



Le Métis
EST. 1871



We've had several opportunities to celebrate our heritage, history, and traditions in recent weeks.

I was delighted to attend the 76th Annual Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival in The Pas. I was proud to see the Red River Métis competitors in the dog sled and Queen and Junior Trapper competitions, as well as the beautiful Red River Métis beading and leatherwork, and other items for sale through the craft show. The MMF's role in the festival as sponsors and community participants is well-led by Vice-President Judy Mayer, Minister Joan Ledoux, and Minister Darrel Ferland, supported by The Pas Local and its Chair, Jolene Mayer.

I have always said I will never forget the North, and I haven't, and I travel to visit whenever I can. There is something about northern hospitality that cannot be matched anywhere else in the world. The warm welcome received by all the visitors to the event is genuine, and locals are proud to share their community spirit and provide a platform for the skills and practices of the people who call it home.

Make no mistake, the skills you see on display in the competitive events are learned the hard way – by direct experience. The people of the North still practice many of the traditional skills of trappers, including fire making, trap setting, and snowshoeing. All of the competitions take strength, endurance, and specialized skills, and it is great to see Youth entering the competitions after learning their skills from parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. It didn't matter if they were competing in the King, Queen, or Junior Trapper competitions; every individual is practicing the same skills – packing canoes, setting traps, making tea, and cooking bannock over fires. This makes sense, because in our culture, men and women worked together as partners in every endeavour, including the running of trap lines.

President's Message

Supporting our Citizens as they practice these traditional skills is one of the reasons why we started the Red River Métis Fur Company, which had a strong presence at the Trappers' Festival. Reviving fur trapping not only helps create more economic opportunities for our Citizens, it also helps ensure that the lands and wildlife of our Homeland remain in balance. Our Elders have taught us that nature will always correct the imbalances left by humans, but nature is vicious when it makes those corrections. Responsible harvesting from the land promotes a healthy ecosystem.

Because fur has been devalued so much over the years, trappers have been making very little income for the sheer amount of work and skill involved in the practice. That's why the Red River Métis Fur Company offers Citizens an above market value for the furs. I know that the trappers I spoke to in The Pas, including Lawrence Genaille, were very happy with the price they got for their efforts, and appreciated that they received the money in hand as they left their furs with us.

Equally important is ensuring that we make good use of these furs and hides. A visitor to the Trappers' Festival only needed to visit the craft sale to see the beautiful work that can be done with furs and hides. That's why our Red River Métis artisans have first access to hides and furs harvested by our trappers. In many ways, this mimics the way things were traditionally done, when trappers and artists would harvest the animals, tan the hides, and produce the clothing and beadwork – all within the same family. Your Métis Government is working on creating a holistic program that supports full use of the furs and hides, while supporting our artisans as they make beautiful wearable art that will be passed down from generation to generation.

This is one of the reasons why the Trappers' Festival is so important, and deserves to be celebrated. While promoting our traditional economy, it also honours our traditions and helps to keep them alive by celebrating the skills and abilities of the people who do the work.

Of course, there is more to the festival than the great skills of competitors. For the Red River Métis, the peak event of Trappers' Festival is Métis Family Nite at the Métis Hall in The Pas. The event is hosted by The Pas Region, and that team works hard to make the event memorable and enjoyable for all. In another example of the cooperation and community spirit that help the North continue to thrive, the event is also supported by the neighbouring Northwest Region, with Vice-President Frances Chartrand and team on site to help out. Family Nite saw a packed hall, with lots of friends and family gathering to eat, listen to music, and enjoy each other's company.

Your Métis Government will always support events that celebrate our culture and traditions. Too often, the mainstream media fails to accurately tell our stories or highlight our traditions. That's why I was proud to send a film crew to the Trappers' Festival, to help our Citizens who could not attend feel like a part of it, even virtually. I heard from many Citizens who told me they appreciated the coverage, and that watching it made them proud of our Nation and our Ancestors who led the fur trade.

I congratulate and thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make the Trappers' Festival such a successful event. It's hard to believe, but everything that happens over the course of the festival is entirely done by volunteers. The amount of work to organize such a complex series of events cannot be understated, but all who attend the festivities can see the volunteers run the events with great energy and enthusiasm. I look forward to attending again next year!

Of course, hot on the heels of the Trappers' Festival, Manitobans got to enjoy Louis Riel Day. This was an important day to celebrate Louis Riel as a father of confederation, founder of Manitoba, and the province's first premier. The MMF is the National Government of the Red River Métis, the inheritor of our Ancestors' mandate to Louis Riel's provisional government. Carrying this inheritance is our great responsibility, as well as our great honour. We have never given up on the inclusive vision Riel had for our Homeland – what was once known as the Northwest – and we never will.

There were many Louis Riel Day events taking place across Manitoba, hosted by our Locals and Regions, and I know they were well attended and well received. I took some time to visit the festivities in Winnipeg at the St. Boniface Museum. Our longstanding partnership with the team at the museum for Louis Riel Day events is one of great respect and cooperation. As always, I appreciate their ongoing efforts to highlight the contributions of the Red River Métis to this, the province we helped create. The event was a great success, thanks to this partnership and the efforts of both the museum and our MMF staff.

Many of you will have heard that I will be in your Region to discuss some history-making events taking place for our Nation, as we continue to advance ourselves and find our place in Canada's confederation. I look forward to meeting with you all and discussing these important matters.

Until we meet, 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. ∞

Red River Métis weightlifter prepares for the national stage



Red River Métis Citizen Abigail Chandonnet lifts 54-kg at a weightlifting competition.

Growing up, Abigail Chandonnet never thought much about lifting weights, but now the Red River Métis Citizen is preparing to represent her province in the sport of Olympic weightlifting.

The weightlifter will attend the 2023 Senior Canadian Championships from May 19-21, which takes place in Toronto.

For Chandonnet, her journey into weightlifting wasn't easy, as she didn't get into the sport until after graduation.

"I grew up in Manitoba on a farm and didn't do much," she said. "I was literally the most unathletic person. When (my family) moved to Ontario, I played rugby a little bit in my last year of school and then started going to the gym after."

The now 28-year-old ended up diving into CrossFit, but then ruptured her abdominal muscles and received surgery to repair them. After healing and returning to working out, Chandonnet found a

new gym that offered more functional training, like Olympic weightlifting.

"I never knew about weightlifting, and I never heard about it, except within the CrossFit world, but I found out it was a sport. I started doing weightlifting and didn't have big goals for it. I didn't take it seriously until three years ago," the weightlifter said. "I ended up with a cool coach from the city, and then we've been actively progressing and trying to get to higher levels, which has been working."

Weightlifting has been a staple event in the Olympics since 1920. The competition consists of two types of lifts, the snatch and the clean and jerk. While executing the snatch, the weightlifter lifts the weight from the ground to above their heads in one fluid motion. During the clean and jerk, the athlete first lifts the weight up "clean" past their shoulders and gets into a squatting position, then thrusts the weight above their head and holds it there.

Chandonnet noted athletes participate in weightlifting recreationally or to attend competitions. She outlined how you move up the ranks of the competition world.

"As you move up levels, it goes provincials, nationals, Team Canada, and the big show (the Olympics). You get to go to provincials by the standards set by your province, and it goes off the marker of what the lifters are lifting in your category in your province," she said. "So then, when you go to nationals, it's what people are lifting in your category in the nation, in all of Canada. So, I get to go and represent Ontario at nationals against all the other provinces."

The Red River Métis weightlifter was excited to learn she qualified to compete at the 2023 Senior Canadian Championships. She believes her drive to compete and hunger to train in the sport help propel her success.

When asked what she considers her most substantial achievement in weightlifting, Chandonnet quipped that she's just starting to scratch the surface of what she can accomplish. She's proud of how far she has made it into weightlifting.

"Not being a natural athlete and not having a background in sport has been a disadvantage, especially when you go to these competitions and (watch) ex-national level gymnastics (athletes competing). I feel like weightlifting is a secondary sport for a lot of people. So, it's nice to be able to keep up with these people because the athletes in this sport are all amazing," she said. "We compete by weight class, and my weight class is one of the lower weight classes. It's so exceptional to see these women coming up and cleaning and jerking double (their) body weight. You're like, 'oh ... like that's possible?'"

Although the Red River Métis Citizen now resides in Cornwall, her family lived in Churchill for eight years.

"Obviously, being that far up north, you're really accustomed to your natural resources and the traditional values and ways of all our Indigenous people, especially since we had a lot of Inuit influence. I grew up hunting, and everything was traditional," Chandonnet said. "Moving (to Cornwall) was a culture shock for me, to be honest. It's very different here, in the way they do things, but I've always carried my beliefs strong."

In 2022, Chandonnet had the opportunity to attend the Manitoba Métis Federation's Beyond Borders meetings, which took place across Canada and into the United States, with the common goal of connecting with Red River Métis Citizens beyond the provincial borders. She attended the meeting in Ottawa and was very invigorated by the experience.



Chandonnet is also a Registered Massage Therapist and became attached to the profession while working through athletic injuries.

“It was great to see the (Red River Métis) Community come together outside Manitoba because people migrate and move,” she said. “It brought me home because it made me feel supported, and my people are close.”

Chandonnet is a Registered Massage Therapist (RMT) and became attached to the profession while working through athletic injuries. She is passionate about using the information she’s learned to help others, and her knowledge has come in handy for weightlifting.

“Whenever I was switching careers and trying to figure out what I wanted to do next, I wanted something that would complement me because I also coach Olympic weightlifting, so I was like, what would make the most sense, and that’s how I fell into massage therapy,” she said. “It is a strength all around to understand the way that the body works, to understand your muscles, and to understand recovery. There are so many small things that translate. If I’m in the gym, and I feel something weird pull, I’m like, ‘oh, okay, that attachment is this’; the only reason I know that is (because) I’m a massage therapist.”



Chandonnet is competing at the 2023 Senior Canadian Championships from May 19-21.

The Red River Métis massage therapist noted her clients also believe that her weightlifting prowess translates into her strength as an RMT.

Chandonnet was motivated to coach weightlifting, as she was always early to the competitions and one of the first to weigh in. It was there she started mentoring younger athletes.

“I ended up adopting some of the kids, and that’s how it grew. A lot of the kids got comfortable with me. It just made sense. I went and took my national coaching certification, and I did a bunch of coaching courses,” she said.

Because the sport is so small, coaches are relied on to learn the other aspects of the competition, Chandonnet said, like being a technical official, loader, and of course, knowing how to weightlift. All in all, she’s found coaching very rewarding.

“It does bring me a lot of joy to get people into (weightlifting) and kids moving and healthy. It’s such an interesting sport,” she said. “We have a couple of kids that we’ve brought from the intermediate level up to the national level, and to watch the development of this sport is almost more fun than being a competitor.”

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!



Hé-ho! The MMF partnered with Festival du Voyageur to hold the 52nd Annual Fiddle and Jigging Contests on February 25 and 26! Red River Métis fiddler Michael Audette hosted both competitions, and local Red River Métis artists JD Hawk, Échiboy, and CT Awards and Promotions created the medals.

Aside from performing well in the 2023 Senior Canadian Championships, Chandonnet also aspires to rank to compete internationally this year.

“My goal is not to compete at the Olympics. That’s because, unfortunately, I’m old, so this ship is slowly sailing,” she laughed. “In order to compete internationally, I have to up my rankings: let’s say I have to be in the top three in my weight class. So, my goal for 2023 is to get into at least the top five in the weight class in Canada and be eligible to compete at Pan Ams and some other international meets. Paris 2024 (Olympic Games) is next year, so a lot of our Olympians will be working towards qualifying for that, which opens up some spots naturally, but there’s still a lot of work to do.”



Métis Youth Climate Symposium

Clarion Hotel and Suites, Winnipeg
March 25-26, 2023
Ages 14-29

Presentations, interactive workshops, and roundtable discussions on:

- Climate Change Impacts in the National Homeland of the Red River Métis
- Becoming a Leader in Environmental Advocacy
- Firsthand Experiences from Métis Citizens, Harvesters, and Elders
- Involvement opportunities
- How to Take Action in Your Community

To register, contact Amber Chambers at
amber.chambers@mmf.mb.ca

The Manitoba Métis Federation is hosting **Plant Propagation Workshops**

Start your own willow and poplar trees to grow in your yard, while learning valuable skills related to horticulture!

This workshop will include information on how to propagate trees and shrubs throughout Manitoba's forests, the different techniques, and methods of plant propagation.

The workshops will be hosted on
April 1st in Winnipeg and April 2nd in Brandon,
from 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

16+ All Red River Métis Citizens in Manitoba Welcome

If you are interested in participating, please email
trees@mmf.mb.ca to register and stay up to date on future programs!

