



## **Working together to protect our identity**

On July 21, I travelled to Edmonton to meet with the Alberta Métis Federation (AMF) and sign a memorandum of understanding, creating a framework that allows for the pursuit of shared goals, including the protection of the historic Métis Nation identity, exercising of section 35 rights outlined in the *Constitution Act* of 1982 and pursuing legal, cultural, economic, and business opportunities where there are common interests.

This memorandum of understanding is an important document, one that shows a new pathway forward for the many Métis Nation Citizens who have been abandoned by provincial bodies who say they represent their rights and interests, but instead consider themselves clubs. Partnering with the AMF strengthens our joint ability to protect our identity, while recognizing the independence of the AMF's member communities and their right to self-determination.

Today our Nation stands at a crossroad. On one side, there are patriots – Riel's people – who stand ready to defend the Métis Nation, which was born in the Red River and extends into the West. People who believe that respecting our culture and our ways, like listening to the Assembly and the will of Citizens, is of profound importance to how we operate as a Nation. The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and the AMF share this belief and will work together to defend our democracy, our culture, and our practices. We

believe this memorandum is only the beginning of a new path forward for those of us who trace our ancestry back to the Red River Métis.

On the other side, there are those who would support the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), who could be referred to as "Powley's people," as they challenge the democratically agreed upon national definition of Métis, by introducing what they call "historic communities" in Ontario. The identified communities in Ontario do not have connections with the Métis Nation that evolved from the Red River Settlement. By their own report, only 22 per cent of the MNO's citizenship are ancestrally connected to Métis communities in Western Canada.

What MNO is accepting in their definition is a combination of three different groups: The "historic communities," the Powley people, and the 22 per cent who can trace their heritage back to the Red River Métis.

The leaders of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the Métis Nation British Columbia have thrown their support behind the MNO, in spite of the obvious evidence and risks to our identity, as well as the lack of consultation or support from Citizens.

In their most recent attempts to further their agenda, the MNO brought the Métis National Council (MNC) to a corporate court in Eastern Canada to rule on Métis governance issues. In their arguments, the MNO said that the MNC is just a corporation, with no ability to operate as a government. It also argued that the General Assembly, a traditional and core institution of the Métis Nation and the MNC, does not have authority over its own governance. We know that no one but the Red River Métis can decide who we are and our identity. These eastern people of mixed heritage are not us and they must pursue their rights separately. We will not let their numbers overwhelm us and distort our Nation's identity.

If these membership-based clubs succeed in their bid to change who can be part of our Nation, the MNC will no longer be capable of exclusively representing Citizens who trace their ancestry to the Red River Métis. Instead, it will become a pan-Indigenous organization that would include people with no historic connection to our Nation.

Unlike the other provinces within our Homeland, the MMF has asked for, and received, a clear mandate from its Citizens to protect our national identity and prevent the so-called "historic communities" from diluting our culture and legacy. That mandate includes leaving the MNC if it proves necessary to protect our definition of Métis identity.

Thanks to the agreement we signed with Canada at Upper Fort Garry on July 6, 2021, leaving the MNC will not take away our ability to protect and represent the rights of the Red River Métis. The agreement cements recognition of the MMF as the democratically elected representative for the Métis who trace their ancestry back to the Red River, no matter where they live in the world.

I will say this: we will do what we must and what we have always done in Manitoba. We will be the iron wall that protects our identity and nationhood from the threat of invasion from the East. We will turn our focus to becoming the national voice for those who derive their rights from the Red River Métis, also known as the Manitoba Métis, ensuring their interests are properly represented. It is no less than what Louis Riel would have expected of us.

As Louis Riel said on January 28, 1870, on the ninth day of the Convention of 40:

*"We must seek to preserve the existence of our own people. We must not by our own act allow ourselves to be swamped. If the day comes when that is done, it must be by no act of ours."*

*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.*

Until we can be together again, I encourage everyone to stay safe and follow the public health guidelines. 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. Q.M. ∞

# Citizen cycling to combat childhood cancer



Kyle Waczko is participating in the Great Cycle Challenge for the month of August to raise funds for the SickKids Foundation.

Kyle Waczko hadn't cycled before this year.

In January 2021, he picked up cycling for the first time in an effort to train for a Ducks Unlimited Canada ride, a charity for which he runs the Southeast chapter fundraising committee in Steinbach. He started a 15-week cycle program in his basement, cycling around 7-km at a time, and began riding outside in March.

But when a friend's nine-year-old son Adrian was diagnosed with brain cancer, the Métis Citizen and his wife wanted to know what they could do to help.

"Fighting a certain type of brain cancer, he has been putting up the battle of his life," Waczko said. "It's unfortunate that instead of living life, kids like him have to fight for it."

After signing up to donate blood, Waczko wanted to do more.

That's where he found the Great Cycle Challenge, a charity that supports SickKids Foundation, which funds research for childhood cancer.

"They challenge each other to do so many kilometres and raise a certain amount of money. So, I jumped at the chance," he said.

Waczko pledged to ride 500-km for the month of August, with hopes to raise \$500, but he's already surpassed that goal, having raised over \$4,000 at time of print.

Among over 1,800 other Manitobans participating in the Great Cycle Challenge, the first-time rider is



Waczko has embarked on an 800-km ride across the province, which will take place over a span of six days.

sitting in third place for donations as of press time.

"I've been trying to get as much exposure as I can for this cause," Waczko said. "It goes to the SickKids (Foundation), and they do a lot of work and research regarding childhood cancer, and their main model is kids should be living life, not fighting for it."

And Waczko has quite the undertaking for the Great Cycle Challenge, with plans to cycle 800-km across the province and back over a span of six days. Kicking off the month on August 1, he left Giroux for Wasagaming, with plans to stop in Winnipeg, Elie, Portage la Prairie, Langruth, Amaranth, Alonsa, McCreary, and Ste. Rose. After a day's rest, he'll end back in Giroux on August 6 after stopping through Minnedosa, Neepawa, and Portage la Prairie.

"I'm stoked. I can't wait to do it," Waczko said prior to his journey. "It kind of works out anywhere from 160 to 180-km a day. So quite a lot. The goal is basically the equivalent I believe of running a marathon every day in cycling terms. It's about six hours, seven hours of riding a day."

In preparation for the five-day trek, Waczko completed a handful of 160-km rides, and had been cycling 40 to 80 km three to four times a week.

The "Ride to the Lake" in support of Ducks Unlimited Canada was also good practice. The July event saw close to 60 cyclists travel from Winnipeg to Kenora, with proceeds going towards Canada's wetlands and habitat.

"That was over 220 km, so by far my biggest accomplishment as of yet has been that, but for the

children's the Great Cycle Challenge, I'm looking at an 800-km road in front of me, and as long as the weather holds out on me, I'm going to make it to Wasagaming and back to the town of Giroux," Waczko said prior to his kick-off.

Although his journey is ambitious, Waczko said thinking about all of the donations he has received will keep him going, and stressed the importance of volunteering and getting behind causes.

"You will feel good and it does get noticed," he said. "Programs, charities – they don't happen without people putting in their time. You're never too busy to lend a hand in things you enjoy and can get behind."

While Waczko's five-day trek ends on August 6, donations for the Great Cycle Challenge are open for the entire month of August.

"I'm going to continue riding as well. I just wanted to kick it off with a big trip to start the whole thing for myself," he said.

To donate to Waczko's page, visit <https://greatcyclechallenge.ca/Riders/KyleWaczko/o>

## 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!



Feeling sash-y

## Manitoba Museum's new Prairies Gallery implements more Métis history



The installation of Louis Riel with his walking stick at Manitoba Museum's new Prairies Gallery.

At a time when institutions such as museums are striving to look beyond the colonial perspective, the Manitoba Museum has re-evaluated its offerings with a Métis lens.

The museum, located in downtown Winnipeg, recently launched its Prairies Gallery – a reimagining of its Grasslands Gallery – with an emphasis on additional Métis, First Nations, and Inuit inclusion. The freshening up caps off the museum's four-year, \$20.5-million capital renewal project.

To start, at the entrance to the galleries are separate land acknowledgements for both First Nations and the Métis. The Homeland of the Métis Nation acknowledgement recognizes Louis Riel and the Provisional Government as Manitoba's founders while providing basic background on the Métis Nation.

One of the major revamps is an increased focus on Riel, which curator of history Dr. Roland Sawatzky described as overdue during a tour of the exhibit in April. When the museum was planning the new exhibit, Sawatzky said it took care to consult with other museums and historical sites, ranging from Le Musée de Saint-Boniface Museum to the Louis Riel Institute's Riel House to Upper Fort Garry, to ensure it was not covering the same ground.

"We talked about how we could work together so our exhibits are complementary," Sawatzky said.

Ultimately, the museum opted to focus primarily on Riel's political influence through a timeline of notable dates and accompanying pictures, heavily focused on the Métis perspective. Beyond the hard facts, however, it also seeks to humanize the province's founder, as his likeness is printed on a transparent pane, and, looking at a certain angle, the Riel figure appears to be holding a walking stick.

"What we agreed upon was we wanted him to be (almost to) scale, but a little bit larger than life, still, because he is that kind of figure," Sawatzky said. "He is a monumental figure in Canada, but we wanted him to be approachable."

The stick, donated to the museum by the Royal Winnipeg Rifles in 2017, was utilized by Riel until he gave it to his escort that took him to his jail cell in Regina following his defeat at Batoche in 1885. At the time of donation, a petition addressed to the Rifles asked that the stick be repatriated to the Métis Nation, receiving more than 250 signatures. Museum curator of cultural anthropology Dr. Maureen Matthews said that the museum was not directly contacted with the request, however.

"There was (also) nothing from the (Manitoba) Metis Federation. We were talking at the time," she said. Surrounding the Riel piece are installations that cover five ways people have viewed Riel over time: leader of the Métis people; political leader as an MP; traitor; human being, husband and father; and Father of Confederation.

"Many of these perspectives are not agreed upon," Sawatzky said, "but they're all an important part of Canadian and Manitoban history."

Some artifacts that have been part of the exhibit for years are now presented differently, Matthews explained, singling out a sash that belonged to Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière, the grandfather of Louis Riel and proud Métis.

"That part of his story was never really privileged before," she said. "It was part of the Hudson's Bay Company collection as a treasure of the Hudson's Bay Company, and now it's here because it's about a very important Métis family who helped shape this province."

Matthews hopes that when guests look through the exhibit, they realize the true extent of Métis influence on the city.

"We've brought our artifacts that really deal with the beginning of Métis cultural identity and we make the big point in this part of the exhibit that Winnipeg was a really Métis place," Matthews said. "Up until Confederation, it was a really Métis place."

Matthews has worked to implement more and more Métis elements into the museum's exhibits over the years, noting that she has worked closely with the Krauchi family, including beadwork artist Jennine, on past Métis-related exhibits, and is in the process of completing another regarding quillwork.

Matthews added that the exhibit on the 1938 destruction of the Métis community of Ste. Madeleine was the first in museum history to include Michif translations. The permanent exhibit, which was installed in 2019, includes contributions from late Elder George Fleury.

*\*The Manitoba Museum is open as of August 5. Visit [manitobamuseum.ca](http://manitobamuseum.ca) for details as restrictions continue to loosen in Manitoba.*

# Métis Youth leader launches Indigenous clothing brand



Métis Youth leader Justin Langan has recently launched an Indigenous clothing brand, O'KANATA Apparel.

Justin Langan's aim to support Métis Youth has always been a key aspect of his volunteerism. He first became involved with the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) in 2015, when he joined the Northwest Youth Advisory Committee, which allowed him to empower other Métis Youth in the province.

That was just the start of a long road of accomplishments for Langan.

The University of Manitoba political studies undergrad has sat on the MMF Provincial Youth Advisory Committee, has an Interactive Media Arts diploma from Assiniboine Community College, and previously served as Editor-in-Chief of the Métis Youth newsletter, *The Cart*. The Northwest Region community leader accrued a long list of accolades for his engagement with Métis Youth and his mental health advocacy – from a Manitoba Indigenous Youth Achievement Award, to being named one of CBC Manitoba's Future 40 last year, to being honoured with a 2021 Indspire Award as a Youth Recipient, among many others.

Now, at the young age of 22, Langan has recently launched an Indigenous clothing brand. Through O'KANATA Apparel, he will continue to support Indigenous Youth. Ten per cent of each purchase will help fund scholarships, initiatives, programming, and community supports for Indigenous Youth.

"The clothing line will help fund Indigenous Youth through scholarships and bursaries, for which Youth can apply when applications open this fall. Youth will also be able to apply for project funding in their home communities," Langan said.

"I have always wanted to create a key Indigenous brand that directly assists the Indigenous Youth of this country."

Langan said the idea came to him earlier this year.

"I wanted to create a brand that would reflect the unique and troubled history of this country while also being proud of where Indigenous people are today, so using the Huron-Iroquois word 'kanata' to reflect that in the name seemed right to me."

Langan said the launch of his brand would not have been possible without support from the Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC), an MMF affiliate that supports small Indigenous businesses with loans and other services. Through the MMF's Youth Entrepreneurship Program, Langan received funding to help purchase clothing and launch the brand's website.

"I appreciate the help and assistance LRCC gave to me by guiding my entrepreneurial process," he said.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Program is part of the MMF Entrepreneurship Initiative, which aims to strengthen Métis economic development and entrepreneurship through increased support for small businesses and new business startups.

Asked his advice to a young Métis entrepreneur looking to start a business, Langan said to never be afraid to look and ask for help.

"Whether that be in terms of funding," he said, "or in terms of feedback from friends and family. It's a daunting task to start your own business, and it will take up a lot of your time, but as long as you plan accordingly and be open to feedback, I trust you will do great."

Since the website's June 2021 launch, Langan said sales have been going well.

"The feedback I have been getting from customers (has) been so encouraging, and I appreciate the support so much. People seem to love the product and that makes me so happy."

The extensive line includes casual clothing for children – from a baby bib and onesie, to a toddler t-shirt – in addition to adults – from hoodies, sweatshirts, sports joggers, and tank tops, to baseball caps and toques. O'KANATA Apparel also has an Every Child Matters collection, with the option of an

orange or black t-shirt. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Legacy of Hope Foundation, which raises awareness about the residential school system.

Langan plans to expand the clothing line to add new designs and incorporate more Indigenous artists across the country.

"I want to focus on designs from distinct groups of Indigenous people, reflecting the heritage of those people and the history they have," he said.

While O'KANATA Apparel has taken up a lot of his time, Langan, who is entering his second year of his Bachelor of Arts degree in the fall, is also spending the summer creating Indigenous short films in his home community of Swan River. He said he balances all of his projects by creating a schedule each day to manage deadlines.

"It has taken some time to find the correct balance for myself, especially when reflecting on my mental health, but it's always a balancing act. I'm happy to be in the position where I can get the supports I need for the projects I have dreamed of."

For more information on O'KANATA Apparel, please visit [okanataapparel.ca](http://okanataapparel.ca), or visit the clothing line's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram ([@okanataapparel](https://www.instagram.com/okanataapparel)) pages.



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