



Le Métis

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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As your Red River Métis Government continues to advance our Nation and pursue our rightful place in Canada's Confederation, we also continue to see individuals and groups attempt to colonize our identity, and claim for themselves what rightfully belongs to us. They don't understand the history that made us who we are, and they clearly don't understand the suffering our Ancestors had to undergo because of who we are. These groups and individuals don't have the same perspectives we have within our community and our Nation, because they quite simply are not us. They have no connection to us.

One of the teachings we have received from our Elders is that we must never forget who we are, or where we came from. The importance of this knowledge can't be understated, as it not only helps us educate others about the true history of our Nation, it also helps us navigate a way forward that honours the deeds and sacrifices of our Ancestors.

In *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility and History*, written in 2012, a number of historians and academics talk about what made our Nation unique and how we formed a community and eventually a Nation, which is different from all those of mixed heritage who were born elsewhere in what is now Canada. In the publication, historian Jacqueline Peterson refers to the evidence of our Nation's birth on the plains as "both incontrovertible and stunning... it is important to recall the sheer force of Métis numbers and ethic and political consciousness manifested at Red River after 1815."

Our development as a Nation happened because of where we were located – in the Red River region, the number of mixed marriages that happened, and the number of offspring from those marriages that produced children – our Ancestors – who began to see themselves as something different from their First Nations mothers and European fathers. The marriages between our Ancestors of mixed ancestry were only the beginning of our history as a Nation. Too often, this simple fact of mixed heritage is the beginning and end of the claims of those who wish to call themselves "Métis" in other parts of Canada. For these people, being of mixed heritage generally meant deciding to identify as part of your First Nations community, or blending into settler society.

For the Red River Métis, it wasn't the accident of birth that formed our Nation. We became a Nation due to the generations that followed these initial mixed heritage births, where people were born of parents who themselves had mixed ancestry began to identify as something different – Red River Métis. They are the seeds that were planted that grew to become the mighty Nation we are today.

We signalled our birth as a Nation through the unfurling of our infinity flag, often cited as the oldest flag in Canada, with symbolism indicating two peoples and two cultures coming together forever. We knew who we were and what we had created together, and it went far beyond a few families of mixed heritage.

When Canada came to the Red River settlement and the historic Northwest – which we now know as the Canadian prairies – it certainly knew and understood that the Métis were something different. We had our own approach to settlers, and our own view of the world that was distinct from Canadians and from our First Nations relatives. Louis Riel himself stated clearly in his Memoirs that: "When the Government of Canada presented itself at our doors it found us at peace. It found that the Métis people of the Northwest could not only live well without it... but that it had a government of its own, free, peaceful, well-functioning, contributing to the work of civilization... whose jurisdiction was all the more legitimate and worthy of respect, because it was exercised over a country that belonged to it."

Canada reflected this distinct reality by dealing with us as a distinct people, and engaged in distinct negotiations with us, the results of which are found in the Act that created the postage stamp province of Manitoba.

Canada's distinct treatment of the Métis wasn't always a good thing for our Ancestors. As soon as we completed the negotiation that saw the creation of Manitoba, our people were hunted, harassed, beaten, and forced away from one another and our settlements. As John A. Macdonald himself said in a letter to Sir John Rose in 1870: "These impulsive half-breeds have got spoilt . . . and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers." It was clear – even in 1870, months before the province of Manitoba was created – that the Prime Minister of Canada viewed our people as distinct, and targeted our Ancestors with a distinct dislike and a plan for our eventual demise as a Nation.

Another way that our distinct history and character is evident is through the well-documented history of our First Nations relatives. Our Plains Cree relatives called us Otipemisiwak, the people who own themselves. We were the flower beadwork people, known to our relatives through our distinct style of beading, decorated with prairie flowers and mouse tracks, each piece telling a story about the wearer. We had treaties and alliances with First Nations, including the Iron Confederacy, the Sweet Corn, and the Prairie du Chien treaties. First Nations and Red River Métis camps and eventually, permanent villages, sprung up beside one another, for mutual aid and protection. You can still see these communities existing side by side across the heart of the Homeland, including my own home community Duck Bay, and our neighbour, Pine Creek First Nation. Anywhere you travel in the heart of the Homeland, you'll find homesteads and houses where our infinity flag is proudly flown. Today, our last names are found in both First Nations communities and our own Red River Métis Community, showing the long-standing relationship between our people and our First Nations neighbours, with intermarriages happening in the past and still occurring today. We are separate Nations, but the intermarriages are plentiful.

Not only can you see our presence as a distinct Nation throughout our documented interactions with the United States, Canada, and the First Nations who called this land home, there are also well-documented Red River Métis communities in the early 1900s, including Roostertown, which existed from 1901 to 1950s on the southwest outskirts of Winnipeg, and Ste. Madeleine, which existed following the Reign of Terror in the late 1800s until it was burned in 1938.

The flooding of another Red River Métis Community due to the hydro development of Grand Rapids Dam



was in many ways the spark that fanned the flames of our community's re-emergence as a political actor – resulting in the Manitoba Métis Federation being established in 1967.

These are only snapshots that demonstrate our beginnings and then show our continuous existence of our Nation and our people throughout the history of what is now Manitoba. These are not examples of individuals of mixed heritage or even isolated families who eventually became part of First Nations or settler communities. They prove the existence of our Nation from its earliest roots to the present day. Our language, our culture, our arts, our towns and villages, our flag, and our community have all withstood the test of time, and are things that we should take deep pride in, along with a deep sense of responsibility to keep them alive for future generations.

These are the things that cannot be stolen or faked or re-interpreted to include others. These are the markers of a Nation. We know that we are a young Indigenous Nation compared to our Inuit and First

Nations relatives, but we are a Nation that is older than Canada. As a distinct Nation, our perspective on modern events is different from our First Nations and Inuit relatives, but that's as it should be.

Our history of being marginalized and ignored, of having to fend for ourselves and look after one another, as well as our entrepreneurial roots and our strong work ethic, are all informed by the forces that shaped our Ancestors and our Nation, and are what continue to shape our views and perspectives today.

This distinct viewpoint is why you'll so often hear me and members of your Red River Métis Cabinet talk about nation-to-nation and government-to-government relationships with Canada, the provinces, and the municipal governments we work with. It is why we demand that we speak for ourselves. It is why we expect governments and institutions that wish to engage with us to use an approach to our interests and initiatives that are distinct from other Indigenous Nations. We respect the positions and perspectives of our Indigenous

relatives, but we are our own people with our own view. We remain the people who own themselves.

Simply put – we are unique. We are distinct. We may share common teachings and values with some of our First Nations relatives, but how we interpret and implement them are uniquely Red River Métis. So be proud of who you are. Be proud of your Ancestors and your unique history. Believe in yourself – believe in Métis.

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. ∞

SAVE THE SWIFTS: HOW THE MMF IS CONSERVING CHIMNEY SWIFT HABITATS AT FORMER ROXY LANES SITE

HE MMF'S ENERGY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT CREATES AN ARTIFICIAL TOWER TO HOUSE CHIMNEY SWIFT RESIDENTS ON HENDERSON HIGHTWAY.



Conservation Specialist Alexia Hardy stands in front of temporary, freestanding artificial chimney at the former Roxy Lanes site, monitored by EIRM staff.

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has adopted two tenants at the well-known site – but they might not be what you expect. The Energy, Infrastructure, and Resource Management (EIRM) Department has been busy preparing for the migration of chimney swifts, a species at risk. EIRM's Natural Resources portfolio has been preserving the designated chimney swift residency at the former Roxy Lanes site – keeping the tenants happy and housed.

"Chimney swifts are small, migratory birds; they spend their winters in Mexico and southern U.S., and they spend their summers here in Canada," said Alexia Hardy, Conservation Specialist within EIRM's Natural Resources Portfolio. "Historically, chimney

swifts nested in large hollow trees, but as those habitats disappeared, they adapted to nesting in chimneys."

In 2022, the MMF acquired Roxy Lanes, discovering the site as a confirmed chimney swift residence. Chimney swifts are threatened under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA), and the provincial Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act (ESEA), making it vital to preserve nesting spots. Chimney swifts are also known as an indicator species, meaning that when their populations are high and thriving, it indicates the environment is healthy and protected.

Hardy, whose role focuses on the species at risk files, has seen firsthand how chimney swifts and their habitats are disappearing.

"As traditional chimneys are being demolished or capped, they're becoming less and less common, so chimney Swifts have less and less habitats to nest and roost [in]. They often return to the same site each year," she said. "The MMF constructed a temporary freestanding artificial chimney designed specifically to support breeding and roosting."

A chimney swift pair has been confirmed to be using the artificial tower, and staff are routinely monitoring the swifts' movements.

"Our department conducts weekly monitoring here [at] the Henderson Highway site; this consists of spending one hour during the daytime monitoring

for chimney swifts entering or exiting the chimney," says Hardy.

Eventually, the temporary artificial tower will turn into a permanent fixture on the property, ensuring that chimney swifts will have a home for generations to come. The artificial chimney is one part of the Natural Resource portfolio's mission to preserve chimney swift habitats – another is their Citizen-led Chimney Swift Monitoring Program.

Just as MMF staff monitor the chimney onsite, Citizens can find and monitor designated chimney

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– ALEXIA HARDY



swift residencies in their communities, making their own contribution to the cause.

"This work is a part of the Red River Métis Community-Based Climate Monitoring initiative, which empowers Red River Métis Citizens to engage in community-driven monitoring programs within their MMF Locals and Regions. So, for those interested in monitoring, [it] involves watching designated chimney swift sites for one hour each week and recording when chimney swifts enter or exit," said Hardy. "Programs like this raise awareness and provide valuable data about species at risk."

EIRM's programs often pioneer meaningful opportunities for Citizens to lead environmental preservation and positive change, contributing to some of the MMF's core values: conservation and Citizen stewardship.

Peter Fleming, Minister of Natural Resources and Associate Minister of Environment and Climate Change, reflected that this program is a key example of how citizens can meaningfully participate in the MMF's conservation driven programming.

"[The MMF extends] a heartfelt thank you to all Red River Métis Citizens who are participating in our Citizen science programs, your contributions really make a difference," said Minister Fleming.

If you'd like to get involved in a Citizen-led monitoring program like the Chimney Swift Monitoring Program, contact Climate Specialist Bethany Lundberg at bethany.lundberg@mmf.mb.ca. To learn more about chimney swifts or the MMF's other species-at-risk projects, please contact Conservation Specialist Alexia Hardy at alexia.hardy@mmf.mb.ca.



The well-known property is currently home to a chimney swift pair, being monitored in-person and virtually.

IN HIS NATURAL HABITAT: GIBSON RIEGER COMPLETES MASTER'S IN MARINE ECOLOGY



Gibson Rieger has completed his master's degree from the University of Manitoba and hopes to bring his knowledge of marine ecology to Manitoba waterways.

Growing up in Sanford, Manitoba, Gibson Rieger developed a love for ecology at an early age. Whether it was fishing in his backyard with his dad or taking trips to Lake Winnipeg, an environmental curiosity has paved the way for Rieger's successful academic career in marine ecology.

Recently, the Red River Métis graduate completed his master's studies at the University of Manitoba (U of M) – where his area of study allowed him to look at the relationships between species and their physical environment, focusing on marine organisms and marine food webs. His research has taken him to Atlantic Canada; Rieger described the experience as an opportunity to expand his horizons and be somewhere completely different than the Homeland he loves.

"For the past two summers I've been out in Newfoundland for my master's research. The first chapter was looking at fish spawning habitats in Newfoundland – important habitats for three main species that are integral to the food web... [connecting] lower trophic level zooplankton and those really small organisms to seabirds, whales, [and] all the big species that everyone is interested

in and loves to see," he said. "The second chapter was focused on a couple of those seabird species using tracking data to find where they're foraging and then compare the environment where different species are foraging."

Emphasizing the significance of incorporating Red River Métis perspectives into the scientific field, Rieger highlighted the value of diversity when looking at the world of science.

"To have Métis knowledge brought into science is really important because it's going to direct that science to look at questions and answer questions that Métis people have about the world that they're facing around them every day," he said.

Following his masters, the Red River Métis Citizen has found part-time employment with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and will be starting contract work in the fall.

"I'm just working processing biological samples in a lab, and then this fall I'm going to be doing a contract with Environment and Climate Change Canada, where I'm going to be organizing some of the seabird survey data," he said. "I really enjoy formulating research projects, coming up with questions... working with wildlife hands-on. I'm hoping to find an opportunity long-term that lets me do all those things."

Rieger accessed the Manitoba Métis Federation's (MMF) Post-Secondary Education Support Program (PSESP) during his graduate studies and encourages other Red River Métis Youth to look into funding options when it comes to their post-secondary pursuits.

One aspect of receiving PSESP funding the graduate enjoyed was the cultural component.

"When I applied for the PSESP, there was a

couple hour course that you took as an eligibility [requirement] and that was really interesting too. It was like a refresher on Métis history and culture. It is great that those supports are out there," he said.

Rieger offered his advice to Red River Métis Youth who are pursuing post-secondary schooling and urges students to put themselves out there – especially with their professors.

"I would say get in touch with your professors – that's what I did during my undergrad. [In] one of the intro first or second year courses, I just asked, 'Do you have any opportunities in your lab?' and I was able to volunteer in [my professor's] lab for a little over a year... I would just really encourage anyone to seek out those opportunities and try to make those connections anywhere you can," he said.

Advocating for curiosity about the world at an early age, the Citizen highlighted the understanding that scientific knowledge can extend beyond institutional boundaries.

"Science isn't just in labs and people with lab coats. It's happening everywhere. It can be in your own backyard. I think [it's] important just to get started early," he said.

Rieger is an excellent example of how Citizens can be supported by the MMF through a wide range of programs and opportunities – whether it is growing your career or exploring your interest in the world around you.

If you are interested in learning more about funding opportunities for school, visit mmfeducation.ca and to learn how you can get involved in different environmental initiatives, including our Red River Métis Citizen Scientist program offered through the MMF's Energy, Infrastructure, and Resource Management Department, please contact bethany.lundberg@mmf.mb.ca.



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