

## **For October 7, 2013 Publication Le Metis President's Message**

This year's MMF 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly on the September 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> weekend was a great success. The MMF AGA is by far the largest Assembly within the Metis Nation. As I described in an earlier President's Message, our AGA is an integral part of our Metis government structure for reporting, accountability, debate, discussion and direction. It is also an annual gathering our Metis community and celebration of our Metis culture.

Throughout the two days of business there were nearly 3,000 delegates attending the AGA. We were pleased that this year there were nearly 1,300 additional people participating virtually via our live video streaming. Over the coming years we will continue to develop further opportunities and facilitate involvement of delegates and observers either in-person or on-line.

This year our special AGA theme was "Our Time has Come!" in recognition of our March 2013 Supreme Court of Canada MMF Land Claim victory. This landmark decision has been called a "New Beginning" and we are confident it will provide a foundation upon which to build a legacy for the Manitoba Metis Community, our children, our Elders and our families.

As we all know, the Manitoba Metis are the Founders of Manitoba and Canada's Negotiating Partners in Confederation. In exchange for putting down our arms, section 31 of the Manitoba Act was a constitutional obligation and solemn promise to set aside 1.4 million acres of land to give our Metis children a "head start" over the expected influx of settlers from the east.

We emerged triumphant with the Supreme Court recognition of the historic injustices committed against our people as the result of persistent inattention, failure to act diligently, negligence, repeated mistakes, delays, and inaction by Canada. In its decision, the Supreme Court confirmed that constitutional obligation and solemn promise were not kept.

Since the beginning of our land claim struggle the Metis People have insisted we ensure tomorrow's children get that head start that was shamefully stolen from their ancestors. The Metis People have also made it clear that any money negotiated as part of a future land claim settlement agreement needs to be put into a trust fund to protect and grow a legacy.

I am happy to say that the Assembly unanimously passed a resolution to establish a Metis Trust Fund. There was not one vote against. This resolution called upon the MMF to create the Fund and that all monies received through a future negotiated collective claim settlement be put into the Fund to be safeguarded and used to responsibly benefit future generations. I thank our delegates for their wisdom and foresight.

I would like to thank Brandon Mayor Her Worship Shari Decter Hirst and Council for the warm welcome we received that weekend, and for the honour and respect given to the Metis by flying the Metis Nation Flag at City Hall. Brandon's citizens and business community without exception make us feel comfortable when we hold our AGA in their city. Undoubtedly we will be back.

I thank my MMF Board colleagues, our staff, service providers, and sponsors for their work and commitment in making the AGA an unqualified success. I also want to thank our Local Executive leadership and other delegates for their role in ensuring our Metis governance continues to be effective. I thank our Elders for their guidance and experience as well as our Youth for their energy and interest.

On Saturday night we held the Metis Jamboree. It was a great showcase of Metis Youth talent. All proceeds successfully raised went to the Bereavement Fund. I commend all the musicians and staff. The Bereavement Fund, along with others such as the Louis Riel Endowment Fund, the Protector Fund, Conservation Trust Fund, and the Metis Heritage Fund, is our people's way to raise money to give back to the community, to help each other in our times of need, and to protect our rights and culture.

During the AGA weekend, the Infinity Women Secretariat held their First Inaugural Annual General Assembly. I congratulate Anita Campbell on her election to the important position of Spokesperson. As per the MMF Constitution, in her role, Metis women will continue to have a strong voice on the MMF Board of Directors and ensure women's views and issues are brought forward.

I thank all the VIPs who attended the Assembly. I thank Manitoba Deputy Premier Eric Robinson who spoke in place of the Premier, Reg Helwer PC MLA on behalf of Brian Pallister, as well as Dr. Jon Gerrard. I want to give special recognition to the federal party representatives: NDP MP Pat Martin for his words on behalf of his leader Tom Mulcair as well as Federal Liberal MP Carolyn Bennett who introduced the video greeting provided by Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau.

In all cases these federal party representations at the Assembly made it clear that they support our land claim and made explicit commitments that if either ever holds the balance of power, or becomes the government, they will ensure the government enters negotiations with the MMF to reach a land claims agreement. We have been reassured that Canadians know how to keep a promise, and that these representatives and the parties they lead are committed to a renewal our constitutional partnership.

I offer my prayers and give condolences for all of you who have lost family, friends, and neighbours. I ask that you please pray for the good health of those who are sick or shut-in. Best wishes to all.

Believe in yourself – Believe in Metis!

Meeqwetch,