MÈTIS PLATFORM PRIORITIES FOR 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION CYCLE

15 Priorities to address the needs of Manitoba Mètis

INDEX

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Parameters
- 3. Key Asks for 2021

15 ISSUES FOR THE RED RIVER MÈTIS

MÈTIS NATION

- 4. Preservation and protection of Mètis Identity
- 5. Recognition
- 6. Land claims resolution
- 7. Mètis community and Government Infrastructure
- 8. UNDRIP

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 9. Educational opportunities (most especially post secondary)
- 10. Housing
- 11. Targeted healthcare supports
- 12. Child and Family Services
- 13. MMIWG and the Women of Mètis Nation

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

- 14. Micro-business support
- 15. Farmers and Ranchers
- 16. Fishers
- 17. Technological assistance
- 18. International

Introduction

The Mètis Nation of today numbers in the tens of thousands, with over 40,000 registered Citizens in Manitoba alone. We believe the real population could be as much as 100,000. If fully realized, these numbers would make the Manitoba Mètis the largest Indigenous group in Canada by far.

The Manitoba Mètis Federation (MMF) is the democratic self-governing political representative for Manitoba's Métis Community.

The Manitoba Mètis Community offers a diversity of viewpoints, as one would expect from a large Nation. Our Citizen population extends across all regions of Manitoba and beyond, into the rest of Canada and across the world.

The history and roots of the Mètis Nation are found in the Canadian West, particularly in the Red River Valley. Nationhood, as you know, requires shared history and a distinct culture formed by a collective will, often in response to issues that confront them. From its inception, the Métis Nation was a self-determined society with well-established governance structures that were fully formulated by 1870.

The history of Canada includes egregious wrongs inflicted on the Mètis Nation, particularly those who lived in what was to become Manitoba. It is a history founded upon fraud, repression, marginalization and violence.

It was the Mètis Nation who brought Manitoba into Canada's confederation. Part of the negotiation included protection for the preservation of our culture, traditions and ways of living. Canada reneged on the promises of 1870 that were made as part of the Manitoba Act, and proceeded to ignore the issues and needs of the Mètis Nation for well over a century. Our Nation's circumstances of isolation in remote communities, lost identity and poverty are a direct result of a campaign by our country and province against our Citizens.

Thankfully, that history is starting to change. In 1982, the Mètis Nation was expressly recognized as an "Aboriginal People of Canada".

In 2013, the Supreme Court Canada recognized the wrongs done to the Métis Nation of the Red River, declaring that the Crown did not act honourably in implementing the constitutional obligation in s. 31 of the Manitoba Act and further, that "the unfinished business of reconciliation of the Métis people with Canadian sovereignty is a matter of national and constitutional import."

Therefore, the first request of this document is that all parties contending for leadership in Canada acknowledge that the Mètis Nation has been wronged and that Canada has a duty to address the unfinished business referenced by the Supreme Court.

Parameters

This document contains Mètis-specific initiatives that the Manitoba Mètis Government is sharing with all parties, on behalf of our Citizens.

These priorities are based on:

- Surveys and research done about the views of our Citizens, including both targeted and opt-in feedback
- Consultations with Citizens who have sought assistance through our departments, programs and services
- The experience of the President and Cabinet of the MMF

Together, these priorities represent our collective experience of existing programs as well as identifying gaps that we hope to see bridged by the current government and any government that is formed after the upcoming election.

While these are the top priorities identified by our Citizens and our experience, this is not an exhaustive list and does not represent all issues faced by Mètis Citizens. In addition, as a Nation that is part of the fabric of Canada, the decisions and policies that affect all Canadians are also of great importance to our Citizens.

This document will be shared with all parties leading up to the anticipated election, with the expectation that any parties contending to lead Canada's next government will comment on their respective positions in relation to these priorities. It is our hope that all parties will incorporate the priorities they can commit to within their published platforms.

The feedback we receive from all parties will be shared with the Manitoba Métis Community, to help Citizens make informed voting decisions.

For reference, we use several terms interchangeably, which we interpret to mean the same thing: MMF is the equivalent of the Manitoba Métis government. The term Métis Nation is interchangeable with Manitoba's Métis community and/or Red River Métis.

KEY ASKS FOR THE 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION

In addition to committing to existing supports, programs, services and agreements, we ask each party to recognize and adopt the priorities notedbelow. These priorities are not partisan, but reflect Canada's fiduciary dutyowed to the Red River Métis also known as the Manitoba Mètis or the Historic Mètis Nation.

Detailed suggestions for these are contained in the larger document entitled "Platform of the Red River Métis – 2021".

The following points are not amenable to adjustment, as they represent "high level policy-based principles" from which detailed programs can bedeveloped.

The feedback we receive from all parties will be shared with the Red RiverMétis Community, to help Citizens make informed voting decisions.

IDENTITY

The Red River Mètis (also known as the Manitoba Mètis Community or the Historic Mètis Nation) is a distinct Indigenous Nation, whose government is the MMF.

Full implementation of the Indigenous Languages Act with sufficient fundingto the Red River Mètis to promote preservation and expansion of Michif.

RECOGNITION (Treaty)

Present and enact the legislation for a Modern-Day Treaty for the Red River Mètis, as contemplated by the July 6, 2021 agreement between Canada and the MMF, by June 30, 2022.

LAND CLAIMS

Settlement of the land claim dispute set out the declaration of the S.C.C, in M/F v Canada [2013] 1 SCR 623 will be resolved to the satisfaction of the RedRiver Mètis within the 44th Parliament.

FUNDING

Funding for Indigenous programming that is clearly, proportionately and equitably distributed between the Indigenous communities in Canada, witha distinctions-based approach for the Red River Mètis in a permanent bilateral mechanism.

HEALTH

Designated, equitable distinction-based funding for the Red River Mètis, including inclusion of the Red River Mètis in the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, with the Mètis government empowered to deliver appropriate healthcare services to its citizens.

CFS

Enter into a Coordination Agreement as contemplated in section 20 of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (previously Bill C-92) with the Manitoba Metis Federation, the government of the Red River Mètis, within 44th Parliament and provide adequate funding to the Red River Mètis to return the responsibility to care for our children, families, and youth to our Community.

EDUCATION

Enhanced funding for post-secondary education for Mètis students, with anemphasis on those in remote and rural areas, and initiatives for graduates transitioning into the workforce through internships and federally supported hiring programs to combat systemic racism.

MICROBUSINESS FUNDING

Creation and funding of two funds by the end of 2022. The first to aid Mètisentrepreneurs in recovery from the effects of COVID, those engaged in traditional businesses like ranching and fishing, and others that are expanding the scope of micro-businesses especially those which utilizeMètis culture. Create an intervention fund operated by the MMF to allow it to protect Mètisbusinesses when changes to resource utilization are made on ideological considerations by other levels of government.

DISTINCTION BASED SET ASIDES

Revise the federal set aside program and procurement process by the endof 2021, so that entrepreneurs who are citizens of the Red River Mètis have access to a proportionate share of contracts with Canada and have time to gain the needed skills to successfully compete for contracts in our communities

COMPETING IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Funding that will allow Mètis citizens currently hampered by lack of affordable internet or cellular access to compete within the global economy.

INTERNATIONAL

Fund the Manitoba Mètis Federation's Indigenous International Nation to Nation trade initiative.

Remove barriers and tariffs for MMF and Indigenous International Nation toNation trade.

Provide Governmental support to the Red River Mètis in InternationalIndigenous Nation to Nation activities.

Inclusion of the Red River Mètis in International trade missions and appropriate consultation on our priorities in the development of trade agendas and policies

PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF MÈTIS IDENTITY

Louis Riel warned the Mètis of the Red River that there was coming a horde of Easterners that would supplant them in their own territory. But his entreaty was that though that may happen, it should not happen with the passive acquiescence or the outright concession of the issue by the Mètis people. Successive Red River Mètis Governments and all of our citizens have felt this as a core issue since 1870. The Mètis were part of Confederation, but the joining of Canada was never intended to usurp Mètis identity.

The Mètis National Council has adopted, as have all of its members, the following definition of Mètis:

"Métis" means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation."

Consistently, the citizens of the Red River Mètis have set out as their highest priority that the definition of Mètis must be protected and honoured. That the cultural and other appropriation of the term Mètis cannot be allowed or accepted.

- Support for educational programming about Mètis identity for the public.
- Mapping and updating all instances where Mètis Nation is talked about in federal documents from forms, websites, publications and educational tools, for newcomers, bureaucrats and newly elected officials, in consultation and partnership with Mètis Nation.
- Permanent policies and mechanisms to engage with Mètis Nation representatives on Indigenous initiatives from culture, heritage and communications and allow for review and approval of Mètisspecific content.
- Support for the Mètis National Council's definition of Mètis identity, with clear language around programs offered to Mètis Nation

Citizens and programs available to those outside of Mètis Nation with mixed heritage.

• Support for post-secondary programs that educate about Mètis Nation.

RECOGNITION

The Mètis are a Nation based in Western Canada with its roots primarily within the Red River Valley. It was, from its inception, a self-determined society with appropriate governance structures. These were fully formulated by 1870. That Mètis Nation now numbers tens of thousands with over 40,000 citizens registered and could reasonably number about 100,000 citizens. That would make the Red River Mètis the largest, by far, Indigenous group in Canada.

The recognition up to this point has been largely ineffective because successive Governments have been unwilling or unable to enshrine the necessary recognitions for Mètis people. In *Daniels [2012] SCC 12* the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that fell under the purview of s. 91(24) of the Constitution Act. In deciding that they expressly stated that it was unnecessary to decide to whom the term Mètis refers. For the Red River Mètis a further break through came and the representative nature of the Mètis Government was accepted in **Dumont** v. Canada (A.G.), [1990] **2 S.C.R. 279**.

An agreement with the current Government of Canada has recognized that the Manitoba Mètis Community is a distinct Indigenous Nation for application of UNDRIP. It has created a framework to create a more formal recognition. We are asking each party to incorporate into the platform they will present to the public:

- Commitment to honour the existing agreement signed July 6, 2021.
- Commitment to recognizing the MMF as the representative Government of the Manitoba Mètis.
- Commitment for equitable and reasonable resources for the Manitoba Mètis to implement self-government.
- Commitment to continue working on the Nation-to-Nation relationship so that historic wrongs can be addressed.
- We expect the cost of Governance for the Mètis Nation to be well above \$30,000,000 per year and are asking that parties commit to

such funding as is equitable to allow MMF to deliver services to the Mètis citizens.

LAND CLAIMS RESOLUTION

In Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. v. Canada (AG), 2013 SCC 14 the Supreme Court gave life to the notion that a government could not fail indefinitely to fulfill its obligations to citizens. This was more so because there were specific obligations that the Court found that Canada had deliberately failed to fulfill. The case engaged the "honour of the Crown" in dealing with an Indigenous people.

In broad terms the Manitoba Act was an attempt to ensure that Mètis persons who had already settled the Red River and who were foregoing an existing governance structure would be protected and accommodated.

Section 31 is a constitutional obligation to an Aboriginal group. In accordance with the principles outlined above, the honour of the Crown is engaged by s. 31 and gives rise to a duty of diligent, purposive fulfillment. (Para.92)

The delay in completing the s. 31 distribution was inconsistent with the behaviour demanded by the honour of the Crown. (Para 110).

This was not a matter of occasional negligence, but of repeated mistakes and inaction that persisted for more than a decade. A government sincerely intent on fulfilling the duty that its honour demanded could and should have done better. (Para 128)

The Supreme Court recognized that the appropriate remedy for the failures was to allow the defaulting party an opportunity to come good on its Constitutional obligation. In deciding that a declaration was available it did so to affirm that the Crown had a continuing Constitutional obligation to the Manitoba Mètis.

The purpose of s.31 of the Manitoba Act was to ensure a "head start" for the Mètis children and the community that existed. It was an intention to ensure that the thriving community and Government would be able to survive. A Government must therefore commit to:

- Acknowledge that Canada acted in bad faith and owes a debt to the Manitoba Mètis.
- Commitment that the declaration means that there is an ongoing Constitutional obligation on Canada to act in good faith and to address the Honour of the Crown.
- Commitment an appropriate funding to allow the Mètis Community, as an Indigenous Nation, to regain its lost economic base.
- Meaningful negotiations to set out reparations for that lack of a head start.
- Providing sufficient support so that the negotiations can be conducted fairly and honourably.
- Because the amount of loss is necessarily so large, to accept that and to look for innovative and reasonable ways to provide redress without causing economic chaos.
- If settlement cannot be achieved through negotiation to agreeing to a process for quantifying the loss and allowing for those monies to flow.
- We expect that the commitment to the Manitoba Mètis for reparations should equate to something in the excess of \$1,000,000,00 but perhaps should be spread over 20 or more years.

MÈTIS COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Red River Mètis are behind other Indigenous Government is providing basic infrastructure to its citizens. This is caused by years of in-fighting between Federal and Provincial politicians as to whether the Constitutional responsibility for Mètis was Federal or Provincial.

In the result, we need assistance on bringing these services to the level reasonably expected by all citizens of Canada.

- Métis infrastructure development strategy focusing on sustainability and community/sectoral need.
- Green infrastructure investments for Métis new builds, renovations, and retrofits.
- Métis infrastructure expansion based on development strategy.
- Métis infrastructure sustainability fund investment revenues to pay for infrastructure operation and maintenance costs.

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Canada's acceptance and now passage into law of UNDRIP is, and was, an important step in the reconciliation of issues between Canada and Indigenous communities.

For too long the Mètis were a forgotten people. That has begun to change.

We are concerned that the necessary supports to ensure adequate implementation will not be available. It is critically important that the implementation plan allow for the full participation of all Indigenous communities or an equitable basis.

- Support for the implementation of UNDRIP and particularly as it relates to the Mètis of Manitoba.
- Sufficient finding to allow the Red River Mètis to participate and be consulted in any implementation plan.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In the last 5 years the MMF has significantly expanded, with funding from Canada, the assistance it is able to provide to Mètis post secondary students.

In particular, we have funded hundreds of students with grants of \$5000.00 to assist them with the cost of attending post-secondary education. In the last fiscal year, we assisted 878 students amount of \$4,365,000.00 in aid together with other supports. And in every university and college in Manitoba (7 in total) we have established endowment funds for additional resources. With employment related programs we are assisting over 2000 students annually.

But there is a critical need to expand, in all students, the history and understanding of the Red River Mètis. And it we have learned in these last two years of the pandemic that we should be increasing the use of technology especially to promote distance education.

- Enhanced funding for post-secondary education for Mètis students, with anemphasis on those in remote and rural areas, and initiatives for graduates transitioning into the workforce through internships and federally supported hiring programs to combat systemic racism.
- Simplify and streamline process for federally funded tuition supports for Mètis people including grants, bursaries and scholarships.
- Improve access to post-secondary education for students in remote and rural areas, including availability of tutoring
- Culturally-appropriate and Mètis-specific student housing for Mètis Nation students, including rural and remote students relocating for education.
- Bridge support and federally supported hiring program or policy for Mètis graduates to gain first jobs and career support to combat systemic racism in employment, including internship programs

- Support for post-secondary programs that educate about Mètis Nation.
- Educational technology support for all Mètis Nation students, including Internet and data access for rural and remote students.
- Mental health, mentoring and community/Elder/educational support structures and resources for both on and off campus students.
- Improve access to post-secondary education for students in remote and rural areas, including availability of tutoring as well as technology supports like Internet and data access.
- Support culturally-appropriate student housing for Métis Nation students, including mental health, mentoring and community/Elder/educational structures for both on and off campus students.
- Simplify the process for federally funded tuition supports, including grants, bursaries and scholarships.
- Institute procurement policies that allow the Manitoba Métis Community's government to equip, educate and train Citizens to compete for opportunities.
- Offer a federally supported hiring program to combat systemic racism and allow Métis graduates to gain first jobs and access internship programs.
- Funding and other supports in the development of Firefighter Training Programs that enable a firefighting crew in each of the seven MMF regions.

HOUSING

With a renewed nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada, the Manitoba Metis Federation has been able to make the strategic investments and commitments necessary to start addressing the housing needs of our citizens. Whether it's providing the only home repair and renovation funding program in Manitoba through the Home Enhancement Loan Program (HELP) or the First Time Home Purchase Program (FTHPP), hundreds of Metis citizens and their families have attained the dream of home ownership or received financial assistance to protect their home with much-needed repairs and renovations addressing safety, health and accessibility concerns. New affordable housing units have been developed by the MMF throughout the province, in both rural and urban communities. These programs and developments have made meaningful differences in the lives of our citizens.

As we continue this work, the evidence clearly demonstrates that the needs far exceed the current financial capacity to deliver. Whether it is accessible housing for our seniors and disabled citizens, a dignified place for our veterans to call home, affordable student housing, housing for youth aging out of care, or addressing homelessness, more must be done. To address the housing needs, we ask that your government commit to the following:

- An extension to the 2018 Canada-Metis Nation Sub-Accord with increased funding, allowing for long-term planning and stability to address the housing needs of the Red River Metis.
- A 10 year, \$50 million (\$5 million/year) agreement targeted to addressing Metis homelessness.
- Targeted funding for the development and construction of transitional supportive housing units for Metis youth aging out of the child welfare program.
- Enhanced funding for green/environmentally-friendly housing projects.

TARGETED HEALTHCARE SUPPORTS

The pandemic exposed one of the biggest disparities between First Nations and Mètis citizens. We do not begrudge, in any way, the supports that were necessary for First Nations communities. Those were necessary and well spent.

However, the federal Government had no specific programming for Mètis citizens. That left our citizens at some considerable disadvantage. This was compounded by a Provincial position that did not respect that the Red River Mètis are a distinct Indigenous community with a working Government. In the result, Mètis citizens we left off from any ability by its Government (at least initially) to provide vaccines or other like assistance.

The MMF funded programs for its citizens and even provided direct finding to other community-based organizations were appropriate so that its citizens could be as safe as possible. We operate a pharmacy which provides FREE, funded entirely by the MMF, prescription medications to citizens over 55. But we are hampered by a bureaucracy that has not provided equitable resourcing to our Government.

- Inclusion in the First Nation Inuit Health Branch (FNIB)
- Métis-specific and local clinical health services including clinics, nursing stations, laboratories, home-care, hospital funding, longterm care and soft care costs (e.g., podiatrists, massage therapy, etc.)
- Data-sharing policy for Citizen health information sovereignty and governance, including population health surveillance, infectious disease management and immunization records.
- Métis-specific programming for FASD, mental health, maternal health, diabetes care and chronic illness.
- Development of ethics and research information governance infrastructure for all types of Métis-specific health research.

- Designated, equitable distinction-based funding for the Red River Mètis, with the Mètis government empowered to deliver appropriate healthcare services to its citizens.
- Health policy with respect to individual health information sovereignty and governance; this was especially evident with covid.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ENHANCEMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES

The Mètis CFS Authority and its two agencies have operated under the Manitoba Legislation for some years.

Like other Indigenous Governments, we have argued with Provincial authorities that our children had become an industry and that the lack of focus on prevention made resolution of issues all but impossible.

We were encouraged that parliament passed Bill C-92 and intend to implement its provisions foully for our citizens. But we remain concerned that there be adequate funding to ensure that implementation is not a hollow promise

- Financial support to shift focus to prevention programming versus existing protection-focused apprehension, with programs intended to reduce number of children in care and the duration of time in care.
- Restorative/healing programs for families involved with CFS, to heal from past traumas and support for children and families transitioning out of the care system.
- Support for policies intended to keep children within families or extended communities.
- Bridging support for youth formerly in care as they transition to post-secondary education and self-sufficiency, with ongoing community supports/mentorship.
- Enter into a Coordination Agreement as contemplated in section 20 of An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (previously Bill C-92) with the Manitoba Metis Federation, the government of the Red River Mètis, within 44th Parliament and provide adequate funding to the Red River Mètis to return the responsibility to care for our children, families, and youth to our Community.

MMIWG AND THE WOMEN OF MÈTIS NATION

Mètis women have long been the backbone of the Mètis Nation. We are proud of the fact that 11 of 23 members of Cabinet, freely elected, are Mètis women (including a distinct position for the Spokesperson of Infinity Women Secretariat).

Again, the pandemic brought home to us that there continues to be a disparity in services and access to necessary supports for Mètis women. And with ever high rates of violence, the supports necessary are a critical need.

- Long-term family care programs and supports for families who have lost loved ones to violence.
- Early intervention programming in both urban and rural/remote communities, including structures for mentoring and access to Elder supports.
- Culturally-appropriate and empowering transition housing for women that includes support for mental health, life and work skill-development, with mentoring and community/Elder supports.
- Targeted funding and education for women entrepreneurs, with particular focus on microbusiness development.
- Mètis involvement in the strategies and implementation of programming to address the ongoing and historic issues related to Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN CANADA BY MÈTIS CITIZENS

For all of Canada, but especially for Mètis citizens, the future, like the past is based upon small and medium sized businesses. The Métis have been front line entrepreneurs throughout our history. We have been hampered by the lack of head start that was denied us by failure to fulfill the promises of The Manitoba Act.

Historically many Mètis have operated multiple streams of income to survive. Industries such as small farms, ranches and fishing have been primary sources of income. But other incomes were almost always needed.

In recent years there has been a going demand for culturally based products. These fledgling companies and industries need support to flourish. And nay of our businesses, like other in Canada, have suffered either because of climate change or the recent pandemic.

Most importantly, we have always been traders and have worked across international lines with our relatives and other Indigenous peoples.

Farmers and ranchers:

- Mitigation measures to allow for Indigenous Governments to have agricultural Crown Land leases transferred seamlessly into their care on behalf of Métis agricultural Crown Land leaseholders.
- Establishment and expansion of harvesting areas in all regions of Manitoba.
- Restore Legacy Leases to ensure traditional economies are able to continue.
- Support appropriate audits/appraisals of agricultural Crown Land to reflect quality and capability of land for agricultural and pasturing purposes.
- Support the creation of a Métis-specific agricultural Crown Land committee/council.

Fishers:

- Programming to support traditional Métis-led commercial fishery including stocking of lakes, investing in infrastructure, local population management and monitoring processes and aquatic invasive species management and bio-security for Métis-claimed waterways.
- Ensure Métis-inclusive model for FFMC transformation.
- Support for meaningful consultation for any and all policy changes and updates that impact Métis Citizens including infrastructure development and decision-making with the Province of Manitoba, and all aspects of rights, claims and interests within our province with DFO and Sustainable Development.

Environmental impacts, mitigations and protection:

- Investments in Métis-led and Métis-specific climate change resiliency and adaptation mechanism, in forestry and agriculture.
- Support through non-project specific agricultural funding that allows for transition to clean growth and climate change-related mitigation practices among Métis farmers and ranchers.
- Support for planning, designing and implementing long-term, Métis-specific agricultural land environmental mitigation and monitoring program, including platforms for intersectoral engagement to fill knowledge gaps on the effects of agricultural operations on adjacent habitats.
- Creation and funding of two funds by the end of 2022. The first to aid Mètis entrepreneurs in recovery from the effects of COVID, those engaged in traditional businesses like ranching and fishing, and others that are.
- expanding the scope of micro-businesses especially those which utilize Mètis culture.
- Create an intervention fund operated by the MMF to allow it to protect Mètis businesses when changes to resource utilization are

made on ideological considerations by other levels of government.

- Revise the federal set aside program and procurement process by the endof 2021, so that entrepreneurs who are citizens of the Red River Mètis have access to a proportionate share of contracts with Canada and have time to gain the needed skills to successfully compete for contracts in our communities.
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