

SUMMER 2026 VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2

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“open heart surgery”
on Portage Place
Shopping Centre**

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ON THE COVER: From left: Jim Ludlow, president, True North Real Estate Development, Gavin Johnstone, chief operating officer, True North Real Estate Development, Glenda Gartner, senior vice-president, development services, True North Real Estate Development, Kelly Wallace, vice-president and district manager, PCL Construction, David Van Hooren, senior construction manager, PCL Construction and Heather Smith, director, marketing and business development, Architecture49

CARVING OUT A NICHE

OUR sixth annual Indigenous issue has a little bit of everything — hundreds of millions of dollars of ongoing downtown redevelopment, a new airport in Thompson, Anishinaabe artwork in space as well as cool restaurants serving interesting and delicious food.



Indigenous investment is impacting life in Winnipeg in a way it never has before and everybody — Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike— stands to benefit in the coming months, years and even generations.

Southern Chiefs’ Organization and the Manitoba Métis Federation are leading the way, reimagining three signature buildings in the business core — the former Hudson’s Bay store, Portage Place Shopping Centre and one of the founding members of the original banker’s row, the Bank of Montreal building at Portage and Main. All three were in various stages of decline and usage but are having much-needed new life breathed back into them.

While those are high-profile improvements downtown, I’m just as fascinated by the Indigenous-owned restaurants that are not only carving out their own niches but are increasingly doing so in neighbourhoods that aren’t traditionally home to Indigenous entrepreneurs and chefs.

Every neighbourhood has a coffee shop and how fun is it to have so many locally-owned cafes taking on Starbucks and Tim Hortons and having so much success? Sabrina Carnevale explains why consumers are doing a double take when it comes to their coffee purchases and are choosing to supporting local. (She also appears on the Manitoba Inc. Podcast to speak further about the many grounds for success.)

Ahem.

I took a friend of mine from out of town to the Empty Cup on Academy Road recently and told him it was one of the locations that Starbucks had abandoned because it didn’t have a drive-thru.

When we walked in on a sunny Saturday morning, the place was packed and there were 15 people in line ahead of us.

“I can see why Starbucks didn’t like this location,” my friend said with a smirk.

I haven’t seen the books but with so many of the locally-owned shops expanding throughout Winnipeg and beyond — Empty Cup is about to open its first location in Saskatchewan — it can only mean one thing: Winnipeggers are increasingly buying local coffee. That keeps money in the community and province. Economists call it “reducing economic leakage” but it’s really about shopping where you live and supporting the entrepreneurs in your communities.

Let’s hope that attitude can keep spreading to other purchasing decisions.

Geoff Kirbyson
Publisher, Manitoba Inc.



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MANITOBA INC.

BUSINESS PODCAST

Hosted by Eleanor Coopsammy & Geoff Kirbyson



The Manitoba Inc. Podcast is regularly among the top 20 business podcasts in Canada. Coming out every two weeks (or so), we have covered off the big stories of the day, including the impact of tariffs on everything from automobiles to ice cream, what the election of Prime Minister Mark Carney and his Liberal government will mean for business and what beers we drink.

Join hosts Eleanor Coopsammy and Geoff Kirbyson as we try to understand the potential repercussions of a wide range of developments and issues on the Manitoba economy, and subscribe for regular updates.

Follow Manitoba Inc. on LinkedIn, on Instagram (manitoba_inc) and visit us at manitoba-inc.ca.

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ANGELA LOVELL

Angela Lovell is an award-winning freelance writer based in Manitou, Manitoba. She has more than 30 years of experience writing about agriculture, environment, business and rural life.



CARLY PETERS

Carly Peters likes to tell stories. It makes sense for a communications professional with an extensive background in publishing and a passion for the non-profit sector. From crafting articles for trade and consumer magazines to penning press releases and speeches, she creates content that connects with audiences.



SHELLEY COOK

Shelley Cook is an Anishinaabe kwe from Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and a graduate of Red River College's Creative Communications program, where she specialized in journalism. A storyteller at heart, Shelley's writing explores themes of identity, culture and community. Her work is grounded in lived experience and a deep commitment to amplifying Indigenous voices. She currently serves on several Indigenous advisory circles and community boards.



JEFF SWYSTUN

Jeff helps brands grow their influence and value through Swystun Communications. He was DDB Worldwide's chief communications officer, Interbrand's chief marketing officer and a principal consultant at PwC. Jeff has spoken at more than 40 conferences and his book, *Why Marketing Works*, topped Amazon's advertising category. Jeff has appeared on CNBC, NBC, CNN, BNN Bloomberg and the CBC. His clients include the Tampa Bay Rays, BeaverTails, Bond Brand Loyalty, Ralph Lauren, Deloitte, Ascend TV, Mortgage Professionals Canada and Harvard Developments.



ALISON GILLMOR

Born and raised (mostly) in Winnipeg, Alison Gillmor is a freelance journalist and educator. When she's not walking her dog, she reviews movies for the *Winnipeg Free Press* and teaches film in the McNally Community Classroom. She has written on art, books and design for *The Walrus*, *Border Crossings*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Canada's History*, *The Globe and Mail* and the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



JIM TIMLICK

Jim Timlick has worked on the Manitoba media scene for the better part of three decades. He has reported on everything from amateur sports and agriculture to city hall and the local business sector. He is also a former manager of media relations for the CFL's Winnipeg Blue Bombers.



SABRINA CARNEVALE

A familiar voice on Winnipeg radio for more than a decade, Sabrina Carnevale's extensive media experience includes CBC Manitoba reporter, Bell Media radio host and Winnipeg Free Press columnist. Born and raised in Winnipeg, she has become a trusted voice in writing and producing original content that highlights strong community connection and healthy living. Sabrina's multimedia portfolio includes radio and television reporter, columnist, journalist and web series author. Her passion for healthy living has afforded her the opportunity to write for several publications where she encourages people to get out of their comfort zones and find the joy in everyday life.

Changing the face of downtown Winnipeg

PCL Construction's crew at the former Portage Place Shopping Centre has years of experience building sports facilities, healthcare centres and manufacturing plants, and that experience is on full display as they tackle one of downtown Winnipeg's most complex transformations.

For decades, Portage Place stood as one of the city's most recognizable landmarks, drawing shoppers, office workers and visitors through its glass-covered atrium and busy corridors. Today, crews are carefully dismantling parts of that familiar structure – not to erase it, but to reinvent it. The workers behind the more than \$650-million overhaul of the soon-to-be former shopping mall are applying the same precision to the deconstruction of its centre court as they are building out towers on the north and south ends.

Repurposing and recycling about three-quarters of the materials from the Portage Place site is what Kelly Wallace, Winnipeg vice-president and district manager at PCL, calls “adaptive reuse.”

For example, where an atrium once featured pedestrian bridges and skylights, a gaping opening now sits at the centre of the site. Creating that opening required crews to remove eight 75,000-pound concrete beams and dismantle the atrium roof using two of Manitoba's largest high-reach demolition machines. Soon, the space will become the continuation of Edmonton Street, connecting the north and south sides of Portage Avenue and creating a new outdoor pedestrian corridor.

“You’re taking it apart with the intention of reusing a lot of it,” Wallace says. “So, you don’t just knock it down. It’s like taking a Lego set apart. You take it apart piece by piece so that you can reuse it.”

PCL doing “open heart surgery” on former shopping centre



“We’re taking an old building and we’re revising it to reshape downtown. We’re reusing the existing foundation’s infrastructure, which is exciting because you get some value out of a depreciating asset. It comes with some challenges because you’re not demolishing the existing building, but you’re deconstructing it,” he says.

PCL also removed the atrium slab and is replacing it with a bridge structure designed to support emergency vehicles once Edmonton Street is reopened through the site. The roadway will also serve as a one-way vehicle drop-off zone for the future Healthcare Centre of Excellence.

“That’s probably the most complicated piece because of all of the services running underneath through a duct bank that houses (fibre-optic) cable,” he says.

Supporting work of this scale is a tower crane, erected in April, that will play a major role in structural concrete work and material handling as the project begins to rise vertically.

“It’s a feat of engineering, which we take very seriously because doing it safely is the most important part for us,” he says.

The atrium is just one facet of the redevelopment, which will be a wonder of architectural ingenuity, engineering innovation and construction savvy and know-how, when it’s completed next year.

The 1.2-million-square-foot property will maintain a retail component – including a much-needed grocery store – but two major additions give it the potential to become truly transformative. They are: a 265,000-square-foot Healthcare Centre of Excellence, featuring primary care with integrated mental health services, surgery, diagnostics and renal dialysis, which will also become the new home for expanded Pan Am Clinic programs; and a 19-storey residential tower with more than 200 units, up to 40 per cent of which will be rented at “affordable” rates, well below the market rents for the area.

The Healthcare Centre of Excellence will feature, among other components, primary care, diagnostic imaging, kidney health facilities, surgical nano suites and include the world-renowned surgical tools of Arthrex, a U.S.-based orthopaedic surgical tools company. Its founder, Reinhold Schmieding, was celebrated in May in Winnipeg as this year’s winner of the International Distinguished Entrepreneur Award (IDEA) by the Associates of the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba.



A photograph captured by drone shows the construction site and crane, which was erected in April.

The technology in this new facility is intended to rival that of the Cleveland and Mayo Clinics in the United States.

Since its founding in 1981, Arthrex has created more than 2,000 surgical tools used for knee and shoulder surgeries, which have improved the quality of life for millions of patients. One of those patients is Winnipeg Jets goaltender, Connor Hellebuyck, who underwent knee surgery using Arthrex technology last season.

Wallace is particularly proud to note that the ongoing overhaul of downtown Winnipeg is being driven almost exclusively by local companies, including True North Real Estate Development (TNRED), Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) and the Manitoba Métis Federation.

"Local people are driving the revitalization of downtown. We're buying assets that had been owned by people who weren't from here and we're making them our own. We're repurposing them to make Winnipeg and Manitoba a stronger, more attractive place to live," Wallace says. "I think it's exciting to see how people are getting engaged with redeveloping downtown and how Manitoba-born people are leaning into making downtown a place that people want to go."

Jim Ludlow, now president of TNRED, was the head of True North Sports and Entertainment Inc. during construction of what is now known as Canada Life Centre, widely regarded as the primary catalyst for growth in the central business district since rising from the ashes of the old Eaton's department store and opening as the MTS Centre in 2004. PCL Construction served as the lead builder on that project.

"The campus redevelopment of the property once known as Portage Place is one of numerous projects that are remaking Winnipeg's downtown. It's a privilege to lead this historic revitalization and I can't wait to see it all come together by 2028," he says. "Working alongside a truly world-class construction company such as PCL means the delivery of a healthcare facility for Manitobans that is meant to be just that – world class."

PCL is also the lead builder for SCO's \$310-million redevelopment of Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn, the century-old former Hudson's Bay building. The shuttered department store's 655,000-square-foot heritage landmark is being transformed into a mixed-use development featuring nearly 400 residential units, as well as retail and office spaces.

Portage Place is only one piece of a much larger story unfolding downtown.

The Fort Garry Hotel recently completed a more than \$1-million upgrade to its first floor, creating high-end accommodations catering to high-net-worth travellers. Similarly, the Richardson family, owners of the Fairmont Hotel, has temporarily closed the Portage and Main property while it undergoes a multi-million-dollar renovation.

Across Winnipeg's most famous intersection, the Manitoba Métis Federation is currently converting the historic Bank of Montreal building into a major cultural and heritage hub, which is set to open next year.

Just a stone's throw away at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, the first phase of Rainside at the Forks, a multi-million-dollar development featuring 350 residential units within nine apartment blocks and one condo building, is coming out of the ground. The European-flavoured project will have amenities such as a daycare centre, coffee shops and pedestrian-friendly walkway.

Construction is also well underway on the 17-storey Sutton Place Hotel, the fifth and final tower of the \$550-million

True North Square on Carlton Street.

Another recent addition to Winnipeg's skyline is Wawanesa Insurance's new national headquarters, a 21-storey mixed-use office tower that opened its doors two years ago at True North Square. The landmark building was also constructed by PCL.

"It doesn't happen overnight. It happens one piece at a time, one project at a time," Wallace says. "It's one person or one group believing in it. There are people who are leaning into it and believe in it. We can feel the momentum."

And as downtown sees more traffic, the more existing businesses will grow, and the more others will choose to relocate there.

"The downtown of the city is the heart of the province, and we're doing open heart surgery right now," he says.



The Healthcare Centre of Excellence is expected to put Winnipeg on the map not just nationally but internationally because of its partnership with Arthrex, the U.S.-based orthopaedic surgical tools company, which has created more than 2,000 surgical tools.

Wallace says there may never have been more optimism about the future of downtown Winnipeg than there is today.

"It feels like there's more energy downtown, and it feels like it's growing," he says.

And when the ribbon is cut on the new-and-improved Portage Place in 2028, he says PCL and other downtown stakeholders aren't going to rest on their laurels.

"When you see people putting money into downtown, like you see with Portage Place, you look around and say, 'what other assets in the area can be reimagined?'" he says.

"This is going to continue to be the topic of discussion. 'What do we do with this building or what about that flat parking lot?' I think it's just starting to open up. What's possible? Let's find out."

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Bruno Silvestre helped lead record enrolment growth during his tenure as dean of the Asper School of Business.

B RUNO Silvestre has undoubtedly left the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba in better shape than he found it.

After nearly five years at the helm as dean, the long-time academic and supply chain expert is moving to British Columbia to lead the Peter B. Gustavson School of Business at the University of Victoria, effective this September.

“It was a difficult decision for me. It has been such a great experience here, engaging with this amazing community. Winnipeg is a privileged town to have so many committed people,” he says.

“This opportunity came and there are family decisions behind it. I’m sad and excited at the same time.”

During his time at Asper, which also included nearly one year as acting dean, he oversaw a vast array of improvements, not the least of which is the 28 per cent growth of student enrolment across programs over the last five years.

(An acting dean is expected to be named during the summer, followed by a global search with a new dean to be announced in 2027.)

That growing enrolment and ongoing high demand has prompted the Asper School to take action. It is raising funds for the projected \$40-million project.

“This new building is going to be transformational, to bring the school to the next level but it’s also going to boost the economy of the province. It’s not only about jobs but ideas and entrepreneurs that come out of the Asper School,” Silvestre says.

The current home, the Drake Centre, will continue on, primarily as the site for the growing Bachelor of Commerce program. There’s no denying that the nearly 40-year-old building is bursting at the seams. In 2025, a record-high of more than 850 new students were accepted at the school. And 16 per cent of the new students identified as having Indigenous ancestry, making it the school’s largest-ever cohort of Indigenous business students.

In fact, Indigenous students made up seven per cent of the Asper School's student population during the last academic year, including 97 who were enrolled in the Indigenous Business Education Partners program.

These numbers grew by about 21 per cent from the previous year and show no signs of slowing down.

Silvestre is particularly proud of the school's growing commitment to the Indigenous community as he believes strongly that economic reconciliation is everybody's responsibility.

He says Asper is "very committed" to offering pathways for Indigenous youth to a business degree, both undergraduate and graduate.

"We have been identifying and removing systemic barriers for Indigenous youth for the last five years. We are happy to advance our reconciliation pathway and really help Indigenous youth to do business, if that's the career they want to pursue," he says.

Silvestre says First Nations, Métis and Inuit people need to have a seat at the negotiating table so they can participate in business decisions that will impact not just Manitoba but Canada.

"The Asper School can really be an effective partner and open up the international business world to Indigenous youth and entrepreneurs alike, so they can make decisions empowered with knowledge and expertise," he says.

"It's one step at a time. There is resistance, we can't deny it. But as we graduate more students and engage more with First Nations, these barriers are going to come down. The new generation is much more open to that because they are growing with these elements already in place and these discussions are happening more openly. In the past, we didn't have that."



Supplied

Members of The Associates of the Asper School of Business are a group of nearly 400 senior executives who drive the Manitoba economy forward but who have been giving back to the business school for more than four decades.

Last May, the Asper School launched its new five-year strategic plan, entitled, Building Community, Inspiring Innovation. The mission is to keep a community mindset while conducting business because connections are Asper's biggest assets and service to the community fuels innovation.

The plan has three pillars — empowering learners, advancing research excellence and expanding meaningful engagement, all of which are designed to drive prosperity, positive societal impact and economic well-being here and around the world.

So much of what the Asper School does is facilitated by The Associates of the Asper School of Business, a group of nearly 400 senior executives who drive the Manitoba economy forward but who have been giving back to the business school for more than four decades.

"I have worked in multiple business schools across the globe and I've never seen anything like that," he says.

Right behind them are the Young Associates, the under-40 version of The Associates, with about 200 business leaders with strong connections to the Asper School.

**"THIS NEW BUILDING
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— Bruno Silvestre, dean of the Asper School of Business



Roman Swanson, NOMVD Media

From left: Dean Bruno Silvestre (Asper School of Business), Grand Chief Garrison Settee (Manitoba Keewatinowki Okimakanak Inc.), and Chief Larson Anderson (Norway House Cree Nation) in Norway House.

Silvestre says the school is preparing its students to excel in the national and international arenas, particularly through its co-op program, which places nearly 300 students at more than 100 local and national businesses.

Another 100 students spent a semester abroad last year through its international exchange program, which features partnerships with 65 business schools in 35 countries. At the same time, 65 students from around the world spent a term at Asper.

"We take international experience and international learning very seriously," he says.

Case competitions used to be ad hoc events at Asper but in the last few years, they have become a regular part of the curriculum. In fact, about 400 students every year

represent the Asper School and the UM in case competitions all over the world. Silvestre is particularly quick to note that Asper students won the John Molson Undergraduate Case Competition, the biggest and most prestigious event of its kind, for the first time last year in Montreal.

"That represents the calibre of the education we are providing here and also the calibre of students we are graduating here," he says.

The feeling appears to be mutual. A recent survey of Asper School graduates found 91 per cent of them felt that their experience and degree met or exceeded their expectations.

"These students want the best. They know what a good education is. But we're not happy with 91 per cent. We want to push to 95 to 98 per cent," he says.

While many well-established members of the Winnipeg business community have had decades-long relationships with the Asper School, Silvestre says there is always room for more.

"There are so many opportunities (for business leaders). They can hire co-op students, they can become members of The Associates, they can be guest speakers in our classrooms and they can coach our teams in case competitions to represent the Asper School. There are multiple ways they can share their expertise with our students and give back, as well," he says.

"Ultimately, it's all about the students and supporting the next generation of leaders who are coming out of the Asper School of Business who will lead this province."

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BUSINESS BRIEFS

Highlights from Manitoba business

CITY LAUNCHES PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT VACANT BUILDING REDEVELOPMENT

The City of Winnipeg is introducing two new programs aimed at encouraging the redevelopment of vacant properties, with applications opening July 1.

The Renovation Fee Waiver Program and the Vacant Building Exemption Program are designed to support owners who are actively repairing, redeveloping, occupying or demolishing vacant buildings. City officials say the initiatives will reduce financial barriers while helping return unused properties to productive use.

Mayor Scott Gillingham says the programs will help move redevelopment forward when owners have a clear plan in place.

"Every vacant building is a property that could be doing more for the neighbourhood as a home or a business," he says. "When an owner has a real plan and active permits, we should help that work move forward."

Under the Renovation Fee Waiver Program, eligible property owners can receive a dollar-for-dollar credit toward vacant building fees based on the value of City-issued renovation grants or construction permits tied to redevelopment work. Credits can apply to new or overdue fees. Owners must apply within 12 months of the grant issue date or permit closure.

The Vacant Building Exemption Program waives vacant building fees for eligible properties with active development, building and construction permits.

Councillors Evan Duncan and Vivian Santos say the programs will help reduce barriers while improving safety and supporting housing and economic growth.

Owners must maintain safety and security standards throughout redevelopment. More information is available at winnipeg.ca/vbprograms

WINNIPEG EARNS FUNDING BOOST AFTER EXCEEDING HOUSING TARGETS

Winnipeg has secured an additional \$4.05 million through the federal Housing Accelerator Fund after exceeding its housing targets, bringing the city's total funding under the program to more than \$126 million.

The funding is in addition to Winnipeg's scheduled \$30.6-million annual installment under its agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. The city said it met all required milestones and exceeded its two-year housing target by 14 per cent.

Under the updated agreement, Winnipeg has increased its housing target by 150 units, bringing its overall goal to 14,251 new homes by the end of 2026.

At its two-year reporting deadline in December 2025, the city reported 9,716 newly permitted housing units, including 1,046 affordable units.

Mayor Scott Gillingham said the additional funding reflects the city's efforts to accelerate housing development.

"This performance bonus is a direct result of our commitment to change how we build in Winnipeg," Gillingham said in a release. "We're cutting red tape, modernizing our processes and working with the federal and provincial governments and other partners to get more homes built across Winnipeg."

The Housing Accelerator Fund links federal funding to housing performance targets and permitting reforms intended to increase housing supply more quickly.

City council is expected to consider recommendations on how the additional funding will be allocated later this year.



GO WHERE THE CUSTOMERS ARE

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

MANITOBA Blue Cross is taking its show on the road.

The Winnipeg-based health benefits provider recently christened a new service centre in Winkler.

Staffed by two local customer service representatives, the new facility enables members to get face-to-face assistance with their claims, ask questions about their coverage and receive guidance from a knowledgeable, customer service team.

The Winkler opening comes almost a year after Manitoba Blue Cross christened another location in Thompson.

Ben Graham, president and CEO of Manitoba Blue Cross, said the moves were no coincidence.

“We’re Manitoba Blue Cross, not Winnipeg Blue Cross,” he says. “There is a recognition that while people are moving online, they still value face-to-face service.”

Graham says southern Manitoba communities, including Winkler, Morden, Altona and Carman, are growing “exponentially” and it’s important to service customers where they live.

“It’s the right location for us; it recognizes the role that southern Manitoba is playing in growing the provincial economy,” he says.

Winkler mayor Henry Siemens says he’s “very happy” that Manitoba Blue Cross chose Winkler for its latest site.

“It’s going to help our community. The service aspect is the key piece. We’re very excited to see where it’s going. We’re a rapidly-growing area. There is an opportunity for continued growth for Manitoba Blue Cross here,” he says.

Winkler continues to churn out growth across a variety of key metrics, including building permits and the number of people per house, between 3.5 and 4.0 per cent.

Siemens says Manitoba Blue Cross has long differentiated itself from its competitors. For example, it doesn’t take long to speak to a real person



Ben Graham, president and CEO of Manitoba Blue Cross, says it’s important to offer in-person service to customers outside of Winnipeg.

when you call in, he says.

“Manitoba Blue Cross is zigging when everybody else is zagging,” he says.

Eligible Manitoba Blue Cross plan members with individual or employee assistance program coverage can access professional support for their mental well-being through in-person counselling sessions.

And members of the public can also visit the centre for information on travel or personal health plans.

THE GEOTHERMAL ADVANTAGE



The answer to Manitoba’s energy challenge may be hiding just below the surface

CMU

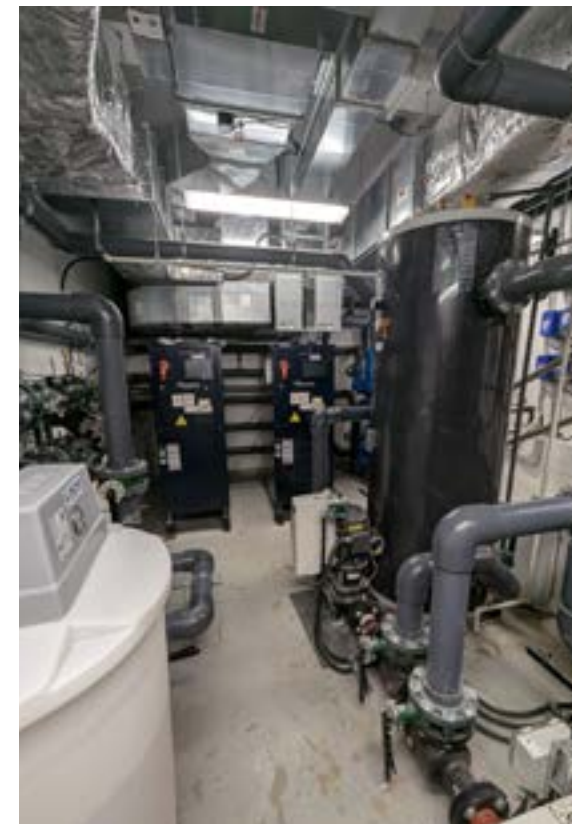
BY ALISON GILLMOR

ED Lohrenz has been involved with geothermal technology since its beginnings in the 1980s, designing environmentally-sustainable heating and cooling systems for sites across Canada and around the world. Having worked on everything from a small-town hockey arena to a 17-storey Manhattan office building in locales ranging from the Siberian tundra to the Australian outback, Lohrenz knows there are no one-size-fits-all options with geothermal.

That’s why GEOptimize, the Winnipeg-based geotechnical consulting firm Lohrenz founded in 2013, models, designs and optimizes site-specific geothermal systems that take into account geological and climatic conditions—in Manitoba, that means layers of clay and limestone and a punishing 70-degree temperature range—as well as building function and client needs.

The company’s four-person team recently consulted on the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago, providing geothermal design assistance to the engineering firms working on the multi-structure campus. “Certainly, it’s a high-profile project and it’s

A repurposed shipping container is lowered into place. The central pump station for CMU is where all the piping from the ground heat exchanger and connections to the building come together.



CMU

A central pumping station connects CMU’s geothermal energy network.



CMU

always interesting to be involved with those,” Lohrenz says. While it was a huge undertaking, Lohrenz was particularly struck by some of the little details, such as transferring excess heat from buildings to melt snow on sidewalks—an idea that would seem to have cold-weather applications here at home.

When it comes to using geothermal technology in Manitoba, though, the possibilities go way beyond toasty sidewalks. According to Lohrenz, bringing more geothermal options into the province’s energy mix offers important environmental and economic benefits.

Manitoba Hydro, the province’s primary provider of power, could be nearing its peak-usage supply limits as early as 2029.

“Reducing that peak kilowatt demand is one of the things that geothermal does that no other technology can do,” Lohrenz says. “Manitoba Hydro has to be able to meet the demand on the coldest day of winter. Not having that energy is not an option.”

Geothermal, which works by tapping into the renewable energy stored beneath the earth’s surface to heat and cool buildings, can help. Because each kilowatt of electrical energy used to power a ground



GEOptimize provided geothermal design support for the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago.

The central pumping station that connects the ground heat exchanger to the buildings. The heat pumps replace an inefficient 60-year-old gas boiler and also provide air conditioning.



CMU

Some of the pipe in boreholes under the football field. This is the first 16 kilometres of pipe for the first few buildings connected to the ground.

source heat pump (GSHP) produces an average of three to four kilowatts of heat energy, geothermal can ease the demand on stressed electrical grids. Delaying the need for new—and hugely expensive—hydroelectric infrastructure means lower capital costs and higher revenues. “That’s why many jurisdictions and electric utilities across the country offer incentives to install geothermal systems,” Lohrenz explains.

Electrical grids are being challenged by several factors in 2026—population growth, climate change and current technological trends. “We’re seeing a lot more electrical demand in the last couple of years because of AI data centres and bitcoin mining and things like that, because they draw a lot of power,” Lohrenz says. No matter how people feel about them, data centres are coming, Lohrenz believes, but geothermal systems can offset some of their downsides. These megascale AI facilities consume massive amounts of energy—one site proposed for Manitoba would require about one-seventh of the power produced by the Keeyask dam, according to Lohrenz—but they also kick off a lot of heat. In cold climates, geothermal technology can be used effectively to divert that heat to other buildings. Finland, for example, “is purposely building data

centres underground and that heats a portion of downtown Helsinki,” Lohrenz says.

In terms of Manitoba models, there has only been some very preliminary analysis. “If the heat from a 180-megawatt data farm was diverted to a greenhouse, it could heat a half-square-mile of greenhouse, or 320 acres.”

That’s a lot of winter tomatoes.

Beyond using geothermal to heat and cool individual buildings, the technology increasingly involves larger multi-structure systems. Lohrenz has been working with Canadian Mennonite University, which is currently planning to join nine of its campus buildings into a geothermal energy network. “This takes advantage of some of the synergies of different types of buildings,” he explains. For example, you can connect classroom buildings used mostly in the day with residences used more at night, so that heat can shift over as needed.

And while retrofitting existing structures for geothermal options is good, planned thermal energy networks that connect new-build neighbourhoods and commercial districts would be even better. Setting up geothermal from the get-go increases

overall energy efficiency and substantially reduces initial installation costs. Start-up capital costs are still borne by individuals, corporations or developers, however, which is why Climate Action Team Manitoba, a coalition of environmental groups, is advocating for the provincial government to set up a public utility to build and manage large-scale geothermal infrastructure. This issue came up when Lohrenz and his colleagues recently did a feasibility study for the Water Tower District in St. Boniface.

Expanding geothermal power in Manitoba has clear environmental benefits, but it makes economic sense, too, according to Loren Remillard, president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. “When you take a look at trade right now, there’s a heavy push on diversifying our trade markets to better manage risk and insulate ourselves from overreliance on any one market. That same thinking applies to energy,” he says.

“We’re seeing the cost of an overreliance on one source of energy play out in the conflict with Iran. It’s imperative for our community, our business community, our country, that we ensure we develop as many forms of energy and sources of energy as we can, to better insulate our economy from shocks that are happening halfway across the world.”

As Remillard suggests, “Renewable energy is essential for our economy right now but even more so into the future.”



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An additional 24 kilometres of pipe will eventually be installed in boreholes under the football field.

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A major airport expansion aims to attract investment, jobs and new industry to Manitoba

Cleared for growth



Rendering

The West Lands development represents one of the largest growth opportunities at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport in decades.

THE Winnipeg Airports Authority is negotiating with potential tenants for a massive new commercial project at its West Lands development designed to strengthen Manitoba’s role as a multi-modal transportation hub.

Infrastructure work has already begun on an 84-acre parcel of land west of the airport that will create shovel-ready sites for aviation, aerospace, defence, advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution businesses that require immediate or proximal runway airside access and multi-modal connectivity. Ultimately, it’s expected there will be 2.6 million square feet of commercial and industrial development on the site.

“The airport is in a growth mode,” says Will Rossall, director of real estate & land development at the WAA. “We’re more business focused than we were in the past.”

It’s too early to announce any tenants but Rossall says the WAA has received interest from about 15 different groups. For the air side, they include maintenance, repair and overhaul providers opportunities as well as manufacturers of aviation equipment and airplanes. And on the ground side, WAA is in talks with players in the pharmaceutical industry, distribution and logistics as well as current tenants looking to expand.

“There is good strong demand. We anticipate a pretty quick absorption of about five years for 84 acres. I’m cautiously optimistic we’ll exceed that based on what I’m seeing,” he says.

The total infrastructure investment for this first phase — representing just 84 of 220 available acres — is \$33 million, \$10 million of which was provided by the federal government, \$5 million by the province and the

remaining \$18 million by the WAA. The work currently underway includes site servicing, grading, drainage and utility installation, as well as the extension of Moray Street.

“It’s the perfect time for this development. The supply chains are shifting and the demand for connected infrastructure is growing,” he says.

The WAA is confident the project — which will be formally named this summer — will be a significant economic driver with an estimated 2,700 jobs expected to be created, either directly or indirectly, construction will contribute \$1.9 billion to GDP and there will be annual recurring GDP impact of \$486 million.

Expansion of the West Lands is the biggest opportunity the airport has had from a development perspective in some time, Rossall says.

The Winnipeg Airport Authority's Scott Marohn (left), vice-president, Commercial and Will Rossall director, Real Estate and Land Development, at the West Lands development, where the WAA is already fielding interest from prospective tenants.

“The airport is in a growth mode. We’re more business focused than we were in the past.”

"We're working to provide a united front so it's easier for companies to do business with Manitoba," says Kerilee Falloon, director of communications and marketing at the Winnipeg Airports Authority. "We can collaborate on shared goals with companies that move goods and people across air, land and sea as opposed to having to go to separate ports," she says.

Travellers at Richardson International will also notice a new piece of land acknowledgement artwork in the arrivals hall near the Hug Rug. Commissioned by a Treaty 1 artist, it reflects a shared commitment to respect, recognition and meaningful inclusion within one of Manitoba's most important gathering places and features a trilingual message in Anishinaabemowin, English and French, in honour of the First Peoples of this region.

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MORE

THAN A CUP OF COFFEE

Independent coffee shops are thriving
by offering something big chains can't:
**AUTHENTIC NEIGHBOURHOOD EXPERIENCES
AND HUMAN CONNECTION**



BY SABRINA CARNEVALE

YOU could be forgiven for assuming a smaller Canadian city wouldn't have much of a coffee scene. Winnipeg isn't Vancouver, and it isn't Toronto. But ask anyone who has spent time here and they'll tell you the coffee is excellent.

Independent shops have taken root in nearly every Winnipeg neighbourhood, building loyal followings that show little sign of falling off — even as the cost of everything from green beans to commercial rent has made the math increasingly difficult.

The numbers back up just how deeply coffee is rooted in Canadian culture. According to the Coffee Association of Canada's Canadian Coffee Drinking Trends 2025 study, 71 per cent of Canadian adults had a cup of coffee the previous day, making it the country's most-consumed beverage.

Today, Canada's coffee industry is valued at nearly \$6.2 billion and supports more than 160,000 jobs, according to Retail Insider, an online trade publication specializing in retail news and industry analysis. In a market that size, there's room for more than just the giants.

Thom Bergen Coffee Roasters opened its first location on Sherbrook Street in 2012. Co-owner Graham Bergen is direct about where the industry stands.

"It's dominated by big chains. There's no way around that."

Even so, Thom Bergen's four Winnipeg locations — Sherbrook Street in Wolseley, Kennedy Street downtown, Corydon Avenue in Crescentwood and Tuxedo — were each chosen because they



Thom Hiebert (left) and Graham Bergen turned a shared passion for exceptional coffee into one of Manitoba's most recognizable café brands.



From one café to four locations, Thom Bergen continues to shape Winnipeg's coffee culture.

sit inside communities rather than beside highways.

“Walking from where you live, or with a friend, to a café is a really important part of being part of any neighbourhood,” he says.

That philosophy extends beyond location strategy. The company focuses on familiarity and community connections, from hiring staff who know regular customers by name to creating spaces that become part of a neighbourhood’s daily routine.

That approach holds across demographics and neighbourhoods alike.

“Probably the first 15 customers at Sherbrook are retired couples,” Bergen says. “People assume you’ve got all the young hipsters at Sherbrook and the retired folks in Tuxedo. It’s really almost the same at all locations.”

LITTLE Sister Coffee Maker, which opened in Osborne Village in 2013 and added a south Osborne location in 2018, arrived at a similar conclusion.

“You really have to connect with your neighbourhood to be a successful coffee shop,” says owner Vanessa Stachiw.

Long-term success, she says, comes from regulars — the people who live nearby, stop in throughout the week and build relationships with staff.

“The staff are the heart of it. People come because they want coffee, but they also just want to connect with people.”

That neighbourhood-focused approach has played a role in Little Sister’s continued expansion. It is preparing to open a third location this summer at 171 McDermot Ave., the same building where its roastery has operated for a decade.



Sierra Friesen photo

Vanessa Stachiw, owner of Little Sister Coffee Maker, is helping redefine what a neighbourhood coffee shop can be.



Sierra Friesen photos

Little Sister Coffee Maker is set to open a third location on McDermot Avenue.



Haley Yurman, Empty Cup's senior leader of brand and marketing, says the company took a different route by focusing on areas underserved by specialty coffee shops.



Dr. Divya Ramachandran, assistant professor of marketing at the Asper School of Business, says successful businesses grow by understanding the communities they serve.

Empty Cup Collective took a different route. It opened its first location on Panet Road in April 2021 and now runs seven locations in and around Winnipeg, with an eighth under construction in Saskatoon — its first outside Manitoba.

For Haley Yurman, Empty Cup's senior leader of brand and marketing, growing the business without losing the feel of a neighbourhood café comes down to two things: location and people. The company focuses on areas underserved by specialty coffee shops.

“You have all your big players — your Starbucks, your Tim Hortons, your McDonald's — but nothing truly local close by,” she says of the Panet Road location.

The company also moved into the old Starbucks space on Academy Road roughly a year after it closed, finding a built-in customer base already looking for a local alternative.

As the company prepares to enter Saskatoon, that local identity remains the priority.

“How do we continue to feel local in Saskatoon, even though we're not?” Yurman says.

For Empty Cup, which started as an idea for canned cold brew inspired by co-founder Mark Talman's travels through Asia, the answer is understanding a community before opening within it. That means learning the neighbourhoods, paying attention to customer habits and allowing each café to reflect the character of the area around it.

Dr. Divya Ramachandran, an assistant professor of marketing at the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba, points to Gen Z — those born between 1997 and 2012 — as a major driver behind the rise of independent café culture. It's a trend, she says, rooted largely in a desire for authenticity.

“When younger generations have the time and desire to get something that genuinely satisfies them, they tend to look for independent coffee shops,” she says. “Those places have their own identity and a uniqueness that people connect with.”

Consumers are also paying closer attention to where products come from and whether a business is locally owned, and those factors are increasingly shaping purchasing decisions. For a generation that values individuality,

even where you buy your coffee can become part of your identity.

Ramachandran also points to what she calls the “hidden gem” effect. Younger consumers often share newly-discovered local cafés on TikTok and Instagram, where finding an independent spot early carries social value.

“It gives them a leg up in their social status in their own little groups.”

By comparison, major chain openings rarely generate the same kind of organic enthusiasm or cultural cachet online.

Being owner-operated has practical advantages, too. Bergen says major decisions at Thom Bergen often come down to a quick call between himself and co-owner Thom Hiebert. That flexibility mattered when tariffs and supply-chain pressures drove coffee prices up between 12 and 30 per cent over two years. In response, Thom Bergen rerouted shipments directly through Toronto, bypassing American supply chains altogether. The company also roasts in-house on a vintage German UG 22 roaster that took 11 months to certify for use in Canada.

Today, Thom Bergen sources coffee from eight countries through direct farm partnerships, with 75 per cent of its menu tied to those relationships. In Honduras, the company has purchased one small farm’s entire harvest for three consecutive years. Those long-term agreements help stabilize pricing and quality in a market that has become increasingly volatile.

Bergen says the commodity price of coffee more than doubled recently after barely moving for 70 years. For companies that couldn’t adapt quickly, the impact was severe, forcing many specialty coffee businesses to close.

Ramachandran says that same flexibility is also a branding advantage. Unlike large chains, local shops can shape everything from décor and music to staffing and menus.

“They aren’t tied down to a one-size-fits-all corporate culture. That uniqueness can appeal to many different kinds of people.”

Economic pressures are also influencing consumer habits. According to the Restaurants Canada 2025 Foodservice Facts Report, more than 80 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 reported eating out less because of rising living costs. Coffee, however, has remained a relatively accessible indulgence.

“You could probably still afford a nice coffee even if you couldn’t afford a nice meal,” says Stachiw.

Yurman sees the same trend and connects it to something broader.

“Beverage culture has just absolutely blown up in the last three years,” she says. “I have three drinks on my desk right now — and I don’t think that’s going away, especially with millennial and Gen Z cohorts. People love a little treat and a beverage is an easy one to grab.”

That instinct to reach for something small and satisfying, even when budgets are tight, has helped coffee hold steady while people cut back elsewhere. People are pulling back on bigger purchases, Yurman says, but coffee is a constant purchase.

Ask people why they spend time in coffee shops and the answer is rarely just about coffee. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for low-pressure social spaces has grown.

COFFEE BY THE NUMBERS

According to the Coffee Association of Canada's Canadian Coffee Drinking Trends 2025 study:

- **71 per cent of Canadian adults had a cup of coffee the previous day, making it the country's most-consumed beverage.**
- **Canada's coffee industry is valued at nearly \$6.2 billion and supports more than 160,000 jobs, according to Retail Insider. In a market that size, there's room for more than just the giants.**

“These ‘third spaces’ offer a very low-pressure opportunity to socialize,” Ramachandran says. “You don’t have to talk to anybody, but if you want to, you have the option.”

You can sit alone with headphones on, have a five-minute conversation with someone in line or work for three hours without speaking to a single person. Stachiw puts it simply:

“Everyone wants human connection, and a coffee shop is a safe way to connect with other people.”

For Winnipeg’s independent cafés, that may be the biggest reason they continue to grow. They’re selling coffee, but they’re also creating places where people want to spend time. And in a city where winter can keep people isolated for months, that matters.



The Winnipeg Humane Society's Community Outreach team lead the WHS team experiences. (L to R): Mara Simpson, Danisha Jarrett, Ally Klinck, Kendra Galbraith and Kendra Zielke. (Pinky loves the camera but isn't part of the program.)

PD DAYS ARE FOR THE DOGS: THE WINNIPEG HUMANE SOCIETY'S NEW CORPORATE TEAM EXPERIENCES

Before you start reading this article, rest assured, you will get to pet a dog.

THE Winnipeg Humane Society (WHS) is offering up the chance to go behind the scenes of Manitoba’s oldest animal welfare organization to not only learn about how it helps the dogs, cats and critters it cares for, but what the community can do to increase the well-being of all animals.

The WHS adheres to the Indigenous concept of “One Health,” the belief that animals, people and the environment are all interconnected. When we increase the well-being of one, we increase the well-being of the others.

While most people think of the WHS as simply a shelter, the organization actually supports both ends of the leash. As a social service, the WHS offers programming that addresses food scarcity, homelessness and mental health to increase the well-being of animals and the people who love them. That includes a pet food bank, low-cost vet care and free emergency boarding. There’s even a SafePet program for individuals leaving domestic abuse situations, which is designed to keep pets where they belong, with their loving owner.

The new Corporate Team Experiences, facilitated by the WHS Community Outreach team, include a mix of education on the animal-human connection, behind-the-scenes access and meaningful group activities

that vary from creating bundles for the pet food bank, stuffing Kongs for animal enrichment or beautifying our outside space for dog walkers, volunteers and new meet-and-greets.

Packages range from half-days to full days (the latter includes lunch), supporting 15 to 30 people and can include the add-on of a WHS therapy dog (or two).

And while you’re getting those scratches behind the ears in, you’re also giving back. Program fees from Corporate Team Experiences help to support the animals in WHS’s care.

To book a Corporate Team Experience, contact the WHS Community Outreach Department at 204-982-2046 or communityoutreach@winnipeghumanesociety.ca.



Mayor celebrates first anniversary of Portage and Main reopening to pedestrians

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

IT'S been one year since Portage and Main opened up to pedestrian traffic for the first time in nearly a half-century, but aside from the initial hoopla it's been pretty quiet at Winnipeg's most famous intersection.

Vehicles pull up to red lights, people cross, lights turn green, people stop and vehicles move. Repeat.

The naysayers' predictions of death and dismemberment from the never-ending stream of accidents have not come to fruition and Portage and Main has settled in to being just another intersection.

Nobody is happier about it all than its primary architect, Mayor Scott Gillingham.

"I think Portage and Main opening has been very positive for the city and certainly for the downtown.

Functionally, the intersection is operating really well. Traffic is flowing smoothly. According to reports last year, close to 3,500 people every day are now walking across the intersection at grade," he says.

The mayor was criticized by the "closed" side for going against the 2018 plebiscite in which 65 per cent of Winnipeggers voted to maintain the concrete barriers that had been in place since 1979.

But an early 2024 report detailing the extensive water damage to the membrane above the underground concourse — not to mention the \$73-million estimated price tag to repair it — was more than enough to convince Gillingham that the only fiscally prudent course of action was to reopen the intersection to pedestrians.

"When you looked at what the (repairs) would entail, it would have been up to five years of road closures (at

Portage and Main) to accommodate the construction. It just made more sense to open it to pedestrians," he said, noting council voted to open the intersection in March 2024.

Contrary to popular belief, Portage and Main is not Winnipeg's busiest intersection. That distinction goes to Lagimodiere Boulevard and Regent Avenue, followed by Portage and Moray Street. Portage and Main is third.

There were some people at City Hall who doubted whether the \$21-million project could be done by the target date of July 1, 2025. Gillingham wasn't one of them. In fact, he worked diligently in city council corridors to ensure the timeline would be met.

"I said, 'It could be done. Let's make this happen.' So, we got it opened in time for the new transit network to be launched," he says.

"So, yes, I pushed and set expectations high to get the work done, do it well, do it right, get it done on time and on-budget. I was very clear behind the scenes that it had to get done."

Adam Dooley, who chaired the "vote open" committee prior to the plebiscite, said the mayor deserves a lot of credit for getting the groundbreaking project across the finish line. He said virtually every mayor over the last four decades had pledged to open the intersection but never followed through.

"It's obvious that it was the right decision," he says. "I ran a business a block-and-a-half from there and I could see what a colossal pain in the butt it was to have those barricades. It made it hard to get around the centre of downtown and it made it very unwelcoming for visitors. It was an unwelcome, ugly intersection."

When the barricades were up, Dooley said pedestrian traffic was minimal but today the sidewalks are "flooded" with people.

"The city should be designed for people first. When you welcome people on two feet to an intersection like that, they come," he says.

Brent Bellamy, architect and creative director at Winnipeg-based Number TEN Architectural Group and who had long been a prominent advocate for the reopening of the intersection, may have had a crystal ball a year ago when he said, "A month after opening, we will have totally forgotten about all the controversy and a year from then, we'll look back and go, 'why did we talk about it for so long?'"



Doug Little photo

"I think Portage and Main opening has been very positive for the city and certainly for the downtown. Functionally, the intersection is operating really well. Traffic is flowing smoothly. According to reports last year, close to 3,500 people every day are now walking across the intersection at grade."

— Scott Gillingham, Mayor of Winnipeg.



Travel Manitoba

WHY WINNIPEG BRANDS WORK



BY JEFF SWYSTUN
BRANDING

The city’s most successful brands don’t chase attention. They earn trust by reflecting how Winnipeggers see themselves.

Winnipeg is a fascinating city for branding and marketing. Flash fails. Hype backfires. Brands that try too hard don’t last.

Winnipeggers are practical idealists. They want sensible choices, genuine experiences, community connection, emotional warmth and financial fairness. The brands that succeed resolve tensions Winnipeggers live with every day.

When working with clients, I uncover their business and customer tensions. Then I position the brand as the clear solution and bring that idea to life through marketing.

Here are some big-brand examples.

Brand	Tension	Resolution	Marketing Expression	What They Resolved
Nike	People want to be athletic but feel intimidated or inadequate.	Everyone is already an athlete.	“Just Do It”	A little exercise goes a long way. Emotional storytelling over product features. Aspiration, not self-doubt.
Airbnb	Travellers crave authentic local experiences but also safety and trust	A place to stay becomes a platform for living like a local.	“Belong Anywhere”	Live like a local. Experiences, not accommodations. Adventure with security.
Spotify	Infinite music overwhelms.	Personalized discovery.	“Soundtrack Your Life”	Relevant Daily Mix and Made for You playlists. Curated, not crushed.

Global brands have scale and resources most businesses can’t match. They often address broad identity or lifestyle aspirations. Local Winnipeg brands are different. They resolve social tensions shaped by the city’s history, stereotypes, size and location.

Here are a few local examples.

Brand	Tension	Resolution	Marketing Expression	What They Resolved
Little Brown Jug Brewing	Craft beer feels trendy, fleeting and exclusive.	A high-quality, unique product that welcomes people as a taste of Winnipeg.	“Honestly, Good Beer”	Bright, friendly taproom instead of industrial or macho. Community gatherings and events. Plainspoken Prairie tone. Neighbourhood belonging, not craft pretension.
The Forks	Historic public spaces are either tourist attractions or local hangouts, but rarely both.	A living space blending heritage, food, recreation and modern urban life.	“Winnipeg’s Meeting Place”	Entertaining, vibrant and active year-round. Varied yet cohesive. Visitors make their own history. Heritage preservation and contemporary relevance.
Peasant Cookery	People desire elevated dining without pomposity.	European-inspired cuisine presented as warm and inviting.	“Rustic Cuisine Elevated”	The name signals humility. Hearty fare made fine. A casual, refined atmosphere. Appealing fine dining, not arrogance.

I’ve distilled five branding traits from successful local businesses, cultural institutions and consumer behaviour. These explain why certain brands feel right in Winnipeg while others never land.

- **Anti-Status Culture:** Quality matters. Showy doesn’t.
- **Earned Local Pride:** Celebrate the city — don’t sell it.
- **Genuine Hospitality:** Friendly, not fake.
- **Evidence Culture:** Show it. Don’t say it.
- **Casual Sophistication:** Big-city experiences, small-city ease.

Winnipeg brands work because they don’t try to outgrow the city — they reflect it.

In a world obsessed with scale and spectacle, that restraint is admirable and can be a competitive advantage. When brands align with how people live, it’s magic. People stop feeling marketed to — and start feeling understood.



Submitted by James Lindsey

A rendering of the new Thompson airport, which is designed to strengthen connections across northern Manitoba and Nunavut.

THOMPSON'S NEW GATEWAY TO THE NORTH



“This is about opportunity. It’s about ensuring Thompson continues to function as a regional hub— not just for flights, but for business, health care, tourism and northern access.”

—James Lindsay, CEO of the Thompson Airport Authority

BY SHELLEY COOK

FOR decades, Thompson's airport terminal bore the marks of age. The building settled unevenly into the ground beneath it, a reminder of an era when long-term planning for the city was limited. With a new terminal nearing completion, the northern Manitoba hub is now being reshaped.

More than a replacement for an aging structure, the new terminal is an access point that expands what's possible for Thompson, northern Manitoba and Nunavut. The airport plays a central role in moving people, goods and essential services across vast distances, supporting communities that depend on those connections every day.

“This is about opportunity,” says James Lindsay, CEO of the Thompson Airport Authority. “It’s about ensuring Thompson continues to function as a regional hub— not just for flights, but for business, health care, tourism and

northern access.”

Lindsay acknowledges that the airport is located on First Nation land, emphasizing the importance of recognizing this history and building relationships rooted in respect and long-term partnership when developing large-scale projects that impact the entire community.

The new 40,000-square-foot terminal is not only a hub for transportation, the state-of-the-art facility's design includes space for food and beverage outlets, retail and financial services, with the goal of attracting a financial institution that could improve access to banking for Indigenous and northern residents who rely on Thompson as a regional centre. The new building replaces a 14,000-square-foot terminal constructed more than a half-century ago, when Thompson was widely viewed as a short-term mining town rather than a lasting northern hub.

“The original airport was built at a time

when nobody really thought Thompson was going to be around forever,” says Tom O'Brien, a long-time resident and member of the Thompson Chamber of Commerce.

Designed for short-term use, the old terminal had reached the end of its life, both structurally and functionally, just as reliance on air travel in the region was increasing.

O'Brien says the new terminal reflects a shift in how the community thinks about its future.

“This building lets us think 20, 30 even 40 years ahead,” he says. “Without it, we would have struggled to fully use the potential that’s here.”

That long-term thinking is increasingly tied to transportation. As climate change shortens the season for winter roads, air travel has become more than a convenience. For many remote and northern communities, it is a critical lifeline, with Thompson serving as a regional service centre.

“For a long time, northern Manitoba relied heavily on winter roads,” O'Brien says. “They’re far less predictable now. Air access is essential.”

Lindsay says the airport supports a wide range of activity across the north.

“It’s a two-way flow,” he says. “You’re bringing people in and you’re moving people out. That reliability supports mining, tourism, health care and economic development.”

O'Brien adds, “When you talk about reconciliation in practical terms, infrastructure matters. Reliable transportation supports Indigenous businesses, employment and community-led development.”

Thompson is located near several First Nations that rely on air travel as a point of connection within the region. Improved air access opens the door to new types of economic activity and opportunity for everyone living in the area.



Submitted by James Lindsey

A 40,000-square-foot terminal hub will include space for food and beverage outlets.

For example, Northern Manitoba's climate, Lindsay says, continues to draw interest for cold-weather testing of equipment, vehicles and materials.

“There’s growing global interest in cold-weather testing,” he says. “Northern locations like Thompson offer conditions that can’t be replicated elsewhere.”

Lindsay cites NATO's DIANA innovation program as an example of how extreme northern environments are increasingly discussed in global testing and innovation contexts, noting that modern infrastructure is a prerequisite simply to take part in those conversations.

“If you want to be part of those opportunities, you need the infrastructure to support them,” he says.

While mining remains central to the northern economy, both Lindsay and O'Brien say diversification will play a role in Thompson's ever-growing future. Tourism, in particular, is an industry that is garnering interest from people looking to explore northern destinations for nature and wildlife experiences.

For many visitors, that sense of wonder begins the moment they arrive in Manitoba's vast north. Thompson sits at the edge of boreal forest and open tundra, where wildlife remains a close part of daily life. Wolves, particularly, are a big part of the landscape. Sometimes they are even visible near the airport and along the city's

outskirts, which serves as a reminder of how unique and stunningly beautiful this region is.

“It’s also about first impressions,” O'Brien says. “What people are arriving to now versus what they’ll be arriving to soon is night and day.”

That shift matters for a city often shaped by outdated narratives.

“This building helps change how people see Thompson,” O'Brien says. “It shows what the community actually is.”

With the Manitoba Winter Games set to take place in Thompson next March, the airport will see an increase in visitors as attention turns to the city. However, the new terminal's official opening isn't slated until later this year, in May.

And then, the sky is the limit.

Lindsay says airports often serve as anchors for further development, including hotels, retail, services and partnerships with Indigenous communities and regional businesses.

After nearly two decades of planning, the new terminal is built for the long view, grounded in the belief that northern Manitoba's future is still unfolding.

“This airport isn't just about flights,” Lindsay says. “It’s about what comes next.”

TRAVEL MONEY 101

WHAT EVERY TRAVELLER SHOULD KNOW BEFORE
CONVERTING CANADIAN DOLLARS INTO FOREIGN CURRENCY



Supplied

Currency exchange comparisons and considerations can help you get the most out of your Canadian dollar.

BY CARLY PETERS

I'm on my way to a two-week trip to Japan. I have a few yen in my pocket, but since I haven't converted Canadian dollars into anything other than U.S. dollars in several years, it took some research to decide where (or even if) I would get my cash before I left Winnipeg.

The internet suggested withdrawing cash from one of Japan's widely popular 7-Eleven ATMs could be a good choice, but I had my doubts.

I'm not alone in my quest to understand exchanging foreign currency. Many international destinations, including Japan, are seeing an increase in Canadian travellers thanks to the tensions with our neighbours to the south, along with the weak loonie to the U.S. greenback, which has made vacations on the other side of the 49th parallel significantly more expensive.

Compared with last year, Canadians are converting fewer Canadian dollars into U.S. dollars for account transfers and cash withdrawals, while demand for euros and Australian dollars is rising, says Christina Varvarikos, director of FX, Personal Banking & Investments at RBC Banking. British pounds and Mexican pesos have also topped the exchange rate list recently for many Canucks, according to Currency Mart Winnipeg Downtown.

Whatever the destination, if you are planning to go abroad, currency exchange comparisons and considerations can help you get the most for your loonies.

Convenience for account holders is often why people gravitate to their bank for getting their foreign currency, says Varvarikos, pointing to the ability to use online banking or mobile apps to purchase foreign cash. She adds trust also plays a role, since transactions are recorded and traceable, providing peace of mind in case of disputes or errors.

Major banks typically offer 40 to 65 currencies. Branches usually keep common currencies, such as U.S. dollars,

QUICK CASH: GENERAL CURRENCY EXCHANGE COMPARISONS

Using exchange rates from May 20, 2026, \$500 Canadian was worth approximately ¥57,700 before exchange spreads and fees. Here's what travellers might receive through different exchange options:

- **Bank (RBC: ¥54,000–55,500)**
- **Airport provider (International Currency Exchange): ¥50,500–53,000**
- **Currency exchange provider (Millennial Currency Exchange): ¥56,000–57,000**

euros and British pounds, in stock. If you need Dominican pesos or Jamaican dollars, you will have to order them in advance and pick it up a few business days later.

The sourcing, transporting and stocking of foreign cash is one of the reasons banks tend to build larger markups into their exchange rates, especially for the ones you have to order in.

Those markups are part of the foreign exchange spread — the difference between the market exchange rate and the rate offered to customers — which banks and currency exchange providers build into transactions as a source of revenue and to cover operational costs.

After trekking to 116 countries as a travel advisor, Christine Ward generally steers travellers toward dedicated money exchanges to secure slightly better rates than banks.

She prefers ordering money online through International Currency Exchange, a company that operates out of major airports, including Winnipeg's airport, picking it up right before takeoff. But the convenience at airport kiosks can command a higher exchange premium and transaction fees for a last-minute grab.

Fees at currency exchange providers may come in the form of fixed transaction charges or percentage-based costs calculated on the converted amount.

Currency exchange providers also include local storefronts, such as Millennial

Currency Exchange or Currency Mart Winnipeg Downtown. These operators tend to carry a broader inventory and their foreign exchange spread is generally lower because of less-costly overhead, says a spokesperson from Currency Mart.

Your destination should also be a consideration, says Ward. Many of the top locales take credit cards and you'll only need a small amount on hand for transportation or tips. In my case, Japan doesn't have a tipping culture but temples, shrines and many food vendors only take cash. A quick search about your destination before you fly out will prevent you from over-purchasing cash.

If you decide to skip the pre-trip conversion and pull some pocket money from a local ATM instead — say at a Japanese 7-Eleven — choose to be charged in local currency, not Canadian dollars. That way, your bank handles the conversion on its end rather than the ATM or merchant's bank, which often applies a less-than-favourable exchange rate. But beware, using a credit card is typically considered a cash advance, which can come with additional banking fees.

In the end, I got my yen from a currency exchange provider. The on-hand stock (sheepishly, I left getting money to the last minute), the exchange rate at the time, and a flat transaction fee of less than \$4 made it the best choice for my trip. But a little legwork on what will work for your destination is the best advice before you put your feet up.

Efficiency Dunn-Rite

Matching cooling demand with smarter technology

WHEN food processing facilities look to reduce energy waste, refrigeration systems are often where the greatest opportunities lie. In energy-intensive environments such as poultry processing, cooling is integral to every facet of production.

At the Dunn-Rite Food Products facility in Winnipeg, refrigeration is more than a utility system — it's essential to maintaining food safety, product quality, and efficient production. As processing demand continues to grow, facilities across Canada are facing increasing pressure to expand capacity while managing rising energy costs.

To address this challenge, Dunn-Rite partnered with Efficiency Manitoba through its Custom Energy Solutions (CES) program to modernize its refrigeration system with variable frequency drive technology. By improving how compressor capacity responds to real-time cooling demand, the project demonstrates how targeted efficiency upgrades can reduce energy consumption, improve system performance, and support long-term operational reliability in food processing facilities.

CANADIAN POULTRY – DUNN-RITE FOOD PRODUCTS

Dunn-Rite Food Products, owned by Sunrise Farms, operates a poultry processing facility in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Sunrise Farms is a Canadian family-owned group of companies that has grown from its origins in poultry production, including hatchery operations, farming, primary processing, and further processing, into a national distributor of protein products across Canada.

With facilities in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario, Sunrise Farms has established a national presence while maintaining its commitment to quality and family values. The company employs around 3,600 team members who help deliver premium food products across Canada.

Refrigeration is central to operations at Dunn-Rite's Winnipeg facility. As demand increased, finding new solutions for reliable and energy-efficient cooling systems became even more important.



KEEPING IT COOL WITH VFD TECHNOLOGY

A variable frequency drive (VFD) controls the speed of motors that power equipment such as fans, pumps, and compressors. By adjusting the frequency and voltage supplied to the motor, a VFD enables refrigeration equipment to match cooling output to the facility's actual needs throughout the day.

As cooling demand naturally fluctuates with production schedules, facility occupancy, and environmental conditions, refrigeration systems do not always need to operate at maximum output.

Traditional refrigeration compressors often rely on mechanical unloading methods, such as slide valve unloading, to reduce cooling capacity during lower-demand periods. While effective, this approach can still consume more energy than necessary because the motor continues to run at full speed.

A VFD improves efficiency by slowing the compressor motor when cooling demand is low. Instead of continuously operating at maximum speed, the compressor can adjust gradually and automatically based on conditions inside the facility. This allows the refrigeration system to operate more efficiently while maintaining consistent performance.

For food processing facilities, this technology can provide several important operational benefits. Reducing unnecessary energy consumption helps lower operating costs while supporting more stable temperature control throughout the facility. Because the equipment is not constantly operating at full speed, VFD systems can also help reduce wear on mechanical components, supporting improved long-term reliability and maintenance performance.

Most importantly, VFD technology offers a practical, achievable solution for facilities seeking to improve efficiency without fundamentally changing their operations.

SMARTER COOLING FOR EXPANDING FACILITIES

As Dunn-Rite expanded operations at its Winnipeg facility, additional refrigeration compressor capacity was needed to support increasing production. “We knew that increasing refrigeration capacity would support production growth, but it wouldn't necessarily improve efficiency,” says Craig Perrett, Industrial Systems Engineer at Efficiency Manitoba. “Without fully exploring optimization, the expansion would likely raise energy use and operating costs.”

To address this, Dunn-Rite partnered with Efficiency Manitoba through its CES program to improve system performance. “The focus shifted from simply producing more cooling to using cooling more efficiently,” says Perrett.

The facility's cooling system is served by an ammonia refrigeration system, and the expansion allowed for two additional refrigeration screw compressors to serve increasing cooling demands. Traditionally, systems like this rely on slide-valve unloading to manage capacity. This reduces output but not motor speed, so compressors still use significant power even at partial load.

For this project, a VFD was added to one of the new compressors, which is now used as a trim machine. The upgraded system uses a more efficient control strategy, reducing speed to 720 rpm before using slide-valve unloading. This approach better matches real-time cooling demand and improves efficiency during load fluctuations.

The upgraded refrigeration system at Dunn-Rite meets higher production needs, reduces unnecessary energy use, and improves operational responsiveness, resulting in measurable annual energy savings.

MEASURED RESULTS AND VERIFIED SAVINGS

To validate performance, the system was analyzed using operational data collected at one-minute intervals over two weeks. Compressor performance was compared to the original scenario to assess the impact of VFD integration.

The analysis confirmed that Dunn-Rite achieved projected annual energy savings of 210,000 kWh. In addition to these savings, the project achieved a simple payback period of just over two years, accounting for both energy and non-energy benefits. Furthermore, the project qualified for a \$31,000 incentive from Efficiency Manitoba's Custom Energy Solutions program, directly improving the project's financial outcome.

Most importantly, these improvements were made without disrupting daily production. The facility operated as usual

during implementation, demonstrating the practicality of integrating efficiency upgrades into existing systems.

HOW CUSTOM ENERGY SOLUTIONS SUPPORTED THE PROJECT

“Working with Efficiency Manitoba made a real difference in this project,” says Lloyd Harms, Maintenance Manager, Dunn-Rite Food Products. “Their team helped us identify practical energy-saving opportunities in our refrigeration system and guided us through available financial incentives. Having both technical insight and program support made it much easier to move forward with confidence.”

Unlike traditional rebate programs, CES is based on customized engineering analysis and verified performance. Incentives are tied to measured savings, calculated at \$0.25 per kWh of electricity saved and \$0.30 per cubic metre of natural gas saved, so greater energy reductions receive greater financial support.

The program supports a wide range of industrial systems, including compressed air, pumps, fans, heat recovery, steam systems, ventilation, and variable speed drives. This approach helps facilities find efficiency opportunities that integrate with existing operations without affecting reliability.

By combining technical expertise with performance-based incentives, CES reduces implementation barriers and supports confident decision-making for facilities considering energy upgrades.

SUPPORTING MANITOBA INDUSTRY

Across Manitoba, industrial facilities are addressing rising operating costs and the need for greater efficiency while remaining competitive. The main challenge is implementing energy-saving measures that align with production needs.

The Dunn-Rite VFD project shows how targeted equipment upgrades can deliver significant results with minimal disruption. More broadly, the project highlights the value of collaboration between industry and programs like Efficiency Manitoba's Custom Energy Solutions. Combining technical expertise and financial support makes efficiency improvements more accessible and impactful.

For facilities like Dunn-Rite Food Products, this support can be the difference between maintaining current systems and making meaningful progress toward long-term operational efficiency.

Learn more about Efficiency Manitoba's Custom Energy Solutions program at efficiencyMB.ca/industrial.

HEALTH COVERAGE THAT PUTS YOUR FURRY FRIENDS FIRST

Avoid the high cost of veterinary care through pet insurance

As a pet owner, is there anything worse than having to euthanize your dog or cat? There is, actually — when you have to say goodbye to your beloved four-legged friend because you can't afford to pay their medical bills.

This gut-wrenching circumstance wouldn't happen with an older parent or grandparent and it doesn't have to happen with Max or Macie, either.

But you need to take out pet insurance.

If you haven't heard of it, you're not alone. This safeguard for our furry family members is taken out by less than five per cent of dog and cat owners in North America. It's much more prevalent in other parts of the world. In Sweden, for example, 80 percent of dog owners and 50 percent of cat owners take out insurance for them, and over 30% in the UK.

Pet insurance in Canada is limited to cats and dogs, while some countries extend coverage to animals as diverse as rabbits and horses. But no matter the breed or age of your cat or dog, Fetch stands apart in helping pets live longer, healthier lives.

The best, and most affordable time to purchase pet insurance is the time of pet ownership, during the puppy and kitten stage. As pets age, the insurance premiums go up similar to how human healthcare works. Many breeds are also prone to predisposed medical issues, so it's good to be proactive. Premiums, on average cost around \$25-\$35 per month to insure a cat and \$35 to \$45 per month for a dog. It's as simple as adding it on to other monthly subscription services.

There are different thresholds for economic euthanasia, according to Bill Skubovius, Winnipeg-based senior vice-president of business development at Fetch Pet Insurance. He says consumers routinely make decisions about a wide range of insurance products — such as life, disability, critical illness and travel — and pets should be absolutely part of the consideration set.

"Anyone who would struggle with paying a vet bill of \$1,000 or more should get pet insurance. It brings you peace of mind and financial security for your 4-legged family members," he says. "When you look at the overall cost of care with owning a pet, from food and toys, to treats and grooming, prioritizing the medical health side should be the first order of business."

Skubovius says he knows of countless cases where families have cancelled a vacation or maxed out their credit card to pay for an unexpected veterinary bill for their pet.

So, what does pet insurance cover? Pretty much everything you would take your pet to an animal hospital for, ranging from swallowing a foreign object, a dental injury, breaking a bone, to diabetes, cancer and surgeries.

"Fetch provides the most complete coverage available, throughout North America," says Skubovius.

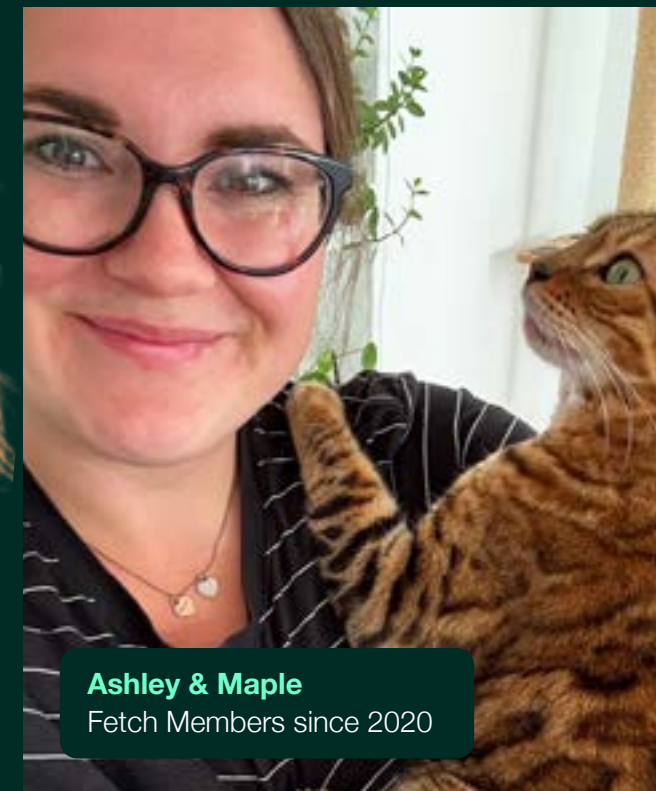
On top of the core coverage that includes breed-specific issues, Fetch provides additional benefits that include 100 per cent reimbursement on hundreds of qualifying vet meds, and over \$1,000 in savings on pet health + wellness products from brands committed to the health and wellness of your pet.

There's more.

If your pet is lost, coverage can include printing off flyers to post around your neighborhood to help you find your dog or cat via the Fetch benefit for lost pet advertising and reward. And if you're dealing with your own illness that requires hospitalization and you don't have anybody to dog- or cat-sit, you can board them at a kennel and Fetch will cover it.

In addition, if you live in a rural area and have difficulty making it to the city to access a veterinarian, you can have an online vet appointment and Fetch will cover that too, via their telehealth coverage in the policy.

Pet owners don't question regular visits to their local pet store to load up on various bones, balls and squeaky toys and rarely blink an eye at the cost. Pet insurance should be a part of pet ownership, Skubovius says.



Ashley & Maple
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GET EVERY PAW COVERED

While the market penetration of pet insurance in Canada and the U.S. trails many other European countries, there's no denying that the industry is on the upswing. Over the last decade, pet insurance has become a multi-billion dollar industry and is growing at a rate of 22+ per cent per year.

There are a number of reasons behind the growth. First off, pets are a part of the family and the human animal bond continues to strengthen in households. In addition to the unwavering love for our four-legged family members, the rising costs for veterinary medical care requires consumers to research pet insurance so they can provide the very best care for their pet.

To learn more, visit
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PET INSURANCE



Workplace well-being services from Manitoba Blue Cross are equipping leaders with the tools to navigate a wide range of situations, says Jodie Voth (right), manager of employee assistance services.

Filling the tool box

MANITOBA BLUE CROSS

equips leaders
to navigate
a full range of
employee challenges

A positive workplace culture does more than boost morale – it supports productivity, resilience and long-term organizational success. When employee well-being is overlooked, however, it can affect engagement, performance and overall workplace dynamics.

Leading organizations recognize that a proper work-life balance and strong workplace culture are crucial to both performance and long-term success.

But that alone is not enough. Organizations also need the right processes in place to help employees navigate a variety of

challenges, whether they originated at work or in their personal lives.

Jodie Voth, manager of employee assistance services at Manitoba Blue Cross, says top-performing organizations understand that employees are emotional beings and need to be looked after holistically.

“If employers want the best from their employees, they need to ensure the workplace is supportive and psychologically safe. It’s not just about performance. It’s about how people are cared for when aspects of work and life do not go as planned,” she says.



Workplace well-being services are available to all organizations in Manitoba, helping to build a stronger workforce across the province.

“For many years, people were expected to manage challenges on their own. We understand now that life events and workplace pressures have a real impact. The most effective employers acknowledge that and respond accordingly.”

The workplace well-being services offered by Manitoba Blue Cross are designed to equip leaders with practical tools to navigate a wide range of situations, and leader consultations often serve as a starting point for many organizations. When an organization gets in touch with Manitoba Blue Cross, a specialist conducts an initial consultation to understand the full scope of needs and recommends the most suitable tools and services. A Manitoba Blue Cross benefits plan is not required to access these fee-for-service offerings and the initial consultation is provided at no cost.

“Leaders often reach out asking, ‘how do I approach this?’ We provide coaching and guidance in a way that’s sensitive and supportive, so they feel confident in how they respond,” she says.

Organizations may seek support for a variety of reasons, including changes in employee performance, increased workplace stress or challenging interactions in public-facing roles. In more serious cases, support may be needed following a critical or traumatic workplace incident.

“We’re often brought in to provide immediate support following an incident, and in many cases, we continue working with teams over time to support recovery and resilience,” Voth says.

For employees working in high stress or public-facing roles, repeated exposure to difficult situations can take a toll.

“In these cases, customized supports are often created, such as facilitated debriefings and targeted educational content, to help teams process their experiences and build coping strategies together,” she says.

Manitoba Blue Cross has provided a leading employee assistance program for nearly four decades and continues to evolve its services to meet the needs of today’s workplaces. It currently supports about 300 organizations across Manitoba, including some of the biggest companies in the province.

“We have heard from employer groups how beneficial it is to leverage these services,” she says.

“There is strong interest in leadership development, particularly given the workforce shifts in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many organizations are focused on supporting new and emerging leaders and ensuring they have the tools they need to succeed,” she says.

Manitoba Blue Cross offers a range of services designed to support leaders of all levels, including leadership coaching, workshops and seminars and customizable group sessions.

Within their comprehensive catalogue of workshops and seminars, compassionate leadership training builds leaders’ capacity to foster respectful, psychologically safe workplaces through compassionate communication and support leadership practices. This training aligns with Manitoba’s recent legislative recognition of psychological health and safety as an essential component of workplace safety.

“Every organization—and every employee—can benefit from the services we provide. That’s why these supports are available to all organizations in Manitoba, not just existing clients, helping to build a stronger workforce across the province,” Voth says.

Organizations can get started with a no-cost initial consultation to explore the most effective and personalized options for their teams by visiting wellness.mb.bluecross.ca.

They can also contact the Manitoba Blue Cross team directly at workplacewellbeing@mb.bluecross.ca or by calling 204-786-8880 or 1-800-590-5553.





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Redevelopment of the Hudson's Bay Company's building is creating space for the Southern Chiefs' Organization citizens.

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WEHWEHNEH BAHGAHKINAHGOHN BLENDS ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION WITH DOWNTOWN RENEWAL

BY SHELLEY COOK

A MASSIVE redevelopment project taking shape in downtown Winnipeg stands as more than a major economic investment. For the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO), the transformation of the former Hudson's Bay Company building offers an opportunity to advance Indigenous-led city-building, economic reconciliation and long-term renewal in the heart of Manitoba.

Known as Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn, meaning "It is visible" in Anishinaabemowin, the project is converting the historic building into a mixed-use space that includes housing, commercial units, health services and community-focused amenities designed with Indigenous people at the centre.

For SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels, the redevelopment is about creating something to last for future generations.

"There's obviously always a number of opportunities that are available to us at any given moment and we saw a big void left in downtown when Hudson Bay closed," Daniels says. "This project is creating space for SCO citizens that is theirs."

The redevelopment has grown significantly since it was first announced. In March, Daniels announced the project's total cost had risen to \$310 million, more than double the original \$130 million estimate released in 2022. He says the increase reflects a more accurate understanding of the scope of the work as construction plans evolved, along with inflation, supply-chain pressures and uncertainty surrounding potential U.S. tariffs.



Governments at the municipal, provincial and federal levels have collectively committed \$110 million toward the project.

According to Daniels, roof work is nearing completion while crews continue framing and installing mechanical systems inside. The site is expected to open in the fall of 2028.

While the scale of the redevelopment is significant, Daniels says one of SCO's primary goals has been ensuring Indigenous workers benefit directly from the project. He estimates three-quarters of the current workforce on site is Indigenous.

"There's no other project of this size, across the country, that has this kind of a First Nation Indigenous workforce," Daniels says. "We call it the gold standard as a result of that."

A major factor behind those numbers has been Miikahnah Connect, an Indigenous workforce and retention platform SCO created. The platform helps recruit workers, connect them with employment opportunities and provide ongoing support aimed at improving long-term retention.

"We created an app and we made sure that our construction manager, PCL, was also proactive in working with us and then the subcontractors as well," he says.

"We really just sort of wrote it into the agreement to put pressure, that we would achieve these kinds of numbers."

However, Daniels says the platform was never intended to serve only one development. Instead, SCO hopes Miikahnah Connect can become a broader tool for businesses seeking to improve Indigenous recruitment and retention practices across multiple industries.

The redevelopment comes as Winnipeg's downtown continues to face challenges stemming from pandemic-era disruptions, including declining foot traffic and vacant commercial spaces. Daniels believes projects like

"THERE'S NO OTHER PROJECT OF THIS SIZE, ACROSS THE COUNTRY, THAT HAS THIS KIND OF A FIRST NATION INDIGENOUS WORKFORCE. WE CALL IT THE GOLD STANDARD AS A RESULT OF THAT."

— Jerry Daniels, Grand Chief, Southern Chiefs' Organization

Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn will bring new life to the city centre by bringing new residents, businesses and services back into downtown Winnipeg.

"It's going to raise property values," he says. "And not only that but it increases incentives for private investment. And so, it's going to create more vibrancy and a better quality of life for downtown Winnipeg."

"It's the heart of our city. It's the heart of Manitoba. And we're playing a significant role in repairing and getting that area revitalized."

Housing will form a substantial portion of the redevelopment. Daniels says SCO sought to strike a balance between affordability and long-term financial sustainability.

"We looked at making housing available as much as we possibly could without getting too close to the line for where it is unsustainable," he says.

The project will include a combination of affordable and low-income housing options supported through different pricing structures and subsidy models.

"We tried to make it the best scenario that will maximize housing availability without compromising the financial management of the property," Daniels says.

The redevelopment also carries symbolic significance. The Hudson's Bay building has long stood as one of Winnipeg's most recognizable landmarks and remains closely linked to Canada's colonial economic history. Daniels says transforming that space into an Indigenous-led development sends a powerful message about Indigenous participation in the country's future.

The SCO project is one of several Indigenous-led developments reshaping Winnipeg's downtown landscape.



Supplied

The Hudson's Bay Company building has long stood as one of Winnipeg's most recognizable landmarks and remains closely linked to Canada's colonial economic history.

The Manitoba Métis Federation's National Heritage Centre, currently under construction in the former Bank of Montreal building at Portage and Main, is expected to open next year. The 122-year-old building will house the "Our Grandmothers Collection," a library of 142 cultural artifacts curated by professor and artisan Gregory Scofield. In 2024, the MMF also expanded its downtown footprint by purchasing two former Bell MTS office towers near the heritage centre.

Together, these projects reflect a growing Indigenous presence in some of Winnipeg's most prominent and historically significant spaces.

"I think it's taking us in a direction that our grandfathers, grandmothers would have hoped for," Daniels says, "and that is that we play a significant role in this country."

"I THINK IT'S TAKING US IN A DIRECTION THAT OUR GRANDFATHERS, GRANDMOTHERS WOULD HAVE HOPED FOR. AND THAT IS THAT WE PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THIS COUNTRY."

—Jerry Daniels, Grand Chief, Southern Chiefs' Organization

Indigenous entrepreneurs AT THE TABLE



Prairie Berry, a Métis-owned family business in Glenlea, sits on a 24-acre strawberry farm. The farm-to-table establishment is run by Jen Turenne and her husband, Matt.

Indigenous chefs and entrepreneurs in Manitoba are building food businesses rooted in tradition, innovation and hospitality

BY ANGELA LOVELL

MANITOBA'S Indigenous culinary sector is growing, with chefs and entrepreneurs building successful businesses that celebrate culture, strengthen communities and introduce diners to traditional ingredients in new ways.

From Winnipeg restaurants such as Promenade Brasserie, Sharecutterie and Bistro on Notre Dame to Indigenous Kitchen's popular food truck and destination dining experiences at Prairie Berry and Buffalo Point Resort, Indigenous-owned food businesses are creating opportunities while showcasing the diverse culinary traditions of First Nations and Métis communities.

One word comes up repeatedly when speaking with Manitoba's Indigenous chefs and restaurant owners: nurturing.

The term perfectly captures both the food they serve — rooted in traditional First Nations and Métis recipes and ingredients — and the welcoming experiences they create for guests.

PROMENADE BRASSERIE

At Promenade Brasserie in St. Boniface in Winnipeg, owner Jay Lekopoy serves Métis-inspired comfort food in a relaxed, community-focused setting.

"I want people to come in and know they are welcome, that this is their community spot," he says.

One of the restaurant's most popular breakfast dishes is the whipped ricotta scramble — fluffy scrambled eggs with ricotta cheese over crispy Brussels sprouts, topped with lemon juice and Parmesan cheese.

"It's a dish that is satisfying and nurturing but doesn't slow you down for the day," Lekopoy says.



Travel Manitoba

The menu at Promenade Brasserie on Provencher Boulevard features local and traditional ingredients.

At lunch, customers often order pork belly with apple jus, rice, pickled cabbage, pickles, cucumber, roasted carrots and parsnips and chipotle aioli.

The menu highlights local and traditional ingredients and changes with the seasons. Specialty dishes, such as wild boar chop, sourced from a local farmer, showcase the creativity of chef Cameron Hornby and Lekopoy's passion for food history and food systems.

"I love that I get to go home every day with a handful of stories about people's lives and know I am providing a space that is important to them," Lekopoy says.

"One of the biggest motivations for starting this restaurant, and for being here every day, is exploring what it means to participate in the birthplace of the Métis while creating a modern

space that Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada can call its own."

INDIGENOUS KITCHEN

Tara Hall operates one of Manitoba's most distinctive food trucks. Inspired by her Saulteaux-Ojibwe upbringing, the menu features fried bread bison burgers, pickerel, Indian tacos, tacos in a bag, specialty fries, wraps and seasonal Saskatoon berry cheesecake and milkshakes.

While studying culinary arts at Red River College, Hall developed a business plan for an Indigenous-themed food truck — something Winnipeg did not have at the time. Seven years ago, she launched Indigenous Kitchen.

The business operates seasonally from April to October and attends major events, including the Red River Exhibition and Winnipeg Folk Festival.



Drawing on recipes passed down through generations, Cassandra Carreiro has built Sharecutterie into a business that celebrates Indigenous culture through food.



Sharecutterie

A bouquet and original sharecutterie board from Sharecutterie.

When not at festivals, the truck serves customers at the Oodena gas station at Taylor Avenue and Kenaston Boulevard.

Hall learned to make fluffy bannock from her great-grandparents and it remains one of her most popular menu items. Her bannock bison burger is the top seller.

“There are not many people in this generation who know how to make real bannock,” she says. “I wanted to bring traditional food that isn’t offered at other food trucks.”

Hall measures success simply.

“If customers leave full and happy, then I’m satisfied,” she says. “We make sure people leave happy with what they’re eating and feel they are getting good value for their money.”

One of the biggest challenges she faces is criticism from within her own community.

“My own people are often the biggest critics of the business I’m in,” she says. “Other Indigenous businesses experience the same thing. Many Indigenous women entrepreneurs face similar challenges when starting or running a business.”

Despite those challenges, Hall is expanding. She plans to open a permanent Indigenous Kitchen restaurant in a new retail development at Kenaston Boulevard and Taylor Avenue this fall, creating a year-round location for customers and a new stage of growth for the business.

SHARECUTTERIE

As an Indigenous- and woman-owned business, Sharecutterie, with locations on Stafford Street and at The Forks, is rooted in hospitality, community and creating welcoming spaces.

The company specializes in elevated grazing experiences through curated charcuterie boards, handcrafted cocktails and café offerings. Its menu

emphasizes connection and sharing, with a focus on presentation, quality ingredients and inclusivity.

“What sets us apart is our ability to create visually beautiful, approachable food experiences while accommodating a wide variety of dietary needs,” says owner Cassandra Carreiro.

The restaurant’s signature sharecutterie boards remain customer favourites. Its bannock sharecutterie sandwich — featuring three types of meat, cheese, white wine herb mustard and mango harissa jam — has quickly become a standout.

Carreiro draws inspiration from travel, dining experiences, local ingredients and emerging food trends.

Like many restaurant owners, Carreiro faces rising food and labour costs while navigating economic uncertainty. Still, she sees opportunities in creating unique, experience-driven dining concepts.

“There’s something special about creating food that becomes part of people’s celebrations, conversations and memories,” she says.

For Carreiro, future growth includes expanding catering services, strengthening the company’s presence at both locations and continuing to build a brand that showcases Indigenous entrepreneurship through innovative food experiences.

PRAIRIE BERRY

Prairie Berry is a Métis-owned family business in Glenlea, about 10 minutes south of Winnipeg, on the 24-acre strawberry farm where Jen Turenne grew up and now lives with her husband, Matt, and their children, Nixi and Cruz.

Originally a strawberry u-pick operation, the family paused the program six years ago to rotate crops and launched farm-to-table dining experiences instead.

The events feature three- to seven-course meals served directly in the strawberry patch during the brief harvest season at the end of June. Guests dine among the berries while local chefs create menus that incorporate strawberries into every course using fresh Manitoba ingredients.

The concept transformed a seasonal agricultural operation into a sought-after culinary destination, attracting guests from across Manitoba and beyond.

This year marks the final season for the popular dining experience.

“We planned to host the dinners for only a few years, but they kept growing every year,” Turenne says. “We’re hosting our final season because we will be planting berries again next year and reopening the u-pick in 2028.”

The farm attracts many repeat visitors looking for an experience that differs from traditional restaurant dining.

“Our farm-to-table dinners are served in gazebos in the strawberry patch, so guests get the outdoor farm experience with an added touch of fine dining,” Turenne says.

MANOOMIN RESTAURANT AND ONISHKANN CAFÉ

For the past four years, Red Seal chef Jennifer Ballantyne has offered a menu that blends familiar favourites with the traditional ingredients and recipes she grew up with on Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

Located inside the Wyndham Garden Winnipeg Airport hotel, Manoomin Restaurant and Onishkann Café prepares everything in-house and from scratch. The menu changes regularly.

Popular breakfast items include eggs Benedict served on baked bannock with a choice of toppings, wild berry barbecue sauce and crispy onions.



Travel Manitoba

Manoomin Restaurant and Onishkann Café, located in the Whydham Garden Winnipeg Airport hotel, prepares all dishes in-house.

The bison skillet features two Nature’s Farm eggs, seasoned bison meatballs, fire-roasted tomato sauce, Parmesan cheese, house-cut hash browns and a choice of grilled harvest grain bread or bannock crostini.

Recent additions include elk pot pie and handmade roasted tomato and squash ravioli.

Ballantyne says food has always been her calling.

“We all have the same connection when it comes to food. It brings people together and always has,” she says.

She also takes pride in mentoring the next generation of Indigenous chefs.

“When I see young chefs start to shine, succeed and get excited, that’s a beautiful feeling,” she says.

As Indigenous cuisine gains wider recognition, Ballantyne sees growing opportunities for young chefs to build careers while sharing their cultures through food.

“There are so many different traditions under the Indigenous umbrella. There is tremendous opportunity for growth, and more people are finding their voices and showcasing what they have to offer.”

“There is tremendous opportunity for growth, and more people are finding their voices and showcasing what they have to offer.”

— Jennifer Ballantyne, chef and owner of Manoomin Restaurant and Onishkann Café

Feast Café Bistro in Winnipeg blends Indigenous ingredients, mentorship and community impact into a decade of culinary entrepreneurship

The menu at Feast Café Bistro on Ellice Avenue is rooted in First Nations food pathways, honouring traditional ingredients.

Travel Manitoba

Where food tells a story

BY ANGELA LOVELL

FEAST Café Bistro has become an internationally-recognized gathering place and one of the early Indigenous-owned restaurants in Canada after opening in 2015. For more than a decade, the 50-seat restaurant has brought together Indigenous tradition, modern Manitoba cuisine and community connection.

Rooted in First Nations food pathways, Feast Café Bistro's menu honours traditional ingredients and harvesting practices while embracing a contemporary approach that uses locally-sourced products and foraged foods.

Owner Christa Guenther describes the restaurant as a space for storytelling, culture and shared experience, welcoming both community members and visitors seeking an authentic connection to the people, history and flavours of the region.

"Through food, hospitality, tourism and conversation, we celebrate the richness of First Nations and Métis traditions while creating a modern dining experience that reflects the spirit of Manitoba today," she says.

Guenther describes herself as a home cook-turned-restaurateur. While her recipes feel familiar, she builds them around traditional ingredients.

"When I make pizza, I use bannock for the crust and traditional ingredients like bison and squash," she says. "We harvest, cook and eat with good intention."

A signature dish is braised bison short ribs topped with smoked wild blueberries and a maple demi-glace that takes three days to prepare.

"Some people hesitate to buy bison because it's expensive and they don't know how to cook it, so we give them that experience and they enjoy it," she says. "Bison has 85 per cent less fat than beef, 75 per cent more iron and it is raised humanely and antibiotic-free."

"I need to price my menu so all walks of life can come here."

— , owner of
Feast Café Bistro in Winnipeg

The most popular lunch item is roasted butternut squash bannock-crust pizza topped with toasted pine nuts, mozzarella, Bothwell cheddar and maple chipotle sour cream, with optional bison sausage or pepperoni and vegan and dairy-free alternatives.

Desserts include sweetgrass crème brûlée and homemade sweetgrass ice cream.

The menu also features wild rice from northern Manitoba, used in the house salad with Saskatoon vinaigrette, homemade wild rice pasta and rotating specials, such as stuffed wild rice ravioli and bison noodle broth with wild rice ramen.

Guenther grew up in Winnipeg's North End, surrounded by poverty, family breakdown and addiction. She did not finish high school, attend culinary school or work in a commercial kitchen before opening Feast Café Bistro.

Her interest in food began early when she cooked for younger cousins. At 23, she opened a licensed holistic daycare for inner-city children with complex needs who struggled in larger care settings. After securing funding, she developed a food program.

"Some of the children came from poverty or their mothers didn't know how to cook or couldn't afford healthy ingredients," she says. "It was amazing to see how food could nurture and change children. I saw their behaviour shift. They had more energy and could learn better."



Travel Manitoba

At the same time, she reconnected with her First Nations and Métis heritage through food.

"When Canada's Food Guide for First Nations, Métis and Inuit came out, I saw ingredients I had no idea belonged to my culture or my French background," she says. "I started incorporating them into my recipes. At that time, there were no cookbooks or accessible histories of traditional food, so I went to communities and asked Elders to share knowledge."

"They gifted me 100-year-old seeds for beans, squash and corn, so I built an Indigenous seed garden," she says. "I still maintain an Indigenous garden and do a lot of canning."

Over 10 years, she developed hundreds of recipes while running her daycare and studied global cuisines to expand her culinary approach.

"I would go to Asian shops in Winnipeg and ask owners about ingredients and cooking techniques," she says. "I learned Thai, Indian, Italian and Greek cooking. I take those influences and create my own dishes."

A DIFFERENT RESTAURANT MODEL

When Guenther christened Feast Café Bistro, she intentionally rejected a traditional restaurant structure.

"I wanted to give job opportunities to people in my community," she says. "We employ people who have faced barriers to employment and provide opportunities to grow and succeed. We support local organizations through job practicums, mentorship work experience programs and business tours."

She acknowledges the challenges of training staff without prior kitchen experience.

"It takes time and mentorship, but it has been the biggest blessing," she says. "People who had never cut an onion now make their own soups. They are loyal, kind and reliable. If I can do it, they can too."

Guenther also hopes to shift industry norms.

"As a woman, a mother and an entrepreneur, I am doing it my way," she says. "It's not how kitchens

traditionally operate, but it is a respectful, nurturing environment. We are changing the idea that hierarchy is required for success.”

Customers come to Feast Café Bistro for more than food.

“We are creating new, positive food pathways around traditional foods,” she says. “Our story is often rooted in negative narratives, but people leave here understanding who we are as First Nations and Métis peoples.”

She says the restaurant helps reconnect diners with Indigenous food systems and identity.

“I want people to experience the essence of who we are as a people and as a nation through the foods of our terroir.”

Rising food costs remain a challenge, particularly for ingredients such as

bison, wild rice and wild berries. Guenther remains committed to accessibility.

“I need to price my menu so all walks of life can come here,” she says. “I want a young Indigenous woman or man to be able to experience their traditional foods in a restaurant setting. That has been a challenge, along with long hours and sacrifices my family makes, but it is extremely rewarding.”

When she opened the restaurant, Indigenous fine dining was rare in Canada. Today, she sees a growing sector.

“There are now many skilled Indigenous chefs who are classically trained and returning to their roots, using foraged ingredients and sharing their stories,” she says. “Everyone brings a different story to the table.”

At 49, Guenther has come full circle.



Travel Manitoba

Guenther's recipes have appeared on Food Network and in culinary magazines.

Her recipes have appeared on the Food Network and in culinary magazines she once used for educational reading.

“I never thought that would happen as a home cook,” she says.

She now plans to expand into cooking videos and a cookbook.

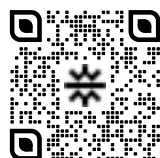
“I want people to cook these traditional ingredients at home,” she says. “Home is where my heart is.”

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Cielo can be reached at 204-290-5370 or cmckee@cardinal.ca

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From Sagkeeng to space



Anishinaabe artist's work reaches Artemis II mission to the Moon

BY JIM TIMLICK

Canadian Space Agency

It's hard to imagine anyone in Manitoba was more excited than Henry Guimond when Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen and the crew of Artemis II launched into space in the spring.

Guimond, an Anishinaabe artist born and raised in Sagkeeng First Nation, was commissioned to create a specially designed patch Hansen wore on his bright orange Orion Crew Survival System suit during the high-profile mission around the moon.

He was glued to his television during the launch and says the visuals sent a shiver down his spine.

"It was really breathtaking to see that spacecraft light up like that and go," he says. "My heart kind of skipped a beat when I saw it going up and how bright it looked."

Guimond was chosen after Hansen contacted him through Sagkeeng's Turtle Lodge International Centre for Indigenous Education and Wellness.

The artist admits he was initially puzzled by the request.

"I got a call that an astronaut wanted a painting. It kind of blew my mind," he says, laughing. "I didn't know what kind of painting. I thought he just wanted artwork."

A design rooted in culture and space

It took Guimond more than 200 hours to complete the design. He produced two preliminary drafts, which Hansen incorporated into the final patch worn on his suit.

The design features the Seven Sacred Teachings represented through animal imagery arranged in a heptagon. It also includes Grandmother Moon, Hansen's astronaut wings and a bow symbolizing Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt.

"I was pretty happy with it," Guimond says. "I wanted to add some mechanics, but I didn't want a rocket. The bow and arrow made sense because that's what Artemis would carry."



Canadian Space Agency

(From left to right) CSA president Lisa Campbell; Dave Courchene III, leader of the Turtle Lodge; Henry Guimond, artist; CSA astronaut Jeremy Hansen.

He says Hansen responded positively to the final design.

"He was really proud of how it worked out. He liked the mechanics of the bow," Guimond says. "It makes me proud that he's wearing it."

From Sagkeeng to space agencies in Quebec

Although Guimond did not travel to space, he says the experience made him feel part of the mission.

He later visited the Canadian Space Agency headquarters in Longueuil, Que., where he delivered the original artwork used to create the patch.

"We went on a tour. It's a beautiful place," he says. He also shared a dinner with Hansen during the visit.

It marked the second time the two met. Their first meeting took place in September 2024, when Hansen visited Manitoba as part of a Canadian Space Agency tour. During that visit, Hansen spent several days in Sagkeeng First Nation, where he took part in a four-day fast, participated in a sweat lodge and received Indigenous teachings in preparation for his mission.

"I asked him how it felt knowing he was going to the moon," Guimond says. "He said he was preparing himself and willing to do it for humanity. I thought he was

really brave."

Hansen later reflected on the experience, saying the community had made a lasting impression.

"They've done a lot for me, they've given a lot," Hansen said. "They want to be part of it and help, and hopefully their efforts will help communicate the beauty and depth of Indigenous knowledge."

Art inspired by land and sky

Much of Guimond's work is rooted in Indigenous teachings but space has long been part of his artistic inspiration. The sun, moon and stars frequently appear in his work.

"The sun represents the Creator, the giver of life. The moon is the grandmother and the stars are the star people and where we come from," he says.

Two of his paintings are on display at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Guimond, who also works as an architect and building contractor, says the exposure from the Artemis II project has led to new opportunities. He has received international media requests and inquiries about commissions.

Anyone interested in contacting the artist can email Turtle Lodge at theturtlelodge@gmail.com.



City Collections repossession specialist Chris Davis is one of nearly 30 licensed recovery experts who repossess between 250 and 300 vehicles in Manitoba and Saskatchewan every month.

The repo man is busier than ever

CITY COLLECTIONS SEES POST-PANDEMIC BOOM

BY the time Chris Davis knocks on your door, it's already too late.

You're at least three payments behind on your vehicle loan and he or another member of his team have arrived to take it back on behalf of your lender.

All isn't lost, however. You've still got 21 days to clear the arrears and reclaim your car or truck from the auction house. After that, though, it's gone.

It's never a surprise when the recovery specialists from City Collections show up at your house or workplace because your bank, credit union or other lender has already hired a collection agency, which has been in touch — repeatedly — with you about catching up on your payments.

"They know their days are numbered," Davis says. "We know where they live and work. We find the vehicle, block

it in and call the tow truck. Then we knock on the door and say 'here's your notice of seizure.'"

City Collections has been in business for more than three decades and business is most definitely booming. It has 29 licensed recovery specialists plus another five people who work in its Henderson Highway office. Together, they repossess between 250 and 300 vehicles in Manitoba and Saskatchewan every month. That's about 10 cars and trucks every day.

Davis attributes at least part of the growth to the business and consumer loans made available by the federal government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Almost anybody could get a car loan then — and they did. Everybody who owned a convenience store or was selling a widget on Amazon got this money. Now they have to pay it back," he says.

There are strict rules by which City Collections and other agencies have to play. For example, it's against the law for them to phone or visit a debtor before 7 a.m. or after 9 p.m.; to phone or visit on a Sunday or statutory holiday; or to harass debtors or their neighbours.

Every repossession has to be done in accordance with the Consumer Protection Act, which stipulates written notice must be given to debtors within 48 hours, telling them that their goods have been repossessed, the amount that must be paid to have the goods returned, how the amount owed is calculated and where the goods are being stored.

But City Collections does much more than just cars and trucks. It also collects farm equipment, boats, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, trailers and recreational vehicles.

"Anything that people want that has value," Davis says. "But we don't

repossess things worth less than \$5,000."

City Collections' clients include banks and credit unions, private lenders as well as financing and leasing companies.

Private lenders cater to consumers with significant credit problems who don't qualify for bank financing, often because they've bounced a few too many cheques.

"There are more private lenders out there than you realize," Davis says. "Once you're a credit criminal, you get bounced off of banking platforms."

Not every repossession attempt is a winner but City Collections has a success rate of 86 per cent with an average turnaround time of five days.

Davis says his team looks beyond the transaction and they're sympathetic to the plight of the people they're visiting.

"We'll offer to give them a hand getting the baby seat out of the vehicle," he says.

And they realize that having a vehicle repossessed in a fashion that can be seen by all of the neighbours can be embarrassing.

"People don't typically talk about it. They don't want the neighbours to see the tow truck coming. Sometimes they'll ask if the vehicle can be moved a block over before it's put on the hoist," he says.

"Manitoba is a seize or sue province and the best option is usually to give up the vehicle and find something with lower payments and lower interest rates. Give up the car and you're off the hook for all that money."

As you might expect, not everybody is willing to relinquish their vehicles without a last-ditch break for freedom. Mike Stratischul, a veteran

recovery specialist at City Collections, was nearly run over by a debtor whose townhouse he had visited a number of times.

"His wife was lying to cover for him but I recognized him from Facebook. He said that wasn't him so I gave him my card. On my way out of the parking lot, I found his car a few units down. I parked behind it so he couldn't leave and got out to check the serial number. He came outside and asked what I was doing. When he realized he couldn't get out, he jumped in the car, smashed into the car beside him, smashed into the building — tearing the eavestroughs off — and drove off over the grass. I had to jump out of the way," he says.

"I got him three days later at his work."

Davis and his team also enforce foreclosures on small businesses. For example, when a wood shop in a Winnipeg strip mall refused to install the proper ventilation to bring its space up to code — after three years of requests — a recovery specialist arrived with a lock smith, changed the locks and posted a note on the door why the tenant was locked out.

"There was saw dust everywhere, including on the electrical boxes. Things can blow up when they're not up to code. We asked the employees, 'would you rather burn to death?' They got it sorted it out over a long weekend," he says.

While putting vehicles up on a tow-truck hoist is the most visible part of what Davis and his team do, they're ultimately in the business of saving business relationships.

Yours.

"Why jeopardize your business reputation by attempting to collect debts and recover assets on your own?" he says.



Trippier Law

Faron Trippier and his team of litigators handle a broad range of files, including commercial disputes, class actions and personal injury.

Advocating for economic reconciliation

BY FARON TRIPPIER

LITIGATION is not reconciliation. Sometimes it's required, but litigation is rarely the first choice.

When governments fail to consult properly or adequately recognize rights, litigation can become a necessary tool for accountability.

At the heart of our work involving First Nations and economic development is a simple idea: economic reconciliation must reconcile the interests of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. The image of a handshake — two sides coming to the table with clarity, respect and shared understanding — captures our view that the goal is not to force consensus but to create conditions where all parties can move forward with greater certainty, security and shared prosperity.

We represent clients seeking legal clarity and improved outcomes, particularly in matters involving First Nations and economic development.

In Manitoba's evolving legal landscape, some of the most significant disputes concern consultation, rights and the ability of First Nations to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lands and economic future. Our firm has experience, flexibility and a willingness to invest in and lead in doing this work the right way.

Our First Nations work often involves claims against Canada, Manitoba and municipalities where consultation has been inadequate or rights have not been fully recognized.

Those disputes are often closely tied to economic development. For First Nations, issues involving land, resources and consultation can determine whether a community has a meaningful voice in projects shaping its future.

The deeper problem is not litigation itself but the failure of governments and public entities to engage properly with First Nations.

In the most recent First Nations mineral rights dispute, as with all claims we have advanced on behalf of First Nations, we believe the boardroom — not the

courtroom — is the better place to resolve these issues. Direct engagement and dialogue advances reconciliation and leads to better, more durable outcomes.

Economic reconciliation is more than a slogan. It requires a framework in which First Nations can participate fully in the province's economic life while other stakeholders operate with greater clarity and stability. Litigation fits into that framework only when governments fail to meet their obligations and it cannot replace the engagement reconciliation demands.

We believe in balancing principle and pragmatism and that doing the work properly means building relationships, earning trust, understanding history and engaging directly with communities. That is what makes meaningful economic reconciliation possible — and what delivers certainty, security and growth for all Canadians.

Faron Trippier, a lawyer in Manitoba for 27 years, founded Trippier Law in 2023. The firm recently welcomed Brian Meronek, K.C. as Senior Counsel, and Kris Saxberg as General Counsel.

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