

CanDel Reception - Opening Remarks

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Tansi and good evening - my name is Kyle Vermette and I'm a Red River Métis Nation citizen on delegation representing the Manitoba Métis Federation. Mes excuses à tous les francophones présents, mais mes propos seront entièrement en anglais.

First, I want acknowledge the Creator, the world around us, and our place within it.

Second, I wanted to acknowledge that the land politically designated as New York City is the homeland of the Lenape Nation, which they call "Lenapehoking", and I acknowledge their continuing relationship with their traditional territory. I am honoured to be a visitor here.

As Indigenous peoples, how we speak to each other sends a signal to the world about how the world should treat us. A land acknowledgment is a small but meaningful act of respect we show our brothers and sisters that place them within our world and place us within theirs. For the world to respect us, we must continue honouring our traditional orders and continue acknowledging each others' dignity and worth.

March 2023 represents the 100 year anniversary of Cayuga Chief Desk-a-heh's arrival in Geneva to address the League of Nations, where he sought to achieve recognition of the sovereignty of the Haudenashonee. Here we are, 100 years later, working together in partnership with Canada to address a cross-cutting issue of paramount concern - water.

That's why we're all here together. I want to extend my most sincere gratitude to the Government of Canada for their commitment and efforts in supporting the Manitoba Metis Federation to advance Red River Métis climate and conservation leadership and capacity, including through meaningful and effective participation in this conference. We are seeking to achieve two things: to facilitate knowledge exchange, especially amongst Indigenous peoples, and to stimulate greater cooperation respecting water governance and decision making.

Former US Congressman John Lewis stated that "democracy is not a state, it is an act". I believe the same is true of partnerships with Indigenous peoples. I want to extend a special thank you to Parliamentary Secretary Duguid, Michael Goffin, and staff for your acts of generosity, flexibility, and partnership throughout the week.

With that, I'd like to extend the warmest greetings on behalf of the Manitoba Métis Federation to my fellow Indigenous delegates, Chi-O-gimaa-kwe Woodhouse, Judy Wilson, Ambassador Rae, Parliamentary Secretary Duguid, ECCC staff, and all Canadians who are here working hard to ensure the protection of water and the health of our aquatic and marine ecosystems.

Thank you.