

President's Message

June 30, 2016

Métis Harvesters are responsible hunters, fishers, and trappers. We are the original conservationists. The Métis understand this truth: with rights come responsibilities. Our people harvest in a way that ensures there is fish, wildlife, and plants for food and medicine left for future generations.

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) – the self-governing body of Manitoba's Métis Community – developed the Metis Laws of the Harvest through consultation with our Elders and Métis Citizens. These Laws recognize our inherent right to harvest while acknowledging our inherent responsibility for good conservation and resource management. Any Métis Harvester abiding by the Metis Laws of the Harvest will be protected if they are prosecuted or harassed by the Province.

There seems to be some confusion regarding the inherent rights of the Métis People. Recently, the RM of Pipestone passed a resolution and created a petition calling on the Provincial government to regulate Métis Harvesters and create special zones for Métis hunting. They intended to bring this to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) Western District Meeting. Using common sense, and knowing their jurisdiction, the AMM refused to hear it.

What the RM fails to understand is neither they, nor the Province, nor anyone else has the ability to extinguish the existing and inherent rights of the Métis Nation, as recognized and affirmed in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. The Métis have an inherent right to harvest. We will continue to exercise this right and anyone who tries to tell us otherwise will find themselves on the costly side of a losing argument.

The Métis have always supported and protected our families, our community and our way of life. We have done this for many generations, and continues today. We must remember the actions and leadership of those generations before us. Just recently, delegates from across the Métis Homeland gathered here in Winnipeg – the birthplace of the Métis Nation and Heart of the Métis Nation Homeland – to commemorate Cuthbert Grant Jr.

It was 200 years ago on June 19th that Grant led a group of Métis across Frog Plain to deliver supplies to their partners on Lake Winnipeg. They did so in defiance of an oppressive proclamation by the Hudson Bay Company (HBC), which sought to prevent them from freely trading and providing for their families. On their way, Governor Semple of the HBC and his men confronted them. The Métis were victorious. Now known by many as the Battle of Seven Oaks, this served as a catalyst for the crystallization of our identity as the Métis Nation. For the Métis, this is rightly known as La Victoire de la Grenouillère – the Victory of Frog Plain.

Again, I wish to emphasize the Métis have inherent rights as Aboriginal people. We will defend these rights. They are not subject to the whims, fallacies or actions of outside agencies, governments or individuals. We take our responsibilities seriously. Our Metis Laws of the Harvest prove this.

In closing, I offer my thoughts and prayers for those who are shut-in or are having difficult times through failing health, sickness or loss. May you find company, encouragement, and help through your connections with family, friends and community. I wish you the best as you enjoy these warm summer days.

Meeqwetch,