Thursday, January 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2013

Keith Henry
President
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Re: Letter to editor of the Vancouver Sun

I am responding to the article by Kim Pemberton, entitled, \textit{"Ruling turns up heat on Harper"} on January 9, 2013. This article is in relation to the landmark Métis and Non-Status Indians court victory in what is now referred to the \textit{“Daniels Case”}. 

To begin, the news article assumes that the historic Metis status court ruling is a done deal. An appeal is probably pending and there is a long road forward on this, probably years before anyone sees an impact.

The news article references the President of the United Native Nations (UNN) and the Metis Nation BC (MNBC). Both of these organizations do not represent all Métis people in British Columbia and in fact questions what research, if any this reporter has done to inform the public at large. The BC Métis Federation is another provincial Métis organization who represents the interests of approximately 6300 actual members. Both MNBC and UNN have relied historically and consistently on census data which alone does not provide an actual picture of how our Métis people have formed their own governance in this Province. By omitting the BC Metis Federation, this article excludes some 6300 Métis people.

This latest legal rendering does not only reflect or impact the Metis relationship to the Federal government. The ruling will also impact upon the Province in relation to the duty to consult and further impacts our relationships with First Nations throughout BC.

If your author did research, she would learn that the UNN and the MNBC do not meaningfully represent their purported constituencies. UNN has been inactive for years and in the case of the MNBC as example, they are millions of dollars in debt and many in the Métis community have been calling on the Federal and Provincial governments for reform and support for an alternative Métis governing organization through the BC Métis Federation. These MNBC leaders are now quoted once again stating they represent all 60,000 Métis people in this province, which is only a estimated census figure from 2006, which is not true and they continue to manipulate structures and process, exploited our Métis culture and history, and intimidate people into false loyalty for economic and political gain. They exercise power without responsibility. By doing so this has led current governments and their MNBC bank (Royal Bank of Canada) to continue to deny accountable or responsibility to our grass roots communities throughout BC.

You cite Bruce Dumont as the Métis leader for all Métis people in BC. The significant irony is that many of local Métis communities Mr. Dumont purports to represent now that this Métis and Non Status court case is successful are embroiled in an ongoing crisis because of his own failed leadership, discriminatory service delivery of programs and services to the most vulnerable in our communities, antidemocratic
actions, and bankrupt policies at the MNBC which have been well documented and largely ignored by the media across this province.

The latest Metis status court case does not support the current exclusive, monolithic definition of the Métis adopted and promoted through the Métis National Council (MNC) and its affiliates, including the MNBC. In fact, the court case was actually advanced by a broader more complex, historical definition of Métis and Non Status Indians.

Your article goes on to portray Metis getting handouts. This creates ethnic tension and political acrimony, a politics of difference, because it implies a zero-sum view that if one group benefits, another suffers, whether First Nations or the general public. You imply that crass economics drives the political process. This ignores that our country is an ethical pact, based on conciliatory and indigenous notions such as inclusion, tolerance, justice, equality, and concern for the public good.

Since its inception, the BC Métis Federation has charted a carefully negotiated path where we recognize that recognition of Indian status or other rights-based identities must be balanced with good governance, freedom of speech, citizenship engagement, the revival of a treaty relationship, the resurgence of Aboriginal perspectives and meaningful crossover of ideas.

The historical context is that Canada is an ethical pact that has been established by constant negotiation and compromise. From the earliest nation-to-nation nation Aboriginal friendship treaties, to responsible government, to Louis Riel as a reformer and nation builder, and down through to current days, we see intention reflected in our public strategy. The act and promises of nation-building involved bringing very different communities together.

We anticipate that the deeper ethical and fiduciary significance of this ruling will be lost to the current provincial government, which still denies that there is a collective basis for Métis rights in BC, misrecognizing our unique historical and constitutional status. Both provincial and federal governments continue to impede the evolution of Métis self government and a treaty relationship and discriminate by co-opting and legitimizing the dysfunctional organization such as the MNBC. A key ingredient of Aboriginal self government for Métis people includes our rights to freely decide who we want representing our interests, which thousands now have together with the BC Métis Federation.

Historically, the media by their complicity has long placed Métis people into history as noble or ignoble savages. In British Columbia history as example, Métis people have been portrayed as sidekicks to European settlers, or inevitable victims of contests for control in Western Canada. Louis Riel and others have been portrayed by BC media as opportunists, men out to destroy Canada.

Your latest article maintains Metis people solidly within this paradigm as villains or victims, opportunists or passive recipients at the behest of a benevolent government. The implication that flows from these latest court proceedings demands that as a society we need to talk about responsible ways to remember the past differently, not as ideology that controls or dominates.
If you would care to look beneath the surface technical arguments of this historic ruling and misrepresentation a different story emerges.

Thank You,

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