



Le Métis



Over the last several years, Canadians have seen multiple high-profile cases of identity theft. These individual cases are an important part of the overall conversation about Indigenous identity, but they are not the only examples of identity theft taking place in our country.

In a recent publication from a virtual meeting, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) states that there is “no singular ethnogenesis of the Métis,” which means they are asserting that there is no one place, time, or community where the Métis emerged as a Nation. This is yet another piece of evidence that the MNO is doing what the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has said they were doing all along, which is working to undermine our nationhood, while driving their own agenda that allows for anyone with mixed blood to be accepted as Métis.

It is incomprehensible that they would make this statement while continuing to celebrate our great heroes like Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, and Cuthbert Grant, who sacrificed everything to defend our Nation and our distinct identity.

Equally mysterious is the fact that these claims are being supported by the organizational presidents of the Métis Nation of Alberta and Métis Nation Saskatchewan, who are now openly referring to multiple nations when talking about the Métis in Canada.

Not only are they hiding behind our identity, they are using as many distractions as they can to divert attention from their actions, like filing claims in eastern courts against myself and Clément Chartier, who left the Métis National Council in a surplus position, with no funds missing. There will be more to discuss on this subject as the court case evolves, but I look forward to having the actual facts shown in the court, and I encourage Citizens to keep their eyes firmly on the facts they are trying to distract you from.

President's Message

We are Otipemisiwak

If what the MNO and their supporters in other provincial bodies are asserting about multiple Métis Nations is true, why do these so-called nations wear our sash, wave our flag, and wear our beadwork? Why do they celebrate our heroes? Where are their unique cultural artifacts? What are their traditions and where are they being celebrated?

The Red River Métis are the people who were given the name Otipemisiwak – the people who own themselves. If anyone is still seeking evidence of the fact that we are and have always been a recognized collective, they should consider the meaning behind this name. It was our ancestors who fought in the Victory of Frog Plain in 1816, who first unfurled our infinity flag and declared our existence as a Nation and a collective. Our community, our common purpose, and our shared values have always been evident to the people around us – can anyone outside of our Nation say the same?

Our Red River Métis Citizens understand that there is a very clear line in the sand – you either stand with your Nation, knowing that there was, in fact, a singular place and time at which the Métis Nation formed, and that our collective will and consciousness were the source of the name Otipemisiwak, or you stand on the side of those who believe that the definition of Métis means anyone with mixed blood from anywhere in Canada.

Our unique identity

Protecting ourselves against these invaders from the East only highlights why it is important for Citizens and all Canadians to understand the difference between what is unique to us and what is from other traditions. While there's no doubt our Nation was influenced by other cultures, what is unique to us is what we did with these cultural influences. What we created from our influences – Scottish, French, Cree, Saukteaux, and beyond – these are the things that make us unique. We are more than the sum of our parts, as are our arts, culture, language, and heritage.

Think of it like the difference between dancing a jig, which is ours, and engaging in highland dancing. There is nothing wrong with participating in highland dancing, but it shouldn't be something we try to claim as our own.

If our Citizens have Scottish ancestry, they should not be afraid to find the tartan that represents their Scottish ancestors. They should not be afraid to learn about, or even visit, those Scottish villages where some of their ancestors were born. They should also be unafraid to explore First Nations spirituality, or take the time to learn about the First Nations some of their ancestors came from, along with the traditions and practices that are meaningful to those Nations.

But all Citizens should be clear in their own minds that these discoveries and learnings led us to the creation of our own identity and culture as the Red River Métis, and that we've continued to evolve over the last several hundred years. To state otherwise is just as dangerous to our identity as these eastern claims that there is no united Métis Nation.

A message for our Youth

It is important for today's Red River Métis Youth to recognize the important role you play in our Nation's future. You are our leaders of tomorrow, which means you have the sacred duty of carrying our Nation forward.

Our Elders have always told us to protect our identity and remember where we came from. That means we must all remember what our ancestors went through, being pushed away from the economic success they created, forced to split up and lose their communities, all to protect their families and avoid persecution. Each of our families has had to find a way to regain our footing, and reclaim what these invaders tried to take away. Each of us who is part of the Nation of the Red River Métis today represents the successful struggle of our ancestors to preserve what they could.

Passing on our knowledge and teachings to the next generation is the reason why Elders talk about knowing where we come from and why current leaders work so hard to preserve our identity – so that we, like our ancestors, leave something for our Youth to carry forward.

The work ahead of us

I know that many, many Citizens have spent significant time, energy, and thought explaining to others who we are, why we're distinct and in what ways we are different from people of mixed blood. I know that hearing contradictory messages from these provincial bodies can be discouraging, as they actively work against everything we believe in and stand for. But we need to keep doing this hard work, educating Canadians about our identity. I am so proud of Citizens who engage in this dialogue and work to educate others. Know in your hearts, as I know, that every single one of you makes a difference in stemming this tide of misinformation from outsiders who want to erase our identity.

The important work of protecting and preserving our identity is something we are committed to, and we continue to expand our ability to do this work on many fronts. For example, within our Early Learning & Child Care department at the MMF, we're opening daycares across the province that focus on ensuring our children receive culturally focused early learning opportunities. Because the programming is built by Red River Métis for Red River Métis, Citizens can be confident that we don't just look at educating the

child – we also include our families and communities, with programs to support fathers, mothers, and extended family members, like grandparents and community Elders. We also offer programs outside of our child care facilities, including our very popular “My Little Metis Box,” which promotes culture-based learning activities and family fun. These opportunities to share our culture and history with our very youngest Citizens will help them grow up strong and proud of who they are, equipped with

cultural knowledge they will carry for their entire lives. I thank Minister Frances Chartrand and her team for their outstanding work and innovative approaches to building this legacy for our children.

Until we can gather again, I offer my prayers to all our Citizens, friends, and neighbours, and my deepest condolences to those who have been caused to grieve. This time of year can be very hard on the mental health of all Canadians, and I know we are

all tired of COVID-19 and the restrictions it places on our lives. I urge everyone to continue doing their part to help Elders and vulnerable community members. There are many ways you can help, like shovelling driveways, sharing supplies or part of your harvest, or even just the simple act of reaching out to talk with them. I urge everyone to do their part in keeping our communities safe and well.

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

Brandy Bloxom’s photography exposes her love for the land



Photographer Brandy Bloxom connects with her own identity through self-portraits.

Growing up in northern Manitoba’s Leaf Rapids – located in the boreal forest, near sand eskers and thousands of picturesque lakes – photographer Brandy Bloxom has always been inspired by the land.

“My love for the land was always a big part of my life growing up as well as now,” she said. “I appreciate the beauty of everything I see.”

Bloxom felt she had always had an artistic vision, even if it took her time to figure out how to express it.

“I was working full time, and felt I had a calling or something missing,” she said.

She picked up a camera eight years ago and hasn’t looked back.

“Thanks to the internet, I Googled and YouTube’d every question I had and taught myself how to use a camera,” Bloxom said. “Shortly after that, with a few photoshoots under my belt, I left my job to pursue photography full time.”

In addition to the outdoors, Bloxom’s Métis and First Nations roots have continued to inspire her photography.

“It was there the whole time, I just didn’t realize it till later in life where that deep sense of belonging and connection to Mother Earth came from,” she said.

“I had this strong urge to connect with my ancestors and share their stories as well as my own identity in self-portraits.”

Portraits are Bloxom’s favourite type of photography.

“There’s something about photographing a person and seeing through their eyes a whole other world, and me sharing that piece of their soul to the world,” she explained. “It’s like a story with no words needed. You can feel that person, and that to me is something I cannot explain, but can speak to others through my art.”

Bloxom hopes to photograph Elders, storytellers, and healers in the near future.

“My dream would be to go to the Far North and photograph our Inuit relations and perhaps have a portrait book published of my work along with the stories behind the people,” Bloxom said.

While her photography captures faces and landscapes of the North, Bloxom also offers wedding and other photography services. The wife and mother of three hosts small workshops for aspiring photographers in Denare Beach, Saskatchewan, where she resides, as well as the neighbouring communities of Creighton, Saskatchewan, and Flin Flon, Manitoba.

She’s self-taught, but Bloxom has since taken landscape and portrait workshops across the country. Her award-winning portraits have been displayed in exhibitions and public spaces in Flin Flon, Winnipeg, and Denare Beach, to name a few. Visit her website at brandybloxom.com/.

MMF to open Métis-specific homelessness hub by 2023



A rough rendering of the 670 Main Street renovation. The MMF will convert the building at 670 Main Street into 20 housing units by early 2023 for Métis Citizens experiencing homelessness.

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) recently received over \$3.4 million through the federal government’s Rapid Housing Initiative to convert the building at 670 Main Street into 20 housing units. 670 Main Street will provide direct services to Métis Citizens experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness by early 2023.

The MMF’s first rapid housing project is a response to the 2018 census numbers estimating an approximate 234 homeless Métis Citizens living in Winnipeg, with an increase in unhoused individuals since the onset of the pandemic.

“The goal of this endeavour is to prevent and reduce homelessness immediately. We’re hoping to reach many different vulnerable target groups by eliminating barriers to access services,” said Will Goodon, MMF Minister of Housing and Property Management, in a January 21 weekly video.

Some of these target groups include women fleeing violence, LGBTQ2S+ individuals, Citizens who have migrated to Winnipeg from rural and remote areas, those exiting the justice system, people leaving health care, and Métis Veterans.

Addressing homelessness is a top priority for the Métis government.

“Homelessness – the unhoused, folks who are at points in their lives where they are in desperate need to get that little bit of help – is something

that we have always taken very seriously,” Minister Goodon told *Le Metis*. “One of the things that we always have to understand is that homelessness, it definitely affects our Métis Citizens, but the streets really don’t care much whether you’re Métis, First Nations, non-Indigenous, etc. So partnering with other organizations with other levels of government is absolutely critical.”

The project came to fruition through partnerships with the City of Winnipeg and the federal government.

“The City of Winnipeg was excellent to deal with,” said Minister Goodon. “They were very encouraging, helped us to navigate the structures of the funding. And the federal government as well was equally helpful.”

It is imperative for Métis Citizens experiencing homelessness to receive Métis-specific programming, said Minister Goodon.

“It’s really important,” he added, “that our Citizens are the priority. And although there are services that our Citizens probably tap into, that are out there that do a very good job, there is nobody that specifically is out there looking out for our family members. So that’s why we felt it was really, really important for us to push hard on this.”

Using a housing first model, the project will offer cultural programming and wraparound supports, including advocacy, help with addictions and mental

health, resume building, job applications, access to a Métis Elder, a drop-in safe place, basic needs, and access to the internet and telephone.

“Having the folks who can come in and teach our culture can help people really understand their Métis culture, how it’s distinct, how it’s important, what it means to them as an individual, the pride that they can have,” said Minister Goodon.

The MMF is uniquely prepared to offer these wraparound supports.

“One of the things that we’re going to be doing is wrapping around everything, all the services that the MMF can bring. That is really I think one of the strengths that we can bring to this issue. We have Employment and Training people who can help with writing resumes, who can help with other things, getting ready to apply for jobs. We have mental health supports. We are working on getting addiction supports. And of course our Child and Family Services agencies and our Health department and everybody else,” said Minister Goodon.

The project, which will comprise 16 studio and four two-bedroom units, will be completed within 12 months due to the mandate of the Rapid Housing Initiative. In addition, the MMF has been operating a pilot project at 550 Selkirk Avenue since last year. 550 Selkirk Avenue offers advocacy, cultural programming, and other services to unsheltered Métis Citizens. The pilot project will be a model for the 670 Main Street project as well as other future rapid housing projects across the province. The rapid services team will also operate out of the 550 Selkirk Avenue location.

Minister Goodon praised the hardworking team in the MMF’s Housing department.

“I just have to give so much credit to the staff, because they believe in what they’re doing and they’re excited about what they’re doing, and they’re excited about how this will change lives,” he said. “And that I think to me says everything about the MMF, but in particular about our Housing department.”

Minister Goodon looks forward to working with the Ministers and their respective departments responsible for the wraparound services on this project, including MMF President David Chartrand.

“We wouldn’t be able to do this without President Chartrand. He’s a very active president and he understands everything,” said Minister Goodon. “The MMF is so big now, but he definitely has his fingerprints on everything that we do because we’re helping people, and that’s what his mandate is all about.”

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10AM - 12PM PST / 11AM - 1PM MST / 12 - 2PM CST / 2 - 4PM AST

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VIRTUAL INDIGENOUS FOCUSED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Start Date: March 7, 2022

This comprehensive 18-month training program will prepare participants in developing the knowledge, skills and abilities required to achieve Early Childhood Education Level II certification.

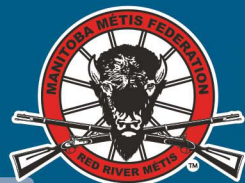
Eligible participants include Unemployed or Underemployed Metis individuals who are:

- 18 years of age or older
- Fully vaccinated and able to provide proof of vaccination prior to start of program
- Able to provide recent & acceptable criminal record, adult abuse, child abuse and vulnerable person registry checks prior to program start
- Motivated to pursue career in Early Learning & Child Care and determined to move forward with an employment action plan

For more information and to apply for this opportunity, please contact:

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Email: metresumes@mmf.mb.ca (using subject line: ECEII)



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