

President's Message

January 26, 2017

Despite the great things happening in and for the Métis Nation regarding reconciliation, recognition and acknowledgement of our constitutionally protected rights, there is still much work to be done and much knowledge to share with our Métis Citizens, other Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in general. Recent remarks made in the media only serves to underline the ignorance and rhetoric being spread in the public concerning Aboriginal rights.

I am a little disappointed Premier Pallister would take the approach that existing misconceptions and prejudiced attitudes by an ill-informed section of the population regarding Aboriginal constitutional rights amounts to a 'race war'. Such rhetoric as this is inflammatory. It only serves to sow division and distrust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

And it isn't only the Premier. Just recently councillors and reeves from the southwest part of Manitoba chose to take the low road of innuendo and misinformation by falsely claiming Métis hunters were overhunting and abusing our right to provide food for our families. However, when pressed for proof, none could be found.

Our Métis harvesters are not overhunting. Our Métis harvesters follow the Metis Laws of the Harvest safely and responsibly. These laws were prepared through consultation with our Harvesters and our Elders. They have evolved from laws that began more than a century ago with the Laws of the Hunt that Métis Buffalo hunters created, respected and followed. Our existing laws respect the resources we harvest and have been developed with an eye for responsible and sustainable conservation. These laws will continue to adapt to our changing environment and reality as Métis Harvesters, Elders and their duly elected Métis Government work together to ensure our resources continue meeting the needs of our family and Métis community.

Let me be clear. We will not take direction from others on how we exercise our constitutional rights as the Métis Nation. We will not permit them the opportunity to try and extinguish or prevent the rights of our Métis Harvesters through rumour and innuendo based on false claims and baseless accusations. Their accusations are not based in safety concerns or conservation efforts. There are simply no facts to not support any claims that they have made to suggest it is Métis rights-based harvesters who are the problem with night hunting or overhunting. Your Métis Government and I, as its President, will fight to protect our constitutional rights as Métis Citizens.

Speaking of Métis rights, I am travelling to Ottawa this week for a Summit meeting between Prime Minister Trudeau and the Métis Nation. The MMF, as one of the five governing members of the Métis Nation, will be signing an agreement with Canada. We will outline a number of important issues and priorities that the Métis Nation will meet about with the Government of Canada throughout the year. We anticipate this being a productive meeting. While the MMF has been advancing reconciliation on a number of issues related directly to the Manitoba Métis – also known as the Red River Métis – we will also be working with the other governing members of the Métis Nation to ensure a more secure recognition extends all across the Métis Nation Homeland.

I look forward to sharing more good news on reconciliation and acknowledgement of Métis rights in the areas of governance and self-determination. I have said it often before, and I say it again, Our Time Has Come!

We are part of a mighty Métis Nation. We have endured many difficulties, losses and persecutions. We still have battles to fight, and let us remain vigilant. Many have given their lives, their families and their reputations to fight on our behalf. Let us honour them by our faithfulness to their vision for our lasting place in this great country.

Finally, I wish to give my thoughts and prayers to every Métis Citizen in Manitoba – particularly those who have cause to grieve or who are sick. Continue to support and encourage one another. Be well. Be safe. May your homes and villages be strengthened through the harmony of family and unity of purpose.

Meeqwetch,