

**Get to Know....**  
**JARROD McCARTNEY**  
Director of  
**RED CLOUD HERITAGE TOURISM & ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**



*Jarrold McCartney was born and raised in Red Cloud. His wife, Rachel and daughter Louise are the two main reasons he gets up in the morning. He has a B.A. in English and Philosophy from Hastings College, a M.A. in American Literature from Kansas State University, and is “ABD” (all but dissertation) in a PhD program at the University of Oklahoma. Should he ever find time to finish his PhD, he will write about the intersection of literature and economics in the work of Willa Cather and Cather Studies. His other areas of academic interest include sports and literature, populism*

*and modernism, and Rural American Literature. He is involved in the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund, the Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Nebraska, the Nebraska Travel Association, and is a proud member of the United Methodist Church.*

### **What is your favorite thing about Red Cloud?**

I love that you can so easily be part of something bigger than yourself here. There are so many opportunities to get involved and immediately have an impact and a valuable role. I love too that even though there may be some disagreements about the vision for Red Cloud's future, almost everyone here has the town's best interest in mind and cares about the outcome.



### **What are some of your favorite businesses to shop at in Red Cloud? Why?**

I love each and every Red Cloud business and want them all to do well and wish I could just list all of their virtues. Please shop local as much as you can as it not only generates sales tax revenue for the community, but helps the people running these businesses and makes Red Cloud an attractive place for new businesses. As far as what I most frequent? I enjoy a good beer, good books, and great coffee so you can probably find me in On the Brix, the Willa Cather Bookstore, or Prairie Plum Coffee. You can't beat the Palace Special Burger or Fat Fox's Big Mac or 3 Pig Pizza. And Danny Bengé and his staff are doing amazing work over at Hometown Market. I love what Peter Osborne is doing over at his store and the potential it has

to support Heritage Tourism. Village Pharmacy is a critical part of what makes Red Cloud a quality place to live—and I love the variety and quality of goods over at Shades West. By 2020 or 2021 I am hoping to add the Garber Hotel to this list! Call me if you're interested in one of the open buildings in town too!



### **What do you wish everyone knew about Heritage Tourism Development?**

That we will create individualized guest itineraries if they contact us in advance of their visit. Locally, I guess it would be nice if I could communicate with clarity how critical communicating what Red Cloud has to offer to the rest of the state, region, and even the country is to this whole endeavor being successful. I'd also like people to know that they can submit events for us to list and invite us to host on Facebook so their event gets more exposure. So much of the work I do needs to go on behind the scenes, in different towns, or in lonely hours in my office submitting grant applications, trying to get an embed code to work on a website properly, or designing attractive documents for tourists. I also wish everyone could hear the praise the rest of the state heaps on Red Cloud's redevelopment efforts—we are truly blessed to have the unique assets we have and our

competent, strategic marketing of them will bring in outside dollars. I also want everyone to know that we are highly receptive to new ideas and figuring out ways to build strategic partnerships so we can get more things done. I'd like my former professors and students to know that the key to success in this job, at its core, is being able to write with relative eloquence and efficiency (this lengthy interview notwithstanding).



**If you could have a superpower what would it be and why?**

I would steal Hermione Granger's Time Turner device from the Harry Potter novels. There are simply too many things to do and not enough hours in the day.

**You're involved in the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund (RCCFF). RCCFF is in the final phase of the Rural Development Philanthropy Challenge which will add \$300,000 to RCCFF's Legacy Endowment. Can you explain why you value being a member of RCCFF, what the campaign is, and why people should consider making a donation?**

*Why I value RCCFF*

I feel that RCCFF is a catalyst for positive change in the community and that the organization's capacity for fundraising will be critical to helping us have the sort of long-term sustainability that will continue to make Red

Cloud an attractive place to visit and live. Plus, we do fun things like the “5K the Warrior Way” Obstacle Course!

The ideas and work that emerge from RCCFF really are about investing in the future of our hometown—we’re interested not only in ensuring that the town continues to exist but that we are able to flourish. And our projects run the gamut from major projects like TVCDC and the Potter Block Hotel Project to improving accessibility to the Indian Creek WMA pond with a new dock to giving small grants to other community organizations and giving scholarships to local youth and to non-traditional students looking to improve their skills and careers. It feels great knowing that we’re helping to improve the town and also helping individuals improve their own lives. I’m extremely excited to see what our group can do with its new Recreation & Health Subcommittee and am hoping that we can get a Youth version of our group going soon. It’s great that you can really work on what you are interested in with this group—I’d encourage anyone interested in working with us to talk openly about their ideas for making Red Cloud an even better place and know that we’re eager to work with you. We have roles on subcommittees too if you want to focus on one project or theme or aren’t interested in fundraising.

*What is the Rural Development Philanthropy Challenge and why do you need to build the Legacy Endowment?*

The Sherwood Foundation out of Omaha issued this challenge to Fund Affiliated Communities (FACs) of the Nebraska Community Foundation. For every \$2 we raise by Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, the Sherwood Foundation will give us \$1. We can raise up to \$200,000 and still get the match, meaning we could wind up with \$300,000. A stipulation of the challenge is that all of the money needs to go into an unrestricted endowment. I like to think of an endowment as a community savings account that will get investment yields. The Foundation will be able to grant money from the interest we get on the investment, but the endowment ensures that there will always be more money and that it doesn’t all get spent at once on one project. This will allow us to have money for things we can’t even anticipate now. Assuming normal rates of return, the \$300,000 we raise from this challenge will grow to over \$400,000 in a 20 year period and will also allow us to grant over \$330,000 in that time period. So basically the \$200K we raise will turn into close to \$750K by putting it in an endowment. This is socially responsible fundraising at its finest. We will, of course, continue to fundraise after the

challenge is over and already have money in the endowment from before the challenge—so having this all come together and having \$100K of it come from Omaha money will provide Red Cloud with a strong financial foundation for generations to come without having to cobble together a fundraiser at the last second or passing a bond or asking the City to pass tax increases, etc.

### *Why should someone donate to the RDP/Legacy Endowment Challenge?*

We have big dreams for Red Cloud, but you can help us dream bigger.

If you care about the future of Red Cloud you should donate. If you support Heritage Tourism, TVCDC, the Indian Creek Dock, City Park improvements, our communications and marketing efforts (Heritage Tourism is responsible for the RC website, social media, the Visit Red Cloud newsletter, this column, and now the Potter Block Hotel Project) and our potential to support numerous other projects, then you should donate. If you want to support future generations in Red Cloud and leave a legacy to and in the community, you should donate. If you want there to be money to support projects besides those I've listed, you should donate.

I've personally donated as much as I could and every member of our group has donated, even though many of us are young and have families. Combined, our group has donated almost \$35K—so we are literally invested in its success. We need help right now getting to the \$200K mark so we don't leave money on table. We've raised around \$125K from around 100 different donors who've given everything from \$10 to \$15K. We must raise the final \$75K by the end of the year or we lose the additional \$37.5K that Sherwood would give us.

There are also some great tax deductions and breaks you can get from charitable giving—in Nebraska I think people should especially look at donating the Required Minimum Distribution from their IRAs if they are over 70.5 or giving a Gift of Grain. Farmers that give grain can still deduct the cost of production but lower their taxable income for the year. These are just 2 great ways to support your community and get a tax break regardless of how much you can give.



*With Liz Rasser, giving a tour of the Starke Round Barn, one of Red Cloud's many Heritage Tourism assets*

**Do you have any hobbies or interests you'd like to share?**

When I get the time, I like to read and write. I also like to like to collect music, especially on vinyl. I am a devoted fan of the New York Mets and spend entirely too much time dissecting everything they do. Perhaps my favorite interest is to simply sit down with my wife and get wrapped up in great TV shows and movies. I used to love politics but am trying to leave that toxic world behind. I want to do more fishing and hunting.

**Do you have any pets?**

We have an ancient cat named Olive. Louise is eager for her to move on to the great litter box in the sky so we can get a dog.

## **What would your high school teachers or guidance counselor say about you if we asked?**

That he never got to school on time and was absent too much. I think they would all be surprised that I wound up back in Red Cloud and that I am working so hard to promote it. I was a good student and I don't think any of them thought I'd wind up in the gutter (maybe a few did), but I think they'd be genuinely surprised to see that I'm so invested in my hometown. I was pretty much anti-everything except the Tomahawk Times in high school so I think I am a testament to the fact that communities should embrace every kid in town and help lift them up to be successful. Certainly Carol Kennedy, Russ Moerer, Don McNeil, and Larry Haller made me feel valued even when I didn't really value what was right in front of me. That sort of support was critical to me returning.

## **What are you most proud of?**

I'm going to steal Liz Rasser's reply from last time: "My family and how we have supported each other when we've faced adversity over the years." I'm also really proud of the work being done in Red Cloud. I never would have dreamt we could do so much and I am looking forward to seeing how much more we can achieve.

## **Do you have a mantra or mission statement you live by?**

I can't say that I truly do—beyond the idea that we should all be kind to one another, give things your best try, and try to maintain a big picture perspective instead of getting hobbled by small details. The closest thing to a mission statement for me is David Foster Wallace's 2005

Commencement Speech at Kenyon College, which you should read:

<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~drkelly/DFWKenyonAddress2005.pdf>

## **What historical figure or celebrity would you most like to have dinner with? Why?**

George Orwell and Kurt Vonnegut, because they are the only two I know of who could speak with lucidity about the lunacy of our current times. David Bowie and Prince because the world is a drearier place without them in it. And Willa Cather so I could ask her if she thinks we're all crazy.

## **Do you have any advice for someone looking to relocate to rural Nebraska?**

Do it! The people here are nice, the cost of living is low, and the idea that there isn't anything to do out here is pure hogwash. There is too much to do and we need people to help us do that work.

## **What is your favorite song and/or recording artist?**

It is utterly impossible for me to come up with a short list for this question, particularly with songs so I'll stick with artists. Some of my favorite artists include Wilco, David Bowie, The Cure, Jason Isbell, Gang of Four, Sturgill Simpson, Roxy Music, Pavement, Pixies, Talking Heads, Radiohead, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, Judas Priest, Vince Staples, Kanye West, A Tribe Called Quest, Deerhunter, LCD Soundsystem, Can, Lou Reed/Velvet Underground, Frank Ocean, Tyler the Creator, and I've really been digging Fleetwood Mac lately which means I am certifiably old.

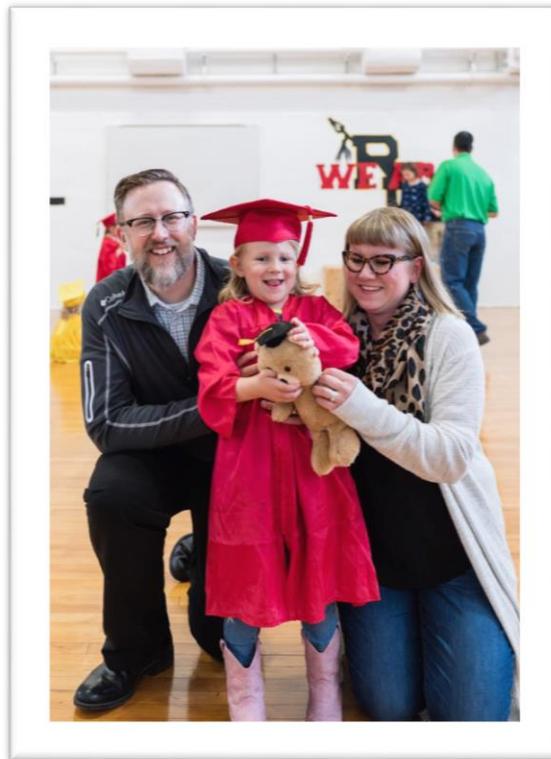


*Red Cloud won the Governor's Showcase Community Award in 2018 and received honorable mention in 2016.*

## **Who is your favorite writer?**

I am probably supposed to say Willa Cather and she's definitely high up on the list. However, my favorite writer is Louise Erdrich. Kurt Vonnegut, Ernest Hemingway, Paul Auster, and Cormac McCarthy aren't far behind. Erdrich's *Love Medicine* is probably my favorite novel. Wallace Stevens,

Theodore Roethke, Gerard Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, and Muriel Rukeyser are the best poets to my mind.



### **What is your dream vacation?**

I'd like to sit around and do nothing for a week in my house. But I would love to spend a summer traveling around Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Former Red Cloud resident Jared Meyer is always posting pictures of epic hunts. Someday I'd like to be that skilled and do something similar.

### **What's your favorite place to visit in Nebraska?**

Scotts Bluff National Monument and Wildcat Hills just south of Scottsbluff are awesome. Omaha is my favorite place to visit though, especially some of the places in the Old Market and Blackstone districts. The Speakeasy over by Holdrege is one of my favorite places, and my family loves Yanney Park and the Children's Museum in Kearney.

### **Who has been the biggest influence in your life? Explain why.**

My wife. She's been willing to make some really drastic life changes all in support of me, but more than that I think she's just a remarkable person

who probably does too much but cares about doing it all really well. The world would be a better place if there were more people like here and if we all worked half as hard.



*The National Willa Cather Center opened in 2017. It's one of the critical assets in the Heritage Tourism Development plan.*

Red Cloud Heritage Tourism & Economic Development is a collaborative project between the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund, the City of Red Cloud, the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Willa Cather Foundation. Contact Jarrod if you would like to set up a visit to Red Cloud or learn more about the downtown Hotel Project! Jarrod had to interview himself for this article—he's sorry about the lengthy message about the RDP Campaign but we really do need your help!

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