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Mapping future critical mineral exploration

Former Indigenous Chamber of Commerce president first full-time CEO of Manitoba Prospectors and Developers Association

By: [Gabrielle Piché](#)Posted: **7:28 PM CST Thursday, Nov. 27, 2025**Last Modified: 11:27 AM CST Friday, Nov. 28, 2025 | [Updates](#)

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The Manitoba Prospectors and Developers Association has hired its first part-time chief executive — an Indigenous woman — and is ramping up courses for First Nations as critical mineral exploration gains steam nationally.

Renee Greyeyes, a former Indigenous Chamber of Commerce president, has taken the helm.

“I didn’t leave Indigenous economic development, I moved closer to it,” Greyeyes said Thursday. “Critical mineral exploration is where tomorrow’s Indigenous economies are going to be shaped and that’s happening right now.”

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'Critical mineral exploration is where tomorrow's Indigenous economies are going to be shaped, and that's happening right now,' says Renee Greyeyes, new CEO of the MPDA.

The association has ballooned over the past five years. It had roughly 20 members around 2020, its president said, and has 224 now. Its annual budget fell below \$5,000 five years ago; it currently exceeds \$100,000.

Still, Manitoba has lagged behind several provinces in exploration despite touting 30 of 34 resources on Canada's critical minerals list.

Eighty-nine mineral projects were ongoing in Manitoba in 2023, Natural Resources Canada data show. A cumulative \$190 million was spent on capital and repair costs; a total 300,000 metres was drilled.

During the same year, Saskatchewan logged 184 projects, \$4 billion worth of spending and 500,000 metres drilled.

(A Manitoba government document lists 76 mineral projects, active mines and mines under care in 2025-26.)

MPDA board members held a series of meetings around 2020 to understand why Manitoba was behind. They came to a conclusion, president MaryAnn Mihychuk said: "We have two bosses now — we have First Nations and we have the province of Manitoba. We can't seem to get on to do any exploration to find critical minerals until the two bosses can agree or work together or find a bridge."

Greyeyes is a bridge, Mihychuk continued. Greyeyes led the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce for a year. The Peguis First Nation member switched roles upon learning about new MPDA courses. Her first day was Monday.

MPDA students are mainly Indigenous. They learn how to connect industry to their communities, how to ensure projects align with land stewardship, and finances and terminology, among other things. Mihychuk has led course development.

Exploration crews might visit First Nations with scientists, lawyers and investors.

"We're asked to interpret really complex technical data that we just don't have the capacity in our own nations to do," Greyeyes said, adding the MPDA courses help "level" the playing field.

The association held courses over two days in Winnipeg this year. It's scheduled three Winnipeg sessions for next year, with plans to host in Flin Flon and Thompson if government funding comes.

Representatives will visit 10 individual First Nations if invited, Mihychuk said.

"The goal is that we're building local experts in the communities (so they're) not dependent on outside consultation," Greyeyes said. "Building capacity really means that communities are moving more towards leading projects rather than reacting to them."

An estimated one in 1,000 mineral exploration projects result in viable deposits. There's a need to inform Manitobans about how such projects work and to temper expectations, Mihychuk said.

Exploration is largely non-invasive, she continued: initial stages involve drone or plane surveillance before diamond drilling begins. Exploration companies might spend years on site before mining companies arrive. Many drop their projects before it reaches the mining stage.

Business growth, regional investment and more local jobs could result from new projects, Greyeyes said.

Manitoba's Mines and Minerals Act needs modernizing in order for the province to truly compete with others, Mihychuk added.

She's clocked increasing interest from First Nations wanting to join MPDA's board. The governing body's makeup will likely change following its annual general meeting in February, she said.

Meantime, Greyeyes will liaise with government, First Nations and businesses in her new role.

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The Indigenous Chamber of Commerce has named Chris Henry as its interim chief executive. He's taken a leave from his former position as its treasurer.

The past month has been “excellent,” Henry said.

“We had a lot of stuff that was going very well in the last year,” he said. “I believe Renee Greyeyes did a lot of exemplary work.”

The board is searching for its new chief executive.

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Reporter  

Gabrielle Piché reports on business for the *Free Press*. She interned at the *Free Press* and worked for its sister outlet, *Canstar Community News*, before entering the business beat in 2021. [Read more about Gabrielle.](#)

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HISTORY

Updated on Friday, November 28, 2025 11:27 AM CST: Corrects that Renee Greyeyes is part-time chief executive

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