



Le Métis
EST. 1871



Recently, I was honoured to be invited to deliver a keynote speech at the World Indigenous Business Forum, which took place in Villavicencio, in the Republic of Colombia.

It is clear, through my many interactions with Indigenous leaders from all over the world, that no matter how far apart our communities are, nor how many cultural differences we may have, there are common values that are shared among all Indigenous Nations. We share a strong dedication to the land our Ancestors lived on, and to the stewardship and conservation of that land for generations to come. We cherish our families and our community, and across every Indigenous culture found in the world, there is a fundamental belief that what we have, what we earn from our lands and what we build and dream of, can only be successful if it is shared.

I expressed this fundamental connection to the representatives of the Indigenous Nations who attended the forum and listened to my words – people from Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Peru, the United States, and Canada. It was widely recognized as truth – when you are with Indigenous people, no matter where they come from, you are with family.

However, there is also a recognized truth that we are all suffering from the effects of colonization. Indigenous people live in poverty across the globe. Success stories do exist, and they are important to celebrate. But there is still too much poverty, too much suffering, too much displacement – and the only way to make change is to work together as a global family, to better each of our circumstances.

Make no mistake, our own people and our own Nation still have work to do to overcome the effects of colonization. Many of our Citizens still require help

and support to achieve lasting security. That's why your Métis government will never stop expanding on the programs and services we offer. It's also why we continue to build toward long-term economic security, which will keep our programs and services vibrant, no matter what the changing political tides bring us.

That said, our Citizens know that we have achieved many great things in the past decades, and we have come a long way in rebuilding our economic engine.

We have helped build the global vision of the Indigenous family – the ability to govern ourselves, to create economic opportunity for our Nations, and to determine for ourselves who our partners in trade will be. This is an important part of what the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is about: the sovereignty of our Nations, and our right to self-determination.

We have been able to help our Colombian brothers and sisters develop the tools necessary to trade with us – in coffee, in panela (a kind of raw sugar), and in the making of our own Red River Métis sashes by expert weavers. We were able to supply them with protective equipment at the height of the pandemic. Over the last few years, we have also been able to help others, in Ukraine, in India, and within Canada.

Red River Métis Citizens take pride in our ability to help others, and our Elders are always clear that this is our way, and that this tradition must continue.

However, colonization has left its mark on some Indigenous communities – there are people who always want to have more for themselves.

Indigenous peoples need to remember that it was jealousy of what our people had that caused us to be robbed of our place – the bounty we enjoyed and the self-governance we achieved before Canada came to our Homeland. Settler governments wanted what we had, and they thought nothing of taking our land and our prosperity for themselves.

It is this kind of jealousy that threatened our nationhood in the beginning. It was the selflessness and sacrifice of our Elders that kept our Nation's flame alive during the dark times. We must work hard to honour our Elders' wisdom and ensure that jealousy does not threaten our nationhood ever again. It has no place in our culture or our Nation. Sharing is caring and we as Red River Métis are not jealous of each other or other Indigenous Nations.

Another impact of colonization is the creation of borders. Citizens know that we are increasingly moving away from the arbitrary constructs that are borders. We have been inviting our Citizens across

Canada and the world to come home to us, the government of the Red River Métis, and our Citizens have been responding. This has been an important step in restoring our thinking to our beginnings, recognizing that our Homeland stretches across multiple boundaries, and that our nationhood and our kinship ties are not bound by these borders.

Equally, it is worth remembering that the Indigenous peoples across South, Central, and North America used to travel extensively. There were never any borders between us, and we traded freely with other Nations, even intermarrying or adopting from one another. This practice gave us strength, as it created understanding, built relationships, and enhanced our cultures and our traditions.

Just as we have done with our Citizens beyond borders, we must go back to our traditional thinking about our relationships with Indigenous peoples across the world. We must forget about colonial borders and boundaries, which were never of our own making. We must come together as Indigenous Nations, committed to supporting one another, to building relationships, and finding ways to create economic success for all.

It is only by being united in one voice that our own Nation has achieved opportunities for education, housing, and secure futures, while we honour our own traditions. By uniting internationally, we can help forge new pathways for all Indigenous Nations, ensuring the world hears the wisdom of our ancestors, and that we have all the means necessary to express and implement this wisdom.

This is the goal that we shared at the World Indigenous Business Forum in Colombia, and it is the goal we will continue to build toward as Indigenous Nations from across the planet who share the common values of unity and sharing.

I will continue to share our progress on this vision and goal with our Nation, as we work to strengthen our relationships with our extended kin.

I send my well wishes to Citizens who are honouring our traditions by harvesting from our Homeland to feed family and community. Stay safe and remember – your Red River Métis Government has your back.

Until we meet 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. ∞

Oliver Boulette helps keep the Métis fiddle alive



Oliver Boulette plays the fiddle during a graduation ceremony in Richer.

Red River Métis Citizen Oliver Boulette has spent many years cementing his legacy of being an elite fiddler.

Boulette grew up in Manigotagan well versed on the guitar. It wasn't until later in life that his grandfather gifted him a fiddle while he was in the late stages of his life.

"I was 22 at the time. I had tried to play before but didn't get anything out of the fiddle," said Boulette. "I picked it up a few times before, but when my grandfather left it for me, I was able to get a tune out, and I remembered some of the tunes he played. So, I try to replay those from memory."

Boulette plays a traditional Red River Métis fiddle style and has performed at many dances, events, and celebrations across the province. Some people have said Boulette plays a crooked fiddle, which he elaborated on.

"When I played with other musicians, they would say, 'man, you've got terrible time. You have to get in time with us.' So, that started to change my style of fiddling. I later learned that it took me away from the Métis style of fiddling, which is a unique-sounding piece of fiddle music in itself," he said. "(Métis) fiddlers from time to time would drop off a note or add one or two bridge notes, so it always sounded like they were playing out of time. But that was okay because the dancers would pick up that missing (note) with their heels with a scuff when they danced, and nobody ever knew. That was our style, so we had a unique style (of playing) here in the Red River."

Growing up with no electricity, radio, or recordings of fiddlers playing, Boulette relied heavily on hearing musicians playing live. He credits his grandfather coming by his house to play the fiddle and hearing him play at house dances as a source of inspiration.

He referenced a few other musicians that influenced him.

"There was a gentleman by the name of Elmer Seymour, whom I heard, and his dad, Wilfred Seymour, was another one I had heard play fiddle, so they kind of influenced me," Boulette said. "There was another guy named James Cowley that had a unique style. He didn't know a lot of tunes, but he could sure make people dance. I was influenced by him as well. I thought he was a deep player."

Boulette has performed at many dances, Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) events, and more, but he said a few notable performances have stood out, including a Métis delegate trip to Juno Beach in 2009.

"I got to play my fiddle over in Juno Beach, so I got to play the Red River Jig over there," he said. "Another couple of times is when I went to New York with Minister (Carolyn) Bennett of the federal government, and I played three different times at the United Nations playing the Red River Jig there. They liked my unique way of playing, so they asked me to join them, so I went over."

The Red River Métis Citizen claims he doesn't have a favourite song to perform, but he is well-versed in all the crowd favourites.

"When you're a fiddle player, you have to play what we call the money songs when you're somewhere (performing); people shout out these tunes, and they say you've got to play these things," Boulette chuckled.

In August of this year, Boulette participated in the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Competition. He had the honour of performing a Métis fiddle medley with renowned fiddlers Patti Kusturok and Shawn Mousseau. He noted it was a unique opportunity to take the stage with such high-calibre players.



Boulette takes the podium to play the fiddle during a Remembrance Day service.

"We all come from different parts of the province, and we can all play the same tune, but we sound different when we play it, and that's what makes it so wonderful. I always say it's not what you put into the music. Sometimes it's what you leave out. (There are) lots of times you have to put your heart into it, and that's what makes the music," said Boulette. "I've heard musicians that were well rehearsed and very good, but weren't putting their heart into it. They said to me, 'well, what do you think,' and I said, 'well, you're very good, but you're not putting your heart into your music, and it's not coming out.' With these fiddlers that performed, you heard them putting their hearts into the music. So, you'll feel the music when you hear it."

During a trip to New York City with the MMF, Boulette toured the National Museum of the American Indian. While taking in the displays, he found an exhibit that resonated with him. It explained Indigenous Peoples are given a musical instrument by the creator to celebrate, honour, socialize, mourn, and pray.

"I've been lucky enough to use my fiddle in all those things. I've celebrated (and) I've honoured," he said. "I had an opportunity to go to the University of Winnipeg and play for 2,500 graduates getting their degrees and doctor's degrees, and I was able to play the Red River Jig as they came in to get their degrees. So that was honouring them. Of course, socializing, lots of community dances and weddings."

The celebrated fiddler has also played at funerals and in prayer.

"People ask me to play because they have grandparents, uncles, and family that play the fiddle, and they come to ask me to play the fiddle when they are laying (family) to rest," Boulette said. "Of course, the other part was when I went to New York and got to play it in prayer. I used my fiddle very much the same as the First Nations used the drum in their prayer; I got to use the fiddle in prayer. So, I've used it in all five things. That was one of the wonderful things the MMF was able to do for me. They asked me to represent them, and I was able to do that."



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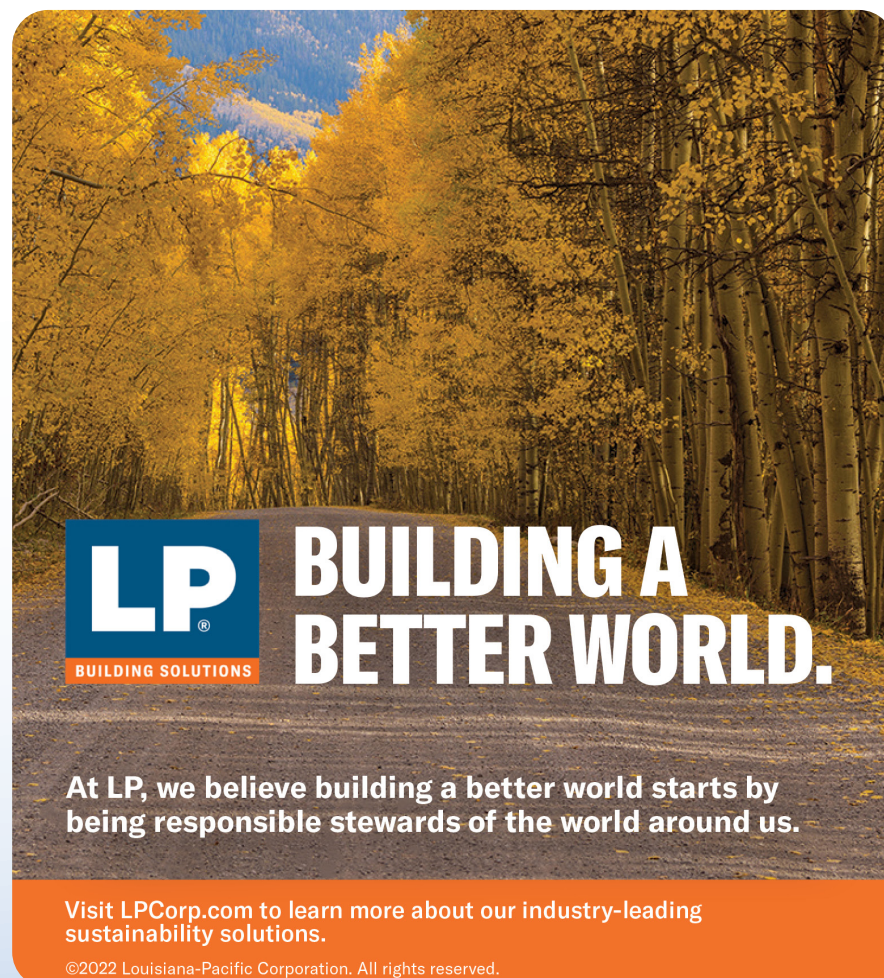
RADON

Is it in your home?

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Julianne Sanguins

jsanguins@mmf.mb.ca

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