

President's Message – August 8

Education and learning have always been central to the Métis Nation's culture. The Red River Resistance was, in part, about ensuring access to appropriate schooling for our children. In 1870, cultural expression was important and intended to be passed to our children by guaranteeing the right to the French language and to education in the Catholic Schools. This was part of our Treaty – becoming key articles in the Manitoba Act.

Unfortunately, both of these articles were ignored along with the unkept promise of lands to our children. In the early 1980s, the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) went to the courts. In 2013, the promise to land was recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada. As I announced immediately following the decision: "our time has come." We are now in negotiations to right the wrongs. Looking back across a century and a half of Métis struggles for nationhood, it is remarkable to see how far we have come in advancing our dreams for our children's future.

In the darkest period of our history, the promises of the Manitoba Act for the education of our people were not kept by the provincial government. Some of our youth were subjected to trauma and violence at Residential and Day schools. Others kept far away from schools altogether, learning from family and from the land. This history of being marginalized and excluded from the education system was reflected for many years in lower levels of educational attainment and higher unemployment for the Métis. We had become the "forgotten people."

Our past leaders created the MMF with a vision for writing a new chapter in this history – one that advances the social and economic interests of all Manitoba Métis Community Citizens. Education was clearly important to this vision. In 1988, after years of research and groundwork, the MMF led the creation of the Louis Riel Institute (LRI) to address the educational concerns and aspirations of Manitoba's Métis. Today, the LRI serves to empower a strong Métis Nation made up of skilled and proud Métis Citizens, families and communities.

The LRI's mandate is flexible and wide-ranging. With its Adult Learning Centre, the Louis Riel Vocational College, and abundant secondary and post-secondary student funding opportunities, the Louis Riel Institute offers aspiring students the resources needed to achieve their learning goals. As a new school year approaches, our youth and adults can look forward to pursuing their dreams while supported by a strong commitment to continuing their education and career goals.

Our next goal is to develop a Métis university, or a university college as the first step to a Métis university, managed by Métis, with Métis students taught by Métis professors. Already, the LRI supports the University of Winnipeg through teaching in the University's classes. This is the next step.

The Canada- Métis Nation Accord was signed last year between the Government of Canada and the Métis National Council (MNC) Governing Members, including the MMF. This Accord identified Employment and Training, Education, Youth and Early Learning as negotiation priorities. As the MNC Minister responsible, and as the Lead Negotiator, I am pleased to say that the very first sub-agreement under the new Accord was signed in Ottawa on June 15, 2018. This agreement, the Métis Nation Skills and Employment Training Accord, invests over \$625 million over the next ten

years for the MMF and other MNC Governing Members to deliver skills and employment training opportunities that best serve the needs of our people.

In particular, the agreement will support and expand services delivered by our MMF Employment and Training Department to those who are building their careers. The Métis Nation Skills and Employment Training Accord will improve the lives of tens of thousands of our Métis Citizens, helping to fill the gap that has existed in their access to learning and employment opportunities. It is good to see we finally have a federal government that understands the steps needed to include the Métis Nation as a true partner.

Of course, education does not begin with college or career counselling. Your Métis Government is also working with other MNC Governing Members and the Government of Canada to improve early learning supports for Métis children. We are developing a Metis-Nation-wide Early Learning and Child Care Framework to better support the unique early learning and child care needs of our children and families. We can expect the expansion of Head Start programs for Métis children, and continued support for successful initiatives such as our Little Moccasins program for new parents and parents-to-be.

In closing, I share my thoughts and prayers with those who are facing sickness and struggle. May you find healing, comfort and community. For those who have lost a loved one, I share my deepest condolences and sympathy. For students, as you prepare to greet a new academic year, know that the MMF stands behind you to assist you in preparing for your future success. And may our readers of all ages have the opportunity for continued learning with access to the resources and training to realize your dreams. Strong individuals and strong families - these are the foundations of our prosperous Métis Nation.

Meeqwetch,