

President's Message

March 10, 2016

Your Métis Government Ministers and I met this past weekend in Winnipeg to discuss important matters affecting our Métis Citizens. During our meeting we discussed a variety of issues from Child and Family Services to land claims to strategic building initiatives. We also received updates on some key bread and butter issues that are affecting our Métis Citizens in Manitoba.

For example, infrastructure projects being discussed by various levels of government represent a once in a lifetime opportunity. Infrastructure does not only include roads and bridges, it also includes bricks and mortar such as sustainable housing initiatives and the economic development opportunities that go along with them. It is important our Métis businesses have set asides and procurement criteria specific to Métis to ensure our people are able to benefit from these planned investments in infrastructure. My Cabinet and I will be working very hard to make sure this happens.

Another important update we had was around the status of the MMF land claim. After recent meetings with officials from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), it is clear the new Liberal government is committed to fulfilling its promise of nation-to-nation relationships. We expect a Memorandum of Understanding to be forthcoming from INAC regarding a framework for our comprehensive claim. This is going to be an exciting and busy time for the MMF. We will be hiring people to help negotiate and shepherd this process forward. I encourage you again to keep an eye on our website for exciting opportunities coming up with your Métis Government. You could be involved in helping shape the success of our families and our children for generations to come!

Recently I had the honour of attending the First Ministers Meeting with the Prime Minister in Vancouver. For me, it was with great pride to hear the Prime Minister declare and reaffirm that the Métis Nation is represented by the MMF and it is the government of the Citizens of Manitoba's Métis Community. The Prime Minister also stated entities such as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) and Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) are not representatives for a government-to-government or nation-to-nation relationship with Canada.

During our meeting with the Prime Minister we had the chance to ensure our opinions regarding climate change and economic development were heard. Climate change is affecting our traditional way of life. It also affects our ability to effect positive economic development opportunities for our Métis Citizens. Effective climate change strategy will take into consideration the effects of changes happening globally and the need to maintain a sustainable approach to economic development. On one hand we must protect our land and environment. On the other our youth need jobs and our Métis businesses need opportunities. It is imperative these two priorities of conservation and economic development go hand in hand.

We are now preparing for the upcoming Métis Rights conference taking place in Vancouver on March 30 and 31. Your Métis Government will be participating in this important conference to ensure the MMF and issues important to the Métis of Manitoba are at the forefront.

April 19th is quickly coming. Just as the Métis helped make a difference in the federal election and shape federal policy regarding a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with Canada, the Métis will make a difference in this provincial election. We have drafted a number of questions for the provincial parties to

answer and indicate their commitment to the Métis Citizens of Manitoba. We have asked for their responses to be sent to my office by March 18th. We will be sharing their answers on our website, Facebook and Twitter. As your President I will hold whoever wins this provincial election to their promises to us.

This provincial election has a number of Métis Citizens who hold official Métis Citizenship cards running for office. For example, in Selkirk we have Alan Lagimodiere and Stefan Jones. In Brandon there is Jordan Fleury. In Winnipeg there is Noel Bernier. In the Dawson Trail riding there is Bob Lagassé. Some other candidates have indicated they are Métis but they have yet to apply for their Citizenship cards. We hope they will do so very soon so we can recognize and proudly support them too. It is good to see our Métis Citizens taking a stand in provincial politics. I invite you to show your support to our people striving to make a difference in their community and province.

I want to share exciting news from St. Laurent. This historic Métis village is competing against nine other towns across Canada to be the 2016 Kraft Hockeyville Champions. St. Laurent is the only Manitoba community in the running. With your help, we can help St. Laurent score an NHL© pre-season game and over \$100,000 in arena upgrades. As Manitobans, let's join together and give St. Laurent the extra push needed to secure this win. You can vote for St. Laurent online on March 13 and 14 at www.khv2016.ca. You can vote as often as you want. I want to congratulate the St. Laurent committee who helped get their arena this far in the running. Go St. Laurent Go! Go Manitoba Go!

Finally, I am sure we are all beginning to feel the warmer rays of sunshine on our faces. Some of us have heard the return of the geese. Soon the ducks will be back and muskrat trapping will commence. This is a great time for our Métis people! Since our birth we have enjoyed the bounty of our land. As a Nation, Métis look forward to the spring hunt. It plays a significant role in our families and villages. Once upon a time we were treated like criminals and charged for simply trying to feed our families. Today we enjoy the freedom of responsible harvesting.

In closing, I offer my best wishes for those who are sick or shut-in. May they be blessed with healing, health, and peace. Be safe and look out for one another as you exercise your right to harvest and feed your families. I pray and share my heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies for all our neighbours, friends, and families who have lost loved ones.

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