



Le Métis

President's Message



This is the last President's Message that will be published in advance of our Annual General Assembly, happening March 25, 26, and 27 at the Assiniboia Downs. It's been two long years since we've been able to gather in any numbers, and I'm excited about seeing the Citizens who are able to come out and spend time with us as we advance our Nation.

The anticipation of getting together at the end of this month has caused me to think about the great tradition that is our Annual General Assembly and how we have continued to evolve our democracy.

For 82 years after the reign of terror, there was very little in the way of formal governance structure in our Nation. There were a few Locals that kept going in their communities, united by common interests, but nothing that brought these viewpoints together from a province-wide perspective.

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) was born on December 28, 1967, through provincial incorporation. We were required by the federal

government to do this in order to receive funding and begin developing a national governance structure. We called ourselves a federation because we were a group of Locals that each operated under their own authority, advancing the interests of the communities they represented. Elections were conducted by votes from three Local delegates or their proxies. Delegates chose individuals they knew and trusted – individuals who had been leaders at the Local level, and on the board for the MMF. People with experience and knowledge.

This is not unlike how we governed ourselves during the great, multi-family bison hunts we used to undertake, where we elected Captains of the Hunt every morning. Only the most experienced and respected individuals were chosen to lead the hunt that was so vital to our lives. Knowledge, experience, and a demonstrated commitment to the well-being of the group were required.

In 1981, Don McIvor was the last president elected by the delegate system. The MMF then moved to a province-wide electoral system, with one vote for one Citizen.

However, the evolution to a one vote for one Citizen method did not change the focus on having strong and trusted leadership. Our constitution has always reflected our continued focus on grassroots knowledge and experience.

We have never wavered from our commitment to our traditions. While the mechanics of our governance may have evolved into formal and legal language, the principles behind them have remained as they were since we followed the great bison herds.

The strength of our constitution and by-laws today is one of the reasons why we have the first Métis self-governance recognition

agreement in Canada, which we signed on July 6 of 2021. It's the affirmation that we are the national government of the Red River Métis, also known as the Manitoba Métis, and that our governance is there for all Red River Métis, no matter where they live.

Locals will always be the guides of our work. They will never lose their importance to our ways or our government.

So while our Annual General Assembly is a good time to connect with each other, hear great music, and share laughter, it's also a sign of our continued devotion to our democratic traditions and our connection to our grassroots. I look forward to everything that the Assembly means, including hearing directly from Citizens about their needs and their vision for the future.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand, LL.D. (hon). Q.M. ∞

Minister Leah LaPlante honoured as Paul Harris Fellow



MMF Minister Leah LaPlante, Vice-President of the Southwest Region, was recently named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Brandon Sunset.

Adding to a long list of accolades for her contributions to the Brandon community, Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) Minister Leah LaPlante, Vice-President of the Southwest Region, was recently named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Brandon Sunset. The Paul Harris Fellow recognition acknowledges individuals who have contributions of \$1,000 made in their name to the Rotary Foundation, a humanitarian organization.

Rotarian Susan Spring, who works as Reaching Home Coordinator for the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, said she nominated Minister LaPlante because Rotary International, founded by Paul Harris, represents doing good in the world.

"In my community, province, and country, Leah represents many things: humble and proficient trailblazer, pioneer, political leader, and role model," Spring said. "A voice of quiet competence, with wisdom, who continues leading the way to make the world a better place, especially, but not only for Métis Citizens. She is a one-in-a-million gem for the world that we are grateful to have in Manitoba and to know."

Minister LaPlante was "in shock" when she found out she had been named a Paul Harris Fellow.

"I am so honoured to be recognized as someone who has given something of value not only to my own Métis community, but to the larger community that I live in," she said.

Vice-President of the Southwest Region for the past 25 years and currently the Minister of Citizenship and Natural Resources, Minister LaPlante has also served the community over the last two-plus decades by sitting on various boards, from Southwest Daycare Inc., the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, and Turtle Mountain Souris Plains Heritage Association, to Brandon University Foundation and BU Cares, as well as MMF affiliates such as the Louis Riel Institute, Métis Economic Development Organization, and Louis Riel Capital Corporation. She has held a variety of portfolios in her time on MMF Cabinet, and has also served on the Brandon Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Council and Canadian Conservation Institute Advisory Committee.

Minister LaPlante has worked tirelessly to promote and preserve Métis culture and heritage since she moved to Brandon in 1997. In 2001, she worked with the National Museum of Scotland on an exhibition called *Kildonan to Red River*, and in 2007, she was a part of the Canadian Conservation Institute's Preserving Aboriginal Heritage: Technical and Traditional Approaches Symposium. She also worked with BBC on the documentary *Highland Empire*, which captured the story of the Scottish fur trade. In 2012, she was honoured at Ka Ni Kanichihk's Keeping the Fires Burning gala for her work to promote, preserve, and protect Métis culture.

"When I first came to Brandon as VP in 1997, I decided in order to move the Métis agenda along, I would get involved in the other organizations and educational facilities, and I was welcomed in," said Minister LaPlante. "As time went on, it was satisfying to form friendships and partnerships. I also realized that I got as much satisfaction out of being part of other groups' accomplishments as my own."

The Red River Métis leader reflected on her commitment to the Wheat City.

"I feel very attached to the City of Brandon after living here for 25 years," she said. "I will always think of myself as a Métis woman from the Turtle Mountains who found herself while getting involved in this community."



Community Photo

Le Metis' 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!



Sun's out, tongues out



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