

LES FEMMES MICHIF OTIPEMISIWAK -  
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION

# Strategy 2013

Prepared for the Métis National Council by Delsys Research Group, Inc.

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## **HISTORY OF LES FEMMES MICHIF OTIPEMISIWAK – WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION**

The Métis are one of three distinct Aboriginal peoples in Canada recognized under the 1982 constitution. The Métis National Council [MNC] was developed in 1983 to be a representative voice of the interests of Métis people in Canada and abroad. The National definition of Métis was adopted by the MNC at its 18th annual general assembly in 2002, which states: “Métis” means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of Historic Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak – Women of the Métis Nation [WMN] has been working as a Secretariat since 1999 within the MNC. “*Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak*” was incorporated in 2010 at the organization’s inaugural meeting. The organization’s first strategic plan was outlined at a general meeting in April of 2012. In March of 2013 the strategic plan was reviewed in a planning process that gave all members the opportunity to discuss and provide feedback on the organization’s goals, objectives and strategies.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The Métis Nation is represented regionally through democratically elected governments from Ontario westward, namely the Métis Nation of Ontario, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Nation of British Columbia. The WMN is structured similarly with the inclusion of the Métis women who have been elected or appointed from each of the governing regions. At this time the Métis Women of Manitoba have chosen not to participate in the national body of WMN but a place at the table is held open and will always be available for them to be engaged.

The WMN is a Métis women’s collective body representing the Métis Women from the Governing Members of the Métis Nation and is officially mandated by the MNC. The WMN is the only recognized representative body to speak on behalf of Métis women.

The President of WMN is elected every three years by delegates from across the Métis homeland who attend an annual meeting. In March of 2013, Melanie Omeniho was re-elected President of Women of the Métis Nation to represent the organization over the upcoming years.

As an organization, the WMN aspires to be an inclusive collective of Métis women from across the homeland. Women from all regions have made progress on many of the organizations objectives. Every member has something of value to contribute. Moving forward will take a collaborative and coordinated effort to continue developing our organization and our networks, our materials, and to engage in activities to advocate the perspective of Métis women at all levels of government and within all Métis communities.



## OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

We will use this document as a touchstone for our organization and it will be the central guide for our planning and activities moving forward. It will help us to focus our energies, to make better choices and to work toward common objectives in order to achieve our goals. It is a “living document” that will assist us with our communications and engagement efforts and it will help to foster support for our goals in our communities.

We will continuously seek feedback on our goals and we will maintain the discussion around our objectives and how we will achieve them. Each year we will track our progress as an organization against this plan to make sure that we are having an impact on the important areas of our lives and our communities, that we have identified in this document.

*Our strategic planning process helps us to:*

- Define our goals and strategies;
- Communicate our goals and strategies to Métis women, Métis governments, and other interested stakeholders;
- Build a sense of ownership of the plan within our organization and in our communities;
- Bring together everyone’s best efforts, experiences and ideas about our future.

*The resulting strategy helps us to:*

- Ensure the proper and effective use of resources by focusing on key priorities;
- Provide the baseline to measure progress and establish a plan for change;
- Connect our members and build strong and effective network of Métis women;
- Build capacity in each of our members by sharing resources, knowledge, ideas and effort and by focusing on our key priorities.

## READING THIS DOCUMENT

What follows is an articulation of the vision and mission for the Women of the Metis Nation, and the goals and supporting strategies needed to be able to achieve them.

# Vision and Mission

*The first element of a strategy is the vision. The **vision** is a statement about the future. It is a vision for what life will be like for Métis women after the strategies have been implemented and the goals and objectives are achieved.*

*A **mission statement** is an active declaration stating what members of an organization intend to accomplish and how they intend to accomplish it.*

## **VISION**

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.

## **MISSION**

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

# Goals and Objectives

*The high-level goals of an organization identify **what** is to be achieved. Goals are broken down into objectives and strategies that define **how** the goals are to be achieved.*

**GOAL #1: Build a strong, successful and responsible organization whose Voice is heard throughout the Métis Nation**

*OBJECTIVES*

- 1.1 Strengthen Our Organization
- 1.2 Strengthen Our Communications Approach
- 1.3 Enhance Our Contribution to Métis Policy and Governance
- 1.4 Build Capacity for Financial Management and Fundraising

**GOAL #2: Be Caretakers of traditional knowledge and the Voice of Métis Women**

*OBJECTIVES*

- 2.1 Remain Trusted Representatives who Advocate on Behalf of Métis Women
- 2.2 Maintain Cultural Awareness and Resiliency Across the Homeland and Canada
- 2.3 Strengthen and Support Citizenship For the Métis Nation

**GOAL #3: Ensure that the perspectives of Métis Women's are included in community economic development initiatives**

*OBJECTIVES*

- 3.1 Support The Economic Empowerment of Métis Women

**GOAL #4: Foster culturally appropriate learning environments and lifelong learning to improve the educational outcomes for Women and all Métis learners**

*OBJECTIVES*

- 4.1 Research, Develop and Share Historical Cultural Materials
- 4.2 Support Programming That Helps Métis Children and Youth to Succeed In School
- 4.3 Build Supports for Métis Women to Pursue Education

**GOAL #5: Help Métis people lead healthier lives and help create the conditions for healthy and vibrant communities**

*OBJECTIVES*

- 5.1 Promote Métis Women's Health Research
- 5.2 Work Together to Address Health Issues Relevant to Métis Women and Families

**GOAL #6: Advocate on behalf of Métis women for social justice and fairness**

*OBJECTIVES*

- 6.1 Raise Awareness and Provide Support to Our Elders
- 6.2 Address Abuse and Violence Against Métis Women
- 6.3 Advocate for Fair and Equal Treatment for Métis Women in Canada's Justice System
- 6.4 Mobilize a National "Bring Home the Children" Committee

# Goal 1

**Build a Strong, Successful and Responsible Organization Whose Voice is Heard throughout the Métis Nation.**

## Introduction

Métis women are influential leaders in our communities, resourceful as individuals and adaptable to change in our communities. We will continue to strengthen our institution, enhance our capacity for communications, effectively contribute to policy development at the national level, and maintain accountability with our finances.

**We can strengthen our organization by** harnessing the talent and expertise of Métis women by recruiting appropriate staff to support our president and our board. We will continue to build bridges, enhance coordination between our members from each of the provinces across the homeland, and continue to build on the formal structures of our organization by assuring clear roles and responsibilities, conducting appropriate planning and reporting, and tracking our progress.

**Strengthening our communications approach** through outreach and awareness is a key priority for our organization. We seek to engage with Métis women across the homeland, with women who may not be aware of our organization, with other levels of government and with the general public. We must work toward the development of formal communications mechanisms and develop an understanding of our audience and their needs. We will maintain interest and engagement in our organization by creating the means for members to continue sharing information and ideas.

**Enhancing our contribution to Métis policy and governance** will enable us to affect the policies that will have impacts on our lives and our families that are often made without taking into account the perspective of Métis women. We must create recognition and value for our voice and perspective within Métis organizations, including the National Council. We will take a coordinated approach to influencing decision-making, and contribute to decisions that impact our families and communities.

**Building our capacity for fundraising and good financial management** is a key component of our strategy. Without resources to support our efforts, we will not have the ability to affect change and achieve our goals. To generate additional resources to support our work, we must be disciplined with our planning and financial management, but we must also be creative with our fundraising initiatives.

## **Objective 1.1 Strengthen Our Organization**

### *Strategies:*

- Recruit and sustain appropriate staff resources to support the president and the board. Build capacity for policy development and communications among all staff.
- Provide assistance to regional Presidents for capacity building and coordinate participation through our regional networks.
- Strengthen our institution by developing clear roles and responsibilities, formalizing planning and reporting processes and tracking our progress through a performance measurement framework.

### *For example:*

- *Develop and implement a WMN recognition program for outstanding contributors, the Order of the Shawl*
- *Continue to develop the WMN website to facilitate remote working relationships*
- *Strategic Implementation Planning*

## **Objective 1.2 Strengthen Our Communications Approach**

### *Strategies:*

- Share information by regularly updating our website, contact database and member profiles.
- Enhance communications with members through notifications, meeting minutes, and newsletters.
- Develop a formal communications strategy for WMN, elaborating creative ways of communicating through traditional media, new media technologies and events.
- Continue to innovate and extend the reach of our communications activities by building and sustaining a strong communications network. Leverage other communications platforms within the MNC, other aboriginal media organizations, and other governmental (federal, provincial, municipal) platforms across the homeland.

### *For example:*

- *Focus on regular/ongoing collaborative initiatives and work groups such as a Michif language network.*

### **Objective 1.3 Enhance Our Contribution to Métis Policy and Governance**

*Strategies:*

- Influence the MNC and Provincial Métis governments from the grass-roots by implementing best practices for governance, accountability, and responsible policy development.
- Organize and strategize to overcome challenges associated with the current national governance structure.
- Advocate on behalf of Métis women at the MNC and within each of the provincial Métis governments; for example, with respect to stewardship of the land and the protection of our environment.
- Help Métis women develop the skills to work as board members and participate in consultations and negotiations.
- Ensure that women are aware of, and understand the terminology that is associated with, important policy discussions and decisions that affect the Métis.

*For example:*

- *Establish a code of conduct and a code of ethics*

### **Objective 1.4 Build Capacity for Fund Raising and Financial Management**

*Strategies:*

- Adapt and implement an accountability model to assist in operating a fiscally accountable and transparent organization.
- Develop alternative funding mechanisms on a priority basis to assure sustainability of our organization.
- Continue to develop strategic partnerships, i.e., hospitals, universities, colleges, Status of Women Canada.
- Share information about our organization's finances in plain language.

# Goal 2

**Be Caretakers of Traditional Knowledge and the Voice of Métis Women.**

## Introduction

We will **remain trusted representatives who advocate on behalf of Métis women** in order to participate effectively as leaders in our communities and at regional, provincial and national level meetings. We must work together to foster a culture of lifelong learning and public service. Métis women must speak for Métis women. As an organization, we endeavor to build the capacity to contribute meaningfully to policy discussions and open new lines of communication among women in our communities. We will work together to be an inclusive organization that encourages all members to contribute their ideas and perspectives.

**By maintaining cultural awareness and resiliency across the homeland and Canada** The role of the WMN is to bridge Métis communities. Overcoming these challenges will be difficult. Change will require patience and compromise. Our organization is uniquely positioned to contribute to the resiliency of our Nation, to protect our cultural heritage, and to be leaders in bridging the gaps between communities. Working in an inclusive and collaborative manner, we will continue to strengthen the fabric of our Nation through sharing information and knowledge resources and through our efforts, activities and events.

**Strengthening and supporting citizenship for the Métis Nation** is an objective of the Métis across the homeland. Gaining recognition our cultural heritage and identity is an important process that enhances self-confidence, self-esteem and fosters inclusion in our communities. Métis women have always had an important role in the development of youth and communities and therefore we will continue to support citizenship for Métis people.

## **Objective 2.1 Remain Trusted Representatives who Advocate on Behalf of Métis Women**

### *Strategies:*

- Encourage and foster Métis women's leadership and representation at the community, regional, provincial and national levels.
- Participate effectively in public policy and decision making related to concerns and aspirations of Métis women by ensuring that women vote and are consulted at every level of decision making, i.e., land management, stewardship, biodiversity, etc.
- Enhance our capacity to be heard by gaining more exposure in the media through our communications strategy, events and responses to major policy decisions.
- Communicate clearly using “plain language” that everyone can understand.

## **Objective 2.2 Maintain Cultural Awareness and Resiliency Across the Homeland and Canada**

### *Strategies:*

- Reach out through our membership to raise awareness of issues affecting Métis women.
- Maintain cultural awareness, traditional knowledge, language, distinctiveness and the identity of Métis people through cultural initiatives, events fostering a Michif language network, and the mentorship of Métis women across the homeland in all Métis communities.
- Develop criteria, conduct research and publish profiles of historical Métis Women to support cultural awareness, heritage and traditional knowledge.

## **Objective 2.3 Strengthen and Support Citizenship For the Métis Nation**

### *Strategies:*

- Facilitate and support those seeking Métis citizenship through workshops and information sharing. Develop FAQs and set aside resources to assist those in special situations or who may not have official documentation.
- Take a collaborative approach to genealogical research and foster coordination between provincial Métis organizations to assist Métis women and families with citizenship applications and identification.
- Continue to engage with families and communities for input into citizenship processes. Leverage current genealogical research and other resources, i.e., HRSDC Aboriginal Affairs Directorate.

# Goal 3

**Ensure that the Perspectives of Métis Women  
are Included in Métis Community Economic  
Development Initiatives.**

## Introduction

Economic development is one of the most powerful determinants of safe, vibrant and sustainable communities for our people. As influential leaders in our communities, it is our duty to collaborate and contribute our perspectives to policy discussions around economic development. Together, we can develop innovative ways of tapping into economic opportunities across the homeland, and through our network, we can share insight and offer advice to women entrepreneurs in our communities. We also have the traditional and historical knowledge that can provide key insight into large economic development initiatives that are increasingly valuable to decision makers and policy makers, i.e., sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

### **Objective 3.1 Support The Economic Empowerment of Métis Women**

#### *Strategies:*

- Enhance Métis women's contribution to the social and economic development of Métis communities by articulating and contributing our perspective to a long-term economic development strategy for the Métis nation.
- Develop resources and networking opportunities for Métis women who are entrepreneurs.
- Design and implement mentorship programs for Métis women interested in starting a business.
- Assist in securing access to financing for Métis women who are entrepreneurs.

#### *For example:*

- *Develop the communications infrastructure on the WMN website to share contacts, knowledge, member profiles.*
- *Publish guidance documents and best practices for business start-ups.*
- *Maintain a regularly updated list of grants and programs.*

# Goal 4

**Foster Culturally Appropriate Learning Environments and Lifelong Learning Opportunities to Improve the Educational Outcomes for Women and all Métis Learners.**

## Introduction

Education is an important determinant of income, employment outcomes and other indicators of well-being. Higher education is associated with higher income, lower unemployment, higher labour market participation, lower chances of criminal involvement, and better overall health. It affects all areas of life.

The early years of a child's education lay the foundation for that child's future. There is an overwhelming consensus that early learning is the most important stage in building a learning foundation for all later learning. The academic, cognitive, social and behavioral skills that children bring into the classroom have a profound effect on learning. The development of these traits can determine their interest in education, and more broadly in their physical, emotional and mental capacities, throughout their lives.

The impact of education is particularly important to women. The median income for Métis in 2006 was \$39,315, whereas the median income of non-Aboriginal Canadians in that same year was \$44,076. The median income of Métis women was approximately \$9,000 less than that of Métis men in that year. Recent research shows that at the Master's or Bachelor's degree levels, Aboriginal people had essentially the same median incomes as non-Aboriginal people in 2006. Aboriginal women who have obtained at least a Bachelor's degree have a *higher* median incomes than non-Aboriginal Canadian women with equivalent education.

Our goals as an organization are improve the educational outcomes for Métis women and all Métis learners by focusing on **the development and communication of historical cultural materials**. We must be able to build consensus around the history of the Métis Nation and be able to communicate that to our people and all Canadians.

We must also focus on **supporting programming that assists Métis children to succeed in school**. We can begin by leveraging the existing work and promising practices that exist across our Nation and work to deliver the cultural and historical training, materials and supports to the educators responsible for teaching our children.

It is important that we continue to support women and all Métis learners throughout the lifelong learning continuum. This includes promoting the funding and direct student support that exists, and working to develop more opportunities for women to attend the programs of their choice. We can also look inwards to promote the success stories of women in our Nations as role models and resources for all women to learn from.

## **Objective 4.1 Research, Develop and Share Historical Cultural Materials**

### *Strategies:*

- Conduct research and build consensus around the history of the Métis nation, and develop a cultural presentation and other materials from the perspective of Métis women.
- Proactively manage content related to Métis women in the media and in particular on our website. Develop an interactive platform where women can contribute articles, photos and videos that can be accessed by the public.
- Work with Canadian educators and school boards to develop and deliver Métis cultural and historical knowledge in an appropriate and accurate way.

## **Objective 4.2 Support Programming That Assists Métis Children and Youth to Succeed In School**

### *Strategies:*

- Share and leverage existing cultural and historical “outreach toolkits” and work to tailor the existing materials to the unique requirements of each region.
- Use the toolkits to deliver cultural and historical training materials and information sessions to educators responsible for Métis children so that they can learn in a culturally relevant and appropriate way.
- Provide advice and information to assist educators so that they are more culturally aware and able to address misinterpretations and cultural differences.
- Develop, publish and distribute appropriate curriculum materials and programs for schools that are aimed at raising awareness, bolstering self esteem and empowering Métis children to stay in school.
- Provide training and mentoring to Métis women volunteers to go out to schools in communities and deliver curriculum and transfer traditional knowledge, i.e, the Grandma program.

### *For example:*

- *Identify the outreach materials that are currently available.*
- *Share available resources through the WMN website where possible.*
- *Publish success stories and promising practices on how members in several Nations are currently engaged in successful outreach and cultural education.*

### **Objective 4.3 Build Supports for Métis Women to Pursue Education**

*Strategies:*

- Help Métis girls and women access funding and other opportunities to engage in enriched education programs throughout the lifelong learning process.
- Develop and foster Métis women-specific social networking tools to communicate and collaborate on education projects and initiatives.
- Generate awareness and recognition for prominent and inspirational Métis women and scholars, their profiles and their stories.

*For example:*

- *Publish success stories and profiles of prominent and inspirational Métis women and scholars on the WMN website.*

# Goal 5

**Help Métis People Lead Healthier Lives, and Help Create the Conditions for Healthy and Vibrant Communities.**

## Introduction

Women leading healthy lifestyles empowers Métis families and communities to make healthy lifestyle choices and to think of our health as a leading consideration in decision making. We will continue to advocate on behalf of women and families for health research specifically related to Métis women and we will facilitate the development of supporting materials for addressing health issues relevant to Métis women and their families. There is nothing more important than our health, and we will continue to promote research and advocacy that is culturally relevant and appropriate for our families and our communities.

### Objective 5.1 Promote Métis Women's Health Research

#### *Strategies:*

- Promote awareness of Métis-specific health concerns including such issues as chronic disease and health education, conduct research and publish reports specific to Métis Health issues.
- Facilitate the development and promotion of a traditional Métis holistic health care model to mitigate risks and reduce harm from prescription drug abuse. Research traditional nutrition, diet and medicine to inform this model.
- Advocate on behalf of Métis people with disabilities and special needs.

### Objective 5.2 Work Together to Address Health Issues Relevant to Métis Women and Families

#### *Strategies:*

- Contribute the traditional knowledge of Métis women to the development of a Métis family wellness center. Link to RCAP and develop a position paper on the development of Métis health institutions.
- Work with partners, including local producers, to ensure food security for Métis families.
- Foster healthy lifestyle changes in our communities through mentorship programs, multigenerational gatherings and events.
- Promote healthy and active lifestyle choices and incorporate activities such as group walks at our conferences and other events.

#### *For example:*

- *Incorporate traditional cooking and food into future events and activities.*
- *Share success stories and best practices for food and diet on the website.*

# Goal 6

**Advocate On Behalf of Métis Women for Social Justice and Fairness.**

## **Introduction**

We will continue to leverage progress made toward each of our goals and work together to promote and sustain peace, fairness, equality and justice in our families, in our communities and throughout our nation. All of us have a role to play in bringing equality and fairness to bear on social justice issues for Métis people. We will work together with our elders to find ways of uniting our women, our children, and our families together. We will work together with young women to foster intergenerational respect and address elder abuse. We will continue to support families who have been affected by violence and we will not forget about Métis women who have been institutionalized. Together we can create awareness and foster our traditional culture of respect and fairness in our communities.

## **Objective 6.1 Raise Awareness and Provide Support to Our Elders**

### Strategies:

- Enhance community supports for elders, aging single women and grandmothers responsible for raising children.
- Advocate on behalf of our seniors for affordable housing in Métis communities.
- Create awareness about elder abuse and promote the role of elders in our communities. Engage with the youth and elders at multi-generational community events.

## **Objective 6.2 Address Abuse and Violence Against Métis Women**

### Strategies:

- Develop and implement an awareness strategy and advocate on behalf of missing and murdered Métis women.
- Study inter-generational impacts of abuse, reinforce traditional Métis family values and work together to support Métis families dealing with the after-effects of abuse and violence.
- Foster support groups, safe spaces and environments where women can feel safe and participate in traditional healing processes.

## **Objective 6.3 Advocate for Fair and Equal Treatment for Métis Women in Canada's Justice System**

### Strategies:

- Research and review the treatment of Métis women by law enforcement, including racial profiling and systemic discrimination, in order to develop educational materials for law enforcement officials.
- Promote justice for Métis women including women offenders who are also victims.
- Foster, collect and curate traditional knowledge, values and customary legal practices.

## **Objective 6.4 Mobilize a National “Bring Home the Children” Committee**

### Strategies:

- Promote the sharing of research between provinces and work collaboratively to promote the reunification of the Métis family to the Métis community. Work together to reduce the number of Métis children in care across the homeland, bring Métis children home and strengthen families and communities.
- Develop dispute resolution mechanisms and processes and Métis specific institutions to address issues of family well-being.
- Develop community processes and support for families dealing with missing children including traditional ceremonies that are meaningful and relevant to Métis families.
- Develop a youth strategy that addresses cyber-bullying and creates awareness among educators to recognize harmful instances of bullying and provide appropriate support.

# Supporting The Strategy

***Build consensus around a vision, mission and a set of goals.*** Strategic planning can be a collaborative process that leverages the knowledge and experience of stakeholders and community members while building consensus and ownership around a vision, mission and a set of goals. This process can provide the foundational knowledge, insights, values and interests that enable an organization to begin articulating detailed strategies and activities.

***Develop Coherent Activities.*** Strategies are guiding principles or priorities for day-to-day decisions and activities. There are many approaches that the MNC could take in order to effect positive change and improve the education outcomes of Métis learners. The question is, which approaches are the most likely to succeed? The idea behind a strategic plan is that the strategies in the plan describe which activities or priorities are the most likely to get the intended results – in this case, better educational outcomes for Métis learners. Strategies can be aligned under each goal as the guiding principles or recommended courses of action.

***Engage in Implementation and Operational Planning.*** The key to successful execution is implementation and operational planning. A strategic implementation plan is a high-level guidance document – a decision making tool to assist in identifying priorities and making decisions. It helps people know what the right work is, how to do the work right, and how much work is enough to achieve the organization's goals. Implementation and operational plans are the frontline management tools that identify what specific tasks are being done, who is responsible for them, when a task is due, how a task connects and affects other tasks and resources within different streams of activities.