



Tuesday, May 2, 2017

Immediate Release

Sent by Email and BCMF Website

Métis Community Meeting – Métis Nation BC Issues

(Surrey, BC) The Nova Métis Heritage Association (Nova) in Surrey, one of over thirty (30) local Métis community organizations in British Columbia, held an important community forum this past weekend to discuss their Charter Agreement and issues being raised by the Métis Nation BC. Métis Nation BC is one of two Provincial representative Métis organizations in British Columbia and Nova has agreements with both Métis Nation BC and BC Métis Federation.

Since late January Métis Nation BC took steps in letters to Nova making allegations of breaches by Nova of their Charter Agreement with Métis Nation BC. The Métis Nation BC and Nova Charter Agreement was signed in 2005. There were four (4) allegations described by Métis Nation BC and since the allegations were made, Nova has provided clarification in letters and emails to Métis Nation BC which demonstrated how these allegations were incorrect. Despite Nova's repeated requests to meet since January Métis Nation BC leadership remained at arms length. Therefore, the Nova board decided to hold a public discussion with members this past weekend who wanted to better understand the situation.

Roughly 30 members of the Nova community association attended and there was significant frustration stated by members about what and how Métis Nation BC was addressing this issue. Métis Nation BC Lower Mainland Regional Director Gary Biggar attended, as well as the Métis Nation BC women's representative Lee Fraser, and these representatives were asked several pointed questions by Nova members. The answers and allegations made by these Métis Nation BC representatives demonstrated a significant lack of support for Nova or reality of how these community organizations function with limited to no capacity. The Métis Nation BC representative tone and remarks were personal in nature. For example, the main reason Métis Nation BC would not meet with Nova was because they had to apparently know who was on the Nova board first. By contrast the Charter Agreement does not describe any such provision but this was their only defence offered.

BC Métis Federation President Keith Henry stated; "I attended in my role as BC Métis Federation President but I am also a long-standing Nova member and have been since 2004 as well as recently appointed Nova board member. I listened respectfully to responses from Métis Nation BC representatives that were incorrect and not based whatsoever on facts. I corrected and pointed out the serious flaws in the Métis Nation BC's allegations of Nova and how sadly inconsistent their approach is, contrary in my opinion to any form of Métis self governance. For example, one of the four incorrect allegations was that Nova did not hold Annual General Meetings (AGMs) which is completely false as I personally have attended several of the Nova AGMs. I asked the representatives how Métis Nation BC applied this assumption to the other five (5) local Métis community organizations as defined in the Métis Nation BC's lower mainland governance structure. The Métis Nation BC representatives stated they have asked for all such information from local Métis community organizations and they are confident that these organizations are complying. I pointed out that this cannot be true as 2 of the local lower mainland Métis community organizations holding an apparent Métis Nation BC Charter Agreement, of the few we researched, are not in good standing at the BC Corporations branch and have not been for

years. I pointed out to Nova members the obvious question about how or why did Métis Nation BC make this allegation then?"

BC Métis Federation President Henry added; "The fact is there needs to be safe ways communities and individual members can raise legitimate concerns and questions of any organization without personal attacks. During this meeting I still witnessed and heard Métis Nation BC representatives attack me personally as I assume some excuse to deflect from the obvious facts. Métis Nation BC leaders and their supporters cannot or do not want to understand that good governance must allow for public debate on issues, open dialogue and transparency. It is clear Métis Nation BC is trying to bully Nova to submit to anything they want or say. They made allegations about Nova in January which are wrong. At a public forum they did not apologize and their representatives took no responsibility to correct. Instead of nation building they demand loyalty at all costs, even if the truth gets in the way. This is simply a form of dictatorship."

BC Métis Federation President Henry further added; "BC Métis Federation continues to encourage Métis Nation BC and all communities to work together somehow one day. We are not trying to tear Métis Nation BC down as they have stated since 2009. I clarified that our position is Métis Nation BC have every right to represent their communities and members but they do not represent or speak for the BC Métis Federation or our thousands of members. It is in their financial interests to state so with governments and industry and Métis Nation BC must stop this."

BC Métis Federation President Henry concluded; "The Métis Nation BC situation of massive financial insolvency and functional bankruptcy was self inflicted. Many of us fought years ago to try and fix this predicted Métis Nation BC mess. These issues were well defined in six categories and some of us even tried to offer a blueprint to steer Métis Nation BC in a new direction in 2011. Past issues such as the decision of Metis Nation BC leaders to buy a school or operate a restaurant, etc have been proven as terrible decisions. It was poor dictatorship style governance at that time that created this mess and somehow, we must correct Métis governance in BC to ensure this never happens again. Sadly, it appears by the responses and statements on the weekend that Métis Nation BC leadership and their supporters have not yet learned from the past. It is these issues that will haunt Métis Nation BC for at least another decade of repayments but despite misinformation neither myself nor the BC Métis Federation created this. It was the lack of Métis Nation BC leadership transparency, community input and misinformation that did. It was decisions to spin false hope for stimulus funding, decision to borrow more against commercial property that would never repay these loans, and much more. Let's hope Métis Nation BC will use this situation to demonstrate a new way forward and begin to repair the relationship with Nova."

For more information about the BC Métis Federation go to www.bcmétis.com

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