



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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Election Results

On Monday, April 28, Canadians elected a new government, led by Prime Minister Mark Carney. You will have no doubt heard from all corners that the threats faced by Canadians made this the most consequential election in a generation, and this is true for many reasons.

The most critical, of course, is the change in the relationship Canada has enjoyed with the United States for generations. While we have always understood that we have an identity that is uniquely Canadian, we built a strong partnership with our neighbours to the south based on shared values. We negotiated free trade agreements to combine our economic strengths to the benefit of our Citizens. In the 20th century, our Citizens fought shoulder-to-shoulder and died together for the survival of democracy and the rule of law.

The strength of these historic ties makes the betrayal of our partnership and the attack on our identity and sovereignty even more difficult to come to grips with. It is a serious matter, and one that Canadians have overwhelmingly recognized needs a serious and once in a generation leader to guide us through.

Canadians have a strong sense of fair play – we have respect for the rules and for the equal treatment

of all people. When we elect a government, we expect it to honour this. For Red River Métis, this also means electing a government that will honour and respect our relationship as Partners in Confederation.

Prior to election day, your Red River Métis Government was hard at work ensuring that all our Citizens understood where each party stood on our priorities. Now that we have a new Canadian government, we will be working to advance these priorities and ensure our journey to reconciliation with Canada continues. It is worth remembering that the only party that did not respond in any way to our priorities was the Conservative Party of Canada.

Of course, the top two priorities we identified are the settlement of our land claim and ushering our historic Red River Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Treaty into legislation. As our Citizens remember, we signed our modern-day Treaty with Canada late in 2024, which was the result of long years of work, going back and forth with Canada to finalize every word, sentence, and paragraph.

We know that the previous administration committed to settling our land claim but did not complete the task. That's why settling our land claim will continue to be a top priority in our dialogue with Canada. There can be no doubt that this is still an outstanding and critical milestone of reconciliation between Canada and the Red River Métis. Settling with us is the only way to end what has been called the "ongoing rift in the national fabric" of Canada. I know our Citizens feel the importance of this in their hearts and souls and feel a powerful sense of responsibility to our Ancestors to see justice done for what was taken from them. This is still an outstanding commitment of my presidency, and I will not rest until this is completed.

As you're aware, there had to be some fundamental changes made in our child and family services recently, based on the shortfall of funding from the province. Manitoba must remain committed to funding the services necessary for the protection of children and – in cases where it's warranted – apprehension and then ongoing support of children in care. This shortfall isn't new, and the province has been and remains aware of it. We've been pushing hard to correct these shortfalls, but the ongoing lack of equitable funding caused hardship to our employees. We must be very clear about this – our child and family services staff are just as qualified and capable as the staff in the employment of the Government of Manitoba, but ours are consistently

treated in a biased way, paid less than their provincial counterparts.

This ongoing challenge resulted in union members voting to go on strike, and ultimately into arbitration after several weeks on the picket line. We acknowledge that the province provided an additional \$2.4 million dollars in new funding, but that only helps address back pay for a limited number of staff, without addressing the continuing inequity in pay between our staff and the Government of Manitoba's staff. We will continue to push the province to understand and meet their obligations to our staff, and do the right thing for all children in care, no matter which agency supports them.

Let me be clear that it is not that our Minister for Child and Family Services, Mona Buors, does not want to offer equitable salaries and equitable standing with the other agencies. It's simply that there is an ongoing double standard where our Métis Child and Family Services staff have been consistently shortchanged when compared to their peers. Minister Buors and her team have been working hard advocating for our staff tirelessly, going above and beyond in their care for the staff who give so much of themselves to the children in our keeping.

However, this does not take away from the responsibility the federal government has to the children in our care. We will continue to advocate for the completion of this coordination agreement with Canada through Bill C-92, *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, so we can start to fund the vital work needed to keep our children within their extended family and/or our community. We will vigorously advance this priority with Canada and as always, we will keep our Citizens posted on our progress.

Along with these priorities, we will continue to work toward Red River Métis specific healthcare funding, the promotion of our business community through federal procurement, continued economic reconciliation initiatives, partnership to protect of our identity and long-term, stable funding to ensure the MMF can continue to provide vital programs and services to our Citizens.

While we advance our priorities with the Government of Canada, as shared during the election, your Red River Métis Government has also started analyzing the Liberal Party's platform and other priorities identified Prime Minister Carney during the campaign, to see how these commitments and priorities can be translated to services to our Citizens in areas like housing, health



care, and food security. We will share our progress on these important matters as we begin dialogue with this new Canadian government.

I want to thank each and every Red River Métis Citizen who went out and voted, and encouraged family and friends to vote as well. For our people, democracy is not just a means of bringing in a government, it is an important pillar of our culture. Together, we have shown Canada that we are strong participants in the democracy of this country, and that our votes can and do make a difference in election results.

Expressing our gratitude to Pope Francis

On April 25, I attended the public viewing for His Holiness in St. Peter’s Basilica. I can tell you that I was in awe, seeing the hundreds of thousands of people who came to pay their respects to Pope Francis as he lay in state. The line up of people who wished to say goodbye were miles long. I myself stood in line for nearly four hours before I had a chance to view him and pay respect to him on behalf of all Red River Métis, who he treated with such care and respect during our visit with him in 2022, when he delivered his apology to us for the historic harms done to our people.

On the next day, Saturday, April 26, I attended the funeral of Pope Francis held outside in St. Peter’s Square, Vatican City, at the heart of Rome. It was a very busy and nervous day, which began at 6:30 in the morning, and included a nearly 10 km walk to be at the square in time for the 10 am funeral. With 130 world leaders also present, the security and organization required to accommodate the mass numbers of people was truly stunning, with security teams very visible and access tightly managed. Italian officials estimated that 250,000 mourners gathered in the Square to pay their respects to the Pope and to his legacy, with a further 200,000 in the streets. Even with our early start, we only got partway into St. Peters, joined by so many others who had also gathered early to bear witness to his funeral services.

Raised by his grandmother, Pope Francis showed his deep respect for the role of matriarchs in the Roman Catholic Church by vocally calling for women to play a more significant role, and by departing from tradition in his request to be buried at Santa Maria Maggiore basilica in Rome, a location dedicated to honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary, where he frequently came to pray. He also showed his support for the LGBTQ2+ community, a clear move in a progressive and inclusive direction. In many ways he was a Pope of Hope – he showed his respect to Red River Métis when he met with

us and ask for our forgiveness for the “deplorable conduct of these members of the Catholic Church” and stated, “I ask for God’s forgiveness, and I want to say to you with all my heart, I am very sorry.” When my Cabinet and I made our Pilgrimage to Vatican City to meet with Pope Francis in 2022, I could see and feel the sincerity of his message. His apology began the reconciliation and renewal of the historic relationship between our People and the Roman Catholic Church.

Devout Catholics will know that the Conclave will begin on May 7 to choose a new Pope. I sincerely hope that the Cardinals have the wisdom to elect a person of similar values, who continues to bring the faith onto a more progressive path of inclusion, love, and hope.

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. My heart is with the friends, family, and community of our lost loved ones. I ask my people to send prayers to our families and help those who are grieving. I will keep you all in my prayers, as always.

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

THE MMF’S ON-FARM CLIMATE ACTION FUND CONTINUES TO GROW

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has planted a foundation for farmers to be more environmentally conscious through the On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF).

The program provides Red River Métis agricultural producers across the National Homeland with funding of up to \$100,000 per farm to implement eligible on-farm best management practices (BMPs). Eligible BMPs focus on three categories: nitrogen management, cover cropping, and rotational grazing.

Hannah Keenes, the Agriculture Portfolio Lead for the Energy, Infrastructure and Resource Management Department, explained the importance of this program to Red River Métis farmers and the opportunity it provides to create environmentally considerate farming opportunities.

“The MMF’s On-Farm Climate Action Program provides Red River Métis producers with non-repayable funding to adopt farm management practices that address climate change adaptation and mitigation by sequestering carbon or reducing their greenhouse gas emissions,” said Keenes. “Simply put, this program provides the financial incentive for our producers to get a little more climate conscious, and to adopt practices they might not be able to otherwise.”

The program is designed to provide short-term relief by providing upfront funding to help cover



The On-Farm Climate Action Fund provides Red River Métis agricultural producers across the National Homeland with funding of up to \$75,000 per farm to implement eligible on-farm best management practices.

rising input costs, while also supporting long-term sustainability of Red River Métis-owned farms – both environmentally and economically.

Keenes hopes to increase awareness of the MMF’s Agriculture Portfolio and the programming that is offered by the MMF.

“We really want to connect with more of our farmers and ranchers. We often hear that they weren’t aware of the Portfolio, nor that the MMF has a presence in the agriculture sector. I also think it’s fair to say that the MMF is not shy about its stance on addressing climate change, and I want Citizens to know that this commitment extends to the agriculture sector as well,” said Keenes.

MMF Spotlight had the chance to sit down with Patrick Gamache, a sixth generation Red River Métis farmer who has benefitted from the OFCAF. Gamache has explored various aspects of farming, from raising livestock to working in farm retail, but now has a strong focus on the grain industry.

“I’m just strictly going right into grain as that’s where my passion is. We are growing wheat, canola, soybeans, corn, navy beans, pinto beans, and then sometimes black beans. Those are the main crops that we’re growing,” he said.

Gamache was first introduced to OFCAF by a fellow Red River Métis farmer.





"Farmers are always trying do better for the environment, but the problem is all these new technologies cost a lot to jump into and get into. So, I had another Métis farmer text me and say 'hey, why don't you look into this, see if you can qualify and get some help to do your projects so we can start doing things a little more efficient,'" he said.

The Red River Métis farmer has been involved with the program for over two years and stressed how simple the process was to get involved.

"(It was a) very easy application. It was great to work with the individuals that were involved. It was simple (and) it didn't take a whole lot of effort on my part and even getting the money was very quick to get as well. It did not take very much time, which made making the decision a lot easier to do," said Gamache.

The MMF not only provides farmers with funding opportunities, but also a sense of connection to their Red River Métis Government.

"The viability or sustainability of Red River Métis-owned farms is an obvious and direct goal of the

program, but we also hope to build rapport and a sense of community amongst Red River Métis producers," said Keenes. "So, getting to know people like Patrick, and to get to go to their farms and meet them in person, is a great aspect of the program."

In 2024, Gamache showed his appreciation for the MMF through his donation of over 2,900 lbs of beans to the MMF's Annual General Assembly.

"I was thinking of something that was close to my heart... edible beans, like your pintos and blacks and navies, is something new that I've brought into the Parkland region, so I thought it would be really cool just to give something I'm very passionate (about) back to other individuals," he said. "It's a great source of protein and you can give lots of it compared to a cow (or animal products). If you can give a quite a bit, then it can touch a lot more people."

The farmer also appreciates how his job allows him to connect with nature, creating a closeness with his Red River Métis culture.

"With (being) Métis it's about connecting with nature and being present and enjoying what mother nature has provided. So, I actually find it very fortunate to be working in the environment, making a living off mother nature and also seeing all the wildlife. It's incredible. I really enjoy (seeing) it," he said.

The OFCAF recently received a three-year extension, which will grant access to an additional \$25,000 and allow farmers to complete their climate-focused projects.

"That will allow them perhaps to finish off those areas that they might not have covered with their rotational grazing or their cover crops, or the nitrogen management," said David Beaudin, Minister of Agriculture. "That also gives our people hope that their Red River Métis Government is helping them in their lives and for their future, so the children of those farmers have an option and provide them some stability in that sense."

If you are interested in learning more about the MMF's On-Farm Climate Action Program, visit mmf.mb.ca/on-farm-climate-action-fund.

A LIFE OF CARE: RED RIVER MÉTIS CITIZEN DEDICATES HERSELF TO CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH



Carole Shankaruk has dedicated her life to the enrichment of Youth through her work in both education and mental health services.

Whether she is advocating for improved mental health services for children or creating Indigenous inclusive education plans, Carole Shankaruk has devoted her life to making a difference in the lives of children.

The Red River Métis Citizen has spent most of her life working in the school system and is honoured

to be a part of the small percentage of Indigenous educators across the country.

"I've worked in the school system for decades, so when I was with River East Transcona for 10 years I was supporting 42 schools," she said. "We would go to (Indigenous-led) workshops and groups and I would see Youth who were so proud to be Métis, (especially) when they have positive role models."

Shankaruk takes great pride in her Red River Métis heritage and makes it apparent through her work within the education system.

"Being a positive representation for Métis students has been a huge reward for me in terms of the work I am doing," she said. "We're seeing kids be so much more engaged in their culture than I would have seen 20 years ago."

As a lifelong learner herself, the Red River Métis Citizen has a deep understanding of the importance of education and its relationship to mental health supports.

"Education is super important to help kids to know their history and support their mental health and their well-being in general, so there are a lot of groups that we run (to support our Youth)," she said. "I think about our grade 6 through 8's when they get to those well-being groups, over lunch once a week, and they sit in a circle, and we create a space for them to share. We do cultural teachings and we provide them lunch and just a space to connect and our rooms are packed. It's been fantastic."

While supporting her students through a global pandemic in the early 2020s, Shankaruk noticed an apparent need for accessible mental health services.

"Pre-COVID we knew that there were mental health needs, but post-COVID the mental health needs have just skyrocketed in terms of Indigenous Youth," she said. "We know that the needs are greater. We know that the risks are higher, so we're continuously working on getting supports for Indigenous Youth."

Shankaruk's passion for mental health advocacy encouraged her to pursue opportunities outside of the school system, leading to her work with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and Kids Help Phone.

"I started with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)," she said. "They were looking for Indigenous representation in rural Manitoba. So, I thought, 'what the heck, I'll throw my name in for the MHCC,' and I was successful to get on the board."

Following her acceptance of the position, the Red River Métis Citizen served for two terms, six years in total; she ended her final term as vice-chair of the board. Shankaruk is still actively involved with the MHCC, where she is a trainer for mental health first aid training.

"It's two days of training around mental health and currently, the Commission has a million Canadians who have been trained in this program. So that's



just one of the many programs that they do," she said.

The Citizen now serves as an Indigenous Advisory Council Member and member of the Board of Directors for Kids Help Phone.

"Kids Help Phone is the only national organization that supports Youth 24/7 from coast to coast, and we've been promoting that organization in all our schools. I am proud to say that, because 20 years ago, it wasn't like that, but when a Youth calls Kids Help Phone, they're going to get a response within three minutes every single time," she said.

The Red River Métis Citizen continues to bring Indigenous perspectives to these platforms and her experience in education has seamlessly merged with her work at the MHCC and Kids Help Phone.

Shankaruk is part of a group of educators who have created Umbay Nagamon: Come Sing, An Invitation to Action-Reconciliation circles within the Parkland. Umbay Nagamon focuses on anti-racism education and building allyship within the education system. This program is also in partnership with BU Cares, a research team focused on rural, northern, and Indigenous communities, school divisions, and related organizations, who have been collecting the research data that comes from the implementation of this program.

"The program has been so amazing that it's taken us across Canada, so we presented for the Mental Health Commission of Canada. We've presented for Kids Help Phone and two summers ago, we were in Prince Edward Island for the Governance Professionals of Canada," said the Citizen.

The workshop has created a space for Elders and Knowledge Keepers to share their truth about the impacts of residential schools while infusing traditional Indigenous instruments into their storytelling.

"It's really heart and head work because we open people up with their hearts and then we move into the education... we ultimately ask people if they're ready to make a commitment to reconciliation," she said.

The act of reconciliation is symbolized by diamond fabric pieces showing individual commitment, later becoming a blanket representing all participants working for Indigenous inclusion in the education system.

"And when our five years is done, which is next year, we're going to do a big inaugural event where we'll make all these star blankets with everyone's personal commitment," she said.

This year, Shankaruk's efforts in mental health and her lifelong dedication to education have been

recognized through being awarded the King Charles Coronation medal.

"I believe there's 33,000 (awards) that are going across Canada, but the Governor General got to give 100 and I was part of the first 50 (to receive the award) and then she'll do the second 50," she said. "I wasn't really thinking it was going to be this amazing moment, but when I was standing there and she gave me the award... you're surrounded by this group of amazing people and you're in this beautiful ballroom, it was a moment I will never forget."

Following her work in the education system, she hopes to continue working with Kids Help Phone as a volunteer counsellor.

"That's my next thing I'm going to do, because they always need people on the night shift, taking calls for Youth," she said.

For Red River Métis Citizens interested in culturally focused mental health services and supports, the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has implemented a Mental Health Wellness Support Line. This service is Red River Métis-owned and operated, confidential, and available in both English and French.

To access the **Mental Health Wellness Support Line**, call **1-833-390-1041 ext. 1**.




Beginner BIRDING COURSE

The MMF's Métis Community-Based Climate Monitoring Program is inviting **Red River Métis Citizens** to join us for a beginner birding course at Fort Whyte Alive! Discover how to identify various bird species and put your new skills to the test on a guided birding walk.

WHO? All Red River Métis Citizens
WHEN? May 3 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
WHERE? Fort Whyte Alive in the Winnipeg Region

Please note: Lunch will be provided and binoculars will be available for use during the event.

For more information and to register, please contact Tanner Barlow at tanner.barlow@mmf.mb.ca

