

John Richthammer

John Richthammer was born in Red Lake, Ontario, in 1966. His father, Johann (John), immigrated to Canada from Bavaria, Germany, in 1956 and settled in Red Lake in 1958. John's mother, Jeannette (nee Lavallee), was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba, and moved to Red Lake after her marriage in 1965.

John was raised in the town of Red Lake and at his parents' tourist camps on Nungesser and Upper Goose Lakes. He attended St. John's Roman Catholic Separate School, graduated from Red Lake District High School in 1985, and studied journalism and photography at Canadore College of Applied Arts & Technology in North Bay, Ontario.

John was the first member of his family to earn a university degree. He achieved a B.A. in History and Film in 1996 at the University of Manitoba, and an M.A. in History (Archival Studies) in 2008. His thesis is entitled, *Memento Mori: An Archival Strategy for Documenting Mortality on the Canadian Frontier, at Red Lake, Ontario, Before 1950*. It was lauded for being the world's first archival study of mortality, and John received the distinction upon convocation of *summa cum laude* ("pass well"). John is pursuing Ph.D. studies.

By his early teens, John was acutely aware that much irretrievable oral history and archival records were being lost with the deaths of the Red Lake District pioneers – especially those who had emigrated from other parts of the world – and the often hurried or careless disposal of their possessions. This compelled him to begin recording their history, locating and collecting their written and photographic records, and publishing some of their life stories in the local newspaper. He was and remains fascinated by the stirring tales of the First Nations people, the Anishinaape, the émigrés from across the globe, and of the fur trade and gold mining eras, as told by grizzled veteran trappers, prospectors, miners, entrepreneurs, and *bon vivants*.

At age fifteen, John became the founding curator/director of the Red Lake Museum (now the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre). This position engrossed him for 12 years – from 1981 through 1993 – as he worked to rescue from obscurity the life stories of many of the pioneers. He published several local histories and biographies and has written extensively on Northwestern Ontario pioneers ever since in his own personal race against their vanishing time.

This avid researching, recording, and archiving of the records of the originals of the Red Lake District has been John's enduring passion for nearly three decades. He was instrumental in acquiring and restoring a larger home for the Museum, seeking funding for various historical projects, building the Museum's collections, teaching elementary and secondary students about the area's rich history, and fostering wide community support for the preservation of local heritage.

John's extensive career as an archivist, archival consultant, and professional historical research specialist has led him to work across Canada in private, corporate, government, community, and academic archival institutions. He was archivist at the University of Manitoba Archives, James Richardson & Sons Archives, City of Winnipeg Archives, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, The Beaver National History Magazine, Linda Lundstrom, Inc., The Municipality of Red Lake, and Investors Group/Power Corporation. John has also been a long-time teaching assistant at the University of Manitoba.

John greatly enjoyed three years in the Yukon Territory, where he worked as Klondike Centennial Archivist in Dawson City, Assistant Government Records Archivist at Yukon Archives in Whitehorse, YT, and at the Dawson City Community Library.

John is the longest-serving journalist in the Red Lake District. He has written news, historical/life features, and photographed for local publications for the past 30 years. He is also a prolific photographer, having photographed people from Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, to prime ministers, premiers, to his beloved Red Lake District pioneers. Additionally, he continues to write columns for a wide range of international and national publications, such as *The Globe & Mail*. John currently writes regular historical and life features for *The Northern Sun News* in Red Lake.

He has written numerous books, manuscripts and academic papers on the history of the Red Lake area and its people, the best-known being the best-selling *The End of the Road: A History of the Red Lake District*.