Every year on September 19, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) marks Powley Day to remember the decade long struggle for Métis rights that led the MNO with Steve and Roddy Powley to the Supreme Court of Canada. On that day in 2003, in a unanimous judgement, the Supreme Court declared that Steve and Roddy Powley as members of the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community had the Métis right to harvest and that this right is protected under section 35 of The Constitution Act, 1982.

Powley Day celebrates that because we had the courage of our convictions; Métis rights were recognized and affirmed by the Supreme Court for the first time.

Powley Day recognizes that the ground breaking Supreme Court decision ushered in a whole new era of Métis rights in Ontario and across the Métis Homeland. Especially important at this time of the year, are the Métis harvesting rights, which are recognized by the Province of Ontario through our Harvesting Agreement.

This fall, as you participate in the harvest or in MNO community council events celebrating the harvest season, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on how the Powley decision has raised the profile of the Métis, and contributed to the recognition of our rights as a distinct Aboriginal people within Canada. The affirmation of the right to harvest is a component critical to the already rich fabric that defines Métis culture.

Powley Day also provides MNO citizens with the opportunity to reflect with pride on the many momentous and historic achievements we have made working together through the MNO. The Powley decision was a crucial victory for Métis rights but since then we have seen other successes such as the Harvesting Agreement, the MNO-Ontario Framework Agreement and numerous other agreements with government and industry proponents.

It is fair to say that in spite of a tremendous amount of hard work and sacrifice of our citizens, the pursuit for full recognition of Métis rights continues. There is still much work to be done with the province and especially with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) in ensuring the acceptance of those rights when they are asserted. We will continue to push forward on such priority issues that you have raised with your Captains of the Hunt, your Provisional Council of the MNO (PCMNO) representative or myself.

We will continue to report progress and movement as it occurs, however each of us must continue to work together to advance the MNO’s Métis rights agenda. The work ahead of us is great and the journey will be long and hard fought, but on September 19, please take a moment to celebrate your Métis culture and heritage and remember Steve, Roddy and the Powley family for their personal sacrifice and commitment to the ongoing struggle for Métis rights.

Gary Lipinski
President,
Métis Nation of Ontario