

**RED RIVER NORTH TOURISM**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**TO**

**MUNICIPAL SHAREHOLDERS**

**OCTOBER 10, 2017**





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 the past twelve months.

Since last reporting to you in October of 2016, the year has been filled with challenge and dynamic change for Red River North Tourism.

This document serves as a reporting of current programs and also summarizes some plans for the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Wales  
President  
Red River North Tourism

## **INTRODUCTION**

Each year, all those directly or indirectly active in the provision of products or services to tourists, as well as interested members of the public, are invited to participate in a Tourism Stakeholders Forum to discuss opportunities and benefits of tourism throughout the Red River North region. In the late autumn of 2016, at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum, Red River North Tourism reorganized, installing a newly elected Board of Directors and adopting a Constitution and By-Laws.

### **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."*

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

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. A fifth Standing Committee will be established soon to manage Communications, including public and media relations, web and social media, and all other forms of public information. The Communications Committee will work in concert with other standing committees to ensure public recognition of the organization and the successful achievement of stated annual goals.

A copy of the Red River North Tourism Constitution and By-Laws is available for reference and it also appears on the RRNT web site.

RRNT has registered with the Companies Branch of Manitoba and received a Business Number. Previously, financial management had been provided through the Gaynor Family Regional Library. Now, independent banking, mail, and telephone accounts are in place and are managed by RRNT volunteer and contract personnel.

**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 McArdle, St Clements Heritage Committee  
Dan Lester, Executive Director, Red River North Trails Association  
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:***

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

## **PLANNING:**

Earlier this year a Strategic Plan was initiated, 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.

## **PARTNERSHIPS:**

The Interlake Tourism Association (ITA) and Travel Manitoba continue to be key partners. Guidance and advice from both these agencies has proven invaluable over the past five years. ITA in particular has been very generous with both time and counsel which has shaped this organization and assisted in its growth and development.

In 2017, through these two bodies, RRNT received a one-time grant of \$4000 which was applied to advertising and social media programs. This provided a significant boost to marketing efforts.

RRNT will continue to work directly with ITA and Travel Manitoba in the development of destination branding (place branding) as well as in the testing and evaluation of proposed new tourism products. These will be major steps forward for the three communities.

**Other partnerships** throughout the region are also critical to the success of plans and programs. RRNT continues to reach out to various organizations, encouraging cooperative planning and joint participation in initiatives. Positive dialogue continues with several groups such as the Selkirk Biz, Community Living, Manitoba Métis Federation, Canalta Hotels, and Selkirk Transit.

RRNT has approached the RM of Dunottar to discuss opportunities for collaboration in the delivery of information and promotions to increase tourism throughout the northern reaches of the region. In the future, similar opportunities may be explored with East and West St Paul to the south.

We believe that these partnerships will enhance Tourism more than just regionally, but provincially, nationally and even internationally.



## AN OVERVIEW OF 2017 ACHIEVEMENTS:

### MARKETING:

This past year, the Marketing Committee has focused attention on a number of strategic initiatives: increasing the reach of print advertising, a new web site, printing and distribution of informational contact cards, sponsorship of a transit bench, and driving traffic to the web site and social media pages, strengthening hometown tourism, to name but a few. Name recognition continues to be the priority.

Other achievements include:

- Digital (large screen) advertising was prominent at The Forks during the Canada Summer Games.
- RRNT regional tourism information was made available at Winnipeg Hotels throughout the Games.
- Summer print advertising also appeared in Travel Manitoba's Canada Summer Games publication (circulation 250,000).
- Sites for brochure racks have been reviewed and new ones put in place. Tourist information brochure racks are now available in 42 locations: 17 Selkirk; 12 St. Andrews; 13 St Clements.
- Stocking of racks requires dedicated attention, especially in peak season. Within the RM of St Clements, Community Living has been engaged to restock the racks for a trial period.
- Distribution of the monthly Events Calendar is more robust than ever and it is shared more broadly, with many others, including the municipalities, using the links

**Red River North**  
SELKIRK • ST. ANDREWS • ST. CLEMENTS

Only 15 minutes North of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

**CONCERTS & EVENTS**

**Rockin on the Red**  
July 14 - 16, Half Moon Drive In, Lockport.  
Halfmoondrivein.com

**Triple S Fair and Rodeo**  
July 14 - 16, Selkirk Park | Selkirkfairandrodeo.com

**Selkirk Waterfront Concerts**  
July 22, Aug. 12, Aug. 26, Selkirk Waterfront  
myselkirk.ca/event/rock-the-waterfront/

**Summer Winds Family Music Festival**  
July 21 - 22, Victoria Beach Community Centre  
Summerwindsmusic.com

**Sand Castle Building Competition**  
Aug. 12. Registration 9am, Grand Beach boardwalk  
grandbeachtourism.com

**MARKETS**

**Skinners Locks Market**  
Sundays 12 noon - 5 pm,  
River Road Skinners at Lockport  
facebook.com/SkinnersLocksMarket/

**Petersfield Summer Market**  
Sundays 10 am - 3 pm  
Mallard Park,  
Highway 9, Petersfield  
facebook.com/PetersfieldCommunity  
ClubsSummerMarket

**Victoria Beach Country Market**  
Saturdays 10 am - 1 pm,  
Victoria Beach Community Centre,  
Highway 59 and Ateah Road.  
vbcommunitycentre.com/  
country-market.html

**info@redrivernorthtourism.com**  
**redrivernorthtourism.com**

Photo Credits: Photo of Kayaker, courtesy of M. Eggert. Photo of Children Jumping into Water, courtesy of Neil Higginson

provided. The calendar is posted on the web site; it is e-mailed to an extensive list of well over 120 recipients, and a further 70+ printed copies are circulated.

- *Chuck the Channel Cat* made many appearances this year: at the *Triple S Fair and Rodeo*; *Rockin' on the Red* at The Half Moon Drive In in Lockport; Lower Fort Garry; and several summer markets, including those at the Selkirk waterfront. On the calendar are appearances at *Holiday Alley*, *Art on the Avenue*, and the Santa Clause parade in November.
- Information on the popular *Homes for the Holidays* tours continues to be shared on the RRNT web page and Facebook pages along with the new *Holiday Alley* program.
- RRNT continues to work cooperatively with the Rectory, assisting in the development of a realistic marketing strategy and encouraging collaboration with the Church.
- The Friends of Lower Fort Garry has welcomed the opportunity to participate with RRNT in tourism program planning and development.
- Two season tickets to the Selkirk Steelers Junior Hockey Team have been purchased. Through contests on the RRNT Facebook page, two seats will be awarded as prizes for each home game. In addition to supporting and promoting our local team, this is another initiative intended to increase traffic to the RRNT Facebook page and web site.
- RRNT and ITA are co-sponsoring *Art on the Avenue* and both will be present, along with *Chuck*, to share tourism information and talk with visitors.
- The transit bench in front of Shopper's Drug Mart on Main Street will soon display RRNT promotional advertising.



These last three items and several Facebook boosts would not have been possible without the \$4000 grant from ITA/Travel Manitoba.

#### *Electronic Media:*

Two extensive reports analyzing RRNT web site and Facebook traffic for the months of June, July, and August have been compiled. Copies of both these reports are available if further detail is desired.

The new and improved web site makes it easier for surfers to find the information they need. Some highlights of the web site report are:

- Over 4000 users in the three month period representing an increase of 235% over the previous ninety days.
- The majority of users initiate their search through browsers such as Google, Yahoo or Bing, and 92.9% are Canadian.
- The Events page and specific events receive the most views.
- Other popular pages are those dedicated to fishing, boating, and seasonal produce markets.

The number of Facebook followers has increased and regularly attracts people to events around the region. Statistics on traffic to the RRNT Facebook page between January and September 2017 include:

- Facebook posts have increased as additional information is forthcoming from within the community. Forty-five posts were made in August alone.
- of those between 18 and 65 years of age living in Manitoba. The Aboriginal Film Festival was one boosted post which ultimately reached just under 7000 viewers with 113 reactions (likes) and comment shares (forwarding to someone else), and 155 post clicks, seeking more information.
- RRNT posts for the Triple S Fair and Rodeo were also boosted and reached almost 8000 people
- Other events boosted on the RRNT Facebook page were *Rockin' on the Red*, *St Andrews Rectory*, and *Summer Winds Music Festival*.
- A post on all the activities available in the region on August 26<sup>th</sup> reached just under 6000 people.
- A post of Travel Manitoba's blog ([manitobahot.com](http://manitobahot.com)) profiling the RRN area was viewed by 9000 people.

We have learned that posts with several good quality pictures and longer descriptions tend to get more likes and shares.





## **MEMBERSHIP:**

Current plans are to launch a new membership program early in 2018. A graphic designer has been engaged to develop the necessary collateral materials and web presence.

The focus of the membership program is building partnerships and collaboration with a range of cultural, heritage, and business partners. It will also provide some modest income.

Depending upon membership level, some promotional support will be offered to members through the web site and other social media efforts. There is proven success with this form of support. For example, featuring the opening of a new ethnic restaurant in Selkirk resulted in over 1000 likes on the RRNT Facebook page within a few hours.

It is anticipated that other streams, such as retail tourism, will also benefit from this form of support to members. It is recognized that retail businesses are a very important component of overall tourism lures.

Repeat traffic to the web site by members is one stated goal of the new membership program. Traffic to the web site will be carefully monitored over the launch and first three months of the membership drive.

## **PRODUCT AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT:**

This Committee is tasked with reaching out to community partners and to foster new program ideas, and act as an incubator for new ventures. RRNT would assist by providing a foundation for programs that could 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.

Representatives from a range of organizations within the RRN area participate on the Product and Service Development Committee including: Community Living, Friends of Lower Fort Garry, Gwen Fox Gallery, Selkirk Biz, Friends of Stuart House, Manitoba Métis



Federation, Selkirk Transit, and Canalta Hotels. The Committee is actively pursuing several new product ideas for development and delivery in 2018, 2019, and beyond.

The potential for innovative programming appears to be limited only by imagination and the determination to succeed! For example, an initial meeting has been held with the Earl of Orkney, exploring the possibility of bringing visitors from the Orkney Islands to RRN. As the Earl pointed out, most local residents are unaware of the regard for this region held by those living on the Islands. Historical tours, genealogy searches, family reunions, and other activities could all be components of this product. It is recognized that this would be a major program with international scope and would require strong partners and financial investment.

Through a partnership with the Horticultural society, Gwen Fox gallery, and a local greenhouse, an *Art and Garden Tour* package is under consideration, possibly incorporating the historical gardens of Captain Kennedy House in St Andrews, and Red Feather Park in Selkirk, along with a retail component in St Clements. Tours could be offered over two or more weekends in mid-summer. Early discussions have generated great interest and ways to include other historic landmarks and businesses have been suggested.



Also under discussion are:

- tours of various regional cemeteries, possibly with historical vignettes enacted at each;
- a collaboration with the Gaynor Family Regional Library offering tours of the prairie garden in combination with a stories by an Elder and/or instruction on traditional medicine gathering;
- a film festival of movies made in the region, profiling the unique buildings and heritage sites that make up our "Hollywood of the North".

## **HERITAGE AND CULTURE:**

The Heritage and Culture Committee has met with the Regional Heritage Group to discuss mandates, areas of overlap, and areas of future collaboration.

As the activities of Rivers West come to a close, permission to post many of their materials



on the RRNT web site has been obtained. These are a valuable resource that should not be lost, and include infrastructure planning frameworks, self-guiding tours, and several synopses of area history.

A community volunteer is in the process of creating an updated catalogue of historic properties in the region and promotional support for the project once complete, may be provided.

The next challenge for the Committee is to engage more ethnic and cultural participation. It is recognized that this will require one-to-one contact as no umbrella bodies exists.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**

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

## **STRATEGIC PLAN AND BUDGET**

The Strategic Plan outlines the budgets and tri-partite financial support requested over the next three years, culminating in a request for per capita funding by 2020. This would provide reliable and timely income and allow for professional assistance to be appropriately contracted as required for product development and tourism promotions.

Over the past five years this committee 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 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 not be specific to any RRNT program at this time, they reflect on the region as a whole.



The absence of public washrooms in several riverside locations throughout the region has been noted and 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.

Other items brought to our attention from members of the community are:

### ***Saint Andrews***

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

The closure of Kennedy House in particular has been met with consternation by numerous visitors and tourism agencies, and this represents a substantial economic loss to the RM and the region. Comments have been received regarding the unkempt appearance of the Scott House interpretive property, more resembling an abandoned relic rather than an important provincial historic site. The lack of washrooms along the length of River Road, especially at the provincial picnic areas, is another frequent complaint.

RRNT encourages continuing and frequent dialogue with the Province, advocating the importance of these landmarks to area tourism, urging the timely repair and reopening of Kennedy House, and full consideration of other issues.

Each generation is tasked with preserving our history. The St. Norbert Foundation is in the process of selling property north of Selkirk which includes structures dating to the 1850's. RRNT supports the efforts of the Regional Heritage Group and the descendants of Duncan McRae in preventing the possible loss of buildings with such historic significance to the area.

### ***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. As with other spaces along the river, the lack of public washrooms in Lockport Provincial Park also has been raised.

A number of signage issues have been flagged, including improved signage at the "59er" and for the TransCanada Trail.

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***

RRNT has received community feedback regarding the lack of public washroom facilities in the downtown waterfront district. As in other places in the region, this puts a strain on local businesses and makes the area less welcoming to visitors.

Other comments/suggestions passed on to RRNT include:

- New welcoming signage at all three approaches to the City would be valuable, especially one leading over the river to City Hall. The importance of the steel mill to area history and development could be reflected in the design.
- Stuart House could be redeveloped for community use. A partnership with the Horticultural Society for improvements to the landscaping may be possible.
- The Marine Museum requires the infusion of fresh approaches to marketing and sustainable operation in order to realize its potential as a tourist attraction.
- While Main Street is well decorated during the winter holiday season less attention seems to be given to City Hall. Perhaps this prominent building could also be dressed for the occasion.
- A booklet or series of brochures extolling the heritage and cultural significance of the City, its businesses and commerce could be a part of a coordinated marketing approach to a broader audience. This could significantly increase economic return through opportunities for small conventions and greater use of facilities such as the Recreation Centre.



## CONCLUSION:

This report has provided a snapshot of the initiatives that have been undertaken on your behalf within the Red River North region in the first nine months of the newly constituted RRNT organization.

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 has been generated through six years of consultation with those influenced by tourism to the region.



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.