively. Posts with good quality images and descriptions get more likes and shares.

A new feature on the RRNT web site is the *Red River Reasons* blog. Presented by a RRNT volunteer, the blog spotlights regional features of interest and is proving popular with visitors to the site.

The monthly Events Calendar is posted on the web site and is also promoted through social media. Community events and festival such as the *Brokenhead Aboriginal Days* are given special attention on the web site.

The request for advocacy support for Captain Kennedy House on the RRNT web site was well received and assisted in boosting the on-line petition response over 2,500.

Links to other fishing sites and blogs have been added to the web site.

#### *Collateral Materials and Distribution:*

RRNT, ITA and Travel Manitoba print information is available at over 40 brochure rack locations in the region. Stocking of these racks requires dedicated attention, especially in peak season. Following a successful delivery trial in St Clements, Inclusion Selkirk (formerly Community Living) has been engaged to restock the racks as far north as South Beach as well as in St Andrews and Selkirk. Travel Manitoba supplies the Grand Marais location and provincial staff coordinate distribution to park offices at Bird's Hill and Grand Beach during the peak summer season. The Gaynor Family Regional Library maintains a significant supply of materials for brochure racks at that facility and other occasional uses by RRNT at events and programs.

The *Selkirk & Area Heritage Tour* self-guiding tour booklet continues to be a popular item. It was reprinted in 2018 with the thirteen advertisements covering the cost.

A new publication *Lockport to Lake Winnipeg - Red River Heritage Tour on the Water* has been added to the RRNT distribution family. This publication was produced through the cooperative efforts of the Red River North Regional Heritage Group, St Andrews and St Clements heritage advisory bodies, the province and the Gaynor Family Library. The Guide is also promoted on the RRNT web site.

#### **MEMBERSHIP:**

The focus of the membership program is building partnerships. It also provides a modest income.

Depending upon membership category, some promotional support is offered to members through the web site and other social media efforts. Repeat traffic to the web site by members is one stated goal of the membership program.

It is recognized that annual membership drives are required and must include personal outreach to both existing and new members.

Membership revenue in 2018 was just over \$1,000.00.

### **PRODUCT AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT:**

Representatives from a range of organizations within the RRN area participate on the Product and Service Development Committee including: Inclusion Selkirk, Friends of Lower Fort Garry, Selkirk Biz, Friends of Stuart House, Manitoba Métis Federation, Selkirk Transit, and Canalta Hotels.

This Committee is tasked with reaching out to community partners to foster new program ideas, and act as an incubator for new ventures. RRNT assists in the development of a foundation for programs that can be nurtured and grow under the auspices of local groups and organizations. Such initiatives underscore the importance of community involvement and continue the role of RRNT in bringing compatible partners together.

The Committee is actively pursuing several new product ideas for delivery in 2019 and beyond, such as establishing a RRNT YouTube channel.

The potential for innovative programming is limited only by imagination and the determination to succeed! The inaugural *Garden and Art Tour* in July 2018 is a perfect example of this.

#### *Garden and Art Tour*

The Board is always alert to opportunities to generate new revenues. In 2018, RRNT President, Lois Wales, undertook to personally create and deliver a new program with the goals of: raising funds for RRNT; attracting visitors to the region; and supporting regional artists. The first annual RRN *Garden and Art Tour* was held Sunday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

At a cost of \$30 per ticket, this program invited the public to tour nine properties: one in St Clements, four in St Andrews and four in Selkirk. Over two dozen artists were located throughout the various sites and workshop activities were included at some locations.

Tickets were sold on-line, at local retailers, and through lead sponsor Cambrian Credit Union. Advertising was placed in local papers and with Selkirk Transit, but of great value was the editorial radio promotion and coverage in the Winnipeg Free Press.



A total of 190 patrons came through the event, 60% of whom were visitors from outside the region. Tickets included a survey and 120 were returned: an extraordinarily high percentage. The majority of respondents indicated they were interested in being contacted in regard to a future event. The comments collected, while overwhelmingly positive, offered some practical suggestions and these have been reviewed and considered in the development of the 2019 Tour.

The artists reported that from their perspective the Tour was successful, with most indicating the exposure to new audiences was particularly valued. RRNT did not charge artists an entrance fee but a percentage of sales was collected.

The 2019 Tour will include seminars and workshops with the first of these scheduled for February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the St Andrews Rectory.

### **HERITAGE AND CULTURE:**

RRNT added to chorus of voices requesting the government extend the Manitoba Film Tax credit. It has been clearly demonstrated that the film industry contributes significant economic benefit to the region.

RRNT actively supported the petition requesting the Government restore Kennedy House. A prominent link to the on-line petition was added to the RRNT web site home page and a formal letter of concern was addressed to the Minister.

As no umbrella bodies exist for the many ethno cultural groups in the region, developing partnerships is a challenge. Wherever possible, the Board and Committees continue to pursue more ethnic and cultural participation.



### **STRATEGIC PLAN AND BUDGET**

Over the past five years RRNT has been diligent in applying a regional perspective to all promotions. It is essential that partners also embrace this view. Compartmentalizing finances is counterproductive and time consuming. If regional results are to be realized, a fully regional view to expenditures must be adopted. This will be critical to continued success.

The Strategic Plan outlines the need for reasonable tri-partite financial support, culminating in a request for per capita funding by 2020. This would provide a reliable and timely income base which would allow for the leveraging of other funds as well as the appropriate

contracting of professional assistance. Planning and delivery of viable new products and promotions are dependent upon the consistent management practices afforded by a stable income.

The Strategic Plan is available as a separate document.

## **ITEMS OF CONCERN**

A number of concerns have been brought to the attention of the Board and Committees through discussions with members of the community. While these may or may not be specific to any RRNT initiative, they reflect on the region as a whole.

Items of concern to all three municipalities include:

- The absence of public washrooms in several riverside locations throughout the region has been noted. The lack of convenient, accessible, boat launch and parking facilities continues to be a deterrent to many visitors. Fishing on and along the river is a primary feature of the region in all seasons. Appropriate infrastructure would assist in generating a strong economic return.
- Are there plans for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 and if so, how can RRNT be active in these endeavours?
- How can RRNT and other regional bodies work together to capitalize on the visibility garnered through the film industry?
- The plight of Captain Kennedy House and other heritage structures is of major concern, not only to those in the immediate area but to visitors as well. It is hoped that all Municipalities will press the Government to appropriately maintain these important historic buildings for future generations.

Items specific to individual Municipalities include:

### ***Saint Andrews***

- Some of the most historically significant built structures in all of Western Canada are found along the Red River in St Andrews: Twin Oaks, Scott House, The Rectory, St Andrews on the Red, Captain Kennedy House, Lower Fort Garry, and the buildings north of Selkirk currently owned by the St Norbert Foundation. Unfortunately several of these under the care and management of the provincial government are in disrepair.

The closure of Kennedy House in particular represents a substantial economic loss to the RM and the region. The neglect of this historic structure has been met with consternation by numerous visitors and tourism agencies. During the *Garden and Art Tour*, many visitors noted the "tragic" lack of attention to the building.

Similarly, comments continue to be received regarding the unkempt appearance of the Scott House interpretive property, more resembling an abandoned relic rather than an important provincial historic site.

The St. Norbert Foundation is in the process of selling property north of Selkirk which includes structures dating to the 1850's that are also in a significant state of deterioration and disrepair. There does not appear to be a plan for the future that recognizes the remarkable heritage of these buildings. RRNT supports the efforts of the descendants of Duncan McRae and the Regional Heritage Group in preventing the potential loss of buildings with such historic significance to the area.

It is hoped the Municipality will press the Province to act in the best interests of the future of these historic properties, ensuring they are maintained with the dignity and respect deserved. Continuing and frequent dialogue with the Province is encouraged, advocating the importance of these landmarks to area tourism, urging the timely repair and reopening of Kennedy House, and full consideration of other issues. With some attention now, these structures will speak to generations to come.

- The lack of washrooms along the length of River Road, especially at the provincial picnic areas, is another frequent complaint.

### ***St. Clements***

- The Kenosewun Museum is another property managed through the Parks and Protected Spaces Branch of the Manitoba government. The Museum has been closed for several years and is sorely missed. A plan for the artefacts within the Museum and the future of the building has not been communicated.
- As with other spaces along the river, the lack of public washrooms in Lockport Provincial Park also has been raised.
- Suggestions have been made regarding the former "ash pit" area, owned by Manitoba Hydro. The area holds potential for picnic spots and rest stops along the trail, along with a boat launch and even community gardens.
- A monument to the original settlers of the area, as a tribute to the many Scottish and Ukrainian pioneers that settled and farmed along the east side of the river, has also been suggested.

### ***City of Selkirk***

- It has been suggested that architectural requirements could be instated to maintain the facades of structures, especially those along Manitoba Avenue and Eveline Street. This would ensure the character of the city at its origin would be retained.
- Numerous comments have been heard regarding the accessibility and safety of the waterfront. Appropriate wheelchair access does not exist. The gradient slope from the street to the river edge is too steep for reasonable use with a wheelchair. A path with a grade that meets current code is needed.

- RRNT has received community feedback regarding the lack of public washroom facilities in the downtown waterfront district. This puts a strain on local businesses and makes the area less than welcoming to visitors.
- While a temporary washroom is installed at the waterfront for the summer months it has not been wheelchair accessible. This is easily rectified and should be addressed for the 2019 season.
- Wheelchair access to the Selkirk Arena also requires improvement. Entrance doors and washrooms are especially difficult to navigate.
- A plan for Stuart House could be communicated. RRNT and other groups are eager to participate in the future of the heritage home and hope it will be brought back to functional use soon.
- Visitors have noted that the water tower, while iconic, is badly in need of a paint job.
- Broader promotion of the Manitoba Marine Museum and the collection it represents is required. The proximity of this institution to Winnipeg and the potential for partnership with other museums could be explored.

