



Dear Minister Cook,

Maarsii. Thank you for serving the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) as Minister of Education and Early Learning.

This mandate letter describes the progress made to date under your portfolio and your responsibilities and priorities moving forward. It also outlines how I expect you to conduct yourself as a Minister and work with other Ministers, members of the Provincial Métis Council (PMC), and fellow citizens. As accountability and transparency are the cornerstones of good government, I am making these letters public, so all citizens are informed of how their government is working for them.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Post-Secondary Education

Creation of a New Post-Secondary Education Fund

Our government is committed to prioritizing the needs of students and addressing the significant gap in post-secondary attainment levels between Métis and non-Indigenous populations in Saskatchewan. In July 2019 at Batoche, we announced our 10-year, \$89 M post-secondary fund to support Métis students with tuition, books, and living allowances. This fund also supports student services and increases education governance capacity at the post-secondary level. In 2019-20, 461 Métis students benefited.

Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Saskatchewan

An important component of closing the gap of post-secondary attainment levels between Métis and non-Indigenous populations in Saskatchewan is community partnering. In November 2019, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Saskatchewan focused on improving the education status of Métis people and removing barriers. This MOU will encourage and contribute to Métis presence at all levels of the university, including employment, governance, enrolment, completion rates, Métis-specific research, Métis studies and curriculum development.

MOU with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association

In July 2018 at Batoche, we signed a MOU with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) to work together to ensure that Métis fully participate in all aspects of the education system as students, teachers, elders, board members and decision-makers. This MOU recognizes the importance of a positive Métis identity as the foundation of student success and the need to integrate Métis cultural content and perspectives in the classroom. In 2019, we partnered with the SSBA and other organizations for local governance week to increase awareness and engage in systems of local democracy.



PROGRESS TO DATE

Early Learning and Child Care

New Path Forward on Early Learning and Child Care

On March 6, 2019, with the other Governing Members of the Métis National Council, our government signed the Métis Nation Early Learning and Child Care Accord with the Government of Canada. This agreement commits \$450.7 M over ten years to strengthen early learning and childcare programs and services for children and families, recognizing that Governing Members are best placed to design, deliver and integrate Métis culture, languages and values into programs for Métis Nation children and families. MN-S is receiving \$9.57 Million annually for the first four years, with a funding agreement for years five to ten to come.

To improve early learning and childcare for Métis citizens, MN-S held a conference in Saskatoon on February 1, 2020 with 180 childcare professionals and early learning educators from all 12 Regions. The discussion focused on developing effective policies and programs, looking at wrap-around services that are fully supportive of the continued mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being of the care and learning of Métis children and their families.

In direct response to the gathering and feedback from participants, we are implementing the following:

1. Awanii Niiya – Who I am: Strong, Confident Métis

Participants noted the need for Elder voices throughout our work. We are working with Métis Elders and communities to establish visual identifiers so that childcare centres, community partners and schools can project key Métis symbols and cultural competencies. A Government of Canada grant of \$350,000 is funding this project.

2. Michif Early Learning Pilot Project and Dene Early Learning Pilot Project

Participants also voiced the vital need for the revitalization and transmission of Michif in our early learning centres and schools. Recognizing a gap in the provincial education system, our government is investing \$1.2 M in language immersion programming. Starting this fall, the Michif Early Learning Pilot Project will provide Michif immersion programming in five school divisions. Working closely with Canadian Geographic, MN-S will design and implement supports to ensure young children and their families have access to the Michif language, and Métis culture, values and traditions. This will allow over 200 children to work closely with Michif Language Keepers to revive the Michif language.

Similarly, our government has invested \$200,000 in the Dene Early Learning Pilot Project to support young Métis children to learn the Dene language in the Northern Lights School Division. Working closely with the community of La Loche and Ducharme Elementary School, this funding will help students from Dene-speaking Métis families learn their language and grow the use of the Dene language.



Our government is committed to continuing to engage with service providers, childcare professionals and families as we work to further improve early learning and childcare.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Supporting Citizens During COVID-19

Emergency Childcare Subsidy Funds

As part of our government's aggressive and proactive response to COVID-19, our government distributed emergency funding to support families in these unprecedented and challenging times. One-time funding of \$500 per child, to a maximum of \$2500 per family, was allocated for children under ten years or younger who were registered Métis citizens. Overall, we dispersed more than \$300,000, supporting 371 families and 588 children. This process allowed our government to speak directly to our citizens and hear their concerns and hopes for their children. We also helped families register their children, thus increasing the number of registered citizens.

Chromebook Purchase for Métis Children

Recognizing that online learning will be a reality for many of our students and the accessibility barriers this poses for many families, our government has allocated \$900,000 to purchase nearly 3000 Lenovo Chromebooks. Chromebooks have begun to be distributed, and we are aiming to have the computers delivered by October so children and youth can use them both at home and in their school.



MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As Minister, you are responsible for the following areas:

- K-12 education.
- Post-secondary education.
- Early learning education.
- Childcare.
- Serve as Chair of the Gabriel Dumont Institute Board of Directors.
- Relationships with the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Advanced Education, all learning institutes and organizations in Saskatchewan, and childcare programs.

PRIORITIES

I expect you to work constructively with your colleagues, members of the PMC, and citizens to deliver on the following priorities:

- We want to create a Métis-specific province-wide ELCC program that tailors to the unique needs of Regions, urban and rural families and children. To accomplish this objective, over the next year:
 - Develop a strategic plan to establish a Métis-specific ELCC program.
 - Design and implement a childcare subsidy for Métis families.
 - Work towards ensuring there is a Métis-specific Early Childhood Educator (ECE) certification available for levels one, two and three. By September 2021, have three institutions offering Métis-specific ECE.
- We want to increase awareness and education on the history, culture, music and language of our people. To accomplish this objective, over the next year:
 - Work with the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education to create and incorporate Métis Essential Learnings into the K-12 provincial curriculum. Similar to the Treaty Essential Learnings, this information will help to educate children and youth on our way of life and traditions.



- We want to increase the number of Michif and Dene language speakers across the province, and the Minister of Language, Culture and Heritage is leading our government's efforts on language revitalization. An important step of accomplishing this objective is to have Michif and Dene language learning as part of the K-12 curriculum throughout the province. With the support of Minister McLennan:
 - Over the next year, launch and monitor the success of the MELPP and the DELPP.
 - Based on the outcomes, over the next five years, expand the program across the province and throughout K-12.
 - Enter into discussions with the Government of Saskatchewan on how they can support the expansion of the pilot project, given that education is a provincial responsibility.
- For post-secondary education, we want to ensure Métis students are receiving a top-quality education and being encouraged to go into second and third degrees. To accomplish this objective, over the next year:
 - Ensure the Métis Nation University Sponsorship Program continues to build and support Métis citizens pursuing post-secondary academic studies and scholarly activities. It needs to be administered based on annual priority areas established by MN-S and the adjudication process to review eligible Métis students needs to be grounded on an objective adjudication process.
 - Continue to strengthen our relationship with the University of Saskatchewan and implement the MOU signed in November 2019 to increase Métis presence at all levels of the university. Specifically, focus on enrolment and completion rates.
 - With support from the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, advocate for the need for Métis women's studies at post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan and across Canada.
 - Continue to strengthen relationships with all post-secondary educational institutions in Saskatchewan and across Canada.
- Continue to contribute to the MN-S COVID-19 response to help ensure the health and safety of all Métis citizens, specifically for children and families. Work closely with the Minister of Health and other relevant Ministers.
- We want citizens to be able to access services and programs in their Regions. A decentralized, Métis-focused service delivery model will best support our citizens. To work towards this objective, over the next year:
 - Work with the Ministers mentioned and the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure to design a pilot for the future construction and administration of a Métis Community Resource Centre for citizens to access services and support in an effective and efficient manner.
- Work with the Minister of Health to support initiatives on early brain and biological development to improve the development and well-being of Métis children.
- Support the Ministers of Economic Development and Tourism and Youth to design and implement a mentorship program to provide Métis youth with the necessary experience, skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship and business.
- Support the Ministers of Women and Gender Equality and Justice in the development of a plan to address the situation of violence against Métis women, female Elders, girls, and LGBTQQIP2SAA persons in Saskatchewan.



EXPECTATIONS FOR MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

All Members of the Executive must act with honesty and uphold the highest ethical standards in their personal and professional lives. Métis citizens' confidence and trust in the integrity of government is essential. Our Executive Handbook was updated in November 2019 by the PMC. It affirms that all Ministers must adhere to strict standards of conduct guided by the principles of integrity, accountability, responsibility, leadership, respect and openness. I encourage you to routinely consult the Executive Handbook and use it as a guiding resource in your work.

In addition to the roles and responsibilities listed above, there is also an obligation to support and advance the overall priorities of this government. Confidentiality, solidarity and collective responsibility are critical to good governance and must be the foundation of how we work together. Our Executive Handbook outlines the meaning of solidarity. Ministers may disagree and state their personal opinions during private meetings. At the same time, to the public, they must present a unified front on all decisions and support all decisions made by their fellow Ministers. Collectively, Ministers are accountable for these decisions, even if they do not personally agree with them.

All Ministers must work collaboratively with each other and all members of the PMC to establish good communication. We will ensure policies and programs reflect the needs and aspirations of Métis citizens. The unique challenges that rural and urban citizens face are considerations in decision-making. Every attempt should be made to consult with and obtain the views of Members of the PMC, local Presidents, community members, Métis women, youth, LGBTQIP2SAA persons, Elders, and other experts.

As we strengthen our working partnerships with First Nations, the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan, you are expected to conduct yourself in a respectful and cooperative manner. Delivering success for our citizens requires good working partnerships with external partners and being solutions-oriented.

Our government has zero-tolerance for unethical behaviour. All Ministers are obligated to question any request or decision that they think may be unethical or unlawful. Rules and the proper protocol for addressing alleged breaches can be found in section 7.0 of the Executive Handbook.



As we rebuild our Nation, we know we have a lot of work to do. Part of this journey must include recognizing the devastating impact colonialism and land dispossession have had on our communities, kinship, and governance. Lateral violence is endemic across the Métis Nation. We need to understand how we are going to discard colonial attitudes and re-invigorate Métis laws and ways of living together. In particular, we need to critically examine how we will reinstate the vital role Métis women, girls and two-spirit persons traditionally played in our societies. This work must include addressing and ending systemic violence against Métis women, girls and LGBTQIP2SAA persons. We must also continue to ensure equal representation of women in all levels of our government, and that these perspectives and needs be reflected in decision-making.

Our people have fought for over a century for recognition, respect, and our rightful place as a self-determining people. Over the past three years, we have made substantial progress towards realizing the visions of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. From signing the Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement with Canada, investing in housing, education and economic development, making real progress on the negotiation of the North-West land claim, and strengthening our internal governance, we have made momentous strides in a relatively short time. This year, our communities have faced a significant challenge to our health and safety: COVID-19. We came together to support citizens, deliver PPE and provide critical support for housing, childcare, and Métis businesses. While we must remain vigilant to ensure everyone's safety, we should all be proud of how we have supported each other during such unprecedented times.

Thank you again for agreeing to serve the MN-S and its citizens. I am here to support you in your role as Minister. Together, we will continue to carry the torch of those great leaders who came before us. We can, and we will, succeed in fully realizing the vision of a strong, self-determining, accountable government for all of us as Métis people in this province.

Sincerely,



President Glen McCallum