



Le Métis
EST. 1871



Due to the restrictions on gatherings for much of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to be innovative and establish new ways of connecting with our community. However, we know there are some things that are best done in person, so Citizens can connect with each other, discuss the issues that are important to our Nation, share their thoughts and ideas with elected leaders, and enjoy some good food and laughter along the way.

While we had a successful virtual Annual General Assembly in 2021 for the 2020 year, and an in-person AGA in the spring of this year for 2021, we are still catching up from restrictions on gathering sizes, which means we must come together and honour our rich democratic tradition and have full consultation with our Assembly.

With our next Assembly scheduled for October 14-16, 2022, we are beginning the important process of holding meetings in each of our regions. This is a critical step leading up to our assembly, meeting with Local and regional executives, to let them know about the business we expect to conduct at the assembly, discuss possible changes or improvements to our constitution, and hear feedback and concerns.

Our first two regional meetings were for The Pas and the Northwest. Not only is it an honour to attend these meetings, it is also part of a longstanding commitment I have made to report on our national business as well as hearing about the business being conducted in the regions and the concerns and activities of the Locals. Our community is strongest when we gather. Whether it's a cousin from down the road or a friend who travelled great distances to participate, you can see how much we enjoy connecting with each other and affirming our ties. As with all our meetings, I am so proud of how well attended these meetings were, as they show that our Locals remain engaged and committed to advancing the interests of all our Citizens.

President's Message

It is only through consultation with our grassroots voices that we can arrive at our Assembly confident that Red River Métis Citizens are informed and prepared for the activity that takes place there. This speaks to the importance of our ongoing connection with our grassroots leadership – the leaders of our Locals.

It's worth remembering that there was a time when Locals were the only visible structures that showed our ongoing commitment to our democratic history and culture, before 1967 and the creation of the Manitoba Métis Federation. We were called a federation because we were a collective of Local leaders and representatives, and we were forced to incorporate in order to receive funding and begin developing a national governance structure.

In many ways, our Nation owes its strongest debt of gratitude to our matriarchs and those individuals and families who kept the flame of our existence and our nationhood alive by persisting at the Local level, during a time when no one remembered who we are, no one wanted to claim to be us, and we had very few resources for our people.

Today, our Local leaders are supported by regional leadership and our Cabinet, where we work to advance our Red River Métis national and international agenda. They remain a fundamental part of our democracy, and the value of their perspective and their work on behalf of Citizens cannot be overstated.

This underpins a message I have shared more than once over the years: Locals will always be the guides of our work. They will never lose their importance to our ways or our government, and their voices are the foundation on which we grow. As you know, we may not always agree with each other, and we may engage in vigorous debate on the subjects that matter to us. However, once a decision has been made and the Citizens have spoken, we move forward together – a united front against any who would try to destabilize us for their own gains.

I cannot stress enough the importance of these meetings and our Annual General Assemblies within our culture and our community. It is always our goal to ensure we have maximum participation and attendance, which is one of the reasons why our assemblies are the largest Indigenous gatherings in the country, with attendance as high as 3,000-plus Citizens.

As always, we will ensure that Citizens know about the Annual General Assembly in the days and weeks leading up to it. We will communicate about the assembly through billboards, social media campaigns, radio and newspaper advertisements, along with livestreaming the proceedings and sharing outcomes through a variety of mediums, from our AGA booklet

to my reports on NCI's *Metis Hour*, my weekly radio report to Citizens. I have no doubt that our next assembly will once again show our dedication to democracy and commitment to working together to advance our interests in Canada and the world.

That is the power of democracy and the power of the Red River Métis community. We are strong, we are determined, and we have never let the flame of our existence be extinguished. The threads of our community, like our sashes, are interwoven together, and we are a force to be reckoned with.

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. Q.M. ∞

Winnipeg Art Gallery exhibit puts the lens on the Métis Nation's role in the founding of Manitoba



Kwaata-nihtaawakihk – A Hard Birth features pieces from Métis, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous artists alongside some archival items.



Métis artist Jennine Krauchi provided the beadwork cover that wraps around a photo of Louis Riel.

A Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG) exhibit is putting the limelight on the Red River Métis Nation's role in the creation of the province.

Titled *Kwaata-nihtaawakihk – A Hard Birth* (pronounced kwa-ta knee-ta wa kick) looks at the Métis Nation's involvement in the creation of Manitoba and the significance of the events of 1869-1870 in relation to our current times.

The exhibition is the work of Métis co-curators Sherry Farrell Racette, associate professor, department of visual arts, University of Regina, and Cathy Mattes, writer and associate professor in history of art at the University of Winnipeg.

The exhibition features pieces from Métis, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous artists alongside some archival items. Mattes explained they didn't want to focus the exhibit on the *Manitoba Act* or Louis Riel, but to look at it from a broad perspective.

"The Red River was so artistically strong, so there were a lot of creative practices among Métis folks. Primarily, it was women who were art makers at that time, whether it was for trade, household items, or clothing for loved ones," said Mattes. "That was our instigator, to consider the process of the founding of the province of Manitoba in 1870, but considering lived experiences of people then, now, and what it will be for Métis folks in Manitoba in the future. Art is really the catalyst in the exhibition."

During the course of the tour, visitors will see beadwork, paintings, photography, film, textiles, sculpture, and performance art.

The gallery was set to debut in 2020 as part of Manitoba 150 celebrations, but the COVID-19

pandemic hindered opening day plans. Farrell Racette noted some pieces of the exhibit wouldn't have come to fruition if it weren't for the pandemic.

"While finalizing a loan for a group of historic watercolours, the curator asked me if I was aware of the James Settee, Jr. painting, which has never been exhibited before. We also had a chance to add a quillwork coat acquired by a military officer who went hunting with Cuthbert Grant in the 1840s," said Farrell Racette.

The pandemic impacted the community engagement that was going to accompany the in-person exhibit, and the curators were unsure if they could have an in-person opening in spring 2022. Farrell Racette said, oddly, there were also positive impacts.

"The artists who did new work dug deeper and had the opportunity to focus, which resulted in the truly extraordinary artworks they created," she said, referencing Ian August's handcrafted surveyors' chain, Jennine Krauchi's beaded picture frame, as well as Lori Blondeau and Theo Simm's installations.

The exhibition kicked off on March 19 and wraps up on September 5.

The co-curators spent many hours researching, travelling, discussing, and piecing the exhibit together. Mattes said visual art itself is a language, and it has brought her Métis heart home in many ways.

"It was important to have the opportunity to present consideration of the founding of the province and who we are as a people now, with art being a catalyst of that consideration," she explained. "As a Métis woman, it was important to be able to do that, and

I'm grateful that the WAG allowed us to continue working on this project despite COVID."

The Michif name of the exhibit, *Kwaata-nihtaawakihk*, was a gift from Métis Elder Verna DeMontigny.

"We had been thinking about the land as a woman and Manitoba as the result of a difficult birth. We met with Verna DeMontigny several times and shared the objects and art with her," Farrell Racette said. "She considered our ideas deeply and gifted us with the best Michif word to articulate this idea. She also selected several objects to translate or give new titles."

Mattes said one of the unique features of the exhibit is a gathering space based on the Métis kitchen table.

"I got a lot of knowledge transmission growing up in my own family (at the table), so there's a very long table there, and our hope is that folks join us in some events we're currently working on. There have been events and workshops already held as an activation of the exhibition. We're hoping to do a couple more," she said. "We encourage people to go see the show. You can spend time sitting around that kitchen table and looking at some of the photos of ancestors that we placed on the wall in that space."

Mattes and Farrell Racette thank the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Infinity Women Secretariat for supporting the exhibit and helping with programming.

Visit wag.ca/event/kwaata-nihtaawakihk/ to read more about the exhibit.

Métis fiddler Patti Kusturok ecstatic to chair Canadian Grand Masters



Métis fiddle legend and committee chair of the Canadian Grand Masters 2022, Patti Kusturok performs at Ste. Madeleine Métis Days.

The Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Championships (CGMFC) is happening in Winnipeg for the first time.

The two-day event features competition from some of the country's best fiddle players, a Manitoba fiddling showcase, an Old Time Dance, and an after-party.

The event was going to be held here in 2020 but was cancelled due to the pandemic, eventually taking place online in 2021. Patti Kusturok, committee chair of the Canadian Grand Masters 2022, said it feels amazing to host an in-person event again.

"We were kind of leery about going forward with it. We weren't sure if it was even going to happen in 2022 because we didn't know how people would feel about travelling and just the general feeling of post-pandemic worries," she said. "We decided we're just going to go for it, and it'll be what it will be. It's turning out to be hugely successful, so we're super excited."

The Métis fiddler is no stranger to the CGMFC, having won the event from 1994-1996, and said it's surreal to now be active behind the scenes.

"I've been going to the Grand Masters since it started in 1990 in Ottawa, and I've made the top 10 every year since then. When I won, it was another surreal experience. I wasn't expecting to win the first time, never mind the third time," she said. "I've been on the Board of Directors off-and-on through the years, and now I'm the vice president."

Kusturok was also eager to chair the Winnipeg event due to being such a tenured competitor. She knows what works well and what could use improvement and aims to incorporate her ideas into the competition.

The Old Time Dance will be hosted at the Norwood Hotel Ballroom on August 26, while the competition takes place at the Royal MTC: John Hirsch Mainstage on August 27.

Fiddlers are selected to compete in four ways: by invitation from the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Association (CGMFA) based on provincial or territorial selection, by finishing top 10 in last year's competition, by being a past champion, or by being selected by the board.

"We have ideas of fiddlers who have been successful in the past, and a lot of us are very active in our respective fiddle scene wherever we live," said Kusturok. "So, we see who's sounding great and who's winning contests in that area, and we base it on that. It's an invitation-only contest, so it's not like anybody can enter. We're just picking what we feel are the top fiddlers in their regions."

During the preliminary round, the contestants must perform a waltz (3/4 time), jig (6/8 time), a reel, breakdown, or hornpipe (2/4 time), and a tune of the contestant's choice.

"There are five minutes of performance, and we have 35 or 36 contestants signed up, so it's going to take some time. We have an emcee (who is) familiar with the fiddle world, with the contestants, with competitions, and how they go. We have faith he's going to keep it running, keep it rolling, so they're not dragging on," she said of Canadian fiddle legend Calvin Vollrath, who is serving as emcee. "Everybody plays their thing in the preliminary round, and then we have a big jam session finale at the end, and we choose the top 10 finalists that will go on to the evening show."

The top 10 will have five minutes to play four tunes in contrasting styles, including a piece of the contestant's choice. Kusturok explained what the judges watch for during the competition.

"The number one thing in our minds when we're judging is how does the music make you feel? Is it danceable? It doesn't have to fit in any old-time realm. People play bluegrass tunes, or people play Cape Breton-type tunes, but as long as it's something

that really touches your heart and makes you want to tap your feet and get up and dance, that's what we're looking for," she said. "(Judges also look for) intonation, are they playing in tune? Their timing, are they speeding up, slowing down? What's their set like? How does one team flow into another? Can they flow together? Can they add different things and tasteful ornamentation?"

This year's judges panel consists of Brian Hebert, who composed many of Canada's legendary fiddle tunes, five-time Grand Saskatchewan Fiddle Champion Rodney Krip, and three-time Canadian Grand Masters Fiddle Champion Mark Sullivan.

Top Manitoba Métis fiddlers Garry Lepine, Oliver Boulette, and even Kusturok will perform. She said it's not often you have this much fiddle talent in one place.

"I'm giddy about the fact that it's here in Manitoba and Winnipeg. I've travelled all over to all these different places. I've worked as a judge, been the contestant, and been on both sides of the fence," she said. "Just the fact that we can bring them to Manitoba and showcase our hospitality, warmth, and even our Métis style of playing here."

The CGMFA will host a Junior Showcase Performance during the competition to highlight the next generation of fiddle talent. They find the young performers by putting out a call for video submissions. Kusturok said it's heartwarming to watch them perform.

"It's great to know that the music is in good hands and that it's being continued and passed along, and it's great to see that there are so many opportunities for young people nowadays in the fiddle world," she said. "There are (showcases) like this that they can go to at the national level. There are camps they can go to and learn from the best of the best in the world that get asked to come to these camps. There are so many opportunities, so it's wonderful to see these young people and how they blossom from year to year."

One of the main sponsors for this year's CGMFC is the Manitoba Métis Federation, which Kusturok is happy to have on board.

"They're a major sponsor in this, and we're just thrilled. I've played Métis festivals, and I just played in Ste. Madeleine (at Ste. Madeleine Métis Days). I remember President David Chartrand when he was talking on stage. He mentioned that the fiddle is the heartbeat of the Métis Nation, and that's exactly how I feel personally."

To learn more about the festival and purchase tickets, visit their website at cgmmanitoba2022.com.

Corn Roast at Riel House

330 River Road, Winnipeg | August 27, 2022

The Riel House Corn Roast has returned after COVID. Come enjoy activities, live music, tours of the house and garden, and of course corn!



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Vaccine Clinic The Pas Region

August 25th @ 12-6 PM
August 26th @ 10-4 PM
MMF Regional Office, 456 Fisher Ave.

Call (204) 623 - 5701 to book an appointment
Walk-in appointments welcome

