

## President's Message

Metis artist David Garneau has a series of paintings entitled "Cowboys and Indians (and Metis?)." With "thought bubbles" his characters ask: "Metis?" This question is asked in the context of our modern popular culture. This question is very relevant to understanding Metis recognition and the relationships between us and other Canadians now and in the future. The Metis were once known as the Forgotten People. Today we remain, more often than not, forgotten or ignored.

Recent reporting by the Winnipeg Free Press continues to perpetuate this perception. According to the article, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers were to honour First Nations at their first seasonal home game and the Investors Group Field official opening. I congratulate the First Nation membership for their recognition at this event. But there is a shameful error on this historic and monumental occasion - the Metis are missing.

According to the article there is a growing recognition of "which treaty territory we live on and whose traditional lands we share..." and upon "rebuilding the relationship between First Nations and all other Canadians." It also went on to say the football club "should be thanked for having the foresight to honour the ground upon which Investors Group Field is built - Treaty 1 territory..."

Hello? Blue Bomber Management were you asleep when planning this event? Winnipeg Free Press Editors, were you napping when editing the article? The stadium is built in Winnipeg, formerly called the Red River Settlement, which is the Heart of the Metis Nation Homeland. This is Metis Traditional Territory. Where and when were you going to give that recognition? Is it exclusively about Cowboys and Indians, and nobody else?

How again could the Metis have been forgotten or ignored? In our recent March 2013 win at the Supreme Court, in *MMF v Canada and Manitoba*, the Metis were recognized as an Indigenous People. Since 1982 we have been recognized in the Constitution as one of the Canada's Aboriginal Peoples. In 2003 the Supreme Court affirmed the Metis were Canada's negotiating partners in confederation. The 2009 Goodon Decision confirmed our Metis traditional territory included Winnipeg.

Often, when I attend workshops, conferences, luncheons, and dinners in Winnipeg, the master of ceremonies or speakers will thank the Treaty 1 First Nations for the welcome into their territory. The Metis are very rarely mentioned. This demonstrates ignorance, willful blindness or, as I hope is not the case, malicious intent. Not confined to one group, these individuals are from a broad spectrum of government, industry and other organizations.

Leader and activist Malcolm Norris, referring to the treatment of Metis, said "to be ignored is more vicious perhaps than to be oppressed." Our Ancestors made great sacrifices in founding Manitoba and building and defending Canada. Despite their struggles, hard work, dedication, and love of country, Metis contributions are not fully recognized nor the wrongs committed against the Metis fully acknowledged.

I assure our Citizens that we will lift this veil of ignorance through classroom education and public information campaigns, as well as by political and legal challenges. We do this to honour our Ancestors and Elders and for the benefit of our future generations.

Meeqwetch.