



Le Métis
EST. 1871



There can be no doubt that the Red River Métis, like other Indigenous peoples in Canada, have been forced to undo the harmful effects of many colonial tools, designed to erase our culture, our community, and our sense of belonging. Some visible harms are the reign of terror against our people, the residential and day school systems, and the 60s Scoop. The colonial child welfare system is also a part of this effort to erase our culture. It's a reality for many children, who were taken away from their birth family and community, and never had the chance to claim their place with the Red River Métis.

Studies have consistently shown that the outcomes for children raised in the colonial child welfare system are more negative than their peers. They are more likely to suffer from substance use, hospitalization, incarceration, and homelessness. They may be attracted to gangs for the sense of belonging or face many other challenging situations because they don't have stability in their lives, or their families are still broken. In fact, most young people experiencing homelessness are those who were once in care.

This is why we have been working toward improving this system for decades. In the past, we could not focus on extended care, or even preventative care. Preventative care is such an important part of the process of our own child welfare system. It means working with at-risk families, building up their skills and strengthening them so that there is never a need for a child to be placed into care. It means getting the parents any help they need to deal with mental health or addictions challenges, strengthening the skill sets that help them raise healthy children, and ensuring they have a strong network of friends and family to help them through any other challenges they might face. For families that had already interacted with the colonial child welfare system, we were not empowered to help stabilize them

and make them stronger so they could bring their children back home.

In 2019, Canada's Bill C-92 – *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* – finally recognized our right to have jurisdiction over our kids in care and provide culturally appropriate supports, and finally shift the focus from apprehension to prevention and placement with extended families and communities. In January of 2021, that bill came into force, creating a direct relationship between the federal government and your Métis Government. This was an important milestone, but it did not mean we were at the end of our fight to protect our Red River Métis children.

For us, there is far more involved than assuming jurisdiction over kids in care. Not only is it critical that these kids keep a sense of their culture, community, and family connection, it is also vital that they feel supported in their dreams. When a child turns 18, it does not automatically mean they have everything they need to succeed in life. The data tells us they can struggle without a continued support system.

For these reasons, we continue to evolve the ways we support our kids in care. Your Red River Métis Government was the first to change the age of transitioning out of care from 18 to 21, which we later changed to 24.

We successfully fought and won against the provincial government's attempt to take away the Children's Special Allowance for kids in care. Making children pay for the administrative costs of their own apprehension was simply the wrong choice by the province, and I'm glad the courts have agreed. I look forward to seeing this settled for our children. It is estimated that the settlement will be worth \$48 million for our Red River Métis children. The MMF has already committed that 100 per cent of the settlement we get from the provincial government will go back into the children's pockets, where it always should have been. Of course, class action lawsuits may affect settlements like this, along with impacting other monies and resources that should go to help our children and families.

We've also been investing in Registered Education Savings Plan accounts for these children, ensuring that if they choose to go into post-secondary education, they have what they need to pursue their academic dreams. Further, we honour their transition to adulthood with ceremony, showing them their community supports and celebrating them. And if they need more time to transition to adulthood than other children their age, we will not abandon them. They are our children, and like all other Red River Métis Youth, they are the inheritors of the legacy we have all worked so hard to deliver to them. Our children are our foundation, and the reason we fight so hard to build a legacy.

President's Message



Now, we are moving into the next phase of supporting our Youth. I am so proud to share that we are investing \$8 million into the creation of new, transitional housing for kids aging out of the child welfare system. The new facility is called Mazoun Infinitii Pakoshayimoohek ("Mazoun") in Michif, which translates to Infinity House of Hope. Construction is expected to start July 3 of this year and be completed by July 31, 2024.

The Mazoun is being designed and developed to offer culturally safe urban transition homes for Red River Métis Youth aging out of care. Mazoun will offer two seven-unit residential facilities with support services, with 10 suites for Youth aging out of care, two suites for family reunification – which will help young parents regain custody of their child – and two more suites for emergency housing for Youth who have left MCFCs care but are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

While this will primarily serve Red River Métis Youth in the 16 to 21 age group who are currently in formal agreements for care with Métis Child, Family and Community Services, Mazoun will also support Youth aged 18 to 24 who are not in formal agreements but require temporary or emergency housing. Even if they still need help at age 24 or older, we will never refuse to help our Youth. This is a fundamental of our approach. At the end of the day, if the family was not broken, these children would have gone back home a long time ago. Turning a certain age does not automatically mean that their family is now able to be the kind of support network these Youth need. We still need to help these families and these children heal.

That's why Mazoun is not just housing. We know that without wraparound services, housing alone does not equip anyone with the right tools to succeed. Mazoun will create a space where current and former kids in care can always return to receive support, services, and a sense of community.

An example of the kind of wraparound support offered is our spirit programs. For more than a decade, the MMF has supported Youth aging out of care through the Métis Spirit and Michif Spirit programs. These programs are unique to our government and are built to support Youth formerly in care through emergency financial help, advocacy, programming, and social support. In recent years, both programs have started evolving to become Youth-led, employing former kids in care to further develop and run the programs for themselves. After all, who knows better how to support kids in care than those who experienced it themselves?

Citizens should know that no other child welfare agency in Manitoba has a program like this, dedicated to ensuring that all Youth who have left the care of an agency always have someone to turn

to for help. Even though these programs are only mandated to provide supports up to the age of 24, no one is turned away. In the last year alone, the programs supported more than 150 young adults as they transitioned out of care.

I thank Mona Buors, the MMF’s Minister for Métis Child and Family Services, and her team for their years of hard work and advocacy and applaud their successes. I also thank them for the heart and thought they have consistently put into our kids in care and the systems that support them. Métis Child and Family Services, along with every department and affiliate of your Red River Métis Government, will continue to work together to ensure that every Red River Métis child has the head start that was promised to us in 1870, even if it means that we must do this one child at a time.

The need to ensure our Youth are ready and able to take on the inheritance we are building for them is something we are speaking about at length during our treaty consultations. These consultations for our proposed modern-day treaty with Canada are now well underway, and there can be no doubt that they are a signal of the historic times we are living in. It has been powerful to see the level of engagement from our Citizens in the Northwest Region, the Southwest Region, the Winnipeg Region, and the Thompson region. Our strength as a people is on full display at each consultation, as we come together to walk this pathway toward our rightful place in Canada’s confederation. I thank all the elected officials in each region for their hard work and diligence in making sure that Citizens can take part in our democratic traditions.

For those living in regions that have consultations upcoming, I encourage you to reach out to your region to register. Even if you missed the consultations in your region, it’s not too late – there more consultations coming, including a virtual engagement. Check out the MMF’s social media pages for more information or email treaty@mmf.mb.ca.

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. ∞

MMF cuts ribbon on 20-unit transitional housing project



The MMF celebrated the opening of Fre Maachi, a 20-unit transitional housing project at 670 Main Street. Left to right: Kerri Scott, Program Manager for the MMF’s Housing Department; Winnipeg Deputy Mayor Janice Lukes; the Honourable Rochelle Squires, provincial Minister of Families; Will Goodon, Minister of Housing and Property Management; and Minister Andrew Carrier, Vice-President of the Winnipeg Region.

On March 20, the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) celebrated the opening of the first of many Housing First projects planned as part of the Red River Métis Government’s homelessness strategy.

Fre Maachi, a 20-unit transitional housing project at 670 Main Street, will assist in the fight to end homelessness in Winnipeg. Fre Maachi, which means “fresh beginnings” in Michif, features 16 studio units, six of which are accessible, and four two-bedroom suites for emergency situations involving women and children.

The newly constructed homelessness hub aims to aid women fleeing violence, LGBTQ2S+ individuals, Citizens who have migrated to Winnipeg from rural and remote areas, those exiting the justice system, people leaving health care, and Red River Métis Veterans.

“It’s humbling to know that we’re going to be making a difference in people’s lives,” said Will Goodon, Minister of Housing and Property Management. “Fre Maachi is fresh beginnings. And sometimes we get busy in our day-to-day lives, we look at people who aren’t in our situation, and we just pass it on by. But the fresh beginnings idea is about those second chances, those third chances, those fourth chances.”

Fre Maachi will offer wraparound supports to help tenants recover a sense of community. These supports include fully furnished units, a welcome kit, mental health and addictions support, vocational counselling, social services, access to computers, free Wi-Fi and laundry, and a meal program. Tenants will also be able to reconnect with their Red River Métis culture. The facility offers a spiritual room for Citizens to maintain a connection to their culture and spirituality, as well as access to a Red River Métis Elder. Each tenant will also receive a sash.

“It’s really important that we look after each other when we’re at the lowest point in our lives,” said Minister Goodon. “And it’s not just a silo that you have sometimes in some bureaucracies. This is going to be the whole Red River Métis Nation wrapping around the people who need our help the most. So, we need to feel important. We need to feel the love of community. We need to know that our Nation will be there for us. And as President (David) Chartrand has always said, the MMF will always have your back.”

The MMF is uniquely prepared to offer these wraparound services through its departments and affiliates, from the Métis Justice Institute, to Métis Child and Family Services, to Métis Employment and Training, to Health and Wellness. The MMF’s Central Registry Office will also help tenants obtain their Citizenship cards.

With all hands on deck for this multifaceted project, many MMF Cabinet members were in attendance to celebrate the ribbon cutting, including: Minister Goodon; Minister Andrew Carrier, Vice-President of the Winnipeg Region; Mona Buors, Minister of Métis Child and Family Services; Minister David Beaudin, Winnipeg Region Executive; Minister JoAnne Remillard, Winnipeg Region Executive; Alfred Anderson, Minister of Culture and Heritage; Denise Thomas, Minister of Sixties Scoop; and Marielle





Gauthier, Minister of French and Michif Language Protection.

Additional dignitaries included: Winnipeg Deputy Mayor Janice Lukes; the Honourable Rochelle Squires, provincial Minister of Families; Jason Whitford, CEO of End Homelessness Winnipeg; and Elder Charlotte Nolin. Jackie Hunt, Director of Housing, emceed the event.

The three-storey building is part of the MMF Housing department’s Rapid Services program, which was established in 2021 to provide housing supports to Red River Métis Citizens at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The MMF’s Rapid Services Hub opened one year ago at 550 Selkirk Avenue and serves as an intake office for 670 Main Street.

The MMF received \$3.4 million from the City of Winnipeg for Fre Maachi last year through the federal government’s \$12.7 million Rapid Housing Initiative. The MMF used as many Red River Métis contractors as possible for the 670 Main Street project, which was managed by Bockstael Construction. Some of the Red River Métis contractors included R.EN Demolition, Stanley Electrical and Mechanical, and Black Bird Concrete.

Winnipeg Deputy Mayor Janice Lukes applauded the MMF for the project’s quick turnaround.

“Even though the pandemic has caused construction delays across Canada, which has made projects like this one incredibly challenging to do, this accomplishment to have the housing unit complete during these unprecedented construction conditions is a testament to the Manitoba Métis Federation’s passion, commitment, and organizational abilities to deliver,” she said.

The MMF also commissioned Red River Métis artist JD Hawk to create a mural inside the building – a project particularly personal to the homelessness survivor.

“When I was asked to paint this mural, and what this building would be used for, it touched me on a personal level. Having been homeless myself, I know the value of having people see me as a person and giving me the opportunity to get back on my feet without judgment,” he said. “This represents hope, dignity, and community. I want to thank the MMF and all those involved – the Ministers – for providing the stepping stone and the support for betterment and for a little stability for those in need.”

The MMF plans to create more transitional housing hubs in other parts of the province, including Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, Swan River, and Thompson.

“In the future, we want to do more. Winnipeg has a very obvious need, when we drive around, when we look around our city and see those in unsheltered

situations or at risk of it. But we have Citizens in other urban centres,” said Minister Goodon. “We want to make sure that our Citizens have opportunities even if they live outside of Winnipeg.”



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Each tenant will receive a sash to help reconnect with their Red River Métis culture.



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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 March 25-26, Red River Métis Youth had the opportunity to learn from Elders and land users about the changes they’ve seen to the land and how it affects their experiences using it. The Métis Youth Climate Symposium in Winnipeg offered presentations, workshops, and roundtable discussions on climate change in the National Homeland of the Red River Métis, everyday actions for climate change, as well as opportunities for climate change employment and volunteering. For more information about the Métis Environmental Leaders of Tomorrow, email Amber Chambers at amber.chambers@mmf.mb.ca





Your **Red River Métis Government** is hosting historic consultations to meet with **Citizens** about the exciting changes coming soon to **Red River Métis Citizens and Government**. Here are ways you can participate in these consultations in the month of **April**:

**INFINITY WOMEN
SECRETARIAT
WINNIPEG**
APRIL 2, 2023

OTTAWA
APRIL 4, 2023

TORONTO
APRIL 6th, 2023

FARGO
APRIL 11, 2023

THE PAS
APRIL 15, 2023

CALGARY
APRIL 18, 2023

SASKATOON
APRIL 20, 2023


**YOUTH
WINNIPEG**
APRIL 22, 2023

**For more information and to
register, visit mmf.mb.ca!**

