



Beyond Borders Taskforce

Interim Draft

“What We Heard”

**Report on the Red River Métis Beyond Borders
Consultation**

October 13, 2022

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Introduction

Background:

The Red River Settlement, now called Winnipeg, Manitoba, is the Birthplace of our Nation and the Heart of our Homeland, while the historic Métis Nation, the Red River Métis, and the Manitoba Métis are the same Indigenous People for which the names have been used interchangeably.

Historically, before effective control, the Red River Métis Homeland extended well beyond the Red River Valley. In 1869, the *National Committee of the Red River Métis*, led by President John Bruce and Secretary Louis Riel, rightly asserted our People's jurisdiction and authority over the whole of our Homeland in what was then commonly referred to as the North-West Territory. Through negotiation between Canadian and Red River Métis representatives, the Territory entered Canada.

In 1870, the Red River Métis became the Founder of the province of Manitoba; and Canada's Negotiating Partner in Confederation; and, after governing our province peacefully, we then faced a Reign of Terror resulting in many of our people dispersing throughout our Homeland and beyond in search of peace and security.

In July 2021, Canada and the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) signed the *Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* (MMSGRIA) which acknowledged the Red River Métis "was established with its own identity, language, culture, institutions, and way of life centred in the Red River Valley, and whose citizens and individuals entitled to become citizens are today located within what is now Manitoba as well as elsewhere inside and outside of Canada."

Article 36 of the 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (*Declaration*), declared "Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders."

Article 33 of the same *Declaration* states in part that "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions." Last year, in June of 2021, Canada passed Bill C-15 which affirmed the *Declaration* as a source for the interpretation of Canadian law.

In 2014, the MMF Annual General Assembly (AGA) gave direction to the MMF Cabinet that our Citizens, our settlements, and traditional territories must not be separated or divided by arbitrary and artificial borders that are not of our choosing or making and that individuals who are Red River Métis are not required to be a resident of Manitoba to obtain their Citizenship card.

In August 2022, the MMF Cabinet passed a resolution confirming the MMF is the *National Government of the Red River Métis*, which included, among other things, that the MMF take further steps to support our non-resident Citizens and build our government beyond

borders. This is the core and essence of our Beyond Borders Initiative, and the mandate of the Beyond Borders Task Force, which is to listen carefully to what our Citizens want. The Task Force membership was established by and received its direction from MMF President David Chartrand with the portfolio oversight and responsibility of Minister Judy Mayer.

Beyond Borders Consultations

Purpose:

This interim report presents preliminary findings from the MMF Beyond Borders consultations with our Citizens who live outside of Manitoba. Led by the Beyond Borders Taskforce, the purpose of the consultations is to provide:

1. a description on who the Red River Métis are as a People and a Nation historically and today;
2. an overview of the MMF – the exclusive National Government of the Red River Métis;
3. an update on the MMF activities right now and planned in future for our Governance “Beyond Borders” (including voting + constitution amendments, etc.); and,
4. an opportunity to share and receive ideas on the continued implementation of the Red River Métis National Governance Beyond Borders including the development of non-resident and cross border policies, programs, and services, etc.

What we Heard:

Each session was unique; however, themes began to form from what we heard across many sessions. During the consultations, as elaborated later in this report’s *Beyond Borders Consultation Findings* section, our Citizens stated clearly the following themes:

1. ***Identity:*** expressing pride in being Red River Métis with concern about the theft and need for protection of our collective identity, Citizenship, and culture including our language, and symbols;
2. ***Nationhood:*** wanting opportunities to gather and assemble as Red River Métis in their local area to further kinship and social connections as well as focusing on rebuilding community;
3. ***Governance:*** committing to our National Government and for it to continue to reach out to Red River Métis beyond borders and develop the institutions of our National Government such as Regions, Locals, and Elections to include candidates beyond provincial and international borders;
4. ***Harvesting Across the Homeland:*** reclaiming and protecting our section 35 right to harvest across the Homeland;

5. ***Programs and Services, and Other Supports:*** supporting the development of MMF programs and services beyond borders noting that these programs and services are based on nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationships with the federal government and provincial governments;

Beyond Borders Task Force

To undertake these Beyond Borders Initiative consultations, President Chartrand appointed the following five representatives to the Beyond Borders Taskforce:

1. Clément Chartier –Task Force Lead and Red River Métis Ambassador;
2. Will Goodon – Minister;
3. Joan Church – Infinity Women Secretariat Representative;
4. Kyra De La Ronde – Provincial Youth Advisory Committee Chair;
5. Genevieve Benoit – Legal Counsel.

The Beyond Borders Initiative, including the Beyond Borders Task Force, is one of the portfolio responsibilities of MMF Minister Judy Mayer.

The Task Force is supported by an MMF secretariat led by Chief of Staff Allan Benoit and managed by Beyond Borders Coordinator Melinda Haney. Staff involved in the consultations included the Engagement and Consultation Department Director Jasmine Langhan, the Central Registry Office (CRO) Senior Director Tiffany Monkman, and with additional Policy Unit, Communications, CRO, and IT supports. The Beyond Borders Task Force is thankful for their dedication and hard work.

Session Locations:

From July through September 2022, the Task Force contacted and consulted with our Citizens and others in the following 14 cities:

1. Calgary, AB;
2. Vancouver (Burnaby), BC;
3. Edmonton, AB;
4. Regina, SK;
5. Kenora, ON;
6. Saskatoon, SK;
7. Yorkton, SK;
8. Kamloops, BC;
9. Victoria, BC;

10. Ottawa, ON;
11. Toronto, ON;
12. Yellowknife, NWT;
13. Grand Forks, ND (USA); and,
14. Fort McMurray, AB (by Video Conference Only).

Participation:

Throughout the course of these consultations, over 630 Red River Métis had the opportunity to share their thoughts. This participation represents 26% of the Citizens currently living outside of Manitoba, within North America. In addition, nearly 310 surveys were completed.

The following summarizes these consultations and provides some preliminary responses towards continuing to build the institutions of our National Government of the Red River Métis living beyond borders.

Beyond Borders Consultation Findings:

The following are the five main themes that arose from the sessions and surveys:

1. Identity:

Within the Identity theme the following sub-themes were reoccurring points of discussion:

a. Red River Métis Pride:

Regardless of where we live, the Red River Métis are proud of our collective identity. A deep sense of connection to our Homeland informs this pride. One Citizen summarized our collective pride: “We are Citizens; we are a People; and we have our own identity and Constitution” (39).¹

As one Citizen stated: “I am very proud to be Red River Métis. The history of the people explains my personal constitution, work ethic, and resolve” (3). Yet another Citizen noted with great pride, “I felt freedom when I accepted my Métis Heritage. I belong to MMF – it’s like I belong to where I was born” (215). One Red River Métis proudly declared: “I am a traditional Michif man, Métis Nationalist, Red River descendent” (71).

¹ The bracketed number at the end of a quotation represents the personal identification number (pin) of consultation participants.

b. Identity Theft and Symbols:

The Red River Métis are concerned about the theft of our identity, culture, and symbols, about the betrayal of the National Definition by Métis organizations, and about the impact to Red River Métis outside of Manitoba.

There is a concern with protecting our identity, culture, and symbols, but from past practice, many have used the flag, beading, music, and distorted the language as a way to groom Citizens within their area and to authenticate themselves. How will it get undone? Many of those who were groomed are now in positions of power and have a following and they are quite critical of the Red River Métis. (243)

Another Citizen asserted that we should reclaim the assets taken in our name as we develop our governance: “if we move forward with the idea of one Nation, all these not-for-profit organizations are holding our assets. We need to bring those assets with us as they do not belong to individual politicians” (352).

In particular, the Red River Métis want to protect our identity from “‘pretendianism’ and race-shifting that is happening across the country” (36). Another Citizen noted the importance of protecting our identity with the integrity of the MMF CRO stating: “genealogy needs to be followed with no exceptions” (123).

c. Culture and Language:

Culture and language are elemental to who we are as Red River Métis. As one Citizen rightly noted, “Michif is not just a language, but a People” (337).

Our strong families are the backbone of our culture. One Red River Métis captured the subtle beauty of living our culture as time spent with family “just wild saskatoon picking and bannock baking” and with a twinkle in the participant’s eye: “I sometimes sucker my sister into making my dad’s tourtiere” (3). Yet another Citizen stated simply, but powerfully, “the culture is in my heart” (52).

We are concerned with knowledge transfer from our Elders to the next generations. As one Red River Métis noted, regarding our Elders and the transfer of culture, “It’s a big part of my life. I grew up with all my Métis Elders. We have very few alive. It’s important to me to make sure my Métis culture stays alive for generations to come” (111).

Similarly, another Citizen noted: “we are losing our culture as Métis because Elders have passed on” (64). One participant noted the most prominent issue facing the Red River Métis was “cultural identity and keeping the culture alive through the younger generations” (124). Still another Citizen suggested a “Michif Kindergarten Class” (66) to ensure our language and culture are passed down to future generations.

2. Nationhood:

Within the Nationhood theme the following sub-themes were brought up by the consultation participants:

a. Rebuilding Kinship and Community:

Our Citizens want to gather and assemble with other Red River Métis no matter where they live, to rebuild kinship and social connections with our extended family and to rebuild community. More than a want, they felt it was a need. One Red River Métis noted: “What has happened out here in BC has deprived us of a sense of community and belonging, and we feel a deep sense of betrayal. I feel that more opportunities for us to gather and talk is a good starting place” (134).

Another Citizen noted: “I hope that we will be afforded the opportunity to create our Red River community here where we are” (406). Similarly, another Citizen asked: “What can those of us do in Ontario?” and noted further, “I would love to have a community connection, a sense of Métis community” (289).

Yet another Citizen stated the importance of kinship, community, and our collective roots that connect us to the heart of the Red River Métis Homeland:

I have my community. I go home to Manitoba all the time, but there are others obviously in this room who have been disconnected. So I just want to say thank you so much for realizing that. It's so important that we have this, that we get to continue to connect to our culture and be proud of who we are. My father, if he was here today, oh my goodness! I am shocked I am not crying because I just know he would be so happy. (217)

Finally, one Citizen highlighted the importance of kinship and rebuilding community by observing that at our gatherings Red River Métis consistently look for relatives: “It seems we all really want to meet Métis we are related to.” To facilitate reconnection, this participant suggested further that “at future meetings, the MMF could place signs on each table for the regions people are from to facilitate this” (782).

b. Gatherings and Community:

One Citizen noted the need for “a place to gather” (38). Similarly, another Citizen noted the need for a “community center [...]” This same participant had taken initiative to ensure the Red River Métis outside Manitoba in their area could gather and practice their culture: “I have started Métis dancing by teaching and gathering us together to dance” (145). Another Citizen lamented “no community centre for Métis” in their area (64). Still another participant noted the need for community engagement and a meeting place for Red River Métis: “I would encourage more engagement with the community by building facilities for educating Métis people about Métis way of life and heritage.” (18).

In discussions with Citizens, during the sessions the Task Force representatives extended invitations to the numerous MMF gatherings including St. Madeleine Métis Days and other community events. They also noted the possibility of having meetings or mini-assemblies

with video-conferencing to connect to MMF Annual Regional Meetings and Annual General Assemblies, as well as to more fully participate in engagement and consultation sessions.

One Red River Métis noted the importance of carrying on the momentum of the Beyond Borders Consultations. This participant wondered: “What happens after tonight?” and continued, “we must be in touch regularly or the momentum will stall” (224). To keep the momentum going, another Citizen wanted to help develop “an action plan, [to] continue to gather us together” (215). Finally, one Citizen addressed the Red River Métis participants and stated: “It is the responsibility of each of us today, to ensure that other people in this province do something. We need to organize” (333).

Citizens also noted the importance of gathering in-person, especially to celebrate famous Red River Métis events and people. For example, one Citizen noted that while video-conferencing was good, they also wanted to gather in-person: “I love the idea of Zoom, but would like to see families come together in person for a Louis Riel weekend so our children could learn a number of cultural things” (339). Similarly, another Red River Métis suggested, “Long term community events for Métis programs to teach Métis ways” (18).

Another Citizen living outside Manitoba noted the importance of participating in the Annual General Assembly and how the assemblies had grown so that today participants gather in the thousands:

“I am so proud that I can stand here today because my mom, my aunties, my uncles, they started when there were 30 or 40 people in the AGA in Manitoba and that was in the early 70’s. Now I actually do attend the AGA in Winnipeg and its amazing to see between 2000 and 3000 people. I am so proud to be part of that” (383).

Yet another Citizen noted that governance meetings were important to them and that when possible, they tried to participate by video-conference even though they lived outside Manitoba: “I always do whatever I can to make sure I attend meetings, local, regional, [and] the AGA” (10).

Finally, one Citizen asked: “Is there a way that the MMF could support a cohort of students across Canada to come home for the Annual General Assembly” (351). Like many Red River Métis, this individual wanted to ensure that the next generation of Red River Métis learn about and can participate in the life of our government.

3. Governance:

Within the Governance theme the following sub-themes were important discussion points:

a. Eliminating Borders:

The Red River Métis supported the reach of our National Homeland beyond what many described as colonial borders. As one Citizen stated: “I support eliminating the borders [. . .]. I believe we need to continue to be proud of our heritage and fight for our inherent rights. We need to proceed with a distinctions-based self-governance approach” (8). Yet another Citizen agreed, “I think the MMF idea of the border-less group is the way to go” (29). Still

another Red River Métis stated: “We need to have our own deals and have our own say onto our supports across the borders” (79). And yet another Citizen, in support of Beyond Borders, declared: “No more borders! One Nation!” (89).

The Red River Métis are looking to develop stable institutions of our National Government beyond borders. As one Citizens stated: “What we set up today as a governance model must be entrenched for future generations” (352).

b. Outreach:

The Red River Métis hope for MMF satellite offices in their area. As one Citizen stated, “a Red River Métis office here in Alberta. I would really get behind that” (24). Similarly, another Citizen in Alberta suggested: “I would have a website that could direct people to where to get more information or a place you could go or a Red River Métis office here in Alberta. I would really get behind that” (24).

Yet another Citizen requested, “support for a local office” in their area so they could gather with other Red River Métis (76). While another participant stated: “I would like to see satellite offices across the province for Red River Métis” (180). This is the hope of our Citizens beyond borders.

c. Elections – Voting and Candidacy:

Citizens now have the ability to exercise their democratic right to vote by mail-in ballot for our Red River Métis Government representatives. As one Citizen stated: “I am glad BC members can vote too” (146).

Some Citizens wondered what is the extent of their voting rights as Citizens living outside of Manitoba? For example, one Citizen wondered if they could vote on changes to our Constitution: “So, according to this Constitution, I can vote as a Red River Métis. How about where there are Constitutional changes needed? I can vote on anything that is there” (701)?

Citizens also expressed making changes that would allow for them to be candidates and be elected to MMF Office. For example, one Red River Métis asked: “I was glad to see you do not have to reside in Manitoba in order to vote. Will there be any changes made to the requirement that candidates have to reside in Manitoba” (224)?

Similarly, another Citizen asked: “If you are a Citizen of MMF can you run for political office from Saskatchewan?” (465). Still another Citizen noted the ability to vote in our elections, but wondered: “If I reside outside of MB, I can vote by mail-in ballot. Are you looking at changes to allow Citizens to run for office if they reside outside of Manitoba” (232)?

As one Citizen stated:

The Constitution approved on March 27, 2022, suggests that only Citizens or residents of Manitoba can be involved [...]. I do not understand how we will have a democratic meeting here when only people with several years of experience in governance within Manitoba can be elected. (290)

Yet another Citizen noted “You mentioned that the method for running for leadership positions will change in the coming days. What are the limitations on running for leadership in the MMF right now?”

This same participant clarified further that: “My question refers explicitly to running for the President of MMF from outside of Manitoba because it is stipulated that a number of years of experience is required within Cabinet, which can only be gained within Manitoba at this time” (197).

d. Regions and Locals:

The Red River Métis want to participate further in our National Government through Regions and Locals. As one Citizen noted, “it would be nice to be able to have a Local outside of Manitoba” (17). Another Citizen stated, “We need one government and Regions all across Canada for Red River Métis” (180).

In looking at the development of the MMF beyond borders, one participant asked hopefully, “Is the MMF looking to expand Regions” (282)? Similarly, another Red River Métis wondered: “What might it look like if there are Locals spread throughout Turtle Island [...], if the Locals or the Regions are bigger and spread out” (212)?

Yet another Citizen queried: “How can we become involved in our Manitoba Local? How many Red River Métis are residing outside of Manitoba boundaries? What can we do outside Manitoba to support MMF initiatives? What are the possibilities of establishing Locals outside of Manitoba?” (589).

One Red River Métis alluded to extending our regional model of governance across the Homeland, instead calling them “districts.” Pointing to the map of our Red River National Homeland, this Citizen remarked: “If that is our Homeland then perhaps it could be divided into districts and someone could be voted to that district like is done in Parliament” (675).

This was echoed many times in the sessions such as one participant who asked: “In the future, will there be Locals across Canada with Métis governing those” (427)? Still another stated “We are all thirsting to have connection to our Red River Homeland. I love the idea of having Locals throughout” (501).

4. Harvesting Across the Homeland:

Our traditional hunting practices across our Homeland predate Canada and extend beyond today’s colonial borders. As President Chartrand noted during the consultation sessions,

Hunting rights are mobile and do not fade away when families move [...]. We are strategizing next moves and our government will cover the costs of these cases. We can prove without a doubt that our ancestors were here prior to Canada being Canada. [...]. Our rights are not limited by colonial borders.

The right to live off the land is fundamental to our identity and defined by the reach of our Homeland. As one Red River Métis living outside the Homeland noted: “I go home and I hunt and I will do that until the day I die” (82).

This harvest depends on our access to the land. As one Citizen noted, one of the most important priorities for the Red River Métis is “access to land, traditional land use” (82). Likewise, another participant noted the importance of “land claims, access to the land to conduct our traditional culture and practices” (67).

Along with access to the land, the Red River Métis consistently identified the “mobility of rights across provinces” (29). One Citizen asserted “harvesting rights in areas where we live in the motherland” (10). As we exercise these rights, one Citizen emphasized, we practice “conservation in alignment with the harvest” (23).

“I want to thank these two gentlemen [President and Ambassador], you know for standing up and fighting for the rights our inherent rights to be able to hunt for fish the trap. Thank you” (226).

5. Program and Services, and Other Supports:

Attendees at the consultations were impressed with MMF programming and supports for Red River Métis in Manitoba, as one Citizen noted: “I would have educated myself sooner on all of the wonderful initiatives and services offered by or in development at the MMF” (3).

During the consultation sessions, members of the Task Force shared the MMF’s *Red River Métis Local Resource Manual*. They also discussed programming and supports currently available to Citizens in Manitoba. These include areas such as education, employment and training, health and wellness, business, economic development, early learning and child-care, and Métis children and family services.

Currently most of these services are only available to Red River Métis living in Manitoba. As one Red River Métis observed: “There are lots of good programs that I am not sure I am able to access” (305). Another Citizen suggested: Would letters of support from people like me assist the MMF in the process of getting services to us? (406). Still another Citizen noted, “People are making a living off of our poverty. How do we get funding to our people for local governance so that we can build a plan? What is our strategy to deal with healthcare, education, etc. on a local level” (267)?

As one Red River Métis stated bluntly: “Poverty has been imposed via intergenerational trauma” (168). To address this issue, one Citizen encouraged the National Government of the Red River Métis to continue to “solicit federal and provincial governments to recognize our rights beyond borders” (50).

While the Red River Métis would like to see the MMF’s existing programs and services extended beyond borders (for example post-secondary education bursaries) they identified critical service areas to address issues of poverty. These include housing, mental health (including support for addictions), seniors’ supports, education, and services for children and families. Within the program and services theme the following sub-themes were areas of ongoing interest:

a. Housing:

As one Citizen noted, poverty and precarious housing are the cause of issues in justice (not to mention child welfare): “Far too many Métis are imprisoned simply for lack of housing and circumstances of poverty” (60). Another Citizen noted that “raising living standards with housing and medical services” is important for the Red River Métis (216). Yet another respondent stated: “I think housing, mental health and money problems” are the most prominent issues facing the Red River Métis today (203).

Similarly, another Citizen stated: “I appreciate the MMF and all the good work it is doing. I have struggled to find funding for housing and other things and have been waiting for this for so long. I know it will take time, and I am happy it is happening” (427).

Another Citizen asked hopefully, “will there be increasing / expanding funds in the future for housing initiatives” (289)? Similarly, another Citizen suggested: “provide means for housing” (10).

b. Seniors’ Supports:

The Red River Métis are concerned for our seniors, especially those on fixed incomes. One Citizen noted the most important need for Red River Métis was, “supporting our elder Citizens in Alberta, Sask[at]chewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia” (34). One Red River Métis senior living in Alberta corroborated the need for support noting that: “I have been ostracized in this province as Métis. I am a senior and I have no access to services” (352). Sadly, many Red River Métis outside Manitoba share this individual’s plight. As one participant noted about the challenges in provinces outside of Manitoba: “My [relative] is the President of a local in [...] and is trying to get programs and funding for seniors” (64).

Yet another participant suggested the need for Red River Métis seniors to have “help with relocation costs for seniors/Métis to move back to our Homeland.” Additionally, this individual noted the need for “help with heating costs for seniors” and that “they have to choose between eating or buying meds or have no heat.” Finally, this individual noted that “harvesting and hunting for seniors for winter food” was extremely important (188).

This reality for our seniors is concerning for many Red River Métis. As one Citizen noted “senior’s care, health, mental health, and shelter” are priorities (7). Yet another Red River Métis identified “Drug addiction recovery, Elders living in poverty, and Métis children in care” as the most prominent issues for our people beyond borders. Still another Red River Métis asked for the following supports: “health coverage for seniors, housing for seniors, dental, and hearing aids” (100). This participant was echoed by another who stated that seniors need supports for “health care, eyes / vision, dental, healing, and medicine” (101).

c. Health:

During the consultations, Red River Métis identified the need for diverse healthcare supports based on rights recognition and government-to-government relationships. As one Citizen noted, “the MMF should be asking provincial governments to help get healthcare rights [...] as it would be a federal responsibility” (267).

Several Citizens noted the need for health care supports for all Red River Métis. For example, one participant emphasized “health care (medication, assistance for medical visit costs, mental health, disability assistance, etc.) and housing (access, assistance with rent and utilities etc.) for all ages” (194). Another Citizen noted simply, the need for “medical coverage” (170). Similarly, another Citizen wondered, “what is in the works for health related to dental, glasses, prescriptions, etc.” (N/A)? Yet another Citizen asked, “would the MMF consider advocating to create programs for Red River Métis to access uninsured health benefits” (219)?

Citizens also identified the need for transportation supports for individuals to access healthcare services. For example, one Citizen identified transportation in a list of essential services including: “housing, medicine, transportation” (95). Similarly, another Citizen identified “housing, health, transportation” as urgent needs (110).

Participants were also concerned about addictions supports. As one Red River Métis noted there is a need for “health, housing, drug addictions” support (190). Yet another Citizen noted the need for “drug addiction recovery” supports (193). Finally, at least one Citizen suggested that MMF: “create Métis built and operated healing lodges across the Métis Nation Territory.” (18).

Several Citizens identified the need for mental health supports for Red River Métis beyond borders. One respondent mentioned “housing and mental health” as significant needs (54). Yet another respondent stated: “I think housing, mental health and money problems” are the most prominent issues facing the Red River Métis today (203). One Citizen living just outside of Manitoba asked about mental health services: “are you going to consider bringing them here” (550)?

One Red River Métis wondered about the availability of MMF’s Mental Health Hotline: “Is the mental health hotline available outside of Manitoba” (397). This Citizen was visibly relieved to hear that the hotline is available. Yet another Citizen stated, “I would love to see MMF have more than a phone number for mental health. Mental health is really important to me. Counselling for our Citizens would be fantastic” (250). Still another Citizen remarked that one of the greatest needs for the Red River Métis were supports for “mental health for all ages” (76).

Another Citizen thought supports for “housing, mental health, food security” as extremely important for the Red River Métis health (128). Finally, another Citizen stated: “I would like to see mental health supports especially for families that have been separated or experienced traumas and addictions” (84).

d. Education:

Red River Métis at the consultations identified education as a critical area of support for beyond borders Citizens. One Citizen noted simply the need for “funding for education” (59). Still another Citizen stated:

When you spoke about programming, I wondered about bursaries. I completed my Master’s Degree a couple of years ago here in the US, and there were no Métis bursaries available to me. However, my son will go to university

in a couple of years. He is considering the University of Manitoba, but if he chooses an US university, would he be able to get a bursary? Bursaries help Red River Métis become more educated, productive, and prosperous Citizens. (797)

Yet another broadened their identification of educational support needs to include: “job training / certification and education” (145). Another Citizen noted: “I would love education funding for my children outside of Manitoba” (269). Similarly, one Red River Métis identified the need for “post-secondary grants for youth” (53).

Recognizing the shortage of qualified health care workers, especially in remote and rural Red River Métis settlements, one Citizen saw an opportunity to support Métis Youth to pursue their education in health-related fields: “Is there an appetite to consider development of a pathway program to enhance applications of Métis Youth to health profession education programs across Canada” (219)?

Along with bursaries and loan-forgiveness programs for education, some Citizens also noted the need for representation of the Red River Métis in graduation and other education ceremonies. As one participant noted, there is a need for “university representation of Métis at events, awards, and academic ceremonies” (159).

e. Children and Families

Children and families figured prominently in Citizen discussions during the consultations. While several zeroed in on the need for programs and services, one Citizen also wondered aloud about jurisdiction over our children and families: “Do you have jurisdiction over your children and family services” (98)? One Red River Métis noted the need to “help advocate for women, children” and families (168).

Yet another Citizen applauded the MMF advancements in Child welfare and the struggle to reclaim full jurisdiction and authority, and to ensure that cultural connection for our children and families: “It’s been a long time coming to be recognized as distinct people within justice and family services, to have our own policies and mandate, and to recognize our culture and the extended family values if a Métis child is to be taken and apprehended” (92). Similarly, another Citizen noted, “we need to take responsibility for the care of our Métis children” (197).

f. Economic and Business:

The Red River Métis value self-reliance and are committed to economic self-determination. As one Citizen noted regarding the self-sufficiency of the Red River Métis: “We lived off the land when I was growing up and we made our own resources and we shared them” (352).

One Citizen outlined how, early on, their work ethic led to their career as an entrepreneur “I left Manitoba after high school and I worked across western Canada doing business” (498). Another Citizen who is new to the business community is “hoping to learn business practices so we don’t have to wait for government funding” (76).

Several Citizens from the business community noted the need for small business supports including loans and grants. One Citizen stated simply the priority for “small business supports” (141) while others identified “loans” (15) and “artist grants”(60). Yet another echoed this sentiment, hoping for “something to help out small business owners struggling like myself.” This same participant elaborated further, the need for “programs to create jobs and secure future work” (160).

The Red River Métis are interested in full economic participation, including access to opportunity for our businesses, especially access to opportunity on major infrastructure projects throughout the Homeland.

g. Women, Children, Youth, and 2SLGBTQIA+

Several Citizens identified the strength and leadership of Métis women. As one participant noted, “I was raised by my grandmother who was a very strong [Métis woman] [...]. Being Red River Métis means being a matriarch and honouring her tenacity. Our women are intelligent, capable, and always ready to face the storm” (60).

As Joan Church of the Infinity Women Secretariat (IWS) noted during the consultations these leadership qualities are embodied in IWS whose vision “is for Métis women to uplift each other to feel fully alive through provision of support for Métis women and the Two Spirit+ community.” In response to this vision, one Citizen wondered, “will the IWS be open to Red River Métis women beyond all borders and boundaries in the future. Yet another Citizen noted that they are already participating in the IWS through video conferencing: “I joined a Métis women’s group via Zoom. I don’t know of anything that is available in BC” (146). This individual was able to connect with other Red River Métis women through the IWS Zoom calls.

Participants also identified the need to provide supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ members of our Community. On this subject, a participant noted the need for healing that included “Men’s and non-binary circles (healing and sharing). Women’s and non-binary circles (healing and sharing)” (212).

Finally, the overwhelming majority (94%) of Red River Métis participating in the consultations identified the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit as a priority area for our National Government.

Citizens also wanted to ensure that our Youth are supported. As one Citizen noted, “Support for youth outside of the Homeland is very important; they need somewhere to go and someone to turn to” (225). Still another participant supported this sentiment, noting “we need more youth programs in our areas, run by Métis people” (49). Some Citizens also identified the need to support youth participation in the life of the National Government of the Red River Métis. For example, one Citizen noted “I would like more youth and women represented” (60).

Yet another participant wanted to see “employment and educational support for youth” (3). Still another Citizen noted the need for “youth programs as well as their identity” (7). Another Citizen identified the need for “Elders and youth support! Really, all the supports possible” (41). Finally, one Citizen noted the need for support for “sports etc. for youth” (48).

h. Other Supports:

Other needs were identified time and again throughout the consultations. Along with the priority areas individual Red River Métis also identified other needs for themselves, their families, and other Red River Métis in their area. These more miscellaneous items include justice, Sixties Scoop Survivors, Veterans, and sport.

Veterans were active participants contributing to the conversation. One Citizen stated proudly, in response to a survey question, “that I am a Métis Citizen and also a retired veteran” (20).

Another stated: “on behalf of the veterans in Saskatchewan, I'm a veteran and so [...] on behalf of the Elders that are here, we want to thank you very, very much for all the information that you've been able to provide us. It's very important and it's going to be a slow process you're right about that (226).

At least one Red River Métis noted the disconcerting situation in the justice system:

I work in the justice system here in Saskatchewan. I am deeply concerned about the overcrowding crisis. Far too many Métis are imprisoned simply for lack of housing and circumstances of poverty. There is rampant abuse by the police and guards. Most incarcerated people in SK are on remand, meaning they are not even convicted. The people are made to eat rotten food and are punished by having access to food taken away. I spoke with a Métis man who told me people are now sleeping on the floor. This is the place that executed Louis Riel. They are still mistreating our people. Please do something. P.S. the province spends Gladue Funding on probation instead of Gladue Reports.
(60)

Without going into as much detail, a second Citizen corroborated the appalling abuse perpetrated against our People: “I work in the justice system supporting Indigenous peoples and hear about the abuse everywhere, everyday” (496).

Citizens were also concerned about Sixties Scoop Survivors and wanted to see further supports developed. As one Citizen noted the need for “support for the survivors of the Sixties Scoop” (167). Another Citizen was concerned with support for Sixties Scoop Survivors to obtain their Citizenship: “There must be a system in place that gives you the option to obtain Citizenship with the MMF that is a smooth and good experience” (502).

A handful of Citizens also identified the need for supports in sport and recreation. One Citizen suggested that MMF “create official Métis sports teams” (18). While another suggested raising the profile of Red River Métis athletes with the “sports hall of fame” (45).

Considerations for Next Steps

To assist in taking possible next steps, the Beyond Borders Task Force offers the following topics for the MMF President and Cabinet to consider:

1. identifying a set of principles to act as a guide and developing a workplan for implementing the Beyond Borders approach;
2. continuing to develop the Government-to-Government and Nation-to-Nation relationships with other Indigenous Peoples and strengthen the relationships with the federal and provincial governments across the Homeland, and beyond, to protect and promote our claims, rights, and interests;
3. supporting Citizen gatherings (in-person and virtual) beyond borders. This may include hosting meetings, conferences, and regular cultural gatherings so that Citizens can develop their kinship and social networks and be a part of re-building our Red River Métis Community;
4. undertaking the necessary actions including using education, political, financial, and legal tools to protect our Red River Métis identity and culture including our language and symbols such as our Red River Métis National Flag;
5. developing our MMF governance institutions, including considering non-resident candidate eligibility in elections, as well as satellite or other offices, and eventually Regions and Locals within the National Homeland of the Red River Métis and beyond;
6. expanding the MMF Harvesting Initiative to include Citizens beyond the province of Manitoba and assert harvesting rights in strategic areas beyond borders within the National Homeland of the Red River Métis;
7. increasing the application of existing MMF programs and services to beyond the borders of Manitoba, particularly, among others, those for education, housing, health, seniors', women, youth and children supports, and business and economic development, as well as developing new programs and services as deemed appropriate; and,
8. reviewing the Citizenship application policy, process and forms to accommodate Red River Métis applications for Citizenship for those living in Canada outside of Manitoba, the United States of America, and beyond.

In Conclusion:

In the Sessions and on social media, the MMF received accolades for both the MMF and the Task Force's current work and other initiatives being undertaken and planned.

The Red River Métis remarked on the progress President Chartrand and Cabinet have made to advance our rights and the institutions of our government. For instance, a Red River Métis in Grand Forks, North Dakota noted, "what I have seen out of MMF in the last ten years is light years of change. Thank you for being here and projecting the Métis Nation into the future" (275).

Another Citizen noted their pride in the MMF leadership: "I am very happy and proud of the Red River Métis Government" (10). Yet another Red River Métis was impressed with our Government's Cabinet, stating: "This is amazing! I'm grateful to the Cabinet for their dedication, foresight, and leadership" (3). Still another Citizen stated simply, "I am happy

with the current MMF leadership” (12). As another Citizen noted of the MMF: “The Red River Métis is a well-run government” (53). Another noted, “I read the updates President Chartrand sends out and am happy and agree with his direction” (83).

In words that best sum up the Beyond Borders Initiative, a Citizen offered encouragement to MMF leadership to continue developing self-government beyond borders for the Red River Métis: “Go for it!! And keep it alive to preserve our way of life and never give in or give up for our dreams” (48).

