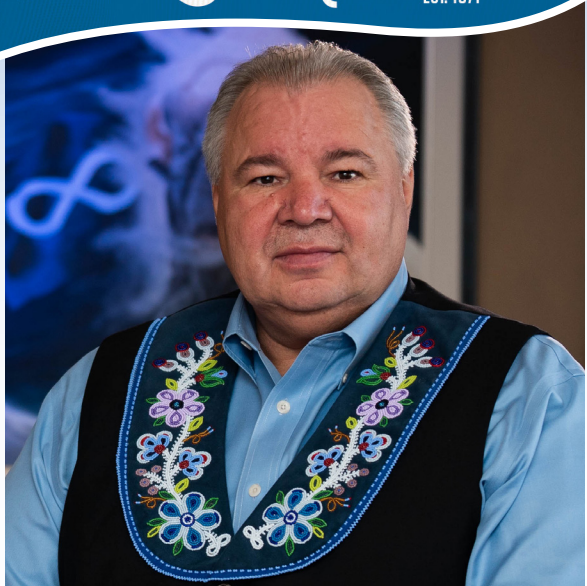




Le Métis
EST. 1871



President's Message

The Red River Métis recently gathered for Métis Days at Ste. Madeleine, the site of a Métis village close to the Manitoba/Saskatchewan border near Russell, Manitoba.

The weekend's festivities included jigging, bannock making, horseshoe, cribbage, and slingshot competitions, along with music, food, and laughter. It was wonderful to be together and celebrate our culture and spend time with our relatives and community, and I congratulate the Ste. Madeleine Local and Southwest Region organizers who worked so hard to make the weekend a success.

However, we can't forget that this celebration is also a commemoration of a village that no longer exists. The memories of what happened there still hold sadness and grief for the descendants of the people who experienced the traumatic end to the once thriving community of 400.

Ste. Madeleine was a haven for families who had been pushed out of the Red River Settlement, St. Francois Xavier and St. Laurent in the 1870s and 1880s after the reign of terror, leaving them as refugees in their own Homeland. Still, Ste. Madeleine's location was well situated for a fresh start, near Fort Ellice, a fur trading post on the Qu'appelle River along the Carlton Trail. In 1902, French Missionary Jules DeCorby, who had already founded a mission in nearby St. Lazare, also founded a mission at Ste. Madeleine.

Over time, the village grew. Along with the church, residents built a school called Beliveau. There was a mail delivery service. Weddings took place there. Births were celebrated. Loved ones were buried at the cemetery. Families earned their way through trapping and harvesting wood for sale, as well as hunting deer and other local game. Entire families would leave Ste. Madeleine for the summer months to dig for Seneca or work the fields for farmers.

Life was surely hard for these families, but they were together and able to practice our traditional lifestyle and live immersed in our culture and identity.

It was in the 1930s, during the height of the Great Depression, that the federal government passed the *Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act* to try and offset the damage done by years of drought across the Prairie provinces. As part of the Act, the government decided that the land Ste. Madeleine was built on was needed for other purposes – specifically, for cattle pasture.

There are stories about how some members of the community were consulted, or given payment for their land if their property tax payments were in order. Of course, it was a rare family indeed that kept their taxes up to date during the Great Depression, particularly Métis families, who rarely saw any tax revenues invested in our communities.

The reality for most was that they left their homes in the summer of 1938 to engage in harvesting and farm labour. While they were gone, their homes were burned. Families, some with 10 or more children, came home from their summer's labour to find ashes where there had once been homes and a community. Few were around to collect family treasures from the homes before they were gone. Winter clothing, household supplies, school books, and foodstuffs were burned. Family dogs were shot. Oral tradition suggests that Ste. Madeleine's church was dismantled and used to build a pig barn in St. Lazare.

Some of these families still remembered what happened during the Scrip times, and the unfulfilled promise of 1.4 million acres of land. It must have felt like they were reliving history, once again refugees in their own Homeland.

Today, all that remains of this village and this community is the Ste. Madeleine Cemetery. Some of our Métis Veterans and heroes are buried there, including Dan Fisher, Lionel Bellehumeur, and Tommy Fleury. Thousands of Red River Métis volunteered to go overseas and defend the freedom of people who did not know them, standing with Canada in defence of global democracy. If they were fortunate, they made it through the war, only to return to a land where the government burned their homes to the ground. Where were their freedoms in the country we love and helped build?

On Sunday, many Elders, Ste. Madeleine descendants, and community members gathered at the cemetery for a mass to honour our ancestors and let them know they have not been forgotten. Even the powerful sun and heat couldn't stop us from paying tribute to them – you could feel the heart of our Nation beating powerfully throughout the ceremony.

Many former residents and descendants of the community still wish to be buried at Ste. Madeleine next to their loved ones at the cemetery. For many years, this was very challenging, since they required permission to cross the pasture to even visit the graveyard, never mind finding a way to have their bones rest with their families.

It is increasingly clear that we must do everything we can to return ownership of the land, including the cemetery, to our people. I committed to the attendees of Métis Days that I would work tirelessly to make sure this happens. I will also strongly advocate to Premier Heather Stefanson that she come and see the festival next year, to understand our Nation's connection to the area. I have no doubt in my mind that once she learns more about it, she will work with the MMF to help us reclaim the land and right the wrong that was done to our people.

While Ste. Madeleine still holds sad memories of what was done, I know we have also marked the land with joy, laughter, and music for more than 30 years. There is no more fitting tribute to the people who made a home and a community in Ste. Madeleine than honouring them through cultural celebration.

For those of you who attended the festivities this year, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. As I am now the proud two-time winner of the cribbage tournament – I issue a challenge to all cribbage players to come out next year and join the tournament to see if you can defeat your President.

Until we can be together again, 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. O.M. ∞

Métis Music Van enshrined in Selkirk mural



“The Beat Goes On” mural features Minister Alfred Anderson and his Métis Music Van. Photo credit: Interlake Art Board.

A treasured Métis icon will have its legacy preserved in the form of a mural in the city of Selkirk.

While serving as the Manitoba Métis Federation’s (MMF) Minister of Culture and Heritage and Vice-President of the Interlake Region, Alfred Anderson has continued to spread joy via his Métis Music Van.

A common sight on the streets of Selkirk, Minister Anderson can often be seen parading throughout town with an excited group of children keen to follow. When asked why he continues driving the van, Minister Anderson says its primary function is to pass down knowledge to future generations and bring a smile to people’s faces. He boasts that the kids are so familiar that he has developed names for the groups he encounters, like the Grain Ave. Gang, which consists of roughly 20 kids following him.

“I love to make people happy. I started driving the Métis Music Van during the pandemic to bring people together in a socially distant way. I didn’t think it would go this far,” Minister Anderson admitted. “I’ve won three separate awards in Selkirk, which means a lot to me, and it means a lot to the community to be recognized in the schools by the younger generation.”

Minister Anderson prides himself on doing numerous parades, birthdays, and school drive-bys with the Métis Music Van. Notably, he even honoured a Citizen of the Interlake Region by presenting the van at a funeral.

“When I drive by, you see the little kids come out, and they’re trying to jig, and they’re break dancing, but they’re getting involved – the seed is planted. When they hear the music, they relate it to Métis

music because I give out little flags. It’s amazing because I didn’t think they’d hang onto those flags,” he said. “When I go by another time, they’re out there waving that little flag as soon as they hear the music. I run into the parents through my travels, and they say when I go by with the music van, the kids want to get outside (and dance).”

The Métis Music Van being enshrined in a mural comes as a complete surprise to Minister Anderson. The Selkirk mural was conceived by the Interlake Art Board and was designed by local artist Ashley Christiansen.

“It just blew me away to see the Métis Music Van, and they captured my vision of everything I wanted to do. (To) play the music, and not only celebrate the Métis culture, but celebrate First Nations, Ukrainian, or Scottish, or even the kids break dancing. But the common denominator is the music. The music is what set them all off,” he said. “During that pandemic where everybody had cabin fever, they couldn’t go out. So, when I went by with the music, it lit everybody up. That’s what my goal was, and they captured that in that mural.”

The mural depicts dancers with traditional instruments like a bagpipe, accordion, and fiddle, while Minister Anderson himself is the focal point, driving the Métis Music Van, decorated in Métis regalia with the music notes encompassing him. The mural is located at the corner of Robinson and Main Street in Selkirk.

“‘The Beat Goes On’ is a colourful mural showcasing Selkirk’s diversity and the underlying rhythm of our community,” the Interlake Art Board said in a Facebook post. “Our artistic goal is to intertwine

images of cultural similarities towards developing mutual understanding and tolerance.”

Minister Anderson has been helping cultivate a strong relationship between the MMF and the City of Selkirk. He pointed to the recent announcement of the state-of-the-art 49-unit seniors housing complex in Selkirk and the nine affordable housing units the Métis Government has constructed.

“We’re very fortunate in the Interlake to have all these things happening for our Citizens. As Vice-President and Minister of Culture and Heritage, I’m very pleased, happy, and proud to be Métis and to spread my culture and heritage throughout the communities,” he said.

Minister Anderson expresses his thanks for the relationship between Selkirk and the MMF as it allows him to facilitate events like the upcoming Youth and Elders Conference and the National Indigenous Peoples Day (NIPD) Celebrations held this past June. The NIPD celebrations marked the first time since 2019 the MMF hosted the event in-person.

“Once you play that music, everybody gets up and enjoys themselves. There are lots of compliments, and my phone is ringing off the hook. They want to know when we’re going to do it again, and everything was positive,” he said. “We went through 450 people for breakfast and (gave out) 1,000 hamburgers and 1,000 hot dogs. Everything was free thanks to the MMF (who) sponsored the whole thing. It was a fantastic celebration – even though the weather let us down and we couldn’t do it in Selkirk Park – but being Métis, we improvise last-minute, and everything turned out great.”

The creation of the Métis Music Van began during the pandemic after Minister Anderson bought an old Purolator van at an auction but had the vision to spread Métis culture in a unique way. One improvement he hopes to make soon is to upgrade to a newer van.

“My goal is to go around all of Manitoba, all of (our MMF) Regions and communities, with this music van spreading the music,” said Minister Anderson, who plans on adding an events trailer to the setup. “(So) we can pull a trailer with picnic tables, barbecues, and tents. So, when we go into a community, it’s a one-stop shop.”

Minister Anderson credits the MMF for encouraging him to keep spreading Métis culture with the van and assisting financially with upgrades and fuel.

This summer, Minister Anderson has taken the music van to local NIPD celebrations as well as Canada Day events, and plans to run the van through a gauntlet of parades, fairs, and local events. He would eventually like to pass the torch to someone who has

the same passion as himself.

The music van has been featured by news outlets such as CBC, CTV, and APTN. Minister Anderson has received numerous awards both in the province and nationally, but it has never been about the recognition for him.

“Bringing joy to the community and bringing people together, even in times we cannot physically be together, is what it’s about. Of course, I’m honoured that the Métis van project is being recognized in my own community, and not only there but throughout Manitoba,” he said. “They sent me an award from Saskatoon. I never had the music van out there. Somebody nominated me and sent videos. It’s spread, and I’m very humbled by the awards.”

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!



“I swear this seat used to be bigger”



Minister Anderson poses by the Métis Music Van.



Minister Anderson and his van pose by “The Beat Goes On” mural.



The artists pose for a photo after the “The Beat Goes On” is completed.
Photo credit: Interlake Art Board.



The National Government of the Red River Métis is calling all our Citizens
- your Métis Government will be in

British Columbia, Alberta & North Dakota
this **SUMMER**,

to meet with you and hear about your priorities and concerns.

For more information, contact Melinda at melinda.haney@mmf.mb.ca or visit:
mmf.mb.ca/beyond-borders-community-consultations OR facebook.com/manitobametisfederation

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