

## President's Message

December 22, 2016

2016 has been an historic year for Manitoba's Métis. With the election of a new federal government in late 2015, the winds of change are beginning to blow and new opportunities are coming our way.

Immediately after forming government, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau directed his Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada – Dr. Carolyn Bennett – to engage the MMF in reconciliation discussions to settle our long standing constitutional grievance. Since my first talks with Minister Bennett, I have led Manitoba's Métis to signing an historic framework agreement that will lead to a modern-day treaty for the beneficiaries of the constitutional promise made in the *Manitoba Act, 1870*.

In March, Manitoba recognized Louis Riel as the first leader of the Province of Manitoba. This is a recognition long overdue. Under Riel's provisional government, the province of Manitoba was created and joined Confederation with Canada.

Also in March, the MMF signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the 2017 Canada Summer Games to be an official Indigenous Co-Host. The MMF will be providing guidance for Métis cultural inclusiveness throughout the Games which are being held in Winnipeg – the birthplace of the Métis Nation and the Heart of the Métis Nation Homeland.

April past, I also had the privilege to be at the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) when it released its ruling on the *Daniels v. Canada* case and stated the Métis are recognized as "Indians" under Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. As a result of this ruling, the federal government is now responsible for negotiating with the Métis as a Nation.

In June, we commemorated the Bicentennial Anniversary of the Battle of Seven Oaks or, as the Métis remember it, *la Victoire de la Grenouillère*. This was a critical event in the emergence of the Métis Nation during which we asserted ourselves as an independent and culturally distinct people. It marks a historic time when we emerged victorious after being forced to fight for our right to free trade, and our right to exist.

Then in July, Thomas Isaac, Canada's Ministerial Special Representative on Métis Section 35 Rights and the Manitoba Metis Federation Decision, reaffirmed the Manitoba Metis Federation as the representative government of the Métis Citizens in Manitoba and 'can forthrightly represent Métis interests in respect of any discussions and negotiations.'<sup>1</sup> In his report, he also recommended the MMF and Canada move on implementing the judicial declaration granted to

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<sup>1</sup> (Thomas Isaac, *A Matter of National and Constitutional Import: Report of the Minister's Special Representative on Reconciliation with Métis: Section 35 Métis Rights and the Manitoba Metis Federation Decision*, July 21, 2016, p. 38)

the MMF. This is something, with the signing of the Framework Agreement with Canada on November 15<sup>th</sup> of this past year, we are already well on our way.

In September, the Manitoba Metis Federation's (MMF) construction arm, Metis N4 Construction, and a leading Chinese housing developer, Beijing Yingdong Industrial Ltd, signed a joint venture agreement to bring new innovative green technology to Canada to meet the housing needs of Indigenous and northern communities. This agreement has led to the creation of INDECO – an innovative green housing construction company.

In November past, we signed our Framework Agreement with Canada on our land claim. This agreement will start the formal negotiations leading to the reconciliation of our constitutional grievance and the renewal of the solemn promise.

This month, I took part in the development of the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*. During a full and tense day of discussions and negotiations on Climate Change, we effected changes to this agreement to ensure Métis are not only mentioned but included and participants in developing a climate change solution for not only our province but our country. This plan will be reflective of our values and needs as Métis Citizens.

Again, this month, I had the honour to represent the Métis Nation at the National Indigenous Leaders meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau at Parliament in Ottawa. Many doors are being opened for us, but we still face systematic and structural discrimination in our relationship with the federal government. We need a government wide distinctions based approach and a Métis Nation policy that addresses and meets our needs. I am confident, however, that this government under Prime Minister Trudeau is fully committed to fulfilling their promises and to creating a strong, sincere nation-to-nation relationship with the Métis Nation.

Locally, many of our departments and Métis Citizens have enjoyed success this past year. In April, Kayleen McKay ran over 445 kilometres from Duck Bay to Alexander Docks in Winnipeg to draw attention to MMIW and to help raise money for Drag the Red. In September, we celebrated new affordable Métis housing in Brandon with a ribbon cutting. November saw a number of our Métis Youth recognized at the annual Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Awards with Julie Desrochers, Kyle Monkman, Emma Gillespie and Alex Hosfield each receiving an award. In December, the Province of Manitoba announced the Metis Employment and Training department will be receiving the 2016 Minister's Workforce Development Excellence Award. These are just a small sampling of the many great things that have taken place over the last year. To list them all, I would not be able to fit them into this issue of Le Metis.

Finally, as you join with family and friends this Holiday Season to reminisce and make new memories, may your families and relationships be strengthened. May the generosity you share with one another warm your hearts and your homes. For those who are shut-in or are having difficult times due to failing health, sickness or loss, I offer my thoughts and prayers. I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year.

Meeqwetch,