

President's Message

November 8, 2017

Our Metis Nation Ancestors were born of the fur trade –part of a global economic trade network. We had trade routes from the Arctic down to Mexico and from the Pacific across to the Eastern United States. The 1849 Sayer Trial, one of the milestones in the creation of the Metis Nation, was the result of the Metis asserting our right to free trade and determining our own business relationships. It was at the end of the Sayer Trial that Metis Leader Louis Riel Sr. – Louis Riel's father – cried out that trade was now free.

Today, nearly 170 years later, we continue to be hardworking taxpayers and, for many, the owners of small and medium businesses. We have Metis citizens – our children, brothers, sisters, and cousins – who live and work around the world. Much like our buffalo hunting Ancestors, we are the most mobile of Canadians and will travel great distances for school and work, and for the service of our country in the Canada's government and military.

This past week, I attended the World Indigenous Business Forum in Santiago, Chile. While there I met leaders of countries and leaders of Indigenous Peoples from throughout the world. I also met with the owners and representatives of numerous businesses and cooperatives – for profit and not for profit. It was very informative. There were many discussions generating many ideas.

As I have reported here, and elsewhere, we have, as an important step onto the world stage, been developing business partnerships within Canada and in China. The Manitoba Metis have much to offer others with our democratic governance building, program and service experience delivery, business development, and trade relationships. The Metis are industrious leaders in exploring the available options and seizing success.

Our Metis towns, villages, and hamlets rely, in the part, on the traditional economies of fur trapping, forestry, and fisheries. Unfortunately due to factors outside our control, such as clothing fashions, climate change, technology advances, and other factors, our traditional economies are in decline. The Canada and Manitoba governments have shown no active economic development strategies to address these challenges. As the Free People, the Otipemisiwak, the Metis will continue to face these challenges and look for options,.

I have often said the Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba, First Nations and the Metis Nation, have the right to enter into our own agreements or treaties of cooperation. Such cooperation could build important relationships in natural resource management, share best practices, create businesses opportunities, and develop other mutually beneficial actions and supports.

I believe the Indigenous Peoples not only within our province, but also beyond our borders, need to explore ways to work together for the benefit of our Peoples. We cannot rely on others. We cannot rely on other governments however good intentioned. We must rely on ourselves. Good community development has to come from within and not imposed from the outside. We must ensure future generations remain hardworking and independent and never become dependent. As Indigenous Peoples we can work together to build our common future.

Within the past few years I have attended and made presentations at a variety of development-related conferences. With those opportunities I have often made the case, as I have back home, that we must work together and help each other's communities and our people's businesses. It is about the power of a dollar. We can decide where, and on what, to spend our money. If we are thoughtful, we can help build our communities with each purchase or trade.

Together as the Metis Nation we need to identify our business opportunities for products and services, for here in our province, across our country, and internationally. There are Indigenous Peoples who are looking for markets to sell or trade their goods such as handicrafts, clothing, fruits and nuts, while we are looking for places to sell our fish, wood, and more. Here are opportunities for trade bringing joint benefits.

For instance, coffee is an important crop in much of Latin America. Most of us drink a cup of coffee more than once each day. Along with enjoying a great cup of coffee, importing and selling retail coffee products could increase Manitoba Metis business and employment right here in Canada while helping out Indigenous Communities in, for instance, South America such as Columbia or Chile.

As your Metis Government, we will continue to explore the possible benefits here and elsewhere of building Indigenous Trade partnerships for the benefit of our Metis people. I believe we will find that this is not foreign to us. We have deep Ancestral roots, indeed our Birthright, in commercial trade with other Peoples.

I offer my prayers for our citizens, friends and neighbours who have passed on. I also offer my condolences to their families. Best wishes to everyone.

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