

President's Message

January 12, 2015

Happy New Year! I hope you were all able to bring in 2015 in a special way and said goodbye to the old while saying hi to the new. I also hope that you had the opportunity to get together with your families, friends, and neighbours to celebrate good cheer in your homes, or in restaurants, halls and ballrooms. As we do each year, we took the time to reflect on past events, and remembered those who had passed on, and offered our best wishes to those who could not be with us because they were away from home.

Many Metis people still celebrate some of the old Metis New Year's Eve traditions of welcoming the New Year into their home by ringing a bell at the front door while previously tapping a muffled bell at the rear door to say goodbye to the Year Past. Other old traditions, not used today, included shooting into the sky with rifles. Today, those of us who look forward to bringing in the year with a crack and a bang use fireworks instead.

Over this past year we accomplished much and had lots to celebrate. For instance, we have taken great strides in Manitoba Hydro's recognition of our Metis Community, our traditional territory, and our resource rights. There is still a long way to go. We also got much done in the fields of health, education and training, justice, and others, and we will continue negotiate, develop, and deliver programs and services to contribute to the present and future success of our Metis families.

We have also made strong gains in the areas of economic development and business creation. In one of our many successful approaches, the MMF further developed our community-owned for-benefit *MEDOCare* Pharmacy model that was designed to help raise funds to pay for programs and services and other initiatives not funded by federal or provincial governments. We must all remember that *MEDOCare* is your pharmacy. Its benefits stay in our Community and we can do what we want with our own money. This is independence and self-reliance.

We have made, and will continue to make, successful partnerships with industry proponents, and with First Nations and other governments. This is for all our benefit. Taking the *MEDOCare* Pharmacy to another level with others is one partnership approach. I thank all our partners for their hard work and foresight. The MMF will continue to identify other partnerships and funding sources, and develop options to ensure investments are made for the growth and health of our community.

This past year we got the Daniel's decision from the Federal Court of Appeal. The MMF had been an intervenor at its hearing and we argued that Canada has the legal responsibility for the Metis. We can no longer be a political hot potato. We were pleased that our arguments were prominent in the Court's decision. The submission we put forward carried the day. While this has now been appealed to the Supreme Court, we are optimistic the final ruling, possibly sometime this year, will be in our favour with Metis finally recognized under section 91(24) of the Constitution.

In 2014 the MMF had both a successful election and fruitful Annual General Assembly. Both are critical components of our Metis democracy. I thank all our candidates who ran for election and congratulate those who were successfully elected. I am now well into my sixth term as MMF President. I again thank the Metis People for your support and my renewed mandate. I am honoured by your belief in me. As we continue to work in this new term, we will keep our sleeves rolled up and fix new problems as they come up and address the existing issues. As the Metis People we have stood by us side-by-side during our times of struggle and together we celebrated our victories. We will continue in the New Year.

I also thank all our Metis Citizens who participated in the AGA and unanimously passed our constitutional amendment resolution about residency that will now allow our Manitoba Metis Community members and their families, our cousins, brothers, sisters, grandchildren, and parents, no matter where they live, to get recognition that they are Metis Citizens. Now they will be able to become a part of the MMF. Passing the

resolution is a historic decision by the AGA delegates and we expect the necessary policies to be put in place in the coming months to bring our Citizens home.

I offer my prayers and condolences for all who have lost family and friends during this past year. Please pray for the good health of those who are sick or shut-in. Give each other a hug. Best wishes to all. And again Happy New Year!

Believe in yourself – Believe in Metis!

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