



Le Métis
EST. 1871

President's Message



This summer has seen the return of a number of significant events to our community, including the historic annual Pilgrimage to the St. Malo Shrine and Grotto and the Elder and Youth conference in Selkirk.

Pilgrimage to St. Malo

As many Citizens know, it had been two years since the last pilgrimage took place, and I know that my heart, and the hearts of all the parishioners, were full of joy that we were able to return to the grotto. Many Citizens and members of the MMF Cabinet participated in the mass that honours the Assumption of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. It was a wonderful, joyful day in the grotto and there were no empty seats at the event.

Of course, anyone who has been to the grotto at St. Malo knows it is a beautiful and meaningful place, inviting visitors to sit in nature and reflect their thoughts or pray – I often visit the grotto to pray and share my thoughts with my mother Martha, who was also a strong Catholic. It is a place of comfort, peace, and tranquility for many.

However, being an outdoor shrine means that it requires significant upkeep. For years, the MMF and the Southeast Region have supported this by engaging summer students to help clean and maintain it. During one of my visits to the grotto several months ago, I noticed that the cross was also starting to weather and needed replacing. During this year's pilgrimage, the MMF was able to make a donation of a cross and a statue from the country of Jordan, blessed in the waters of the river where Jesus Christ himself was baptized.

As your President, I have had the honour of travelling all over the world as I pursue the advancement of the Red River Métis. One of the great blessings I have received from this work is the people I've met and the friends I've made. It is because of a friend,

Hussein Hassan, that I was able to obtain the cross and statue for our grotto from Jordan. It is very rare that people gain access to the wood used to make the cross we brought home to St. Malo – it comes from a holy tree in a location where no trees can be cut down without express permission – permission we would not have obtained without the help and support of our friend in Jordan. On behalf of the MMF and all those who draw comfort from the St. Malo Grotto, I wish to publicly extend my sincere thanks to my friend for helping us to make this extraordinary donation.

I also thank all those who joined far and wide to attend the pilgrimage and participate in the mass. I also offer special thanks to Father Napoleon from Duck Bay and Archbishop LeGatt for their service, as well as all those who helped support the parishioners, including the St. Malo Local and the Southeast Region Vice-President Denise Thomas and executives Shawn Nault and Marielle Gauthier.

Because of this donation to the grotto, I was invited to give remarks following the mass. I was happy to share some of my reflections on the importance of the grotto, and some of the lessons I have learned about the power of God during my lifetime. I was also able to pay tribute to Jean Desrosiers, who was a long-time member of Cabinet at the MMF, and who always fought vigorously to ensure we never forgot the grotto and did what we could to beautify it.

It is because of the vision and the hard work of our Elders, like Jean, that our Nation has continued on, in spite of all efforts by outside forces to erase the Red River Métis throughout our history. The strength and determination of our Elders, community leaders, and family matriarchs continue to keep our traditions alive and protect our identity, always with an eye to ensuring there is a legacy for our Youth to inherit.

Elders and Youth conference

The connection between Elders and the Youth of our Nation is vital to our long-term strength. It is of such cultural importance to us that it was one of the messages we worked very hard to convey to His Holiness when we were with him in Rome earlier this year. We know we were heard by the Holy Father as he himself acknowledged the importance of this relationship when he spoke in Maskwacis this summer.

I am very proud that we were able to celebrate and honour this connection through the return of our annual Elder and Youth conference this year. Last held in 2019, this event sees Elders and Youth gather from across all regions to spend time together as a community, which always includes music, food, and dancing.

What makes the gathering special is that it provides our Youth a chance to learn from our Elders – everything from beading and sewing, harvesting from the land to canning and preserving. Along with these traditional skills and teachings, the Youth also get to listen to stories, receive guidance and feel the support of the Elders from our Nation.

The Elders get to pass on traditional knowledge and wisdom, as well as feel the gratitude and respect of their community for their many years of hard work keeping our culture alive.

Of course, we can never repay the debt we owe to our Elders, nor can we ever forget it. I have often said no one can know where they are going in the future without first understanding where they come from. Our Elders not only provide us with the understanding of where we come from, they also ensure our Youth go into the world with a strong sense of their own identity and a strong sense of community connection.

I believe it is because we still honour this important connection between Youth and Elders that we are experiencing such a strong cultural revival today. There are so many Red River Métis rediscovering their identity, reconnecting with their community, and coming home to their Métis government. I know our ancestors would be proud to see how far we've come, and how many of our traditional ways are still being honoured.

Know that the MMF will continue to be guided by our customs and culture, as we do the important work of advancing our Nation, finding our rightful place in Canada's confederation, and creating new international Indigenous-to-Indigenous relationships to benefit our Red River Métis Citizens.

We are Red River Métis – we are strong, and we are growing stronger. Always believe in yourself and remember that MMF has your back.

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. ∞

MMF revives annual Pilgrimage to historic grotto



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On August 21, The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) participated in the historic annual Pilgrimage to the St. Malo Shrine and Grotto, in honour of the Assumption of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.

It was the first time in two years the yearly Pilgrimage had occurred. Archbishops, Priests, MMF Cabinet, and parishioners came to the grotto for mass hosted by the Blessed Margaret Catholic Parish. Following the service, which was delivered in both French and English, parishioners took part in confession, a lunch held by the Knights of Columbus, and then adoration.

Known for its tranquil beauty, the sanctuary remains a historical site in Manitoba, and is visited by thousands of parishioners each year across the globe. Miracles are known to have taken place at this grotto.

The grotto was built based on the vision of Father Abel Noret, who arrived from France in 1895. After exploring the area, he found a spot reminiscent of the Grotto of Lourdes in France, where the Blessed Virgin had appeared in 1858. Parishioners helped clear the brush in the area, and a small Chapel was

built in 1896. In 1902, the Chapel was replaced by the stone grotto.

“There is a power out there greater than us,” said President David Chartrand, who was invited to give remarks following the mass. “And that’s why we’re here today to celebrate.”

President Chartrand also spoke of his late mother’s devotion to the Virgin Mary, and recounted the miracle of the Virgin Mary appearing to three children in Fatima, Portugal in 1917.

“All walks of life went to see this message of these three kids speaking to the Virgin Mary. And they got the shock of their life: that it was real. That the Virgin Mary was there. The clouds opened up,” said President Chartrand. “70,000 saw how the sun danced for 10 minutes with their own eyes. The sun was rotating and jumping in all ways, in different ways. And there is no way in science, any way to this day even, to claim how that could be, how the sun could do that. So, the Virgin Mary was sending a message on behalf of these kids: I am real.”

President Chartrand also presented a new cross constructed out of wood from the Holy Land of Jordan as well as a statue of Jesus to the pilgrimage. He said he hopes the cross will have a significant impact on the community of St. Malo.

“Please always remember when you come to pray that this crucifix you see before you comes from the River Jordan and the rare trees found by the river. The cross and the figure also come from there, entirely blessed by holy water as Jesus was baptized there too,” President Chartrand said. “On behalf of my Cabinet, we’re very honoured to have been here to donate this and be part of the future, and hopefully miracles will come your way.”

The MMF helps maintain the grotto to keep its natural beauty intact. St. Malo is located approximately 50 minutes south of Winnipeg on Highway 59. You can view the new cross and statue at De La Grotte Ave.



Mass, hosted by the Blessed Margaret Catholic Parish, was delivered in both French and English, and focused on the Virgin Mary.



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