

President's Message – September 19

We are writing a new chapter in Métis history. As we turn the page for Métis Nationhood, it is more important than ever for us to know who we are, to understand our Nation's past, and to articulate what Métis Citizenship will mean for our future generations.

Before Canada existed, the Métis were the dominant political and economic force across our Homeland, with its cultural and financial capital along the Red River. In 1816, fighting under our Nation's flag for the first time, our people were led to victory by Cuthbert Grant at Frog Plain. The flag, one of the oldest in North America, proudly carries our message today: uniting our people, defining our Citizenship, and declaring our Nationhood.

Our Nation fought again in 1869 and 1885, rising together to defend our homes, our families, our culture and our economy. Through these struggles, we shaped the terms and timeline that brought Manitoba and the West into Confederation. After the Battle at Batoche, we paid the ultimate price for defending our Nation: chased off of our land, homes and villages burnt to the ground, children stolen from mothers' arms. We suffered such injustices for nearly a century.

In 1967, some of our greatest thinkers came together once more to take a stand for our Nation. They formulated a Government to defend our people from the abuses we faced. These abuses included ongoing destruction of our homes, communities and economies to make way for energy and urban development; and theft of our children through the Sixties Scoop. Those Métis who were not cut off from their communities had been pushed onto muskegs in remote areas, with no economic or social investment by any government: provincial or federal. The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) came alive in 1967 thanks to wise leaders who stepped forward to create our own Government, to invest in our Nation's future.

Today, thanks to the vision and hard work of MMF leaders, we are on the verge of reclaiming our true place in Confederation through a renewed, distinctions-based, nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship to Canada. Beginning in 1982, with our inclusion in Canada's Constitution, we have affirmed and advanced the rights of Métis Citizens through Supreme court rulings and tripartite negotiations. Under the terms of our 2017 *Métis Nation Accord* with the Government of Canada, the MMF and other Governing Members of the Métis National Council are working to direct resources back into our Nation, for made-by-Métis solutions to the governance, economic and social concerns of our Citizens.

In this new era, every Métis Citizen has a role. This is why we are striving to bring home our Lost Moccasins: those taken from our families during the Sixties Scoop and Residential Schools era. As we reconnect with our Sixties Scoop survivors, there are many tears shed. They speak of waking up in the middle of the night feeling lost and hurt, knowing something was missing in their lives, something was wrong. We must heal these wounds and welcome our Lost Moccasins back home. To this end, we are hosting a Sixties Scoop symposium in Winnipeg from October 19 to 21.

In reconnecting and mobilizing our Métis Citizens, we must also be vigilant. As we have seen too many times in the past, when resources are announced or money is made available, there are always some people scrambling to take it from us, just as the speculators came for our scrip. Today,

we face a challenge from Eastern people who claim Métis Citizenship with no connection to our history and Homeland. They are flying our flag and wearing our sash, with no ancestral or cultural ties to our Nation. As we advance our rights and Nationhood, we must also protect our identity and our culture for future generations.

We are fast approaching the day when we finally hold our true place in Confederation. The Prime Minister, this fall, is putting forward legislation to recognize the MMF as the Government of Manitoba's Métis Nation and offer us, for the first time since 1870, the opportunity to truly govern ourselves, as we did before Canada came into being. We've been waiting a long, long time for this. I welcome you to join us at our Annual General Assembly (AGA) from September 21 to 23 to participate in your Métis Nation Government and the future we are building.

I invite all our citizens to join us at the AGA to witness an historic announcement that will make great changes to the future of our families. Come feel the excitement in person, or listen and watch the announcements streaming live online. We will be blazing a new path for our Nation.

For those unable to attend due to poor health, losses or difficulties in your lives, I send you my thoughts, prayers and deepest sympathies. To every reader, I encourage you to truly understand your history, understand who you are, and take pride in your Métis Nation.

Meeqwetch,