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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Government of Canada and the Métis Nation sign historic Early Learning and Child Care Accord

March 6, 2019 (Ottawa, ON) – Today, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and leaders of the Métis Nation signed the Métis Nation Early Learning and Child Care Accord. The Accord provides the Métis Nation with the authority and funding to create culturally relevant and supportive early learning and child care for Métis Nation children and their families.

“We are a proud, hardworking people, but many of our families struggle as the working poor,” stated David Chartrand, Vice-President and Minister of Social Development of the Métis National Council (MNC), and President of the Manitoba Metis Federation. “For over twenty-years the Metis have been left out of federally-funded Indigenous Early Learning Programs. During this time, the lack of federal commitment to reconciliation with the Metis Nation has hurt our children and our families. Today I stand here rejoicing with our hardworking mothers and fathers that have prayed for this day when our children would have their own Metis Head Start and early learning supports.”

For Minister Duclos, “this Accord solidified our ongoing joint commitment to supporting the Métis Nation vision for early learning and child care where Métis children and families throughout the Homeland are provided with culturally relevant, self-empowering early learning and child care programming and services.”

The Government of Canada has committed up to \$450.7 million to strengthen early learning and child care (ELCC) programs and services for Métis children and families in the Métis Homeland. This will be achieved through a flexible model that allows Métis Nation Governing Members to identify ELCC priorities such as to improve access to programs, integrate Métis culture, languages and values into ELCC services, and promote employment of Métis individuals as early childhood providers.

“The Canada-Métis Nation Early Learning and Child Care Accord marks another milestone on our path to reconciliation and filling the gaps in the availability of essential services to citizens of the Métis Nation,” said MNC President Clément Chartier. “I wish to thank Prime Minister Trudeau for his stewardship of Canada’s nation-to-nation relationship with the Métis Nation and Minister Duclos for delivering on his commitment to ensure an autonomous Métis Nation designed and administered early learning and child care program for our children.”

Vice-President Chartrand added: “We should state that in Manitoba, languages will be respectful; we have many French-speaking Métis communities which connect our families to the Québécois.”

The Accord recognizes that the Métis National Council and Governing Members are best placed to design, deliver and integrate Métis culture, languages and values into programs for Métis Nation children and families. It builds on the considerable collaborative work that was undertaken on a distinct Métis Nation Framework within the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework which was released by the Métis National Council, Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Government of Canada in September 2018. It also marks another concrete step in the implementation of the Canada-Métis Nation Accord which identified early learning and child care as a priority.

Vice-President Chartrand concluded: “Thanks to Prime Minister Trudeau’s and Minister Duclos’ vision, a vision based on reconciliation with our People, we will now have affordable, Metis-specific, child-focused programs with support for recreation, education, and early learning development. Today we have made history and ensured a legacy for our children and families. This is reconciliation in action.”

Quotes from other Governing Member Presidents:

President Glen McCallum, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan:

"This Accord demonstrates the power of working together with respect and recognition. With the inclusion of Métis voices at the negotiating table, we were able to emphasize the importance of education for our children and to achieve an agreement that acknowledges the needs of all of parties. We view this as a step forward – for our children, for our Nation and for our relationship with the Government of Canada.”

President Audrey Poitras, Métis Nation of Alberta

“The Métis Nation of Alberta believes every parent deserves access to quality, affordable child care and Métis families across the province will benefit from our partnership with the federal government. While our objective is to provide a wider range of holistic services, this funding will serve as the backbone of our investments in the spectrum of lifelong learning. It will empower Métis institutions to make teaching and learning more inclusive and accessible to Métis families in the area of early childhood education.”

President Clara Morin Dal Col, Métis Nation British Columbia:

“This is wonderful news for Métis children and families in British Columbia. The Accord is an important step forward for Métis children and families in British Columbia needing access to early learning and child development programming and services. We have never been able to provide such programming and services to Métis families before but now with this Accord and the funding commitment already made to us, we can develop and deliver services and programming from childcare assistance to early learning for our Métis children and families here in British Columbia. This would not have happened without the full support of the Prime Minister and his government and this is an excellent example of what can happen when everyone is working together for our Métis children and families.”

President Margaret Froh, Métis Nation of Ontario:

“Today is a great day for our Métis families and children, who have been vocal about needing more support and greater services. This Accord is another positive step forward and will provide us with the opportunity to address the needs of our Métis families and communities throughout Ontario. By working on a government to government with our Metis governments, Canada is recognizing that the MNO is best positioned to design, develop and deliver programs for our citizens, and we acknowledge this investment that will better the lives of Métis people in Ontario.”

President Melanie Omeniho, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak [LFMO]:

"Today LFMO is very pleased to see that Metis children and families have hope to work on achieving success through the new Early Learning and Child Care initiative that has been committed to by the Federal Government. More than seventy percent of Metis families are lone parent families who will benefit from the ability to ensure that Metis children can achieve success in the formidable years of education. Our families deserve to see bright futures where education and learning are the tools that they will utilize moving forward.”

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The MNC represents the Métis Nation in Canada at the national and international levels. The Métis Nation's homeland includes the 3 Prairie Provinces and extends into the contiguous parts of British Columbia, Ontario, the Northwest Territories and the United States. There are approximately 400,000 Métis Nation citizens in Canada, roughly a quarter of all Aboriginal peoples in the country.