

September 8, 2016

President's Message

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) has had many accomplishments and successes on your behalf - the Métis Nation's Manitoba Métis Community - during this past year. We will have much to discuss at the upcoming 48th Annual General Assembly (AGA). The reporting in the areas of economic development, and of course our land claim, for instance, shows how far we have advanced since our previous AGA. We have also had further Supreme Court and Special Ministerial successes, as well as others, during this past year.

This year our AGA takes place from September 23rd to the 25th at the Assiniboia Downs located at 3975 Portage Avenue on Winnipeg's western edge. With approximately 3,000 delegates expected, based on past assembly attendances, it remains by far the largest assembly in the Métis Nation Homeland. I can't emphasize enough that you should come down to the Assiniboia Downs and experience the year's largest Métis political, cultural and social event. Our first day includes a special workshop on the MMF land claim while the next two days follow our regular AGA agenda. Part of AGA will be a Youth Conference. I suggest that our youth contact the MMF Employment and Training department at (204) 586-8474 or their local Regional Office for more information.

Since the 1960s the AGA has been a central piece of our self-governance structure. It is a time each year when our Métis Citizens can review our record, analyze accomplishments, celebrate successes, give direction, and provide suggestions where we may have room to improve. The AGA gives the delegates of our Métis Community an unequalled forum to set our goals and provide direction on upcoming investments and future priorities.

I am pleased to announce that among the economic development initiatives to be reported at the AGA will be the historic Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) recently signed between the MMF's construction arm, Metis N4 Construction, and a leading Chinese housing developer Beijing Yingdong Industrial Ltd. This JVA was put together to bring innovative green technology to Canada to meet the housing needs of Indigenous and northern communities. The JVA includes the participation of JNE Consulting firm out of Hamilton, Canada, to ensure the products are engineered to Canadian housing standards. The JVA is the result of relationships that have developed over many years.

This is the kind of work that the MMF undertakes on your behalf as the effective Métis self-government of the Manitoba Métis Community. This work is in turn accountable back to you. The MMF's effectiveness, as well as its accountability to our Citizens, is due to our democratic elections but also due to ongoing reporting at the AGA and at our Regional Assemblies. Our constitutionally mandated AGA is fundamental. It is through the assembly that the will and authority of our People is both expressed and confirmed each year.

At this year's AGA, our MMF Ministers will again report on their portfolio and departmental activities. There will be reports touching on all aspects of your Métis government. These range from audit and financials, our national office, and the Infinity Women Secretariat, self-government negotiations, natural resources, rights, and health, as well as economic development and land claims as mentioned earlier. This is to name only a few of the areas.

It's coming up fast. Put a note on your calendar. The MMF AGA happens in less than three weeks. While at the AGA from September 23rd through 25th in Winnipeg, I look forward to seeing you there.

We anticipate this year's AGA to be a milestone date towards justice on our land claim. Together we achieved our Supreme Court victory. Then we signed an MOU with Canada. Now we must take our next steps. Our negotiating teams are working hard on a draft framework agreement to be brought to the AGA based on what we will have heard by the conclusion of our land claim community consultations. A framework agreement sets out the structure of formal land claim negotiations and, once approved by the Canadian cabinet and the MMF, provides a mandate for the negotiations.

As we move forward, the MMF continues our consultations across the province. Please check out our website at www.mmf.mb.ca for scheduling and other important information. I also recommend you contact your Local Executive and Regional Office for news. As we request at each consultation workshop, please ask questions and share your ideas on what you want to see in our collective claim's framework agreement. What kinds of things do you want us to negotiate? You can send these directly to us at ideas@mmf.mb.ca.

Since we started our MMF Land Claim struggle you insisted tomorrow's children must get the head start that was shamefully stolen from their Ancestors: that we must remember our Ancestors' collective political, legal and military struggles. Their sacrifices shape tomorrow for our children, grandchildren, and future generations. It is important we make the right decisions honouring their sacrifice. Together as the Manitoba Métis Community, we will make important decisions and implement our vision of the future.

I offer prayers for family and friends who have passed, and condolences for all who have lost those close. Please pray for the good health of those who are sick or shut-in and cannot attend this upcoming assembly. I ask you be sure to give each other a hug. Best wishes to all.

Meeqwetch,