



Le Métis

∞ EST. 1871 ∞

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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Your Red River Métis Government is looking forward to our first ever Business Excellence Awards Gala. The event will take place on May 30 and will honour our hardworking business community by recognizing the best of the best in the following categories: Traditional Economies, Young Entrepreneurs, Sustainable Economy, Infinity Women Secretariat Spokeswoman's Award, and President's Lifetime Achievement Award.

These categories are reflective of our growing entrepreneurial strength. Whether you're a beader, a trapper, a fisher, a Youth entrepreneur, a woman leading a business, the owner of a stable and mature business, or a business invested in preserving our Homeland, it's important that we recognize and celebrate the contributions of our Citizens.

From the days of our buffalo hunts, making and selling pemmican, early farming, creating our flower beadwork, and operating trade routes across our vast Homeland, Red River Métis have always been hardworking, entrepreneurial people.

I am so proud of the many entrepreneurs, not only because of their individual accomplishments, but because they represent the continuation of our Ancestors' entrepreneurial spirit, which earned the Red River Métis the title of the economic engine of the West.

Caring for our Homeland and supporting our traditional economies

Protecting and promoting our traditional economies and way of life remains a top priority. Trapping, fishing, farming, forestry, and artisanship have been and will forever reflect who we are as a people.

Today, our traditional economies continue to provide an income for Citizens and their families, and enable our collective economic success, particularly in rural areas.

The Red River Métis Fur Company is one of the ways we support businesses in our traditional economic sectors. Launched in February of 2022, through the company we have bought 4,500 furs from our Red River Métis trappers for \$250,000. As we buy furs at 25 per cent over market value, we are seeing growing interest in the revival of our trapping industry, doubling our transactions over the previous year.

We don't just buy the furs to sell in the open market. To promote our continuing cultural resurgence and support for entrepreneurs, a portion of the furs are provided at no cost to Red River Métis artists through our Fur and Hide Program. In the past seven months, 147 furs have been given out to 28 artists. Artisans then make beautiful moccasins, mitts, gauntlets, pouches, hats, and jewelry that are sold to our Red River Métis Marketplace at fair market value.

I'm proud to share that our marketplace is now buying regularly from over 140 Red River Métis Citizens. Items are available for purchase at the stores in the MMF National Office at 150 Henry in Winnipeg, in the Northwest Regional Office in Dauphin, or online at redrivermetismarketplace.ca. This summer, our Red River Métis Marketplace will be mobile, selling these beautiful traditional goods at events across the Homeland.

Commercial fishing also continues to be an important economic activity for many Red River Métis Citizens. Given that the majority of commercial fishers in Manitoba are Red River Métis, we have made it a priority to safeguard this industry, protecting our traditional way of life. That's why we are actively involved with Canada in the sale of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. We have expressed our vigorous opposition to the recent open "Expression of Interest" process, which would make the corporation available for anyone to buy, leaving our commercial fishers with deep concerns about the future of this traditional economy.

We are also working with Manitoba on the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels project, making it clear that we will not support anything that puts fish species at risk. We will continue to fight to defend the rights and interests of our commercial fishers, while protecting the health of our Homeland.

Inviting the world to our Homeland

Our warm and welcoming Red River Métis culture is showcased daily by our nearly 50 Red River Métis tourism and hospitality businesses and entrepreneurs. From lodges to farm-to-table dining to culture and history experiences, there is an opportunity to participate in a range of tourism activities while supporting Red River Métis Citizens. Citizens can also experience great food and customer service at any one of the 21 Red River Métis-owned restaurants, including the Shady Lane Tea Room outside of Brandon or Sophie's Restaurant & Deli in Hadashville.

If you and your family are looking for a home-grown adventure this summer, check out the full list of Red River Métis tourism and hospitality businesses on our website.

If you're not familiar with our Business Registry, now is a great time to get to know it. There can be no doubt that one of the best ways we can continue to build our economic strength is by supporting our businesses. It now has close to 700 registered and verified Red River Métis businesses in it. This directory is not just for use by our Citizens – it's also used by other governments, corporations, and individuals wanting to purchase goods and services from authentically Red River Métis businesses.

Supporting our business community

While we are hosting our first ever business awards gala, this is far from the only way in which we are recognizing and supporting our Red River Métis businesses.

Last year, we established the Métis Economic and Community Development team, which now has officers in nearly all Regions, as well as with our Beyond Borders team and our proud affiliate, Infinity Women Secretariat. The officers deliver important on-the-ground supports for businesses and entrepreneurs where they live and work. This includes helping them connect with financing and business opportunities, promoting them in partnership with others, and engaging them in events like the Red River Métis Business Expo held last December.

Of course, our affiliate, the Louis Riel Capital Corporation, continues to serve a key role

in providing financing and other business supports to Red River Métis business owners and entrepreneurs. Following the devolution of the Métis Economic Development Fund last year, we also established the Red River Métis Business Development Corporation. This MMF affiliate now holds equity and debt financing and plays a lead role in the delivery of major events for Red River Métis businesses and entrepreneurs, including the Red River Métis Business Expo and Red River Métis Business Excellence Awards Gala. It will also continue to build and support the Red River Métis Business Association, recently hiring a manager to advance the development of the business association.

Our efforts to support our Red River Métis businesses and entrepreneurs continue to grow, keeping pace with the growth and advancement of our business community. Through our annual surveys, we continue to learn more about your needs and your sense of the marketplace. We know that our business community consistently shows greater than average optimism for the future. To me, this not only speaks to our enduring entrepreneurial spirit; it also speaks to the continued advancement of our Nation at every level.

I remain very proud of every Citizen who is gaining ground for themselves and their families, creating

the economic success and well-being that was the enduring vision of our Ancestors. We are truly the inheritors of their spirit, pride, and innovative ways, and we have shown what happens when we believe in ourselves, and believe in our Nation.

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. ∞

EMPOWERING GIRLS IN HOCKEY: MMF PARTNERS WITH LAC DU BONNET FOR FEMALE HOCKEY CHANGE ROOM

In the small town of Lac du Bonnet, hockey is a way of life, and the local community arena serves as a cultural hub for all to gather. Now, thanks to the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), the Lac du Bonnet arena is adding a female dressing room.

For a town with a population of over 1,000 residents, the arena has been a gathering place for the community since 1967. The arena has several co-ed rooms but never had a specific space for women and girls to call their own to get ready in.

Lac du Bonnet Mayor Ken Lodge, who serves as Chairperson for the MMF Lac du Bonnet Local, said that the arena serves as a bustling community hub, and from late in the fall right through springtime, the rink is probably the happiest place you can find in the entire community.

"Anytime you come here, whether it's kids or adults, there's smiles on their faces, there's lots of activity. It's loud, it's rambunctious, and it's a lot of

fun. It doesn't matter if you have kids or not. You come here, you watch what's going on, and you immediately feel part of the community," he said.

Red River Métis Citizen Adam Gorrie is the vice president of the Lac du Bonnet Minor Hockey Association and serves on the arena board. He said the idea for a new female change room came from the Lac du Bonnet Rats hockey club, an old Manitoba Hydro hockey team originally made up of players working on a project in the area. Since the team got older, Gorrie and a group of "ragtag players," many of whom are Red River Métis Citizens, have continued on the team's name while playing hockey in the Beausejour Commercial Hockey League.

"We were in the dressing room after a game one day, and the manager, Jeff Seifried, was sitting there with us, brainstorming ideas of what we could do to give back to the arena, and he said it would be nice to see a female dressing room brought in,"

he said. "It was with his passion for this arena that we jumped on board and started the process of building (the change room)."

The Rats and the community started fundraising for the project and hosted "Fore the Rink," an annual golf tournament that raised money to extend the arena's longevity.

"One-hundred and forty-four golfers show up and golf. We've sold out two years in a row now, and we're hoping that success carries on for the future," said Gorrie.

After the Lac du Bonnet Arena submitted a proposal, the MMF provided a cheque for \$27,000 to help fill the gaps and make the change room a reality. Construction is currently underway, with many volunteers from the team and community coming together to donate their time and efforts to the project.



2023 has been the first time Lac du Bonnet has been able to field an U9 all-girls team.

Gorrie is thankful for all the help from the National Government of the Red River Métis.

"I hear all these stories of other communities getting involved with the MMF, partnering up and getting all these projects done. It's great to see in this community that they've reached out, and now we've got this partnership for a long time to come," he said.

The MMF strives to help local communities and is dedicated to growing women in sports. The change room funding is part of the MMF's investment into professional and structured sports development for Red River Métis Youth. From grants such as the Believe Athletic and Artistic Support Program to the Individual Youth Sponsorship, to the donation of \$21,500 last year to the St. Malo Arena to help repair their ice plant, the MMF is dedicated to supporting our Red River Métis athletes. Through a variety of camps, the MMF is committed to introducing Youth to the fundamentals of sports so they can develop their skills, and has hosted many athletic workshops.

Mayor Lodge hoped this project would show people what can happen with simple collaboration, sharing of labour, and advice.

"I think that the major impact out of all of this is going to be the fact that we do have a change room that the girls and ladies will feel comfortable utilizing all the time. They've demonstrated to the community that big projects can be done, and they can be done relatively quickly," he said. "It takes a real collaborative effort, and I think that now that's been demonstrated, we have a whole crop of new leaders coming up to say, 'I can do this.' So, the long-term impact is going to be very important."

Gorrie said although the project has had its bumps, it's been enriching to see how it has evolved.

"It all started with how we can fundraise. The initial design didn't quite work out. So then, we had to go back to the drawing board. We decided (having) the (change room) over where it is now would be the best situation. It's been a process, but it's starting to bear fruits. We're all pretty excited," he said.

Mayor Lodge hopes this project will encourage other Locals to take community-focused approaches to their projects.

"The Local and that community have to have the desire. They have to have that level of commitment where they're willing to work through multiple steps, multiple stages, and be aware they're going to have some setbacks," he said. "They have to develop collaborative relationships with other organizations. (Locals) have to do some fundraising, because that expresses the desire. And (they have) to be able to express the actual need as to what it means to the immediate Métis community and the community at large, because it benefits us all."

He added project management, being organized, and sticking to your plan are all things that can help your Local make a project a reality.

"Anything is possible, but you need to stick with it and follow the steps religiously. You don't want to suffer self-induced delays by not providing adequate information, whether it's as simple as a drawing or a plan for electrical inspection work," said Mayor Lodge. "Whatever (work) has to be done. Everything has to be laid out step by step, so that's going to be singularly the most difficult aspect of doing it is that basic leg work."

The change room will be completed for the 2024/2025 playing season and it could not have come at a better time. Gorrie mentioned that 2023 has been the first time they've been able to field an U9 all-girls team.

"We were in a unique situation this year where we had too many U9 kids for one team and not quite enough for two," said Gorrie, who serves as the team's coach. "We brought up two young ladies from the U7 team to make the U9 female team, and we had just enough to field both teams, which is cool because it's the first time in Lac du Bonnet history we've had something like this."

As a small town, Lac du Bonnet often draws a lot of kids from other communities in the Southeast Region to come and play because the smaller communities normally do not have enough kids to form a team themselves.

"Now we have a facility where everybody can come (get) changed, have that sense of camaraderie, and get out there," said Mayor Lodge. "I think the biggest change that has to occur is the recognition that there are no cookie-cutter children out there. Everybody's unique, everybody's different, but they all want to feel safe and comfortable in their own environment, and this is what we're trying to provide."

For Gorrie, building this change room was close to his heart because Lac du Bonnet had so many young female players starting to show up in the program.

"It was important for them to be comfortable and to be able to tell their friends that, 'Hey, we have this space where we're happy, we're having fun, and maybe you should come join' and grow that group of young ladies and have them enjoy hockey."

The Red River Métis Citizen especially takes pride in this project as he also has two young daughters who play on the U9 Lac du Bonnet Lightning.

Jayla Gorrie has been playing hockey for four years and said her favourite part of playing for the team has been attending tournaments.

"(I like) how we can play hard, get goals, and get (to be) the player of the game," she said, adding that

she's also excited about having a change room for girls. "Really happy, so then the boys can't bother us."

Finley Gorrie is also one of the Lac du Bonnet Lightning U9 players. She said her favourite part of hockey practice is the games, specifically toilet tag.

"You skate on the ice, and you skate away from the people that are (it). (If you get caught), then you go on one knee, and you put your hand out. And then they have to put your hand down, then you're back up," she said.

Overall, Mayor Lodge hopes the fruits of the community's labour will create a much more welcoming environment for girls and ladies.

"Not just to learn to play hockey, potentially ringette, and other sports, but allow them to play longer in their lives. It's important that people not give up the sport," he said. "People will have their area where they'll feel comfortable and safe at all times, and I think it's important. I hope to be able to attract more girls and ladies from the region to come here and play and then set an example that maybe this is the standard we want to set throughout smaller arenas in Manitoba to make these things possible."

DAUPHIN & SWAN RIVER MCDONALD'S JOIN FORCES WITH MMF FOR MCHAPPY DAY FUNDRAISER



Your Red River Métis Government is proud to announce that as part of McHappy Day on May 8, 2024, McDonald's locations in Dauphin and Swan River are collaborating with our Northwest Region. A portion of proceeds from every food and beverage purchase on May 8 will help support families with sick children. You can also purchase a donation heart or a pair of socks at either location and a portion of the proceeds will be given to our Northwest Region's child care centres.



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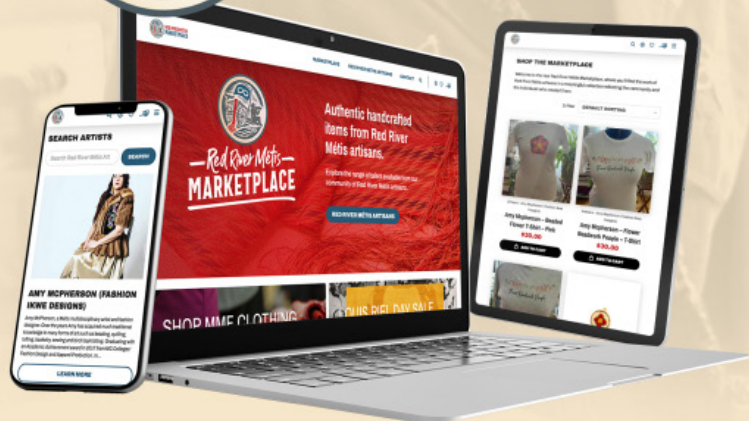


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