

President's Message – June 27

Summer is, for many, vacation time. For others, such as those repairing roads or in building construction; fishing guides; fishers; and farmers, just to name a few, it is a time of hard work. For our MMF Regions and Locals there are Métis Days celebrating our culture and community. At the MMF the summer is always a busy season but the last couple of summers have been among our busiest, with Prime Minister Trudeau's Liberal federal government acting as a willing and able partner. This summer will prove even busier. As our farmers say, "make hay while the sun shines."

Summer officially began this past week. June 21st marked the summer solstice and what we call the first day of summer. Across Canada that day is also celebrated as National Aboriginal Day or, as it is now known, National Indigenous Peoples Day. The MMF hosted many June 21st celebrations across our province. I am thankful for all the good work undertaken by our Regionally-elected representatives, staff, and volunteers as well as the musicians, dancers, and masters of ceremonies for making our events successful.

I want to particularly thank Minister Carolyn Bennett and her staff for attending and speaking at our MMF Interlake Region-hosted National Indigenous Peoples Day event in Selkirk. I would also like to thank the City of Selkirk's Mayor, Larry Johannson, and Councillors for their ongoing support. It is with pride that we entered downtown Selkirk and saw our Métis Nation flags flying from the light posts on both sides of Main Street. I also thank Vice President Anderson, and Ministers Park and Buors, for their good work in Selkirk.

The past week was marked by the MMF arguments at the National Energy Board, or NEB for short, about the Manitoba – Minnesota Transmission Project. The role of the NEB is to hold hearings, ask questions, and gather evidence to ensure that environmental assessments are properly done. As part of their mandate, the NEB assesses whether Aboriginal rights and interests have been considered and addressed and Aboriginal Peoples, including the Metis Nation, have been fully, properly, and meaningfully consulted and accommodated.

The MMF legal counsel submitted to the NEB our MMF – Manitoba Hydro July 2017 Agreement as evidence. Manitoba Hydro tried to prevent it from being on the NEB record. We had a big win when the NEB allowed the evidence. This victory at the NEB will be an important weapon in our battle against the Pallister government, which continues to deny the rights of our Métis Nation.

I want to thank Métis Nation – Saskatchewan President, Glen McCallum, for his kind invitation again this year to attend the Pinehouse Elders Gathering in northern Saskatchewan. While there I met many Métis Elders and Citizens. It was a pleasure to connect with our relatives on the other side of the artificial provincial border. Truly, our ancestral family connections are the ties that bind us together. This summer, the MMF will soon host our annual August Métis Elders Gathering at Grant's Mill in Winnipeg.

On June 15th I signed the *Métis Nation Skills and Employment Training Accord*. Among its objectives is to increase the number of Métis people in the labour force through supports including post-secondary education funding. This is an important breakthrough. This is also the biggest funding agreement to which I have ever penned my signature: more than half a billion dollars over ten years. This agreement will make a great impact on our future. As the Métis National Council Vice-President responsible for negotiating the Accord, I thank The Honourable Minister Patricia Hajdu for her continuing commitment in making this a success.

This week, with many of the MMF caucus and other participants, I am at a workshop called *The Path to Economic Prosperity - A Manitoba Métis Economic Summit*. We are working together to develop a strategy for a holistic approach to strengthening our Métis Citizens, their families, and their communities. We will keep you informed as we move forward on this initiative.

I offer my prayers for our family members, friends, and neighbours who have passed on. I also offer my condolences to their families. It is my hope that those with ill health and pain may be healed. I look forward to seeing many of you this summer as I travel across the province. Best wishes to everyone.

Meeqwetch,