



# Le Métis

## President's Message



July 6, 2021 was a significant moment in the history of Métis Nation. I wish every one of you could have been there for this important event, but COVID-19 restrictions made that impossible. Even though we could not be together, I want to share what it was like to stand at the gate of Upper Fort Garry and sign an agreement that says Canada recognizes our inherent right to self-government.

To help you picture the event, I am sharing a brief summary of the highlights of my remarks.

In my heart, these words and this message were for you: the proud, strong Citizens of the Métis Nation.

*I'm very pleased to be here today, along with my Cabinet. It truly is an honour to be standing on the same ground, taking the same steps Louis David Riel walked with his Provisional Government. This is a good place to look at history and reflect on what he was able to accomplish.*

*Riel was a very religious man. He prayed vigorously and never carried a weapon throughout all the battles across our Homeland. He had his own military behind him, but all he carried was a cross. He also carried a dream and a vision. He wanted to ensure – not only for us, but for all minorities and the First Nations – that everyone had a place in Canada.*

*Even though we created this beautiful province and helped build this beautiful country, Canada's government of the day would not recognize Louis Riel and his Provisional Government as the government of Manitoba.*

*In fact, they went against his government and argued for over a century, saying that it had no standing. But we know there were about 10,000 of us Métis people here in the Red River at the time. There were approximately 2,000 non-Métis citizens and*

*a very, very small population of First Nations left in Manitoba. And yet, Canada and John A. Macdonald said we had no right to be a government in the prairies and no right to speak for the people who lived here.*

*Let me say this: there is nothing in this country that has ever been given to the Métis Nation without us fighting for it. Nothing. Everything we've achieved, we fought for.*

*Anyone who wants to challenge us better understand the Métis Nation of the Red River. We never give up. All you have to do is look at the last 151 years to know that we never give up.*

*We will never give up our rights or our place in Confederation. It is ours, we earned it. We bled for it and we died for it. This is a country we helped build and a province we built as a people, and we will defend it with everything we've got.*

*Today, when (federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations) Carolyn Bennett puts the ink on that piece of paper out in Toronto, and I put the ink on it here, that will tell you that after 151 years, we are now the only truly recognized province-wide Métis government in Canada.*

*This document, which is official today, stands very clearly and says the Crown recognizes the Manitoba Métis government is the government of all Red River Métis people. No matter where they live, in the west, in Germany, or the United States, they can always come home. We will always be there to protect our people – we will always have their back. And no one will be able to prevent that from happening.*

*We don't have to change our Constitution. We don't have to change the definition of who we are that we accepted in 2002.*

*What this signing shows is that if you have your mind in the right place and your heart in the right place, you can achieve anything in this country we call Canada.*

*Throughout all of that, our Nation has always been proud of who we are. We stood strong to protect our identity. We took strong measures to protect our families and sadly, our families paid a dear price for fighting to keep their identity.*

*And I look today of what we were able to achieve, thanks to a Prime Minister I prayed would come. One day, they said they will be a Prime Minister who will understand, who will want to work with us to achieve the peace and restart the developments that were taken away from us.*

*None of this would have happened if Justin Trudeau was not the Prime Minister we prayed for and if he did not have the vision and strength inside of him to not be swayed.*

*Without this partnership with Canada and recognition of our inherent rights, we would never have been able to give more than 2,000 of our students \$5,000 for their post-secondary education. We could have not helped Métis families make down payments on nearly 600 houses in Manitoba. We could not have helped 700 families get their houses fixed, so they can live another 10, 20, or 30 years in their homes.*

*If we look at the daycare centres we're building across this province, we're going to be able to create hundreds and hundreds of jobs and offer early learning to our children, based on our values and our culture.*

*The times are changing, and today's event is part of that change. When the treaty is complete, more change will happen. Don't let the word "treaty" confuse you. What is important to know is that this does not and will not make us First Nations. This is recognition of the Métis Nation by Canada in the modern era, with a modern-day treaty. And it is very clear that this is just the beginning. We will be talking about taxation, fiscal transfers, and law-making, all with the legal backing of our inherent right to self-government.*

*But we need to remember that our fight is not done. Riel was afraid that the Métis Nation would get swamped. He was afraid that people would forget who we are, our place in Manitoba and Canada, and our right to the land we were born to and built on. He was afraid people would forget that there is no place you can find the Métis Nation but the Red River and Western Canada.*

*Like Riel, I fear what the future will look like if others succeed in stealing our identity. That is what we're fighting for right now and we'll do everything in our power to prevent anyone from stealing that from us.*

*For now, let's stand up and celebrate what we've been able to do today.*

Thank you.

Meeqwetch,

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

## Minister Will Goodon to serve on inaugural CMHC Indigenous Advisory Council



Manitoba Metis Federation Minister of Housing and Property Management Will Goodon will serve on the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Indigenous Advisory Council.

If there's a conversation about housing occurring on a local, provincial, or national level, there's a pretty good chance that Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) Housing and Property Management Minister Will Goodon is a part of it.

Minister Goodon, who is based in Brandon, was recently unveiled as an inaugural member of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) 10-person Indigenous Advisory Council.

With only so many funding opportunities to go around, Minister Goodon said it's important to secure a seat at as many tables as possible.

"I saw this opportunity and I thought, 'It's always good to have Métis voices on these committees, especially when there's money being allocated,'" he said. "If we're not there, we get forgotten."

Though the council members were officially announced in early June, Minister Goodon said the group has already met a handful of times, laying the groundwork for how the council will operate successfully.

"We're mostly talking about strategic planning, some

terms of reference," Minister Goodon said, adding that the council has met with about half of CMHC's board members as well.

Creating an Indigenous Advisory Council, Minister Goodon explained, is not only a cornerstone of CMHC's reconciliation efforts, but also a sign that those endeavours are being made in good faith.

"From what I can tell, they're really trying hard to make a difference and not just use the words to say that they're doing reconciliation," he said. "There's a lot of people out there who want to do something right, but they don't know how. That was part of the reason why we came on board, too, (as) Indigenous voices to CMHC where they can have some feedback as to whether they're doing it the right way."

At this early point, Minister Goodon anticipates that the council will propose some of the reconciliation initiatives while reviewing those that originate within CMHC, including working with its committee of Indigenous employees.

"You can have a couple of Indigenous (people) and call it reconciliation, or you can embed reconciliation through everything you do, and that's what we want

to see at the council, that the CMHC takes it seriously and that every program has reconciliation embedded right inside of it," he said.

The 10 members of the council were appointed to a two-year term, with the possibility of a three-year extension. The council is made up of Métis, First Nations, and Inuit people of varying backgrounds and experiences, which Minister Goodon appreciates.

"I've learned a lot from all of them and they all bring incredible experience to the table," he said. "I have to put my piece out there, but I have to force myself to sit and learn at the same time, and that's always an important thing for me.

"Moving forward, I think it will be a very good thing in the long run."

In addition to his MMF and CMHC roles, Minister Goodon also co-chairs the Indigenous Homes Innovation Initiative's National Steering Committee. He hopes to see additional Métis Nation representation within other federal structures, such as the National Housing Council, in the future.

"We need to knock on those doors and open those doors. It's been a great experience ... bringing real

results back to our Elders, our families, our students – all the priorities that we have for our housing infrastructure – I want to have those doors open for us," he said. "The housing money that we get from Canada is fantastic, and we're able to do things that we've never been able to do before, but one thing I've learned from (MMF) President (David) Chartrand is you never rest on your laurels. You keep opening up new doors."

Stressing that his MMF duties remain his top priority, Minister Goodon credited the talent and hard work within the Housing Department to put him in a position to take on additional external responsibilities.

"I'm really lucky that (MMF) President (David) Chartrand sees our involvement in these things as being important, so to have a seat at the table is important, because otherwise, we don't know what's going on and the money's out the door before we even know that the door is there," he said. "It allows me to go out and get some more work in there, so that way, we can bring more staff in, we can do more service, and we can build more buildings."



# Liberty accepts Director role with Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages



Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) Director of Métis Nation 2020/Métis 150 Georgina Liberty is one of three directors that was recently named to the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages.

Georgina Liberty, Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) Director of Métis Nation 2020/Métis 150, has accepted a brand-new role with the federal government.

Liberty is joining the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, and will serve as the Métis director, while the other two director positions are filled by a First Nations and an Inuit representative, respectively.

Liberty pursued the position by answering a call put out by the federal government, eventually earning the spot after a four-month process.

"It's quite a thorough process. You are applying for a federal position, so they do all their due diligence," she said.

Liberty said she is eager for the office's first meeting, which will take place in mid-July, and she looks forward to setting up the office and getting to know Commissioner Ronald E. Ignace and fellow directors Robert Watt and Joan Greyeyes.

"Once we do that, then we'll be starting to set out the objectives," she said, "what the Office of the Commissioner is going to look like, and certainly have to take into consideration what the priorities are already.

"Under the (Indigenous Languages) Act, we're going to be looking at revitalizing, reclaiming, strengthening Indigenous languages for all of our Nations."

From what she knows about her colleagues, Liberty believes that the team that's been assembled is a solid one.

"We all have really strong attributes in different areas, so I think it's going to be a really impressive team. I'm hoping we're going to get a really good, cohesive feeling – sort of like a sash, all weaved together and bringing our strengths to the Commission, and working with the Minister to some degree to make sure that the objectives of the government are met."

From the Métis perspective, Liberty said time is of the essence to get going on language-preservation efforts.

"Particularly for me, for the Métis, we know that heritage Michif, or traditional Michif, as some call it, our speakers are passing at a rapid pace, it seems, so we're very close to extinction," she said. "Listening to (Métis National Council) President (Clément) Chartier and (MMF) President (David) Chartrand, that's an area of priority. What that whole process is going to look like and how we start doing our business, what that looks like, I don't know yet."

Liberty is undaunted by the challenges of helping to put together the inaugural office, as she has had a pioneering mentality throughout her career.

"I'm thrilled," she said. "My whole career has been being at the starting point of many different organizations and companies that I've worked for, so it fits my whole life of learning. I'm honoured, of course, to be the person to represent the Métis Nation for Indigenous languages.

"I believe, as long as you have a good foundation, as long as our roots are set – I've had the opportunity to work with grassroots people right from the get-go – so I think listening to their words, what they envision and what they expect, is one thing."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Liberty will be working from home initially, but plans to soon find an office in Winnipeg and eventually be in Ottawa on a regular basis. She also anticipates meeting national leaders and attending events in her role.

"We want to make sure we hear the voices of the people," she said.

Liberty said her work pays tribute to father, Elder George Fleury, an MMF founder and fluent Michif speaker and advocate who passed in February. She will take the opportunity to learn Michif herself.

"If I can revitalize and strengthen and reclaim our Michif language as a tribute to him, but also for my own learning, because I never learned from my perfect person that I had to teach me. In my learning of Michif as well, I will do that in honour of my dad," she said.

## 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!

To celebrate *Métis Fishing Week* from July 3 to 11, send us a photo of your favourite catch by emailing [communications@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:communications@mmf.mb.ca) or tagging us on Instagram at [@manitobametisfederation!](https://www.instagram.com/manitobametisfederation/) Pictured here is Brett Overwater, holding a brown trout in Lac du Bonnet.



Don't pout if you've got a big trout!

## Elder Terry Somerset honoured at Keeping the Fires Burning ceremony



Elder Terry Somerset was honoured at the 20th annual Keeping the Fires Burning ceremony on June 21.



Each inductee into the Keepers of the Fire Circle receives a cultural gift – shawls for Grandmothers, and blankets for Grandfathers. MMF President David Chartrand presented Elder Terry Somerset with the shawl – a symbol of Ka Ni Kanichihk's appreciation for her activism.

Métis Elder Terry Somerset was inducted as a Grandmother at the Ka Ni Kanichihk's 20th annual Keeping the Fires Burning ceremony on June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day. Each year, the event honours the work and achievements of Métis Nation, First Nations, and Inuit Knowledge Keepers and Elders.

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) nominated Elder Somerset for her years of dedication to the Métis Nation.

Elder Somerset worked hard to ensure her ancestors Angelique and Marguerite Nolin were recognized as Pioneers in Education. Elder Somerset advocated for a plaque to commemorate the Métis sisters' work, which was unveiled at the St. Boniface Museum in 2015.

The Nolins opened a school for Indigenous girls in the Red River Settlement in 1829 – the first established school of its kind in Western Canada. Both fluent in French, English, Ojibway, and Cree, the Nolin sisters helped Father Georges-Antoine Belcourt communicate with First Nations people and create an Ojibway dictionary.

MMF President David Chartrand introduced Elder

Somerset at the virtual event, discussing her work championing women's rights for many years.

"When she has her mind set on something, she doesn't stop. She went on a campaign to make sure that the two sisters, the first women teachers to be here in Manitoba, should be awarded and recognized for their great work. So she actually had a plaque finally installed in St. Boniface, and again, she wouldn't give up on her dream. She wanted a school named after them. She's not finished. Even at 96, she's still out there lobbying," President Chartrand said.

Elder Somerset spoke at the ceremony, expressing her gratitude for being recognized.

"I'm glad that I did this. Because when I came I didn't think anybody would listen to me. But they accept me with open arms. And it's the greatest thing I've ever done, because all my life I've known I was a Métis," Elder Somerset said.

"Thank you very much for having me over. You have no idea what it does, how proud I am that I'm here on behalf of the Nolins. Took a long time, but I'm here."

President Chartrand said Elder Somerset's advocacy work at the age of 96 is a testament to the determination of Indigenous women, particularly Métis women.

"We're a matriarchal society," he said. "We're raised by our mothers. Mothers are the power of our Nation. And clearly at the end of the day, they tell you what they see in the future, and our job is to get it done."