

President's Message

June 16, 2016

Indigenous lives matter. We, as Indigenous People, have much to offer Canada. We also have much to expect from Canada and from ourselves. It has been refreshing to see the Liberal government follow words with action when it comes to addressing longstanding attitudes and misconceptions regarding Canada's Indigenous People.

In its first term, the Liberals under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has appointed Indigenous Members of Parliament to critical portfolios that oversee issues of importance to Canada's Indigenous People. The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould is Canada's first Indigenous Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. The Honourable Hunter Tootoo was also the first Indigenous Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. While Mr. Tootoo is no longer responsible for this portfolio, it is important to recognize the Government's new approach to governing Indigenous issues.

The presence of Indigenous People in the federal cabinet has been an encouragement for all people across Canada. Their appointments have demonstrated the Prime Minister's acknowledgement that often it is the Indigenous people who are best qualified to manage the resources they have relied on since time immemorial. I want to encourage our new Prime Minister to continue his practice of appointing Canada's Indigenous People to those portfolios that directly impact them.

As I said in my last message, these are exciting times for the Métis Nation. From the Supreme Court of Canada's recent ruling on the Daniels case that will help set the negotiations in areas such as education, health care and economic opportunities to the recent MOU we signed with Canada on the outstanding comprehensive land claim of the Métis Nation's Manitoba Métis Community. These are important and critical moments in our collective history as Métis Citizens.

Regarding the MOU we signed with Canada, I will be visiting each region to answer questions and to help explain the significance and impact of this document as well as what our next steps will be. My staff are preparing the agenda for these meetings and coordinating with the Regions to set these up. These community consultations will begin in the next few weeks. Please be sure to keep an eye on our website and to be in touch with your Regional Office regarding this important matter.

This week we are hosting a Bicentennial Commemoration of the Battle of Seven Oaks, Métis leader Cuthbert Grant Jr. and the Métis Nation Flag. Cuthbert Grant is the celebrated Métis leader instrumental in the early development of the Métis Nation. In 1816 he guided his people through turbulent times and afterwards, in 1824, established the new community of Grant Town, known today as St. François Xavier.

The Commemoration activities begin at 9 am on Sunday, June 19th with Mass and a Memorial service at St. Francois Xavier Parish located at 1053 Hwy 26, St. François Xavier. From there we will travel to Grant's Old Mill Museum at 2777 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg for a picnic lunch at 11 am and conclude with the unveiling of the renewed Battle of Seven Oaks National Historic Site located at the intersection of Main Street and Rupert's Land Boulevard in Winnipeg at 1:30 pm.

As part of the Commemoration activities, the Manitoba Metis Federation is partnering with Library and Archives Canada to display the 1818 independent report on the Battle of Seven Oaks written by Lt. Col. William B. Coltman. This report was commissioned by Governor-General Sherbrooke to determine what really happened at the Battle of Seven Oaks. Among the conclusions, the report found the Métis were

not the aggressors in the Battle and responded within the reasonable boundaries of self-defense. The report will be on display from June 16 – June 23rd in the Protecting Rights gallery at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. I encourage you, if you are in Winnipeg, to visit the Museum and view this report written on an event that helped solidify the Métis Nation as our forefathers sought to protect our rights and the ability to trade freely so we could care for our families.

Also this week, Manitoba will be hosting the Métis National Council General Assembly taking place from June 16 – June 18th at the Fort Garry Hotel. This is important gathering of Métis from all across the Métis Homeland. My cabinet and I will be representing the interests and needs of the Manitoba Métis Citizens.

Finally, we will also be commemorating the Battle of Seven Oaks and the Emergence of the Métis Nation at a public symposium taking place 2 pm on Saturday, June 18th at the Hotel Fort Garry. Topics that will be presented include Métis Governance, Mothers of the Métis Nation, Historical Memory and Métis narratives of the Battle of Seven Oaks, and the long journey of the Métis Nation in its struggle for recognition and rights. We will be videotaping these presentations and making them available on our social media channels – Facebook and YouTube.

As I have often said lately, this is an exciting time for the Métis Nation and an exciting and important time to be a Métis Citizen. If you have not renewed your Métis Citizenship card or have yet to take this first step to official recognition of the Métis ancestry, I encourage you to do so. Visit our website at www.mmf.mb.ca for important information on Métis Citizenship.

In closing, I offer my thoughts and prayers to those who are shut-in, are sick or caused to grieve. We are a family – a Nation of one people and a common ancestry. I encourage you to visit one another and support each other in our journey. Together we are strong. Together we can do anything we put our hearts and minds to. Enjoy these beautiful summer days. I wish you health, good luck and safety in your many activities and family gatherings.

Meeqwetch,