

Le Metis President's Message

November 17, 2014

This past weekend, November 15th and 16th, the Manitoba Metis Federation held its 46th Annual General Assembly in Winnipeg. I want to thank all our Elders and Youth, dignitaries, delegates, sponsors, supporters, and staff, as well as my ministerial colleagues for making this year's AGA another outstanding success. Over the course of the weekend, there were in excess of 3,000 participants on the main floor, in the workshops, meetings, presentations and other events. I am pleased that, with the unity and dedication of all, we continue to have the largest assembly across the Metis Nation Homeland.

I want to congratulate all our Youth who attended the Youth Conference. They are among our future leaders and it is good to see there was a great turnout again this year. It's important for them to see the opportunities that are available to them for education and employment, and other life choices. We have a responsibility to offer them the information and experience so they can make those choices for the benefit of their future and those who will follow in their footsteps. I also congratulate all our performers at the Youth Gala Concert that took place at the Burton Cummings Theatre. It was an awesome show.

November 16th was also Louis Riel Commemoration Day. Louis Riel is our great Metis Leader, Statesman, Father of Confederation and Founder of Manitoba. He was also a father, uncle, husband and a son to his family and a friend, guide, and helper to friends and neighbours. It is on this day each year, since 1886, that many Metis have made the pilgrimage to Louis Riel's gravesite to honour his memory, give respects and to celebrate his life achievements. I want to thank all those who were able to be there this weekend despite the cold winds, snow, and icy roads.

There were a number of important announcements made at the AGA. An announcement was made with regards to the development of a partnership with Forbes Brothers Ltd: Power Line Construction, who are the owners of Interlake Power Line here in Manitoba. With this new partnership there are unequalled opportunities for economic and business development for the mutual benefit of Industry and the Manitoba Metis Community. Another major and important announcement done at the AGA was jointly made by the MMF, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro. We have agreed to work collectively build a constructive and productive working relationship.

As I said immediately following the Hydro announcement, this agreement represents a historic turning point in the Manitoba Metis Community's relationship with the Government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. This relationship has often been challenging, and the Metis have been left out of the benefits of the resource developments in our territories, but we believe the "Kwaysh-kin-na-mihk la paazh" Agreement will turn the page and provide a solid foundation for us to focus on our future by working together. We anticipate the completion and signing of the final agreement by the end of the week.

The assembly passed a historic resolution this past weekend. The resolution passed allows citizens of the Manitoba Metis Community who live outside the province to join the MMF. This means they no longer need to be residents of the province. No matter where they live they can join if they can show their connection to the Manitoba Metis Community. We will no longer allow artificial boundaries divide our community and families.

This resolution dealt solely with citizenship. It did not change the MMF governance structure nor did it deal with service delivery or harvesting rights outside of the province. The resolution states that residency in the province of Manitoba is no longer a requirement to join the MMF. What is important is that the applicant must show his or her connection to the Manitoba Metis Community. Arbitrary borders not of Metis choosing will not be allowed to split our community apart.

This is only a quick briefing on all that went on this weekend. I hope that those of you who could not attend the AGA in person were able to watch us on the Internet with the live stream online video broadcast. I am already hearing from viewers that the video was a fantastic way for Metis Citizens to see the presentations and get the news. I have received many thanks for all the communications and inclusive approach that we take to reach our Citizens from across the province and beyond.

I offer prayers and condolences for all who have lost family and friends. I also ask that you please pray for the good health of those who are sick or shut-in. Please be sure to give each other a hug. Best wishes to all.

Believe in yourself – Believe in Metis!

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