

President's Message – May 2

There is a forward-thinking wall poster originally printed back in the 1970s. The poster had a photo of the earth as seen from outer space with the words “Think Globally – Act Locally.” These are words of wisdom our Manitoba Metis Community Citizens take seriously. For many years, we have searched for a sustainable future with responsible business decisions balanced by a better understanding of the larger ecological implications. We have and continue to do this in all our traditional economies.

These thoughts and actions have been part of our Metis traditions long before the printed poster. Trappers who leave areas alone to allow for furbearing populations to revive are an example. Harvesters not hunting during calving or nesting seasons; and, fishers fishing different lakes in rotation as well as not setting nets across spawning creeks are further examples of thinking about the future. These are local individual decisions with larger collective effects. This has always been our way of thinking. To do something contrary has always been considered irresponsible.

The Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), as your Manitoba Metis Government, has followed direction from our people and updated our traditional laws and consultation processes for the modern world. We know there are potential impacts from natural resource development on our Locals – but also, in some cases, on our claims, rights, and interests across the province. As well there can be far reaching environmental and economic implications across the Metis Nation Homeland, throughout Canada, and around the Globe. Some have described this as being part of a “Global Village.”

Our 2002 Report on the Commission on the Metis Laws of the Hunt reflected these principles with statements from our Elders, and other Community Citizens. It was said loud and clear that “along with our rights were responsibilities.” It also said it is not only about harvesting but it is “about everything.” The report led to the inescapable conclusion that the MMF needed to be a partner in environment resources management and in resource decision-making.

Our 2007 Resolution #8 has been the foundation of our engagement and consultation framework for our involvement in management and decision-making. One of the objectives of Resolution #8 is to avoid whenever possible the potential ecological impacts on our rights-based harvesting and our traditional economies. And provide options when it is not. We also have the right to be participants in the benefits of projects in our territory. When we consult and engage with Crown and industry proponents this is among our main objectives for our negotiations and agreements.

The federal government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has taken the “Think Globally – Act Locally” philosophy to heart. They have combined it with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples. The relationship with Indigenous Peoples both at home and around the world is of utmost importance to the Prime Minister – while here his government includes the Metis Nation in its plans and activities through a distinctions-based nation-to-nation government-to-government approach.

For example, as MMF President and Metis National Council (MNC) Vice-President, my staff and I were part of the development of the 2016 Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth & Climate Change (PCF), and I sat at the December 2016 Ministers Meeting when the federal government released framework. This is a far-reaching plan to address the global challenges of highest and critical priority being brought about by Climate Change. The MMF, along with our MNC and Governing Member colleagues has now been working with the federal government to implement the PCF plan. There are sustainable or “green” business opportunities available in following the plan.

The MMF is well placed as a national and international leader for sustainable resource development and environmental protection. For instance, abroad we are building fair inter-indigenous trade and other mutual beneficial relationships with Indigenous peoples in South America. Closer to home, the MMF has taken steps to implement our Metis Youth Boreal Forest Stewardship – A Plan to Address Climate Change. This combines research with action in employment, education, and training. Businesses, such as eco-tourism, promote environmental stewardship. This is more than just “shovel-ready.” We have rolled up our sleeves and put the shovel in the ground.

The MMF has also undertaken a comprehensive province-wide survey of our Manitoba Metis Community to get feedback on the Manitoba Government’s Made-in-Manitoba Climate & Green Plan. We will need to keep an eye on how this provincial plan is rolled out. We need to make sure our Metis harvesting rights are always respected and protected, and the Metis are fully and properly consulted in future infrastructure plans. Carbon taxes and legislation cannot disproportionately impact our people.

We are also working with industry in the resource development industries such as pipelines. Again, we are balancing economic development and environment protections. Truly we cannot have one without the other. For instance, the MMF through our Metis Employment & Training Department (MET), is offering a Line 3 Pipeline 101 Training Program. This is technical and hands-on camp environment for training with certifications included in various environmental areas. I suggest if you or someone you know is interested, contact MET.

As I wrote in a recent President’s Message, “for the Metis people, our priority has always been the wise, balanced, and sustainable use of our natural resources.” We are taking local actions informed by regional, national and global understandings and relationships. The MMF is well placed as a leader among federal and provincial governments nationwide and among Indigenous Peoples worldwide. Together, with our partners, we will build a sustainable and secure future for the benefit of our great, great, great grandchildren.

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