

President's Annual Report

The purpose of this Annual Report is to highlight the broad range of activities undertaken by the Executive and Board during the 2011/2012 fiscal year. The Report outlines the approach taken in developing the Women of the Métis Nation's governance model, measures undertaken to establish a corporate presence of the organization and the activities undertaken to introduce the Women of the Métis Nation within Canada.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Métis women from across our Nation to Edmonton to participate in our second national gathering. I want also to thank the members of the Board of Directors for their input over the past year and the encouragement they have provided. It is through their efforts that we are able to come together and to advance the interests of Métis within our homeland and throughout Canada. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the support and assistance of the Executive and Board of the Métis National Council who have worked with us over the last year. Meegwetch.

Strengthening Governance

Since our last gathering in October 2010 we have worked to move the organization forward and follow through on the work of the past. At the last Annual Gathering we took the bylaws that you passed at the meeting and worked with Industry Canada to ensure that they were worded and coordinated to meet the requirements of Industry Canada. We have moved forward with the organization as the Métis women had indicated by strengthening our ability to work together, to build consensus and to focus our future energies on moving forward the agenda of the Women of the Métis Nation. We have been assisted in this regard by Kathy Hodgeson Smith who is a lawyer with a great deal of experience in this area. Kathy Hodgeson Smith will report directly to the Women at our meeting at the end of March. Over the coming months we will be seeking additional resources to continue to build governance capacity including board training and other professional development initiatives.

Corporate Governance

This year, through funding provided by the Government of Canada, the Women of the Métis Nation was able to establish a corporate presence in Canada. Incorporated at the federal level, we were able to secure funding that led to our very first contractual contribution agreement independent of any other organizations and establish draft financial and organizational policies and procedures. These draft policies and procedures are modeled after "best in class" procedures and are fully compliant with the Government of Canada's Treasury Board guidelines under which the organization is funded. These draft by-laws and procedures will be reviewed by the Board of Directors before adoption. In the interest of transparency and openness, it is my intention to have the draft by-laws and procedures made available to anyone who is interested in reviewing them and we will consider incorporating them into our web site.

Corporate Awareness and Branding

Women of the Métis Nation has also commenced the process of developing its corporate public relations materials that will be used to introduce Métis women to the rest of Canada. This has included developing draft introductory corporate brochure, development of a information jacket cover, updating our logo and developing a summary of our policy positions from papers we have developed over the past several years. These drafts will be made available at our March gathering for comment and input before they are finalized. This set of materials will be invaluable for us as we move forward to introduce ourselves in Parliamentary (House of Commons/Senate) inter-governmental forums and other events. We will also be profiling our new draft Logo that updates and makes improvements to the logo we have used in the past.

Website Development

The Board has recognized the critical importance of using digital technology to expand the awareness and reach of the Women of the Métis Nation. We will be unveiling our new draft web site at our meeting. The web site is intended not only as a place to house information, it is intended to be an ongoing reporting mechanism so that women across the homeland can obtain real time information on the activities and accomplishments of our organization. We will be bolting on social media applications to the web site and incorporating a blog within the web site so that any Métis women who want to contribute information or perspectives will be able to do so. Over the coming year we will also explore the development of an E-newsletter to share relevant information with Métis women. We will also look to promote the website and will be integrating the website with search engines to drive traffic towards it.

Project Development

The Women of the Métis Nation is not seeking to get into the program delivery business. It is, however, seeking to expand its activities into areas of interest to Métis women. This includes developing advocacy initiatives aimed at addressing the priorities of Métis women. We will be seeking input as to what those priorities are at our meetings and through our website. For 2011/12 we have pursued funding to support several of our long-standing priorities: economic development, residential schools, and promotion of the Michif language. In the area of economic development, we were successful in securing financial support to survey Métis women and our development corporations to identify barriers to Métis women's participation in the economy and this study is ongoing. Many of the delegates at the March meeting will be invited to share their views with the consulting team that will be present.

Advocacy and Networking Initiatives

Women of the Métis Nation participated in the Board of Governors meetings of the Métis National Council (June 2011 & February 2012); the Metis Rights Panel meetings; the Metis National Council Annual General Meeting (Saskatoon); The MNC President's Retreat with Board of Governors and the Metis Rights Panel; and the Metis

Constitutional Conference (Ottawa). We also attended the Supreme Court of Canada for the submission on the MMF's historic land claims case.

We have been an active participant in the intergovernmental affairs processes including the sub committee on Violence Against Aboriginal Women for the FPT Minister's group on the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group (AAWG). We will be making a presentation to the upcoming AAWG Ministers and leaders meeting in April in Toronto. We sent a delegation of Metis Women from across the homeland to the "Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum" hosted by British Columbia and the Native Women's Association of Canada. You can obtain more information by going to the attached link. <http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2011/06/ending-violence-against-aboriginal-women.html>

With respect to Parliament we appeared as witnesses at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal people and made our views known on "Metis Women and Economic Security". The link provides an overview of our presentation.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=1&Language=E&DocId=2878978&File=0#Int-2038054>

International Advocacy

We have attended the Sub-regional meeting of Indigenous Peoples from North America and the Caribbean. This was a follow-up to the III Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas in December 2010 regarding implementing the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas for present and future generations. We will be monitoring the progress the Canadian government takes in implementing the Declaration of Indigenous Rights and will be participating in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues. We will make clear that only Métis women speak for Métis women. We will also be monitoring developments at the UN Human Rights Commission particularly as they relate to Canada's approach and response to the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal Women. We have through the Metis National Council had Celeste McKay represent the interest of Metis women at the International Expert Group in New York in January of this year. This committee is directly focused on the issues related to Combatting Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Children. The report is enclosed in your kits.

Next Steps

Over the coming months we will seek to implement the direction provided at our March meeting. We will be seeking to introduce ourselves to governments and non-governmental organizations. We will seek to develop strategic relationships with other women's institutions and organizations (MNC, Governing Members, Pauktuutit, NWAC, Status of Women, etc.).

We will be submitting a multi-year funding application and work-plan to the Government of Canada in the coming days to ensure we avoid the significant delays we encountered in 2011/2012. We will also be pursuing project funding in a number of areas including

economic development, violence against women, residential schools, Michif Language, health and wellness, traditional knowledge, housing and education. As a Board we have remained connected via email, phone, occasional conference calls and a board of director's meeting in Ottawa.