



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The annual Red River Métis Elder and Youth Gathering was held on August 29th and 30th in Selkirk. It's wonderful to see this tradition returning to our cultural events calendar both last year and this year, after the pandemic forced us to postpone it for several years.

This gathering was brought into creation at a time when we lost a number of Elders and Knowledge Keepers in our Nation, and we realized that we needed to do more to ensure the transmission of knowledge between generations. Building a legacy for our Elders and an inheritance for our Youth through economic development, education, housing, and child care supports are all important, but without the understanding of how it all came to be, the legacy is not complete.

For Youth who grew up in strong Red River Métis towns and villages, the information offered to them at the gathering is a good reminder and a chance to reconnect with relatives and Elders. For Youth who are growing up in urban centres or beyond our borders, it is of vital importance that we create an opportunity for them to learn our traditional ways and hear the teaching stories of our Elders. This is equally important for our Youth whose families are returning to our Nation, learning about their identity and reclaiming their place as Red River Métis.

Without this opportunity to learn – not only what Elders have to teach, but to see how Elders are treated within our community – there are very few opportunities for these Youth to practice our culture and traditional ways.

Creating opportunities to spend time in community is an important gift your Red River Métis Government can give our Youth. As they continue to chase their dreams and receive their education, keeping their connection strong with Elders and all community members is vital. It makes sure they hear the wisdom of life experience, gain the skills our Elders can teach, and learn our Nation's past. There may be nothing more critical than this transfer of knowledge, which is why our annual Elder and Youth Gathering is one of the most important things we do each year.

Learning from our Elders – everything from beading and sewing, to harvesting from the land, to canning and preserving – also gives our Youth a chance to feel the support of the Elders from our Nation.

The Elders feel the gratitude and respect of their community for their many years of hard work, keeping our culture alive and fighting for our rights at a time when there were very few resources to support them.

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.

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.

I believe it is because we still honour this important connection between Youth and Elders that we are experiencing such a strong cultural revival. There are so many Red River Métis rediscovering their identity, reconnecting with their community and coming home to their Red River 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.

With our treaty well on its way to ratification by the Canadian government, our ability to provide programs and services to Citizens, helping them gain a strong foundation for a bright future, and our Red River Métis Heritage Centre in development at the historic corner of Portage and Main, we are building strength from strength, and creating a pathway to the future that honours our Elders' sacrifices and energizes our Youth.

## Helping other communities

Your Red River Métis Cabinet has been watching the wildfires happening in the Northwest Territories and British Columbia with deep concern. When we learned that there would be evacuees sent to Manitoba, we immediately reached out to the government of Manitoba to offer our assistance by way of food, lodging, and transportation to our construction camp for evacuees displaced by the wildfires. As Citizens know, the MMF's camp can accommodate at least 80 people in a safe, secure area near Treherne, Manitoba.

Offering to help those in need is also part of our proud history and heritage, as taught to us by our Elders. We have always welcomed newcomers and visitors to the heart of our Homeland, helping where we can and supporting them in times of need. The Mennonites of Manitoba have long recognized that without the Red River Métis people, their hardships would have been greater when they first came to the historic Northwest. The MMF – the National Government of the Red River Métis – remains committed to coming together to help in times of need. While current circumstances do not require our immediate support of Manitoba's efforts, we remain on standby to help, either through the province's coordinated efforts, or directly with Indigenous nations at risk of evacuation.

Until we gather, I offer my prayers to all our families, Citizens, friends, and neighbours, and my deepest condolences to those who have been caused to grieve.

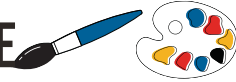
Meeqwetch,

*President David Chartrand. LL.D. hon . O.M.* ∞





## GOURMET CAKES WINNIPEG IN BUSINESS AT ED SIMARD GENERAL STORE



Red River Métis baker Katie Bak recently partnered with the Ed Simard General Store to sell her baked goods.

Baker, blogger, and entrepreneur Katie Bak has had a big year so far. The owner of Gourmet Cakes Winnipeg recently partnered with the Ed Simard General Store to sell her baked goods.

During the pandemic, Bak discovered a newfound passion for making desserts and started baking treats for her loved ones. As her talents for baking grew, what was once a hobby sparked inspiration to launch her very own blog, *The Gourmet Cake Girl*, in late 2021, through which she now offers in-person classes on baking fundamentals.

"I became more interested over time in creating recipes and explaining my thought process behind them," she said. "I created my blog as a hobby, and it turned into people ordering cakes and cupcakes from me shortly after that."

The Red River Métis Citizen truly came to love the business, drawing inspiration from her time as a server where she had the opportunity to connect with people on a personal level.

"My interests expanded to entrepreneurship and teaching. So, when I started baking as a hobby, it just developed over time," she said. "The more I learned from other bakers and the more I listened to entrepreneurs talk about business, what you can do with it and the connecting side of it as well, it all came together nicely."

One of Bak's signature creations is a Métis Flag cupcake, which she said has been a huge hit.

"There's beadwork on the cupcake. So, it's blue and white like our Métis infinity flag. I also can do that on cakes," she said. "It's the beadwork that people love."

It wasn't until this year that the Red River Métis baker realized she could continue to do what she loved as a profession. The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) contacted her after a fundraiser event for the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, where she created a beaded cake for a cake auction.

"A day after the fundraiser, Tammy Barton (Manager of the Métis Economic Development Organization, an MMF affiliate) contacted me to set up a meeting to perhaps sell some stuff in the store which resembled that beadwork and the culture of the Red River Métis," she said. "Then it developed from that."

Bak made her edible creations for the March grand opening of Fre Maachi, the MMF's 20-unit transitional Housing First program, and recently had samples of her baking available at the 2023 Extraordinary General Assembly.

While Gourmet Cakes Winnipeg is currently a one-person operation, Bak plans to hire additional help next year to support her busy schedule.

The entrepreneur has been working hard to expand her blog and create more recipes for people to enjoy. She has one mission: to teach people how to bake through her online recipes or in-person courses that she hosts.

"I continue to do it because I get some questions and emails here and there about creating recipes and techniques I've used. So, I try to be more specific with the techniques (I use for) creating," Bak said. "It kind of developed into more of a teaching blog with how to create recipes."

The Red River Métis blogger said her typical audience is people who have tried their hand at baking and are interested in it but may not have the foundational tools to pursue it. She prides herself on creating recipes and recipe eBooks that cater to people of all skill levels.

"There are no-bake recipes. They're three or four ingredients, and they're not that tricky," she said. "This introduces someone who's a beginner baker into baking and shows them that baking (can be) quite simple if you start with a simple recipe and then build onto that."

Bak is grateful for all the support she receives from the MMF.

"Métis Employment and Training has provided me this year with a mentor to help guide my process of starting my business. I work with her, and we meet often," said the baker. "She was a huge accelerator for my business in terms of learning how to do business things like bookkeeping, knowing where to get supplies and where to order it, and how to increase exposure to my business."

While the Red River Métis entrepreneur grew up not knowing about her lineage, she started to learn more about it after reconnecting with family on her dad's side three years ago. Since then, she has been on a journey to learn more about her heritage.

"(I've been) learning about Indigenous culture and attending as many MMF events to learn about our history and progress through the years," she said. "I also stay connected this way by building relationships with other Red River Métis Citizens, entrepreneurs, and people in our community and learning as much as I can."

Bak has already made leaps and bounds in growing Gourmet Cakes Winnipeg, but she hopes this is only the beginning.

"I would love to open my own store once I get the skills. I want to gain more knowledge on baking and running a business," she said. "Then, I would love to create more jobs for our Métis communities."

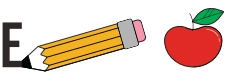
Bak's homemade cakes are available at [gourmetcakeswpg.com](http://gourmetcakeswpg.com) or at the Ed Simard General Store at 150 Henry Avenue, located inside the MMF Home Office.



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## RED RIVER MÉTIS DANCER CONQUERS THE WORLD STAGE



Harry Halpin left his mark on the dancing world stage this year, showing competitors just what Red River Métis performers are capable of.

The Red River Métis Citizen recently participated in the Dance World Cup, where he medalled in two of his performances.

"In total, I had five routines. I had a small group jazz dance and a small group contemporary, and then I had a contemporary solo, a hip hop solo, and a hip hop trio. I got a bronze for my hip hop solo and a silver for my hip hop trio," said Halpin.

This was his first time participating in the Dance World Cup, which took place in Braga, Portugal in July 2023.

"I've never really left the country before," said the dancer, who hails from New Brunswick. "I've just been in the Maritimes my whole life, so it's insane going to Toronto and Europe and dancing on the world stage and meeting so many people from across the world."

The Red River Métis performer was genuinely moved by the unity of dancers from around the globe.

"It was really something special, because you see all these people, and at one point there's a big parade. All the countries walk with their dancers through the town, and then at the end there's this big party," said Halpin. "Every country is just getting along, having a good time, and it's cool to see everyone enjoying being together, dancing and connecting over things we love."

The 16-year-old first began exploring the world of dance at the age of eight.

"I was always dancing around the house, and if we went to a wedding, I'd always be dancing the whole time. So, my mom signed me up for an all-boys hip hop class, and you know, I just really liked it," he said.

Halpin has been at the Studio Dance School throughout his entire competitive career. He credits a lot of his success to both the school and his instructors.

"I'd say three people have really made an impact on me. The first has to be my teacher, Danielle Robertson. She's the best and like family. We all know each other so well and she just does some amazing choreography for me," said the dancer.



Red River Métis dancer Harry Halpin earned two medals at the 2023 Dance World Cup in Portugal.

"Then there's Stephanie Grace-Lilly, she's my studio's owner. She also went to Portugal with me, and it was nice having her there. Then, there's Janelle MacLeod. She's newer to our studio, but she's the best – super nice, super talented, and a pleasure to work with."

The Studio Dance School has two locations: Rothesay and Saint John in New Brunswick. Halpin travels between both locations to explore different styles of dance.

"I do every style. The only style I don't compete in is ballet because I'm not a classically trained ballet dancer," he said.

The young dancer said his favourite styles to compete in are hip hop and contemporary.

"You can always tell a nice story through contemporary dances, which is great," said Halpin. "On the other hand, I love hip hop music, I love hip hop and rap culture. You look cool and you feel cool while you perform, it's awesome."

The Dance World Cup is not the only competition Halpin has excelled at this year. He has also achieved great success at the provincial level.

"Three out of five competitions we participated in this year, we placed," he said. "One was for my solo this year that Danielle choreographed. I also got second at a competition in Saint John and that was special."

Halpin reflected on one of his favourite pieces to perform that has been well-received in the competition circuit.

"We had this one dance called 'Sadness,' and in a competition, there's normally like 300, 400, 500 dances. And then they'll get the 20 categories into the final," he said. "So, it'll be top overall jazz, top overall contemporary dance. We got into the top category like every time with that dance."

While dancing might be Halpin's first love, he also enjoys singing and acting.

"I really love performing. If you're in a big theatre, in front of a bunch of people and just out there performing, it's incredible. It's the best feeling," he said.

Halpin has participated in a wide range of musicals over the last five years.

"Me and my dad did *Elf* the musical back in 2018, and that show was super funny," he said. "Then I did *Grease* in Grade 10 at my high school. That same summer, I did *Frozen Junior*, which was also fun."

With a few years left in high school, Halpin has begun reflecting on his hopes for his future career. With so many interests and talents, the sky is the limit.

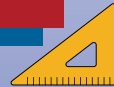
"I know that I want to do something that I enjoy and be an entertainer," he said. "Whether that's music, dancing, being in musicals, or even being a talk show host. But you never know, right?"

### COMMUNITY PHOTO

On August 17, MMF President David Chartrand joined the IMA executive at the annual Seniors Summer Feast in St. Laurent. Thank you to the hardworking volunteers for putting on another great event!



Le Métis' Community Photo section invites Red River Métis Citizens to send in photos to be featured in our newsletter. If you have a photo that celebrates the Red River Métis, send it to [communications@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:communications@mmf.mb.ca) and you may see it in print!









# Annual General Assembly sponsorship opportunities are now available!

Visit [mmfaga.ca](http://mmfaga.ca) to view our sponsorship opportunities and to fill out our online form.

Annual General Assembly  
October 13 - 15, 2023







SCAN TO ACCESS  
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TELL US WHAT

# Ecosystem Integrity

means to you and inform us of species of concern to the Red River Métis.



RED RIVER MÉTIS

**STEWARDS**  
OF THE  
**HOMELAND**

Your National Red River Métis Government understands the importance of protecting and conserving our environment and staying up to date on Red River Métis perspectives. Because of this, the MMF needs your input on how Red River Métis define "ecosystem integrity." This definition will guide our methods for protecting a healthy, sustainable environment that supports our traditional, social, and economic practices. Assessments for ecosystem integrity will inform future decisions for conservation, protection, and restoration across the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. The 7-question survey takes 5-10 minutes to complete, and participants will receive an honorarium.

Contact [stewards@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:stewards@mmf.mb.ca) to learn more about the Red River Métis Stewards of the Homeland Program.

