



Le Métis

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YOUR RED RIVER MÉTIS GOVERNMENT'S BI-WEEKLY NEWS.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"I am glad that the Crown have proved that I am the leader of the Half-breeds in the North-West. I will perhaps be one day acknowledged as more than a leader of the Half-breeds, and if I am I will have an opportunity of being acknowledged as a leader of good in this great country." Louis Riel – Memoir

There can be no doubt that Louis Riel has been on my mind and in my heart recently. On November 16, we remembered him on the anniversary of his judicially-sanctioned murder in Regina – then part of the historic Northwest, and still under old English law – which took place 138 years ago. This allowed the use of archaic English law from 1352 to ensure that he would be executed.

The annual commemoration of our historic leader is usually the last opportunity of the year to gather in community and honour Louis Riel's contributions to our Nation, our province, and our country.

The recent Speech from the Throne confirmed the message given by Premier Kinew to more than 4,000 Citizens at our recent AGA, that one of his government's first acts of business would be recognizing Louis Riel as the first Premier of Manitoba.

It was only two days later that your Red River Métis Cabinet and I witnessed the tabling of a piece of legislation called the *Louis Riel Act*, which will see this historic injustice against Riel finally righted.

During the second reading of the *Louis Riel Act* by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, which took place on Monday, November 27, member statements were made about the bill. I listened closely to all that was said by the leaders of the parties, and heard the messages shared by other MLAs.

It was truly a moving moment, not only for Louis Riel's legacy, but for all of us as Red River Métis, who have remained faithful to Louis Riel's vision throughout generations. I felt it was important to share some of the highlights with our Citizens.

Premier Wab Kinew said: *"I'm sure that all of us over our lives have seen the evolution of the way that we talk about Mr. Riel, and this seems to be operating on a parallel track of the work of reconciliation that is occurring within Manitoba. And I think that we all feel positive about that arc moving in a future-facing direction. . . .Mr. Riel's vision is the foundation of why we're able to do all those things here in Manitoba today, and while perhaps we haven't fully realized a hundred per cent of the articulation of Mr. Riel's vision, it is my belief that we are getting closer each and every day."*

Leader of the Official Opposition, Heather Stefanson, said: *" . . . this bill that's before us today is an important one. It will bestow an honorary title on Louis Riel for the history that he has made in our province. And we on this side of the House are fully supportive of this, and we want to see this bill move forward to committee so we can hear from other members of the community and what this means to them."*

Cindy Lamoureux, the lone Liberal MLA in Manitoba, said: *"Riel was not only a fighter for rights, but a believer of justice and the rule of law. He wanted to make sure that there were fair rules to govern the Métis, and that power should not and cannot be centralized in the hands of the few. Because when power works for the few and not the many, that is not democracy. Riel was at the forefront of some of the most important conversations that we continue to have today. Conversations about democracy, representation, and voting rights. It was Riel's provisional government that led the charge, and we can thank him for fighting for these fundamental rights that we as Manitobans enjoy today."*

Red River Métis Citizen and MLA for Lagimodière, Tyler Blashko, said: *"Our diversity makes us stronger today and every day. We pay tribute to the pride and strong spirit of Métis communities that have fought so hard to have Louis Riel recognized as Manitoba's first Premier. We strengthen our multicultural roots by making and acknowledging this change, and*

recognizing Louis Riel as that first Premier. This is something all Manitobans should be proud of and should celebrate, and something the province of Manitoba is honoured and proud to support."

Red River Métis Citizen and MLA for Seine River, Billie Cross said: *"I stand here and bring voice to people who have not had a voice. I stand proudly to talk about my grandmother, a Métis woman who went to residential school, who spent two years in a school, and eventually grew up on a trapline. A woman who couldn't read or write, who experienced poverty and hard times most of her life, a woman who was proud to be Métis but couldn't tell the world who she was. She instilled the values in me that I carry today to be a person who can be proud of who they are, openly. By proclaiming Louis Riel the honorary first Premier of Manitoba, we are finally telling the truth. We are finally showing Canada who our true first leader was. Manitobans deserve to have that honour; Métis people deserve to have that truth be told."*

Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Jamie Moses said: *"This bill brings hope to the entire province. This is a type of bill that can unite us around the idea that regardless of where we come from, regardless of the community that we subscribe to, regardless of the part of the province where we live, we can come together and recognize that as a people we are greater together than we are apart. That's the ideal that Louis Riel brought into the work that he did every single day, the important work of establishing the framework of the province that we call home, establishing that framework by bringing people together from different walks of life across this province, from different walks of life across this country, around the idea that Manitoba could be its own community, its own people, that the Métis people could be their own people and stand on their own and live on their own and thrive on their own, and the idea that we could do this altogether as one people, as part of one nation, Canada. And that's the ideal that Louis Riel brought into the work that he did, the legacy that he had, and that's why it's important that we bestow this honorary title on him today."*

This is the first time in our history we've heard such truthful and deep recognition for our historic leader from other levels of government. The quote from Riel at the top of my message speaks to his own hope for the future – a future he knew he would not be alive to witness – where he would finally be recognized as a truly great leader of good in Canada.

The statements in the House this week clearly show that what he hoped for has finally come to fruition. We should all be proud of what he achieved as a leader. The recognition of his efforts and sacrifices by other levels of government is something we never gave up hope on, but hearing the words from provincial elected officials as they correct this historical wrong are powerfully moving.

Imagine if what we've heard in honour of Louis Riel in the past few weeks was a reflection of the historic attitude about his deeds, instead of what was actually said about him, which were tales full of misinformation, bias, and hatred. Our people wouldn't have experienced the diaspora, where we were cast off our own lands, and pushed to the margins of our Homeland without homes or community. We know we have always been a hardworking people. I'm confident that if the treatment and attitudes Louis Riel and our Nation experienced in the past were more like what's happening today, we would have been very advanced culturally, economically, and socially by

COLONEL DAVID GREBSTAD REFLECTS ON MILITARY PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR CITIZENS

The Red River Métis are known for our distinguished military record. From the Victory at Frog Plain in 1816 and the Battle in Batoche, to two World Wars and beyond, Citizens have taken up the call to arms. Now, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are looking for the newest generation of Red River Métis military recruits.

"(The Red River Métis) have served their communities and country in times of peace and war and are valuable members of the Canadian Forces," said Colonel David Grebstad, the Director of Army Personnel Management for the Canadian Armed Forces. "The Canadian Armed Forces offers a number of excellent opportunities for Red River Métis Citizens – not just Youth – to have vibrant, rewarding, and exciting full- and part-time employment in many trades and occupations in an accepting and respectful environment."

Colonel Grebstad is the highest-ranking Red River Métis Citizen in the Canadian Armed Forces and spoke at the MMF's Indigenous Veterans Day ceremonies in 2022 and 2023. He said joining the military has been a life-changing experience.

"I've been doing this now for 33 years, and I do it because I love it. There are some great opportunities, especially if you join the regular force, but the reserve force as well," he said. "You get to learn, do cool army stuff if you're into cool army stuff, and you can learn to trade. There are all sorts of occupations you can apply for."

Colonel Grebstad added it's a very fulfilling career, and it takes you to many places.

"I've (been) deployed in Naples, Italy, to work in the NATO Headquarters. I've been to Afghanistan and Egypt, and that's just for deployments (for

our own hard work. Instead, we have been forced to fight to regain our place from the position of underdogs, a fight that continues through every advancement we make; every week, every new building, every new program and initiative is part of this fight. It's a fight that I've been actively involved in for decades, thanks to your faith in me as your President. Never forget – believe in yourself; believe in the Métis of the Red River.

Don't forget, *the Louis Riel Act* is not simply a piece of legislation. It's going to become part of the education children receive in this province and in this country. No longer will future generations hear what I heard in school, about the traitor, or the madman. Now he will be known as the first Premier of Manitoba. People will learn about his contributions to Canada, and how our people changed the shape of the West.

We can never forget that our province is unique in its creation and its history. The forces that shaped it are a spirit of independence, a vision that

includes all people, and a strong will to fight against injustice. It's who the Red River Métis are, and what Manitoba is all about. I have great optimism for the future, working with a provincial government that will sit down at a table with us, eye to eye and on equal footing. I'm sure we will disagree on matters from time to time, but I believe we will always work toward resolutions with mutual respect.

Until we gather again, 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.

I also 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. ∞

in the military, uniforms, and more," said Colonel Grebstad.

This entry program is not basic training, but a way to expose Indigenous people to the Canadian Armed Forces.

"You don't come out of (the IEP program) with any qualifications," Colonel Grebstad said. "Everything is provided for you, like transportation, food, and accommodations, but you are not paid a salary."

Another program Red River Métis Citizens can participate in is the Indigenous Summer Training Program (ISTP).

"At the end of the Indigenous Summer Training Program, if people are interested in staying in the military, they can transfer to the regular force, they can transfer to the reserve force, or they can transfer to the Canadian Rangers. It's a great opportunity," said the Colonel.

Red River Métis Citizens can also take part in the Indigenous Leadership Opportunity Year (ILOY) program, which gives Citizens a productive academic year of education and leadership experience at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario.

Colonel Grebstad said these courses provide military training, so they offer a bit of a challenge.

"There'll be some physical and probably mentally challenging aspects to it because we are preparing people to serve in a military force. But they're not impossible to overcome," he said. "The (CAF) doesn't enroll people with the intent of breaking them or not allowing them to serve. We eventually want to bring everybody in, train them, and give them a

rewarding full- or part-time career in the Canadian Armed Forces."

One of the perks of enrolling in these Indigenous military programs is there's no commitment. Compared to non-Indigenous programs, trainees may be contractually obligated to the CAF and may have to apply for release.

"At the end of each of these programs, you are free to go home, turn in all your equipment and say, 'thank you very much, but this just isn't for me,'" Colonel Grebstad said.

He said the best time to sign up for these programs was a month ago, but the second-best time to apply is now. Depending on the program, it can take a long time to be enrolled.

"In the ILOY and ISTP programs, you are handling weapons and learning military tactics. Because of that, there is a security clearance that has to (occur)," he said, adding that medical screening is also an important part of the process.

Colonel Grebstad said the CAF has grown leaps and bounds to recognize different cultures and provide support, noting some Indigenous spiritual advisors are available.

"The Canadian Armed Forces recognizes the spiritual and cultural complexity of the Canadian population," he said. "If an MMF Citizen is stationed somewhere where perhaps there isn't a (Red River) Métis Elder who is an actual chaplain in the Canadian Forces, the chaplain service has connections with local Indigenous leaders, and they have a duty to find Indigenous and, in particular, Métis Elders who can provide cultural and spiritual guidance to Métis service members."

The CAF has also relaxed the dress code policy and changed their stance on recruits growing out their hair.

"Were opening up those (avenues), allowing Indigenous members to really be proud of their Indigenous heritage and reflect it in their dress," said the Colonel. "Of course, no matter what, we're still a uniformed force. So, you still have to wear a uniform, but there's a lot more flexibility to express your pride in your Métis heritage, whether it's through the sash or other ways that you want to."

The Canadian Armed Forces is committed to reconciliation and strives for a diverse workforce within its ranks.

"Red River Métis Citizens can bring their worldviews and experiences, and can unofficially educate their peers, colleagues, friends, brothers, and sisters in

arms by sharing their heritage and background," he said. "They'll contribute to an overall better Canadian Armed Forces and Canadian Army."



ARE YOU A RED RIVER MÉTIS CITIZEN INTERESTED IN JOINING THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES?

Criteria to enter these programs vary, but some of the main requirements include:


- ∞ Being a Canadian citizen;
- ∞ Being at least 16 years of age;
- ∞ Applicants under the age of 18 must obtain consent from a parent or legal guardian to participate.

If you're interested in learning more about these programs or registering,

- ∞ Go to **forces.ca**, follow the prompts, and a recruiter will contact you;
- ∞ Contact the Recruiting Detachment in Winnipeg by phone at 204-983-3680 or email at **info.winnipeg@forces.gc.ca**;
- ∞ Email the local reserve formation at **38cbgreuiting@forces.gc.ca**.



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VISIT **MMFMB.CA** FOR MORE INFORMATION

MMF CONGRATULATES DR. KELLY SAUNDERS



Dr. Kelly Saunders, author of *Métis Politics and Governance in Canada* and longstanding friend of the Red River Métis, is an Associate Professor of Canadian Politics, Public Administration, and International Relations at Brandon University. For 10 years, she has been the Academic Director of the Legislative Internship Program for the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, running the program alongside the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. The interns support the Legislative Assembly with research and other important duties. On November 22, she was honoured for her years of service to the program, nurturing the growth and development of 100 interns during the course of her tenure in the role. This is her last year of service.

On behalf the Manitoba Métis Federation, congratulations for a successful term!

MMF PARTICIPATES IN SANTA CLAUS PARADE



The MMF was excited to take part in the Manitoba Hydro Santa Claus Parade again this year on November 18. Downtown, the heart of our Red River Métis Homeland, was filled with holiday magic as we paraded down Portage Avenue, spreading joy and smiles to all! A big thank you to everyone who attended – your festive spirit made the day even more special!

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