



Le Métis

EST. 1871

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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope all Citizens enjoyed a restful and joyous Christmas and New Year, and are now ready to undertake the challenges and opportunities offered by 2024. For our people and your Red River Métis Government, it is already shaping up to be a good year as we continue to advance our Nation and move from success to success. Coming up soon, we will see our Youth Camps start to roll out, starting with a cultural camp at our location on the edge of Duck Mountains in the Swan River area. This will be quickly followed by a sports and athletic camp for our Youth, in the Woodlands area. I look forward to the continued rollout of these camps and other important initiatives that support our Youth as they pursue their athletic dreams, or seek to learn more about their identity and our Nation's history.

I'm also proud to share that our treaty is now complete. It is our expectation that our treaty will receive appropriate review and be voted on by Parliament by the end of January or early February. It's worth noting that our treaty has followed a completely different process than what is being attempted by Bill C-52, which recognizes so-called "historic Métis communities" in Ontario without any scrutiny from Canada. We know these people from Ontario are not our people. We in the West are the true Métis people, the Red River Métis. We are Riel's people, not these individuals and organizations in Ontario trying to steal our history, identity, and culture. The legislation Ontario is trying to force into law through backroom politics lacks the democratic checks and balances of our treaty.

We have been completely transparent in the process of developing our treaty. As Citizens remember, we undertook extensive consultation about our treaty with thousands of Citizens across the Homeland. We even brought our treaty to places where our people did not historically live, but where our Citizens have moved over the years, including Vancouver, Ottawa, and Toronto. I know our Citizens living outside of the Homeland appreciated the opportunity to connect with community and our government just as much as those within the Homeland did. I look forward to bringing you all more news about the conclusion of our treaty, as I know it will be an exciting and historic moment for all our Citizens.

While the last steps are completed on our treaty, we have commenced negotiating our Land Claim, which is the long-awaited finalization of the victory we won in the Supreme Court of Canada in 2013. It's been just over 10 years since we won that victory, and more than 30 years since we began the case, with many of our past leaders making great sacrifices to keep it alive. As always, I will update you on this matter as it continues to evolve. But even as we work toward the conclusion of this case, let's not forget that the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) is already trying to take us to court for a piece of the settlement, wanting to take part of our victory away from us. During all the years we fought for our land claim, MNA didn't put one cent into it, but now they seem to think they're entitled to the outcomes. Rest assured, we will protect this settlement for our people and will fight vigorously against anyone who tries to take it.

Another example of good things happening for our people is the upcoming resolution of the province's clawback of the Children's Special Allowance (CSA).

Taking back the future for our kids in care

As Citizens know, we have been vigorous in our efforts to see the CSA funds returned to the people they belong to – the children who were in care with our agencies from 2006 to 2019.

The CSA provides payments to federal and provincial agencies and institutions that care for children and are the equivalent to the Canada Child Benefit given to parents who are raising their children. In 2006, the province of Manitoba began forcing Indigenous agencies to give the CSA to the province, which was put into general revenues. This money should have been dedicated to things that directly benefit our kids. For example, the funds could have been put in a trust or a savings account they could access when they reached adulthood.

In 2021, we joined a multimillion-dollar lawsuit brought against the province by 15 Indigenous Child and Family Services Agencies for misuse of the CSA. We were successful in this lawsuit, and the province indicated at the time that it would let the decision stand. It shouldn't be forgotten that there was a law firm that commended a class action lawsuit to deal with the dispersal of the inheritance (CSA) of our kids in care or formerly in care, without our knowledge or our input. We moved very quickly to prevent this law firm from representing us without our knowledge or consultation, or consultation of the individuals affected by it. Now we can work with our Youth to ensure that this money gets to those it rightfully belongs to.

Making children pay for the administrative costs of their own care is simply wrong, and I'm glad the courts agreed. The MMF has already committed that 100 per cent of the CSA taken from them will go back into the pockets of our Youth, where it always should have been. Many of those who had the funds stolen from them are now adults, but that does not change the fact that these funds belong to them. They were forced to suffer this injustice as children and the fact that they have aged out of the system does not mean they should be excluded from access to the benefit they are owed.

Since this important victory for our kids in care and formerly in care, we have continued to establish the necessary groundwork to transfer the funds from the provincial government back to the individuals it was taken away from.

On December 13 of last year, the lawsuits to obtain the CSA were certified by consent, which means that the three class action lawsuits were recognized by the court as the correct bodies to manage the settlement for those who had been in care during these years. The lawsuit that impacts our kids or former kids in care is called the Lafontaine Class Action. A Judicially Assisted Dispute Resolution is set for January 26 of this year, so that we can come to a settlement between the province and our Youth, along with the two other recognized class action groups.

We know that Nahanni Fontaine, now Minister of Families for the provincial government, was very vocal in her criticism of the previous administration regarding the clawback of the CSA, so we believe she will want to quickly resolve these final matters without the need for further court hearings. Clearly, it is time to settle this in a way that is a win for everyone, but most importantly for the Youth who were directly affected by this policy. It would be shameful if this proceeded to further court hearings, and we believe Minister Fontaine will agree.

Once this stage is done, we will be reaching out to ensure all eligible kids in care or formerly in care know about the case and how to access their funds. We are already hard at work creating a strategic communication plan to ensure we reach all our eligible Youth and return their funds to them.

Not only will we reach out directly to all those who are still in our care regarding their settlement, we will also speak directly with those who have left our care but have kept in touch with us over the years. For our kids still in our care, the funds will go into savings accounts, so they will have that money when they come of age and start to think about the next steps of their life, including any educational or entrepreneurial dreams they may have.

For those Youth and adults we have lost contact with, we will do what it takes to reach out to them. This will include targeting all social media platforms

where we know our Youth spend their free time. We will also use billboards, radio and television advertisements, our own website and social media platforms, and all other communication vehicles at our disposal to ensure that every eligible Youth of our Nation receives what is owed to them.

I cannot stress enough how important it is that this money go back to these children – we committed to returning these funds to the kids, and we will do everything in our power to see that they get them.

I know that our Citizens will have many questions about this settlement, and the friends and family of those who should receive a settlement will want to make sure their loved one's names are included. That's why the MMF has already established an email address and phone number for those who need information or wish to be registered. Caregivers of kids currently in care, or those Youth

who have transitioned out of our care, can email CSA@mmf.mb.ca for more information.

I thank Minister Mona Buors and her team for their hard work and advocacy for the Youth of our Nation who are or were in our care. As she said after the certification hearing: *"As much as our kids will benefit from the funds, they will also benefit from seeing this injustice finally come to an end, knowing that their Red River Métis Government fought for them, every step of the way."*

Until we meet again, 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. ∞

MELISSA LAGACE CONTINUES TO GROW HER VIRTUAL ASSISTING BUSINESS

As a mother of two, Melissa Lagace always knew she wanted to work from her home in La Salle, Manitoba so she could be present with her daughters. After being let go from her data entry job during the COVID-19 pandemic, she was exposed to the world of virtual assisting through the online platform TikTok, which has now led her to the successful career she has today.

"At first, I was kind of hesitant, but I was (also) like, 'that sounds really cool, that's something I would want to do,'" said Lagace. "So, I started doing more research and then I kept seeing these girls post videos saying that they were working from home with their kids as virtual assistants, so I ended up taking a girl's course from the States and then I launched my business."

The Red River Métis Citizen was encouraged by her friends to create a virtual assisting course and begin coaching people who are interested in becoming virtual assistants.

The versatility from virtual assisting allows Lagace to feel mentally stimulated throughout the day, making her workdays more enjoyable compared to when she was working a 9-5. At the beginning of her career, clients ranged from other online businesses to brick-and-mortar stores. Anywhere there was a need for an assistant, the entrepreneur offered her services.

"I have worked with a bunch of different clients and then I fell in love with creating. I really enjoyed creating my website, and I was like, 'this would be a fun service to offer,'" she said.

The entrepreneur enrolled in courses offered by the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) to expand her current skill set. Now, Lagace can offer a wider range of services to her clients.

"I took a course in May (2023) through the MMF with Jelly Academy and learned more about SEO



Melissa Lagace first pursued a career in virtual assisting after discovering the field on TikTok.

and digital marketing," she said. "So that's the main service that I offer now is website design and management."

Lagace was first introduced to MMF funding through the recommendation of a friend. Recognizing the costs that go into starting a business, she began the process of becoming a Youth entrepreneur through programming offered by the MMF's affiliate lender, Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC), in November 2020.

"It was really helpful because (LRCC) made me create a business plan, not that I didn't already have one, but this business plan was a lot more detailed," she said. "They made me project my income for my first year and second year. It's been nice to have that to follow and see where I'm at with things."

The entrepreneur has managed to incorporate her Red River Métis identity into her business through encouraging other Citizens to explore the world of virtual assisting.

"It's definitely something that I share about in my course, and it's fun because I've had a lot of Métis Citizens from Manitoba take my course," said Lagace. "I'm also part of the Métis women entrepreneur mentorship program right now. There was a girl that came to the MMF saying she wanted to be a virtual assistant, so she was paired up with me."

In addition to her coaching, Lagace encourages her students to access as many resources as they can to learn new skills.

"You don't need to know everything. I always tell my students, and this isn't a word, but everything is 'figure-out-able,'" she said. "If there's something a client wants you to do and you've never done it before, there's probably 10 YouTube videos out there showing you step by step how to do it."

The entrepreneur said that you can only be so prepared when it comes to starting your own business, and eventually you must dive in.

"I remember being so scared when I got started because I didn't know how this was going to go," she said. "I think just jumping when you are scared, doing it anyways, and believing in yourself is really important."

Lagace hopes her platforms will show people that being an entrepreneur doesn't have to look a certain type of way.

"I don't live in a big city. I live in a very small farm town, so I'm not the online business owner who lives in an apartment with a nice view, gets Starbucks every morning, and is in the central business area in the city," she said. "I think part of my goal too is just showing people that no matter where you are, you can have a successful online business."

RED RIVER MÉTIS ENTREPRENEURSHIP SHINES AT RIVERTON RESTAURANT

If you were to travel about 90 minutes north of Winnipeg, chances are you would stumble across one of Manitoba's hidden gems, Red River Métis-owned restaurant The Mixed Grill.



Located in Riverton, owner Audrey Collins prides herself on creating an environment that is perfect for families to enjoy.

"We've got your breakfast. We've got your lunch covered. It's all homemade burgers, homemade soups, and more every day. We do pizzas in the evenings," she said. "You can have everything, and we are licensed. We have a beautiful patio. The Mixed Grill is friendly, safe, and family-oriented."

With dreams of opening her very own restaurant, the Red River Métis entrepreneur opened The Mixed Grill in 2014.

"My husband and I both like to cook, and I did work with my mom when I was younger. She had a restaurant, so I knew what it was all about. But owning your business is different than working for somebody else. I'm learning that," Collins said.

The Mixed Grill's diverse menu is also available for catering, which Collins said has been a boon for the business.

"I started that around five to six years ago, and it just keeps growing and growing, and we're busy catering all the time," she said.

"We've done everything from grads, funerals, birthday parties, anniversary parties. We catered the first Reggie Leach Classic golf tournament here," she said, referring to the former NHL player

from Riverton. "He had a big dinner and auction at the hall. We served 450 people, so that was nice."

The restaurant has become a staple in Riverton, and with its 10th anniversary approaching in May, Collins is proud of what The Mixed Grill has achieved.

One aspect of her business Collins is especially proud of is the hiring of all-Indigenous staff, including members of her own family.

“WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE MMF, I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE HAD TO CLOSE. THEY WERE A GREAT HELP.” – AUDREY COLLINS, OWNER, THE MIXED GRILL

"Most of my staff have been family members. Right now, I have my daughters in the kitchen cooking, my nieces serving, and I also have another niece who cooks in the evening," she said. "I have three kids, and each has taken a turn working here."

The owner said her children's roles within the restaurant have contributed to their development of critical life skills.

"(My son) can cook. He works a lot, so he doesn't cook a lot, but learnt people skills," she said. "You learn how to serve, you know how to communicate with your customers, stuff like that. My son was a little shy. So, it helped him come out of his shell."

Collins said she chose the name The Mixed Grill because the restaurant serves a mixture of breakfast and lunch.

"When we first opened, we were open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week. Then I realized I couldn't work that many hours. We had a mixed menu, so we're like, 'oh, mixed menu, (The) Mixed Grill,'" she said.

Collins said it's important to her to use local ingredients and to keep everything as homemade as possible.

"That's how I cook. That's just how I've learned and the way my mom did it," she said, "and that's the way we like to do it."

The Red River Métis Citizen said they are very thankful for the MMF and its affiliate lending institution, the Louis Riel Capital Corporation's (LRCC), support.

"They helped with the bridge financing. Anytime I've needed anything, I email, and I'm like, 'what can

I do about this?' And they help," she said. "The MMF helped with a lot of funding, especially through COVID with extra money. Because we weren't making the money that we were before, so they helped me pay my bills."

Like many other restaurants around the province, The Mixed Grill was shuttered by the COVID-19 pandemic, but found a way to adapt.

"When we closed, we did take-out only. I mean, it was okay. We had all the guards and all the health things in place," Collins said. "We were still busy but not busy enough. Without the help of the MMF, I probably would have had to close. They were a great help."

Collins said she appreciated how supportive the LRCC has been.

"I feel assured I'm not alone, and they're there to help. When you're a sole proprietor, it's scary sometimes. It's good to know they (the MMF) do have my back, and they're there for me," said the entrepreneur.

The Mixed Grill is on 32 Main Street Southwest in Riverton. They are open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Thursday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., for dine-in and take-out. Visit the restaurant's Facebook page at facebook.com/themixedgrillriverton/.

CURLING ROCKS: EINARSON SHOWS YOUTH THE SPORT

A big thank-you to Kerri Einarson, Red River Métis Citizen and four-time women's national curling champion, for spending a full day with our Red River Métis Youth at the Tyndall Curling Club on January 5. Your curling insights, tips, and tricks added a fantastic touch to the day, making it a memorable experience for everyone involved!

HEALTH CONSULTATION

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES FOR OPTIMAL LIVING, VITALITY,
AND EMPOWERMENT FOR THE RED RIVER MÉTIS

If you are from the Northwest, Thompson, or The Pas Region,
please contact consultation@mmf.mb.ca to register.

January 20 & 21, 2024
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre
4 Nelson Road
Thompson, MB



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AT NOON TO LISTEN TO
PRESIDENT CHARTAND ON

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