



South Wind

"The official newspaper of the Manitoba Southern Chiefs' Organization, Inc."

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Sandy Bay Ojibway Nation hosts successful Fisheries Summit

Message from Southern Grand Chief Chris Henderson

Booshoo! Washte! Tansi! Greetings to our Southern Chiefs, Elders, Veterans, Council Members and First Nations citizens across Southern Manitoba.

On April 22 & 23, 2005, First Nations, non-First Nations, and Métis fishermen gathered on the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation to discuss challenges facing their industry. The **Manitoba Commercial Inland Fisheries Conference** was well attended by close to 500 commercial fishermen.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chief Irvin McIvor of the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation and all his people for being excellent hosts. This conference was truly a first-class event, organized and coordinated by first-class people!

For your information, please find a copy of my speech within this *South Wind* edition that I delivered on Day One at the Fisheries Conference.

Among some of the major outcomes of this conference was the formation of a Manitoba Commercial Inland Fishers Federation. The purpose of this 'federation' is to create a united voice for the fishers, to protect the fishers' interests and to address and overcome their challenges. This federation will now be the province-wide representative body of the Manitoba Commercial Inland Fishers.

Until next time, take care and may the Creator watch over you and your families. *Meegwetch!*



l-r: Chief Irvin McIvor, Regional Vice Chief Francis Flett, Grand Chief Henderson, MKO Grand Chief Sydney Garrioch, Manitoba Metis Federation President, David Chartrand and Chief Ron Evans at the Manitoba Inland Fisheries Conference.

Aniin. Booshoo. Tansi. Greetings. I am Chris Henderson, Southern Grand Chief of the Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.



Grand Chief Henderson addressing the fishers, Chiefs and technicians at the Manitoba Inland Fisheries Conference, April 22, 2005.

It's my pleasure and honour to be here today. I want to thank the Elder for the opening prayer. I also want to thank Chief Irvin McIvor of the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation for hosting this conference and AFN Manitoba Regional Chief Francis Flett for inviting me here today as well. More importantly, I want to thank you all as First Nations Fishermen for continuing to exercise your Inherent, Aboriginal and Treaty rights by risking your lives by going out on the lakes to try and make a decent and moderate livelihood pursuant to our Treaties.

I myself am not a fisherman. My grandfather was a fisherman. But I must confess that I've never been out on the lakes and tried my hand at commercial fishing. I would not disrespect you and your way of life by pretending to be something I am not. I do not believe, or practice, misrepresentation. And I have the utmost respect and admiration for those of you who continue to actively fish, despite the many challenges that face your way of life.

Some of these challenges include low-fish prices. I've been told that certain fish species in the quota-entitlement are equivalent to the commercial prices that fishers received over 20 years ago. As a potential and practical solution, the administration should explore the possibility of removing certain fish species from the quota entitlements and allowing individuals to explore their own markets. The pickerel-sauger fisherman support the whitefish pool.

In 2004, the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation shipped its Whitefish to China to have it processed, packaged and shipped into the United States for sale, resulting in a small profit for the corporation, which was swallowed up by the high cost in administration. You, as commercial fishers, have

been told that this is your corporation, and that this is your money. But at the end of the day, when you retire, your name is deleted, along with your number, from the computer, and you're never mentioned again.

To add insult to injury, you will receive:

- no super-annuation;
- no life-insurance plan;
- no disability and sickness;
- no pension plan; and,
- no past-retirement and health care coverage.

And all these things are offered to employees at the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, all based on your blood, sweat and tears. In the last couple of years here in Manitoba, lives have been tragically lost by those who braved the waters to support this "monopoly"; and the only thing that these grieving families receive are a condolence card and a hand-shake.

Another challenge facing fishers is water quality. It is imperative that the federal and provincial government work to ensure that water quality is improved and upheld for future generations to sustain the fishery industry. If they stand idly by, choosing to do nothing concrete and constructive, I as Grand Chief will have to strongly consider launching a civil suit against the two levels of government, on behalf of those who derive their livelihood through the clean waters of Lake Winnipeg. Because the way things are going now with Lake Winnipeg, commercial fishing and drinking water will be negatively affected.

As our supposed "Trustee", the Department of Indian & Northern Affairs has to ensure that an economic base for our First Nations youth is

established, regardless of what profession they wish to pursue. Previous Indian Affairs Ministers have stated that education and economic development are the foundation to the success of any First Nation across Canada. To that end, Indian Affairs should consider and take immediate steps to subsidizing high-priced fishing quotas and entitlements, as well as purchasing equipment, like boats and out-board motors, for those young people that want to follow in the foot-steps of their grandfathers, fathers and uncles.

These are just a few of the challenges and potential solutions that are facing your industry, or as I should correctly say - *your way of life*. I thank you for your attention, and I will be sitting in for the rest of this important conference to listen and to learn from you.

Meegwetch!

