



# Le Métis

## President's Message



It's been a busy time for your Métis Government – between our 52nd annual and first virtual general assembly and the Citizens Forum on Identity, Citizenship, and Homeland the week before, we've been connecting with Métis Nation across the internet more than ever before.

### **Métis Nation Citizens Forum on Identity, Citizenship, and Homeland**

During the Citizens Forum on March 20 and 21, we heard from experts as they talked about topics that ranged from traditional Métis migratory patterns to floral beadwork. I was especially moved by the discussion about our Métis beadwork, so easily differentiated from Cree and Sioux styles. Our floral designs are unique to the Métis people, with their representations of prairie flowers. We learned that it was even possible in some cases to identify which family the bead worker was from.

To hear about our beadwork and our culture and history around things like Red River Carts, the pemmican trade, and our fiddle music shows what we already know – that our Nation accomplished much here in the West. We did not do these things in Ontario, except for parts of the northwest, where some of our people migrated. It tells us that there are two histories of two different peoples – one is Métis Nation. The other is something else.

I want to thank all the presenters for sharing their tremendous knowledge with our Citizens. The Forum was so well-received that many demanded a third session, so they could invite their families and community members to hear the important message about protecting our identity as Métis Nation. I'm proud that our Nation is ready to stand against outsiders trying to claim our heritage. Know that your Métis Government will continue to defend our Nation against these outsiders trying to steal our identity.

### **Annual General Assembly goes virtual**

While COVID-19 continues to rob us of our usual in-person, dynamic assemblies that combine governance with music, dancing, friends and family, I'm glad we were still able to engage with Citizens and bring some entertainment to their homes.

Citizens took to the internet in record numbers to watch the proceedings of our first-ever virtual Annual General Assembly on March 27 and 28. I think we're all getting more used to this digital world, because the assembly saw Facebook page views up 225 per cent, well over 55,000 hits on our AGA website and an additional 7,500 plus hits to our mmf.mb.ca website. Social media engagement reached its peak with over 7,000 reactions to our evening of music and entertainment.

The Saturday evening edition of *The Beat Goes On* for our AGA had my toes tapping. It was so good to hear Clint and Tom Dutiaume, Don Ranville, and Paul Hampton as they backed all our Métis fiddlers, vocalists, and jiggers, including Ray St. Germain, Holly Vezina, Johnny Dietrich, Colleen Bryce, Michael Audette, and other talented performers.

We're very proud of our delegates who attended the event, along with the many Métis Citizens and allies who livestreamed the event to watch our democratic process in action. I can't say enough about the dedication of our Local Executives, who stayed online throughout the entire proceedings and even worked through their lunch.

We also had several milestone announcements. Out of respect for our Citizens and our democratic process, this virtual assembly only passed essential motions. Non-essential resolutions were not deliberated or voted on. Any constitutional changes require notice to be given to the assembly prior to any voting. Once COVID-19 vaccinations are complete in Manitoba, later this autumn, we'll host an in-person assembly – usually 3,000 strong – where these resolutions will be voted on.

### **Recognition of our right to self-governance**

In what I know is a truly historic moment, the Annual General Assembly saw the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) sign a Negotiators' Statement of Understanding with the Government of Canada. I cannot emphasize enough that this goes back to what Louis Riel dreamed about and had a vision for in 1870, when he and his provisional government created the *Manitoba Act*. This recognition of Métis Nation's right to self-governance was what he was trying to achieve. After 150 years, this recognition of our inherent rights of self-determination and self-government – as differentiated from contingent rights – is what we've been fighting for since the time of Louis Riel.

The statement recognizes the MMF as the government of the Manitoba Métis, rather than a club or an organization. This document and the negotiations that will continue mean we are in a new era that will fundamentally change the way Canada and Manitoba do business with us on a government-to-government basis.

The statement signing, along with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's video to assembly participants, showed Canada's commitment to continue negotiating with us and resolve our outstanding land claim.

I'm so excited about our future. I can't wait to share more with you.

### **Investment in our Nation's Youth**

There was still more good news when Minister of Sports and Youth Richard Genaille and I announced a \$1-million investment in professional and structured sports development for Métis Youth. Along with skill-building conferences, the MMF will support Métis Youth as they pursue their athletic goals in hockey, baseball, curling, golf, and more. It's time to start filling the empty baseball diamonds in our Métis villages. With this fund, we can build Youth camps that will be the best in the province and give our hockey players and other athletes a strong system to help them develop their skills.

Another thing that has me feeling proud of Louis Riel's little Nation is our Mini AGA. The session was completely filled up, with 90 Youth between the ages of five and 12 registered to participate. It's so important that our Youth and future leaders grow up learning about their Métis identity, what it means to be a part of the community and how to work their way up our political system. This is the pathway to ensuring that they understand the importance of our Constitution, our governing principles, and the values that make us who we are – the people who own themselves.

### **Giving voices to our missing loved ones**

We also announced a new program that will give \$1 million to support the location of missing and murdered loved ones. Called *Pey Key Way Ta Hin* in Michif and *Bring Me Home* in English, it will provide individual rewards for information that leads to locating missing individuals. The name of this program gives these lost loved ones their voices back and reminds us that they are still missing and want to come home.

In many cases, the families are no longer very interested in seeing someone get charged for the crime, and they know they're unlikely to find their loved ones alive. They just want to bring them home, so family members can visit them and pray over them.

We are currently offering \$10,000 for tips that lead to the location of Jennifer Catchway and Marcus McKay. I pray for both families – and all other families with murdered or missing loved ones – that this program can help lead them to peace.

If you missed watching these important announcements, seeing the proceedings of the AGA or the tremendous talent of our Métis entertainers from Saturday night, the video footage is still available on our YouTube channel.

#### Many thanks

On behalf of Métis Citizens, I want to personally express my thanks to all the Local Executive leadership and all grassroots leadership in our government – they truly show that in order to lead grassroots, you must first be grassroots. The way they freely give their knowledge, expertise, and wisdom just shows the hardworking, community-minded approach that makes our Nation great.

I also want to personally thank everyone behind the scenes who made this virtual AGA possible, including co-chairs MMF Minister Will Goodon and the MNC's Marc LeClair, the entertainers, and the organizers. I look forward to the time when we can gather for an in-person AGA, hopefully in the fall.

Until we can be together again, I offer my prayers to all of our Citizens, friends, and neighbours, and my deepest condolences to those who have been caused to grieve, including the families of Marcus McKay and Jennifer Catchway.

*President David Chartrand. LL.D. hon. D.M. ∞*

## Manitoba Metis Federation celebrates first virtual Annual General Assembly



MMF Minister Jack Park surprised President Chartrand with a sculpture honouring Veterans, as thanks for his advocacy for recognition of WWII Métis Veterans over the last 20 years.

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) celebrated its 52nd Annual General Assembly (AGA) virtually on March 27 and 28. With close to 300 local elected leaders representing 120 locals from across Manitoba attending via Zoom, the event – which was livestreamed on the MMF and AGA websites, as well as YouTube – saw thousands of viewers watching the largest Métis Government in the Prairies conduct affairs for its Citizens. The reaction was very positive from the delegates, but all felt the virtual difference and shared that they were missing the 3,000 delegates who would normally attend. As the delegates got used to the new format, the meeting flowed quite smoothly. A lot of business was accomplished, and major announcements followed throughout the two-day event.

Opening Ceremonies featured welcoming remarks from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with an added

surprise of a special video greeting for delegates and all the viewers. Many other dignitaries also provided greetings, including Manitoba's Lieutenant Governor Janice Filmon, Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Northern Affairs Dan Vandal, Special Representative of the Prairies Jim Carr, provincial Indigenous and Northern Relations Minister Eileen Clarke, Manitoba NDP leader Wab Kinew, Manitoba Liberal Party leader Dougald Lamont, and our Métis National Council (MNC) President Clément Chartier.

The weekend's festivities featured presentations from MMF Ministers highlighting the Métis Government's recent milestones, including the MMF's support for Citizens during COVID-19, the growth of the Early Learning and Child Care department, accomplishments in housing, and post-secondary education supports.

The AGA, co-chaired by MMF Minister Will Goodon and the Métis National Council's Marc LeClair, also looked to the future with a number of historic announcements.

During MMF President David Chartrand's State of the Métis Nation address, he announced a \$1-million program to support families of missing and murdered loved ones. The new *Bring Me Home* program, called *Pey Key Way Ta Hin* in Michif, will provide \$10,000 rewards for information that leads to the location of missing Métis and First Nations individuals. The program is a continuation of the previously announced \$200,000 support. Last year, the MMF offered \$10,000 for tips leading to Jennifer Catchway's location. Under this new program, the MMF is offering \$10,000 for information leading to the location of Marcus McKay, who has been missing since 2000.

"We're giving a voice to those lost souls. They lay somewhere cold, somewhere buried in a bush, somewhere hidden, we don't know where. But their souls are crying to come home. So, the program is going to give them a voice," said President Chartrand.

Later on March 27, President Chartrand, MMF Chief of Staff Al Benoit, and LeClair announced that the MMF and Canada have reached consensus on most elements of a draft *Manitoba Métis Self Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* with the federal government. The agreement will recognize that the MMF is the government of the Manitoba Métis Community. This means it is mandated to deal with the Community's Section 35 rights and represent the beneficiaries of the Supreme Court of Canada's declaration of *MMF Inc. vs. Canada* with respect to the promises made in Section 31 of the *Manitoba Act* of 1870.

"This is going back to what (Louis) Riel had dreamed about, envisioned about, wanted to happen, which they denied for over 150 years, my friends," said

President Chartrand. "We are in a new era, a new change, and it will actually fundamentally change the way government does business with us on a government-to-government basis."

Also on Day 1, President Chartrand, Minister of Métis Child and Family Services Mona Buors, and Al Benoit provided an update on Bill C-92 consultation and Métis child welfare, explaining that Bill C-92 allows the Métis Government to take control of its child welfare system from the Province.

"It's a quantum leap forward in reconciliation," said Benoit. "It takes the focus of Indigenous child welfare away from apprehension and colonial ways of looking at the world."

The MMF will be creating its own laws and policies for Métis Child and Family Services, moving towards a proactive and preventative approach where children are returned back with their families, community, and culture.

There was still more good news on Day 2, as President Chartrand and Richard Genaille, MMF Minister of Sports and Youth, announced a \$1-million investment in professional sports development for Métis Youth. The funding will go towards initiatives such as sports camps and skill-building conferences.

The Saturday evening performance of *The Beat Goes On* saw Clint and Tom Dutiaume, Don Ranville, and Paul Hampton provide backup music for a stacked, rotating, socially distanced lineup of Métis fiddlers, vocalists, and jiggers, including Ray St. Germain, Holly Vezina, Johnny Dietrich, Colleen Bryce, Michael Audette, and other talented performers.

Thank you to everyone behind the scenes who helped make this virtual AGA a success. The MMF hopes we can all be together again for an in-person AGA in the fall. If you missed the AGA, it is available on the MMF's YouTube channel. All relevant AGA documents, including resolutions and audits, can be found on the AGA website at <http://aga.manitobametis.com/>

## Community Photo

*Le Metis'* new Community Photo section invites Métis Citizens to send in photos to be featured in our newsletter. If you have a photo that celebrates the Métis Nation, send it to [communications@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:communications@mmf.mb.ca) and you may see it in print!



Don't stop retrievin'

### PROUD SPONSORS OF THE MMF'S ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Manitoba Metis Federation  
*Annual  
General  
Assembly*

## Minister Anderson brings Métis culture to the masses



Ten years ago, when Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) Culture & Heritage Minister Alfred (Buck) Anderson first bought an old Purolator van at an auction, it was purely a business purchase to haul cupboards for his work with Dawson Bay Builders.

But the vehicle has a whole new sense of life now.

Minister Anderson, who is also the Interlake Metis Association's (IMA) Vice-President, thought to repurpose the van after seeing events such as Manitoba Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Ste. Madeleine Métis Days, and scores of other cultural mainstays fall by the wayside last spring as the COVID-19 pandemic started to take hold.

"I was thinking, 'Why don't I bring the music to the people?'" Minister Anderson said in a recent interview.

As Manitoba Day approached on May 12, Minister Anderson collected the van from the compound where it was being stored and rigged it up to bring some joy to town in the pandemic's early days.

"I threw a sound system in and put some banners on the old van," he said. "It started from there." Minister Anderson drove around Selkirk rotating a playlist of roughly 20 tunes from a selection of artists such as Jason Lepine, Morgan Grace, and Glenn Hewgill, and has gotten people jiggging over the course of the past year.

The IMA covered the cost of the sound system and the banners, which included a banner marking the province's 150th anniversary with an image of Louis Riel, the MMF logo, and the infinity symbol. The MMF later provided a new set of tires for the van.

At various points throughout the year, Minister Anderson has outfitted the van in seasonally

appropriate décor, ranging from a flag commemorating veterans' sacrifices around Remembrance Day to being decked out in a full-on festive manner as the holidays came near, complete with Christmas lights. He was, however, lacking proper decorations, as a contingent of local kids pointed out.

"The next time I came by, these kids are standing out there and they've made candy canes and Christmas bulbs out of cardboard and hand-coloured them," Minister Anderson recalled. "It blew me away, so I put them on the van, too."



Minister Anderson said the van is on the road about 15 to 20 hours a week, with his flagship route starting in the north end of Selkirk before weaving through town for four to five hours. As word of the van spread, he started to receive requests to drive by birthday parties — including one for MMF President

David Chartrand and one that ended up being a parade of nearly 30 cars — and schools during recess or lunch breaks.

"When I drive by, it's just like a magnet. The kids just run to the fence and they're dancing and waving, and then they're running along the fence chasing me," Minister Anderson said.

For larger events, such as recent Louis Riel Day celebrations in Winnipeg, Minister Anderson has an additional entertainment trailer with picnic tables, barbecues, tents, and a 24-by-24-foot stage.

Looking ahead, Minister Anderson is hoping to remodel the van to install two six-foot doors on the side that will open up to allow for a live band to play a show. Ultimately, he hopes it becomes a way for those artists to recoup some of the losses they've felt during the pandemic.

"They're really hurting, too," he said. "Not only have I got to get them, but I've got to find the funding to pay for them. I don't expect them to volunteer like me."

And, ever the perfectionist, once Minister Anderson feels he has the entertainment van model down pat, he hopes to see the blueprint used for similar projects in each MMF Region.

The van was one key adaptation that inspired the Selkirk Biz to bestow a Business Excellence Award for resiliency and determination upon the Selkirk Red River Métis Local. The accompanying \$200 in Selkirk Biz business bucks went right back into the Local, Minister Anderson said.

Selkirk Biz executive director Sheri Skalesky said the board zeroed in on four core criteria elements when determining winners: resiliency, care for staff, uplifting messages, and the uphill battles they faced. The Local met those marks, primarily on the strength of the music van, its promotion of Métis culture, and ability to bring joy to the community.

"When everybody hears the music, it's connecting everybody when we can't be connected in certain ways," she said, noting she regularly sees Minister Anderson's van out and about in town.

To see videos of the van in action, head to [facebook.com/bucky.anderson.7](https://facebook.com/bucky.anderson.7).