

President's Message – July 11

At the heart of our Métis Nation is our culture, shared in community and passed down through generations. Our culture stands for Métis values such as respect for our Elders, care for our children, and working hard to support one another in times of need. Our culture is also rooted in traditions and celebrations including music, dance, food and special gatherings.

We have had many opportunities to celebrate our successes these past few weeks. On June 28, I was pleased to present, with Minister Denise Thomas, a significant donation to CancerCare Manitoba Foundation. These funds, raised in May at the Manitoba Metis Heritage Fund gala "*A Hunt for the Cure,*" will support patient and family services for Manitobans fighting this terrible disease. The donation was made possible through the hard work of Manitoba Metis Heritage Fund and MMF elected representatives and staff. We are committed to helping families have better chances for the future. The gala and resulting donation represent the strength of our Nation working together to bring hope for families facing difficult times.

Those who were able to attend the July 1 celebrations at Lower Fort Garry had a fantastic day of Métis music, dance and food. They were also witness to an historic moment as the Fort raised our Métis Nation flag alongside our Canada flag. This symbolic gesture has real consequences for our Nation. It represents recognition for our role as Métis in bringing Manitoba into Confederation. It also signifies our continuing presence and rights on our Métis Homeland. This celebration is a milestone in an ongoing relationship with Lower Fort Garry and Parks Canada to spread awareness of our rich heritage as Métis Citizens.

Riel House National Historic Site of Canada also hosted special celebrations on July 1, inviting children and families to explore sash-weaving and bannock-making. If you have not been to Riel House, I encourage you to pay a visit to the former home of Louis Riel's family, where programming and interpretation from the Louis Riel Institute connects Riel's place and time to our thriving culture today. Throughout the summer, Riel House hosts free community gatherings on Thursday evenings from 6-8 pm. We welcome all to share in Métis music, dance and friendship at the Riel House Soirees.

Our biggest celebration of the summer is just around the corner. The Back to Batoche cultural festival is an annual gathering hosted by Métis Nation – Saskatchewan and taking place this year from July 19th to 22nd. Ten thousand of our Métis Nation Citizens will gather from across the Great Plains, and beyond, to share community and culture. Bring your tent and be sure not to miss our Manitoba artists showcased on Saturday, July 21st, alongside incredible talent from across the Homeland.

Back to Batoche is not only a great opportunity to enjoy the best of Métis fiddling, jigging and square dance. It is also a time for our Métis Citizens to share experiences and plan for the future. The days leading up to the festival will feature a Métis Nation Youth Conference and the Métis Nation General Assembly. Together, we will shape our shared destiny: defending our Nation, advancing our rights, and protecting our people.

I send thoughts and prayers to those who are sick and suffering. May you find the comfort and love of family, as well as the protection and strength of community. For those who have lost a family member or friend, I offer deepest sympathies and condolences. For all readers, I share best wishes for a safe and festive summer. I hope to see you in Batoche!

Meeqwetch,