

President's Message
January 24, 2018

It is hard to believe that the month of January is almost over. I was fortunate enough to spend some time reconnecting with my family away from the office. But of course the work never stops for the Métis Government. Throughout January we were busily working on a number of key initiatives.

On January 15, our lawyer Jason Madden appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada. The purpose was to intervene in the case *Chief Courterelle and Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada*. The case challenges legislative changes made by the former Harper Government to Canada's environmental protection laws and regulatory scheme. These changes severely limited or removed protections relied upon by the Mikisew Cree to protect their traditional territory and Treaty rights. The Harper Government brought in these changes in an omnibus bill without notice or any consultation with the Mikisew Cree First Nation or any Indigenous peoples whose rights were potentially impacted by these changes.

As the voice of the Métis people in Manitoba it is the duty of the Manitoba Metis Federation to step into these court rooms and make sure that the voice of the Métis Citizens is heard. THERE SHOULD BE NO LAWS ABOUT US WITHOUT US. The issue that we must pay attention to here is that in the Constitution of Canada, there are provisions that protect Indigenous people. It is very clear that the duty to consult with Indigenous peoples necessary. If it is allowed that a legislation change can supersede the very essence of the protection provided through the Constitution, that would mean that provincial and federal governments can try to remove our rights as protected in the Constitution. This would have damaging effects for Indigenous peoples, particularly for the environment and natural resources. This case has a lot of potential harm, so the MMF has taken intervening status and we will be defending this matter in the Supreme Court.

On January 17, our other lawyer Murray Trachtenberg appeared before the Provincial Court in Manitoba. The Province cut funding to our Health and Wellness department, without any kind of notice or explanation, leaving us with \$650,000 less to provide for our Citizens. The health and wellness of our Métis Citizens may not be a priority for the Province of Manitoba, but it is for the Métis Nation. I am concerned with the health of every Métis Citizen and I have made it my mission to ensure every Métis Citizen will get the proper care they need. This is why I brought the Government of Manitoba to court.

As we speak I am in Ottawa attending an emergency meeting called by Minister Jane Philpott. The purpose is to review the child welfare system and find the gaps in service. I will be presenting a report about the current state of the system and our proposed changes to make the system work much more effectively in Manitoba and specifically in the Métis Community.

We offer incredible programs and services through the Metis Child and Family Services Authority and the Metis Community Liaison Department. These programs and services are

underfunded and the provincial and federal governments are dictating how we can spend the funds we do have. That doesn't allow us to put the money where it's needed most. The Daniels Case showed that there is a clear and direct fiduciary responsibility to meet the needs of the Métis people. I will present Minister Philpott with a very clear picture of the Métis child welfare system as it stands today, and where we know it needs to go.

In February I will be hosting an emergency meeting about the crisis facing our fishers. This is a main priority for the Métis Government. I am concerned for their livelihood and for the future of the fisheries industry. If you are a licensed, active fisher or processing plant operator, I invite you to join the meeting. Your voices need to be heard. I have also invited federal Fisheries, Oceans and Canada Coast Guard Minister Dominic LeBlanc and provincial Sustainable Development Minister Rochelle Squires to attend the meeting as well, because they need to hear the issues and be part of the solution. If you want to attend the meeting please contact our Engagement & Consultation department at 204-586-8474 to register.

In closing, I offer my thoughts and prayers to our Elders, our sick and our shut-ins. May you be safe, healthy and happy today and throughout the coming years.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand
Believe in Yourself – Believe in Metis.