



# Le Métis

## President's Message



In recent days, Bill C-15, *An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, concluded its long journey by receiving Royal Assent, passing into law in Canada.

As your Métis Government has shared with you, we worked shoulder to shoulder with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) to develop this legislation with Canada, proving the value of consultation with Indigenous governments. The nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship we have with Canada and the ones we are growing with ITK and AFN are a blueprint for the future, and one I hope we keep evolving.

The UN Declaration is an important instrument of international law, and it holds a great deal of promise for the Métis Nation. It presents a strong vision

for the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, built on a foundation of meaningful self-determination. This framework sets out expectations for minimum standards for the dignity, survival, and well-being of our Nation in ongoing consultation with us.

This legislation lays the groundwork for a renewed relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. We have been strong supporters of the implementation of this legislation, partnering in advocacy and bringing clarity to the definition of consultation.

While the benefits of consultation are significant and were discussed often, it may take time for the conservative premiers in the country to understand that "consultation" does not mean "veto", and that economic development is a shared interest for all governments. Bill C-15 is a win-win-win for Indigenous peoples, industry and all Canadians. It also makes it clear that we all have a shared responsibility as stewards of the land and waters around us: government, industry and Indigenous Peoples. We will continue to honour the ways of our ancestors and the teachings of our Elders as they guide us to conserve and preserve.

We have come a long way on our journey. But we cannot rest – we must move from the framework of Bill C-15 into the design an action plan and then, finally, to implementation. Through this work, we will create a distinctions-based approach to upholding the inherent rights of the Métis Nation and strengthening our Citizens, communities, and governments.

This work was the effort of decades, with many Métis Nation patriots driving the outcomes in partnership with the First Nations and Inuit governments, Canada, and a growing network of global Indigenous

partners. This ability to forge relationships, create our own tailored programs, and finally see the fruits of our tax dollars – this is what it means to have self-determination. Human rights are Indigenous rights, and if this had been understood and honoured in the 1870s, imagine where our province, our country and our world would be.

I thank Prime Minister Trudeau for keeping his promise to bring this legislation forward and Ministers Lametti and Bennett for overseeing its advancement through Parliament. The Métis Nation has always valued the strength of a person's word and the integrity of honouring it and our nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada is improved by every successful dialogue.

Another successful dialogue resulted in a Métis Director in the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. In her new role, Georgina Liberty will be focused on preserving and revitalizing Michif and working the other directors and the commissioner will help strengthen all Indigenous languages in Canada, which will have positive impacts for our multilingual Métis Nation. Georgina has been part of the MMF for a long time, carrying on the work of her father George Fleury, who was a respected Elder and a founding father of the MMF. On behalf of her friends and family at the MMF, I extend our congratulations to Georgina as she begins her new role.

I wish everyone well and hope that we all get the opportunity to spend time with our loved ones as public health orders continue to ease. I offer my prayers to all our Citizens, friends and neighbours, and my deepest condolences to those who have been caused to grieve.

Meeqwetch,

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

# Celebrating Métis students and grads!

In this issue of *Le Metis*, we are featuring Métis high school and post-secondary students and 2021 graduates. As schooling looked different over the past 15 months, the MMF celebrates these scholars' hard work and accomplishments in the face of these challenges.

## Jennifer Setlack



Ever since she shadowed doctors at her hometown hospital as a teenager, Jennifer Setlack has been interested in medicine.

Even though becoming a doctor has been in the back of her mind for a long time, when the Winnipeg Metis Association Citizen was recently accepted into the Doctor of Medicine program at the University of Manitoba Max Rady College of Medicine, it didn't fully set in.

"I think it's going to take a little bit more time for me," Setlack said, "but I'm really excited. I'm very grateful."

Setlack's volunteer and work experience, coupled with her extensive schooling and research, have led her to this moment. Her interest in medicine was ignited while she was volunteering in her hometown of Ste. Anne, which included shadowing doctors at the hospital. She worked as a paramedic for the City of Winnipeg for 11 years, and has been in university for over a decade straight. She has two undergraduate degrees: one in biological sciences, and the other a double honours degree in psychology and sociology. She is currently working on her master's in sociology at the University of Manitoba.

The MMF would like to celebrate Manitoba Métis grads on our social media platforms. Tag **@manitobametisfederation**, or send your graduation photos to **communications@mmf.mb.ca** for us to share them!

While Setlack's late Métis grandfather introduced her to Métis culture, such as playing the fiddle, it wasn't until she was an adult in university that she started to learn more about her heritage and trace her lineage. During her studies, she took courses on Indigenous history and health, while at the same time applying for Citizenship at the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF).

A turning point for Setlack came during her application to medical school and was invited as an Indigenous student to the Medical School Entrance Interview Workshop on Strengthening Identity in Medicine. Organized through the Ongomiizwin Education centre at the University of Manitoba, the four-day workshop is more personal, she said, and teaches specific connections to Indigenous culture and Métis history.

"I learned so much from that workshop and from just even applying to medicine, that helps me to learn more about my family history," Setlack said.

Throughout her studies, she said the MMF supported her – from paying for her tuition and books for the last year of her double honours degree, to helping with funding for her master's degree.

"Tuition is very expensive, and books are very expensive, and when you're going to university, you can't work as many hours as maybe you need to to pay for all of those things," she said. "The major thing that the MMF has helped me with is just being able to actually focus very hard on my studies and not maybe to worry so much about the financial implications of taking on less paid work."

Setlack said the MMF's funding also allowed her to focus on her research, which has influenced conversation around City of Winnipeg public services.

"They've also allowed me to be able to help and give back to my community, through my research and through my academic connections connecting those to public service."

Her psychology honours project examined the mental health of paramedics and firefighters, and was published in the *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* last year. She is working on a second scientific article on the topic.

"The mental health of paramedics and firefighters was never studied within the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service previous to that study, and I just think that it's been able to influence conversation around the topic, and possibly funding for mental health services for paramedics and firefighters," Setlack said.

Her sociology research project looked at the organizational structure of emergency services in Winnipeg, and her current project, which is in the beginning stages, involves equity, diversity, and inclusion research for the City of Winnipeg.

"We're looking at those equity groups and their experiences working as City of Winnipeg employees. So the hope with that is to influence City of Winnipeg policy and strategy, to be able to improve workplace experiences, and then also to be able to improve public services that the City of Winnipeg provides," Setlack said.

"I feel like I would be a really great doctor, and be able to serve my community in a really great way being a physician."

As for after medical school, she would like to work with Indigenous communities, perhaps as a family physician.

"Throughout my work experience I have worked on some northern reserves, like Oxford House and Little Grand Rapids, and I really enjoyed my time there, so I think I would like to do some community work in that way as well," Setlack said, adding that she is open to other specialties.

After being in university for over a decade, Setlack is looking forward to taking time off between completing her master's next year and starting medical school in August 2022.

"I'm just really excited for the medical school program. I love university, I love education," she said.

"I'm really grateful to the MMF and what they've been able to do for me. I really feel like that research and being able to focus on my education wouldn't have happened to the same level if it wasn't for the MMF."

## Chloe Coté-Vaillancourt



Chloe Coté-Vaillancourt first felt connected to her Métis heritage volunteering at the Métis dinner during the annual Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival in The Pas.

"A memory that stands out and that I always enjoy watching is the square dancers during the Métis supper," she said.

While the high school graduate was born in Winnipeg, she grew up in The Pas.

She competed nationally for The Pas Roadrunners swim club from Grade 5 up until high school.

"I always liked swimming, whether it be at the lake or the pool," Coté-Vaillancourt said.

Her favourite part about high school was travelling for basketball and volleyball, to locations across the province such as Thompson, Swan River, Neepawa, Norway House, Flin Flon, and Dauphin.

She was also set to travel to Halifax with the provincial basketball team at the 2020 North American Indigenous Games.

"I made the 19U team," Coté-Vaillancourt said. "(The Manitoba Metis Federation) was supposed to sponsor me, but due to the pandemic, it was cancelled."

While she said the pandemic made school rough and stressful, "it makes you appreciate it a lot. I'm a very social person and like going to school. I had a difficult time during the remote learning part. I'm glad we got to get back into the classrooms, but it's definitely not the same."

In her spare time, the 17-year-old enjoys spending time with friends, working out, as well as camping and the outdoors.

As for what's next, Coté-Vaillancourt plans to take a year off and then go to university, perhaps in Brandon or Edmonton.

"I am looking at taking courses that involve Indigenous studies," she said, a subject she also enjoyed in high school.

## Aime Lilley



Having been out of school for nearly 10 years, Aime Lilley never thought graduating from the Business Administration program at Red River College (RRC) would be in the cards for her. But her work at a non-profit wasn't challenging enough, and she knew she would have to upgrade her education in order to change careers.

"Before I started school, I was living a life that I was not proud of, and often resorting to unhealthy

coping mechanisms," Lilley said, adding that upon graduation, "I proved to myself that I can do anything I set my mind to."

The 30-year-old, who works full time as an Insurance Administrator for MIG Insurance in Portage la Prairie, said she now feels much more secure in her life.

"Knowing that I have my diploma and was able to accomplish such a major feat in life, I feel confident with who I am and hopeful for a bright future."

She hopes to own a home and start a family, with career aspirations to eventually work in human resources.

During the first year of the two-year program, Lilley faced some hurdles, struggling with math and accounting. She also lost her dad halfway through her first year.

"My experience with RRC was truly challenging, but I learned a lot about who I am as a person. I learned that I am an extremely determined individual," she said.

Lilley received funding from the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) for both years, earning a Louis Riel Bursary as well as straight As in her second year.

"During all of these challenges, because I was financially supported by MMF, it made it a lot easier to pull through. I did not have that extra stress of worrying about how I was going to support myself. Not only did MMF support me financially, but they were there mentally," she said, adding that her

Employment and Training Counsellor continuously checked in on her. "This made me feel valued and cared for. I am so grateful for her kindness throughout my schooling."

The pandemic posed its own unique difficulties for Lilley, switching from full-time on-campus to strictly online courses.

"The amount of self-discipline you need to get through it was something not everyone could manage," she said. "We started our program with about 11 people, and at the end of the second year, there (were) only four that graduated."

The MMF provided multiple COVID-19 support payments during the pandemic.

"That in itself was a great form of help, along with the encouraging words often given to us, whether it was through email or (MMF President) David Chartrand's speech announcements," Lilley said.

"I just want to express my gratitude to the MMF for believing in me and supporting me in every way possible the past few years. I know they will continue to root for me, and I will do everything in my power to make my Métis people proud."

## Cody Rogers



Cody Rogers knows what it's like to live with chronic illness.

That's why the University of Manitoba kinesiology and recreation management student, due to graduate with his master's in October, is dedicated to making the experience more manageable.

All that's left for Rogers to do is defend his thesis, with the current timeline suggesting he'll have the opportunity to do so by the end of July. The defence will be a culmination of nearly two years of work investigating sport participation's effect on coping with diabetes.

For Rogers, who suffered renal failure and is a kidney transplant recipient, entered the faculty with a chronic illness lens.

"After talking with my advisor, we explored different chronic illness contexts and ultimately decided on diabetes," he said.

Rogers said his studies have gone well, with findings including that playing sports helps people cope with their emotions and because of that, they can have better quality-of-life outcomes.

"We found that people are mentally healthy after coping with their emotions and ... they report higher levels of general health when they've been able to cope with their emotions," he said.

The bulk of the time Rogers has spent on his thesis has been during the COVID-19 pandemic, so he's had to be adaptable with shifts to remote learning.

"It was pretty much, on your own, behind the screen, so that was a little stifling," he said. "You don't have that same social environment that you'd hoped to get in grad school with trips to the restaurant after class or things like that.

"It was kind of a downer as far as school and the pandemic."

Rogers is currently employed as an academic coach at Red River College, which he plans to continue for the immediate future, though he hopes to break into the research field after graduation. That said, after seven years of post-secondary, Rogers acknowledged that he hasn't yet homed in on a specific career path.

"I haven't really taken the time to reflect on what I want to do next," he said. "All I know is that I want to be helping people."

Rogers' academic coaching job has helped him appreciate that empathy, giving back to students in need not long after he was one himself.

"I know what it's like to feel that weight and that stress, and having somebody to talk to really helps me in my times when I need to reach out for help," he said. "To be that person for somebody else is very important for me."

The past two years, Rogers received support through the Manitoba Metis Federation's (MMF) Post-Secondary Education Support Program.

"I stopped having to worry about grocery bills and rent bills, and the fact that I can put my full focus and attention into my research and into my education," he said. "And as someone with a kidney transplant, my own health. I can dedicate a little bit of time to my self-care, knowing that I have that support.

"It takes a little bit of that stress away, especially in the pandemic."

In addition to appreciating the MMF's contributions to his education, Rogers said the recent tragic discoveries at the sites of former residential schools across the country have brought a deeper need to connect with his Métis heritage, including speaking with some family members who have been reluctant to embrace those roots.

"I've been thinking a lot about my Métis heritage and my identity," he said. "Growing up, it wasn't talked about a lot. There was one side of my family that talked about it more than it was talked about in my household.

"I've been speaking more about it and what it means to me. I've been having more conversations with family members, and I've been looking for additional resources to better educate myself."

## 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!



I'm always hungry, he's always stuffed