



# Le Métis

∞ EST. 1871 ∞

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



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Within the First Nations, Inuit, and Red River Métis community, the phrase "land back" is a big topic of discussion. I can assure you that your Cabinet and I are always working for the betterment of our Nation, and land is always a part of the conversation. This includes conservation and stewardship, purchasing buildings as investments, and seeing culturally significant lands returned to our Nation.

It's clear that getting land back can come in many shapes and forms, and often produces results with benefits that go well beyond our Citizens – in this way, with initiatives like the ones outlined in this message, we prove that reconciliation is a two-way street. We can generate greater prosperity and well-being for all when we work with industry, business leadership, and other levels of government.

### **Ste. Madeleine – Healing the wound in the heart of our Nation**

WE DID IT! At the beginning of this year's Ste. Madeleine Métis Days – Premier Kinew and I signed a memorandum of understanding that will, among other things, commence negotiations to immediately transfer approximately 100 acres of Manitoba Crown Land to the MMF, where the historic village of Ste. Madeleine once stood.

This year's Ste. Madeleine Métis Days will forever remain in my heart as a historic, moving, and

powerful day for the Red River Métis. The presence of our Premier, Wab Kinew, along with provincial Red River Métis Ministers Renée Cable and Bernadette Smith, was so well received by Citizens, once again demonstrating that we are in a new era of government-to-government relationship with the government of the province we brought into Canada.

Citizens who were on site know how powerful and touching the ceremony was, and knew what the signing meant to each of them. I could feel the presence of the Ancestors who suffered so much when the town was burned and they were treated as less than cattle, and I knew they were smiling down upon us as we saw that injustice addressed.

It was also important that David LeDoux, Chief of Gambler First Nation, was on hand and signed the memorandum of understanding as a show of support, and I thank him for his attendance and his words. He wanted to ensure that we would not change the sharing of the cemetery with Gambler and that we'd work together on ongoing initiatives. My words still stand today – we have never questioned or doubted First Nations rights to lands, harvesting rights, or economic opportunity, and we don't expect our First Nations relatives to challenge our rights. Chief LeDoux's presence shows that, with mutual respect and active consultation, we can work together and share the benefits of our successes. This is the way forward, instead of playing the colonial game that says only one Indigenous group can benefit from any opportunity. This game only serves to tear us down, instead of building us all up.

I know there is still work to do to make sure this land comes back to us in a good way. I look forward to hearing from everyone on this important matter, as we ensure that the land that has been restored to our Nation will always be part of the fabric of our community.

### **Investing in the heart of the Homeland**

We recently announced the purchase of 333 Main Street, as well as 191 and 179 Pioneer Avenue. This announcement took place less than a year after our purchase of 200 Main, adding to our downtown footprint of 11 properties. With this announcement, our total investment in downtown Winnipeg is well over \$100 million, all over the past six years. We've also brought over 550 employees downtown, and will be adding another 160 more over the coming year. Our goal now is to ensure that our properties are fully tenanted, reducing the historic high vacancy rate in downtown Winnipeg.

This investment shows that we take our role in the revitalization of downtown seriously. With 60 per cent of our employees working downtown every day, we know we can bring substantial and much-needed economic benefits to businesses and service providers located around our buildings.

The funding for this purchase was a direct result of our business activities, as well as our ability to leverage our existing properties. I've always said that the Red River Métis are an entrepreneurial and business-minded people, and this is showing in our ability to not only make a profit on your behalf, but to use that profit to continue building on our strengths and successes. We must prepare our next generations with a stronghold for their continued economic strength.

As our Elders know, it's not our way to keep our success only for ourselves. With our renewal and revitalization, we are able to lend our strength to the broader community and bring prosperity for all. I was proud to make the announcement and to see so many of our Citizens and staff on hand, joined by the broader business community, as we celebrated the ribbon cutting ceremony for these new buildings.

### **Helping our Citizens reach their forever homes**

Since 2019, the MMF – the National Government of the Red River Métis – has been helping our Citizens achieve their home ownership dreams through our First Time Home Purchase Program. In the coming days, we are going to be celebrating the 1000th home purchased by one of our families through the program, with homeowners Meghan Young and Joshua Boucher, both Red River Métis Citizens, achieving this dream with our support.

I remember how exciting it was when we launched the program. After all the planning and preparation, it meant so much that we had our very first application on the day we announced the program. This was quickly followed by a flood of applications and phone calls from Citizens, asking questions because they could not believe that we'd made this program for them, creating pride in our families, parents, grandparents, and our Nation.

Don't forget – our people, who brought Manitoba into Canada's confederation, have watched other governments – including Canada – try to administer programs of this nature, but there's not a doubt in my mind that ours outmatches every other program. The fact that ours is still running strong is the proof, going well over the original plan of helping 800 families. The program has helped



infuse more than a quarter of a billion dollars into the economy through economic spinoffs like additional purchases, as well as helping create an estimated 460 jobs, in just five years. These results are from just a small investment and an initial bit of help, which is all our hardworking Citizens have ever needed to counteract what was done to our Ancestors after Manitoba was brought into Canada's confederation.

As I said many years ago, we will get our land back, acre by acre if we have to – that's a promise I made

to Citizens, and I stand by it. We still have steps to take, including seeing our land claim settled in this term, as promised by the Government of Canada.

But let there be no doubt – I am confident that with each step we take toward the future, we are building a strong legacy for the Youth of our Nation, so they can continue to build on your Red River Métis Government's ability to support all our Citizens, including those yet to be born. This is the vision of our Elders and past leaders, which has always guided my steps as your President. I clearly

state to you all now that I will not rest until this important work is done.

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. ∞*

## RED RIVER MÉTIS ATHLETE MAKES WAVES AT PARALYMPIC TRIALS

Red River Métis Citizen Maxine Lavitt recently made a splash after competing in the 2024 Paralympic Trials.

The swimmer, who has a visual impairment, currently swims on the University of Manitoba swim team, and said she relished the experience of participating in the trials.

"I got to swim 10 times. I made the finals for every single one of my events. That was a big achievement for me. It was my first competition at that level," said Lavitt. "It was an amazing experience to be able to compete against the best in the world and to be able to see other people race too."

Paralympic swimming is divided into 14 different classes. Classes 1-10 are given to swimmers with a physical disability, while 11-13 are for swimmers with a visual impairment. Lavitt swims in Class 13, for those with greater vision than classes 11 and 12 but less than 20 degrees of vision.

"There's a telephone wire going from your eyes to get back to your brain, and mine doesn't communicate the message as well. When I'm in the pool, all I see is not even shapes, just melted colours," she said. "There's no definition of shape or where I am, so it's difficult to know where I'm at in the race because I can't see my opponent next to me, so I have to pretend in my head that someone's right next to me to get really into it."

Lavitt raced in the 50m freestyle, 100m backstroke, 200m medley, 100m breaststroke, and 100m butterfly throughout the trials, hosted in Toronto from May 13-19, 2024. When preparing for a major competition such as the Paralympic Trials, the Red River Métis athlete has a set practice schedule.



*The Red River Métis athlete's accolades include breaking five Canadian records in the S13 categories and medalling multiple times in the Canadian Swimming Championships.*

"I swim twice in the morning, then again in the evening on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Then we do dryland training, (which is) weights and working in the gym with a trainer on Tuesday and Thursday," she said. "Going into a meet, we'll dial back a bit of that training. Going into a big competition, I fall back in the gym and prioritize my stretching, hydration, and fuel. Even missing a day in the pool, I feel like I haven't swum for 20 years. It's a weird feeling."

The Red River Métis athlete's accolades include breaking five Canadian records in the S13 categories and medalling multiple times in the Canadian Swimming Championships. Lavitt has also attended two North American Indigenous

Games (NAIG) as both a competitor and an apprentice coach.

"I was lucky enough that my teammate (Carson Beggs) was the head coach," she said. "He is someone I was familiar with, and he was an incredible mentor, and getting to learn from him was an incredible experience."

After Lavitt's experience at the 2017 NAIG, the athlete sought to connect with her Red River Métis identity and learn about her heritage.

"Being able to learn Southern Michif was a big step in that. I spent many summers at Riel House, and that unlocked the door for me to learn more about



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my culture, how to bead, and the history behind it," she said referring to working there as a summer student. "I was very thankful to the (Louis) Riel Institute for the opportunity."

The proud Red River Métis Citizen is eager to share more about the Red River Métis whenever she can.

"Every single meet, I'm bringing the flag out. My swim bag is covered in my beadwork because I want people to see that representation. Something I didn't have as a young swimmer is seeing other swimmers like me," she said. "But now, even coaching at NAIG, I'm seeing how there are more Métis Youth in swimming. I want that to keep going and for them to be proud of themselves, their culture, and who they are."

The Citizen is in her third year of Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba, where she has been fortunate enough to take evening classes, which were the best for her schedule.

"I was working as a swimming instructor part-time in between my training sessions and then going to school at night," Lavitt said. "I've been doing that kind of schedule since I was 13, so I'm used to it by now."

Lavitt is also grateful to the Manitoba Métis Federation for helping with funding support through the Post-Secondary Education Support Program, which aims to improve the education of Red River Métis students by providing them with access to educational opportunities at the post-secondary level.



Lavitt likes to represent her Red River Métis pride via the beadwork she created for her swimming bag.

"That's something I'm extremely thankful for. I don't think I would have been able to balance school and working full time, so having that extra financial support means the world to me and makes me confident to swim more and focus on my goals," she said. "I also was a recipient of the (MMF's) Believe Athletic and Artistic Support Program this year. That helped me get to Paralympic trials and to have the funds to compete at that level because it's a lot of travelling."

Now that the 2024 Paralympic Trials have ended, Lavitt is determined to represent her home country.

"I hope to compete for Canada one day. I'd like to make a national team. I don't know if it would be for the next Paralympics, World Championships, or the Commonwealth Games," she said. "Just being able to represent my country would be cool, and to be a Métis athlete representing my country I think would be awesome."



## MMF JOINS MANITOBA GOVERNMENT FOR HISTORIC FIRST CABINET MEETING



On July 18, the MMF participated in our first government-to-government joint cabinet meeting with the Manitoba provincial government at the Manitoba Legislative Building. This meeting allowed us to discuss important matters of interest to our Government and Red River Métis Citizens. We look forward to seeing more meetings like this in the future!



## NOTHING BEETS A FARMERS' MARKET!



This past weekend, your National Government of the Red River Métis teamed up with St. Norbert Farmers' Market to celebrate our second annual Métis Market Day on Saturday, July 27. It was a great day filled with many Red River Métis vendors, musicians, workshops, and so much more!



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