

President's Message

August 13, 2015

Democracy is the foundation upon which the Métis Nation is built. From the early beginnings and the buffalo hunts, Métis people have organized themselves and democratically elected leaders. When Métis chose a leader, that leader was commissioned by them to carry out the agreed upon laws set forth by the Métis community.

Louis Riel, our great Métis leader and founding Father of Manitoba, adhered to the principles of democracy. Duly elected as head of the Provisional Government, he represented the Métis people. At their direction he presented the "List of Rights" that set the framework for the Manitoba Act of 1870 founding the province of Manitoba.

Together, through democratic process, Métis people have been able to express their will and effect great change over the centuries – from the early hunts to the organization of the Métis Nation and the leadership of the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Métis people are well acquainted with the power that is found in a unified and collective voice expressed through a democratic vote.

On Sunday, August 2 Prime Minister Harper met with the Governor General of Canada and requested Parliament be dissolved. This has triggered an eleven week election campaign that will see Canadians head to the polls on October 19. Party leaders and their candidates are on the campaign trail seeking the support and vote of Canadians. This is a great opportunity for the Manitoba Métis community – Canada's Founding Partner in Confederation – to exercise our democratic right and make our voice heard on Parliament Hill. In Manitoba, the Métis voice is over 52,000 strong. This can be a loud voice! There is not a politician alive that would not want this kind of support.

During this federal election campaign I have directed my communications team to compile and assemble information regarding the positions the various federal parties are taking regarding important Métis issues. We are putting to them questions that we need answers for regarding our land claim, economic development, education and the ASETS agreement, and healthcare to name just a few. We will be publicly posting these questions and the responses we receive on the MMF website.

In fact, you will be able to find a host of important information about this year's federal election online at www.mmf.mb.ca/elections.php. I encourage you to spend some time here checking out what the various parties and candidates are saying about the important matters facing the Métis community.

To vote in the federal election, you must prove your identity and address. I am happy to announce that we have worked with Elections Canada to ensure our Métis people are able to use their Métis card as one of the two required pieces of ID you must present to verify your identity. For all the information you need to register and vote in this federal election, as required by the Government of Canada, you can visit www.elections.ca.

Everything your democratically elected Métis government, as represented by the Manitoba Metis Federation, has worked hard and listened to your voice and followed your direction. We are now asking you to make your voice heard again. It is vitally important for each and every Métis citizen to participate in this federal election. Make your voice heard loud and clear on Parliament Hill. Engage your local candidate. Let them know what is important to our Métis community.

Typically those who are 40 years old or older vote regularly in elections. This is good! Unfortunately our younger citizens are not voting. What we, as your democratically elected government, have worked for is largely for the posterity of our people and it has the greatest impact on our youth. Our young Métis citizens need to step up and become a vital part of this democratic process. Come out and be heard! Engage your candidates and make it known that you are part of a large Métis community. Let them know you will only give your support to those candidates who acknowledge and commit to working with us in meeting that challenges we face.

In closing, I offer my hopes for our Métis people who are sick or shut in. I also offer my prayers for those who have departed and my condolences to their families, friends and neighbours. My best wishes to all.

Meeqwetch,