



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I was recently asked to appear before Canada's House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, to speak about the proposed federal budget and my thoughts about the opportunities and challenges I see with it, as the leader of the Red River Métis.

When I spoke to the committee, I reminded the members that I have been in politics for a long time, having been honoured to be elected as your President eight times in the past three decades. In that time, I have seen many federal budgets, some of which held good news for us, and others which have ignored our existence completely. But without exception, each budget has represented the realities, perspectives, and sometimes, the prejudices of the time.

This budget is no different – the 2026 budget reflects the realities we are facing as the world shifts away from the stability we've enjoyed since the end of World War II. We are seeing the old-world order fade away, destroyed by the actions of madmen like America's Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir Putin. As our own Prime Minister said during his powerful speech at Davos, it is now time for middle powers like Canada, Australia, Korea, and others, to come together and create new partnerships, which will build the strength and resilience of our economies.

This budget is reflective of these changes and shows the path of the required generational investments in Canada's security in the arctic, in our military strength, and in our efforts to secure new trade partners internationally. I can say, without doubt, that this is the biggest change I have seen in my lifetime, beyond the horrors of the global pandemic, beyond the vindication of our land claim victory at the Supreme Court of Canada, beyond the Daniels' decision or the Canada-Métis Accords. It is very clear, for those following global politics, that these changes are necessary in order to secure our country for future generations.

We are the Red River Métis. It is in our blood to protect our country, even though it has not always

treated us well. It is the only place in the world where we exist, and we are tied to its history and its well-being in ways that we all feel deeply. As with the federal legislation on Major Projects, my government is prepared to support our federal partners in this budget and its national and international focus, but I cannot forget about the social realities of our People.

So, while Canada's budget leaves us with some questions, and some issues we will continue speaking with Canada about, there is also great potential for us to be part of the changes that are coming, as investors in the future prosperity of this country. As builders, entrepreneurs, and trailblazers – the way our Ancestors were in the past. In short, it creates a path for us to once again become the economic engine of the West. And as I clearly stated to the committee, we are shovel-ready and prepared for when Canada catches up to us.

We have completed our part of the work. We are shovel-ready on multiple housing projects and we are ready to build, and we are waiting for Canada.

I shared with the committee that we have a track record that speaks for itself. We are already a proven success in housing. We are rapidly approaching 1,500 families who have purchased and are now living in their own homes through our First Time Home Purchase Program, which is a success that far outstrips any other program in Canada. With just a small investment, we have put hardworking Red River Métis families in their own homes, building a legacy for the future and contributing more than \$350 million to the Canadian economy. This is on top of the core infrastructure builds we have produced, like our apartments on Eveline in Selkirk, our many child care facilities, and seniors homes in places like St. Laurent, The Pas, Russell, and many more.

On behalf of our Citizens, we manage 49 residential properties, with a total of 152 units of affordable housing, including transitional housing units.

The success of our Housing and Early Learning and Childcare programs has been based on long-term agreements with Canada, which have allowed us to create programs and make decisions based on long-term vision and planning.

I also told them about the success of our education funding, which is currently supporting 2,600 of our Citizens in University with \$5,000 per year.

I reminded the committee members that these are not donations being made by Canada to our people – they are simply a return of our taxes to us, so that we can manage our own affairs. We've proven that we're better at creating success within our Nation than any federal, provincial, or civic government could ever be.

This is why we support Canada's 2026 budget, particularly in the area of investments for Major Projects, with the understanding that funding will be tied to results. We have demonstrated, over and over again, that we consistently deliver results.

However, one area of concern I shared was the future uncertainty of programs like Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples, which carries risk for our Youth and takes away our ability to make the same long-term strategic decisions. I also flagged that the funding for our education support program must continue and even expand, leading to opportunities in education. I reminded them that we have a responsibility to our young people, and that our Youth must have access to

programming to provide them with the best start in life. I made it clear that the time for investments into education and training is now, so our Youth have the skills to participate in nation-building projects.

I also reminded them that these investments into our Nation have been a long time coming. Like our treaty, which is on its way to becoming the laws of this land, we have been waiting for Canada to recognize what we are capable of contributing for 156 years. We have always been patriots, contributors to the economy, and believers in the vision and values that have helped shape this country. We have done this with and without Canada's recognition or support, because we don't waver from what we stand for and we don't wait. But it's more than time for Canada to recognize our strength, and treat us as partners in Confederation, and a force to be reckoned with.

As I told the committee, I did not come to them for a handout or a hand up. Instead, I told them that if they wanted to put something in our hands, let it be a shovel, because we are ready to do the work to keep our country strong, united and free.

After my presentation about the budget, I was made aware of the troubling comments made by National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak during her own presentation at the committee, where she stated that she believes Canada should go back to referring to Indigenous Services Canada as Indian Affairs, to prevent the Métis or the Inuit from accessing any funding from that department, which she feels should be exclusively – meaning only – allocated to the First Nations. She knows very well that the funding was never intended solely for the First Nations. It was set aside for all Indigenous Nations, but she now claims it should only go to First Nations, which isn't based in truth. It clearly shows where her agenda is going.

I can only imagine the sharp contrast felt by the committee in hearing these two very different presentations. The National Chief is incorrect, and is trying to marginalize both the Inuit and the Métis in her quest for exclusive access to federal funding. This does not resonate with the times, nor the common cultural values across the majority of Indigenous Nations, where the recognition of our kinship and our responsibility to one another remain strong, and we recognize the incredible strength we have when we work together.

Rest assured, the Red River Métis will never surrender our rightful place in Canada's Confederation, our place in the constitution, nor our right to access the taxes we pay. We will continue to engage with partners across all Indigenous Nations, who share our vision of a stronger, more economically secure future for our children and grandchildren. History will make its own determinations about who has the right approach to building Canada.

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. ∞





## CAPTURING OUR HISTORY: RED RIVER MÉTIS AUTHOR'S MEMOIR REVIVES FAMILY ALBUMS

Arlene Chapman discusses *Keeper of the Albums*



**Red River Métis author Arlene Chapman delved into 30 photo albums to tell the story of her family in her memoir.**

Arlene Chapman always knew she had a story to tell.

"I've always wanted to write my life story," she said. "I just didn't know how to go about it."

From taking a memoir writing course in 2019 to her book launch in 2024, it took nearly five years for Chapman to complete her memoir, *Keeper of the Albums*.

It was important for the Red River Métis author to keep her family's stories alive. Equipped with around 30 photo albums to choose from, she was able to illustrate the story of her family. Perhaps that's why Chapman is known as the "Keeper of the Albums."

"Going down from my great-grandmother and even before, they were all camera buffs. They just loved taking pictures. My mom had what's called a Brownie camera. It's an old-fashioned square black box," she said. "Her mother used to take pictures all the time, and my mother did, and then I did, and my husband did, and my daughter and my grandson – everybody is taking pictures."

When her mother passed away in 2000, Chapman inherited 13 of her photo albums – some dating all the way back to the 1800s.

While incorporating her family photos into *Keeper of the Albums*, the author made a point to centre her Red River Métis identity.

"I would write a story – like my dad, he taught himself how to play the fiddle. So, I have a picture of him playing the fiddle. I would put that picture beside the story of my dad with his life of playing the fiddle," she said. "So people can not only read the story, they can see the picture of what I'm speaking of."

Writing her memoir has inspired Chapman to keep telling stories – this time with fiction.

"Now I'm writing kind of a spin-off to that story, but it's a novel. It's fictitious, but [with] elements of truth put in," she said. "Because when you write your memoir, you're writing about a lot of people in your life, and you have to be careful what you say. I kind of felt like my hands were tied in a lot of ways, so I couldn't say all that I wanted to say in my memoir. So I decided to do this novel."

A companion to *Keeper of the Albums*, the Red River Métis author's forthcoming historical novel will be titled *Keeper of Secrets*.

The novel is set in the fictional Saskatchewan town, Bois Brûlés – inspired by the many names the Red River Métis have been called. The characters in the novel tie back to Louis Riel – namely, the protagonist.

"Seeing as it was based in Saskatchewan, I researched what was happening in Saskatchewan at the time. And so that's all part of it, because the town I created was created originally to do a lot with the people that fought with Louis Riel,"

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**- ARLENE CHAPMAN**

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Chapman said. "The character that I have, her great-grandfather, was one of those that went with Louis Riel... my book is set in 1953. So there's a lot of characters in there that all focus around the [Red River] Métis upbringing there as well."

Chapman has enlisted her grandson, Red River Métis filmmaker Matthew Shoup, to edit her novel.

"I've written the first draft," she said. "Matthew is editing it now, and then I will go through that and rewrite and rewrite until it's perfect."

It's not the first time Chapman has collaborated with her grandson. She previously participated in Shoup's documentary, *Michif French: A Language of Our Own* to highlight the importance of keeping Michif French – a language she grew up speaking – alive.

"It feels like the language is dying, which is very unfortunate. And with Matthew being so proud of being [Red River] Métis ... he just embraces the whole thing, which is so nice to see a young person today doing that," said the author. "So when he asked me if I would do this with him, do an interview with him for it, I said, 'sure.' I had no idea what I was getting into, but I just told my story and my experiences."

Their shared Red River Métis pride has given Chapman and Shoup an extra special connection.

"He's like a sponge. He's learning everything all the time. And his passion for filmmaking was like from the time he was nine years old," she said. "And then when he approached me with this, I thought, 'how perfect is that to get the word out there about being Métis and being proud about being Métis?'"

Like Chapman, the Manitoba Métis Federation recognizes just how many Red River Métis Citizens have stories to tell. Reading Red River Métis stories also helps others better understand the culture, traditions, and lived experiences of our people. Email us at [communications@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:communications@mmf.mb.ca) to be featured on our **Citizen Spotlight** page, showcasing Red River Métis excellence across the Homeland and beyond!



*Chapman launched her memoir, Keeper of the Albums, in early 2024.*

## EMBRACING LITERACY THE RED RIVER MÉTIS WAY

The Red River Métis may be known for traditional oral storytelling, but that doesn't stop the Manitoba Métis Federation from encouraging our Youth to read during I Love to Read Month. From our child care centres to our Michif work booklets, Citizens can celebrate this month of literacy in true Red River Métis fashion.

If you are interested in ending I Love to Read Month with more books under your belt, visit the Red River Métis Marketplace at 150 Henry Avenue or at [redrivermetismarketplace.ca](http://redrivermetismarketplace.ca)!



## SHOP RED RIVER MÉTIS: MEET JESSICA WYLYCHENKO

There's no better way to start your day than with a fresh bagel – and Hudson Bagels should be your go-to spot! Since 2020, owner Jessica Wylychenko has been serving the community with tasty bagels, house-made spreads, and a vibrant vision of community inclusion. When she's not at her West Broadway storefront, you can find her at local farmers' and makers' markets across the city.

Offering a range of products for all dietary needs, Hudson Bagels makes sure your mornings are comforting and delicious. Visit [hudsonbagels.ca](http://hudsonbagels.ca) to see what this West Broadway gem has to offer!





# SAVE ENERGY & MONEY WITH MÉTIS ENERGY EFFICIENCY OFFERS

Efficiency Manitoba and the Manitoba Métis Federation are working together to help make energy efficiency upgrades easier for Red River Métis Citizens.

Qualified households can receive free energy-saving upgrades such as:

- ✓ Insulation upgrades
- ✓ New high-efficiency natural gas furnace
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