Ottawa, Ontario, March 8, 2013 – The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Métis are entitled to a declaration that Canada failed to implement Section 31 of the Manitoba Act 1870 as required by the honour of the Crown. The decision marks the culmination of thirty two years of court action by the Manitoba Métis Federation against the Governments of Canada and Manitoba, seeking fulfillment of the commitments made by Sir John A. Macdonald to the Métis provisional government and its president, Louis Riel, for a 1.4 million acre land base for the children of the Métis majority in the Red River Settlement. Under the terms of the Manitoba Act, that Settlement became the province of Manitoba.

“Our search for justice since 1870 has been vindicated by the Supreme Court today”, declared President Clément Chartier of the Métis National Council. “The entire Métis Nation salutes the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and its President David Chartrand for pursuing our land claims in the courts since 1981 against all odds”.

The decision sets the stage for land claims settlement negotiations between the MMF and Canada. “As the only Aboriginal people excluded from the federal land claims process, the Métis finally have the leverage to start these negotiations,” said President Chartier. “It is fitting that the decision comes on March 8, the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Métis National Council, itself an expression of the continuous struggle for justice of the Métis Nation.”
Triumphant Return
- Victory Celebration -

March 9, 2013 Winnipeg, MB - President Clément Chartier accompanied President David Chartrand (MMF) along with President Audrey Poitras (MNA) to Winnipeg after the Supreme Court of Canada ruled Friday that the federal government failed to properly distribute land grants that were promised to the Manitoba Métis of the Red River Settlement in 1870.

After arriving at the Winnipeg James Armstrong International Airport, there were several hundred people present greeting the Métis leaders.

A rally was held immediately after they arrived at the Louis Riel Gravesite located in the cemetery at the St. Boniface Cathedral, to celebrate their success and the prospects of the next steps of negotiations with the provincial and federal governments. At noon, a celebration of Métis culture with Métis fiddling, dancing, and traditional Métis food was held at the Community Hall, Lower Level of the St. Boniface Cathedral.

“To be a part of this historic event was truly a gift from the Great Spirit, a God-inspired moment, with Riel surely smiling down upon the great victory and vindication of his sacrifices and a testament to the tenacity, perseverance and excellent leadership of President David Chartrand, his government members and the Métis Nation citizens within the province of Manitoba which brought the Métis Nation of the Northwest into confederation” stated President Chartier.

“To be standing at Riel's resting place with Métis leader John Morrisseau, the President who initiated the action 32 years ago and current Métis leader Chartrand who brought it home over his leadership of the past 17 years, was certainly both an honour and a humbling moment, a moment in life I will never forget” concluded President Chartier.

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Victory Celebration
March 8th marked the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Métis National Council, another chapter in the Métis Nation’s longstanding tradition of forming governments or representative bodies charged with ensuring the wellbeing of its citizens.

After several decades of seeking alliances with other dispossessed Aboriginal peoples, it became clear during the era of Canadian constitution making in the 1980s that the Métis Nation had to reorganize itself politically in order to continue on its road of self-determination, and its quest for a land base and self-government.

This was absolutely driven home by the actions of the Native Council of Canada which, through its Indian majority Board of Directors (15 of 18) including all three of the Executive positions, acted in concert with the two other national Aboriginal organizations to remove from the constitutional agenda the items dealing with a Métis land base and self-government, and filling the two NCC seats at the constitutional conference with a non-status Indian and a Status Indian.

This treachery in hindsight was a godsend to the Métis, precipitating a return to a Métis only path on the road to Métis Nation self-determination, and a re-constitution of Métis Nation representative government. This action was premised on Métis nationalism, with a dedicated plan to pursue the right of a land base and self-government on the basis of the right of self-determination as a people, and retaining the newly acknowledged Aboriginal and Treaty rights in section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982 as a fall back position.

This March 1983 position of the Métis Nation drew criticism from the founding president of the Native Council of Canada who called the MNC’s pursuing rights on the basis of Métis Nationalism as “blasphemous” and “very foolish”, and the idea of a western homeland as being too narrow as there were Métis throughout all of Canada. Fortunately, such views were isolated and ill conceived.

Regardless of such criticism, and in the face of the expressed actions of other Aboriginal leaders pitted against the Métis Nation, our leaders in 1983 forged ahead in a determined and profound manner and over the next 30 years have made substantial gains. This would not have been possible had we not made that decision 30 years ago to never again let anyone else speak for us, nor let anyone else - governments, courts or other Aboriginal peoples - define who we are.

We have been steadfast in pursuing our rights in the political arena through the constitutional process from 1983 to 1992, and falling back on section 35 in the mid-nineties to protect our peoples’ against state charges when exercising their rights as Métis to hunt and fish for food to feed their families, as well as pursue land rights through the courts.

Through a combination of legal proceedings and the political arena we have remained steadfast in defending our people’s rights and pursuing self-government and a land base.

It is only by pursuing our rights in these forums on a distinctions-based approach that we will eventually be successful. It is only by remaining true to our past and defending our existence as a people in a distinct traditional homeland in the historic Northwest – on the prairies encompassing the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and extending into contiguous parts of British Columbia, Ontario, the Northwest Territories and the United States of America – that we will continue on the path to further victories.
“Children of the Métis Nation”

Métis Nation Youth gather for leadership workshop on Residential, Boarding and Day Schools

March 14, 2013 Ottawa, ON - Twenty-Five youth from across the Métis Nation Homeland joined by Elders, Métis Nation leaders and Métis residential and day school survivors gathered in Ottawa for a Métis Youth Leadership Workshop which focused on the Legacy of Residential Schools and its Impact on our Families and Communities.

The goal of the leadership workshop was to promote healing and reconciliation among Métis youth and survivors by combining social networking with tools and resources to essentially ‘share the story’ of the Residential and Day School experiences and inter-generational impacts through the development of a social media framework which will be implemented by the Métis National Council to inform the public. Métis National Council President Clément Chartier stated, “This is the third time that youth have been engaged in being educators on the issues of Residential and Day Schools in the search for truth and reconciliation. Having the youth utilize the tools of today to promote healing and to help Canadians understand the impacts that have been left on our families and communities is a unique and significant approach to the sharing of knowledge.”

The youth heard stories from Métis survivors on their experiences and how it affected their lives and their ability to parent and build relationships. Other sessions included Métis Nation History, Social Media Planning, the creation of a video “We are children of the Métis Nation”, showcasing the highlights and interviews with youth, residential school survivors and inter-generational survivors.

“It is certainly encouraging to witness the great concern and interest exhibited by the youth present at this workshop and their pledge to continue doing what they can to help educate others about the victimization of past generations of the Métis and the need to include the vast majority of former Métis students who have been excluded from the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, Canada’s apology and the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission” concluded President Chartier.
March 16, 2013 Ottawa, ON - Forty Métis Women delegates from across the Métis Nation homeland came together at the Annual General Assembly at the Courtyard Hotel in Ottawa.

Following Ontario Elder Jo MacQuarrie’s opening prayer, President Chartier in his opening remarks spoke about the importance of Métis women actively participating within the Métis Nation political process and continuing to highlight issues which needed to be addressed by the Métis Nation governments.

On day one of the WMN AGA President Chartier provided a presentation on the proposed Métis Nation Constitution, assuring participants that consultations and drafting are progressing in the drive to a Métis Nation Constitution by December 2013.

“The objective is to pursue a new modern Constitution as an expression of Métis self-determination and self-government” stated President Chartier.

President Chartier spoke about the history of Métis governance in Canada, beginning with the first Métis provisional government in the Red River Settlement under the leadership of Louis Riel in Manitoba in 1870, and including the formation of the Métis National Council in 1983. Background on historical and present day relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Federal and Provincial governments was also provided, along with past and current rights litigation of concern to the Métis in Canada, and the role of the Métis Rights Panel.

“I found the questions and comments relating to my presentation both probing and productive, and look forward to the on-going dialogue with the leadership of the Women of the Métis Nation as we move forward towards the adoption of a Métis Nation constitution” stated President Chartier.

The day also provided WMN opportunity to launch their new website, www.metiswomen.org coupled with a demonstration of what it contains, along with other interactive communication strategies.

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Women of the Métis Nation

Board of Directors

as of January 1, 2013 is as follows:

Melanie Omenibo, President
Monell Bailey, Treasurer
Sharon McBride, Secretary
Brenda Bourque-Straticbuk, Director
Clara Dal Col, Director
Métis Nation Regional Economic Development Engagement Session

March 18, 2013 Vancouver BC - Métis Nation hosts Regional Economic Development Engagement Session to foster business relationships between Métis businesses, industry and governments.

Métis Nation citizens from British Columbia and Alberta gathered in Vancouver with industry representatives at their second Métis Nation Regional Economic Development Engagement Session. This two-day engagement session, hosted by the Métis National Council in conjunction with both Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Nation British Columbia is a crucial step towards solidifying the position of Métis businesses and entrepreneurs in the Canadian economic landscape.

Following opening remarks a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the MNA and MNBC took place, setting out a working relationship between the two Métis governments with respect to economic initiatives which they have in common.

Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras stated “that this signing ceremony signals a new era in inter-governmental relations between the two Métis governments which we believe will assist us in engaging industry in mutually beneficial engagement in major resource developments which are currently underway or will be emerging over the next decade in our respective jurisdictions”.

Métis Nation British Columbia President Bruce Dumont added that “this signing evidences the goodwill between the MNA and MNBC in the pursuit of our common objectives of pursuing economic opportunities, taking advantage of joint initiatives and exchanging training information and bringing the collective strength of our institutions into whatever challenges we may encounter”.

The ensuing panel discussions focused on a variety of topics including engagement with industry partners and major projects, Métis business growing the economy and access to capital.

This Summit is the fourth
This Summit is the fourth regional session within the Métis Nation Homeland in a series of five which will culminate at a Métis Nation Industry Roundtable on March 21 & 22, in Vancouver, resulting in the development of a Métis Nation Economic Development Strategy that will contribute to economic opportunities moving forward.

“It is refreshing to witness the progress that has been made since the start of this economic development process” stated Métis National Council President Clément Chartier, “a process which I believe will lead to greater economic opportunities and engagement by our people, governments and institutions in the resource sector in our traditional homeland through cooperative action with other governments and industry partners.”

Please visit our Economic Development Portal to access the presentations at metisportals.ca/ecodev/
March 21-22, 2013 Vancouver, BC: The Métis National Council hosted an Industry Roundtable on Skills, Partnerships & Economic Growth. This two day forum was dedicated to exploring ways in which industry and the Métis Nation can collaborate in generating employment and wealth.

The Roundtable brought together Métis leaders, industry and government representatives to discuss best practices and collaborative approaches in support of Métis Nation economic development goals. It provided an opportunity to develop working relationships, share best practices and opportunities to work together to further economic growth. It also provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, discussion of industry-Métis Nation relations and exploration of training opportunities.

The Roundtable built on previous regional engagement sessions the Métis National Council and its Governing Members have held with industry in Winnipeg, Prince Albert, Grande Prairie and Vancouver. These sessions have identified numerous promising corporate practices and collaborative approaches with the Métis in the areas of education, training, employment, procurement and partnerships.

Panel discussions included enhancing Métis participation in pipeline construction and mining, improving Métis labour market and educational outcomes, Métis participation in power generation and oil and gas industries and strategies to enhance Métis entrepreneurship and community infrastructure.

The forum enabled the MNC and its Governing Members to bring together specialists from their capital corporations, business support units, ASETS, as well as members of the Métis business community to address their foremost economic challenges and opportunities.

“I thank the many industry representatives, government officials and academics who joined us over the two day Métis Nation-Industry Roundtable whose participation has been of substantial benefit to us in our quest for enhanced participation in the economic life of Western Canada” stated President Chartier, “with a special heartfelt thanks to the many Métis leaders, entrepreneurs and service delivery officials who brought so much knowledge and vitality to the roundtable”.

April 2013
March 23-24, 2013, Vancouver BC:
The Métis National Council held its General Assembly over the past two days centered on the historic land rights victory of the Manitoba Metis Federation in the Supreme Court of Canada on March 8, 2013, the 30th anniversary of the founding of the MNC as an expression and vehicle of Métis nationalism.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Clément Chartier spoke of the crisis confronting the Métis Nation that resulted in a gathering of prairie Métis leaders in Regina on March 8, 1983 to establish the Métis National Council.

Canada’s new constitution afforded us an opportunity to sit down with the First Ministers and negotiate our rights as one of the Aboriginal peoples at a constitutional conference scheduled for March 15 and 16th, 1983.

So with our expectations raised on rights, it came as a shock shortly before the conference to learn that the three prairie Métis associations would not have a seat of our own at the constitutional table.

That we were expected to participate through an organization that had actually insisted that Métis self-government and land base be removed from the constitutional agenda.

According to that organization and the federal government, a Métis was anybody of mixed ancestry who chose to identify as such so the prairie Métis didn’t need their own seats.

Suddenly, our hard fought gains of constitutional recognition appeared to dissipate.

This was the crisis confronting the Métis Nation on that eighth day of March 1983, one week before Canada’s first constitutional conference after patriation.

On that day in Regina, our three prairie Métis associations formed the Métis National Council as an expression of Métis...
nationalism and our identity.

Not as off-reserve mixed-bloods, but as a distinct people and nation with a common history, culture, territory, language and political will to be self-governing.

And, in the tradition of Riel placing his foot on the surveyor’s chain, we said, “NO – this shall not pass”.

NO, to the federal government defining us as it chooses.

NO, to other Aboriginal peoples defining us as they choose.

NO, to anybody for that matter defining us as they choose.

And NO to the constitutional conference or any negotiations where the rights of Métis are being discussed without our full and equal participation.

On that day we declared war on Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

We would sue him personally in the Ontario courts.

We would seek an injunction, preventing him from convening the conference until the Métis were at the table, with our issues on the agenda.

And with the clock ticking down toward the conference, we did just that.

The Crown attorney in the trial, a future Supreme Court of Canada justice, challenged Jim Sinclair on who were the Métis.

Sinc shot back: “John A. Macdonald didn’t send troops to New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island; he sent them to Manitoba and Saskatchewan”.

Suddenly the federal government was learning who the Métis were.

They pleaded with us to drop the case; they promised an arrangement that our distinct voice would be heard through another Aboriginal organization.

And we told them “NO”; the Métis National Council would represent the Métis Nation and no one else.

And when they asked what we would do if we lost the case against the Prime Minister, we said we would go back to the prairies and mobilize the Métis Nation against Ottawa and a sham constitution.

And on that day I received a letter from the Minister of Justice.

The Métis National Council would have its own representation at the table and our own issues restored to the constitutional agenda if we dropped our lawsuit against Prime Minister Trudeau.

And, fellow citizens of the Métis Nation, we have never looked back on who we are as the Métis Nation.

President Chartier then set out as an imperative the consolidation of the citizenship and boundaries of the Métis Nation in advance of self-government negotiations that are now clearly on the horizon. This included: adhering to the National Definition in the registration of citizens of the Métis Nation without grandfathering; completing the National Acceptance process; and completing the certification of Governing Member registries based on common standards. Consolidating the citizenship system, he said, was critical to the adoption of a new constitution, much of which has been reviewed and approved, in principle, by the Métis Rights Panel.

President Chartier also demanded adherence to the definition of the Métis Nation ancestral homeland on the prairies extending into contiguous parts of other provinces and territories.

Suggestions that we can somehow adjust our boundaries to take in people who have never been part of our nation betray who we are and what we stand for. They are historically and culturally inaccurate and, from a political point of view, the height of folly.

Continued on next page
He concluded that “the days of putting off difficult decisions for fear of upsetting people are over. The stakes are too high.” In that spirit, the General Assembly adopted a resolution the following day reaffirming that there is only one Métis Nation, and that the geographic homeland of the Métis Nation is the historic Northwest which entered into confederation in 1870 through the negotiations of the Métis Provisional Government lead by President Louis Riel.

Following his address, President Chartier presented the Order of the Métis Nation to President Chartrand in recognition of his achievements, and a President’s Recognition Award to John Morrisseau, a former Order of the Métis Nation award recipient. He also presented the Diamond Jubilee Medal to Elder Norman Fleury, former MNC president, Gerald Morin, and Marc LeClair, a long time advocate for Métis rights.

Afterwards, there were the updates from the MNC Governing Members and from Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (Women of the Metis Nation). There was also an update on recent developments in Métis litigation including the MMF land claim by Métis lawyer Jason Madden.

That evening the MNC held a Gala Dinner to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Métis National Council. Former Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada Minister John Duncan was presented with a beautifully beaded Métis vest in appreciation for his commitment to the Métis Nation. He was joined by the Honorable Chuck Strahl, a past recipient of the Order of the Métis Nation, who served as moderator of the Métis Nation-Industry Roundtable on March 21-22.

John Morrisseau provided an emotional account of the struggle surrounding the launching of MMF v Canada in 1981 and was followed by David Chartrand’s rousing mobilization of the Métis Nation for events to come. Entertainment for the evening included Métis fiddling, dancing and singing.

The second day featured the MNC finance report, approval of the MNC audit, and the appointment of the auditor. This was followed by several hours of addressing Métis Nation matters through bylaw amendment, and the adoption of a series of resolutions to guide the work of the Métis Nation.

“This General Assembly, marking the 30th Anniversary of the Métis National Council as the sole and legitimate government of the Métis Nation, dealt with several tough issues and in the end came out with a strong re-affirmation of our nationhood in what was historically known as the Northwest,” stated President Chartier. “This, together with victory in the courts and progress in the political arena, accelerates us on the path to greater self-determination.”
UPCOMING EVENTS

- Centre for the North Roundtable  
  April 3-5  
  Ottawa, ON

- Métis Rights Panel meeting  
  April 10  
  Ottawa, ON

- Métis Rights Forum  
  April 11-12  
  Ottawa, ON

- Aboriginal Affairs Working Group (AAWG)  
  April 16-17  
  Winnipeg, MB

- United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples  
  May 20-31  
  New York, NY

- Nagoya Protocol  
  June 3-5  
  Montreal, QC

DECADE OF THE
Métis Nation

2013: Remembering Métis Residential School Survivors