

integrity in our identity



2025



State
of the
Nation





On behalf of the National Government of the Red River Métis, your Cabinet Ministers and I welcome you to the 2025 Annual General Assembly (AGA) – This year’s theme is “Integrity in Our Identity.”

INTRODUCTION

To prepare for this year’s State of the Nation, and its theme of Integrity in Our Identity, I began by reflecting on the thoughts and feelings I had at the signing of the *Red River Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Treaty* on November 30, 2025. My heart glowed with pride to share that moment with fellow Citizens, family, and friends. It was a moment 154 years in the making, as we once again treated with the country we love and helped to build. We proclaimed with our hearts and minds and in one voice that we are the Red River Métis of the historic Northwest, we are Canada’s Partners in Confederation and the Founders of Manitoba.

Our Treaty represents the permanent recognition of this relationship by Canada, our Partners in Confederation, and that the relationship is enshrined in the Constitution and protected by it. The nature of our relationship can no longer be questioned by changes in political leadership or changes in government. It sets in stone our mutual responsibility to engage with one another on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis.

We cannot escape the dark history that has haunted our relationship with Canada and with some Canadians. However, the Treaty teaches all of us that we can come to terms with our past. I thank Canada for taking important first steps towards renewing their promise to Red River Métis. So many political leaders

across party lines have expressed their support for this Treaty and recognize what it means to us and what it means for Canada, and I thank them. I signed the Treaty next to the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, then Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations, and I am immensely proud of the partnership our respective governments built to reach that moment.

Most importantly, the Treaty represents the Red River Métis grit and determination to NEVER give up. No matter the challenge, no matter the hardship, no matter the pain of past betrayals, we will not stop.

We will stand united in defence of our unique and distinct identity. For over two centuries we have known and experienced the truth that we are stronger together. We have persevered throughout our history in protecting our families and our Nation. WE ARE RED RIVER MÉTIS!

Your Cabinet Ministers and I have remained committed to keeping the Treaty legislation moving towards Royal Assent. Once Royal Assent is received, the Treaty will become, in effect, a part of Canada’s Constitution. I am pleased to have the commitment from the Honourable Rebecca Alty, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations that the Treaty legislation will be introduced to Parliament this fall.



The MMF – the National Government of the Red River Métis – continues to pursue Canada to honour its commitment to settle our Section 31, *Manitoba Act 1870* land claim. In *MMF v. Canada*, the Supreme Court recognized that our claim under Section 31 was a “collective claim for declaratory relief for the purposes of reconciliation between the descendants of the Métis people of the Red River Valley and Canada.”

Further, the court recognized that MMF is “the body representing the collective Métis interest” for the promise made to us in the *Manitoba Act*. According to the Court: resolving our land claim is “a matter of national and constitutional import.” As your President, I am determined to hold Canada to its commitment and to see negotiations through to their conclusion.

As your Red River Métis Government continues to advance our Nation’s priorities and cement our rightful place in Confederation, in the same breath we continue to stand against those who threaten our identity. These claims to our identity are acts of modern colonization made by those who have no understanding of our history, homeland, heroes, nor connection to our Ancestors.

A LEADERSHIP RACE, AN ELECTION, AND A NEW PATH FORWARD

The full legacy of Prime Minister Trudeau’s time in government will be analyzed and written about for decades. Observers will no doubt reach many different conclusions about his leadership and his government’s policies.

What I can say with absolute certainty is that under his leadership, Canada was forced to confront its relationships and reconcile with Indigenous Peoples.

His time as Prime Minister moved the markers forward. Our Treaty with Canada is only one example of this. My Cabinet and I thank him for his commitment to serving the public for over a decade.

Following the federal election on April 28, Mark Carney became Prime Minister of Canada. The results demonstrated that Canadians recognized we are now in period of economic uncertainty. The sudden change in our relationship with the United States cannot be overlooked or downplayed.

While it is difficult to hear the rhetoric around crippling global tariffs from our close neighbour and, traditionally, close ally, the challenges to our sovereignty are threatening. We must acknowledge what is happening and prepare.

Canadians immediately united behind the sentiment that we will not be absorbed into the United States. Canadians are also preparing to do what is needed to withstand any punitive economic action taken against us.

You will have heard me say repeatedly – NEVER FORGET WHO YOU ARE. Our Elders have passed these words of wisdom down to us through the generations. Staying grounded in our identity and sharing our story is essential to educating the world about who the Red River Métis are.

We are entirely unique and distinct from our First Nations and European relatives. Our identity took its shape at the heart of the Red River Valley where, by 1870, we were already ten thousand strong. What happened at Red River – not replicated anywhere else.

We signalled our Nation’s birth in 1816 through the unfurling of our Infinity Flag. The Infinity Flag was not known in eastern Canada. It is the symbol of the Red River Métis – the New Nation.

The importance of Bill C-5, the *One Canadian Economy Act*, cannot be underestimated. It is a strong response to the new challenges all Canadians face. However, this does not give Canada a green light to put development and economic gains over protecting Red River Métis Section 35 rights.

“We have heard whispers from the South, voices that suggest annexation to the United States. But I tell you now, Red River is not for sale. We are a People, not a commodity to be traded between nations.”

Letter from Louis Riel to US President Ulysses S. Grant

I brought the Red River Métis perspective to Senate and the House of Commons Committees. I made it clear in my presentations that the relationship has often worn thin and promises have not been kept. We have been too easily forgotten or dismissed. This does not encourage trust.

Our trust in Canada will be improved by the Royal Assent of the *Red River Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Treaty* and by the settling of our Section 31 land claim. That said, trust cannot be renewed overnight. It takes time. It is a matter of rebuilding and strengthening the relationship with meaningful action on a day-to-basis with a nation-to-nation, government-to-government approach.

Our Treaty and our land claim are projects of national interest. Never forget that bringing Canada into our Homeland was one of the most important nation-building projects in both Canadian and Red River Métis history. We became Canadian Citizens while Canada’s size hugely increased – bridging from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans.



This summer the Prime Minister invited us to attend a Métis Summit on Bill C-5. However, the Métis National Council (MNC) and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) had also been invited to attend. In 2019, you gave your Red River Métis Government the mandate to leave from the Métis National Council for its illegitimate support of the Métis Nation of Ontario, which is an entity built on Indigenous identity fraud. Today, the MNC is without the required founding members to exist as a legitimate entity in its own right. We could not participate in something that would legitimize either. With this in mind, we took a principled stand and declined to participate in Prime Minister Carney's summit with Métis on Bill C-5 in August.

Our government is strong and respected. We are here for long haul.

Following our stand, Cabinet and I were pleased to host Rebecca Altj, Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations, and Mandy Gull-Masty, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada for a conversation

PROMOTING OUR ENTREPRENEURS

While we are prepared to defend Canada in the economic battles ahead, we must be treated as equal Partners in Confederation, and our distinct identity must be respected.

I commend Minister Gull-Masty on our August joint statement where we had the pleasure of announcing the recognition of the Red River Métis Business Directory by Indigenous Services Canada. This means that the 874 registered Red River Métis majority-owned businesses now qualify for the federal government's Indigenous procurement strategy and the 5% minimum target for federal expenditures.

about our position on the summit and the need for us to only engage in a direct bilateral relationship with Canada.

The Prime Minister also heard us clearly. We spoke over the phone at length, prior to the Summit and he has committed to a bilateral relationship and to an upcoming government-to-government meeting. I look forward to meeting with the Prime Minister to reaffirm our respective government's relationship and responsibilities to one another.

I will continue to say to Prime Minister Carney and his colleagues: you have our support. The Red River Métis have always stood ready to defend our country in times of trouble and we will stand with you in this economic battle in defence of our country.

This is a critical step for Red River Métis business owners as they seek out the opportunities that will come from the advancement of major projects of national interest.

Towards strengthening our businesses, in recent years we have worked with SkyAlyne in support of the Future Aircrew Training program and have collaborated with Enbridge, Manitoba Hydro, and many other companies on workforce participation. With our Red River Métis Power Corporation, we are now taking bold steps into the green energy future.

Our steps to build an environmentally responsible future, include using and constructing a high-efficiency, high-yield carbon-offset project that will see us grow 160 million trees over the next twenty years.

We are also making significant investments into the Heart of our Homeland with our revitalization of downtown Winnipeg. This endeavor not only has long-term benefits for our people

but indeed all Manitobans. Along with this, we are making companion investments in our rural communities with affordable housing and childcare centres. Utilizing our own procurement process we are ensuring that Métis labour, contractors, and other Métis product and service providers have an opportunity to contribute to and share in these initiatives.

RED RIVER MÉTIS AND THE GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

In Manitoba, the future of our province's economy and its role in projects in the national interest are already being contemplated by Premier Wab Kinew's government. Through Manitoba's Affordable Energy Plan, the Premier has created an unprecedented opportunity for Indigenous governments to provide utility scale electricity resources through wind power.

There is much wisdom behind this strategy. The Premier has assessed the landscape for areas of opportunity for us to invest in Manitoba's energy infrastructure and security.

As I have stated repeatedly, the reordering of economic relationships must be an opportunity for Red River Métis to be full partners in Manitoba's future success. I am hopeful that this precedent setting partnership with Indigenous governments will be a pattern of partnership and continued growth.

Our own entrepreneurial spirit made Winnipeg the destination for trade and business in the 19th century. While the events of 1870 and the Reign of Terror that followed were an attempt to extinguish our potential, it could never last. Our determination and resilience proved too strong to be contained forever. Today we see clearly that Manitoba is uniquely positioned to play

a vital role in trade, transport, and commerce, and Red River Métis are ready to be significant partners.

We often think of Manitoba as a landlocked province. But we cannot forget to look to the North. Along the shores of Hudson Bay our province possesses Arctic Ocean access to the world's economy. With the right investments into infrastructure, and the full partnership of the Red River Métis, the Port of Churchill may well again become a central hub of global trade. This would open an array of opportunities for our Citizens who live in the North, as well as their neighbours in the towns and villages across the region.

Canada's economy is built on the success of people just like our Red River Métis business owners. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have always been the backbone of our economic engine. We were free traders – independent and secure in our own economic might in our Homeland. We did not bend to the will of those who saw annexation of our territory as inevitable. Our work ethic and strong business sense compelled us to work together to become the masters of the Plains and to build our economic strength.



More than 150 years later, this remains central to our identity and Canada can learn from our success to forge a new path towards economic independence and sovereignty. There can be no doubt that there will be challenging times in the days, weeks, and months ahead for our entrepreneurs. Remember, a crisis can provide an opportunity to adapt.

Your Red River Métis Government, along with the Louis Riel Capital Corporation and the Red River Métis Business

Development Corporation, will be with our business community every step of the way, lending strength where it is needed and helping find new pathways and new opportunities.

There is good reason for the continued optimism of our business community, and we will ensure that this sense of hope for the future continues through these changing times.

INTER-NATION RELATIONSHIPS



The strength of Indigenous cultures – including Red River Métis – lies in the value we place on relationships. Relationships are the foundation upon which everything else is built. Whether in business, politics, or community life, the importance of trust, respect, and ongoing dialogue cannot be overstated.

Through the media or the Moccasin Telegraph, you may have heard rumours that some First Nations would rather choose to make non-Métis partnerships. If that is the case, then it is their prerogative.

Let me make something clear, we will always try to work with our relatives and our cousins, but do not see it as a weakness on our part that we challenge their positions on Métis right or partnerships. We will keep the vision that we are stronger together and that a unified Indigenous approach to problem solving and advancing the areas we all struggle in is the best path forward. My mother always taught me that I should never be jealous of someone else's success. Rather, I should celebrate the success of those around me – whether First Nation or Métis. To this day it

remains one of my personal core values received from my mother's deep cultural knowledge. I have applied them to the way I lead.

The Red River Métis have always been *Otipemisiwak* – the people who own themselves. We will continue to promote our distinct identity and continue to seek to work in partnership with our First Nations and Inuit relatives. We remain open to discussion of partnerships including the signing of treaties between our Peoples. Historically, we made treaties between nations; we need to revive these cooperative efforts to preserve our economic and national futures.

There is such richness in our respective cultures and in our traditional knowledge to share – especially at this critical time. Our people, especially our Youth, have extraordinary strength and ability to bring to the world. We owe it to them and to one another to stand together. The time for unity is now, and we cannot allow this opportunity to slip away.

CONCLUSION

“During the five years that I must pass in exile, I have only this to say to the Métis: Remain Métis, become more Métis than ever.”

- **Louis Riel**

The words of Louis Riel are no doubt familiar to you as they are words our Nation – la Nouvelle Nation – the Red River Métis, continues to follow. Holding on tight to our identity is as important today as it was during his lifetime. Never forget to celebrate who you are and embody the values and ideals that drive our identity.

Each of us is responsible for taking the words of our Elders and Ancestors as a powerful guide to help us navigate each challenge and celebrate each achievement.

My mother raised my brothers and sisters and me to be proud of who we are. Her presence is always with me, and every day I am always grateful for the love and guidance we received from her. I remain deeply grateful to all Red River Métis Citizens for your

continued support. My commitment to you is unwavering. I will never stop fighting for you and for your families and I will never stop fighting to protect our identity for the generations who will follow us.

As always, the path we follow is yours by design. It is the energy you bring to your family lives, your communities, and our Locals across the Homeland that maintains our identity and keeps us strong. It is the grassroots action you take today that will teach and empower our Youth for tomorrow.

I hope you will always see what I see: the unlimited potential of Red River Métis success reflected across our Prairie Homeland.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, BELIEVE IN MÉTIS!

Meeqwetch,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Chartrand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.







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