

## President's Message

March 26, 2013

This past week I participated in two major events that will have immediate and positive impacts on our Metis business community and on the current and future livelihoods of Metis employees and students.

As MMF President, and as MNC Minister responsible for economic development, I lead our national initiatives. One such initiative is our Metis Nation – Industry Roundtable. This roundtable focused on skills, partnership and economic growth. It brought together Metis leaders and captains of industry as well as Metis, government and other technical experts.

The topics covered the steps needed to increase Metis procurement opportunities, connect training to employment, and facilitate Metis business owners' access to financial capital. Leading industry players that participated included the Ledcor Group, Enbridge and others who represented the construction, oil and gas, and mining industries to name just a few.

It was clear from many presenters that there is a shortage of skilled employees now and well into the future. Investment in Metis training and employment initiatives as well as developing Metis businesses is critical. Industry is calling for partnerships with the Metis Governments to assure mutual benefits not just for the Metis but also for all Canadians.

The MMF continues to implement our Economic Development Strategy. It is through our strategy that our Metis Economic Development Fund, our Metis Economic Development Organization and its growing number of subsidiaries, as well as the LRI and LRCC are aligned. Aligning the good work and experience of our institutions and programs is essential to success.

Through our companies we see a time when we will be able to fund, with our own money, projects, programs and services that are not paid for by other governments. Similar to our Elders Firewood Project we are planning a number of future initiatives such as eyeglasses for our Elders. But at no time will we accept Government excuses for not fulfilling obligations to our people.

Ironically, mid-way through our Roundtable, the Federal Government released its budget. We are disappointed that the Metis were not mentioned even once. The Metis are hardworking taxpayers. We are proud to be

able to contribute to our country's economy, services, and infrastructure. Unfortunately, we do not receive the benefits we pay for.

We trust government to manage our tax dollars and ensure we have the resources to grow our economies, find jobs and pay taxes. I strongly believe this budget does nothing to develop our partnership with Canadians and provide the tools necessary for Canada and the Manitoba Metis Community to work together to address economic and social needs for the benefit of the Metis and all Canadians

One issue that keeps coming to the forefront of discussion is ensuring that our Metis Citizens access the benefits promised by industry and governments. It is clear that relying on mere promises will not work. Ignoring our Metis Government and our People's direction, some companies have relied on the census definition and self-declaration to pretend they hire Metis employees and use Metis business. This is simply wrong.

The work we do in the courts, in the boardrooms, and in the Halls of Parliament and Legislatures, increases the recognition of our rights and interests, results in practical initiatives closing the social and economic gaps between the Metis and other Canadians in areas such as housing, health, education, training, and employment.

Following the Roundtable was the Metis National General Assembly. Here we continued the business of the Metis Nation including economic development. Much to my surprise, I was honoured with the Order of the Metis Nation for my work in bringing our MMF Land Claim home with victory. I thank our leadership and our people for this honour and ongoing support.

That evening we had a 30th anniversary gala in celebration of the Metis National Council. John Morrisseau gave a history of the MMF, MNC, and our Land Claim, for which I am grateful. I thank our friends the Honourable Chuck Strahl and Honourable John Duncan who attended. I also thank our performers Andrea Menard, the Metis Prairie Steppers, and the Al Desjarlais, Clint & Jim Dutiaume Trio for their showcase of our culture.

I want to thank my fellow Metis Nation leaders and our Citizens in Manitoba and from across the Metis Nation Homeland for their support during the past years. I offer my best wishes to our shut-ins and sick. I offer my prayers for all who have lost friends, family and neighbours.

Believe in Yourself - Believe in Metis

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand, LL.D