

## **President's Message**

*April 7, 2016*

This past week your government leaders and I participated in the Métis National Policy Conference held in Vancouver. As your President, I was there to make sure matters that are important to Manitoba Métis Citizens were at the forefront.

During the Conference, delegates held excellent discussion around such important topics as understanding the boundaries of the Métis Nation – these are not just geo-political boundaries imposed upon us by Ottawa or any other government jurisdiction. The Métis Nation is rather defined by greater things such as our ancestral and historical connections through our families, our historical economic routes of trade and providing for our families. Our ancestors, though born in the Red River Valley spread out from there into the West and parts of Ontario to escape the oppression of the new Canadian government and in search of opportunity to thrive.

Discussions were also held around the importance of having a verifiable process for Métis Citizenship. The Manitoba Metis Federation has a process that is able to verify and confirm a person's ancestral and legitimate connection to the birth of the Métis Nation. Through our standards, which also includes the Powley Test – a process recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada – we are able to confidently affirm Citizenship in the Métis Nation. We are now working to develop a centre of excellence in genealogical research to assist our Citizens in affirming their identity as Métis. This centre will be available to any person to research and affirm their Métis Citizenship within the Métis Nation.

Another item we discussed was the land claim of Manitoba's Métis Community. In 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the Manitoba Metis Federation as the Métis Government and negotiator of the claim. I am happy to tell you that very soon I will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Canada that will begin the work of developing the framework for negotiations. I have said it before and I must say it again, this is an exciting time for the Métis Citizens of Manitoba. Very soon we will begin the honourable and long overdue hard work of reconciling the wrongs made against the Métis – Canada's Negotiating Partner in Confederation and the Founders of Manitoba.

The Métis have always played a significant role in the country of Canada. Recently, we helped make a difference during the federal election. Now we have another opportunity to make a difference in the upcoming provincial election. To help our Métis Citizens, we have developed a list of important questions and put them to the four major political parties in Manitoba. To date we have heard back from both the PCs and the NDP. We hope to hear from the Liberals and the Manitoba Party soon. You can read the responses to these questions on our website at [www.mmf.mb.ca/elections\\_qa.php](http://www.mmf.mb.ca/elections_qa.php). I encourage you to review their responses. I also encourage each and every one of you who are eligible to vote to do so. It is our right and responsibility to cast our ballot and to let our voice be heard.

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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