

Mary Richard, [OM](#). (1940-2010)

Mary Richard is a Metis activist and politician in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Mary was born to a Métis family in Camperville, Manitoba. She has long been active in promoting language retention, housing, training, cultural awareness and business enterprise among and for Manitoba's aboriginal population. She became the director of the Manitoba Association of Native Languages in the 1980s, and held this position for almost a decade. In 1997, she was appointed by Winnipeg Mayor Susan Thompson to co-chair the North Main Task Force, examining social problems in north Winnipeg's aboriginal community.



Mary was active with the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and was the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Thunderbird House in north Winnipeg, which opened its doors in 2000. Although this was intended as a tourist destination, it soon became primarily a social outreach centre for the many low-income persons living in the area. Under Richard's leadership, Thunderbird House became active in programs to assist aboriginal youth escape solvent abuse, gang life and the sex trade. She is no longer CEO, but remains active with the organization.

Richard is also a past president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, and a former executive director of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg. She also owned the Teepee Restaurant in Winnipeg.

In 2000, she was named to the Order of Manitoba. She campaigned for the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba in the 1999 provincial election, in the constituency of Point Douglas. The winner was George Hickes of the New Democratic Party. The following year, Richard crossed to the Liberal Party of Canada and ran as that party's candidate in Winnipeg North Centre for the 2000 federal election. In explaining this move, Richard told a Winnipeg Free Press reporter that she had long supported the Progressive Conservatives at the provincial level and the Liberals at the federal level. She finished second against New Democrat Judy Wasylycia-Leis.

In 2003, Mary received a National Aboriginal Achievement Award (Community Service). In the Foundation's write-up they stated:

Mary Richard can't even think of slowing down. "I don't have time to retire," this Manitoba Métis, now in her 60s, says cheerfully. And that's a good thing for her province, city and Aboriginal peoples everywhere. To say she has worked tirelessly for Aboriginal people over the years would be understating her accomplishments. The CEO of Circle of Life Thunderbird House in Winnipeg – to name just one of her current activities – Ms. Richard's efforts have touched virtually every aspect of Aboriginal life in her province through five decades. She was the Executive Director of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg – the first of its kind in Canada. That was just the beginning. Ms. Richard, a former President of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg -- was instrumental in ensuring the survival of Aboriginal languages in Manitoba. She implemented the Manitoba Language Retention Programs during almost a decade of service as Director of the Manitoba Association for Native Languages. "We were just becoming aware of language loss but had no materials for teaching," she says today of her work during the 1980s. "So, we got Elders together with language speakers and I raised the money to get the books printed." These education kits — made possible after Ms. Richard raised half-a-million dollars — are now

available in seven Aboriginal languages and sought after by school boards and universities across the country. She's established Native housing, training and cultural projects, built bridges to the private sector and established the plans for an Aboriginal business district in her city. Builder, doer, leader, partner – that's Mary Richard.



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