



David Chartrand, LL.D. (hon), O.M.
President

June 22, 2023

Dear Red River Métis,

Re: Harvesting in our Traditional Territory across the Red River Métis Homeland

This letter is for our Citizens, both Manitoba residents and non-residents, who are now or may wish to become Red River Métis Harvesters.

For two decades, your Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) Cabinet and Annual General Assembly (AGA) have been taking historic steps in rebuilding our Nation – the Red River Métis – protecting our rights and uniting the Red River Métis Homeland. We continue to take unprecedented steps today.

The following letter sets out directions for continuing to protect our collective rights of self-determination and self-government, as well as our section 35 constitutional right to harvest and feed our families in our traditional ways.

MMF Métis Harvesting Initiative (MHI) Background:

Hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering are rights held by an Indigenous collective. In our case, the Red River Métis is the Indigenous collective. Our collective rights may be exercised by Citizens. But these are not personal rights held or owned by any individual. As our Harvesters and our Elders have told us, and as under International Law, an individual may exercise or practice collective rights only according to the rules and directions of the collective.

Our harvesting rights apply in our traditional territory throughout our Homeland. In Canada, our Red River Métis Homeland includes Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, as well as portions of Northwest Ontario, Northeast British Columbia, and Southwest part of the Northwest Territories. *See attached artist's draft rendering of our Red River Métis Homeland Map.*

The issues are complex, and circumstances are changing day-to-day when dealing with the exercise of our collective harvesting right across the geographic extent of our Homeland. This is evolving, and we are building on the strength of our *Métis Harvesting Initiative* ("MHI").

The MHI was developed and continues to be guided by our Harvesters and our Elders to direct and protect our rights. The MHI has rules requiring Harvesters to have their *Harvester Identification Card*, follow the *Laws of the Harvest* including its management provisions, contribute annually to the *Conservation Trust Fund*, and use big game management tags.

Direction:

As per the MMF Constitution, all MMF Citizens with a Citizenship card ("V" number series) are entitled to apply for and receive an MMF Harvester Identification Card. Subsequently, the Citizen will be able participate in the MHI including validating the Harvester Identification Card with the annual Conservation Trust sticker and requesting big game management tags.

The following principles will frame our collective harvesting across our Homeland:

- 1) Harvesters living either inside or outside of Manitoba may harvest across borders in our traditional harvesting territory throughout our Homeland;
- 2) For clarity, Harvesters who are Manitoba residents will continue to harvest within Manitoba and may now also harvest across borders in our traditional harvesting territory in other provinces within our Homeland;
- 3) For additional clarity, Harvesters who are not residents of Manitoba may harvest inside Manitoba as well as in our traditional harvesting territory in other provinces within our Homeland;
- 4) USA residents may harvest in Canada as per the above. Unfortunately, at this time, under the MHI, Métis Harvesters who are USA Citizens or Canadian Citizens cannot harvest in the USA notwithstanding being either USA or Canadian residents;
- 5) Within Manitoba, all Harvesters may harvest north of the Métis Natural Resource Harvesting Zone, again within our traditional harvesting territory, through to the Hudson's Bay coast;
- 6) All Harvesters will be able to participate in our MMF Conservation Initiatives such as, for instance: MMF Moose Tag draws in the Porcupine and Duck Mountains in Manitoba, draws on our MMF-owned lands, or other to-be-identified harvesting areas in which harvesting is limited and MMF draws implemented.

Red River Métis Harvesters must continue to follow the MMF *Laws of the Harvest* revised 3rd edition, and any future editions, which include the requirement to follow applicable federal and provincial laws for health, safety, and conservation. The Métis Laws of the Harvest will be interpreted and revised to reflect the above. Harvesting is subject to resolutions, policies, directives, and laws put in place by the MMF Cabinet and the MMF AGA.

Harvesters must understand there is a risk they will be charged, and seizures may be made, by federal or provincial conservation officers or enforcement officials. If charged, or seizures

made, please contact the MMF immediately. The MMF will provide appropriate supports to the Harvester. These may include legal and other-related reasonable costs.

Remember, as already stated above, all Métis Harvesters whether inside or outside of Manitoba must follow the MMF *Métis Laws of the Harvest*. Also, holding a Harvester Identification Card is not a right to hunt big game or otherwise. The Harvester must follow the rules found in the *Métis Laws of the Harvest* and the resolutions, policies, directives, and laws put in place by the MMF Cabinet or the MMF AGA as approved from time to time.

Our Next Steps in Advancing our Harvesting Rights:

The MMF continues to responsibly implement the MHI throughout our Red River Métis Homeland. As we move forward our steps will include:

- 1) Meeting with the provincial government ministers and senior officials responsible for natural resources and/or indigenous relations to engage in negotiations towards reaching harvesting agreements.

As we move the MHI beyond borders, we are encouraging our Harvesters, both those living inside and outside of Manitoba, to be patient and wait and not harvest outside of Manitoba until we have received answers from provincial governments and determined our next steps;

- 2) Continuing to undertake historical and contemporary research to ascertain gaps, gather data, and examine evidence and consolidate materials for protecting our harvesting in preparation for possible legal challenges;
- 3) Analysing the existing wildlife and fisheries population studies reports and consulting with our Elders and Harvesters to determine the species-specific capacity for harvesting in identified areas;
- 4) Reviewing policies, procedures, and directives as well as amending the *Métis Harvesting Initiative* (MHI) and its *Métis Laws of the Harvest* (Revised 3rd Edition) as necessary;
- 5) Enhancing our legal strategy for the ongoing protection of our Harvesters if they are harassed or charged;
- 6) Reaching out to First Nations in those areas outside our Homeland towards developing relationships and agreements for Red River Métis harvesting within their territories with permissions under appropriate laws;
- 7) Contacting First Nations within our Homeland towards negotiating management agreements including the sharing of available fish and wildlife as well as developing and implementing plans for population conservation, habitat enhancement, and sustainable harvesting.

By this process above, we are moving ahead protecting our harvesting rights across our Homeland. We will continue to develop and implement a flexible plan to seize the opportunities and respond to the challenges as they arise.

Once again, I must remind Harvesters there is a risk you will be charged, and seizures may be made, by federal or provincial conservation officers or enforcement officials as we move forward implementing the MHI and exercising our collective harvesting rights.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact the MMF Central Registry Office (CRO) for Harvester Identification Card application-related matters and the Energy, Infrastructure and Resource Management Department for those specifically about harvesting. Thank you.

Yours,



Vice President Leah LaPlante

Minister of Natural Resources
MMF - National Government of the Red River Métis

cc. Peter Fleming – Associate Minister of Natural Resources
Allan D. Benoit – Chief of Staff

