



Métis Nation  
of Ontario 

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Métis Leaders in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan Address Racism in Healthcare

**[OTTAWA, ONTARIO, October 19, 2020]** Leaders from the Métis Nation of Ontario, Métis Nation - Saskatchewan and the Métis Nation of Alberta joined other Métis, First Nations and Inuit leaders from across the country on a video call held October 16<sup>th</sup> hosted by Ministers Miller and Bennett. The session focused on a national action plan to address systemic racism experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada's health care systems, following the horrifying public footage of the racism Joyce Echaquan experienced moments before her untimely death.

The Presidents of the Métis Nation of Ontario, The Métis Nation - Saskatchewan and the Métis Nation of Alberta express their deepest condolences to the family of Joyce Echaquan. Sadly, Métis, First Nations and Inuit people across the country have long documented systemic racism in our healthcare systems. These injustices continue to deter Indigenous peoples from accessing healthcare services, which results in overall poorer health outcomes and avoidable deaths for Indigenous peoples across Canada.

Systemic problems require systemic solutions. While broad representation from multiple orders of government and health care organizations at this meeting is heartening, it is only one step. We need a sustained effort to affect systemic change. Unequal access to healthcare calls for an immediate plan of action.

These actions must include mandatory cultural safety training for medical professionals, and the inclusion of Métis, First Nations and Inuit partners at every stage of the decision-making process in order to address the health needs and priorities of Indigenous peoples. Increasing respect, recognition and a genuine understanding of Métis people among mainstream health care providers is critical in order to bring about change improving health outcomes.

The Presidents of the Métis Nation of Ontario, The Métis Nation–Saskatchewan and the Métis Nation of Alberta will continue to work with federal Ministers Miller, Bennett and Hajdu, and the respective provincial governments to move this forward on behalf of their respective citizens.

“Joyce Echaquan’s brave actions have shone a light on the truth of systemic racism within Canada’s health care systems. We will work with the Government of Canada, with Ontario, and with all the other partners needed to make systemic changes to our health systems to make them safer for Métis and all Indigenous peoples. This work is about the kind of fair and just society we all want for our families and our children; it is about the health and well-being of all our relations long into the future and the time to act is now. We want to thank Ministers Marc Miller, Patty Hajdu, Carolyn Bennett and Dan Vandal for their leadership on this critical issue, and we look forward to working together to bring about real change.”

— President Margaret Froh, Métis Nation of Ontario

“Our hearts and prayers are with Joyce’s family and her community, and with all families who have experienced mistreatment. It is a sad situation for people who go through racism in our health institutions. We have to address systematic racism in our country, at all levels. We need to make sure that cultural sensitivity training and anti-racism education is available for everyone. And this training must recognize the Métis as a distinct people in Canada, as Métis culture is often absent or ignored within pan-Indigenous approaches to culturally appropriate care.”

— President Glen McCallum, Métis Nation - Saskatchewan

“The tragic loss of Joyce Echaquan, coupled with the foresight and courage she showed in her darkest hours, has rippled across our Nation. With one video, she showed the world what so many of us experience: systemic racism in Canada is real, and it needs to stop. This is not a new issue, nor is it limited to the health care system. We welcome opportunities to continue working with the Governments of Canada and Alberta across all ministries to put an end to systemic racism. We must move to action and collaborate closely on developing policies, programs, and services that are respectful and culturally safe for our people. To heal, we require supportive environments that consider the unique needs of our Métis families and communities. We will not forget Joyce’s courage as we move forward together to create a better future for our People within Canada.”

— President Audrey Poitras, Métis Nation of Alberta

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