

# Stéphane Pattyn, Métis Entrepreneur: Leading with Character

---

Zac Cumming

STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA



Stéphane (Steph) Pattyn  
*Pattyn Ventures*

## INTRODUCTION

Pattyn Ventures is a construction company started by Métis Stéphane (Steph) Pattyn, who has demonstrated a meaningful leadership style throughout his life. Steph grew up in Ste. Anne, Manitoba, and had a love for the game of hockey. Steph went all the way to the level of Division I hockey in the United States to play with the University of North Dakota Fighting Sioux. While attending the university, Steph developed another passion, and that was for entrepreneurship. Steph worked with a concrete company during his time off in the summer, and decided while he was still attending university that he wanted to start his own concrete

---

Zac Cumming is a third year student in the Asper School of Business. He found a passion for Indigenous development through his Indigenous Business Studies major. His goal is to assist his future employer in building successful Indigenous relationships.

company. With the help of The Louis Riel Capital Corporation (an Aboriginal Financial Institution), he started Pattyn Concrete as soon as he was out of school. Steph and his company have grown to a degree that is hard to match. He carries strong values on how to lead his workers and on making a difference in surrounding communities. Steph is an individual who is always pushing to be better each day, and is constantly working with his employees to help them succeed.

## PERSONAL PROFILE

Steph Pattyn is a Métis entrepreneur from a small town just outside of Winnipeg, Manitoba called Ste. Anne. Steph never imagined that one day he would be the owner of a thriving business with a successful profile in Winnipeg and surrounding areas. Steph had every intention of becoming a professional hockey player based on a stellar record in his youth. One thing set Steph apart from other competitors — it was the fact that he always tried to be the best and was diligent in achieving success. He loved hockey from a young age, and he started his junior career in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, with the Portage Terriers. Two years of above average play resulted in an amazing opportunity to play for the University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux. This opportunity could have led to a professional hockey career, but it also opened other doors too.

Steph enrolled in the University of North Dakota's business program and majored in entrepreneurship. Keeping up with school work, along with competing at a competitive level in sports, can be difficult for most student athletes. Steph was determined to push through and succeed in both. After a couple of years with the Fighting Sioux, his leadership skills were acknowledged and was named captain of the team. This was a huge accomplishment for him, as the Fighting Sioux were a highly skilled Division I hockey team that have won eight national championships.

## ORGANIZATION START-UP

Steph took his studies seriously while attending the University of North Dakota. He developed his dream of becoming a leader on the ice and at the same time planned for his own company. Entrepreneurship became a real priority for him, and starting his own concrete business in the construction business was his end goal. He earned his business degree and returned home to the town of Ste. Anne. Steph began his entrepreneurship journey with a strong foundation of leadership skills that he developed over the years playing hockey, where his leadership style was one of “listening, understanding, goal setting and feedback” (personal communication, February 2019).

Steph approached the Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC) that finances Métis-owned businesses. LRCC covered 40% of his \$100,000 start-up costs as a non-repayable grant if his company was sustainable for three years. Steph was motivated to make sure his company would grow and meet the construction needs of the region. This relationship between Steph and the LRCC was part of his success. Steph now uses his relationship with the LRCC to reach out to others applying for the funding and share how he succeeded so that they too will be successful. Steph builds relationships with his fellow Indigenous entrepreneurs, as well as the members of the LRCC, because he believes cultivating relationships will help grow a future together in the world of business.

## PATTYN VENTURES

After an amazing start to Pattyn Concrete, Steph wanted to expand into a complete construction company. The foundational goals are to grow and build communities as well as their company. The company is based on core principles of “quality craftsmanship, transparent communication and an emphasis on relationships” (Pattyn Ventures LTD., 2019). The company takes great pride in taking every opportunity presented to them and in constantly improving their skills every day. Pattyn Ventures is known for setting themselves apart from other construction companies because they are focused on assuring that their customers know that they are being listened to and that Pattyn Ventures is adapting to change. The motto for Pattyn Ventures is “Growing People. Building Communities” (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Stéphane Pattyn talks about a very simple perspective that he brings into every aspect of his life, and that is to show his true character. “See through things, overcome difficult situations, that’s what people notice, they see the little things and the effort you put forward each and every day” (personal communication, February 2019).

Clients are always put first for Pattyn Ventures, this is something that Steph shows to his employees, as well as future clients. “We don’t claim to be the best, as that would be arrogant and go against our fundamentals. In every relationship and transaction, we are committed to being fully in the moment in order to serve and produce amazing results for our clients” (Pattyn Ventures LTD., 2019).

## LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

Steph has had core principles on effective leadership since he was young. He discussed how being Métis opened the door to learning different perspectives and how other Métis individuals lead in different aspects of their life (Interview with Pattyn on January 24, 2019). Steph doesn’t just use his leadership skills for his own benefit. He has implemented a leadership program within his organization to help his employees learn how to be effective leaders within the organization as well as in their everyday lives. This program that he has in place involves everyone from the receptionist to the labour workers. He wants his workers to understand everyone’s position as well as their own role within the company, as this leads to respect for everyone’s work. “I believe the foundation of becoming a good leader is learning how to care about others before yourself. This leads to a mutual respect that cannot be tarnished” (Pattyn, personal communication, February 2019). The leadership program that is put in place for the Pattyn Ventures employees has three goals that it shares. These are goal setting, feedback, and implementation. Using these goals, the workers understand how to communicate properly with their peers and to learn from them.

Steph is always open to new ideas on how to become better from other individuals, a common approach shared by many Indigenous leaders (Wallace, 2001). The office workers at Pattyn Ventures all come from corporate backgrounds and are encouraged to share their points of view to help their company succeed.

Steph credits the influence the sport of hockey has had on his leadership. He was able to learn from previous captains at the University of North Dakota, who helped him, which gave him the opportunity to share with his small hometown and influence economic growth. He ultimately is able to benefit others with his experience too. He noticed with other leaders, for example, that he didn’t need to be the most skilled individual in the room to become the ultimate leader, he needed to show character (Bucci, 2012).

Steph lives every day trying to be a better individual and reminds himself each morning that “Every day, it is important to be better than I was yesterday, or at least attempt to do so” (Pattyn, personal communication, February 2019). He states that if one is able to be self-aware and see what exactly it is that one can do better today, it leads to success. Another strong leadership perspective he holds is that effective leaders aren’t afraid to reach out (Calliou, 2012). He knows that likely someone out there knows more than he does, or has experience with an issue he is trying to solve right now, so it is important not to be afraid to ask for help or an opinion. Steph has many leaders he turns to, including hockey captains, coaches, bosses, and family members, for their advice and critiques, which has positively impacted his success as an entrepreneur. Finally, his last piece of advice to be a successful leader is that “hearing ‘no’ isn’t the end of the world” (Pattyn, personal communication, February 2019).

## **GROWTH OF COMMUNITIES**

When Steph got his company started with the help of the Louis Riel Capital Corporation, he knew that it was not only his company that he wanted to see succeed, it was also the community that he grew up in and all the individuals who are a part of that community. Stéphane Pattyn loves his hometown of Ste. Anne, and he is also a big supporter of the surrounding area, such as Richer, Manitoba. Being a Métis entrepreneur, he loves being able to interact with other members of the Métis community. Ste. Anne’s and Richer’s economies were growing slowly. Steph wanted to be a significant partner in bringing change to the area.

To begin, Steph brought his skills directly to the senior hockey team, which is called the Ste. Anne Aces. Everyone around the area was passionate about the Aces and knew that with Steph’s leadership style he could turn the team into something great. The team ended up by winning the championship three years in a row after Steph’s arrival and brought in new fans that ultimately helped the community become stronger. Since Steph arrived in Ste. Anne, he has been very involved with the growth of the community through town projects. His company built the Ste. Anne skate park, which is used by three schools (Interview with Pattyn on January 24, 2019) to try and diversify the activities that were available for the younger generation. Pattyn Ventures was also a part of a major project — the new helipad landing for the Ste. Anne hospital. This project gives surrounding areas a closer option than Winnipeg when an emergency occurs (Gerbrandt, 2018). Finally, Steph has helped alleviate the housing shortage in the town of Ste. Anne by partnering on the construction of new condominiums. The town of Ste. Anne has seen significant growth in population, as well as a growing demand in businesses that are wanting to locate within the town since the condominiums were built.

Ste. Anne is not the only community that was on Steph’s radar to help grow economically. Steph saw potential in the town of Richer, Manitoba. Richer has many Métis members who support their annual rodeo held each August. This rodeo has expanded over the last couple of years with Steph’s involvement. Pattyn Ventures is a major sponsor of the event, and Steph also volunteers to assist with events.

Richer does not have an arena in the area. The community does have an outdoor rink that is used by many, but Steph supports an arena for the town to help kids enjoy hockey. For this reason, Pattyn Ventures is the general contractor for the arena in the town of Richer.

This is one of the many ideas Steph has in mind for the community to help them grow to their maximum potential (Interview with Pattyn on January 24, 2019).

With all the success that Steph has had with his company, he has put a lot of thought into how he will continue to grow and to attract funding for years to come. He has turned to his past mentors for help, as they are experienced and successful in business. He developed a plan with his sparkling mentorship team of Mark Chipman, Rob Tetrault, Tommy Kenville, Dave Hakstol, and Denise Pattyn, and called it the Fighting Sioux Fund. The name links Steph's experience with the mentors from his hockey days.

The Fighting Sioux Fund gives companies' investment opportunities with Pattyn Ventures to partner with future economic opportunities. "Pattyn Ventures is seeking motivated investors to assist in growing our economic engine" (The Fighting Sioux Fund, 2020). The Fighting Sioux Fund gives investors three options. The first option is an equity partnership with the Fighting Sioux fund at a cost of \$50,000. With the investment in the equity partnership, Pattyn Ventures will prudently pursue opportunities with due diligence. This will allow the company to move forward even while several projects and acquisitions are in progress. The second option for the investors is the "All-Star Investor" option, at a cost of \$250,000 for an equity partnership and unique gifts tied to the investments being pursued. Finally, the "Legend Investor" option, for \$500,000, includes everything offered in the previous two options and a preferred rate of return of 60%.

The Fighting Sioux Fund is founded on four core investment principles that include "1. Find good businesses; 2. Pay a fair price; 3. Bring value and evaluate worth; and 4. Diversify the portfolio" (The Fighting Sioux Fund, 2020). This fund will help achieve Steph's vision of encouraging high economic growth by attracting exciting opportunities.

## CONCLUSIONS

Steph Pattyn worked hard and dedicated his efforts culminating in his experiences with Division I hockey at the University of North Dakota. While hockey has remained close, he values the opportunity of a lifetime of becoming the owner of a company. Steph has had major success in the business world with his company, Pattyn Ventures, and he credits that success to hard work and dedication. He regularly reflects on previous leaders that have been a part of his life and how they have helped him become the leader he is today. Steph's leadership style is similar to many other Indigenous leaders in valuing the experience of other leaders and sharing what he has learned when asked. Steph tries to support his home community and others in the area to grow their economies. His long-term vision for his company and community resulted in The Fighting Sioux Fund to broaden the economic reach beyond Pattyn Ventures. Steph is a great leader and an individual who has worked hard to get to where he is today.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION ON INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP

With everything that I've learned from class discussions, along with my interview with Steph Pattyn, I have realized that Indigenous Economic Leadership can come in many different forms and that there is not a specific way that is more successful than others. Isn't that

the best part of the Indigenous way? That there are many possibilities to achieve success. I have learned that with acceptance and understanding, a true Indigenous leader is always willing to hear other opinions, regardless if they agree or not. I understand that Indigenous Leaders are often very respectful individuals who have a connection to where they are from. These leaders want to help their home community, and often their neighbours, succeed in every way possible. This attitude is also shared with peers and other community members. Steph is an example of a leader who surrounds himself with the people he cares about most and people who share what he believes in. People may not always listen or share what he believes in, but this leader is focused on being the best version of himself and leading by example for the youth and other individuals who may need guidance on their journey through life. Finally, I believe that a strong trait underlying this leader's effectiveness is his perseverance through tough times, no matter what.

#### WORKS CITED

- Bucci, J. et al. (2012). Ice hockey coaches' perceptions of athlete leadership. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 24(3), 243–259.
- Cailliou, B. (2012). *Wise Practices in Indigenous Community Economic Development*. Montreal: Inditerra.
- Gerbrandt, C. (2018, October 30). *Ste. Anne Helipad Expected To Launch After Final Inspection*. Steinbach Online. <https://steinbachonline.com/local/ste-anne-helipad-expected-to-launch-after-final-inspection>
- Pattyn Ventures LTD. (2019, July 30). *Pattyn Ventures*. <https://www.pattynventures.com>
- The Fighting Sioux Fund. (2020). *Pattyn Ventures The Fighting Sioux Fund*. Ste. Anne, MB: Pattyn Ventures LTD.
- Wallace, M. (2001, April 1). Sharing leadership of schools through teamwork: A justifiable risk? *Educational Management & Administration*, 29(2), 153-167.