

For December 2nd 2013 Publication President's Message

During my tenure as MMF President, Metis economic development has been a priority in dealing with every-day challenges faced by our citizens. With education, training, and jobs comes pride, a sense of accomplishment and financial ability. Being able to meet personal, family and household needs, along with other purchases, keeps neighbours working and businesses open. In turn, there is a tax base to build roads, run hospitals, and provide government services to help to keep families and communities strong.

The Metis are hardworking taxpayers. We contribute to the building of our province's infrastructure, for instance its roads and hospitals, and other provincial and federal programs and services. No matter where we live in the province, there are no problems with the tax collector finding each and every one of us. Unfortunately, when it comes to getting those taxes back as our fair share to address our individual and community needs, we are often forgotten or our requests ignored.

In implementing our Metis economic development strategy, the MMF takes two approaches: The first path is to work with Canada and Manitoba towards ensuring our people business people, employees and trainees have continued access to existing opportunities, programs, services and funding available through federal or provincial institutions, or through your own Metis government and institutions.

A second path is towards self-reliance and to build our own economies, programs and services with new partnerships and creative approaches with governments and industry. This is the path has shown much promise over recent years. The MMF has built a reputation for hard work, professionalism and innovation. This is consistent with our entrepreneurial spirit and our history as a people. The Metis is a nation born of a commercial culture over two and half centuries ago, and it remains very much within us today.

As part of following the second path, I have often explained that a cornerstone of our economic development strategy is our purchasing power. At every one of our regional and annual general assemblies I attend I ask everyone to recognize the purchasing power in the room. As single individuals it may not seem like much. But add up the spending of all citizens in a room, or our community of over a 140 thousand people, and then our purchasing power is without doubt very powerful.

Each dollar we spend has power to create opportunities. It has the power to close the gap between our living conditions and those expected by all Canadians. To wisely use the power of the dollar was one reason for creating the Metis Economic Development Organization (MEDO). It was to develop for-profit business partnerships to support our Metis Government and our Metis Community. When we

strategically support our Metis businesses and work with private industry, this creates change.

In part, economic development consists of creating businesses and jobs, educating and training future employees, managers, and owners of these businesses. MEDO starts businesses while it works closely with our METS education and training, the Louis Riel Institute (LRCC), and the Metis Economic Development Fund (MEDF). LRCC and MEDF also help our Metis business-owners by making much-needed loans and investments.

In continuing to follow the second path, this week I, along with senior MMF staff, will be in Ottawa to meet with a number of Canada Members of Parliament, as well as government officials at the Minister, Deputy Minister, and Assistant Deputy Minister Levels. It is to strengthen our existing relationships, build new ones, and discuss our economic development strategy and priorities, and identify creative and innovative ways to meet mutual objectives, for the benefit of our people.

Among the topics we will discuss is to continue the existing programs, services, and funding as well as sharing new ways of facilitating our Metis community and industry partnerships. This goal is to increase investment, training, and employment success. Private and public partnerships, including procurement opportunities, are critical to move forward in Metis economic development.

The MMF will continue to search for innovative ways to support the success of our Metis employees and businesses in the both the new economy as well as to ensure we protect and enhance our existing traditional economies in resources, such as fisheries, trapping, forestry, and mining, upon which our communities rely. By necessity this is a multi-pronged approach requiring the coordination of the MMF, other governments and industry.

Although this week's meetings are with Federal government representatives, the MMF will continue to strengthen the relationships we already have built with the Manitoba government ministers and departments, as well as private industry. It is only by working together that we can meet our mutual objectives to strengthen our economies and to ensure our people and communities are healthy, solid and successful.

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