



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.

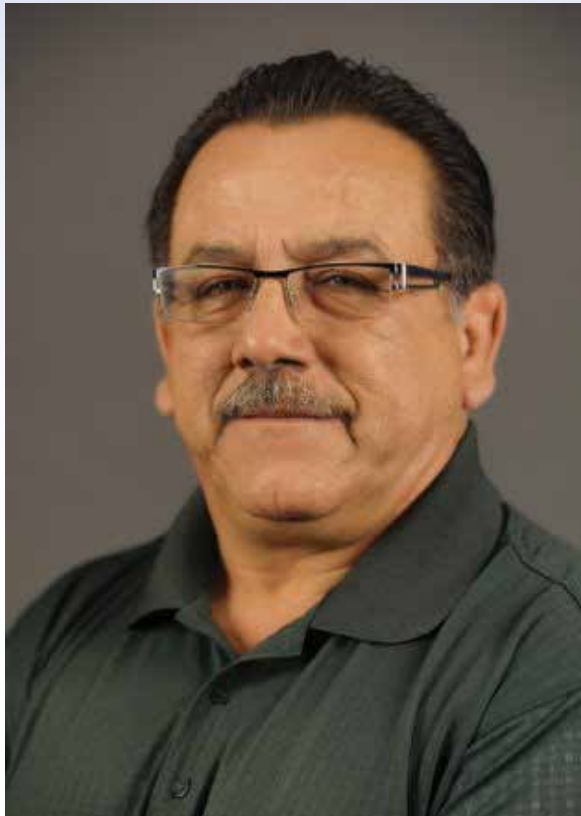
For now, let's stand up and celebrate what we've been able to do today.

Thank you.

Meeqwetch,

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

Métis Veterans and Elders appointed to the Commission of the Métis Veterans Legacy Program



Jack Park was recently appointed as Chair to the Commission of the Métis Veterans Legacy Program.

David Chartrand, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Spokesperson for the Métis National Council, as well as President of the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), recently announced the appointees to the Commission of the Métis Veterans Legacy Program (MVLVP).

Chaired by Jack Park, the Commission includes Métis Veterans and Elders: David Armit from Comox, B.C.; Alex Maurice from Beauval, Sask.; Ted Mitchell from Dryden, Ont.; and Elder Jim Durocher from Ile a la Crosse, Sask.

“Candidates for this prestigious position were carefully selected from within the Métis Nation,” said President Chartrand. “Each Commissioner possesses extensive knowledge and experience within the Métis Nation and specifically with Métis Veterans. Each Commissioner has a unique understanding and respect for Métis Veterans that enhances their qualifications and puts them in a position to succeed.

Each appointee recognizes the honour and privilege of sitting on this Commission.”

A Métis Veteran himself, Mr. Park was awarded the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 in part because of his service in the Canadian Armed Forces. He said he is grateful to President Chartrand for the honour to serve as Chair.

“I want to thank him personally for appointing me to that position. I’m very honoured, and I’m looking forward to ensuring that his vision for the Veterans is fulfilled to the maximum,” said Mr. Park.

“It’s actually quite humbling, and I feel very good about it. I’m just excited to get going and help these Veterans out who have sacrificed their lives for Canada.”

The establishment of the Commission puts the MVLVP into full operations for its mission of recognizing and honouring the forgotten Métis Veterans who served Canada in the Second World War. The Commission will support overall objectives of the MVLVP.

“The first task of the Commission will be to work alongside members of the Métis Veterans Legacy Program to review and decide on commemoration project proposals to preserve the legacy of Second World War Métis Veterans, as well as Métis Veterans from other theatres of war. From there, the Commission is tasked with developing the structure of a National Metis Veterans Association that will advocate for all Métis who have served or are currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces,” said President Chartrand.

“The Commission will represent the Métis Nation at official functions from time to time and will also adjudicate appeals for the MVLVP Recognition Payment Program. I am so proud that after a decades-long fight, we have a permanent program that gives us an opportunity to recognize and honour our Veterans, as was the hope of our WWII Métis Veterans.”

Last month, all newly appointed Commissioners underwent training for their orientation.

“We went through a vigorous training regimen that was put together by our staff ... and it was fantastic, the way it was received by myself and my fellow Veterans that are Commissioners as well,” said Mr. Park. “We found it very helpful in terms of how we are going to be deliberating on each case that comes before us, and how we’re going to review these proposals and ensure that the Veterans are recognized, duly recognized, in their communities all across Canada, so it’s quite exciting.”

The announcement of the Commission follows the launch of the MVLVP Commemoration Program in February 2021. The Commemoration Program serves to promote awareness and appreciation of the achievements, contributions, and sacrifices made by Métis Veterans by inviting Métis Citizens to create public displays of homage to Métis Veterans.

“Since the launch of the Commemoration Program in February 2021, the response has been overwhelmingly positive,” said President Chartrand. “Several applications have already been submitted, which together offer a variety of ways to honour Métis Veterans. We will be announcing the first commemoration project in the coming weeks.”

For more information on the MVLVP and to apply for commemoration project funding, please visit metisveterans.ca, email veteran.info@metisnation.ca, or call **1-800-532-1993**.

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 and you may see it in print!



Our favourite spot

Benoit heeds Call to the Bar



Genevieve Benoit recently received her Call to the Bar.

At the outset of her legal career, Genevieve Benoit already has some overarching goals she's hoping to achieve.

The big one, according to Benoit, who from a very young age grew up with the staff and leadership in the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) family, is to stand up for and give back to the Métis Nation. Benoit says that she looks up to MMF President David Chartrand and Cabinet Ministers who have been dedicated to defending the Manitoba Métis.

"As a proud descendent of the Red River Métis, I aspire to do my part to advance the rights and interests of the Métis Nation. I hope to be able to grow and practice more in the area of Aboriginal law focusing on Métis rights," she said. "I think it's really important to ensure that our rights are being respected and recognized by Canada and other governments."

The University of Manitoba grad received her administrative Call to the Bar in mid-May, and she has been active with MN Trachtenberg Law Corporation, the same firm with which she articulated, since then. Benoit's current areas of focus are litigation and Aboriginal law.

"It was definitely an emotional day," Benoit said of the Call to the Bar. "Despite the fact that COVID is around, we were still able to celebrate in the way that we could."

Benoit's schooling was mostly finished by the time the pandemic emerged in the spring of 2020 during the tail end of her final year of classes. In the big picture, its impact was minimal, as she was interning for the past year before being called to the Bar.

"I was really lucky in the sense that life continued as usual, aside from the occasional working-from-home (day) in the first little bit," Benoit said. "I was largely unaffected, which I'm very grateful for."

Benoit has long embraced her Métis roots, as she was involved with the Manitoba Indigenous Law Students' Association throughout law school, serving in the roles of 1L Representative, President, and VP Finance.

In her third year of law school, Benoit was accepted into the Osgoode Hall Indigenous Intensive Program through York University in Toronto. The program includes a placement, and for seven weeks in early 2020, Benoit was placed with the Navajo Nation Supreme Court in Window Rock, Ariz.

While there, Benoit was fascinated to discover how the Navajo system operated within the American judicial system, as well as the respect other courts had for its decisions.

"I learned about their Nation, their court systems, and their governance model. It was the most memorable part of my law school experience," she said. "The Navajo Nation Supreme Court incorporated their language and culture into their court decisions. They would get appeals from lower courts, and the way they tackled them was really involved with their teachings and their language. That's what stood out the most to me."

Without a similar space for Indigenous court systems in Canada, Benoit was intrigued by the Navajo Nation's operations and wonders if similar models could be implemented north of the border.

"It was interesting to see that dynamic and begin to think of ideas for what the future of the Métis Nation court system could look like," she said. "I think that there's definitely room for the Canadian government and Canadian court systems to acknowledge Métis legal structures, jurisdiction, and laws, and try to find a way to incorporate those into Canadian society."

"In Canada, we have such a high rate of Indigenous people being incarcerated including Métis, so I think the best way of trying to address this issue is to bring nations in."

Benoit, who has been involved with the MMF since she was a child, cites Jean Teillet, a Métis lawyer and writer, who has argued on behalf of the Métis Nation including the Goodon Decision here in Manitoba, as her role model.

"Having been involved with the Manitoba Métis Community since I was quite small, I have always wanted to be a lawyer and hopefully one day help the Métis Nation," she said.

Benoit also eventually hopes to be in a position to mentor up-and-coming Métis lawyers.

She added that the MMF has been nothing but supportive throughout her educational journey. Indeed, the MMF has been an essential part of her growth.

"Throughout my schooling and my journey to becoming a lawyer, the support and encouragement I've received from President David Chartrand and his Cabinet has not gone unnoticed," she said. "I want to thank our President and our Manitoba Métis Government for their help. It's been a long road and I really appreciate their support. As a Métis lawyer, it is now my turn to help in any way I can."

Megan Wood receives 2020/21 President David Chartrand Education Scholarship



Elmwood High School Principal Mike Babb, graduate Megan Wood, and Winnipeg Metis Association Vice-President Andrew Carrier.

New graduate Megan Wood of Elmwood High School is this year's recipient of the President David Chartrand Education Scholarship. The scholarship gives Wood \$1,000 to help her pursue her goals in post-secondary education.

In her application for the scholarship, Wood said that she shares Manitoba Metis Federation President Chartrand's interest in protecting and enhancing the experience of students in the education system. She hopes to help students come out of their shell and achieve their own goals. To help her make

this happen, she plans to attend the University of Winnipeg in the faculty of education.

Wood enjoys playing basketball and volleyball, art, reading, and playing games. A piece of her artwork, titled "Sweet Dreams," was selected by a committee from the Red Cross and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs for inclusion in a First Nations Health and Wellness Colouring Book.

In her letter of recommendation for Wood, Laura Buller, Student Success Support Teacher at Elmwood High School, said Wood represented Elmwood High School with pride and dignity. She describes Wood as an incredible student, avid athlete, and generous community member. Buller also describes Wood's "lead-by-example" attitude as an athlete, which helped newcomers feel welcome and part of the team.

Wood participated in the 2019 Manitoba High School Athletics Association AAA All-Star basketball game, and took part in the Canadian Academy of Travel and Tourism program, which required a high level of academic performance and significant volunteer hours.

During her time at Elmwood High School, she helped sort clothes at the MCC Thrift Shop, picked up garbage during Happy Days on Henderson, and served community members on Soup Day.

"Receiving this scholarship helped me get closer to my goal of helping students receive the same opportunities I received during high school and expand their knowledge on Indigenous culture," said Wood.

"I am very proud to award this scholarship to Megan, who is a worthy recipient," said President Chartrand. "I truly believe that education is something that can never be taken from you once you have it, and I want to encourage all Indigenous students to work hard toward post-secondary educational goals."

The President David Chartrand Education Scholarship is funded through the Children's Legacy Fund, which was established in 1984, when the Children's Aid Society closed. When it dissolved, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre was one of several organizations to receive funds, which they used to create the Children's Legacy Fund to support Indigenous Youth as they further their education.



Who doesn't love a good fish picture? While these photos were sent to celebrate Métis Fishing Week from July 3 to 11, send us a photo anytime – of your favourite catch, walking the dog, or just hanging out at home. Email communications@mmf.mb.ca or tag us on Instagram at [@manitobametisfederation](https://www.instagram.com/manitobametisfederation) for the chance to be featured on our social media platforms, or in Le Metis!