

President's Message

January 28, 2016

La Loche is a largely Métis village in northern Saskatchewan. January 22, 2016 began in many respects like any other day in this community – the sun rose, children headed to school, parents and caregivers began their day's work. However, by midafternoon it was clear this day would go down in infamy and remembered not for any good or virtuous reason.

I was shocked and horrified when I learned of the senseless violence that took place in that small community last Friday. My heart broke for those who lost loved ones and I pray daily for those who were injured. All across the Métis Homeland there are Métis families and friends that have been impacted by this tragedy.

What is happening in our society when one of our youth believe the only way to deal with difficulty is through violence and aggression? How do we end this? During the weeks and months to come, this is a tough question we will need to consider in planning for our families' futures.

I have stated time and again that we must invest in our families. We must celebrate our strengths and work to make our families, our villages and our Nation stronger. We must protect our most valuable – our Elders who are the knowledge holders and our Children who carry our legacy. They are the bridge between our past and our future. Please take time for your family. Children, please visit and listen carefully to your parents and grandparents. And we adults must do the same. We have much to teach each other. We have much to learn from each other.

Share your good fortune with others. Invite your friends and neighbours for dinner. Help them with their needs. If they need help clearing snow, cutting wood or getting food – do it! The Métis are known as a "Society of Generous Ones". We have always shared with those who need help. We have always stood shoulder to shoulder with those oppressed. Let's make sure we continue to do so.

In a couple of weeks we will be celebrating Louis Riel Day. He and his government envisioned a province that defended, supported and embraced all cultures. In 1869 his provisional government created a List of Rights that became the framework of the Manitoba Act (1870) – Canada's Treaty with the Métis. Louis Riel Day is celebrated the third Monday of every February. This year Louis Riel Day will fall on February 15. I encourage you to mark this day on your calendar and set it aside to celebrate with your family and friends.

Soon I will be joining with the MMF Board of Directors as well as department directors for a period of strategic planning. This is an important step in our governance permitting us the opportunity to reflect on progress, develop solid plans to enhance programs and services, and to respond to challenges we face as a government and nation. Teamwork is essential. We must develop strategies, both short and long term, toward protecting the rights and meeting the needs and aspirations of our Métis Citizens. There is much work to be done.

In closing, I offer my best wishes for those who are sick or shut-in. May they 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. In particular, I remember once more our Métis brothers and sisters in La Loche.

Meeqwetch,