



LES FEMMES MICHIF OTIPEKISIWAK – WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION

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 2012/2013 fiscal years. The Report outlines the approach taken in developing the Women of the Métis Nation's Strategic Plan and highlights a range of activities and events that I have participated in as your President.

Background

The Métis Nation is represented regionally through democratically elected province wide government structures 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. 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 government of the Métis Nation – MNC. The WMN is the only recognized representative body to speak on behalf of Métis women.

Welcome to Ottawa

I would first like to take this opportunity to welcome Métis women from across our Nation to the Nation's capital where so many positive accomplishments have occurred this year and want to personally thank you for participating in our third national gathering. I want 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 Edmonton we have worked to move the organization forward. 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. Industry Canada has recently created new legislation that governs non-profit corporations, *The Canada Not-For-Profit Corporations Act (NFP Act)* and all corporations including ours is required to transition to the new *Act*. In order to do this the Executive has called upon Kathy Hodgson Smith to help in this transition. Kathy is a lawyer with a great deal of experience in this area. Kathy Hodgson Smith will take us through these new requirements during our meeting.

Corporate Governance

As I mentioned in my year-end report last year the Government of Canada has provided us with funding assistance in order to establish a corporate presence in Canada. Although we received funding relatively late in the fiscal year, we have established good working relationships with the federal government. We have made significant progress in establishing 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. In the interest of transparency, I am fully committed to having these procedures

and our bylaws available for our people to review on our revamped web site that will be unveiled in Ottawa this week.

Website Launch in Ottawa

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 web site at our meeting in Ottawa. 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.

Strategic Plan

Building upon the input and direction provided at our Assembly in Edmonton, we developed a draft Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will be a living plan that will have to be reviewed and revamped as activities and priorities change. As in any good strategic initiative - planning must meet the ever changing needs of the organization. The Board will continuously work towards doing an annual assessment of the Plan to ensure that we are meeting measurable outcomes. The Métis Women across the homeland have expressed the importance of political and financial accountability. This is a critical component of the Strategic Plan.

This high-level plan was used to obtain funding support from the Government of Canada. This plan services to guide the organization as we pursue common objectives. Delegates will have yet another opportunity to refine this strategic plan at our Ottawa Assembly. Much of the second day of the Assembly will be devoted to updating and elaborating this strategic plan and we have retained expert consultants skilled in project planning to assist us in this endeavor.

You will recall last year there was unanimous consensus on the following mission statement:

Working to ensure that Métis women from across the homeland are empowered and engaged in carrying out the objectives and priorities. They will be engaged in working with the various governments and Métis leaders to build a strong nation.

The Strategic Plan has identified four primary goals that delegates will review at this years Assembly and will be invited to identify activities, performance measures and short, medium and long term priorities to achieve those goals. These four goals include:

Goal # 1 Voice, Culture, Language, Traditional Knowledge and Communications

To give voice to and educate Canadians about Metis culture, language and traditional knowledge and the important role of Metis women through effective and consistent communications methods.

Goal # 2 Governance, Capacity & Organizational Development

To strengthen the organizations capacity, outreach effectiveness and transparency and improve its policy development capacity to advocate on behalf of Metis women.

Goal # 3 Health, Education and Economic Development

To improve the quality of life outcomes of Metis women throughout the life long learning continuum and to close the gap in social and economic conditions of Metis women and Canadian women.

Goals # 4 Social and Justice

To improve and sensitize social and justice systems to the unique circumstances and needs of Metis Women.

At our meeting in Ottawa we will have an opportunity to reviews these goals more closely and to discuss what other goals may be shared by our respective organizations. Building upon these goals, we can identify concrete steps we should take to achieve these goals overtime. This is an important exercise and it is my hope that this can be a real team building consensus exercise. Advocacy and Networking Initiatives

MNC Board of Governors Meetings

Women of the Métis Nation participated in two in person meetings of the Board of Governors meetings of the Métis National Council (July 2012 & February 2013) as well as two conference calls. Work with the MNC centered on strengthening the governance system at the national level including developing new block funding arrangements through a governance Accord and amending the Metis Nation protocol which structures the relationship with the Government of Canada. Significant progress has also been made in the area of economic development and the MNC is in the process of finalizing a meeting with the new Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the Prime Minister of Canada. This meeting is expected to occur within the next month.

Métis Rights Panel and a New Metis Nation Constitution

Women of the Métis Nation participated in two in person meetings of the Métis Rights Panel that serves as an advisory body to the Metis National Council. The Panel provides legal advise to the MNC on a range of issues and is this year focusing on generating consensus on a new Constitution for the Metis Nation as a whole. WMN has been an active participant in the drafting process and as such has ensured that gender equality is a fundamental component of the new draft Constitution. President Clément Chartier will be making a presentation on the constitutional progress that has been made and will outline how Metis women will have opportunities to participate in the process going forward.

Daniels Decision

As many of you are aware, the Canadian courts have proven to be of critical importance in recognizing the rights and interests of the Metis this year. In January the Federal Court ruled that Métis people are “Indians” for the purpose of section 91 (24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. This recognition by the court that it is the federal government has a constitutional obligation to Metis has been a long sought objective of the MNC and by extension Metis women. While the federal government has now appealed this decision it has been a positive step forward and the MNC BOG has decided to intervene at the Court of Appeal level. As your President however, I was interviewed by a number of news outlets and I was able to impart our support for this decision.

As I reported last year, we attended the Supreme Court of Canada for the submission on the MMF’s historic land claims case. On March 8, 2013 the Supreme Court ruled in MMF’s favor and it was my great honour to be part of this landmark decision. The SCC accepted the arguments of the Metis that the federal government failed the Metis in providing the 1.4 million acres of land that was promised under the Manitoba Act and gave the MMF a declaration that the Crown breached its obligations and that the government’s conduct was not consistent with its honour of the Crown duty. President Chartier will speak to this decision and its implications for our people at our meeting.

Aboriginal Affairs Working Group (AAWG) Process

We have continued to be 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 were active participants and made several interventions at the AAWG Ministers and leaders meeting held in April of 2012 in Toronto. We were also a major player in the NAWS process and made several interventions at the NAWS III meeting held in Winnipeg. I will have more to say on this process in my oral remarks

Permanent Forum

The Women of the Metis Nation attended the 11th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous People in New York in May of 2012. I was able to network with a wide range of Indigenous groups from throughout the world. The theme for the 11th session focused on the “Doctrine of Discovery”. We will continue to monitor activities at the UN with a particular interest in work being carried out there on the topic of violence against Indigenous women.

Parliament

With respect to Parliament we appeared as witnesses at the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal people. The link below provides an overview of our presentaton. We will continue to seek opportunities to make the views of Metis women to both the House and Senate Standing Committees.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/411/APPA/18EV-49543-E.HTM>

Next Steps

Over the coming months we will seek to implement the direction you provide in the WMN Strategic Plan. We will continue 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 weeks. 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 through our board of director’s meetings.