Le Métis
LEST WE FORGET
∞ EST. 1871 ∞
YOUR RED RIVER MÉTIS GOVERNMENT'S BI-WEEKLY NEWS.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Last week, I was proud to deliver the first keynote address of this year's World Indigenous Business Forum (WIBF), here in the heart of our Homeland. The WIBF has been in existence since 2010, when it was first held in New York City in partnership with the World Business Forum. Since then, many countries have hosted the event, from Namibia to Australia, and Papua New Guinea to Canada.

Your Red River Métis Government has been an active supporter and participant in this forum over the years, and we have spoken to Indigenous Peoples from across the globe, sharing our successes and learning from others.

The contrast of being at an international gathering of Indigenous people, uplifting one another, while some leaders in the First Nations community were delivering incredibly offensive remarks about our Red River Métis existence, rights and place in Canada's Confederation. As a result, the remarks I delivered at the WIBF took on even greater meaning.

One of my key messages was about how we, as Indigenous people, view business and economic development through the lens of cultural values. For us, respect for friendship, loyalty, and honesty are fundamental parts of our Red River Métis culture. These are common traits shared by many Indigenous Nations in the world. When someone smiles at us, or hugs us, it's a gesture of real friendship. Contrast this to the non-Indigenous business world, where business is often approached not from a cultural perspective, but from a view of simple matter of profits and gains.

The cultural lens of heart and family is why your Red River Métis Government has been a long-standing partner of the Arhuaco people of Colombia. We believe in them because they have become our family. There's not a doubt in my mind that they view us as family – someone in the community even named their son after me – an honour I am still touched by, to this day.

And because we view the Arhuaco as family, we are not partnered with them only to think of profits and gains. We want to make sure they earn a good living for their hard work. This isn't always the case when the world does business with Indigenous Peoples.

I shared this thought with attendees of the WIBF, and said we should support each other, even if we don't like each other as Indigenous Peoples. We owe it to ourselves to honour our ways, and to honour the future generations of each other's peoples, who are innocent and blameless in any fights between leaders.

Working directly with one another to open up trade corridors is one way to help each other. Having a voice in the governments that run our countries is another. Indigenous representation in the governance of cities, provinces, and countries matters. Louis Riel was the first Indigenous Premier of this province. Wab Kinew is the first First Nations premier of this province. Right now, we have five Red River Métis MLAs sitting in government. If this can happen here, it can happen anywhere.

I also want to take a moment to congratulate the many Red River Métis Citizens who ran for office in the recent municipal elections. Win or lose, you stood up to be counted and showed the willingness to work for the well-being of the communities you call home.

When Indigenous people take on roles within colonial governments, we can help shape, change, or remove the policies that hold our people back. When we are in government, we can make the changes that open up economic opportunities.

Some of the economic opportunities we pursue produce a modest return, and some end up creating generational opportunities that can change the lives of our Citizens today, and create a new future for the next generations.

One of the exciting investments we've made is in potash, which is a critical mineral necessary to renew the soil of the world, growing the food that ends up on the tables of people across the globe. That investment is still in its early phases, but there can be no doubt that the world needs more potash. As the Port of Churchill continues to be considered as a project of national interest, we are well positioned to play on the world stage as a potash provider. The province has supported increased production with a recent announcement of a $5 million investment in potash production in Manitoba, which will triple production over the next several years, and accelerate the returns on our investment.

We have also recently partnered with industry in a number of sectors, including a recent one in aviation to combat wildfires, with partner Babcock Canada. While this will no doubt be a solid business partnership, it also helps our Indigenous people combat an increasing challenge in wildfire losses, which is an important part of our economic development considerations.

When I stood in front of our Citizens at the National Assembly last month, I saw 3,000 eyes watching me. And I thought about what they needed to understand to see the journey I've been on these last 30 years. I thought about how I could help them see the early vision of building our brand, and how that brand brought pride, and how that pride changed everything. Just that one small change of focusing on our brand brought many other changes, leading us to today. I wanted to see those 3,000 eyes glow with excitement and understanding.

Of course, our brand goes back much further than 30 years. Our beadwork was our brand in the beginning. It was one of the ways we were first known to other Indigenous Peoples. That's why we were once called the Flower Beadwork People. The Cree had their style, the Ojibway had theirs, and we had ours. It was one of the first branding exercises here in our prairie Homeland, and it remains an important part of each of our identities today.

Our buildings and our investments today are no different – they are part of our brand, part of being contributors to the province we love and brought into Canada. These show that we're committed to advancement, not just for ourselves, but for all of Manitoba and Canada.

While I'm proud of how far we've come, what I wanted everyone to see was that it's all possible. If we can do it, they can do it. They just need to hold tight to their vision and take the steps toward achieving it – never giving up, never walking away from the path.

As I said, these remarks were delivered in a room where collaboration, compassion, and cultural grounding were very evident. This was in sharp contrast to the pair of First Nations leaders choosing to use their platforms to speak against our people, instead of keeping their focus on the advancement of their own people. It's clear that these leaders have lost their way, and lost the cultural values that have kept so many Nations – like ours – strong and unified, even when all the odds have been stacked against them.

I truly hope these leaders take the time to reflect on their positions, and find a pathway back to the grounding principles and cultural truths that made us allies and family. But either way, you can be confident that I will let no one stand in the way of our progress, nor will I lose track of the cultural values that our Elders have taught us, which help us stay true to who we are.

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. ∞

BRAVERY AND RESILIENCE: A RED RIVER MÉTIS VETERAN'S LGBT PURGE SURVIVAL STORY

Red River Métis Veteran Nicole Crevier reflects on LGBT Purge



Celine Filion (left), Nicole Crevier (middle), and Trudi Fontaine (right) on Indigenous Veterans Day in 2024 by the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument in Ottawa.

It was 2017 when Nicole Crevier sat alongside her fellow 2SLGBTQIA+ Veterans and received an apology from then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for the horrific acts of the LGBT Purge.

"I am [an] LGBT Purge survivor," said Red River Métis Veteran Nicole Crevier.

Between the 1950s and mid-1990s, 2SLGBTQIA+ members of the Canadian Armed Forces were discriminated against in a systematic campaign by the Canadian government and military to identify and remove 2SLGBTQIA+ members from the service. Crevier is one of many; it's estimated that 9,000 individuals were impacted by the LGBT Purge.

"I'm the youngest of five. So, unfortunately, we didn't have a lot of money," said Crevier. "So, I kind of hummed and hawed over the years if I should join the military."

In 1988, when Crevier was only 23 years old, she decided to join the military. It was on the first day of training that she met her lifelong friend, Veteran Trudi Fontaine.

"At the end of the day, this person shows up and our Master Seaman… says, 'we got Private Fontaine here. Anybody want to help her make her bed?'" said Crevier. "And foolish me said, 'I'll help her.' And like a piece of gum, she's been stuck on my shoe for 38 years."

Crevier and Fontaine first caught wind of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) looking into them by a fellow service member and teammate.

"We were told by one of the girls on the softball team. They said, 'The SIU… they're watching you guys.' I said, 'what do you mean?' 'They suspect you guys are gay,'" said Crevier. "Needless to say, we started to get very stressed out… and at one point, Trudi and I, our grades were suffering. You know, here I was, excelling, and then all of a sudden, my grades went to crap in a hurry because of the stress."

With knowledge of being watched, Crevier and Fontaine decided it would be best to take matters into their own hands.

> "DON'T EVER LET ANYBODY SAY ANYTHING NEGATIVE TOWARDS YOU OR YOUR MILITARY SERVICE... BE VERY PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU'VE DONE. – NICOLE CREVIER"

"We weren't the only lesbians… there was quite a few of us," said Crevier. "One day we're sitting in the barracks, and I said, 'maybe we should just tell them and kind of see what happens.' To protect everybody else, we told them we were a couple… we've always been just friends, but we didn't want anybody else involved… immediately all of our training got suspended. Any chance of security clearances got suspended."

The best friends were then brought in for questioning by the SIU.

"I was interrogated, asked numerous questions, including 'what's your sexual preference? What do you guys do in bed?' All this stuff. Very, very, very explicit questioning," said Crevier. "And then of course, 'who do you hang out with? Who are your friends? Are you going to tell us who is gay, who isn't?' All this stuff. And we basically refused to turn in anybody."

After being interrogated, the two spent months doing odd jobs that didn't require clearance – also known as Personnel Awaiting Training.

"We spent months kind of in holding pattern and people are wondering… 'How come, why aren't you guys good in training?' And we were told from the get-go, 'don't say anything,'" said Crevier.

"Then you go home and then you tell your parents, people wonder, well, 'what are you doing home? I thought you were in the military.' And my parents till the day they died never knew the real reason."

After getting released from the military, Crevier spent some time in Winnipeg and Nova Scotia before reconnecting with Fontaine in Ottawa, where she met her wife, Veteran Celine Filion.



Nicole Crevier and Trudi Fontaine dressed in uniform during training.

"Trudi actually introduced me to my spouse, Celine," said Crevier. "The nice thing is Trudi and I, we've been through the same thing. So, we really help each other."

Since the LGBT Purge, Canada has committed to doing better. During former Prime Minister Trudeau's 2017 apology to 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians, the discrimination and injustice experienced by members of the military were formally acknowledged, similar to the experiences of Crevier in 1988.

"Thankfully, I was invited to go to the apology," said the Red River Métis Veteran. "This is when I started to meet other survivors face to face. All of a sudden, you look around and it's like, 'my god, how many of us are there?'"

The apology was a very emotional time for Crevier. "There were so many mixed emotions. You feel relief. You feel like, 'oh my god, you know, finally somebody realizes what happened to us.' But also, it brings everything up again. It's like you're reliving it all over again. So, I was grateful to have other people there that went through it, because we all shared the same very, very mixed emotions. Vindication, anger, so many different things."

Crevier cannot help but wonder how things may have gone had the past unraveled differently.

"Instead of being a military member, I was a military spouse," she said. "Celine served all her years, and one of the hardest things for me was every day Celine would get up, put her uniform on, go to work. And I used to wonder… how I would have done in the military."

Since then, Crevier has been able to connect with fellow survivors of the LGBT Purge and hear their stories. She is also part of Rainbow Veterans of Canada and sat on the selection committee for the Women Veterans Council.

"I absolutely love the military," she said. "I wish I could have made a career out of it. I've been very blessed to have the life I've had – this beautiful spouse, fantastic friends, great career. Am I sorry it didn't work out? Yeah, but you know what? I have nothing to complain about."

The Red River Métis Veteran has been reconnecting with her heritage since the late 2000s, partially through the Manitoba Métis Federation's Red River Métis Veterans Department (RRMVD).

"I attended a ceremony a couple of years ago, as well at the Aboriginal Monument here in Ottawa. Sierra Hill [RRMVD staff] was fantastic, because I didn't have a sash or anything, so she brought me back a sash from Winnipeg, which I really, really appreciated," said Crevier. "I'm very grateful to have been accepted by the Red River Métis and to see how my family is continuing [to connect with our] heritage."

It is Crevier's love for the military, despite her harrowing experience, that shows resilience and the heart of our Red River Métis Veterans.

"Don't ever let anybody say anything negative towards you or your military service," she said. "Be very proud of who you are and what you've done."

Red River Métis Veterans have fought to protect our Red River Métis people and Homeland for generations to come, demonstrating resilience while facing racial discrimination. Crevier's story tells a tale of heroism and bravery as a Red River Métis Veteran facing and overcoming adversity like the Red River Métis Veterans who came before her. To learn more about programs and services offered to our Veterans through the Red River Métis Veterans Department, visit ***mmf.mb.ca/red-river-metis-veterans.***

RED RIVER MÉTIS FOLK MUSICIAN RETURNS TO HOMELAND FOR RECORD RELEASE



Rick St. Clair is coming back to his roots with the release of his debut album, *Prairie Winds.* Citizens are invited to attend his album release party at the West End Cultural Centre in Winnipeg on November 12. This event will also feature Red River Métis fiddler Michael Audette, whose fiddle mastery appears on the album. Visit rickstclair.com to get your tickets now!

SHOP RED RIVER MÉTIS: MEET LYNN NAKONECHNY

Lynn Nakonechny is a jill of all trades. Not only has she run a successful event planning company, All Occasions, for the last 3 decades, she became a professional dance mom in 2013 with her second business – Diamond Dance Academy.

The Red River Métis entrepreneur loves running her businesses in the Thompson Region and encourages other Citizens to look into entrepreneurial opportunities in their communities. If you're interested in learning more about these businesses, you can check out diamonddanceacademydancestudio.com or visit the LRCC Business Directory.





Métis N4 Construction Inc. is a diversified development and project management corporation wholly owned and operated by the MMF Métis Economic Development Trust.

We are committed to ensuring MMF capital investments create meaningful opportunities for Red River Métis businesses, workers, and Citizens.

With approximately $150 million in projects currently in development, design, and construction, Métis N4 continues to lead major projects, including:

∞ The Red River Métis National Heritage Centre
∞ Red River Métis Tree Nursery
∞ Early Learning and Child Care facilities
∞ Housing initiatives
∞ Critical community infrastructure
∞ By prioritizing economic and employment opportunities for Red River Métis throughout projects, Métis N4 ensures that when our Nation builds, our Citizens benefit.

For more information, **visit metisn4construction.ca**



MANITOBA MÉTIS FEDERATION
RED RIVER MÉTIS

For more information, visit
WWW.METISN4CONSTRUCTION.CA