

President's Message

April 5, 2017

This week I will be accompanying the Prime Minister as a member of the Canadian Delegation to Commemorate the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Many Métis have been taught from an early age of Jesus saying at one time 'There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.' This battle saw many thousands of people do exactly this – lay down their lives for their fellow friends and countrymen. Not only did they die for their friends, they also died for many people they did not know and would never meet. A number of these valiant heroes were Métis Nation Citizens. This week I will remember and honour our brave men and women who selflessly gave their lives for the freedoms you and I enjoy.

While Canada did not recognize the Métis as a nation of people during this First World War, the Métis answered the call as Canadians to stand against tyranny and evil as it threatened the lives of our families, friends and allies. It is right to honour such sacrifice. It is important we remember it. A philosopher, George Santayana, once said 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' Friends, it is important for us to remember the horrible sacrifice of our Métis Veterans, if only to make sure we do not permit the same mistakes to take place again and throw our families, homes and country into such hellish danger as the two World Wars we have endured.

Recently I had the privilege of being welcomed to the Métis village of Saint Eustace. I gathered with a large group of my fellow Citizens at the Community Centre where we discussed how may we honour the many Métis Veterans from that area. I shared with them how the village of Kinoshota had built a wonderful memorial to honour our Métis Veterans. We also talked about the beautiful monument and stones of remembrance the Métis Nation have erected at Batoche. Your Métis Government is pleased to partner with our Citizens and Métis Villages to honour our Veterans.

Did you know that Canada has settled with all Veterans of the two World Wars, as well as those people wrongfully imprisoned by Canada here at home during the wars, but it yet has to acknowledge the sacrifice of our Métis Veterans and to settle with them? Even though Canada still does not recognize the great love and sacrifice of our Veterans, we will remember them and honour them.

In my role as the Métis Nation's Minister responsible for Métis Veterans, I am pushing ahead with acknowledging our Métis Veterans. I am pressuring the federal government to do the right thing and honour those who have sacrificed everything for our freedom. Earlier this year I met with the Honourable Kent Hehr, federal Minister of Veterans Affairs. During my meeting, I impressed upon him the need for Canada to recognize our Métis Veterans. I reminded him our Veterans were promised compensation for defending our rights and freedoms. Many said good bye to family and friends to fight a war many miles away, defending and freeing those they never met nor did they know. After the war was over, some of our Métis Veterans returned home with scars, physical and emotional, and much changed by the horrors they witnessed and endured. When they returned, they had expected Canada to honour its promise to provide for them and give

them the support they need to begin providing for their families and communities once again. Once more, Canada turned a blind eye to its ardent defenders and ignored the Métis.

Despite the fact that throughout history the Métis have repeatedly answered the call to defend Canada, our country has consistently ignored and marginalized us. While many of us have endured despite the harsh treatment of us by Canada, our Veterans should not have had to fight overseas then have to again fight upon their return home for the right to a return to our livelihoods and the ability to support our families.

I am thankful for our Métis Veterans and their sacrifice. Let us remember them and honour them in spite of how Canada continues to remember them. We will not forget. We will not break faith with them. We will remember.

Finally, I wish to send my prayers and thoughts to those of our Métis Citizens who are in mourning and grief. May you be heartened by the presence and love of family and friends. Those of you who are sick and shut-in, I also send my thoughts and prayers. Remember one another and continue to care for each other as you already do. When you are out harvesting your spring goose, I encourage you to remember our Elders. Share your bounty and blessing.

Meeqwetch,