



MEMORANDUM

TO: MNA Members, Locals, Regions and Provincial Council
FROM: Audrey Poitras, MNA President
DATE: August 1, 2017
RE: Update on Métis Rights

I am writing to provide an update on some of the recent and exciting progress we have been making on our Métis rights agenda.

1. Métis Harvesting Rights

As most members should be aware, the MNA-Alberta Framework Agreement, which was signed in February 2017, included Alberta's commitment to facilitate "the recognition and respect of Métis rights in Alberta that upholds the honour of the Crown and advances reconciliation." Since that time, we have been working hard with Alberta to implement this agreement. With respect to Métis harvesting, the agreement committed Alberta to:

"Pursue collaborative discussions with the Ministry of Environment and Parks with respect to Métis harvesting rights;"

As most of you know, the MNA has never agreed with or supported Alberta's unilaterally imposed Métis Harvesting Policy. This policy was put into place in 2007 after our Interim Métis Harvesting Agreement ("IMHA") was cancelled by the Ed Stelmach Government and Ted Morton. Since that time, we have turned to the courts and have taken political action to overturn this flawed provincial policy.

Because of our consistent and collective efforts, Alberta has now agreed to begin formal discussions with the MNA on reviewing and updating this policy. For your information, I am attaching a letter recently received from Alberta indicating that they now have a mandate from Cabinet to collaborate with us on reviewing this policy. In the next few weeks, we hope to finalize mutually agreeable terms of reference to guide our efforts.



Then the hard work will begin—at the negotiations table with Alberta. At the same time, we will be engaging in province-wide consultations in the Fall of 2017 to inform our positions at the table and to receive input from our members on the issues identified in the attached letter. I am cautiously optimistic that real progress can be made on this file, so our Métis harvesters can exercise their constitutionally-protected rights without fear of harassment or prosecution.

2. A Métis Consultation Policy

Significant progress is also being made in the area of Métis consultation and accommodation in Alberta. Similar to Métis harvesting, the MNA-Alberta Framework Agreement included the following commitment from Alberta:

“Work towards the development of a non-Settlement Métis Consultation Policy that is consistent with provincial Aboriginal consultation policies in force in Alberta, subject to provincial Cabinet approval;”

Based on the *Statement of Principles on Crown Consultation and Accommodation with Métis in Alberta* that were unanimously adopted by the 2016 Annual Assembly, several Regional Consultations Protocols have already been signed between the MNA’s Provincial Office, Regions, and Locals. These Protocols will form the basis for a provincial Métis Consultation Policy with the MNA. We are optimistic that Protocols will be finalized across the province by the Fall of 2017 so we can move into the next phase—implementation.

Related to this file and at the request of members, the MNA has prepared a brochure, which includes frequently asked questions, that explains the historic context, purpose, and rationale for recent initiatives the MNA has undertaken with respect to Métis rights, including the adoption of the new oath of membership. I am attaching that brochure to this memo. This brochure is also now available on the MNA’s website.

3. Exploratory Discussions on Reconciliation with Canada

At the federal level, the MNA-Canada Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Reconciliation (“MOU”) was signed in January 2017. This MOU contemplates arriving at a formal MNA-Canada Framework Agreement for negotiations by September 2017. This Framework Agreement will establish formal negotiations between the MNA and Canada on issues such as self-government, Métis rights, outstanding Métis claims against the federal Crown, health, and housing, amongst many other priorities.



We remain optimistic that our September deadline for a Framework Agreement will be met. At our upcoming Annual Assembly in Peace River, we will be holding a Métis rights and self-government workshop on Friday, August 11, 2017. At this workshop, Tom Isaac, Canada's Ministerial Special Representative on Section 35 Métis Rights, will be presenting on his landmark report, along with Métis lawyer Jason Madden and our MNA negotiating team with Canada. All of the presentations from this workshop will be made available on the MNA's website after the Annual Assembly.

For those that cannot attend this workshop or this year's Annual Assembly in Peace River, I am pleased to report that we will be kicking off province-wide consultations in the Fall of 2017 to provide an opportunity for all members to be updated and have their voices heard in order to inform our potential future negotiations with Canada. These are exciting times for the Métis Nation in Alberta; however, we need to ensure our citizens are meaningful and actively engaged as we—finally—move towards self-government.

We need to hear from all of you on how we make Canada's commitment to advancing a "nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with the Métis Nation" a reality here in Alberta. As our 2016 Annual Assembly directed, we will move forward on bilateral negotiations between the MNA and Canada to arrive at a modern-day treaty relationship between the Crown and Alberta Métis. I am optimistic that, in the near future, we will finally see the dream of many of our ancestors—to have the MNA's full self-government recognized—become a reality.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the MNA's Co-Ministers on Métis Rights—Karen Collins and Bev New—for advancing these files on behalf of the Provincial Council and the Métis Nation within Alberta. Together, we are building a stronger Métis Nation based on Métis rights!

Attachments:

1. Letter from Alberta on Métis Harvesting dated July 20, 2017
2. Brochure on Advancing Métis Rights and Claims in Alberta