

President's Message

March 24, 2016

This past week your Métis Government Cabinet and Senior Directors met to take pause, review our progress as a government and make strategic plans going forward. Our exercise reminded me of Sun Tzu, a Chinese general, military strategist and philosopher of ancient China. In his book *The Art of War* he wrote, "To not prepare is the greatest of crimes; to be prepared beforehand for any contingency is the greatest of virtues." Sun Tzu was speaking specifically about warfare, but his principle can be applied to any situation that requires sound thinking, accountable leadership and the ability to navigate change.

As we met together, I sensed again the important responsibility we have as your elected leaders. These are exciting times for the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Métis Nation. This year, I believe, will see big changes as we move our comprehensive claim with Canada forward. We also anticipate further advancement and strengthening in our governance of other areas such as the duty to consult, procurement, education and training.

Speaking of change, our province is heading for an election on April 19th that may bring a change in government. To help you, our Métis Citizens, we have put forward 14 important questions for the three major provincial political parties to answer. You can read these questions and the response from each party on our website at www.mmf.mb.ca/elections_qa.php. At the time of the printing of this newsletter, we have received only responses from the PC party. These questions are an opportunity for those seeking your support to express in writing their commitments to you as a Métis Citizen in the province of Manitoba.

Regardless of which party ultimately forms government, I hope we see a genuine government-to-government relationship between the MMF and the province of Manitoba that is based on respect, integrity and transparency. The recent renewal in our relationship with the federal government has been stimulating and refreshing. I sincerely hope the province is able to follow suit.

This week I will be in Ottawa for the federal budget. We have high expectations for this budget. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his government has committed \$25 million to the Métis Nation's Métis Economic Development Strategy; \$50 million to renew and expand the all-important training and employment program known as ASETS; and to expand the Métis Nation's endowments that provide scholarships and bursaries for post-secondary education. Our people are full taxpayers and we want to see a portion of this federal and provincial tax revenue generated by our Métis Citizens and businesses dedicated to our government so we can continue to provide essential services to our people and improve their standard of living.

Next week, your Métis Government will be meeting in Vancouver with the Métis National Council and other representative Métis Governments to strategize on Métis Policy. Among the topics of discussion will be Métis Nation Rights Recognition, the MMF land claim, ASETS, Métis Economic Development Strategy and matters of import for the Métis Nation and our Métis Citizens.

One thing I want to briefly refer to again is our Land Claim with Canada. Recently, your Métis Government, the MMF, met with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) officials to discuss the MMF Governance Structure and how the MMF serves its Métis Citizens. I expect we will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Canada very soon. This will then lead to a framework agreement

as early as this Fall. Our Manitoba Métis Community will then embark on the journey to finally receiving resolution and recompense for being robbed of our collective inheritance so very long ago. How this will look is still not fully developed, but as I said in many times over the years, we will have a trust set up to provide for and assist our Métis Youth, and others, as we establish our place in the world.

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. Meeqwetch.