



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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is my last message of 2024, and I know we are all looking forward to the festivities of Christmas and New Years. As Citizens know, it's the Red River Métis way to celebrate these holidays with enthusiasm and an emphasis on our shared cultural traditions, as well as the activities that are unique to each family.

It's the time of year when I reflect on the achievements and opportunities of the previous year and consider the opportunities in the future. Our advancements seem to grow year by year, and it is clear to more than just our own Nation that we are truly making strides toward finding our rightful place in Canada's confederation.

Even in my own personal interactions, in recent months I have had many non-Métis people stop me in parking lots, restaurants, and stores to congratulate me on the successes of our people. We are truly educating all Canadians about who we are, what we stand for, and they are slowly coming to understand that they are the beneficiaries of our tradition of sharing our successes with others.

I hope that families who either live in or are visiting Winnipeg over the holidays take the time to drive past our Christmas lights display at 200 Main Street. I received many calls last year from parents, who told me that their children insisted on seeing the light show over and over again from their cars, making their parents turn around and continue driving by. The pride and excitement of seeing Santa in his Red River Cart, towed by bison, clearly

resonates with our youngest Citizens. Of course, we made our annual \$50,000 donation to the Christmas Cheer Board as we lit up the holiday light display.

This year, I was delighted to see that the province followed our lead by making additional, larger donations to the charity. This just goes to show that our decision to consistently do the right thing as a government can create greater good. In this one area, I am happy to give the victory to the province for their large donation, as we know it is to the benefit of all those in need over the Christmas season.

But when we are dealing with matters that affect our community, like the Child Special Allowance (CSA) that our kids in care and former kids in care were deprived of, you can be sure I will not back down from any other government. The dedication and focus of our team resulted in Manitoba settling the Class Action Lawsuit for the CSA dollars, which was a victory for our children.

As Citizens know, we committed to ensuring that every dollar taken from our children would be returned to them, plus interest. It was a long battle for our kids, and I applaud the representative plaintiffs Rene Lafontaine and Mary Derendorf for their tireless advocacy on behalf of the other class members. Being the representative plaintiffs is no easy task, requiring focus, dedication, and heartfelt concern for each and every child who experienced the loss of CSA dollars intended for them. They, along with Stuart Stephen, were the first to receive their settlement cheques, and all had smart and worthy investments planned for their CSA dollars.

All three of them demonstrated their maturity and wisdom in their choices to use the funds to invest in their future, showing their deep understanding that the CSA funds were always intended to enhance their wellbeing. As more cheques are distributed in the coming months, we will continue to offer class members financial advice and other program and service supports to help them make the best use of their funds.

This year, we were also able to provide some relief to our Sixties Scoop survivors, through the announcement of our investment of \$2 million dollars into our Bridge to Justice Fund. The fund is intended to provide \$5,000 to our living Sixties Scoop survivors, as we continue to pursue justice from Canada for what was done to them. This idea stemmed from the Sixties Scoop Survivors Symposium that took place earlier in the year, as I listened to the stories of our survivors. Their strength, humour, and care for one another touched my heart, and made me realize that we needed to

be able to provide them with a measure of peace before they are no longer in this world.

The Bridge to Justice Fund is part of our ongoing commitment to support those who were forcibly removed from their families and placed in the child welfare system between January 1, 1939, and December 31, 1991. I have personally seen receipts for the sale of our children to other jurisdictions, like the United States. It breaks my heart to consider that these children were treated like cars or cattle to be shipped to places where they were treated like slaves or worse. Let me be clear that while we hope this funding brings our survivors some peace, we will not give up on obtaining justice and an apology for our Red River Métis Sixties Scoop Survivors.

I am deeply grateful that your Red River Métis Government has been successful enough in our business ventures that we were able to fund the Sixties Scoop Bridge to Justice Fund. We continue to make investments on behalf of Citizens, so that we can continue to offer programs, services and funds. A recent example is the new Red River Métis Power Corporation, which creates the opportunity for us to play a role in the development of wind power capacity in the province we brought into Canada's confederation. Along with this investment into the future, we also invested in the purchase of 333 Main, expanded our pharmacy business with a second one in Dauphin, and opened Lake Manitoba Resort in St. Laurent, all in 2024. We will continue to build on our economic development successes so we can continue to offer programs, services, and supports for our Citizens well into the future.

There were many more accomplishments this year, both great and small, and they are too numerous for me to mention all in one message. From our first year honouring Louis Riel after he was recognized by Manitoba as the first Premier of our province, to our 1000th home purchased, and our first ever Red River Métis Business Expo and Red River Métis Business Gala, we have moved from success to success, and that will not stop in 2025.

I encourage you all to keep your pride in being Red River Métis close to your hearts. Remember, it is your will, guidance, and strong belief in our government and our Nation that continue to fuel your Cabinet and me.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge that this is also a time of year when many of us reflect on the losses we've experienced. This year we also experienced shared losses, like the passing of the legendary Ray St. Germain, Citizen Thomas Guiboche, staff members Marie Ehoussou and



Santanna Bates, and Jim Aldridge, who was a friend, ally, and legal trailblazer who worked hard for our people.

I extend my well wishes to everyone who lost loved ones this year, including my own family. I know many of us feel the pain of loss when we are setting one less place at the table or preparing one less gift than the previous year. I always find it gives me great comfort to speak to those who have moved on to the next world and remember the good times we shared, particularly during the holidays.

As you know, one of the foundations of our culture is making sure every member of our community feels cared for and supported. This is especially important for Christmas and New Years, which is the season of giving. We make our donation to the Christmas Cheer Board every year to help make sure everyone can have a feast and feel happy during the season. I encourage our Citizens to think about the bachelors and Veterans who may feel alone. If you can, drop off a plate of food and make sure they also feel the spirit of Christmas. This is one of the most important ways we can make sure our culture stays strong, by continuing

the generosity and spirit of sharing taught by our Ancestors.

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. ∞

RED RIVER MÉTIS CITIZEN TAKES FLIGHT THANKS TO ATIK MASON INDIGENOUS PILOT PATHWAY PROGRAM



Red River Métis pilot Max St. Cyr graduated from the Atik Mason Indigenous Pilot Pathway Program in April 2024 and is the first Red River Métis graduate from the program. He is also the first graduate from the course to be hired by Perimeter Aviation.

Max St. Cyr has made his community proud by being the first Red River Métis student to graduate from The Atik Mason Indigenous Pilot Pathway (the "Pathway").

The Pathway provides opportunities for Indigenous community members, like St. Cyr, to learn to fly and build careers as professional pilots in northern Canada.

"The program gives (students) the opportunity to go to school, usually in Thompson. They have a school out in Rankin Inlet (Nunavut) as well. They'll bring in instructors from MFC Training out in Moncton, New Brunswick, and then they teach us, then let us fly," he said. "Then, they cover all the tuition and everything, which is huge."

The program was an initiative led by the Winnipeg-based Exchange Income Corporation, which owns several regional airlines including Perimeter Aviation, Calm Air and Keewatin Air – as part

of its response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, ensuring that Indigenous people have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector.

Those who complete the required training to become a commercial pilot will be awarded employment as pilots for one of Exchange Income Company's air operators. St. Cyr said enrolling in this program changed his life, and having the cost covered was the boost he needed to pursue his dreams of flying.

"I was paying for my private licence before, which was expensive, but I got it done which was awesome. And then, I got into the program, and it paid for my commercial (licence) and other licences, which would have been thousands of dollars," said the pilot. "Instead, I was able to focus on work and studying. I knew if I could take the money out of it, I would be able to do it. It was nice to be able to show that."

After graduating, St. Cyr was offered a pilot position at Perimeter Aviation, a regional airline which serves northern communities in Manitoba and Ontario through scheduled air services, cargo, medevac, and charter flight operations. St. Cyr spent his time training in Thompson and was impressed by how the studies catered to the individual needs of each student.

"It was cool to see that, especially for the students who sometimes struggle in certain areas. It's (a) hard (course), it's a lot of work, and sometimes people need that extra help," he said. "The big thing I found was that it was different than big flight schools. They've made it more personalized and helped you with whatever specific needs you had. It was very, very helpful."

He was inspired to enter the aviation industry after taking U1 courses at the University of Manitoba.

"I was doing alright, but it didn't feel like it was what I wanted to do. I talked to my mom and her boyfriend about it, and they told me a couple of things," said the pilot. "I went and did my first flight, and I

remember instantly, I was like, 'yeah, this is what I need to do.' It was awesome. The first flight I ever did was one of the best days of my life." St. Cyr is part of a legacy of aviation experts as his mother and sister work in the industry, while his mom's boyfriend is a pilot for Air Canada. The pilot recalled entering the sector with Perimeter Aviation's cargo department for three years before entering the training program.

"If you aren't in the Atik Mason program but still want to fly, (Perimeter) like hiring internally. Most of the cargo employees there are pilot students, and they're trying to finish their licenses. Once they're done, they wait, and usually, once there are more openings, they'll start pulling people from different operations," he said. "That's what I did. Because I knew I was getting my foot in the door. Then, I got into the program, which expedited the process, which is nice."

St. Cyr devoted many hours to studying in preparation to become a pilot. He said there are many written exams, and pilots must take a flight test to prove their skills.

"I hate written exams. They're my least favourite thing. I never enjoyed them. Once I finally passed, it was quite nice because I used to be a terrible student in high school growing up," he said, adding that once you pass those tests, you must go to Moncton, New Brunswick and take your multi-engine licence and instrument flying licence.

"The Instrument Type Rating Examination is the written exam for the instrument flying licence. It is probably the hardest exam anybody does. I passed that first shot, which is hard to do. I was very, very proud of myself."

St. Cyr graduated from the program in April 2024 and was the first graduate from the course to be hired by Perimeter Aviation.

"We had a grad in Thompson, and somebody else had mentioned (I was the first Red River Métis graduate), and it was the first time it sunk in. It's cool, and I'm very honoured to be that guy. It's great," he said. "If you put your mind to it and get



into this program or find something to do that you like, then you can succeed."

The pilot has become comfortable with flying a De Havilland Canada DHC-8, which is commonly known as the Dash 8 series of airplanes. "It's very different than anything else I've ever flown. I've only flown tiny one-engine planes, nothing that big. It's challenging, but it's interesting to be in there and fly these big airplanes now that my career has started, not just flying these small planes. I get to do some real flying," said the pilot.

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER TRAINING BOOSTS CAPACITY FOR RED RIVER MÉTIS COMMUNITIES



The EIRM Department collaborated with the Métis Employment and Training Department to select a pool of interested candidates.

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) is bringing the fire with exciting new training opportunities for Red River Métis Citizens.

This past spring, 10 Citizens headed up to Onanole, Manitoba and received Type II Wildland Firefighter Training. Type II wildland firefighters work on a hand crew, engine crew, or on helicopters, helping with fire suppression in tough conditions. Type II wildland firefighters are the backbone of efforts to manage or suppress wildland fires.

"We partnered with Parks Canada's Natural Resource Management Branch to provide training focused on building capacity to combat wildland fires and raise awareness about the risks of wildland fire and reducing those risks across the Homeland," said Riley Bartel, a Senior Policy Analyst within the MMF's Energy, Infrastructure, and Resource Management (EIRM) Department.

The EIRM Department collaborated with Métis Employment and Training (MET) to select a pool of interested candidates who were put through a pre-screening process, including the completion of a Par Q form for the physical portion of the training. Citizens worked diligently to complete the training over five days in March, near Parks Canada's compound.

"We targeted Red River Métis Citizens interested in pursuing a career in firefighting but are also involved in the community and involved with volunteer firefighting within their Locals and communities," said the Acting Minister of Natural Resources Peter Fleming.

Funding also helped to purchase equipment like Nomex, which is fire retardant gear for the Citizens, as well as helmets, packs, chaps for the chainsaws, chainsaws, radios, and GPS for the Citizens.

During the course, participants learned about fighting wildland fires, the command system, fire ecology, fire management, FireSmart training – which helps participants understand the need to protect homes and properties from wildfire and outlines the seven FireSmart disciplines – chainsaw training, Workplace Hazardous Materials

The next big step for St. Cyr is eventually becoming a captain, but he said a lot of work needs to happen before that.

"I've had a lot of captains over the last little while tell me I know how to fly the plane. It's just a matter of making sure that my knowledge and everything else is good," he said. "So that's been the big thing, I'm making sure I'm reading non-stop. The big goal would be to familiarize myself with the airplane as much as possible, and then I want to be a captain here within the next few years."

the biggest highlight for me," said the Red River Métis Citizen.

Minister Fleming explained how the program got its start.

"The firefighting program stems from Canada's Natural Resource Minister Jonathan Wilkinson's commitment to training 1,000 community-based firefighters," said the Acting Minister. "The MMF and Parks Canada's Natural Resource Management Branch scheduled this collaborative program for Red River Métis Citizens."

Although this was a pilot program through the Government of Canada, the MMF hopes to apply for more funds in the future to host this training opportunity more frequently. Leforte said he'd like to take his skills back home and open more training opportunities for MMF Youth and members of his Locals.

"To me, that's what we need to look at: getting our Youth involved as well. If we can get a program started and get some of our Citizens trained up, that'd be great."

Chair of the Turtle Mountain Local, Chris Leforte, was one of the 10 Red River Métis Citizens to take part in the training. He said he wanted to enroll because the MMF has 20 acres of land and several buildings, including a new greenhouse within his Region.

"I did some investigating in the lake area of the community and Rural Municipality of Deloraine Winchester. There's no fire suppression whatsoever. There are no fire trucks. We don't even have a pump or a hose," he said. "So, I thought, if something ever went south on our side, or the community side, it was a great opportunity to get some training on the pumps."

Overall, one aspect of the course that really stuck out for Leforte was the chainsaw portion of the training.

"To be honest with you, taking the chainsaws apart from the chain, the bar, recoils, putting them back together and learning how to properly sharpen them, use them, and maintain them was probably

The Red River Métis Citizen is grateful for the program and acknowledges that many smart Indigenous people lack the resources to afford to get their pilot licence, and appreciates this program's help with that.

"I wish more people had any kind of resource to do that," he said. "Which is why this program is huge for people who want to get into the industry. I think it's important because you open a lot of doors for a lot of people up North, and then suddenly, they start working for your companies and end up being a good investment on your end because they become good pilots for the companies they invest in."

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Leforte is also an educator, teacher, and Harvester who is connected to the land and strives to take care of it for future generations. He said we only have one earth, and we need to be able to protect it.

"They don't make dirt, they don't make land, they don't make trees. It takes forever and ever. To help somebody else have that knowledge (of firefighting), either a farmer, your neighbour, the Local, the Harvesting property, or my property, is invaluable," he said. "I've taken away so much from the course. I've learned so much from it."

All in all, Leforte is grateful to his government for this opportunity.

"Kudos to the MMF and the MET Department for putting these courses on. To me, they're valuable, and it's something that I can carry around, and everybody else can carry around in their pocket forever," he said.



**TUNE IN SATURDAYS
AT NOON TO LISTEN TO
PRESIDENT CHARTAND ON
MÉTIS HOUR X2
ON NCI FM**

**MMF Offices will be closed from
Monday, December 23, 2024 to
Wednesday, January 1, 2025.**

The offices will re-open on Thursday, January 2, 2025.