

President's Message
July 26, 2017

Métis from across the homeland traced their path back to Batoche this year to celebrate their shared history and honour their Ancestors. As I do nearly every year, myself as well as family and friends, set up camp in the Batoche camp grounds for a culturally enriched weekend. After raising our Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) flag, we were ready for the festivities to commence. Over the weekend, I enjoyed traditional meals made by family and friends while we listened to the fiddle music and laughter in the distance. It brings me back to my roots camping in these vast prairie lands.

During the opening ceremonies, you could see the procession of each Métis government's flags carried by our Métis youth, veterans, and dignitaries. This was accompanied by the sound of the fiddle, and the singing of the Métis National Anthem. It was an honour to bring greetings again this year. Hearing from all the leaders – provincial, regional and local – about the progress we are making was empowering. It is a time in our history to be excited for what is to come.

In past years, there have been many Métis WWII veterans who were able to attend Back to Batoche Days. We have honoured them for their service to our people and our country by creating a permanent monument at the Batoche camping grounds, which was installed on July 19, 2014. This year, one WWII veteran was in attendance, in addition to the Métis veterans of other wars and peacekeeping duties, who have served their people tirelessly. It was humbling to see all the veterans standing, some very elderly, to honour a family member that was lost in the week leading up to the event.

The sense of community and belonging that one gets by attending this gathering is endless. Our people have always known how to work hard and fight hard for what we believe in, yet we also know how to enjoy ourselves and spend time together as a family. This is one of the ways in which we come back to our culture and traditions. It is important to keep this tradition alive for all the future generations to remember the sacrifices our Ancestors made. It was a true pleasure to spend the weekend with all of our extended family and friends.

On the last day at Batoche there was a flag procession from camp to the cemetery on the National Batoche site. Upon the arrival at the mass grave site of our Métis war dead, the priest who performed a mass beforehand blessed the site and reminded us all to be grateful for the sacrifices many have made who came before us so that we may be safe.

This past weekend also marked the first trip of our mobile outreach office. Staff from the home office made the trip to Batoche to assist Manitoba Métis living out of the province to become Citizens by providing information and handing out applications. I was pleased to see the interest of Métis across the homeland and from other provinces to obtain their MMF Citizenship card. Since we have erased the borders and residency in our Constitution when it comes to Citizenship, there is now a way for our people to obtain their card and truly come back home.

Now that summer is in full swing, I encourage you all to stay informed about when your regional and local meetings and cultural events are taking place. It is important for our Citizens to be well

informed and this is the best way to take part and participate in our community. I look forward to seeing you at the next regional gathering.

Finally, I send my thoughts and prayers to all those who are wounded, plagued by sickness, or shut in. There is hope and comfort to be found in our strong Métis communities and through our loved ones. Remember all the blessings we have, and cherish those around you. Take care and enjoy the beauty of the final summer months.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand.