



# Le Métis

∞ EST. 1871 ∞

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



### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There has been more talk in recent weeks about the iconic corner of Portage and Main, with concerns being raised by some building owners and managers that the proposed closure of the downtown concourse would leave the buildings at Portage and Main cut off and isolated.

Portage and Main is the heart of Winnipeg's downtown – much like Winnipeg is the heart and birthplace of our Red River Métis Nation – and, in 2026, will be the home of the Red River Métis Heritage Centre.

Those who attended the Annual General Assembly last fall also saw a sneak peek of one of the major external features of your heritage centre. The outdoor display of chains, decorated with a vibrant floral beadwork design by master beadwork artist Jennine Krauchi, will honour the moment Louis Riel stepped on the surveyor's chain, symbolically informing Canada that they will not come into our Homeland without our consent. Of course, this display will be best viewed from street level, in a stunning visual that will become just as iconic as the corner itself.

The Red River Métis have many reasons to be invested in the revitalization of downtown – not only because of its historic significance as the centre of commerce, where all roads into the historic Red River of the Northwest began, but also because we will play an active role in its future.

For reasons that are both practical and innovative, we should embrace having Portage and Main open to foot traffic.

#### Changing needs in the downtown area

The concourse had a great purpose when it was originally established in 1979. There was a great deal of foot traffic, with busy, bustling offices downtown, and workers commuting downtown to work, eat, and shop.

COVID-19 changed a lot of things for our city, some of which are still to be counted. One clear outcome of it is that many more companies are offering work-from-home or hybrid models to employees, which created a sharp downturn in local foot traffic in the downtown area. Downtown vacancy rates hit a record high in 2023 coming in at 18.3 per cent, with the suburban office market having a better showing. This tells us that our downtown is dying. Today, more often than not, Portage and Main is now a place we drive through on our way to other places.

Fewer people are coming to work downtown. We need to provide other reasons to come downtown to stay and play. The same old ideas just won't do.

Combine this reality with the fact that tourism in Manitoba is slowly starting to recover from the pandemic, it becomes clear that now is the time to proactively create a welcoming space for people to visit. We need to bring locals back to the downtown area and we need to start sharing the exciting things coming to our downtown.

#### Tourists are seeking new experiences, not the beaten path

Tourist expectations have changed. Increasingly, they want authentic, unique, and one-of-a-kind experiences – this has been consistently observed by travel and tourism experts from across the globe. Travel is not about going to the same places and experiencing the same things as other travellers.

We expect that your heritage centre alone could attract hundreds of thousands of visitors per year.

Remember, from our future heritage centre, it's a short walk to the Forks, as well as the Manitoba Museum, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and beyond. These are centrepieces of our beautiful downtown, and we need to promote these museums and galleries, along with our own heritage centre. We should also remember that our downtown offers stunning architectural sights that date back to over 100 years in some cases, but also includes the

unique modern beauty of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Winnipeg is also the staging location for many other amazing, Indigenous-led experiences in Manitoba. From Churchill to the Peace Gardens, and The Pas to West Hawk, we have a lot to offer anyone who wants to experience something unique and authentic. All it requires is our willingness to embrace who and what we are, and step into the global spotlight.

#### Counting the costs of keeping the concourse

The cost of keeping or repairing the concourse is significant. The City has made it clear that repairing the membrane of the concourse would be a large-scale project. The membrane is the component that prevents water leaking into the concourse, and also helps prevent the buildup of mould and other harmful substances. The City of Winnipeg has estimated that the cost would be approximately \$73 million. That's a substantial amount of money for our city, which could be used to preserve other existing city assets like libraries and pools, or build new ones to meet new needs.

The City has also indicated that the cost to operate the concourse is approximately \$1 million per year. There is some revenue received from vendors and businesses in the concourse, but that revenue is only about \$111,000 per year. It's clear that the concourse is not cost efficient for the City or its taxpayers, which includes more than 50,000 Red River Métis.

The City further indicates that the intersection would have to be closed or disrupted for up to five years, just to fix the membrane. The damage done to businesses in the downtown area in the two years of the COVID-19 lockdown was awful. Driving through downtown today, you can clearly see that it has not yet recovered. That was two years – what would happen after five years of minimal traffic moving through the city centre? A five-year dormancy at Portage and Main would not help that recovery. If we do nothing, we run the risk of seeing tumbleweeds rolling through this once thriving corner.

Creating a welcoming environment for people to come back to our downtown is important, and foot traffic is key to this. It needs to be a place where people stop and shop, visit, and take pictures. People don't go to Times Square in New York or Piccadilly Circus in London, England to experience them from underground. We need to think bigger and find ways to make downtown somewhere people want to be.





### Leading the change

We should be proud of the province Louis Riel brought into Canada's confederation. I know our people are proud of it, whether they live here, in British Columbia, the East Coast, or parts beyond – we all call it home with pride in our voices. We have been the leaders in Manitoba in the past; it's time for us to lead again – encouraging all to embrace what we have to offer the world. Our ability to stand united and share a vision of innovation is unmatched, and I know we can help others feel the pride that we feel.

Our story – the story of the Indigenous People who stood guard for the West of the country now called Canada, at our own peril – has yet to be fully embraced in the consciousness of Canadians and global travellers. Manitoba and our history are as much a part of the old "Wild West" as the more familiar locations. Tourists can be enticed by this idea, and I believe our heritage centre will be at the very heart of it, sharing our true history with the world.

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.* ∞

## EDUCATING WITH HEART: RED RIVER MÉTIS SISTERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE CLASSROOM



Red River Métis sisters Morgan (right) and Mackenzie (left) Bard both have a passion for education.

Red River Métis sisters Morgan and Mackenzie Bard are forging their own paths within the field of education.

Mackenzie has been teaching for the past four years in the Seine River School Division, and Morgan is finishing her final year at the Université de Saint-Boniface's (USB) Faculty of Education. Their commitment to education has not only transformed the lives of their students, but has also become a beacon of inspiration for the broader community.

"I've bounced all over the place with the years I've taught," said Mackenzie. "I've taught everything from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Now, I am comfortably teaching a 5/6 position, and it's awesome. It's been one of my favourite things."

The Red River Métis Citizen's path to being a teacher wasn't always this straightforward.

"I had a longtime dream of being a vet. I wanted to be a vet forever when I was little, and I realized that that would entail not just being around cute animals all the time," she said, "and I thought teaching was going to be my next best option."

Morgan wanted to enter the education field after falling in love with the idea of educating others, especially in languages, after she learned Spanish in high school.

"Languages are so important nowadays. It opens new doors to culture, opportunities, and travel," she said. "I worked with the City of Winnipeg for a couple of years, and I enjoyed planning out and organizing activities for students."

Mackenzie noted that the teaching profession being the next best option is something you'll hear from many teachers, but that hasn't stopped her from loving it wholeheartedly.

"I fell in love with sharing my knowledge with other kiddos and learning from them. Teaching the age I do now, I'm learning things all the time and getting updated on what's cool and what's not," she said. "I love being here every day. I love seeing them smile. We do lots of novel studies, so it's been fun listening to their life experiences."

Mackenzie pursued her undergraduate Bachelor of Arts and then did her education degree at USB.

"I ended up teaching, and now I'm back doing my post-baccalaureate (in education). So, I can't get enough of school," she said.

Morgan is wrapping up her degree at USB. She never realized how her Red River Métis heritage would influence her teaching style until she started her student teaching portion of schooling and learning about the way in which humans teach each other.

"I try to create sustainable relationships with my students. I make sure that all my students are heard, respected, and that everyone can be themselves," she said. "I feel that those practices are the best way for children to express themselves while giving them room to learn more about their identities."

Mackenzie is always aware that she works in a very colonial education system.

"I work in a system that stripped people of their identity and my own family's identity, and I always go between being like, 'yes, there are tests. There are things we need to do', but at the same time, I'm always trying to incorporate my identity into my classroom and what I teach," she said.

The educator said she loves sharing her Red River Métis identity and knowledge with the students. Throughout the year, Mackenzie's class is always talking about what non-Indigenous and Indigenous students can do to work towards reconciliation.

"They always love it when I come to school in a ribbon skirt or beaded earrings," she said. "It's a sense of pride for me being able to share that identity that my mom, my Mémère, and my Grand-Mamie never were able to share with others."

Morgan noted that being an Indigenous educator has become an interesting aspect of her life, as she realized how little Red River Métis representation there is in the education world.

"I would love to see more proud Métis people in the field! My sister and I always talk about the impact we see at school, whether students are asking about our ribbon skirts or beadwork," she said. "It's been important for me as an educator to stay true to my culture so that other students can see Red River Métis representation."

“I ALWAYS FEEL HEARD AS AN INDIGENOUS EDUCATOR WITH THE MMF AND GETTING THAT FUNDING, AND BEING TOLD YOUR EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT TO US IS ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD. AND I FEEL SUPPORTED BY MY GOVERNMENT.” – MACKENZIE BARD





Mackenzie always tries to incorporate something in her classroom throughout each school day that has a bit of an Indigenous perspective.

"I'm always trying to incorporate those perspectives into my classrooms so my kids can see Indigenous Peoples' history in Canada has been a long, difficult road, but we're still here, and there's so much to be proud of," she said.

Morgan and Mackenzie work in the same school division, and Mackenzie said it's fun to tell people her sister is in the division and put in a good word for her. It's a sense of pride for Mackenzie watching her little sister follow in her footsteps.



**"IT'S BEEN IMPORTANT FOR ME AS AN EDUCATOR TO STAY TRUE TO MY CULTURE SO THAT OTHER STUDENTS CAN SEE RED RIVER MÉTIS REPRESENTATION."**

**- MORGAN BARD**



"I know my mom is proud that both her daughters are university graduates because we're the first two on our mom's side who graduated from university. So, it was exciting to be one of those two (to graduate), and it's more exciting watching my little sister succeed in something I've already done," Mackenzie said.

Both sisters appreciate the Manitoba Métis Federation's (MMF) support. The MMF has offered Morgan a number of different supports and sponsorships throughout her education. She said the MMF's sponsorship has been beneficial, notably because this is her final year before graduating.

"This year in education is a very stressful period. I was worried about being able to stay on top of my schoolwork, practicum work, and my part-time job. The sponsorship has been able to aid me by taking off financial stress, as I can focus on school work without worrying about making ends meet for rent or groceries," she said.

Mackenzie said the MMF is the one reason she could afford to pay her tuition.

"It's been nice to not worry about money while getting another degree and pushing myself as an educator," she said. "I always feel heard as an Indigenous educator with the MMF and getting that funding, and being told your education is important to us is always something that makes me feel good. And I feel supported by my government."

## REGIONAL MEETING A SUCCESS IN THOMPSON



The MMF wants to thank Citizens for attending the Thompson Regional Meeting on March 16! The MMF believes regional meetings are a great opportunity to connect with your National Government of the Red River Métis to stay informed, ask questions, and raise concerns. To find out about more regional meetings and other events, visit our website at [mmf.mb.ca](http://mmf.mb.ca) or contact your Regional Office.

# 5 LEGENDARY WOMEN IN RED RIVER MÉTIS HISTORY

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