

President's Message

April 21, 2016

Last week the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) was a VICTORY for the Métis Nation. We have worked towards this recognition since the beginning of Confederation in 1867. In its landmark ruling the SCC affirmed Canada has a constitutional and jurisdictional responsibility for the Métis Nation under s. 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

In its decision, Justice Abella of the SCC wrote "The history of Canada's relationship with its Indigenous peoples, inequities are increasingly revealed and remedies urgently sought...This case represents another chapter in the pursuit of reconciliation and redress in that relationship." The judgment also clearly "recognized that Métis...have no one to hold accountable for the inadequate status quo". The Court went on to describe it as Métis left in a "jurisdictional wasteland". Well, my Friends, this is to END that discrimination of policies that has treated us so wrong.

This historic SCC decision places a clear duty upon the federal government to negotiate with the MMF, the democratically elected representative government of the Métis Nation's Manitoba Métis Community. This will set up a new framework between Canada and the Métis. It is a good ruling for the Citizens of the Métis Nation – a Nation born and raised in Manitoba's Red River Valley – the heart of the Métis Nation Homeland.

Many of our Métis Citizens have been contacting their government about what this decision exactly means for the Métis Nation. Some have asked about whether or not Métis are now 'Indians'. Well, the easy answer is NO; we are still a proud Métis Nation. Others have asked will we be placed on reserves. NO. Some have asked does this mean we will still have to pay taxes. Maybe.

While the SCC decision has an immediate bearing on the responsibilities of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), it also requires all departments of the federal government, including INAC, to negotiate with the MMF to fully understand it's far reaching implication and implement it's full promise. I believe this is the beginning of some sunny days for the Métis Nation. However, we must be patient and we must be wise in our discussions as we negotiate a modern treaty with Canada.

The Métis National Council is preparing a series of plain speaking questions and answers that will help our Métis Citizens understand the full implication of this decision and what our next steps will be as we continue to negotiate with and be reconciled to Canada. I have directed our Communications Department to share this with our Métis Citizens as soon as they have this information. We will be sharing it online at www.mmf.mb.ca, using social media such as Facebook and Twitter; we will

also be sending it to our Regional Offices and to our Locals. We will be publishing it in Le Metis and sharing at our Regional and Local meetings.

This decision has also renewed interest in Citizenship with the Métis Nation. We are very excited about this and are looking forward to welcoming our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, cousins and our extended families. The Central Registry Office is currently preparing important videos, advertisements, brochures and information packages on Citizenship that we will be sharing with you in the very near future. In the meantime, if you have any questions about Citizenship with the Métis Nation, wish to renew your Citizenship card, or bring your contact information up to date so we can share important news with you, I invite you to get in touch with the Central Registry Office at (204) 586-8474. You can also find the latest news from your Métis government on our website or Facebook page.

Finally, I want to share with you again that very soon we will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Canada that will help prepare the way for formalizing a framework for settling our land claims. Both this and the recent SCC decision complements and reaffirms our rights under s. 35 of the Constitution as one of Canada's three Indigenous Peoples. The Métis Citizens of Manitoba and its representative government – the Manitoba Metis Federation – look forward to advancing a path of reconciliation and a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with Canada. As I said after our land claim decision in March 2013: our time has come and our time is now!

In closing, I offer my best wishes for those who are sick or shut-in. May they be blessed with healing, health, and peace. I pray for and share my heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies for all our neighbours, friends, and families who have lost loved ones. May they be comforted during this difficult time.

Meeqwetch,

PULL QUOTE: Read this historic landmark decision by the Supreme Court at <http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/15858/index.do>