



Le Métis

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President's Message



This is my last message to Citizens before we enter the full swing of the holiday season. I hope that everyone has what they need, and that everyone has a place at the table for the feasting, fun, and laughter.

Growing up, I can clearly remember the holidays and the wonder and joy we all felt. My mother did not have a lot of money, but she always made sure each of us got something for Christmas, and there was always enough food for all, including the people who would drop by to say Merry Christmas and visit for a while.

In those days, whenever someone came into a Red River Métis house during the holidays, there was always food. The minute you sat down at the table, food was put in front of you. It didn't matter if you'd just come from supper at home or from visiting another house where you'd been fed – if you were visiting, you were going to eat. It was a sign of caring and abundance, even if the houses you were visiting didn't have a lot of money. Families would have food made in large enough quantities so that there was always enough, no matter how many people came to visit.

I know many Citizens share similar memories about visiting during the holidays. In a year where we are seeing more and more people struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living, it's a very good time to revive or continue this tradition. In the days of the Red River Settlement, the Red River Métis were known for their hospitality, and willingness to share with everyone, including friends, visitors, and newcomers. Of course, with strongminded Métis women like Annie McDermot Bannatyne – who horsewhipped an Easterner for saying bad things about Red River Métis hostesses – it was probably very smart for visitors to accept the generosity of the house.

We all know that Christmas can be a challenging time for many people, including Elders and vulnerable community members. I encourage Citizens who are hosting gatherings in their homes to think about the people around you who might be at risk of being alone during the holidays. Sometimes, small things like hearing from a friend can make all the difference for these individuals.

For those who find this time of year difficult, either because of loneliness or the loss of a loved one over the last year, know that you are in my prayers. Too often, when we are sad, we forget that there are people in our families and our communities who care about us. As much as I encourage all Citizens to reach out to Elders and vulnerable community members to make sure they get a plate of food and some company, I urge those who are worried they might be alone to pick up the phone and reach out to those around you – you may be surprised by the warm welcome you receive.

Red River Métis traditions that emphasize sharing and supporting others are truly one of the greatest parts of our legacy, and it's important that we preserve them and keep our culture alive.

For Elders, students, and hardworking families who have an abundance of love, but have struggled with the rising cost of living, your Red River Métis Government is so proud to provide you with food vouchers that will ensure a festive feast this holiday season. Elders will have the resources to be able

to make those special dishes that make Christmas taste and feel like home. Families will be able to put a hearty meal in front of their children and guests, while students coming home for the holidays can surprise their parents with a contribution to supper. On behalf of Cabinet and staff at the MMF, we sincerely hope that every Citizen gets to enjoy the holidays and feel the spirit of Christmas in their hearts.

As you know, your Red River Métis Government has a longstanding relationship with the Christmas Cheer Board, and we are always proud to contribute to their efforts in any way we can. The \$50,000 they received from the MMF this year is the largest public donation made to the Christmas Cheer Board. Cheer Board Executive Director Shawna Bell told me that our donation on behalf of our Citizens makes sure that the charity will not need to turn any families away. I hope it fills you with pride knowing that it is your government and your Nation ensuring that no child goes without a Christmas this year. Sometimes, it's the simplest things that make Christmas feel special, and they don't cost much at all. That's why I hope all Citizens get a chance to drive past the corner of Portage and Main at some point during the holiday season. With the Christmas lights on full display on the exterior of our Heritage Centre, there's no way you can help but have a smile on your face when you see it. It is truly a beacon of joy for the holidays, as well as a reminder that the Red River Métis are still here in the heart of our Homeland, and we continue to grow our prosperity and strength every year.

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. I also wish a safe and merry Christmas to all Citizens, and hope that the season gives you comfort and peace, along with joy and time with loved ones.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand. LL.D. hon. Q.M. ∞



Colombia's David Chartrand Executive Centre open for business

Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) President David Chartrand was recently honoured in Colombia after a newly constructed building was dedicated to him.

The David Chartrand Executive Centre is located in Pueblo Bello, Colombia, approximately 900 kilometres north of Bogotá, the country's capital. The people of Arhuaco, an Indigenous Nation in Colombia, named the centre after President Chartrand for his efforts to support Indigenous businesses, provide humanitarian aid, and promote Nation-to-Nation fair trade.

"Just like any country or nation, it is important to balance your imports and exports to achieve a healthy economy," President Chartrand said. "The Red River Métis have always focused on trade since the days of the Red River Cart, as it brings opportunities to our economies. It is important for Indigenous people to stand together and support one another; if we do this, we will build each other up."

A ribbon cutting ceremony followed the burning of a sacred leaf as an offering of protection.

The David Chartrand Executive Centre includes an outdoor meeting area, a building for lodging, and a large processing facility and warehouse.

"Tribes from across Colombia will be able to meet at a central location to discuss business opportunities that will benefit their communities," said President Chartrand. "It will provide a safe place where Indigenous leaders and entrepreneurs can gather to grow their businesses and bring innovation to their products and services."

The Red River Métis National flag and the MMF flag will be permanently flown outside of the David Chartrand Executive Centre as a symbol of the strong ties between the two nations. Although they don't have much, the Arhuaco are a hardworking people and share the spirit of giving with the Red River Métis. A mamoncillo tree was planted in President Chartrand's name to represent rebuilding, sustaining, and protecting mother nature – touchstones of Arhuaco culture.

This centre will help boost the Arhuaco's production and storage of goods such as coffee, cocoa, and panela – an unrefined cane sugar product produced by the Nation.



President David Chartrand officially cuts the ribbon to the David Chartrand Executive Centre located in Pueblo Bello, Colombia.

"The Arhuaco are our closest and most successful international relationship so far. We strive to work together on many economic opportunities to further each of our traditional local economies," said President Chartrand. "These economic opportunities include importing and co-branding coffee and panela products. The MMF is proud to invest in this infrastructure so the Arhuaco can enhance their facilities for increased production."

The MMF is currently working with nine communities within the Arhuaco and is in discussions with another three communities regarding international trade for coffee and textiles.

"The MMF strives to develop relationships with the many Indigenous tribes of Colombia. All our international Indigenous relationship are approached with a Nation-to-Nation lens," President Chartrand said. "Our Nation's leaders meet with theirs to build intergovernmental connections and advance our political and economic priorities."

During President Chartrand's mission to Colombia, he was also honoured with the Lanza Llanera Order of Democracy, given to individuals who contribute to the community and support the socioeconomic development and cultural advancement of Colombia's people. President Chartrand made history by being the first individual outside of Colombia to receive this award.

The award was presented by the President of Meta's Department Assembly, José Manuel Sandoval Garzón – an Indigenous leader within the Colombian government.

President Chartrand also attended the World Indigenous Business Forum, which took place in Villavicencio, Colombia. During the forum, President Chartrand delivered a keynote speech focusing on topics such as economic advancement and security, colonization, and inter-nation relationships.

Delegations from Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Peru, the United States, and Canada attended the three-day forum and heard the President's words.

"The right to govern ourselves, create economic opportunity for our Nations, and determine our trade partners are all essential parts of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," President Chartrand said in his speech. "Red River Métis Citizens take pride in our ability to help others, and our Elders are always clear that this is our way, and this tradition must continue. It's critical that we come together as Indigenous Nations to support one another, build relationships, and find ways to create economic success for all."



Red River Métis fiddler launches Holiday Alley in style



Jack Park, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure and Chair of Métis N4 Construction, warms up the crowd before the musicians take the stage.



Red River Métis fiddler Morgan Grace and her father Keith Ginther perform together to open the concert.



Grace takes the stage to play fiddle on the song "Girl from the Ocean" from singer-songwriter Daniel Jordan's EP.

The City of Selkirk got into the festive spirit with the recent Holiday Alley winter festival.

The event ran from November 24-27 and marks the first time since the pandemic that the event has been 100 per cent in person. Last year, the festival was a hybrid of virtual and live events.

Holiday Alley co-founder Shirley Muir said event organizers were skeptical if people would show up in person, but they came out in spades.

"I'm sure we had thousands of people (come) down. There were so many people moving all over the place inside bars and restaurants, they were on the streets, they were at the craft markets, and they were participating in some Indigenous teachings we had," she said. "It was so rewarding to see people get out, and we think part of that is because we and our sponsors, like the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), did not stop during COVID. We just kept giving people art and creativity at a time when they needed and wanted it. The weekend was a huge success for us."

The four-day festival began with a concert sponsored by the MMF and Métis N4 Construction. It featured local Red River Métis father-daughter fiddler duo Morgan Grace and Keith Ginther, who opened for singer-songwriter Daniel Jordan. The member of Red

Moon Road performed his latest EP, *Songs From the Inland Sea*. The EP was created as part of Theatre Projects Manitoba's *Chautauqua: The Interlake Trail*, a multidisciplinary project to capture stories from residents of the Interlake.

For Grace, this concert meant the opportunity to play in front of her hometown, an experience which she greatly enjoyed.

"I think it was exciting to play in front of a crowd, where I grew up, with new people, and learning new things," she said. "The MMF gives us lots of great opportunities. I always love going back to their events. They're fun. I get to meet new people all the time."

Jack Park, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure and Chair of Métis N4 Construction, said the MMF's relationship with Holiday Alley has gone back many years.

"They've always included Indigenous culture, talent, and storytelling," he said. "So, I thought it's the perfect mix for the MMF to get our word out and tell people how we support communities."

During the concert, Grace was invited to perform the song "Girl from the Ocean" from Jordan's EP, which featured the fiddle.

"It was (Holiday Alley's) idea. They had this component and thought Morgan could collaborate on a song with him," Grace's father, Keith Ginther, said. "It's very unique and challenging for Morgan to step outside the traditional fiddle box and play some fiddle on a tune from Daniel Jordan's album."

Other events during Holiday Alley included concerts, a soup cook-off, a mural walking tour, a pooch parade, giant Santa photos, a holiday market, and much more.

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 Red River Métis Nation, send it to communications@mmf.mb.ca and you may see it in print!



On December 9, we kicked off the holiday season by lighting up the future home of our heritage centre, located at the iconic corner of Portage and Main.

Minister Park said Métis N4 Construction and the MMF continues to support our communities that showcase Indigenous talent, our Indigenous culture, and our Indigenous way of life.

"It's not being taught in schools. Young people today don't know who we are, and even the older people don't know who we are," he said. "So, it's a great opportunity for us as Métis Citizens to showcase what we're all about and to be proud of our heritage."



