

President's Message
August 25, 2016

For long years, the Métis have been self-sufficient. Before Canada became a country, we – the Country Born, the Bois-Brûlés, the Otipemisiwak, the Métis, Michif – were thriving. Our families were the great bison hunters of the Plains. We traveled great distances by Red River Cart and York Boat to trade with our partners, crossing vast prairies, rivers and lakes in the East, North, South and West. We helped tame the Northwest and brought the province of Manitoba into Confederation with Canada.

When we treated with Canada - as it sought to expand westward - we negotiated a land grant that was to provide for our children for generations. However, as history has shown and as we have proven in the Supreme Court of Canada, we were robbed of this promise.

We fought decades to right this historical injustice and to secure what was committed to us. Along the way we worked in good faith with the federal and provincial governments, despite both not always reciprocating. Through our efforts we have been able to negotiate a partial recognition of our rights and interests in such areas as harvesting, education, economic development and self-governance. More are yet to come!

There is much more we can offer all levels of government – federal, Aboriginal, provincial and municipal. For example, there is the port in Churchill. We have investors, capital firms, economic development expertise and so forth that can help lend perspective and opportunity to our northern villages. Then there are housing initiatives and experience we have to offer for Métis, First Nation and Inuit. Again we have investors, expertise and capacity to bring improved housing to many Indigenous communities.

Another good example of where we can help is with natural resources such as the freshwater fishery. Recently, the provincial government made an announcement about opening up the freshwater fishery so fishers in Manitoba can sell their catch directly to anyone looking to buy any of the species readily available in our lakes. The Manitoba Métis government applauds this direction and we are cautiously optimistic this could mean economic opportunities for our Métis fishers and their families. However, for the best chance of success, the Métis must be consulted and included in an advisory capacity as the provincial government explores alternatives to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC).

The Métis make up the majority of commercial fishers in Manitoba. They and their families and communities rely on the fisheries' sustainability and the income it generates. It is critically important they receive the full benefits of their experience, knowledge, and hard work on the lakes.

It is very important to listen to what the fishers have to say. As the government of Manitoba's Métis, the MMF will start a process of province-wide consultation with fishers by early fall to develop a coordinated response to the provincial government's

announcement about the FFMC and the freshwater fish industry. In the meantime, the MMF is pursuing answers from the provincial government to the fishers' questions and concerns we have already received.

We are continuing our consultation with our Métis Citizens on the important issue of developing a framework for our upcoming negotiations with Canada on our collective land claim. This past week, I was in St. Lazare, Brandon, and Winnipeg where again I heard great feedback, questions and suggestions from you about how we should proceed as we seek to settle this outstanding grievance and repair the rift in the national fabric of Canada.

We have been collecting the feedback and questions we have been receiving at our community consultations and through inquiries made to the MMF and our land claims email account - ideas@mmf.mb.ca. We will provide you with a report at our upcoming AGA taking place September 23 - 25 at Assiniboia Downs in Winnipeg. We will also share these details at the same time on our website at www.mmf.mb.ca and through our Regional Offices across Manitoba. Keep an eye on our website for important updates regarding these important community consultations.

Finally, I wish to give my thoughts and prayers for those who are shut-in, ill or have cause for grief. May you find comfort and strength in community with family and friends. I wish you all the best and safe journeys this summer as you get out and enjoy times together at home and away.

Meeqwetch,