



YOUR RED RIVER MÉTIS GOVERNMENT'S BI-WEEKLY NEWS.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Last weekend, I had the honour and privilege of joining survivors of the Sixties Scoop, as well as residential and day school survivors, at a Symposium designed to support each individual on their healing journey.

In the Sixties Scoop, our children were ripped from their culture and their community, and nobody in this country raised a finger to protect them. In 1870, they stole our wealth and took our land. In the Sixties Scoop, they stole our children, and kept stealing our children afterward through the child welfare system. These are all part of the same efforts to erase our culture and kill our spirit. While they haven't been able to erase us, they certainly hurt many of our families and children.

What many Canadians do not understand about the effects of the Sixties Scoop, as well as residential and day schools, is that the scars last a lifetime, and they can't be fully healed without survivors being able to reclaim their place in our Nation. While reconnecting brings them great strength, it doesn't resolve everything. These are people who were stolen from their community, family, and identity, and in some cases, purchased by people in the United States who were not interested in building a family or loving them. Our children were stolen to be farmhands and labourers. They were stolen to be abused and hurt by people who did not have their best interests at heart.

During the worst of the Sixties Scoop era, children growing up in our villages knew that when the black vans showed up, they had to go and hide in the bushes. Our families were vulnerable, and our children "easy pickings" to scoop and sell. Our children were stolen, not because their parents were bad, but because they didn't know how to defend our children against the authorities.

Those who weren't scooped or sent to residential schools were often subjected to cruelty in day schools, either by the racism and prejudice of regular teachers, or through prejudiced nuns who were transferred into the provincial school systems from the federal residential schools after they began closing. Many of our Elders and seniors left school early to escape the treatment at the hands of people who had no respect for us and our ways. These experiences are just as important as those of our Sixties Scoop and residential school survivors, and we have not lost sight of the fact that there must be an accounting for these experiences in our Nation.

During these times, our Nation wasn't as strong as it is today. I am so proud that we are no longer defenceless, and that our Citizens know that your Red River Métis Government has your back. The advancements we make for our Nation today – and there are many – are not just for political recognition. We advance so that we can protect our children, help our families gain financial well-being, and build up our towns and villages as economically viable places to live and work. We also advance our Nation so we can ensure that permanent adoptions are a thing of the past, so that our children will always be able to access their identity, community, and culture. Together we work to ensure that no one else has to suffer what our survivors suffered. We will keep our community together and strong.

But make no mistake, I have listened to the stories of our survivors and I have cried with them. They have come to me to talk about their pain, and to say that they don't know how to find peace. One individual in attendance at the Symposium shared that they used to cry at night and didn't really understand why. It was only when they came home to our Red River Métis Government and community that they understood why they cried, because they understood what was missing all their lives. Being reconnected with the community that was stolen from them helped them understand their grief and start the healing journey. This is a journey that takes a lifetime, and may never be truly completed.

Looking around at the 100+ survivors and family members of survivors this past weekend, I could see that this population is aging. It's hard not to be

frustrated with Canada when I see this, knowing that the pursuit of justice for our survivors is not complete. Canada needs to be able to come to the table and negotiate with us to settle with our survivors before they are all gone. We know we have a special place in Canada's confederation, and it's time Canada owned up to its responsibility to our survivors.

I know that everyone is frustrated about the Métis Sixties Scoop class action lawsuit. I'm frustrated, too. The case was five years ago, on behalf of Métis who were taken from their homes between 1951 and 1991 and placed in the care of non-Indigenous foster or adoptive parents.

To be clear, the MMF does not have any say in this lawsuit, which highlights the challenge with class action lawsuits. Using the consent of a small number of individuals, a class action can include anyone else with similar circumstances, without any consent or consultation of these individuals. Subject to court approval, the lawyers taking these cases can come to an agreement on what the settlement looks like for members of the class action. They decide how much of the settlement their firms keep. They decide whether or not funds are set aside for healing or legacy programs.

What's worse is that every time a new class action is filed, our efforts to negotiate with Canada on your behalf are interrupted. Canada cannot work directly with us as long as there's a class action for "Indigenous" survivors, because they have to wait to be clear about whether or not these class actions purport to represent our people. Your Red River Métis Government is seeing the issue of class action lawsuits come up across a variety of different areas, including for our kids in care, and we know that they present a challenge for us as a self-governing people. No one should be able to represent us without our consent and active participation, but in these class actions, your government is not part of the process. This means we can't help these law firms understand our culturally distinct needs, which go well beyond a monetary payout. Our survivors tell us that there must be support for healing in place – not just for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren. Just as the scars never leave our survivors, their children and grandchildren also bear the weight of what happened, and our survivors are wise to see it and want to bring healing to their families. This is one of the many ways our survivors make me proud of our people.

These are complex issues and complex cases, but our Citizens know that our government – like our Nation – never gives up. It took us 153 years to



see Louis Riel recognized as the first premier of Manitoba, but we made it happen. Of course, we won't make our survivors wait that long. We will continue to fight on their behalf. If necessary, we will get ahead of the federal government and deliver the long-awaited settlement to our survivors from our own funds, and settle the bill with Canada later.

To our survivors – I know you are angry and frustrated, and you should be. You deserve justice, and it's been far too slow in coming. But I also want you to know that your presence in our Nation is valuable to us. You are valuable to us, and you

always will be. Your history is hard, but I want you to know that your suffering has not been in vain. We have learned from your experiences and your willingness to share your stories with us. They are what fuel us to continue to pursue justice for you.

I urge to you stay connected with each other, and lean on one another. Sometimes, you are each other's best medicine. A cheque is a cheque and it's part of the justice you deserve, but you will still need to live, heal, and find peace. That's where a sense of community and your Red River Métis Government will play critical roles on your journey

forward. We are here for you. I thank Minister Denise Thomas (Sixties Scoop) and Minister Andrew Carrier (Residential and Day Schools) for their work on these important portfolios, ensuring that we never lose sight of your needs and experiences.

Until we meet again, I offer my prayers to all our families, Citizens, friends, and neighbours, and my deepest condolences to those who have been caused to grieve.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand, LL.D. hon. O.M. ∞

2023 INDSPIRE RECIPIENT BRINGS ART BACK TO HER COMMUNITY

From a young age, Ruby Bruce did everything she could to capture and recreate her world in her own artistic style. As early as she can remember, drawing and colouring were some of her favourite activities. As she got older, she began to observe the world around her – the people in her life, the places she had been, and what it meant to navigate the world as a Red River Métis Citizen.



Bruce creates contemporary Indigenous pop art that celebrates her Red River Métis background.

"I believe I've always been an artist at heart. My ideology is that some people are innately artists and creatives, it's a unique way their minds work. While anyone can learn a skill, having a passion for it or a natural talent to perceive the world in a creative way isn't something everyone has," she said.

Hoping to evoke emotion that transcends you to a place of childlike nostalgia, Bruce now creates art that is filled with bright colours and bold imagery. Her take on contemporary Indigenous pop art takes art enthusiasts on a journey that highlights her Red River Métis background in a captivating way.

"Growing up in the community of St. Laurent, my Red River Métis identity has been not just a part of me but the foundation of my being, and has significantly impacted what I create and what I see and experience as an artist," she said.

Bruce uses her personal experiences as a Red River Métis woman, student, and mother to further connect with her art.

"My creations are manifestations of my life's experiences, the things I've seen, and the emotions I've felt, which is ultimately my experience as a Métis woman. The Indigenous lands, the local fauna and flora, are historically mine, and they physically, spiritually, and intrinsically are the lifeblood that courses through my veins, inspiring my art with a passion that is as infinite as the prairie skies and the Métis flag."

In June 2023, Bruce was the Youth recipient of the Indspire Award, which honours First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals and their achievements across a variety of categories. The artist recognized this award as a huge honour for her and her community.

"This award demonstrates that with a bit of self-determination and mutual support, amazing things can happen," she said. "Receiving this award instils in me an enormous sense of pride in myself as a resilient Indigenous woman, as a Red River Métis, and as a girl with a dream."

The Youth sees her win not only as an accomplishment for herself, but a victory for her community, Red River Métis Youth pursuing the arts, and importantly, her inner child.

"It shows to the world our strength and the incredible things we're capable of. I can imagine a little Ruby shouting, 'we did it! We really did it,'" she said. "And that thought brings tears to my eyes and fills my heart with happiness."

Recipients of the Indspire Award had the chance to take part in an evening reception, dinner, and post-reception celebration where stories and accomplishments of past and present winners were shared with guests throughout the night. Bruce was in good company, with Red River Métis artist

Jennine Krauchi also receiving an award that same year.

"It was an extraordinary experience to meet such remarkable Indigenous individuals from all over Canada. The experience felt almost like a dream, and I am deeply honoured to have been welcomed there," Bruce said. "Meeting such incredible people and being regarded as somewhat of an equal by them was unreal. My favourite part of the event was being able to meet them and listen to their stories, and how these stories interconnect."

Having the chance to collaborate with other Red River Métis Citizens has held great significance to the artist.

"It's deeply gratifying when my own community acknowledges and seeks to elevate me, and I am eager to reciprocate that support. The chance to share my artwork through communal channels not only fills me with pride but also reinforces my sense of belonging and collective identity (and) community," she said.

Bruce recently worked with Marika Schalla, Red River Métis author and past Indspire Award winner, on the book *Stella Welcome To Your Doodem*.

"Marika Schalla and I share a familial bond and have collaborated on creating short stories for many years. We were motivated by a desire to bring our visions to reality, and we embarked on publishing our first book," she said.

The book centres on the pair's great-grandmothers and explores themes of family, culture, and passions, molded from the artists' shared experiences.

In addition to her collaborative efforts, the Red River Métis artist has facilitated Youth art workshops in St. Laurent, where she continues to see positive impacts on the community.

"Since my teenage years, I've been organizing and leading art and cultural workshops. The amount of positive feedback I've received for my workshops has always astounded me. To this day, I am amazed that participants genuinely enjoy them and learn something from them," she said.



In her workshops, Bruce teaches basic art techniques, Indigenous perspectives, and concepts like food sovereignty through the creation of art, cultural items, and much more.

The best part of these workshops has been the relationships she has built with the Youth and the inspiration they take from participating in her classes.

"I've had students say, 'Miss Bruce, I want to be just like you. I'm going to be just like you,' and those words fill me with such joy. The idea that I inspire these Youth to chase their dreams, that I'm able to offer encouragement to those who might not have received it elsewhere, makes me feel almost superhuman. I'm making a positive impact," she said.

When Bruce is not teaching, she serves as the co-founder and member of the St. Laurent Art Space Committee. The group was formed as a response to the noticeable absence of artistic opportunities within the community, with hopes of fostering a vibrant art scene.

Bruce is also involved with Heartberry Education, an innovative venture founded by Marika Schalla providing educational resources through Indigenous cultural perspectives.

"Here, I dedicate my efforts to co-creating and leading educational cultural workshops, alongside contributing my skills in graphic design and illustration," she said.

Bruce credits much of her success to the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and its role in her development as a student, mother, and artist.

"They have supported me in numerous ways, from assisting with my college education to accepting me as a Métis Youth delegate at their Annual (General Assembly), to providing me and my child a

bit of excitement and happiness through their *My Little Métis Box*," she said.

However, the highlight of Bruce's MMF support thus far has come from the encouragement of a prominent Cabinet Minister who extended an artistic opportunity to her during her early years.

"In elementary, Mona Buors was my teacher. She is currently the Minister responsible for Métis Child and Family Services at the Manitoba Métis Federation. She presented me with a big artistic opportunity at a young age," Bruce said. "The experience still holds a special place in my heart as a source of inspiration to this day. She recognized and nurtured my artistic abilities."

Minister Buors offered Bruce and her classmates the opportunity to create two murals for the MMF.

"This experience influenced me and was a key motivator in my young artistic journey. Reflecting on this memory fills me with pride and happiness at my accomplishments at such a young age. Looking back, I was very fortunate to have (Minister Buors) as a teacher," Bruce said.

The encouragement to pursue her talents throughout her life has helped Bruce to face the critiques of others, limited access to resources, and self-doubt. She hopes the work she does will inspire other Red River Métis Youth to further explore their artistic abilities.

"One of the main things that has helped me throughout my artistic journey is self-determination. Self-determination is a core aspect of being Red River Métis," she said. "Louis Riel once said, 'My people will sleep for one hundred years, (but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back).' This statement not only shows the transformative power of art, but also the role that you, as young Métis artists, play in the resurgence and preservation of our culture."

Bruce describes being an artist as a gift – a legacy handed down by our ancestors. She hopes other Red River Métis Youth continue pursuing their own gifts.

"It is a treasure that I hope you will share with the world through your beautiful artwork. Art goes beyond expression; it serves as a powerful medium of communication, bridging time and space and connecting the stories, traditions, and wisdom of our ancestors. It carries a sacred duty, acting as a tool between our past and the generations yet to come," she said. "Let self-determination be your guiding principle. Embrace the unique stories and perspectives that only you can tell, drawing inspiration from our history and culture and land and people and spirit."

MMF HOSTS RED RIVER MÉTIS CHILD CARE CONFERENCE



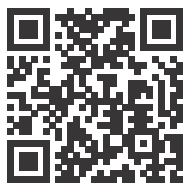
On March 2, the Manitoba Métis Federation hosted a Red River Métis Child Care Conference, where early learning and child care professionals joined us for a full day of Red River Métis-focused child care learning. The event featured keynote speakers and workshops teaching land-based education, discussion panels, mental wellness and inclusion sessions, and more!



Red River Métis artist Ruby Bruce has been passionate about the arts for as long as she can remember.



SCAN HERE
to watch
Métis Minute!



YOU CAN LEARN A LOT IN 60 SECONDS!



MÉTIS MINUTE

Discover more about the MMF and the Red River Métis with our Métis Minute, airing on CTV and the MMF YouTube Channel.

CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT

STORIES HIGHLIGHTING RED RIVER MÉTIS
CITIZENS IN THE COMMUNITY, ALONG
WITH MMF PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES,
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