



**Press Release
Attention News Editors**

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MEDIA ADVISORY

**Alberta Métis Set To Gather in Historic Cypress Hills
To Prepare For 'Hunt For Justice' In Alberta Courts**

Medicine Hat, AB (June 9, 2008) – Hundreds of Métis from throughout Alberta are set to meet later this week in the historic Cypress Hills in order to get ready for their upcoming Métis rights 'hunt for justice' in Alberta courts. A backgrounder on Métis harvesting rights in Alberta is attached.

The gathering will bring together Métis Elders, citizens and harvesters from all parts of the province, along with prominent academics and historians, who will be experts in upcoming court cases against Métis harvesters who have been charged by the Alberta Government. The gathering will provide an opportunity to the Métis community to share stories and relevant historic documents as well as identify potential community witnesses for the upcoming trial.

The gathering will also include an update on the charges against over a dozen Métis harvesters from throughout Alberta and the proposed time lines for the court cases from well-known Métis lawyers Jean Teillet and Jason Madden, who have acted as legal counsel in a series of other Métis rights cases in Ontario (*R. v. Powley*, *R. v. Laurin*), Manitoba (*R. v. Goodon*) and Saskatchewan (*R. v. Laviolette*, *R. v. Belhumeur*).

"It's unfortunate that instead of our people being able to gather in Cypress Hills for the 'History in the Hills' events in order to just celebrate our history, identity and culture in Alberta, we are gathering to prepare to defend our history, identity and culture in the courts," said Audrey Poitras, President of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Poitras added, "However, similar to how the Métis people have always used the Cypress Hills as a place for social, cultural and spiritual strength and well-being, our people will once again gather in the Hills for this purpose."

Details on the gathering are as follows:

**Alberta Métis 'Hunt For Justice' Gathering
Sunday, June 15th, 2008 at 1 p.m.**

Location: Main Group Camp, Elkwater Highway 41 Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park.

Directions from Medicine Hat: Drive about 30 km east on Hwy. 1 (Trans Canada Highway) and then turn right (South) onto Hwy. 41 at the turnoff where signs indicate Cypress Hills Provincial Park, then drive about 30 km to Elkwater townsite, take first right after driving over causeway.

For additional information on the gathering contact Marilyn at the Métis Nation of Alberta at (780) 453-0281 or Jeanette at the Miywasin Society at (403) 502-4019.

*** Individuals bringing family or historical documents are reminded to bring copies (not originals).

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For interviews or more information on the Métis Nation of Alberta contact:

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Backgrounder on Metis Harvesting Rights in Alberta

In September 2003, in the *Powley* case, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that Métis have constitutionally protected harvesting rights. Following the *Powley* decision, the Alberta Government and the Métis Nation of Alberta negotiated and entered into the Interim Métis Harvesting Agreement (IMHA) to accommodate Métis harvesting practices throughout the province. The IMHA effectively accommodated Métis harvesting in Alberta for over 2 ½ years until the Alberta Government cancelled the IMHA, fulfilling Ted Morton's failed leadership bid promise to the Alberta Fish and Game Association.

In July 2007, Ted Morton, as the Minister for Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), implemented a unilateral and arbitrary Métis Harvesting Policy, where SRD officers now attempt to determine who is Métis in Alberta. Morton's Policy also excludes Métis living in most of central and southern Alberta.

In August of 2007, the Métis Nation of Alberta Annual General Assembly unanimously rejected Morton's Policy. The Métis Nation of Alberta adopted its own Métis laws of the hunt and has been defending Métis harvesters following Métis laws who have been charged by the Alberta Government. To date, over a dozen Métis harvesters, including, Elders, single mothers and entire families, have been charged from throughout all of Alberta.

In April 2008, the Provincial Court of Alberta appointed one case management Judge to oversee all of the Métis harvesting cases in the province. It is expected that a Métis harvesting rights test case will proceed to trial in 2009, combining existing charges from throughout central and southern Alberta locations.