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'Unique opportunity': MPDA builds majority Indigenous board



By: [Aaron Epp](#)

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For the first time in its 30-year history, the Manitoba Prospectors and Developers Association has a majority Indigenous board of directors.

The association, which has more than 220 members, elected nine people to the board at its annual general meeting last month. Seven of the board members are new; six are Indigenous.

MPDA is the first prospectors and developers association in Canada to achieve a majority Indigenous board, according to new president Terry Brown.

"It's significant in that it creates a unique opportunity to bridge the understanding between (First Nations), the Métis, and of course, the exploration and developer industry," said Brown, CEO of Okimaw Community & HR Solutions

MPDA board of directors 2026-27

Terry Brown — president

CEO of Okimaw Community & HR Solutions

Carla Devlin — vice-President

President of Sio Silica Corp., mayor of East St. Paul

Jesse Steckley — secretary

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population.

The MPDA has been working over the last five years to increase the number of Indigenous board members to reflect Manitoba's demographics, said Renee Greyeyes, the association's chief executive.

"Our projects are mainly on or near traditional territories of First Nations peoples, and we wanted to make sure that our board does align with that and that it's representative of that reality," Greyeyes said.

Over the past several months, the MPDA has been working to reposition itself around early stage engagement between exploration companies and First Nations, Greyeyes added, with a focus on improving understanding of how mineral exploration works before major projects are proposed.

The efforts come at a time when Manitoba lags behind several provinces in exploration, despite having 30 or 34 resources on Canada's critical minerals list.

According to the Fraser Institute think tank's 2025 survey of mining companies, Manitoba is one of several Canadian jurisdictions with strong mineral potential that fail to fully capitalize on it. The worldwide survey, which was released at the end of February, ranks Manitoba 13th for mineral potential. The province falls to 39th when considering policy factors alone.

The issue in Manitoba is not a lack of resources, but the confidence developers have in the process, Brown said.

"Companies look for jurisdictions where they understand how projects will proceed, who to engage with and what expectations exist at these stages of development," he said. "When those pathways are unclear, projects often move to jurisdictions where the process is easier to understand."

Brown, who attended the annual Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada conference in Toronto last week, believes Manitoba can be known not only for its mineral potential but for how development is carried out.

"When companies engage early, communities have access to information and economic opportunities, and when governments find clear and predictable processes, everyone benefits," he said.

A majority-Indigenous board of directors is a step in the right direction for the MPDA, said Lorne Pelletier, senior economic adviser at the Manitoba Métis Federation.

Kevin Gamble — treasurer

Chartered accountant, tax manager

Cameron Holstrom — director

Founder, principal of Niipaawi Strategies

Steve Richard — director

Entrepreneur

MaryAnn Mihychuk — director

Owner of Mihychuk Consulting

Robin Richards — director

Co-founder of NIBI Enviro Tech

Keith Peskoonas — director

Lands manager for God's Lake First Nation

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Pelletier added.

“So while this is a positive development and we’re hopeful or optimistic, there’s definitely room there for the association to further engage the MMF and Red River Métis citizens,” he said.

The MPDA will be hosting its annual reconciliation forum and gala at Assiniboia Downs in Winnipeg on April 9. The event will bring together Indigenous leadership, exploration companies, students, educators and provincial officials.

About 100 people are expected to attend, which will include the introduction of a new short course the association has developed to explain exploration activity to communities, Greyeyes said.

Greyeyes joined the MPDA in November. She was previously the president of the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce.

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Aaron Epp

Reporter

Aaron Epp reports on business for the Free Press. After freelancing for the paper for a decade, he joined the staff full-time in 2024. [Read more about Aaron.](#)

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