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President's Message

This coming February 17th Metis Citizens along with other Manitobans will be celebrating Louis Riel Day in honour of our great Metis Leader and Founder of Manitoba. It is appropriate that this February holiday was named by Manitoba schoolchildren who understood and acknowledged Louis Riel's critical role in 1870. He still plays an important part in their education and in their lives.

This relatively new Manitoba holiday complements the Metis November 16th gravesite ceremony that has taken place every year since his death. Keeping his memory alive has been a pilgrimage made by the Metis since 1885. It is an annual commemoration of his death, a celebration of his life and recognition of his deeds. Louis Riel remains a focal point in our Metis history and symbol of our Metis Nationhood.

If he were here today, Louis Riel, as he was in 1870 when the Manitoba Act was passed, would be considered a youth. As the protector of minority rights he is clearly a role model for other youth and indeed us adults. It is remarkable all that he accomplished, the lives he touched, and future he helped create. I am convinced that Manitoba and indeed Western Canada would not be here today if it were not for his action.

Our Metis Louis Riel left us many quotes to reflect upon that are still very relevant today. One favourite of mine is when he told our Ancestors "We must cherish our inheritance. We must preserve our nationality for the youth of our future. The story should be written down to pass on."

Fast-forward to the year 2014 and "youth of our future" in Louis Riel's quote are our children living today. And, yes, we are protecting our nationhood and we are writing down our history for them and for future generations. For instance, the Louis Riel Institute, known as LRI, is working with other MMF departments and institutions to ensure our Metis history will be accurately and fairly portrayed in the Manitoba schools curriculum.

In another example in preserving our nationhood and history, we have created a partnership and are developing detailed development proposals for a Metis National Heritage Centre to be built at the Upper Fort Garry site in Winnipeg near where the Assiniboine and Red Rivers meet. This was the seat of the Metis-led provisional government and where Louis Riel introduced Canada's first-ever Bill of Rights.

It has been said that our youth are our future. They are not only our future – they are the dreamers and architects of that future. It is important that we provide them with the skills, experience, and tools needed to help them build the future as they

envision it. The MMF takes a lead role in providing these resources and supporting the youth and their families in education, training, and employment.

Our Metis Training and Employment (MET) department is one of Canada's leaders in developing education, training and employment partnerships. I suggest that prospective Metis students contact your Regional Office for more information on the opportunities available. As well, to help our students the MMF, through the LRI, has the Louis Riel Endowment Fund that is disbursed through the major universities and colleges. Please contact the LRI for more information.

The MMF is currently putting together the Metis Youth Entrepreneur Symposium planned to take place late March in Winnipeg. If you are a young adult with business ideas, or are interested in starting your own business, then this conference is for you. As part of the MET and economic development conference, participants will get a business-start-up kit. Please check out our MMF website over the coming weeks, indeed days, for more information on this symposium and other youth initiatives.

Have a great holiday on Louis Riel Day. I hope that all parents and grandparents, children and grandchildren can spend the special day together.

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