



Le Métis

President's Message



We at the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) hope that everyone had a safe, healthy, and celebratory Christmas and New Year's. For many people, the New Year means turning a new leaf and starting a fresh canvas for us to continue to grow and further our agenda.

The MMF is proud of our Citizens and especially our youth for continuing to practice COVID-19 pandemic protocols and keeping their loved ones and communities safe. Our youth have not forgotten that although they are more likely to survive this horrible virus – it is not about them but rather it is about their families and Elders.

With 2021 being a fresh page for us as a Nation, as your Manitoba Métis Government we are going to be focused on making 2021 the year of growth and economic development. In 2020 we already started our vast, province-wide strategy to create economic opportunities and sustainable living options for our Citizens. This year we are going to expand more on these efforts.

In 2021 we are looking forward to buying new land, infrastructure, and constructing new buildings that will bring various benefits to our Manitoba Métis Citizens. Some of these buildings will include Child Care Centres, Senior Housing, Affordable Living, and many other great ventures. We will continue to make sure our construction projects will help as many of our Métis entrepreneurs and contractors as possible.

We will continue to protect our harvesting rights, work towards modern co-management agreements with other Indigenous rightsholders, as well as other governments. We will continue to work on protecting the environment and wildlife as we ensure our elders' teachings are passed down through the generations.

We anticipate that we will be building greenhouses and begin planting trees to do our part in tackling climate change.

Going forward we will continue to be the economic engine of the province that we established in 1870. Since the dawn of our Nation, we have been economically minded and motivated to create better living conditions for our families and community through economic expansion while respecting the environment. Today is no different.

Though we have much to look forward to in 2021, we are also facing some challenges and hardships as we continue to fight to get our Métis Citizens included in the vaccine rollout plan. Currently, the Province has not included the Métis in their initial discussions or rollout of COVID-19 vaccines. This, despite our willingness to participate, as Indigenous Peoples, and the founders of this province. The continued mishandling of the pandemic plan by the provincial government will not stop our efforts to ensure the Métis people of Manitoba receive equitable care.

We have been in dialogue with the federal government and have received word from Minister Miller and Minister Vandal that the Manitoba Métis will be included in future vaccine rollouts. They too find it unfair that the Province is intentionally leaving the Manitoba Métis out of their vaccine strategy.

It is unimaginable that we can face this level of discrimination during the 150th anniversary of the Métis Nation bringing Manitoba into Confederation. Without the Métis, Manitoba may not have existed, nor the westernmost provinces that came after us. As we celebrated 150 with fireworks, billboards, virtual shows and by other means within our households, we remembered this. Pallister would not even utter the words "Métis" when addressing the province as he tried to erase us from this province's history, but he failed. Manitobans across the province remember who established this province.

Time and time again, studies continue to show that the Métis are the most susceptible to chronic illness. One thing that COVID has highlighted is the severe inequity that exists in our healthcare system. As it stands, the First Nations and Inuit have their own federal health branch and the Métis are stuck falling between the cracks of federal and provincial jurisdiction. We are hoping that the new distinctions-based health legislation promised to us by Prime Minister Trudeau will help reverse this inequity and help our Citizens live healthier, happier, and longer lives.

Something else to look forward to in the new year is a new communications strategy that will help us reach out to our Citizens in new, innovative, and previously unimagined ways. Staying connected to the Métis Nation with information sharing and

transparency is integral to our success. This will help our people access life-changing programs and services the MMF provides. We are looking forward to unveiling these updated services in the future.

I would like to thank all of those who helped make 2020 so special, despite the unique circumstances, and we hope that you too are looking forward to 2021 for what it is: a new page, with great opportunities to expand and grow as a Nation. I will be keeping all those affected by COVID-19 in my prayers. Though the cases in Manitoba are slowly declining, we hope that you all remain healthy and safe during these trying times.

As we leave 2020 behind, I would like to thank Louis Riel and the other Métis leaders who founded this beautiful province that we are all so blessed to call home.

President David Chartrand, LL.D. (hon). O.M. ∞

Manitoba Metis Federation 2020 Year In Review

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) has worked for over half a century to strengthen the Métis Nation and expand our footprint in this province, creating economic and cultural prosperity for our people in Manitoba. Our commitment to defending our Nation, advancing our rights, and protecting our people remains more vital than ever.

The last year brought unprecedented challenges for our Nation and our province, and the MMF stepped up to keep our people safe and supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some of our 2020 highlights:

Pandemic Response

Upon the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MMF quickly mobilized to ensure no Métis Citizen was left behind, executing a proactive and robust strategy to support Citizens during the COVID crisis and mitigate its impacts on the Manitoba Métis Community.



The MMF invested in a thermal scanning system at Home Office to take the temperature of all those entering the building. We also ensured PPE was distributed across the province as a proactive approach to protect staff and citizens. After the first cases were found in Manitoba, the MMF announced a \$1 million investment for emergency funds for Métis Elders, entrepreneurs, and employees adversely affected by the pandemic.

The MMF also set up a health facility that was stocked and prepared to assist families facing the COVID crisis quarantines. This facility, a repurposed construction camp, is still available to assist not only Métis families in need but has been available to assist others as required.

Other supports throughout the year included the Louis Riel Capital Corporation's (LRCC) Métis Emergency Business Loan Program, which provides up to \$40,000 in financial support to small and medium Métis businesses suffering from the impacts of COVID-19; and the Métis Community Business Fund, a \$4.4-million COVID-19 relief program for Métis community collectively owned businesses and microbusinesses, which includes fishers and artisans. This program is still being offered.

Upon code red closures beginning November 2020, the MMF renewed supports for Citizens, and unveiled new programs for Métis businesses and students. The MMF offered \$5.5 million to assist Métis businesses, with eligible businesses able to receive a non-repayable grant of up to \$10,000.

In December 2020, the MMF launched a toll-free Mental Health Wellness Support Line operating from 7 am to 11 pm daily, at 1-833-390-1041, in response to mental health challenges faced during code red isolation.

Metis Community Liaison Department

Throughout the pandemic, the MMF's Metis Community Liaison Department (MCLD) conducted wellness checks a number of times with over 1,000 Elders. MCLD has provided the proper resources needed to help alleviate stress, anxiety, and the fear of isolation our Elders may have during code red restrictions. Since the beginning of the hamper program in March 2020, the MCLD and MMF Regions have delivered over 8,000 hampers containing essential food items – including recently providing the makings of a small Christmas dinner – to Metis Elders, families, and vulnerable Citizens.

In November 2020, the MMF announced the Memorial Services Financial Support Program that, coupled with other programs offered by the MMF, provides up to \$5,000 in financial support to eligible Métis families to help cover the costs of funerals or memorial services.

Video Programming

A natural outcome of the MMF's pandemic response and the need to deliver information to Citizens faster and more efficiently than ever before, the MMF began launching Daily Video Updates on the MMF website, mmf.mb.ca, and YouTube channel detailing MMF programs, services, initiatives, and projects, as well as COVID-related updates. In April 2020, the MMF launched *The Beat Goes On*, a virtual entertainment program offering the best Métis musical talent, with performers such as Ray St. Germain, Michael Audette, and Johnny Dietrich.

The show, aimed to keep viewers entertained in their homes, began weekly on Saturday afternoons, with an added show on Thursday evenings.



In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 forced the closure of daycares and schools province-wide, leaving parents to teach their own children. Without many Métis-specific resources geared to early learners, the MMF asked its affiliate, the Louis Riel Institute (LRI), to develop an online show for Métis children and their families. Starring LRI Metis History and Culture Coordinator Teresa Byrne and her son Mason, *Red River Cart Adventures* launched in April 2020, airing Tuesdays at 10 am. Due to the positive response, the children's show resulted in two spin-offs in the series' weekly lineup: Thursday's *Meet Up with Mason*, an activity show starring Mason and featuring a special guest, and Sunday's *Did You Know?* starring LRI Métis Culture and History Instructor Shirley Delorme Russell. To watch past episodes of *Red River Cart Adventures*, visit the MMF website at mmf.mb.ca.

Education

The MMF has been working tirelessly for years to address the gap in education for the Métis, and 2020 marked additional progress in advancing education outcomes for Métis students.



The MMF presented funding to its first Métis students through the Post-Secondary Education Support Program (PSESP). Through the PSESP, the MMF will provide \$6.6 million to Métis students attending university during the 2020-2021 academic year, with support for each full-time student not exceeding \$5,000 per year. In July 2020, in partnership with the federal government, the MMF launched the COVID-19 Emergency Student

Assistance Program, which allocated \$1.8 million for students financially impacted by the pandemic.

Upon code red closures in Manitoba, the MMF announced in November 2020 that up to \$1,500 would be distributed to nearly 1,000 Métis students currently enrolled in college or university to help them through the pandemic's second wave.

In June 2020, with large graduation ceremonies cancelled across the province due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the Louis Riel Institute and the MMF's Metis Employment & Training department worked with the MMF Regions to host socially distant Virtual Graduation acknowledgement ceremonies.

In September 2020, the MMF launched a homeschooling initiative to support Métis families choosing to homeschool their children this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the guidance of the Louis Riel Institute, the MMF Homeschool Support Program teachers and tutors provide online interactive instruction for Grades K-8, funding for distance education and tutoring for Grades 9-12, learning resources, and school supplies. In 2020, 222 students enrolled in the Homeschool Support Program.

Housing



This past year saw landmark investments in housing infrastructure, with strides taken to address homelessness and provide affordable housing opportunities for Métis Elders and families.

In August 2020, the MMF held the Grand Opening of the accessible Frank Bruce Métis Seniors Complex in St. Laurent, the first of many seniors' housing builds that the MMF will construct across Manitoba. The complex is the first major construction project under the \$500-million Canada-Métis Nation Housing Sub-Accord signed in 2018 – which earmarked \$125 million to the MMF over 10 years. The MMF also broke ground on a new affordable housing project in Portage la Prairie for Métis families and seniors, as well as housing projects in St. Boniface and Selkirk – investments intended to target and directly support Métis Citizens.

The MMF launched the \$1.5-million Home Enhancement Loan Program (HELP) for low- and moderate-income Métis homeowners.

HELP increases the lifespan of homes, with priority to Citizens with emergency or health and safety-related housing needs.

The MMF expanded the First Time Home Purchase Program (FTHPP), which provides grants to Métis Citizens to cover the down payment of their first home purchase up to \$15,000 plus closing costs of up to \$2,500. Citizens contributed over \$58 million to the Manitoba economy in 2020 through the FTHPP in mortgages and additional economic spinoffs. The LRCC funded 220 applications in 2020, with a total of 406 applications funded since the program's inception in February 2019.

Early Learning & Child Care



The year 2020 involved the development of a new Early Learning & Child Care (ELCC) department. The MMF invested \$9 million in 2020 on child care centres across Manitoba, with job creation and child care programming in the works across the province because of new partnerships and projects. The ELCC conducted feasibility studies to determine demand for new child care programs within Manitoba, and there are projects in various stages in Winnipeg, Dauphin, Thompson, Swan River, Duck Bay, Selkirk, and St. Eustache.

Metis Employment & Training

In May 2020, as part of the MMF's post-pandemic proactive employment strategy aimed at providing training and employment opportunities to its Citizens, the MMF committed to creating up to 700 employment opportunities by the end of fall of 2020. Our tree removal training opportunity helped to save Manitobans tax dollars across the province by supporting Municipalities by providing labour. Programs included hiring students in high school or post-secondary institutes looking for a summer job.

Metis Employment & Training (MET) expanded their \$3-million Summer Student Employment Program (SSEP) and created a partnership with Infinity Women Secretariat, which coordinated an Employment Strategy focused on hiring female Métis Youth in junior high, high school, college, and university. For the SSEP, MET partners with employers across the province to create and support summer jobs for students to earn money and obtain real-world experience. Through this program, MET hired 465 summer students.

In the fall, MET and ELCC launched a Youth website, mmfmetisyouth.com, which features educational information, upcoming virtual events, and activities such as crafts and recipes. In partnership with Provincial and Regional Youth Advisory Committees, MET offered programming and contests to keep Youth engaged in 2020.

In October 2020, the MMF launched the Youth Entrepreneurship Program, which aims to encourage entrepreneurship in Manitoba Métis Youth. Facilitated by MET and the LRCC, the program assists with skill development and provides financial supports to help bring business ideas to life.

Métis Cultural Activities, Events, and Celebrations

On May 12, 2020, Manitoba Day, the MMF acquired the BMO Building at Portage and Main, the future home of the Métis Nation Heritage Centre, which will display artifacts and contemporary art, and educate the public on Métis culture and heritage.



The MMF Home Office, Regional Offices, and Locals host many Métis cultural events throughout the year. Amid COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, many events were cancelled, others were held following social distancing protocols, and many virtual events were presented to keep Citizens engaged and entertained in their homes. Some of our biggest events of 2020 included:

- Louis Riel Day celebrations across Manitoba
- The 204th Anniversary of the Victory at Frog Plain
- Virtual Métis Jig & Jam Variety Show for National Indigenous Peoples Day



- Virtual Louis Riel Commemoration Ceremony
- Winterlude – Ottawa
- Louis Riel play introduced
- Métis Nation Gala
- Order of Gabriel Dumont for Métis National Council President Chartier
- Kenora Kickoff – Red River trail trek

Métis 150

The MMF, in partnership with the Métis National Council, had planned many festivities in celebration of Manitoba's 150th birthday. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these events were postponed or cancelled, and some turned virtual – including a first-of-its-kind Manitoba-wide fireworks celebration on July 15, the 150th anniversary of Manitoba officially joining Confederation.



The MMF also launched two year-long billboard campaigns across the province. The digital campaign saw English and French billboards with topical Métis Nation dates, messages, and initiatives. The print billboard campaign included posters at Winnipeg and Ottawa's airports, on billboards across Manitoba, and featured messages in English, French, and Michif on the interior and exterior of Winnipeg and Brandon buses.

Charitable Gifts

In November 2020, the MMF once again became a sponsoring partner for the annual Radiothon in support of the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation. The MMF Matching Hour allowed listeners to call in and make a donation that the MMF would match up to their \$5,000 amount. The MMF's donation was put towards the purchase of a piece of equipment at the Youth BIOlab.

In celebration of Métis 150, the MMF donated \$70,000 to the Winnipeg River Heritage Museum in September 2020. The contribution is in addition to a previous commitment that supported the museum's capital project and its operational expenses.

The MMF also upped its annual donation to the Christmas Cheer Board to \$50,000 in light of additional challenges faced by Manitoba families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Selkirk Food bank received \$10,000 during the COVID crisis to help keep their doors open.

Many other organizations received financial support throughout the province.

Veterans

In April 2020, the Métis Nation launched a new website, Metisveterans.ca, to keep Citizens across the Homeland informed on new developments and initiatives concerning Métis Veterans.

MMF President David Chartrand continues to search for Métis Veterans of WWII to present them with \$20,000 Recognition Payments as part of the Métis Veterans Recognition Program Contribution Agreement signed in 2019 between the federal government and the MNC to honour forgotten WWII Métis Veterans. In June 2020, the MMF announced that all surviving spouses of Veterans who have passed would be eligible for the Recognition Payment. If the spouse has also passed, the living children of a Métis Veteran will receive equal portions of the payment. Due to COVID-19, President Chartrand was not able to present each Recognition Payment personally, but the payments were safely given to 54 Veterans, spouses, and/or children in 2020.

Citizenship Conference



Over 300 Citizens across the Homeland gathered in Saskatoon in March 2020 for the Citizens Forum on Identity, Citizenship, and Homeland. The event allowed leadership and Citizens to discuss Métis identity and Homeland, and how to protect Métis Nation Citizenship. President Chartrand expressed the crucial need for patriots to fight for the integrity of the Métis Nation, underscoring the importance of the National Definition and location of the historic Homeland. This remains one of the most important conversations for the Métis Nation today.

State of the Nation

The Métis Nation, led by the hard work and perseverance of President Chartrand, received historical mention in the federal throne speech in 2020. Relations continue to be developed that will further signify our place in confederation. Meetings after meetings with federal Ministers, pushing the Métis Agenda, have proven to have significant direct positive impacts on our people. With progress being

made and commitments to advance our land claims, health care, and children's rights, 2020 has laid the foundation towards delivery on the broken promises of Canada dating back to 1870.