

***Metis Nation - Saskatchewan
Legislative Assembly - July 2003
Vice-President's Report
Lorna Docken***

Greetings to our Senators, Elders, youth, members of the Metis Nation - Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly and guests. It is with pleasure that I address you today. There is much work to do at this assembly and I look forward to your input.

On the Metis rights agenda, I ask you, the members of the MNLA to provide direction on areas you see a need to push harder. As a people, the Metis have a right to self-determination which includes governing ourselves on and off a land base, preservation of our language and culture and our own institutions. I ask you if we have made progress in our struggle for self-determination, and how we can each contribute in our own way towards this goal?

In terms of governance, the PMC has met regularly to provide the leadership our citizens ask for. Thank you to the PMC for all your hard work. I suggest that the MN-S locals consider working towards uniform governance structures that reflect the Metis Nation overall, while fostering local individuality. I presented the MNLA

with a draft Local Governance Act that required comment. Some of you have commented. I thank you for that and ask once again to look at this as a start.

I have suggested other constitutional amendments which are in your kits. I ask that you look at where we want to go in the future when considering these changes. Do we want to move forward or do we want to move towards a more efficient system?

I understand that the Registry process has been moving forward as quickly as humanly possible with the resources available. Perhaps this is not quick enough and we need to extend our registration deadline. There are two schools of thought on the voters lists for the next election. Keep in mind that voting lists and citizenship lists are not necessarily the same. Some people feel that the voters lists should be finalized by a certain date and persons not on that list should not be able to vote. Others feel that declarations of Metis ancestry should be used in order to allow persons not on the list to vote. These are both extremes and my preference is somewhere in the middle. However, at present, persons not on the list simply will not vote or we will have a flawed election open to challenges. You must provide the direction on how the elections commission will conduct the next MN-S election.

Saskatchewan can be proud of the fact that we have had strong Metis institutions for

many years and are seen as the most progressive in the country. Institutions are part of self-determination and we need them to provide the infrastructure for our nation. The Provincial Metis Council had the responsibility for Metis Employment and

Training for about two years. I am happy to say that METSI will now be in the hands of the METSI Board. I am a strong believer in decentralization and community control.

Our Metis youth have been extremely active under the leadership of Jennifer Brown.

She has represented us well and been a great ambassador for Saskatchewan Metis and youth. Congratulation to Jennifer and all the Saskatchewan youth who received awards at the Metis youth recognition awards in Ottawa this April. We need to encourage the youth to develop their potential and become leaders within and outside the nation.

Maryanne Gagnon has provided strong representation for the Metis women in this province. Her and her board have been working towards a new constitution. While the MNLA has no authority to dictate to the Metis Women, I suggest that we support them in their efforts and work towards a more unified nation.

Our elders have been working on healing the communities and families of the nation through their "Speaking Out For Healing" project. This is an area us politicians have long ignored. I feel that the time to deal with the symptoms of oppression we face as a people is NOW. We have to work on ourselves, our families and our communities so that we can be strong as a nation. Hats off to the elders for their efforts.

I commend everyone for their efforts. All of us are able to contribute differently and at different times in our lives. But we all want the same results. We need to individually and collectively keep on contributing what we can and our goals will be realized in full some day. Remember that we have rights as a people under international law to self-determination. We need to remind ourselves and the rest of the world of this fact on a constant basis. Litigation such as the Powley case in Ontario will advance our rights. We need to continue in this manner and never get discouraged no matter how slow things seem to be moving. I have been involved in this movement for about thirty years now and much has changed. We have grown tremendously as a people thanks to all of our contributions. Once again thank you for doing your part.