

## **President's Message**

### **August 11, 2013**

Our recent MMF Land Claim victory at the Supreme Court of Canada will be forever known as a new beginning for the Metis People. Truly, as I have said many times since that day: our time has come. Together we made necessary commitments and sacrifices and I fulfilled my promise to bring our struggle to the highest court. We emerged triumphant with the recognition of the historic injustices against our people.

The Supreme Court reaffirmed that Section 31 of the Manitoba Act, also known as the children's grant, set aside 1.4 million acres of land to be given to the Metis children. The court made clear this is a solemn constitutional obligation engaging the honour of the Crown to give the Metis children a head start over the expected influx of settlers from the east.

It is clear this solemn promise was not kept. The court declared, "so long as the constitutional grievance at issue here remains outstanding, the goals of reconciliation and constitutional harmony remain unachieved." Our lands were lost through the delay and inaction of the Canadian Government. The Metis children were swindled and their lands stolen.

For over 140 years this swindle has impacted the economy of the Metis Nation's Manitoba Metis Community. Imagine the lost opportunities for growth and wellbeing for generations of children. The land was to provide the foundation upon which to build their future. The Supreme Court's recent decision provides the basis to start anew, lay a new foundation and build an inheritance for tomorrow.

Previously the Supreme Court confirmed the Metis are Canada's negotiating partners in Confederation. And, as I have often said, our partners left the negotiating table. Now, with our court decision, the Government is being called back to the table to finish the business of Confederation and to right the wrongs and create a legacy for our children, grandchildren, and future children.

Since the beginning of our land claim struggle the Metis People have said we need to ensure tomorrow's children get the head start that was shamefully stolen from their Ancestors. You have told me that we need to ensure that any monies negotiated as part of our land claim will be put into a trust fund to protect and grow a legacy used to responsibly benefit future generations.

The Metis are a young and growing population. This underscores the importance of education and economic development and expanding opportunities when developing the legacy. Some ideas suggested include assistance for first-time homebuyers, business startups and enhancements, college and university education, as well as programs for Elders. These would give peace-of-mind to parents and grandparents alike.

With this priority the MMF has been developing an action plan for building the legacy. In the meantime I have already met with numerous government officials and I am

continuing to take the steps necessary to create a formal negotiating table to resolve the broken promises of reconciliation as called for by the Supreme Court of Canada.

To move forward wisely you need sound advice. To this end a group of top Canadian business leaders agreed to advise the MMF on future business and development in anticipated settlement of our Land Claims. Recently, and with great pride, I announced this Land Claims Strategic Investment Committee made up of the Right Honourable Paul Martin, Mr. Hartley Richardson, Mr. Sanford Riley, Mr. Harvey Sector and Dr. Eric Newell.

This committee will advise the MMF on how to best create a Legacy Fund, which, as a financial trust fund, will support the aspirations of the Metis families and children for generations to come. I know these advisors well and can confidently say they are great friends of the Metis People. They are donating their time and sharing their expertise in education and economic development. I again thank them on all our behalf.

As parents and citizens of our community, we have a both the right and responsibility to teach our Metis values to the generations of Metis children who will follow us. Our values include hard work, saving, investment, and planning for the future success of our families and our community. This is part of a great inheritance.

This is the point in our history when each of us will stand and play a critical role in leaving and protecting the collective birthright of our children, our nephews and nieces. A financial trust fund will be both a practical result and a tangible symbol of our shared Metis values and hopes for the future. Building the Legacy Fund will be a labour of love for upcoming generations of Metis children.

Meeqwetch,