

President's Message

August 9, 2017

This summer we are taking the deep roots of our struggles since the early 1800s, weaving those together with today's achievements and creating a constitutionally protected self-government.

Before Confederation, the Métis had complete authority to create their own laws and exercise their inherent rights without outside interference. That gave us more strength and expression in how we meet the identified needs of our Citizens. To accomplish this again, it is time to formalize a fully recognized, independent Métis Government. Where the Métis Community stands today is a direct result of the strong leadership provided by the Manitoba Métis Federation.

When I was first elected 20 years ago, I made a promise to the Métis Citizens that I would pursue our Land Claim and take it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. With the full support of our Métis Citizens, and the Métis Government's elected representatives and staff, I did that: we were victorious. That win at the Supreme Court, coupled with success in other areas, will now give us the leverage to secure full self-government for Manitoba's Métis. This was a promise made and is now the promise is being fulfilled.

Formalizing a self-government agreement provides us with authorities and jurisdictions to enable Manitoba Métis Citizens to exercise their collective rights and interests without interference from other governments. Building on historical milestones, such as the policy development and legal recognition of our Métis harvesting laws, and our constitutionally protected recognition of the Manitoba Métis Government is a natural evolutionary process of governance. It will provide a strong foundation for responding to and meeting the evolving needs of the Métis Community.

It means not being affected by political ideologies and changes in other governments who may not share or recognize the vision and priorities of the Métis. It also empowers the Métis Government to negotiate stable, long-term fiscal relationships between the federal and provincial governments. Furthermore, this fulfills and protects the right of every confirmed Métis to be recognized and registered as Citizens of Manitoba's Métis Community – a right that cannot be revoked or rescinded.

I am excited to travel throughout the province this summer to share with you our progress on this important step in self-government. Also, at these scheduled community meetings, we will also be exploring how we will exercise our rights in harvesting in the area of night hunting and night lighting. Already I have met with the Citizens of Southwest Manitoba to discuss this topic. As I said at that meeting, we will never extinguish our inherent rights, though we may change how we exercise them. The laws we established under the direction of our Elders and harvesters have been accepted by the province of Manitoba. During times where some Conservation Officers felt otherwise, we have remained victorious in the courts defending our hunting rights.

Other discussions we will be undertaking are around freshwater fish marketing. There is an opportunity for the Métis Government to explore purchasing the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. I am seeking your thoughts and input on this matter. Our Métis Fishers have traditional knowledge and wisdom on how to best manage and support a freshwater fishery. We

have often been ignored and discounted when we have made our position known. Maybe it is now time to take this matter into our own hands and build a sustainable system that meets the needs of our Citizens and benefits all fishers across the province. Be sure to stay tuned to our website, Le Metis, Metis Hour x 2, and the MMF social media channels so you are kept abreast of our upcoming meetings.

As always, should you have any thoughts, concerns or opinions regarding anything your Métis Government is undertaking on your behalf, we want to hear from you. There are numerous ways you can get in contact with your elected representatives. Get involved in your Locals. The Manitoba Metis Federation is a grassroots government. All our work begins with you at the Local level. You can also engage your Métis Government representatives at the Regional level. Your leaders would love to hear from you. You can also contact your Métis Government by email at communications@mmf.mb.ca or give us a call at the Home Office. (204) 586-8474 will get you in touch with our government.

In closing, I send my thoughts and prayers to you all, in particular to those who are shut-in, sick or have cause to grieve. Be kind to each other and help share one another's load. As Manitoba's Métis Community, we are a blessed and fortunate people. Let us share our blessings with each other and thereby enrich our families, our homes and our villages. Enjoy the remaining days of summer. I wish you all health and safety.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand