



Le Métis

President's Message



I have always been taught that in order to know where you are going, you must reflect on where you've been. While it's always important to do this, thinking about the opportunities of a new year gives your Métis government time to think about our pathway forward as we continue to advance our Nation – the Red River Métis, also known as the Manitoba Métis.

We certainly accomplished a lot in 2021.

How we protected our Citizens against COVID-19

I can easily recall to my mind the emotions we were all facing at the beginning of 2021, when there were very few people who had access to vaccines, and we were fighting against a province that refused to prioritize the Métis, in spite of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization's recommendations. At the time, we said we bring every drop of our Nation's fighting spirit to bear in order to ensure our Elders and vulnerable Citizens could access these life-saving measures.

While we fought for that access, we introduced a COVID-19 testing site for Métis Citizens, and provided additional funding to keep our students safe and well in spite of the many business closures that took away their part-time jobs. We also continued providing funding to our small and medium sized businesses, including farmers, ranchers, fishers, and artisans, to keep them going and help them keep their families fed.

How we built economic resilience from the ground up

At the beginning of 2021, I promised Citizens and our federal partners, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Cabinet, that we would build child care centres, seniors housing and affordable housing units. I also told Citizens we would protect harvesting rights, bring focus to green initiatives and evolve our

Nation's ability to be the economic engine of the West, as we were at our Nation's beginning.

I am so proud to say that, thanks to the hardworking Cabinet and staff at the MMF, we were able to accomplish everything we said we would in 2021, including protecting our harvesters and prioritizing the battle against climate change with our ambitious tree planting campaign to give back to the earth.

One of the most important ways we helped Citizens kickstart their economic well-being is through home ownership. When someone owns a home, they have equity, they have something to pass to their children, and they have security. A well-maintained home that is owned by the people living there is so critical to financial well-being. We have received over 1,000 applications for our housing program, with approximately 600 families having already purchased their homes and several hundred more still looking.

That said, with the housing market and the costs to repair homes in such a volatile state, many more Red River Métis homebuyers needed help to achieve their dreams of home ownership, and your Métis government was ready to help. We not only helped our Citizens buy houses, we also helped them maintain and upgrade their homes through our Home Enhancement Loan Program.

We know that the economy will continue to shift as the pandemic continues on. Many people, particularly Youth, are moving away from traditional jobs and into the microbusiness space, becoming entrepreneurs in their own right. That's why we started providing support in these important and growing spaces, while continuing to fund our students' academic dreams and delivering on critical training to help all our Citizens find employment and build economic stability for the future.

One new program we introduced in 2021 is designed to help Citizens in our communities where there are no child care centres. Your Métis government is offering Red River Métis Citizens training, support, and assistance with funding to offer child care services in their own homes. This can offer so many benefits, generating an income for the child care provider and allowing parents to seek educational or employment opportunities, secure in the knowledge that their children are receiving quality care in their home community.

We also purchased three sites in 2021 to create camps that help our Youth reach their potential. I know many families will be so excited for these camps to start, and I look forward to delivering on these plans in 2022.

I fully expect this momentum to continue into 2022, as we continue to support our Citizens, contribute to economic momentum in our Homeland and work to

offset the harmful impacts of climate change, putting Canada on notice that our Nation is rising stronger than ever before.

Keeping in touch – virtually

We undertook a number of consultations over the course of the year, to make sure our Citizens' voices were heard and that we continued providing you with the transparent, accountable governance you are accustomed to. To help offset the challenge of COVID-19 risk, we went to online consultation on matters related to child and family services, identity and citizenship, implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, health, and more.

The need to stay connected is also the reason why our 52nd Annual General Assembly went virtual. Out of respect for our Citizens and our democratic process, we only passed essential motions, but did not deliberate or vote on constitutional resolutions. Instead, we wanted to wait until our next full Assembly so that our Citizens can meaningfully discuss, debate, and provide feedback on the proposed resolutions. We hope to be able to gather in person in the spring so we can hear more about your will.

During the virtual Assembly and for several months after, we also conducted surveys of Citizens to understand your needs and concerns. I want to assure you that your will has been heard. The thoughts you shared with us are important and have been heard by other governments and stakeholders in Canada.

It is one of my most cherished hopes that we will be able to gather together in person in 2022.

Coming together to mourn our past and build a brighter future

This year saw Canada begin to grapple with the truth of how the Métis, First Nations, and Inuit have been treated in this country. Canadians are waking up to the fact that the unmarked graves resulting from the residential and day school system are just the tip of the iceberg of mechanisms that have worked to take the spirit out of the Indigenous child, including the Sixties Scoop and the disproportionate number of kids in the foster system and the justice system today.

For many of our Citizens, these discussions have reawakened pain and forced them to relive the suffering they experienced at the hands of these horrific policies. Know that your Métis government will never let anyone forget what we went through as a Nation, nor will we let them forget that our resilience is the reason our people still have our culture and our identity.

I will deliver this important message to His Holiness when we meet with him in Rome, along with sharing our Nation's hopes for a revitalized relationship with the Catholic Church that reflects our longstanding history together.

While meeting with Pope Francis will be an important step on the road to healing, we know there are many policies and systems that need to be taken apart in order for us to find our rightful place in Canada's confederation as a sovereign nation with protected rights and a widely recognized place in the constitution.

As painful as the revelation of the unmarked graves was for us all, there were bright spots in 2021 that showed advancement in truth and reconciliation, including the passing of Bill C-15, *An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This was quickly followed by the signing of our *Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* on July 6 of this year.

It was truly an honour to stand where our first President, Louis Riel, stood on the day we signed the agreement, and usher in a new era for the Red River Métis. I hope his spirit was with us as we were recognized as the legitimate government of our Citizens, at the very same place he and his provisional government first stood to proclaim our right to own ourselves, and were not recognized. It took 151 years for Canada to recognize the Métis government in the Prairies.

There are many more good things to come our way as a result of this agreement, but this was such a monumental and historic step, I still feel a deep sense of pride whenever I think of it.

Forging a path away from identity shifters

This year saw many disappointing behaviours and actions by former allies, who appear to have fundamentally lost their way. These provincial leaders in other provinces have opened the floodgates to non-Red River Métis, becoming a pan-Indigenous organization and truly losing the purpose of the Métis National Council (MNC) that was established in 1983.

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) brought 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. It is also the position of MNO and the other provincial leaders that their organizations are nothing more

than clubs, giving them a right to control who receives membership, abandoning the very concept of citizenship.

That was only the beginning of the shameful actions of these clubs this year.

Once we withdrew from the MNC, in accordance with the mandate unanimously handed to us by you, our Citizens, our decision was validated by the terrible actions of the remaining members of the council. It did not take long for them to begin bringing us to court over our July 6 agreement with Canada and over our rights as outlined in Section 31 and 32 of the *Manitoba Act*. It also did not take long for them to start talking about "Métis Nations" as though there is more than one, or about sweat lodges and drums as though they ever belonged to the Red River Métis.

We know our Citizens made the right decision in giving us this mandate, and these actions are proving it again and again. I fully expect to see more of these shameful identity distortions in the coming year – it will become increasingly clear to all that these bodies do not wish to preserve and honour our identity, which is Louis Riel's identity, Cuthbert Grant's identity, and Gabriel Dumont's identity – those visionary leaders who gave so much to fight for our rights.

We know we are not alone in our concern for what's happening with these provincial organizations, and you can see it in the number of inquiries, requests, and calls for help we are receiving from across the Homeland. Patriots are gathering once again to the standard of the Red River Métis, ready to battle against those who would swamp us and use our identity for their own gain. That's why we signed a memorandum of understanding with the Alberta Métis Federation earlier in the year, and why we are receiving thousands upon thousands of individual citizenship applications from across the prairie provinces, and beyond.

To help ensure our voices are heard in Ottawa and there is good understanding of what our priorities are, we launched an incentive to help drive voting during the federal election in September, offering prizes donated by the Red River Métis business community. Through this, we not only set precedent in Canadian electoral policy, we saw a sharp increase in voters, particularly in our Youth. This is exactly the outcome we hoped for, and we know that the strength of our vote will ensure that our priorities are heard and addressed.

Exciting developments yet to come

Some of the important initiatives we've been working towards that we expect to see concluded in 2022 are

Métis-specific healthcare legislation, settlement of our land claim and the creation of our modern-day treaty. We will also advance our work to assume full authority of our children in care by signing an agreement under Bill C-92, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. Of course, we will also continue building on our momentum with existing programs and services like culturally-focused child care in centres and licensed homes, housing, training, employment and Youth programming, just to name a few of the sectors your Métis government is active in.

These are such significant bodies of work that will set precedent and break ground for other Indigenous communities that they must be carefully thought through and negotiated with precision and expertise; they require significant time commitments and dedicated resources. I am hungry for these to conclude, but I know we must ensure that we leave no stone unturned on our pathway forward.

These longstanding promises from your government to you, our Citizens, will be completed and will help bring us back to the place we were promised when we brought the West into Canada. That is a commitment I've made to you, and I will not rest until it is fulfilled.

In the meantime, I wish you all a wonderful and safe New Year, and I look forward to serving you in 2022. I offer my prayers to Citizens and friends for whom this is a hard time of year as they mourn loved ones who are no longer with us. I also send my best wishes and joy to families who will be bringing new life into the world – for those Red River Métis yet to be born, I look forward to welcoming you into our Nation.

Meeqwetch,

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

Manitoba Métis Federation 2021 Year in Review

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has worked diligently for over half a century to advance our Nation, the Manitoba Métis, also known as the Red River Métis. This year, your Métis government grew in leaps and bounds, with a record number of new property developments and initiatives, along with enhanced services for our Citizens. We also returned to some in-person activities and events after a more isolated 2020.

Major advancements in the history of the Red River Métis occurred this year. Here are some of the most prominent moments from 2021:

Signing of the Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement

On July 6, 2021, the MMF and Canada signed the *Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement*, officially recognizing the MMF as the existing government of the Red River Métis. MMF Cabinet and staff celebrated the historic signing with federal MPs at the historically critical site of Upper Fort Garry. Signed by then-Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett and MMF President David Chartrand, the agreement identifies the MMF as the one true recognized province-wide Métis government in Canada.

Métis Vote

To ensure our voices are heard and our needs are addressed, it was important for the Red River Métis to get out to vote during the federal election in September. The Métis government reached out to each political party, requesting that each respond to our top 15 priorities, as identified by our Citizens. These included the protection of our identity, recognition of our treaty rights, land claims, proportionate and fair funding, Métis-specific health care, jurisdiction over Métis child and family services, education and employment, and funding for microbusinesses. The parties' responses and commitments were posted on our website, which allowed us to inform Citizens about each party platform and how it would affect them.

The MMF also held a Get out to Vote contest to encourage Métis Citizens to attend to the polls. Any Citizen who took a picture outside of a polling station and sent it to the MMF was entered to win prizes, from 50-inch flat screen televisions to a PlayStation 5, to a Chevy Spark. We are proud of this precedent-setting contest that reached voting demographics who were previously less engaged in the electoral process.

Pandemic Response

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MMF has been mobilizing at every turn to make sure Citizens are informed and protected. This year was

no different – the MMF launched a Métis-specific testing site in January, offering faster test results to Citizens.

The MMF pushed for months to have vaccines earmarked for the Red River Métis, after the provincial government excluded the Métis, in spite of the recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). The MMF partnered with Long Plain First Nation to distribute 100 Moderna vaccines to vulnerable Citizens and frontline staff, providing critical protection when no other vaccines were available to the Métis.

After extensive advocacy, the MMF was finally able to start offering vaccines to Citizens in April, delivering the first 100 shots of AstraZeneca at the MEDOCare Pharmacy's vaccine clinic located at the MMF Home Office. Eligible Métis Citizens were able to receive their first, second, and third Pfizer doses from their Métis Government's vaccine clinic between May and December. Regional vaccine clinics took place across the province as well.

Announced in August, the MMF also adopted a mandatory vaccine policy for all employees, contractors, visitors, and Cabinet, in order to keep Citizens safe.

Veterans

In February, the Métis Nation announced the Métis Veterans Legacy Commemorative Program, which promotes awareness of and appreciation for the achievements, contributions, and sacrifices made by Métis Veterans. Through the program Métis Citizens and other community organizations can apply to create public displays of homage to Métis Veterans. This program was the final phase of the Métis Veterans Legacy Program (MVLV) launch, which recognizes and honours the forgotten Métis Veterans who served Canada in WWII.

In July, Métis Veterans and Elders were appointed to the MVLV Commission, chaired by MMF Minister and Métis Veteran Jack Park. The Commission supports overall objectives of the MVLV, working alongside staff of the MVLV to review and approve commemoration project proposals and developing the structure of a National Métis Veterans Association.

Education

The 2020-21 school year saw increased support for Métis students. Between Métis Employment & Training and the Louis Riel Bursary program, the MMF awarded 633 bursaries to the tune of \$3 million to Métis students attending universities in Manitoba. The second intake of the Post-Secondary Education Support Program resulted in awarding \$5,000 to 847 Métis students for a total of \$4.2

million. Through the Emergency Student Assistance Program, which addressed additional financial needs of students caused by the pandemic, the MMF provided 558 Métis students with \$1,500 each in funding for a total of \$837,000. A successful first year of the Homeschool Support Program saw over 270 registrants.

The MMF also partnered with the University of Winnipeg in October on the creation of the Dr. Annette Trimbee Indigenous Excellence Scholarships in honour of the former U of W President and Vice-Chancellor, who is Métis. Funded through donations of \$250,000 from each the MMF and the U of W, the prestigious scholarships are reserved for undergraduate Indigenous students.

Housing and Property Management

This year built on the momentum from last year's growth in housing across the province, leading to more jobs created for Métis contractors.

From breaking ground on seniors duplexes in St. Ambrose and Binscarth, to the grand opening of Willow Bay Development in Portage la Prairie, and construction of family units in Selkirk and St. Boniface, it was a busy year for the growing Housing and Property Management department. The MMF had a record number of properties under construction this year, including a Regional Office and pharmacy for the Northwest Métis Council, local office space in Flin Flon and Russell, and the Lake Manitoba Resort in St. Laurent. The MMF also made a monumental announcement in November by investing \$10.3 million in The Pas to building housing, child care, and community facilities. Lastly, the MMF is planning 22 short-term housing units for those at risk of homelessness.

In April, in response to the rise of the cost of lumber and other materials, the MMF announced that the Home Enhancement Loan Program (HELP) would be increased from \$15,000 to \$18,000. The MMF also increased loans for Citizens in the North to \$25,000 due to the high cost of materials and transportation above the 53rd parallel. The MMF has received over 1,000 applications and approved 325 Métis Citizens for forgivable loans through the program, with repairs and renovations totalling over \$4.5 million.

The First Time Home Purchase Program (FTHPP) offers grants to help cover down payments, ultimately helping 600 Métis Citizens become homeowners, leading to \$130 million in mortgages and economic spinoffs since the program's inception in 2019.

Early Learning & Child Care

Continuing from its inception last year, the Early Learning & Child Care (ELCC) department has grown

quickly to fulfil the MMF's mandate of providing high-quality early learning for Métis children. The department partnered with Louis Riel Vocational College to facilitate early childhood educator careers for the Red River Métis. The ELCC sent out hundreds of culture kits for children which supported families during the isolation of the pandemic, as well as thousands of the seasonal My Little Métis Box, aimed to enhance literacy, numeracy, and gross motor skills.

This year also saw major advancements in plans for and construction of child care centres across the province, including in Dauphin, Swan River, St. Eustache, Brandon, Winnipeg, and The Pas.

In addition, the MMF is now offering the Home Child Care Program, which helps Citizens start their own licensed home child care program, providing business coaching, workshops, and a \$40,000 forgivable loan for start-up costs.

Support for ranchers, farmers, fishers, and business owners

As our Métis ranchers, farmers, and fishers face ongoing challenges from the pandemic, the Métis government was here to support them while they preserved our traditional economies.

In January 2021, the MMF launched the Commercial Fisher Net Program, providing 10 nets to each active fisher, to a maximum of 1,000 nets. The MMF also provided legal support for Métis farmers and ranchers crushed by new provincial Crown Lease Land management legislation, in addition to financial support through the MMF COVID-19 Business Support Program.

The MMF set millions of dollars aside to help small Métis businesses weather the hardships of the pandemic.

In 2020, the MMF launched the Métis Emergency Business Loan program to help cover non-deferrable operating costs, which provided over \$8 million in support to Métis businesses affected by the pandemic. The program was enhanced in 2021 with an additional \$20,000 made available as a grant of up to \$10,000 with no payments for 12 months.

The MMF aims to foster the Red River Métis entrepreneurial spirit. Through the Louis Riel Capital Corporation, the MMF offers the Entrepreneurship Initiative, which includes programs for Youth entrepreneurs, small/home-based businesses, and Métis commercial fishers. Each program provides loans of up to \$25,000, with 25 per cent to a maximum of \$5,000 forgiven, as well as business coaching, mentorship, and business plan assistance.

Métis Child and Family Services

Major advancements came to Métis Child and Family Services this year, with the consultation on

Bill C-92 – *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* – which allows the Métis government to take control of its child welfare system from the province.

The MMF continues to invest in children in care beyond the age of 18, with additional supports to help them gain life skills and access post-secondary education. This includes investments in RESP accounts for over 500 of our kids in care to help them secure their future success.

Sixties Scoop

Renewing a commitment to the reconciliation of our Métis Sixties Scoop survivors, the MMF created a new Sixties Scoop department. The department will oversee the creation of the Métis Nation Sixties Scoop Wellness Centre Pilot Project.

Métis Minute

The MMF launched a new video series called *Métis Minute*, focused on Métis culture, heritage, and facts. Along with airing monthly on CTV, we have posted each new video on our website, covering topics such as Red River Carts, York boats, pemmican, the fiddle, jigging, beadwork, and identity.

Charitable Gifts

President Chartrand and staff visited CancerCare Manitoba's new Genome Sequencing Laboratory in March, made possible by the MMF's \$1-million donation in 2019. The Genome Lab advances the use of precision medicine to conduct genetic testing in Manitoba.

In May, the MMF committed \$50,000 to Oxygen for India, encouraging Citizens to contribute as well. The Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce hosted the event in response to India's struggle with a COVID-19 variant, with thousands dying each day. The funds were to provide lifesaving equipment for direct end users that run hospitals in the country's smaller cities.

In August, the MMF also donated \$15,000 to the Friends of Old St. Jude's, the stewards and curators of an old church located in Grand Marais. The money was allocated towards rebuilding the vestibule and steeple at the historical site.

In December, at the first annual tree lighting ceremony at the future Métis Nation Heritage Centre, the MMF continued its longtime support for the Christmas Cheer Board with a donation of \$50,000.

Métis Cultural Activities, Events, and Celebrations

This past year saw the return of some in-person Métis Nation events, upon loosened restrictions, while others were held virtually due to the ongoing

pandemic. Some of our biggest events of 2021 included:

- Virtual Louis Riel Day celebration
- *The Beat Goes On* specials
- Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations
- Métis Nation flag raising ceremony at Investors Group Field
- *Heartbeat of a Nation: Métis Women 250 Years* exhibition opening at the WAG
- Rooster Town Picnic
- St. Eustache Métis Local Celebrate Indigenous Resilience Thirty-Eight Fundraiser
- Virtual Louis Riel Commemoration Ceremony
- Virtual Christmas Special

Cabinet Appointments

In April, the MMF announced Ministers leading two important portfolios in the Métis government. Vice-President of the Winnipeg Region and Minister of Michif Language, Residential Schools, Riel House, Pemmican Publications, and the Métis Community Liaison Department, Andrew Carrier was appointed Minister of French Language. David Beaudin, Associate Minister of Education and Winnipeg Regional Director, was appointed Minister of Agriculture.

Looking toward the future

As we enter the new year, we, as the national government and voice of the Red River Métis, understand that defending our Nation remains critical for our Citizens. We will continue to advance our cause and provide you with transparent and accountable governance and grow our economic engine to regain our place in Canada's confederation. As always, we have your back.

Your Métis government looks forward to fostering new relationships formed in the last year, and continued positive advancements for the Red River Métis. Stay tuned in the new year for upcoming announcements as the Red River Métis Nation continues to grow.

Visit mmf.mb.ca for the full Year in Review.