

**RED LAKE REGIONAL  
HERITAGE CENTRE**

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2029

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# Strategic Plan: 2024 – 2029



## Red Lake Community

Located in Northwestern Ontario, Red Lake lays two hours north of the Trans Canada/ Highway 105 junction. Our 4,000+ citizens live in five geographically dispersed communities. While the median age is a quite young, 38, there is a growing segment of our community that is at or near retirement. About 25% of our members are Indigenous. Red Lakers tend to be well educated with a high level of employment: the mining industry remains a key employer.

Tourism plays an increasing role in the community and adjacent to the town. In 2018, the 29,040 square km east of Red Lake was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The World Heritage Site shares part of its location with the Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. As a remote community with a relatively small population, the people of the town are accustomed to voluntarily working together to create the range of recreational and cultural offerings typically established in larger communities.



## Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre

Open since 2005, the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre (RLRHC) is housed in a beautiful, easily recognized facility. It houses a historical museum showcasing mining, aviation, fur trading, immigration, and Indigenous cultural history in its permanent gallery. A temporary gallery brings to life current topics and community stories of interest. Varied educational and recreational programs serve youth, families, and seniors. Open year round, the RLRHC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and has an annual operating budget of approximately \$300,000. Operational grants from the municipal provincial and federal levels are supplemented by fundraising. Some 5,000 visitors from all over the world are hosted at the RLRHC every year.



### Mandate

The RLRHC is responsible for preserving, promoting, and interpreting Red Lake's natural and social history.

### Vision

The RLRHC strives to promote the ongoing resilience and sustainability of the community through:

- Providing leadership and support to the development of community partnerships
- Celebrate the historical, cultural, and artistic assets of the Red Lake area.

### Guiding Principles

The work of RLRHC is guided by the following core values:

- *Inclusion:* People from a variety of cultural and interest groups and holding a range of perspectives are welcomed, their voices heard, and their stories represented in our work.

- *Participation:* We are active participants in the design and delivery of cultural tourism initiatives and educational projects in the Red Lake area.
- *Welcoming Destination:* The RLRHC offers a safe, welcoming, and comfortable gathering place for residents and visitors.
- *Respectful:* Thoughtful consideration and respect for the people, visitors, employees, volunteers, and partners with whom we engage is always a priority.



## Mission

In partnership with the Municipality of Red Lake, the community of Red Lake and key stakeholders, the RLRHC strives to be a leader in preserving, promoting, and celebrating the region's natural and cultural heritage. This mission is fulfilled through:

- Ensuring that the community of Red Lake's ongoing history is documented and represented through exhibitions, research, art, and events.
- Creating an environment of exploration, where education and growth bring together communities and provide opportunities for sharing knowledge and experiences.
- Together with community representatives, provide opportunities to strengthen Red Lake's positive identity through exhibits, events, programming, and performances.



## ***Direction 1: Grow as an Active Tourism Destination***

**The Issue** – The RLRHC has been a primary destination for those who are new to town, vacationing, or have an active interest in the history of the town. The loss of the building in a 2019 natural disaster, coupled with a pandemic, greatly restricted the RLRHC in delivering that function.

**The Opportunity** – The repaired and renewed RLRHC is ready once again to resume its role as a cultural hub. After a lengthy hiatus, momentum will need to be rebuilt and the community will require a reintroduction to the work of the RLRHC.

### **The Strategic Direction –**

The RLRHC will act as a tourism destination, offering a varied selection of programming, events, and exhibits, while working with other community organizations to help develop an ongoing activity plan.



### **The Strategies**

- i) Ensure that there is an assortment of content offered to address the interests and sustain engagement with varied segments of the community.
- ii) Develop relationships between regional tourism operators and the RLRHC to exchange information and share promotional materials for the mutual benefit of clientele
- iii) Invest in community partnerships to identify opportunities, develop and offer a “Red Lake Experience” to tourists and visitors to the community.
- iv) Develop a formal promotional plan, identify annual priorities for action, and invest in creating promotional content to be used in a variety of opportunities.
- v) Create a more active approach to promotion, including seeking out regional tourism options and providing staff with the information needed to develop as a comprehensive tourism information center.
- vi) Evolve as a contributor to the vitality of the social, economic and cultural aspects of the community.

**Direction 2: Communication and Promotion**

**The Issue** – While the RLRHC has worked at rebranding, social media, and online engagement, the efforts have been inconsistent and disjointed. Marketing and promotion has been secondary to other priorities.

**The Opportunity** – Despite the lack of a cohesive promotion plan, a segment of the community remains engaged and appreciates the work done at the RLRHC. Building on this foundation, increasing awareness and engagement through a comprehensive communication and promotion plan could serve to grow the RLRHC’s participant and stakeholder engagement.

**The Strategic Direction** – The RLRHC must make positive changes that address the community, its members, and tourists.

**The Strategies**

- i) Develop a communication and promotion plan.
- ii) Focus on remaining responsive, relevant, and topical in creating offerings to the community.
- iii) Incorporate advertising strategies as part of all project development, ensuring that promotion is part of any project produced.
- iv) Ensure that the RLRHC brand is featured on RLRHC content, including gift shop materials, signage, and online communications.
- v) Establish ongoing communication and connection pathways with schools and other educational organizations to promote curriculum-based educational programming.
- vi) Modernize the gift shop to include a range of branded products and incorporate effective merchandizing and customer service techniques.



### ***Direction 3: Team Unity***

**The Issue** – In response to the adversities of a pandemic and destruction of our facility, staff of the RLRHC began to function in relative isolation from one another. While this was effective during the crisis, eventually teamwork began to lag. The components needed to excel as a team in a vibrant and active community facility now need to be reestablished.

**The Opportunity** – A newly refreshed RLRHC is returning to its role as a destination for tourism, events, and programming. The team is eager to implement methods to promote employee and volunteer cohesion.

**The Strategic Direction** – The RLRHC will develop a shared team vision and identity that incorporates the principles of acceptance, agreement, and alignment to promote the highest level of dynamic teamwork.

#### **The Strategies**

- i) Develop, share, and coordinate annual workplans that respond to identified needs and priorities and includes each staff person’s planned tasks, activities, and timelines.
- ii) Prioritize and protect opportunities to connect and invest in culture of effective communication, welcoming feedback and encouraging continuous peer learning.
- iii) Nurture a working environment that values our people by focusing on psychological safety, building trust, active listening, mutual support, respecting boundaries and providing acknowledgement.
- iv) Promote staff retention through offering enhanced experiences and opportunities for growth as part of staff development planning.
- v) Re-establish the RLRHC’s volunteer program to enhance the work of staff and improve community participation in our environment.



## **Direction 4: Comfortable and Inviting Space**

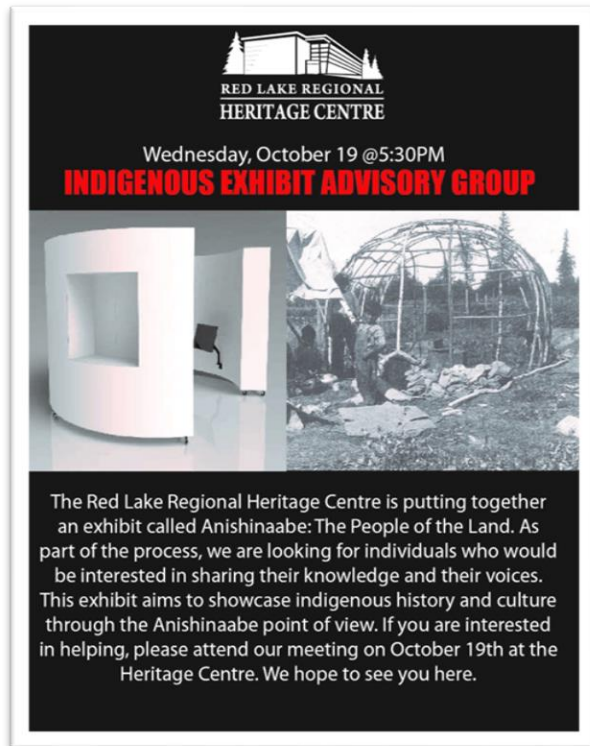
**The Issue** – By definition, the RLRHC is more than just a museum. It is intended to be a destination where people can drop in, share, and learn. Currently there are very few opportunities for enjoying the RLRHC’s space besides rentals and exhibits.

**The Opportunity** – A need for a comfortable and inviting public meeting place has become a growing concern for many of the RLRHC’s Stakeholders. As an active part of the community, the RLRHC can better utilize the building to invite visitors in to enjoy the space.

**The Strategic Direction** – The RLRHC will promote and develop its role as a destination for informal learning, research, socialization, and participation in cultural topics.

### **The Strategies**

- i) Set aside and develop an area as a comfortable space for multi-use informal gatherings.
- ii) Consider the needs of a wide variety potential users, such as seniors, students, volunteers, representatives of community interest groups, youth, and families, among others.
- iii) Equip the space to allow users to engage in research using the RLRHC’s resources.
- iv) Develop the capacity to conduct interviews and exchange cultural information.
- v) Provide a variety of opportunities to provide feedback regarding ongoing improvement of the RLRHC.



## ***Direction 5: Sustainability***

**The Issue** - The RLRHC has evolved to offer a variety of activities compatible with a cultural hub in a remote community. However, the RLRHC has been resourced to provide traditional museum functions. To date, the RLRHC has responded to the need by stretching available resources. This practice has resulted in inefficiencies, staff burnout and a loss of overall direction post covid. The current approach to balancing needs with resources is no longer sustainable.

**The Opportunity** - As the RLRHC returns to a fully functioning facility, it is now time to seek a truly sustainable approach.

**The Strategic Direction** – Recognizing the unique requirements in delivering a broad range of cultural activities and programs in a remote community, devise a more sustainable approach to address the community’s broad cultural well-being.



### **The Strategies**

- i) Develop a working framework for resourcing the delivery of cultural services needed by the community as part of annual work planning.
- ii) Safeguard staff well-being by adjusting the employee complement to respond to the broadening demands on the RLRHC.
- iii) Develop deep relationships with community stakeholders, and wherever feasible, expand resources by partnering with other organizations to deliver programs and projects.
- iv) Seek sponsorships and donations for special projects and equipment.
- v) Promote financial sustainability through increasing and diversifying attendance and revenue sources.
- vi) Focus on efficiencies that will maximize productivity, minimize waste, and enhance the RLRHC’s place within the overall community.

## ***Direction 6: Museum Standards and Practices***

**The Issue** - Standards for the Heritage Sector require continual maintenance of facilities and equipment, the occasional upgrading of specialized tools and materials, and regular modification of operating policies and procedures. These requirements are costly, responsibility for meeting standards is shared across the Municipality of Red Lake and the RLRHC, and frequently falls outside of annual operating budgets.

**The Opportunity** – The RLRHC has recently undergone a complete rejuvenation of the physical plant, equipment and furnishings, exhibits, and conservation facilities. This “new start” creates a manageable opening for a comprehensive and continuous maintenance plan.

**The Strategic Direction** – In consultation with the Municipality of Red Lake, develop a *Museum Standards Plan* that includes facilities maintenance and replacement, policy and procedures revisions, and coordinated staff work plans to ensure the RLRHC continually meets Museum standards.

### **Strategies**

- i) Create a comprehensive and ongoing review mechanism that evaluates the RLRHCs capacity to meet museum standards, including impact of wear and tear on the facility and equipment requirements.<sup>1</sup>
- ii) In consultation with the Municipality of Red Lake, create a five-year Museum Standards Plan that includes projections for facility and equipment needs, estimated staffing needs, and operational forecasting.
- iii) Identify standards-related special projects for the short, medium, and long term, and incorporate those projects into sustainability planning.
- iv) Ensure that the annual RLRHC and staff workplans are informed by the Museum Standards Plan.
- v) Ensure the Board of Directors and RLRHC staff have access to training to maintain an up to date understanding of museum requirements and their own roles in achieving them.



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<sup>1</sup> See requirements set out in Standards for Community Museums in Ontario, the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI), and the Canadian Heritage Information Network

## Next Step

The Board of Directors and staff of the RLRHC will translate the strategic directions set out in this document into a multi-year work plan that specifies activities, assigned leads, time frames and outcome indicators. The priorities identified in the Strategic Plan will guide fundraising efforts and inform our approach to monthly and annual progress reporting. Immediate efforts will focus on enhancing the functioning and well-being of the team tasked with implementing the priorities and plans identified, as their efforts will continue to be critical to successfully addressing the hopes and expectations of the Red Lake community.

## Acknowledgements

The RLRHC extends its thanks to the people of Red Lake who provided feedback in focus groups and through online surveys during the research phase of developing this plan. We hope the results adequately capture your ideas.

We further thank the staff and volunteers who compiled the results of an extensive feedback and consultation process into this coherent summary.

Finally, we thank the Board of Directors for their steady guidance to achieve the priorities of the strategic plan for 2017 to 2023 despite the highly unusual challenges - fires, evacuations, storms, floods, and a pandemic – we faced. We hope for calmer waters ahead as we work together toward achieving the priorities set out for 2024 to 2029.



## **Land Acknowledgement**

We, the Municipality of Red Lake acknowledge that our foundation and the spaces in which we live and maintain are on the lands of the Anishinaapek of Red Lake; the traditional lands of Lac Seul and Wabauskang First Nations, and Treaty 3 territory. As we are all Treaty people, we will continue to cherish the reciprocity of all our relationships on these sacred Lands and Waters.

## GOALS IDENTIFIED DURING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>
<i>Short Term</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase visitation</li> <li>• Improve gift shop</li> <li>• Deliver programs</li> <li>• Start hosting community events</li> <li>• Begin advertising our rental space</li> <li>• Complete the main gallery</li> <li>• Improve on membership sales</li> <li>• Complete donor wall tile engraving</li> <li>• Improve digital file storage</li> </ul>
<i>Mid Term</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the building compliant with accessibility laws</li> <li>• Increase fulltime permanent staff to align with meeting the expectations articulated by community residents</li> <li>• Develop a unified tourism plan</li> <li>• Create and publish an annual exhibit schedule</li> <li>• Develop a programming schedule and summer schedule</li> <li>• Upgrade gift shop with a proper scanning equipment</li> <li>• Develop a formal membership program</li> <li>• Digitize the donor wall tiles</li> </ul>
<i>Long Term</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease reliance on the Municipality of Red Lake for operational supports</li> <li>• Meet standards and guidelines for Conservation and Collections</li> <li>• Balance exhibit content to reflect variety of community interests</li> <li>• Increase the number of Indigenous visitors</li> <li>• Increase interest from Balmertown and Cochenour</li> <li>• Develop long standing partnerships</li> <li>• Develop a working archive</li> <li>• Develop a new and ongoing fundraising method now that the donor wall is complete</li> </ul>

APPENDIX B

**SOAR**

*Findings from community consultation using the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) strategic planning technique.*

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ The building (Instantly recognizable)</li><li>✓ Experience (Over 20 years' experience between two employees)</li><li>✓ Connections and Partnerships</li><li>✓ Gallery Spaces</li><li>✓ Digitization technology</li><li>✓ Web Page</li></ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Number of permanent staff (2)</li><li>✓ Storage (artifacts, gift shop, programming, technology)</li><li>✓ IT services</li><li>✓ Advertising/marketing</li><li>✓ Gift shop (Point of sale)</li><li>✓ QuickBooks (Needs upgrade)</li></ul>
<p><b>ASPIRATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Archives easily accessible</li><li>✓ Events</li><li>✓ Gift Shop – move to a quicker system</li><li>✓ Increase Indigenous visitation</li><li>✓ Increase school programming</li><li>✓ Increase footprint through outside tours (ON This Spot)</li></ul>	<p><b>RESULTS (Measuring Progress)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Tracking number of visitors by month</li><li>✓ Budget tracking</li><li>✓ Past Perfect</li><li>✓ Annual report</li><li>✓ Facebook posts/website articles</li></ul>