

President's Message
November 22, 2017

On Louis Riel Commemoration Day, on November 16, 2017, I made a historical announcement, released details, and rolled out the Manitoba Métis Prescription Drug Program. With this program your Métis Government is helping our Seniors to get their medications. No longer will they need to first pay out of their pocket for their prescriptions. This is the first time an aboriginal government has come forward and done this.

Our Métis Seniors living in poverty should not have to choose between paying their hydro bill or paying for their medication. Only one ambulance bill and their budget is blown for the rest of the year. They have been paying taxes their entire lives and, yet, when they are most in need, many find themselves without any help in making ends meet. I am delighted your Métis Government is doing so well in its businesses that it can now provide supports for its Senior Citizens in getting for their medicines.

Since the Supreme Court of Canada's Daniels decision in 2016, it has been made crystal clear that the Government of Canada has a fiduciary responsibility to our Métis people. Yet we have not seen any benefits from the decision. Ultimately Canada must take on their responsibilities. In the interim, the MMF will make sure our Senior Citizens receive assistance and are covered for their prescription drugs.

The current federal government has shown its willingness to work cooperatively, on a Nation-to-Nation Government-to-Government basis, with your Manitoba Métis Government. We have made great strides with Prime Minister Trudeau since 2015. Our Land Claims negotiations have moved ahead at lightning speed. In addition to self-government, the negotiations will include the areas in health, education, and economic development.

Just a few weeks ago I attended and spoke at the Canada's Public Policy Forum that took place at the University of Winnipeg. The topic of the forum was economic reconciliation with the Métis. There was, of course, a strong focus on education and training. I stayed longer than I was expecting so I could hear from the Youth who were part of a panel near the forum's end.

From what I heard, it seems to me that our Youth, much like their Ancestors, are hardworking and independent. Hard work and independence can be very strong drivers of success. But sometimes these can take on less positive individualistic aspects. Positively, our Youth are thinking about how their education and training will benefit themselves. This is only natural. This is how people think. On the other hand, many are not thinking about how they can benefit the Métis Nation while they are going to school and after they graduate.

This leads me to feel we need to strategize about how we can meet their aspirations and meet our community needs at the same time. It appeared to me that in some cases some of our Youth focus on the opportunities we have fought so long and hard for, and do not fully understand the fight we had to go through to get these opportunities, nor how they might help and give back. We will continue to work on developing options. Together we, young and old, both now and in the future, need to work hard to strengthen the Nation.

Some Métis are still hiding in plain sight. Many were never told as children who they were. We want those people to claim their identity. We want them to know their roots and know their culture. They don't have to hide anymore. I tell these people that we are here. Get involved in their MMF Local. Talk with the Elders in our community. There are so many opportunities available to get involved and help the Métis Nation.

My prayers are with our Elders, our sick, and our shut-ins. My thoughts are also with our veterans and the survivors of the sixties scoop and the day and residential schools. It is my goal that they receive respect and justice. 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.

Meeqwetch,