

## **For October 8, 2015 Publication Le Metis President's Message**

These past few weeks have been very busy and will continue to be for the next few. I am sure you haven't missed all the TV advertising and mail, and the knocking on your door. Coming soon on October 19 is the 2015 Federal Election. This is less than two weeks away. Each election the MMF helps you in finding out what the federal political parties are doing for the Metis. We do this by sending them questions. Visit our MMF website at [www.mmf.mb.ca/elections.php](http://www.mmf.mb.ca/elections.php) to read their responses.

I want to spread the message that in all elections we need your help. Voting in this federal election is particularly crucial. We have in this election what can be called "a perfect storm" for the candidates, their parties, and their leaders. Your vote may be the one that makes the difference on which party forms the next government. I am not asking you to vote for any particular party, nor am I telling you how to vote. What I am asking is you come out and vote. Take the five or fifteen minutes, or whatever it takes, to put your "x" on the ballot. Show the parties that they must listen to you. Stand up and be counted.

I am pleased to say this year we have again had a successful MMF Annual General Assembly (AGA) which took place this past week on September 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> in Winnipeg. Over the course of the AGA weekend there were nearly 3,000 delegates attending to the main hall ceremonies and activities, the tradeshow, the youth conference and other sessions and meetings, as well as the evening banquet which was hosted by our own Metis government-owned Metis N4 Construction.

Among the dignitaries we welcomed to the AGA were Premier Greg Selinger, our Metis National Council President Clement Chartier, Minister of Justice and Attorney General Gord Mackintosh, Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Tom Nevaakshonoff, Mayor Brian Bowman, Women of the Metis Nation President Melanie Omenho, and Infinity Women Secretariat Spokesperson Anita Campbell. We also welcomed a number of federal election candidates, including Metis candidate Dan Vandal.

At our AGA the MMF gave special recognition to our past Board Director and Elder Marielee Nault. As you may already know, Marielee passed away earlier this year. Her passing saddened us: her family and friends. This year, we awarded her our Manitoba Order of the Sash which her husband accepted on her family's behalf. The Manitoba Order of the Sash has only been awarded to a few, and it is the highest honour to be awarded by the Manitoba Metis. Marielee will be missed.

The success of this year's AGA, like past years, is only possible with the hard work of our elected representatives, staff, contractors, volunteers and members, and our corporate sponsors and partners who participated in the support, planning, and implementation. I want to thank everyone who helped make this year's AGA a success.

The Metis have constitutional rights to harvest in our traditional lands and the Province has the constitutional obligation to manage the same resources. At the AGA I signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Premier Selinger, witnessed by Conservation and

Water Stewardship Minister NevaKshonoff, and Minister of Justice Macintosh. This MOU puts in place a date sensitive timeline and concrete steps that will lead to a further recognition of our traditional territory and our Metis Laws of the Harvest. The MOU includes adding, within six months, further Game Hunting Areas to the Metis Harvesting Zone. These will be north of The Pas and in and around the Grass River as well as in the southeast in the Manigotagan area.

In October there is also the upcoming Supreme Court hearing of the Daniels case which has been appealed from an earlier decision by the Federal Court of Appeal. At the Court of Appeal, the MMF directly intervened and was able to have our arguments recognized, accepted, and repeated by the court in its decision. This time, the MMF will be intervening as part of the Metis National Council (MNC) submission to the Supreme Court.

There is a principle that with jurisdiction and authority come responsibilities and obligations. We argue the Metis are “Indians” for the purposes of interpreting 91(24) of the Canadian Constitution. Metis under 91(24) means the federal government has exclusive legislative authority for the Metis. Canada can no longer hide from its responsibilities by saying it does not have jurisdiction for the Metis. In the past, Metis issues fell between the cracks and were not addressed because of Canada’s denial.

As I have in earlier speeches and messages, I want to assure our Metis Citizens that this does not mean the Metis will be Indian, either status or non-status, or registered, as we normally think of the terms. In this case, in this section of the constitution, it is the more general meanings of native, aborigine, aboriginal, or indigenous people. The Metis will remain a distinct people under 91(24) and we will always be known as Otepayemsuak, the independent ones, the ones who own themselves and are their own bosses.

Earlier court decisions, such as our MMF v Canada Land Claim Decision, have made it clear there is a fiduciary relationship between Canada and the Metis. We anticipate with a positive Supreme Court decision, it will be made clear the Metis are within the jurisdiction and hence a responsibility of Canada. This will have positive consequences for our access to federal programs and services, and for the protection of our lands and rights.

Upon closing this week’s President’s message, I offer my prayers for our friends, family, and neighbours who have passed on. I also offer my sympathies and my condolences to those among you who have lost someone you loved and who will be dearly missed. My hopes to those who are sick or shut in, and my best wishes to all.

Meeqwetch,