

President's Message

March 12, 2013

Friday March 8th, 2013: This day will be forever known as the new beginning. Our time has come. I promised to advance our MMF Land Claim all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada to seek justice. We have fulfilled this promise. The Supreme Court of Canada in its decision has recognized the injustice committed against the Metis People.

Before I go on, I want to quote here from our great Metis Leader Louis Riel. This is a tribute that is as fitting today as it was over a hundred years ago: "There were two societies who treated together. One was small, but in its smallness had its rights. The other was great, but in its greatness had no greater rights than the rights of the small..." This is a remarkable insight.

The decision is about a solemn promise made in the 1870 Manitoba Act to provide 1.4 million acres of land to our children to give them a head start before newcomers swamped them. This solemn promise was not kept. Our lands were lost through the delay and inaction of the Canadian Government. The Metis children were swindled and their land stolen. The Metis were displaced and dispersed throughout and beyond our Homeland.

I am excited to say this Supreme Court decision will have the biggest impact on the Metis People since the Battle of Batoche. But this time we won! Our People will always stand up for what is right! This has not only been a 32-year legal challenge but part of our Metis Nation's larger struggle for its right to exist since the Battle of Seven Oaks. We are a nation with a history and rights that are often ignored. But no longer!

The Supreme Court recognized the truth of our Metis history and vindicated our People's 143-year-old struggle for justice. That is a start. The steps forward will need to be in partnership with positive benefits for not only the Metis but also for our neighbours in Manitoba and indeed across western Canada. We believe Canadians want to do the right thing. Canadians have principles and values and know what to do.

However, we should not rest and believe that everything will fall easily into place. To resolve the injustice recognized by the Supreme Court, we will need to have a plan of action to ensure there will be tangible and reasonable objectives and results. I want to ensure my people that I am already developing this strategy to impress upon the Federal Government and Canadians as to why and how this can be done.

The MMF will pursue the best opportunities for our People. On the other hand, there will be governments, organizations, institutions, and even individuals, who will attempt to challenge and divide us on this Land Claim as well as on other issues that will impact the Metis. Our battles did not end with this Supreme Court decision. Together, we will stand and protect the rights and interests of our Metis Nation and our Manitoba Metis Community.

The Metis are Canada's negotiating partners in Confederation. The Federal Government was the other partner. And they left the table. Now, with this decision, we expect the Government to come back to the table. This has been called the unfinished business of Confederation. It is

now time for the partners to work together to finish this equitably and honourably. I look forward to having a good discussion with the Prime Minister.

In finishing this business, I want to make it clear that we will not take away the properties or homes of our neighbours in and around Winnipeg in what was originally called the Postage Stamp Province. We know the pain and suffering when people lose their homes. We do not want others to go through what we went through. We do not want them to experience the same violence or feel the same fears that our families went through, and, all too often, still go through.

I want to thank our Ancestors, as mothers and fathers, and as children, who suffered under the reign of terror, paid a horrible price, and lost their lands. I also want to give thanks for the tremendous support of our Metis Government elected representatives, our dedicated staff, and our community leaders who put their hearts and souls into the struggle.

And, I want to give special thanks to the Metis People who gave me the direction to continue to fight this long battle in the courts right up to the end. I thank our Elders for their prayers. Thank you for your faith, strength, and dedication to standing up and righting the wrongs against the Metis Nation.

It is our dream, mine and that of each and every one of our Citizens, that our Youth of the next and coming generations will be able to walk with confidence and pride that their little Metis Nation will finally have its rightful place in Canadian Confederation.

Meeqwetch.