Our Vision is to be an organization of strong Métis women who are the Voice of women in the Métis Nation, with a significant role in enhancing the socio-economic and cultural wellbeing of all Métis people.

Our Mission is to ensure that Métis women from across the homeland are safe, connected, empowered and have capacity to work with other Canadian and Métis organizations to help create the conditions for healthy, vibrant and productive communities throughout the Métis Nation.
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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

To all my Métis sisters and guests

I humbly present the 2017-2018 annual report to you to help to highlight the significant work we have done over the past year. Our organization has been growing in leaps and bounds and we have been doing our best to keep up. It is exciting to engage with you and present the activities of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak [LFMO]

I first want to acknowledge LFMO’s Board of Directors who have worked alongside of me to bring opportunities to build more capacity. We are actively working to grow in each province as well as at the national level. The Board’s bios are contained within this report. I thank them and value their fierce commitment and fearless approach to the roles that they continue to demonstrate representing the Métis women in their provinces.

My second acknowledgement is the role of my staff. I would like to thank Jennifer Lord for her strength and the work she has done to assist us in our growth. Recently, Jennifer took a position with the Status of Women and she has been missed. We wish her the utmost best in her new endeavor. Our Senior Political Advisor, Lisa Pigeau has been an amazing support and has demonstrated her commitment to seeing our organization’s success. Since Lisa has started in April she has worked tirelessly to build on our organizations capacity.

As you will read in this report, we have been engaged in a significant number of issues that face Métis women but we have only scratched the surface. We are working to lift up and address priorities of Métis women across the homeland. We are hoping that with the continued support of the Federal government and the work of our research and policy development, we will see more opportunities for Métis women and girls in our community.

I realize the role that Métis women have played throughout the generations and we want to continue to advance those roles and to ensure that there is an intersectional lens in all our future work.

Please know it has been an honour to represent Métis women throughout my term. I do recognize that my leadership is only as strong as the many women who broke the trail before me and the women and girls who work at our grassroots community daily. I welcome all of you and look forward to our 16th Annual General meeting.

Melanie Omeniho
President
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak
I am pleased to bring greetings from the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) to the delegates of the 2018 Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Annual General Meeting. I would like to thank President Omeniho for extending an invitation to attend the AGM.

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak’s work representing the interests and aspirations of Métis women is a crucial part of moving the Métis Nation forward. The MNO admires and supports its efforts to provide Métis women a voice around the world and here at home.

Métis women have always played a pivotal role in the Métis families and communities, and their lived experiences provide important insights into priority areas, including economic development, education, health and violence against women.

It has been a pleasure to work together over the past year to advance key priorities outlined in the Canada-Métis Nation Accord and to increase awareness on how these areas specifically impact women. I look forward to the progress we make by continuing to work together and advancing our common goal of building a strong and prosperous Métis Nation for women, children and families.

Sincerely,

Margaret Froh
President
Minister Bennett’s message for Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak - Women of the Métis Nation
Annual General Meeting (October 12-14, 2018 in Toronto, Ontario)

I want to extend my best wishes to everyone at Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak - Women of the Métis Nation. This is a milestone year for your organization, as you hold your 8th Annual General Meeting! My heartfelt congratulations to you all on your ongoing hard work representing Métis women.

Your efforts in ensuring Métis women are safe, connected, and empowered has an incredible impact on all of the Métis Nation and across Canada. Creating a space for the voices of the grassroots Métis women is crucial to breaking down barriers. We know that when women are seen and heard, they use their voices to the benefit of their families and entire communities.

In the spirit of reconciliation, I look forward to continuing to build upon our relationship with you - a relationship based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership with the women of the Métis Nation.

I wish you all a productive Annual General Meeting.

Marsee! Thank you! Merci for all you do.

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
As Minister of Status of Women, I am happy to extend my greetings to Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak – Women of the Métis Nation. I have enjoyed working with you over the past year and I look forward to our continued collaboration.

While the past year has seen us work together on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the deep tragedy that this represents for the Métis Nation, for all Indigenous people, and for all Canadians, we have taken some positive steps forward to heal some of the harms of our history.

Status of Women Canada has taken on the responsibility of commemoration related to the inquiry. This important duty complements our work on preventing and addressing gender-based violence. Women and the LGBTQ2+ community are far too often the targets of violence, and the rates of violence against Indigenous women are even higher.

Last year the Women of the Métis Nation met for the first time with the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for the Status of Women. Your voice was also heard at Status of Women Canada’s Indigenous Women’s Circle and at UNCSW 62 in New York City.

Our government is committed to continued meaningful engagement with all Indigenous women and their communities and we have much work to do together.

I look forward to continuing to partner with Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak – Women of the Métis Nation to build a more prosperous future for us all.

Maarsii.


Cette année, nous avons travaillé ensemble à l’Enquête nationale sur les femmes et les filles autochtones disparues et assassinées. Il s’agit d’une tragédie profonde pour les Métis, les Autochtones et l’ensemble de la population canadienne, mais nous avons adopté des mesures positives dans l’optique de guérir certains maux de notre histoire.

Condition féminine Canada (CFC) s’est chargée de souligner ce drame. Cette triste responsabilité de grande importance s’aligne sur notre travail pour prévenir et contrer la violence fondée sur le sexe. Les femmes et les personnes allosexuelles sont trop souvent les victimes de la violence, et les taux de violence contre les femmes autochtones sont encore plus élevés.

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak a rencontré pour la première fois l’année dernière les ministres responsables de la condition féminine des gouvernements fédéral, provinciaux et territoriaux. Votre voix s’est aussi fait entendre au Cercle des femmes autochtones de CFC et à la 62e CCNU à New York.

Notre gouvernement est déterminé à faire preuve d’un engagement solide et continu envers les femmes autochtones et leur collectivité, et nous avons encore beaucoup de travail.

Je suis convaincue que notre partenariat nous permettra de bâtir un avenir plus prospère pour chacune et chacun.

Maarsii.

The Honourable Maryam Monsef, P.C., M.P.
L’honorable Maryam Monsef, C.P., députée
Minister Philpott message for Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak - Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Meeting (October 12-14, 2018 in Toronto, Ontario)

I would like to extend my best wishes to you, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak - Women of the Métis Nation, on the occasion of your 8th Annual General Meeting. Your dedication to advocating for and supporting women of the Métis Nation is truly inspiring. You are making such a profound difference in the lives of Métis women.

The Government of Canada is committed to working in partnership with Métis to advance reconciliation and improve the lives of Métis women and their families. Together we are making real progress and we look forward to making even greater strides going forward.

Métis women are the centre of their families and at the heart of the Métis Nation. As we work together to set priorities and develop policy to improve socio-economic conditions for the Métis Nation based on the recognition of rights, respect, and collaboration, it is vital to ensure that the voices of Métis women are included.

When Métis women are empowered, their families, communities, and all of Canada benefit.

I wish you a successful and productive meeting.

Thank you,

The Honourable Jane Philpott
Minister of Indigenous Services
Biographies

MELANIE OMENIHO
President, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak

Melanie Omeniho is a descendent of the historical Métis community of Lac Ste Anne and is a proud member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. As a young person, Melanie attended meetings and assemblies alongside her mother and other strong Métis women role models who insisted on being included and heard. Her political and advocacy career led her to play a role in the development and incorporation of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO) and to her three-term re-election as President by Métis women across the homeland.

Melanie has extensive experience in the areas of community development, social programming, and family and children services. She has worked to develop programs and advocate on behalf of her community to effect changes to the various social programs to better meet the needs of the Aboriginal community. She received the Queen’s Jubilee Medal in recognition for her work in education, Aboriginal youth and advocating for families involved with Children Services.

VICTORIA LEA PRUDEN
Vice-President, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak

Victoria Lea Pruden has a passion for promoting healing and awareness about impacts of trauma, and loves to work and advocate for people impacted by abuse and trauma. Victoria is a dedicated leader in the Métis community, and was elected in 2016 to the office of Provincial Women’s Chairperson in the Métis Nation British Columbia after serving several terms as a community President for Métis Nation Greater Victoria.

Since 2012, Victoria has been the Executive Director at Bridges for Women Society and has worked for the society for over 12 years in various roles including front line, program development, and management. She has presented to many groups, community partners, and sister agencies about Bridges’ trauma-informed programs and the specialized work that Bridges does creating a legacy of transformative change.

She is proud to have worked on many healing, culture and language projects over the years with Métis elders, and continues to work on keeping Métis culture, language, and teachings alive. She is the mother of an 11 year old boy, Kwennis Pruden Ladret. She enjoys painting, beading, reading, writing, connecting with other Métis people, and learning from Métis elders she is blessed to call friends. She is profoundly honored to live in the traditional territory of the Sincoten and Lekwungen speaking peoples, on unceded Coast Salish Territory, in Saanich, BC.
ANITA CAMPBELL  
Treasurer, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak  
Spokeswoman, Infinity Women Secretariat Inc.

Anita is a Métis woman from the community of Duck Bay, spent her childhood and teenage years in the City of Winnipeg and later moved north to the City of Thompson. Anita is engaged to Mike McIvor and has a blended family of 3 sons, 2 daughters and 3 grandchildren. In addition to serving on many Boards and Committees, Anita is the Founder, Spokeswoman and CEO for Infinity Women Secretariat Inc. and is also the Manitoba Metis Federation’s Minister of Finance and Human Resources, and their Chief Administrative Officer. Previous to this, she was employed with the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre for 35 years in Thompson, Manitoba, holding the position of Executive Director for the last 23. Anita has played a major role in the development of programs and services that address the social, education, cultural, employment and training issues throughout the province. Anita received the provincial award for Community Development from the Original Women’s Network in 2001, the Interprovincial Association on Native Employment (IANE) Bill Hanson Award in 2007, the Thompson Trail Breakers Award for Community Leadership in 2011 and received the Governor General of Canada’s Sovereign’s Medal for Volunteers in recognition of outstanding Indigenous Leadership in June, 2017.

TAMMY MAH  
Secretary, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak  
Les Filles de Madelaine, Saskatchewan

Through this position, President Mah has met with the twelve (12) Regional Directors to encourage Métis women in each region to step forward as a women’s representative for their region. Laying a strong province-wide foundation for Les Filles de Madelaine is integral in harmonizing the voice of Métis women throughout Saskatchewan. To date, three of twelve (12) regions have held elections while the remaining nine (9) elections are in process with locations and dates set. The election of a Métis women representative in each region will create the full complement of the Board of Directors of Les Filles de Madelaine Secretariat Inc.

With the leadership of current President Tammy Mah, Les Filles de Madelaine has been recognized by the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan and has secured a dedicated seat within the structure of the Provincial Métis Council.

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MARILYN LIZEE
Secretary, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak

Mariyn Lizee was born in Lloydminster Saskatchewan. Being a true Métis, Marilyn moved around frequently and finally planted roots on the Elizabeth Métis Settlement. After raising her family and enduring many trials and tribulations, she emerges as a strong and opinionated Métis woman who discovered early in life that her passion is helping those who could not help themselves; to be a voice for the voiceless and advocate for the rights of Métis people.

Having grown up in a Métis community, Marilyn truly understands what it means to be Métis and the importance of educating everyone about Métis culture. Marilyn has her first year of business at NAIT where she graduated 3rd highest in her class. Marilyn has been working with and for the Métis Nation of Alberta since 1996 and is the Treasurer of Local 1990 (Grand Prairie). As a stalwart advocate for Métis women, Marilyn is the President of the Alberta New Dawn Métis Women Society and additionally represents Alberta Métis women on the national level as a board member of the Women of the Métis Nation. Additionally, Marilyn volunteers on various committees on behalf of the Metis Nation of Alberta and is always looking for opportunities to give back to the community.

SHARON CADEAU - Métis Nation of Ontario Women’s Council

Sharon Cadeau has served as PCMNO Vice-Chair and spokesperson for the MNO Women’s Council since 2008. She became actively involved in Métis politics in 1999 when she first learned of her Métis ancestry. She was Founding President of the Credit River Métis Council based in Brampton and has served as Regional Councillor for Region Eight. Her work on behalf of the MNO Women’s Council is focused on securing the funding required to carry out the important advocacy and public awareness role of the Women’s Council.

Sharon, whose Métis roots have been traced to Penetanguishene, was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and has lived in Germany, Nova Scotia and Ontario. Her contributions to the Métis community include work on several different boards and committees and she is committed to ensuring the voice of the Métis Nation is heard throughout the province. Sharon received the Ontario Heritage Trust Award in recognition of her work with Mississauga Heritage and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. She has also earned one of the highest honours that her community can bestow: two eagle feathers.
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak - Women of the Métis Nation

Annual Report 2017-2018

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak is the recognized voice of Métis Women across the homeland. Operating in a democratic, transparent and fiscally accountable manner, we influence public policy and decision making related to concerns and aspirations of Métis women at all levels of Indigenous and Canadian government. A secretariat of the Métis National Council since 1999, LFMO was incorporated in 2010 at the organization’s inaugural meeting.

We are guided by six strategic goals:

1. Build a strong, successful and responsible organization whose voice is heard throughout the Métis Nation;
2. Be caretakers of traditional knowledge and the voice of Métis women;
3. Ensure that the perspectives of Métis women are included in community economic development;
4. Foster culturally appropriate learning environments and lifelong learning to improve the educational outcomes for women and all Métis learners;
5. Help Métis people lead healthier lives and help create the conditions for healthy and vibrant communities; and
6. Advocate on behalf of Métis women.

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak continues to increase capacity in alignment with strategic goal number #1. In 2017-1018, we have seen growth and development in three main areas.

∞ Human Resources;
∞ Increasing our participation in Core Meetings; and
∞ The securing of a “Head Office”.

Under the guidance of LFMO’s National President, and encouraging the furtherance of internal capacity, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak facilitates:

∞ Communication with the LFMO membership on issues of importance;
∞ Advocacy on behalf of the LFMO membership;
∞ Participation in national meetings and events on behalf of the LFMO;
∞ Development of strategic relationship with other women’s institutions and organizations (MNC, Governing members, Pauktuutit Inuit, Native Women’s Association of Canada, Status of Women);
∞ Re-development of LFMO website;
∞ Meetings of the LFMO Board of Directors;
∞ An Annual General Meeting;
∞ Development of proposals and work plans in the areas of economic development, ending violence against Indigenous women (EVAIW), and Justice.
Human Resources

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak has seen significant growth in its human resources capacity in fiscal year 2017-2018. Upon endorsement from the Board of Directors, we engaged a “Senior Policy Analyst”.

The Senior Policy Analyst, reporting directly to the President of LFMO has served to increase the capacity of women across the homeland by providing supports to secure additional contribution agreements, funding and grants. Directly engaging with Métis women across the homeland, the Senior Policy Analyst provides ongoing support to develop capacity within the 5 provincial representative bodies through increased communication, information sharing, support of proposal development and knowledge translation from funder requirements to actionable proposal development.

**CORE MEETINGS**

With increased capacity, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak has been actively involved with several key policy areas in activities throughout 2017-2108. The meaningful engagement and participation has significantly increased.

Notable activities in this reporting period include the following high-profile meetings:

**LES FEMMES MICHIIF OTIPEMISIWAK INVOLVEMENT IN THE PERMANENT BI-LATERAL MECHANISM**

In December 2016, the Prime Minister announced that the Government would establish Permanent Bilateral Mechanisms with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation. The purpose of this mechanism is to identify each community’s distinct priorities. The 2017 Federal budget identified interim funding for the mechanisms however Budget 2018 identified 74.9 million over five years with 15.5 million per year ongoing.

On March 19th, 2018 President Omeniho was invited to participated with Métis Nation leaders President Clément Chartier, Métis National Council, President Clara Morin Dal Col, Métis Nation of British Columbia, President Audrey Poitras, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, President David Chartrand, Manitoba Métis Federation, and President Margaret Froh, Métis Nation of Ontario at the Métis Nation Permanent Bilateral Mechanism Leaders Meeting.

**President Omeniho delivered the following remarks:**

“We would like to thank the Ministers for the opportunity for being engaged with the Métis Nation through the bilateral processes and LFMO is grateful for the fact that the women and diversity were at the heart of the 2018 budget. The Métis Nation recognizes the central role women play in raising Métis families and value the experiential education and wisdom that Métis women bring to our tables.

We encourage all Ministries to work with the LFMO and their regional entities to ensure that a gender lens is applied to all policies and legislation that may impact Métis women and families. Over the years - often when a gender lens has been applied it was by other women’s organizations and Métis women have not had the opportunity or capacity to ensure it is through their culturally distinct lens.”

The Métis Nation has identified the following priority areas for the Permanent Bilateral Mechanism:

- Early Learning and Childcare
- Education
- Housing
- Health
- Child and Family
- Fiscal Relationship
- Economic Development
- Environment
- Justice

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak sits with other Senior Officials of the Métis Nation Governing Members to strategize and develop workplans for both Year 1 and Year 2 priorities. We are also represented on many of the technical tables related to the priority areas.
EMERGENCY MEETING ON FIRST NATION, MÉTIS AND INUIT CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Held in Ottawa on January 25-26th, 2018, an emergency meeting on First Nation, Inuit and Métis Nation Child and Family services provided an opportunity for federal, provincial and territorial governments and Métis, Inuit and First Nations leaders to prioritize needs to address the current state of the child welfare crisis in Canada.

In looking to the future of Child and Family Services, the Métis Nation identified specific steps to be taken to ensure meaningful, culturally-appropriate reform. President Omeniho was quoted in a Métis Nation of Ontario Press release on January 26, 2018 as emphasizing that in addition to being a human right crisis, Indigenous children in care speaks to the need to recognize and implement the rights of Indigenous people to self-determination and

“(As Minister Bennett rightly pointed out) This is a section 35 rights issue, the right of our Métis Nation to protect and secure our Métis families and children. Who can argue with that?” (Métis Nation Press Release January 26, 2018).

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak will continue its on-going work with the Métis National Council on this file to ensure the development of a specific Métis Strategy is built firmly on a culturally-safe gendered lens.

APTN In Focus January 24, 2018 Appearance as a lead-in to Emergency Meeting on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Child and Family Services

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, as represented by President Omeniho was interviewed on APTN’s program In focus regarding the Emergency Meeting on Child Welfare.

"It’s a humanitarian crisis. That’s the focus of a two-day ‘emergency meeting’ on child welfare in Ottawa happening Thursday and Friday.

Indigenous Services Minister Jane Philpott, children’s advocate Cindy Blackstock, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Family Advocate Cora Morgan, Southern Chiefs Organization Grand Chief Jerry Daniels, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak President, Melanie Omeniho, and grandmother Chickadee Richard join host Dennis Ward live in Ottawa to put the child welfare system In Focus”(retrieved from http://aptnnews.ca/infocus-podcast/ 05/03/18).
When asked to provide a Métis perspective on children welfare, President Omeniho stated:

“The child welfare system is actually leaving a lot of our Métis Kids falling in the gaps. I know Manitoba is more responsive to Métis children and families than the rest of Canada so we are going into this meeting trying to build relationships between our Métis Nation and the governments in Canada to ensure that Métis children that are coming in to care and being brought into care have some responsibilities back to their own Nations and are connected to their own communities so that we can continue to work with them. (Because) as long as they are known as ‘other’ Indigenous Children or ‘other’ Aboriginal children when they don’t get qualified as First Nations children, it means that those children don’t receive the same kind of care and commitments that some of the other kids who we are working with in the system do. We are hoping to become a delegated authority as part of Métis Nation for Métis children. We are going to be pushing for that with our provincial partners.”

President Omeniho was asked what her message, the message of the Métis Nation and others going into these meetings with the Federal government and some other ministers would be this week, President Omeniho stated “I think that we need to address this. I think this is a humanitarian crisis as Minister Philpott has named it. I believe that we need to collectively work within the Métis Nation and the other Indigenous Nations to try to find solutions to all of these issues. These things aren’t going to fix themselves. I think that the province and the federal government will need to step up to the table and work with the Métis Nation, the First Nations and the Inuit to make sure that we can come up with solutions that are going to change the outcome otherwise we are going to have another generation of residential school children under some other name.”

When asked to comment on whether she felt that the Indigenous Services Minister understand the problem and what needs to be done, President Omeniho stated “We see that she has actually come out of the gate running to try to deal with the Indigenous services and I’m hopeful that with the new change in the ministries to have two ministries and to try to deal with the fact that we need Indigenous services all across the spectrum that understand and identify issues specific to each of the Indigenous groups of people in a distinctions-based process we are very hopeful that’s what she sees and that is what she is doing. She has demonstrated that in many of the issues she is bringing forward and when she speaks about the issues she does seem informed and has been appraised of what is going on so we are hopeful that it is going to go forward in a good way.”

Host Dennis Ward asked President Omeniho if the colour of one’s skin or their last name weighs heavily when they go in to hospital? Her response was “It absolutely does. We’ve seen in other provinces mothers who have been part of a system or an institutionalized process are immediately flagged when they come into the hospitals or if they even bring their children in, who has had an accident and are suffering from injury we see and experience the same thing where apprehension is the course of action rather than to trying figure out what’s really gone on. Accidents happen with children but because of who they are, they are judged One of the very first things that I’m going to say is that it is really tough for both the provincial/territorial and federal governments to pushing the football back and forth between each other. We need to work collaboratively together. We don’t care and the children in care don’t about which face is standing there they just need to have solutions to change the outcomes. We all have to start moving forward in a role; not having paternalistic policies and legislations telling us how to take care of our kids but having us as part of taking care of our children.”
**MÉTIS NATION SUMMIT ON CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE**

The Métis Nation hosted a “Summit on Child and Family Services” on March 26-28th, 2018 in Winnipeg Manitoba. The summit brought together Métis Nation leaders to discuss the current state of child and family service in relation to Métis children. Speaking on behalf of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, President Omeniho provided opening comments alongside of Métis Nation President, Clément Chartier, Métis Nation Minister of Culture, Heritage and Families and Manitoba Métis Federation President David Chartrand. In her remarks, President Omeniho asked participants to think of the role Métis women play in raising Métis families and (to) value the experiential education and wisdom that Métis women bring to our everyday lives. She asked that as an implementation plan evolves, to centre the conversation on the needs of Métis mothers and caregivers as well.

Presentations and Best Practice models were presented to highlight the history of Métis children in care, the current landscape of Métis Nation child and family services, promising areas in Métis Child and Family services, prevention and early intervention needs, Kinship and customary care, Culture-based programs and services, and research and data needs. Minister of Indigenous Services Canada, the Honourable Jane Philpott also hosted a panel with Métis youth on resiliency. Minister Philpott announced $1 million in funding to the Métis National Council to support their consultation efforts towards culturally appropriate child welfare reform.

Federal, Provincial Territorial (FPT) Forum for Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women
The FPT forum of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women has been meeting since 1981 to fulfill its mandate of: a) sharing knowledge and information with an aim to promote and advance equality for women and girls; and, b) undertaking collaborative initiatives as agreed upon by consensus, on issues related to the enhancement of women and girls’ equality. The 35th annual meeting took place November 8-10, 2017 in Toronto and co-chaired by Honourable Ministers Maryam Monsef and Indira Naidoo-Harris.

On Thursday November 9, 2017 the FPT Ministers met with National Indigenous Leaders and Representatives (NILRS) in advance of the formal opening of the meetings to discuss topics of importance to Indigenous women and girls. A summary report from the National Indigenous Women’s Summit (February 2017) was presented. The recommendations from the summit provided direction on key priority areas from a distinctions-based approach to ending violence against Indigenous women.

A press release was issued on Friday November 10th, 2017 which included the following summary of the separate pre-meeting.

“During a separate pre-meeting, for the first time, Ministers held discussions with National Indigenous leaders and representatives: The Assembly of First Nations, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, Native Women’s Association of Canada, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and Women of the Métis Nation. The discussions provided an opportunity to constructively address some of the most important issues facing First Nations, Métis and Inuit women.” (Press Release - Status of Women Ministers Advance Key Priorities Affecting Women and Girls, November 10, 2017 - Toronto, Ontario issued jointly by Minister of Status of Women and Status of Women Canada)

Further topics addressed at this meeting included:

- **Gender Wage Gap and Women’s Economic Empowerment** - GWG Research Brief and Recommendations from the Task Team, and Ontario’s Proposed Women’s Economic Empowerment Strategy
- **Gender-Based Analysis** - results for the jurisdictional scan (Yukon) and Gender-Based+ Analysis (Canada)
- **Gender Based Analysis, Violence against Women and Girls -Sexual Violence** - Addressing sexual
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak anticipates active participation in agenda settings and presenting priorities on future FPT meetings of Ministers Responsible for Status of Women, applying a Métis-specific culturally relevant lens.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATUS OF WOMEN - INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN THE FEDERAL JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM

On Thursday December 7, 2017, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, represented by President Melanie Omeniho was called as a witness to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to present on Indigenous Women in the Federal Justice and Correctional System. Other witnesses called at this time included Vicki Chartrand - Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Bishop’s University; Quebec Native Women Inc. represented by President Viviane Michel and Véronique Picard, Justice Coordinator; Felice Yuen, Associate Professor, Concordia University; Aboriginal Legal Services represented by Jonathan Rudin, Program Director. A full transcript of the proceedings is available at http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/FEWO/meeting-83/evidence

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.) presented the following:

Welcome to our special guests today. Your excellent testimony is going to be very helpful as we chart a path forward, so thank you so much.

My first few questions will be for Ms. Omeniho. I represent a fairly sizable Métis community, and as you know, Manitoba is home to the largest Métis community in the country. In fact, I represent part of Louis Riel’s riding of Provencher. It’s not called Provencher anymore it’s Winnipeg South but it’s the historic community of St. Norbert.

I’m aware of the great work that you do, and particularly Infinity Women, in Manitoba. Do you have a number or a proportion of the prison population that is Métis? Do we have a roundabout figure for the indigenous folks who are in our penal system? What proportion would be Métis?

Speaking specifically to the paucity of research regarding the Métis reality in the prison system, President Omeniho replied:

“I would have to tell you at this point that any of us would only be guessing what the number is. That’s actually one of the issues I meant to raise earlier. When women become incarcerated, and not only under the process of the sentencing, how often does anybody ask the question so that they can self-identify?

I think that is part of the issue even with the pan-Aboriginal approach. People need to start asking who these people are when they get to a correctional institution. They need to be asked the question, “Are you an Indigenous person, and how do you identify?” That’s the only way the system is ever really going to know: by tracking this.

There are no statistics or research specific to Métis”.

THE 62nd SESSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, UNITED NATIONS HEAD QUARTERS, MARCH 12-23, 2018

The key themes of the 62nd Session on the Status of women was ‘Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls’. Invited by Honourable Minister Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs to be part of Canada’s delegation, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak was represented by President Omeniho. Invitations such as this high-profile event is evidence of increased capacity of LFMO and improved awareness that a pan-Indigenous or non-specific women’s agenda does not meet the complex the unique needs of Métis women. Space is beginning to be created for the expression of Métis women’s needs and goals to ensure better outcomes and achieve equality.
Along with a reception for Canada’s delegation, and Canadian Remarks at the inter-Parliamentary Union, LFMO had representation and knowledge sharing opportunities with Canada hosted/co-hosted side-events such as Barriers to Justice for Indigenous Women, ‘Silent Tears’: Disability: Violence and Survival of Rural Women Globally, and Engaging Men and Boys. Further Information can be found at http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE MULTI-PARTNER OIL SPILL RESEARCH INITIATIVE (MPRI)

On September 29, 2017, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard Hon. Dominic LeBlanc invited President Melanie Omeniho to become a member of the advisory committee for the Multi-Partner Oil Spill Research Initiative under the $1.5 billion Oceans Protection Plan. This is a collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) as lead with Natural Resources Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Transport Canada.

Traditional, Indigenous women have had the role of keepers and protectors of the waters. As such, Métis women’s voices are of significant importance in a contemporary context of protectors of waters. The commitment for this committee is 2-years and convenes twice per year. LFMO’s role is to provide expertise and advice to facilitate the management and implementation of the program, to review the progress of the initiative and all funded research projects with the objective of identifying linkages and/or issues and to raise awareness of the initiative and research outcomes. On key measures that is stated in the Terms of Reference is to include a greater role for Indigenous groups in the marine safety regime training for prevention and response operations and shared decision making.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The Indigenous Women’s Leadership Conference hosted by the Native Women’s Association of Canada was held November 28-29th, 2017. Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak was represented by President Omeniho. This conference focused on Indigenous women in business, Arts and Culture, Communications and Media, Youth leadership, Entrepreneurship, Advocacy and Law, and Policy and Politics. Many women leaders shared their knowledge and experiences on the road to their individual accomplishments. President Omeniho provided opening remarks. Present for this event were the following Government of Canada Ministers:

∞ Minister Carolyn Bennett - Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs
∞ Minister Maryam Monsef - Status of Women

TRILATERAL WORKING GROUP ON VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Working Group’s mandate is to analyze violence against Indigenous women and girls in a meaningful, constructive, and forward-looking way in order to address the disproportionate level of violence and victimization they face in all North America. The Working Group exchanges, on an ongoing collaborative basis, best and promising practices in the areas of education, health, economic policies, crime prevention, justice, and rehabilitation with the goal of reducing violence against Indigenous women and girls.

It is of the utmost importance for the Working Group to include Indigenous women leaders and civil society representatives in the Working Group’s discussions so that they may have a strong voice in representing their communities and explaining the impacts of national government policies on their community members’ lives. Following the first meeting of the Working Group in 2016, Mexico, Canada, and the United State have sponsored the attendance of Indigenous women experts from each country, whose testimonies to the Working Group have informed subsequent dialogues and agenda.

The Working Group is comprised of government officials and executives, who convene with Indigenous leaders and representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United States. Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak represents Métis Women at this table.
Strategic Work of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak

THE INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Since the first announcement of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, the LFMO has been willing and available to support the work of the Commissioners and their staff. The LFMO participated in a multitude of teleconferences in the 2017-18 fiscal year, with calls at first every two-weeks and progressively moving to every month or so. Three in-person meetings with the Commissioners were also called in Ottawa on June 7th, 2017 and February 8th, 2018. A follow-up meeting with senior level staff at the National Inquiry was held the following week on February 15th, 2018.

In addition to our political participation with the National Inquiry, the LFMO also has official Standing with the National Inquiry and has hired Métis lawyer, Jean Teillet, as our legal representatives as part of Paper, Salter, Teillet LLP Barristers and Solicitors. Our legal team has worked tirelessly to ensure the LFMO is well informed and well positioned at Community Hearings, Expert Hearings and at every turn of the National Inquiry, all under the instruction of President Omeniho. Calls between President Omeniho and our legal team are frequent as are updates via email exchange.

As the LFMO had not received our Contribution Agreement from the National Inquiry, no funds to pay for travel related to this issue nor the countless hours of legal fees flowed in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. This put considerable financial pressure on the LFMO. President Omeniho attended all of the above-mentioned meetings at the expense of the LFMO and attended the Edmonton Community Hearings from November 7-9. President Omeniho advocated for this process to improve as well as brought our concerns regarding a lack of inclusion of Metis women, families and survivors at Community Hearings, Expert Hearings and any research plans that were shared. These concerns were shared directly with Commissioners, with senior officials within the Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (December 7th and February 16th) and with Minister Carolyn Bennett (December 12, 2017 and March 5th, 2018).

On March 6th, 2018, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls made a formal request to Canada for an extension of time and additional funding to complete their mandate. The Commissioners asked...
for an additional 24 months (to December 2020) and $50 million dollars. After much thought and consideration, the LFMO came to the decision that we cannot support the National Inquiry’s request. A Briefing Note detailing the LFMO’s position was submitted to the MNC Board of Governors and the LFMO Board of Directors to ensure that the LFMO position was well-thought out, well-explained and why a public announcement was necessary.

The LFMO shared our position publicly via Press Release on March 8th and in part reads:
On behalf of the women, girls, and families of the Métis Nation, LFMO has been attempting to work with the National Inquiry to ensure that it is inclusive, supportive, and respectful of the distinct needs and realities of Métis women and girls. From the beginning, LFMO has tried to work in partnership with the National Inquiry to provide advice and assistance so that the Métis were not forgotten, and so that the voices of Métis women, families, and survivors could be included at every step of the process. Despite our efforts, the National Inquiry’s hearings and research have excluded Métis women and girls.

In light of the National Inquiry’s refusal to include Metis women and girls in their work, the LFMO announced that “[w]e will make our own recommendations to the Minister based on work done by the Métis Nation, for our Métis women, families, and communities.” The Press Release also explained that the LFMO is currently working on a proposal that will, “[l]ed by our Métis women, and under the guidance of our Elders, work with Métis families and communities to gather data on Métis women and girls. We will ensure that the Métis perspective and needs are brought forward. We will include a plan to bring about reconciliation and commemoration for our loved ones. We are as we have always been willing to step up and work with our Métis communities, families, the Government of Canada, and others to find solutions so that we can put an end to this tragic and ongoing loss of our Métis women and girls.”

The LFMO’s position to not support an extension was shared in-person and in-writing with Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Carolyn Bennett on March 5th. Another more detailed explanation, was submitted to Prime Minister Trudeau on March 9th as a formal letter.

**PAN-CANADIAN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN: CELEBRATING, RESPECTING, AND VALUING INDIGENOUS WOMEN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak entered into a transfer payment agreement with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) to develop a pan-Canadian Awareness campaign to end violence against Indigenous women. MIRR was seeking a National level women’s representative body to oversee this work. The LFMO envisioned a campaign that was purely strength-based and highlighted the value of Indigenous women, not perpetuate stereotypes or include imagery of violence. The campaign will be marketed to governments, institutions and organizations to implement and will focus on changing negative perceptions and attitudes among non-Indigenous people towards Indigenous women and girls.

A full-time Project Manager was hired by LFMO to focus specifically on the Pan-Canadian Awareness Campaign and Spruce Creative was the successful production company to launch into the work.

Three advisory groups were convened to engage and advise the process, the province of Ontario’s Provincial Committee on Prevention and Awareness, National Indigenous Organizations and Pauktuutit Inuit women to ensure that the campaign provide a distinctions-based approach to highlighting Indigenous women.

We look forward to the launch of the concepts in July, 2018!
New Initiatives 2017-2018

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Funded through the Status of Women Canada, this 24-month project will support the development of a strong, effective and sustainable Métis women’s organization that advocates for the interests and needs of Métis women by delivering on substantive grassroots-informed outcomes and policy positions. We will conduct a needs assessment to gather evidence about the challenges faced by Métis women and girls. A report will be developed to inform best practices and lessons learned on how to engage Métis women, which will contribute to the direction of future work. As a result, Métis women organizations across Canada will be better equipped to influence the application of a gendered lens on the governance structures, programs and policies within the Métis Nation.

**BUILDING VISIBILITY THROUGH BETTER COMMUNICATION**

This funding will enable us to update the www.metiswomen.org website. We will create a portal this is deeply rooted in Métis culture and honouring, a place where Métis women and citizens at large can come to learn more about the work that we engage in and will also create a space where Métis women can be proud to see Métis women flourish and excel.

**EMPOWERING MÉTIS WOMEN THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

We have created a style guide and branding guidelines that will serve to highlight and Identify Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak throughout the Métis homeland, Canada and beyond.

1. Maintaining the cultural distinctiveness and preserving the cultural identity of Métis women;
2. Undertaking projects that improve the social and economic conditions of the Métis community.

This project is strength-based and will centre our women in a space of pride and resilience. It is rooted in our Métis culture and feature icon symbols

**ENHANCED CAPACITY FOR EARLY INVOLVEMENT IN THE CO-DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURALLY COMPETENT GBA+ FRAMEWORK**

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak proposed early capacity development to support early involvement in the co-development of a Culturally competent GBA+ framework to ensure effective early identification and engagement with the Métis community. This funding is to support an in-person meeting to ensure early thinking, communications and engagement processes with members, and the development of considerations and design requirements for a governance structure to support balanced participation of all voices throughout the project.

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FIRST NATION, MÉTIS AND INUIT INCLUSION IN TRAUMA-INFORMED WORK**

The LFMO is developing a resource and training on wise-practices that are inclusive of Métis cultural competency in trauma informed care. The Ensuring
First Nations, Métis and Inuit Inclusion in Trauma-Informed Work project will begin the work with Métis communities, survivors of violence to identify wise practices and develop training for service providers that applies a Métis and gendered lens while being aware and considerate of the impact of trauma on Indigenous people. We are also interested in exploring how this model can be used in additional phases of work to provide a First Nations and Inuit cultural competency into trauma informed care, working with our sister organizations. We are looking for an investment in funds to reach out to our partners and to develop a plan to be implemented through a more detailed project following this initial engagement, planning phase.