

President's Message

December 17, 2015

The Season for Peace, Joy and Goodwill to all people is upon us. All around us we hear and join in with familiar Christmas Carols and long standing Holiday Traditions. It is, as the song goes, the most wonderful time of the year!

For many, it is a time of frantic shopping, gift-wrapping and gift-giving, and office parties. Of course these are important, but often in the rush other more important things are forgotten. The Holidays are also occasions to reflect on our experiences over the past year, to spend time with family and friends, and to help others who are in need both here at home and abroad.

Recently, as we reflected upon the Christmas Season, one of my staff shared with me a story from his home community. During one Christmas morning, a little boy came to his house to visit. When the young boy was asked what Santa had brought him for Christmas, he burst into tears and said "Santa forgot to come to my house." The young boy came from a single parent home and his Dad could not afford to give him a gift at Christmas. My staff person went into his house and spoke to his kids. They decided to give the young boy one of their gifts. The toy was wrapped and the little boy was told that Santa had left a present for him under their tree by mistake.

This story breaks my heart. No child should have to face Christmas morning disappointed that Santa forgot them. No parent or grandparent should have to look at their children and tell them that there is no magic, no gift and no Santa this year.

The Métis have a time honoured and rich tradition of sharing. The Métis welcomed many of the immigrants who came from outside Canada and assisted them in their settlement here in Manitoba. Transporting the Mennonites by Red River Cart from their boats to their first homes is but one example. Our welcome of the Icelanders to the shores of Lake Winnipeg in the mid to late 1800s is also well known. This tradition is upheld even now by our Métis Citizens. For example, each year, Glorian and our family work with the Metis Child and Family Services to provide a family in care with all the fixings for a magical and fun filled Christmas.

I know what it is like to have very little. Growing up, we were very poor. My Mom worked hard every year to make sure each one of her children had a gift for Christmas morning. She knew the importance of making her children feel loved and appreciated. Her care and concern also extended to everyone who came to her home. Every Christmas she made sure she had enough food to feed her family and any other person who came to our home during the Holidays.

Out of the depths of my Mother's love for her children and her community, she gave. Her kindness and compassion left a mark on me. Her efforts, support and instruction has helped me become who I am today. Without my Mom's guidance, I would be a lesser man. Her lessons of generosity and love for everyone has taught me to do whatever I can for others as well. She has guided me, and still guides me today, as your President.

In the Spirit of this Season I invite you to join me and my family in making this Christmas extra special for families in need. The President's Office will be collecting donations to help provide a happy Christmas to Metis Child and Family Services children. If you would like to help make this Christmas extra special for a

child in need, call Amanda in the President's Office at (204) 586-8474. We can connect you with a family that you can bless this year. If you aren't able to support a whole family, don't worry! You can still help make the Holidays merry for a family. Some of our staff and friends provide money towards a Christmas hamper. We can take whatever donation you give and use it to provide a jolly Christmas dinner and gifts for the Children.

Remember, there are many other ways you can give this year. For some people in our community, Christmas can be a difficult time for all kinds of reasons. Maybe you have neighbours far from home and family. A visit and a greeting can help push away the darkness of feeling alone during the Holidays. Maybe your neighbour is an Elder. Why not help them out by shoveling their walkway, dropping off some Christmas goodies or just visiting for some tea and conversation? We all have the ability to make this Christmas a time of Peace, Joy and Goodwill.

And, we must never forget the Métis who heard the call of service from their country and humanity. They made personal sacrifices, and for many the ultimate sacrifice, during World Wars I and II, Korea, Afghanistan, other conflicts, and our peacekeeping missions. We thank our veterans for standing strong – for keeping peace, defending democracy, and protecting families, here and overseas.

The magic and meaning of Christmas is, of course, in the celebration of Jesus. It is also about love, peace, and helping others. I do hope that you are able to spend this special time with your family, friends and neighbours. My wish is that we are able to bring the gift of joy, now and into the future, to all those who have touched our lives over this past year.

I offer my best wishes for those who are sick or shut-in. May you be blessed with healing, health, and peace. I pray and share my heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies for all our neighbours, friends, and families who have lost loved ones. On behalf our MMF Board of Directors, staff, and citizens, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and Wonderful Holiday Season.