

RED RIVER NORTH TOURISM

ANNUAL REPORT

TO

MUNICIPAL SHAREHOLDERS

OCTOBER 2019





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 the current fiscal period.

This document provides a snapshot of the initiatives that have been undertaken on your behalf within the Red River North region in 2019 – the third year of the constituted RRNT organization. It highlights current programs, new ventures, and also summarizes those items under examination for future implementation.

A financial summary is also provided as required.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Wales
President
Red River North Tourism

CONSTITUTION AND MANDATE:

Under the 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 **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.

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.

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 is reviewed and updated as part of the planning and budget process.

**Red River North Tourism
Board of Directors 2019-2020**

Executive:

Lois Wales, Community Volunteer, Selkirk; *Chair*
Jerry Culleton, St Andrews Realty; *1st Vice President*
Marlena Muir, Community Volunteer, Selkirk; *Vice President; Chair, Product and
Service Development Committee*
Merilee Mollard, 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, Selkirk
Darlene McArde, Community Volunteer, St Clements
Terry Neplyk, Consultant and Owner, Juan More Thing, St Clements
Rob Sarginson, Liaison, Red River North Regional Heritage Group, St Andrews;
Patti Tomko, Owner, Poplar Forest Lodge & Campground, St Clements
Robert Turner, Community Volunteer, St Andrews

Ex Officio:

Gail McDonald, Interlake Tourism Association, *Tourism Advisor*

Municipal Appointees:

Sandra Strang, Councillor, RM St Clements
Kristin Hoebee, Councillor, RM St Andrews

Municipal Staff:

Riley Aisman, Interim Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator, City of Selkirk
Teresa Howell, Recreation Director, RM St Andrews

Since presenting to you in January, Red River North Tourism has continued to explore innovative ways to attract visitors to the region. The results of our efforts have been positive and we continue to embark on new initiatives.

PARTNERSHIPS:

The strength of our programs and the successes we have enjoyed lie within the effective partnerships we have established with area businesses, other tourism organizations, and not-for-profit groups, throughout the region and beyond.

- We continue to work in partnership with **Interlake Tourism Association (ITA)** in the *Travel and Events Guide* and other co-op advertising programs, and as the premier participant in the *Interlake Map*, RRNT and member organizations received four awards at the recent ITA awards dinner, *Celebration of Stars*. Opportunities with **Travel Manitoba** are always considered and RRNT participates whenever possible, generally through ITA co-op offerings.
- **Inclusion Selkirk** distributes RRNT tourism information to over 40 brochure racks throughout the region. This provides meaningful work experience to their clients and ensures RRNT information locations are consistently offering the material tourists seek. Together, we are also exploring opportunities to capitalize on the use of the *Riverside Grill* as a set location for *Burden of Truth* and other movies. As a feature location on the *Garden and Art Tour* in July, the restaurant exhibited the works of Indigenous artists. Of course, they are always a part of *Homes for the Holidays* and *Holiday Alley*.
- **Gaynor Family Regional Library** continues to be a significant supporter of Red River North Tourism activities. The library provides RRNT with meeting space, acts as a hub for our information materials, and the cooperation of the staff is both invaluable and immensely appreciated. The *Urban Prairie* was again a highlight of the *Garden and Art Tour* and the library was also a primary ticket vendor for the event.
- **Master Gardeners of the North** partnered with RRNT in the presentation of monthly lectures on gardening and hands-on workshop sessions. Attendance was good and the program returned this September. Most of the lectures are held in the theatre at the Gaynor Family Regional Library. When soil is involved the Age Friendly building in St. Andrews is used.
- The **Selkirk and District Horticultural Society** partnered in the garden selection process for the 2019 *Garden and Art Tour* and also provided many volunteers to assist in the gardens on tour day. RRNT advertised the Society's *Annual Plant Sale* on social media. In addition to local attendees this promotion attracted visitors from Winnipeg and other garden clubs. In return, *Garden and Art Tour* handbills were given to all who attended. Ultimately, the sale was their most successful to date, raising approximately \$8,000 for the group.
- Tickets for the *Garden and Art Tour* were also sold at **Harry's Foods** and the Selkirk branch of **Cambrian Credit Union**. Two local businesses: **Packers Women's Fashion** and **Flowerchild Nursery** supported the sale of tickets to the *Garden and Art Tour* by offering handbills to their customers.

- The many programs and activities of the **St. Andrews Heritage Centre** are advertised on the RRNT Facebook page and we continue to share ideas for new product development. Most recently we have entered into a trial, 8-week, job-share with **RM St. Andrews**. Operating from **The Rectory**, the individual hired will assist RRNT two days per week on a variety of projects such as coordinating the reprinting of brochures and the development of new content; initial preparations for the *Garden and Art Tour* and other programs planned for the 2020 season; and coordinating tourism content for monthly promotional space offered by the **Selkirk Journal**.
- Related programs and activities are regularly explored with both **Parks Canada** staff and the volunteers of **Friends of Lower Fort Garry**. The possible sharing of administrative staff is one topic of continuing discussion with the *Friends*. There are several volunteer driven groups in need of professional assistance; by maintaining communication we can be alert to opportunities that could be of joint benefit.
- The **Selkirk Biz** has assumed administrative responsibility for the *Selkirk Santa Claus Parade* and requested RRNT partner in its presentation. We look forward to growing community participation and visitor experience in that event.
- Liaison with the coordinators of the **2020 55+ Games** has begun.

TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- **Garden and Art Tour**
In this second year of the program, nine properties throughout Red River North were showcased. **Cambrian Credit Union** returned as lead sponsor for the 2019 event.

Once again, the majority of *Tour* attendees came from outside the region. An excellent response rate was seen with almost 60% of participant exit surveys returned. The survey revealed that those respondents spent over \$4,000 on art and books at the tour and an additional \$4,100 on gas, groceries, clothing, and other items from region retailers and restaurants. This suggests an economic impact well over \$10,000 for that single Sunday event.

A *Selkirk Community Development Corporation* grant was received and applied to the cost of youth musicians, advertising and printing.

- **Video Shorts**
Two minute video shorts have been produced. The first of these features *Discovery Day* at the **Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail** and has been posted to the RRNT web site and YouTube channel, and also shared with Travel Manitoba and Interlake Tourism. The second is in final editing and will present the RRNT's *Self-Guided River Tour*.
- **Film Festival**
The first phase of a feasibility study for a "*Made in Red River North*" film festival is nearing completion. The study explores potential venues, licensing fees, costs of showing movies, and other factors, and will also seek information from other film festivals for reference. Preliminary indications are positive and a second phase of the study will examine the films available and possible funding sources.

- **Conference and Convention Packages**

In June of 2018, RRNT tested a spousal program offered in conjunction with the Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs Conference. This is now a customizable tourism product that is on offer to other conference and convention planners through the RRNT web site.

This year, RRNT provided information packages and door prizes for the *Association of Manitoba Museums* annual conference.

Regular liaison with City of Selkirk staff responsible for event coordination and marketing ensures no promotional opportunity is missed when meetings and conventions are planned within the region.

Red River North Tourism is the host sponsor for the *Economic Developers Association of Manitoba (EDAM) Fall Forum* to be held in Selkirk, November 13th through 15th. *Community Futures West Interlake* is organizing the conference and RRNT and some of our partners have been invited to make presentations and provide programs.

- **Tourism Promotion**

Promotion of featured summer events on Facebook with *Travel Manitoba* performed well, seeing almost 18,000 views. This positive exposure will be considered for the coming year and possibly expanded to include winter activities.

RRNT will once again participate in the *Winnipeg Ice Fishing Show* in conjunction with David Oberik of *The Fishing Journal*. The booth will feature the two fishing videos and an array of regional visitor information.

RRNT continues to seek new markets. In addition to co-op advertising with *ITA and Travel Manitoba* we have promoted the region in the *Asian Community Guide*. An opportunity to relocate a popular *Asian festival* to the region has arisen. This could attract upwards of 40,000 visitors to Red River North for the festival.

Visitor information was provided at a *RRNT booth* for several events throughout the summer: at the *Selkirk Waterfront* on market Wednesdays in August; a July event at *The Half Moon Drive In*, Lockport; at *Harvest Festival*, a new market event held at *Lower Fort Garry* enjoyed by over 2000 visitors; and at *Prairie Oaks Day* in the Selkirk Recreation Centre celebrating the new residential developments in Selkirk. RRNT was also a participant at both the St Andrews and St Clements *Open House* events.

Chuck the Channel Cat, the RRNT mascot, made appearances at the Selkirk Waterfront on *Canada Day*, at the July event at *The Half Moon Drive In*, Lockport, and he sailed in the *Selkirk Parade* with David Oberik of *The Fishing Journal*.

Promotional prizes and gift baskets were provided for a variety of events. These included products and coupons from many local businesses including *Three 6 Tea*, *The Mighty Kiwi*, *Harvester Fishing Supplies*, *Packers Women's Fashion*, as well as Selkirk and St Andrews municipalities.

- **The Orkney Connection**

We continue to pursue the community's Orkney roots. A rack card for distribution throughout the Orkney Islands is in production and information will be posted on the

RRNT website. Visitor programs are in the discussion stage and a local travel business is exploring the development of suitable tour packages with us and the means of information distribution through Orkney tourism agencies. A *Manitoba 150* grant application will be submitted.

- **Blog**
One of our volunteers, Robert Turner, continues to **Blog** about the region through the eyes of a new resident. The pieces are well written and pique the reader's interest.
- **Facebook**
The number of **Facebook** followers has increased and the **calendar of events** is broadly shared. As well, more organizations are submitting activities for inclusion on the calendar.
- **Other Program Opportunities**
RRNT has been invited to consider assuming the responsibility and management of another not-for-profit group's tourism programs. This could be of financial benefit but would require the hiring of a part-time coordinator. Discussions continue.

ADVOCACY

- Last year, RRNT began the circulation of a petition to save **Captain Kennedy House** and continues to raise concerns to the provincial government regarding that property, once so popular with visitors to the area. Currently, an *Action Proposal* is being drafted for presentation to St Andrews Municipal Council outlining a vision for the building and its return to practical use. It is imperative this building not deteriorate any further.
- RRNT actively lobbied the Province against the removal of the **Manitoba Film and Video tax credit**. These efforts, combined with voices from other concerned quarters, were successful and the film industry continues to be active in the region.
- More recently, the impact felt in the **Brokenhead Wetland area** due to the Province's lack of coordinated management of gravel resources has come to our attention. Already a serious concern to area residents, this is an ecological threat to a protected zone and is also detrimental to use of the trails by interested visitors who respect wetland habitats. Action will continue on this issue.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- The **Strategic Plan** has been reviewed and updated each year in conjunction with the annual budget process. Due to the growth experienced over the past few years a complete revision of the Plan is now required. When complete, the revised Plan will again provide measureable short term, mid-range and long term goals.
- Also in the coming year the Board of Directors will embark on the development of *policy guidelines* for the organization, including code of conduct and operational procedures.
- RRNT has contracted the services of a professional *bookkeeper* to provide monthly reports to the Board.

- Over the past two years, the membership process has been streamlined and businesses and individuals can now join on-line. A *membership drive* is planned for the near future.

CONCLUSION AND REQUEST

Red River North Tourism has demonstrated a continued growth and has used provided funds wisely. We continue to aggressively pursue financial stability through program revenues, sponsorships, grants, membership fees, and in-kind partnerships.

As can be seen by the attached **Third Quarter Profit Statement**, RRNT has made strides in generating revenues and is now able to hold some funds in reserve to ensure operating capital throughout the year, regardless of when shareholder contributions are received. Given the limited overall budget, this is a significant achievement.

In presentations to council over the past two years we have indicated the need for *a return to per capita annual funding from all shareholders*. This would allow greater participation in advertising and promotional programs with Travel Manitoba and other agencies. Such promotion would be immensely beneficial but is currently cost prohibitive and beyond consideration.

We are requesting each municipal partner return to the per capita funding model and, at a minimum, the allocation amounts of several years ago to allow a more robust marketing program and a continued positive economic impact from tourism throughout the region.