

President's Message

April 10, 2014

In my most recent President's Message, I spoke about last month's court decision concerning the illegal meetings and unconstitutional attempts by Metis Nation Saskatchewan (MNS) President Robert Doucette to remove the majority of the MNS Board of Directors from their duly-elected and democratically-held positions. We were pleased to read the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench judgment that, we hope, has put a stop to Doucette's shenanigans.

I believe it is again worth repeating what the judge had said in the final paragraphs of his judgment: "[...] it is important for all parties to honour their Constitution and follow the directions set out in the Constitution." I, and my MMF Board colleagues, believe this to be critically important. Our MMF governance and our MMF land claim are all based on the honourable implementation of directions set out in the MMF Constitution, and the Canadian Constitution including the Manitoba Act.

What is a constitution? In the dictionary it has been variously defined, but it is best understood as a "set" or "system of fundamental laws and principles that prescribes the nature, functions, and limits of a government or another institution." That is a technical term that does not quite reach to the heart of its importance and meaning. It is the core of our governance. The MMF Constitution is the foundation of our Metis Government upon which we build our Nation.

The MMF constitutional objectives include what I trust to be the core principles, indeed the heart, and soul, of our MMF governance and the democratic beliefs of the Metis People. This is stated in black and white in the fifth objective on the first page of the Constitution. It says the MMF is: "to provide responsible and accountable governance on behalf of the Manitoba Metis Community using the constitutional authorities delegated by its members."

In September 2013, at the 45th Annual General Assembly, the nearly 3,000 delegates passed ten constitutional amendments. These were proposed and brought forward by the MMF Board of Directors and distributed to the Local Executive prior to the Assembly as per the rules of the MMF Constitution. These constitutional amendments are important and I encourage you to visit the MMF website, or get a published hardcopy, and review the Constitution.

Some of these changes to the MMF Constitution were editorial in nature, such as the change of the name of Metis Women of Manitoba to Infinity Women Secretariat Inc. Some on the other hand were substantial. One of the major milestones was the incorporation of our Metis Harvesting Initiative. This initiative is one of our premier self-government institutions. Just as our democratic rights are protected, our resource harvesting rights are protected through constitutional recognition.

So there is now a new Article XVII in the MMF Constitution with the title "Metis

Harvesting Initiative.” This Initiative comprises the structures, policies and procedures enabling and regulating the exercise of the Manitoba Metis Community’s collectively-held harvesting rights recognized in section 35 of Canada’s *Constitution Act, 1982*.

The Metis Harvesting Initiative, as it is now enshrined in our Constitution, includes, but is not limited to, the: Metis Harvester Registration; and Metis Harvester Identification Cards; Metis Conservation Trust Fund; Metis Management System; and the Metis Laws of the Harvest. These were the directions set out by our citizens and recommended by the Commission on the Metis Laws of the Hunt.

The MMF has consistently taken the position that we must always ensure the greatest number of voters are able to legitimately participate in the MMF elections. One such resolution was to clarify the voting procedures including the acceptable proof of identity. Another resolution, one of the ten that were passed and now found in the revised Constitution, is to help ensure the List of Electors is complete.

One amendment states that, in the event, an individual has made application for membership in the MMF prior to the date on which the Chief Electoral Officer gives notice of the date of the Election, and that application is processed and the individual is approved by the Central Registry Office prior to Election Day, the Chief Electoral Officer shall add the name of the new member to the List of Electors on Election Day. This ensures the electoral list is as up to date as possible.

Again, I encourage our citizens to take the time to review our MMF Constitution. It is the rulebook that we here at the MMF follow to provide democratic, responsible and accountable self-government for our Metis Community. The MMF Board of Directors and myself are thankful to have been given the direction from our citizens and the responsibility and honour to protect, preserve, and implement our Constitution on your behalf.

Meeqwetch,