

President's Message – October 24

From October 9 to 11, I had the privilege of participating in the 9th annual World Indigenous Business Forum in Rotorua, New Zealand. Each year, the Forum draws together hundreds of Indigenous entrepreneurs, leaders and strategists to share knowledge, engage in economic discussions, and build Indigenous-to-Indigenous trading partnerships across the globe. As MMF Minister of Economic Development and Métis National Council Minister of Finance and Social Development, I led our Métis delegation to the Forum, where I spoke alongside Ministers of New Zealand's government, Indigenous entrepreneurs and Māori leaders.

Métis have always been, first and foremost, a Nation built on partnerships and trade. In the 18th century, our communities formed along the waterways of the North West fur trade. As traders, interpreters, hunters and harvesters, we built up our early economies through partnerships with one another, with First Nations trappers and with European traders alike.

In the 19th century, as our Nation grew larger, stronger and more economically independent, we built a new way of life for our people through the bison hunt. Our twice-yearly hunts formed the basis, not only of a flourishing economy, but also for our governance practices and protocols. Our Laws of the Hunt set out the rules for our self-government, guiding our political organization during the Red River Resistance of 1869 and laying the foundation for our Métis Government today.

At the time of the Red River Resistance, the Métis were the dominant economic, political and cultural force across our Homeland. After 1869, the Reign of Terror against our people pushed the Métis to the margins of our land and economy. For more than a century, we struggled to sustain our families, communities and livelihoods. The community at Rooster Town from 1901-1961 was a prime example of the poverty, racism and lack of recognition we faced in those years as governments tried to force us to assimilate.

Another example of the horrors of these years was the Sixties Scoop which, from the 1950s to the 1990s, stole our children to be placed with non-Métis families. This past weekend's Sixties Scoop Symposium in Winnipeg marked the beginning of our effort to reconcile this horrible chapter in our history. Listening to, and guided by, Métis Survivors who participated in this consultation, we are launching a process to establish a framework for negotiations that will provide a settlement for Métis Survivors of the Sixties Scoop.

I encourage you to learn about the dark chapters in our past, while also keeping your heads high with an eye to the brighter future we are creating together. Today, we are at last reclaiming our rightful place as full partners in prospering relationships among Nations, across our Homeland and around the world. The World Indigenous Business Forum is an example of the new economic relationships we are building with other Indigenous peoples. Our renewed distinctions-based, nation-to-nation relationship with the Government of Canada offers an example of successful partnership with other governments.

Our path forward truly grows out of the understanding we carry about the past. In the coming week your Métis Government and the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan will be convening in Regina, as we

did in the early years of our organizations, to strategize on matters of common concern including reconciliation and the rights of our Harvesters across the provincial boundaries.

To our Métis Harvesters, I hope you are having a good and a safe season. I understand a few of you have faced some confrontation from Conservation Officers, but to date, no charges have been laid against those practicing our traditional way of life. We should always be proud of who we are, and have no fear of sustaining our traditional harvests of game, fish, berries and medicines on our Homeland. Should those rights ever be challenged, your Métis Government stands beside you.

For those who are unwell, grieving or shut in, I send you my condolences, prayers and best wishes. May you find your own path to wellness and healing. May each of you also find fulfilment and prosperity, always connected by our shared history, culture and community.

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