

**MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
LES FEMMES MICHIF OTIPEMISIWAK
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

Minutes of the **Métis National Council, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation** National Assembly held March 30-31, 2012 in the Laurier Room at the Delta Edmonton Centre Suite Hotel, 102nd Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta.

DAY ONE – MARCH 30, 2012

OPENING CEREMONY AND INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Call to Order and Opening Prayer

The Assembly was called to order at 9:30 a.m. Elder Gloria Laird offered an Opening Prayer. Shannon Souray sang a “Métis Women’s Song”.

INTRODUCTIONS

1.2 Self-Introductions

During a round of self-introductions, participants from across the country introduced themselves. They commented on their personal and professional backgrounds and experiences, and organization(s) they were associated with.

1.3 Introduction of the Chair

Interim President Melanie Omeniho introduced Chair Michelle LeClair to the Assembly.

WELCOMING REMARKS

1.4 Audrey Poitras, President, Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA)

MNA President Poitras welcomed participants and invited them to take in the city’s hospitality. Thanks were extended for the Opening Prayer, and she acknowledged the opportunity to bring together so many strong Métis women to share ideas, experiences and knowledge with the intent to improve the lives of Métis families.

She recognized that the Assembly’s discussion would maintain the vision of a better future for the children and continued strength for Métis women across the country. Her best wishes were extended to participants for an enjoyable and fruitful discussion.

1.5 Clement Chartier, President, Métis National Council (MNC)

MNC President Chartier welcomed delegates and offered comments regarding the importance of the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN). Opportunities for the WMN and MNC to move forward collectively were referenced.

It was noted Interim President Melanie Omeniho had been attending meetings of the Council of Federation’s Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, which had been focused on economic development, education, and violence against Métis women and girls.

Various key activities of the MNC were acknowledged. The Assembly was informed that a report was forthcoming on the drafting of a Métis constitution, intended to present the Métis

nationally and internationally. Due to significant support at the recent discussion on residential schools, the MNC and WMN had agreed to collaboratively seek resources to hold another residential school discussion in 2013.

The MNC's theme for the year was referenced, "Celebrating our Métis Nation Language and Culture". The next year's theme would likely be dedicated to residential school survivors. Best wishes were extended for a successful Assembly.

Roll Call

Chair Michelle LeClair held a Roll Call, and confirmed delegates in attendance.

Health Break

The Assembly recessed at 10:37 a.m. and reconvened at 11:00 a.m.

OPENING REMARKS

1.6 **Melanie Omeniho, Interim President, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation (WMN)**

Interim President Melanie Omeniho referenced some achievements of the WMN and recognized WMN Directors present. Representatives from Manitoba had been invited to participate, and would hopefully rejoin the WMN table soon.

The Interim President commented on her genealogical background and acknowledged the recent passing of her mother, a Métis Elder.

She referenced recent media reports predicting that the Métis population may soon increase significantly, possibly due to increased self-declaration of heritage. It was noted that the Métis National Council (MNC) and WMN had agreed to co-host the next residential schools conference. Programs were needed to help heal residential school survivors, veterans and others who continued to struggle with inner injuries, post traumas. The importance of preventing future generations from suffering from the traumas of the past generations, was discussed.

2. **BUSINESS AGENDA**

2.1 **Approval of the Agenda**

It was MOVED (Sherry Arko) and SECONDED (Clara Morin Dal Col)

That the Agenda for the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation National General Assembly scheduled March 30-31, 2012 be accepted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-01)

2.2 **Approval of the 2010 General Assembly Minutes**

Related information: Minutes of the Women of the Métis Nation National Assembly held October 23-24, 2010

Chair LeClair led the Assembly in a review of the minutes and the resolutions therein.

It was MOVED (Sharon McBride, ON) and SECONDED (Lee Fraser)

That the Minutes of the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation National Assembly held October 23-24, 2010 be accepted with the following amendment:

- append to Motion: 09-10-23-10 the following: “with authority to legal counsel to make amendments as necessary to meet incorporation requirements, while keeping true to the intent of the bylaws as passed by the body”;
- revise Motion: 01-10-23-10 to indicate May Henderson representing Saskatchewan;
- revise Motion: 12-10-23-10 to correctly spell: Susie Hooper and Clara Morin Dal Col;
- utilize a basic resolution numbering system, and append to future WMN minutes a summary of the meetings decisions.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-02)

Request for Action (RFA-NGA1201-01): *It was requested that the appendices referenced in the 2010 National General Assembly Minutes be provided electronically to WMN Members.*

REPORTS

3.1 Report on Women of the Métis Nation Activities 2010-2012

Related information: On-table report titled

- *“Women of the Métis Nation, President’s Annual Report”*

Interim President Melanie Omeniho welcomed participants to the Assembly, and commended the MNC Board of Governors, MNC staff, and others for their ongoing support and assistance. She referred the Assembly to the report provided, and offered the following additional comments:

- although the official name of the group had been registered as “Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak”, the group could continue to refer to itself as Women of the Métis Nation;
- corporate awareness and branding efforts had ensued, beginning with a WMN brochure and revised WMN logo (developed by Christi Belcourt); and
- the MNC had an opportunity to present Queen’s Jubilee Medals to honour the Queen’s coronation of 60 years prior; three Métis women would be honoured with the medals later during the Assembly.

The following comments were offered on some of the research projects WMN had focussed on:

- Economic Development:
 - a report drafted:
 - included information gathered at a recent Economic Development Summit; and
 - recognized a lack of support for Métis women entrepreneurs, even within Aboriginal capital corporations; Métis business women were being interviewed to identify some recommendations;
- Violence Against Aboriginal Women:
 - a report would be drafted to help police and other responders to understand how to work with the families and communities of missing or murdered Métis women;
- Residential School Survivors.

The following comments were offered on the WMN’s new website:

- the site would soon be launched and would include links to the MNC and a repository of WMN documents; and
- core funding had been received to develop the website and host this Assembly.

The following comments were offered on funding for the WMN:

- the WMN had received its first direct contribution agreement; and
- the MNC Board of Governors had been supportive of the WMN seeking funding as an autonomous body.

The following comments were offered on some of the various groups WMN had been involved with:

- the WMN Board continued to make its presence known across the country;
- the WMN was represented on a task force focussed on violence against Aboriginal women, to provide a Métis perspective; the group was reminded that referencing “First Nations, Métis and Inuit” was preferred over “Aboriginal”;
- the WMN was represented on an Economic Development group, and was seeking involvement in a group focussed on education;
- the WMN had participated in UN processes in December 2010, at which issues were brought forward related to international files on rights; and
- Celeste McKay participated on MNC’s behalf at a UN forum, with a report on Violence against Aboriginal Women.

It was MOVED (Sherry Arko) and SECONDED (Barbaranne Wright, ON)

That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation receive for information the “Report on Women of the Métis Nation Activities 2010-2012” and the related update.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-03)

Health Break

The Assembly recessed at approximately 12:00 p.m. and reconvened at approximately 1:00 p.m.

PRESENTATIONS

3.2 Keynote Speaker – Jean Teillet

Interim President Melanie Omeniho introduced Jean Teillet and offered comments on her background and accomplishments.

Jean Teillet acknowledged the role Métis women played in the battle for Métis rights. She explained that she had interviewed some elderly Métis women from Ontario to BC, who graciously agreed to share stories about their childhoods.

Ms. Teillet she read aloud a story she wrote titled “The Long View”, which had been published. The story was constructed using aspects of the interviews she did with Métis women and their childhood memories of transient lives and journeys, buffalo hunts, homes, foods, villages, dancing, music, families, winter sites, and remaining Métis cart trails. The story recalled how government took a Métis community’s children away to residential school while the Métis men were away on a hunting trip, and how quickly the returning hunters went to the residential school to bring their children home. It also acknowledged the many children who were instructed by their parents to pretend that they were French rather than Métis or Michif.

PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Jubilee Medal Ceremony

Comments were provided by the Interim President regarding the significant accomplishments of the MNC’s selected WMN recipients of the Queen’s Silver Jubilee Medal.

MNC President Chartier, MN-A President Poitras and Interim WMN President Omeniho announced that Jean Teillet had been selected to receive a Queen’s Silver Jubilee Medal, in recognition of her dedicated service to her peers, her community and the nation.

Congratulations were conveyed on behalf of the Queen, the Governor General of Canada, and all of Canada.

MNC President Chartier, MN-A President Poitras and Interim WMN President Omeniho announced that Kathy Hodgson-Smith had been selected to receive a Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, in recognition of her dedicated service to her peers, her community and the nation. Congratulations were conveyed on behalf of the Queen, the Governor General of Canada, and all of Canada. Ms. Hodgson-Smith extended thanks for the opportunities that had been presented to her to be involved in.

4.2 Métis National Constitution

Related information:

- MNC Chart titled "A - Organizational Structure and Electoral Process"
- MNC Chart titled "B – Current Separation of Powers and Representation Issues"
- MNC Chart titled "C – Separation of Powers, Direct Election of the President", labelled "Draft v12.12.11, for Discussion"

MNC President Chartier acknowledged the MNC staff's efforts towards completing a constitutional document. He explained that in December 2010 the Métis government agreed to proceed towards the adoption of a Métis Nation Constitution by 2013. A process was set in place, and the Métis Rights Panel was mandated to undertake this.

He stressed the importance of re-registering Métis people, noting that the courts had reaffirmed the Métis Nation's 2002 position. The 2002 General Assembly supported the following "Definitions":

- 1.1 Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, if of Historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.
- 1.2 "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or half-breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland.
- 1.3 "Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-breeds as they were then known.
- 1.4 "Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" within the meaning of s.35 of the *Constitution Act 1982*.
- 1.5 "Distinct from other Aboriginal peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.

He acknowledged that the issue of adoption had created some debate particularly on different interpretations of wording. Adopted people who were non-Métis, had been considered differently by different regions. A constitution workshop was held in Ottawa, at which leaders from across the country had the opportunity to participate. The Métis Rights Panel now included eight members (including a WMN member), and continued to work on the draft constitution.

Marc LeClair recalled that the late former Prime Minister Trudeau indicated that until Métis developed their own laws, they would have to use Canada's. Former Prime Minister Chretien however had not recognized existing Métis rights.

He confirmed that Canada's view of Métis rights had created challenges for Métis people. Many Métis people had lived in more than one province, which made provincial "membership" a challenge. Métis people were becoming more aware of the need to acknowledge common identities.

He referred the Assembly to the Charts A, B and C provided in the pocket of the Agenda. Members were informed that the three founding members of the Métis nation (from the prairie provinces) formed the MNC, and later invited the involvement of Ontario and BC. The Métis community continued to grow and diversify.

President Chartier referred to the worksheets provided in the sixth tabbed section of the Agenda package, intended to accompany Chart C. He encouraged participants to seek responses on the worksheets, and submit them electronically at their earliest convenience to the MNC.

He explained that efforts would be made to pass a Métis Nation / Canada Relationship Act, which set out a relationship. Under the Métis Nation Constitution, and the Métis Nation / Canada Relationship Act, incorporation could occur with your own government.

Cecil Bellrose, Métis Rights Panel, commended WMN attendees for their support of the Métis Constitution.

Kathy Hodgson-Smith referenced Bill C31 and *Mclvor*, and their relationship to the work on the Métis Constitution. She explained that:

- a brochure had been designed regarding how to seek registration under the *Indian Act*;
- Bill C31 was supposed to address the issue of Indian women who previously lost status when they married non-Indian men;
- Sharon Mclvor brought to court the fact that her brother could pass along Métis status a generation further than she would; the BC Court of Appeal acknowledged the inequity;
- in January 2011, Bill C3 provided an opportunity to grandchildren who lost status due to marriage through Bill C31 to register;
- the Métis Settlements Act indicated that membership would be determined by the Métis communities; any Métis members voluntarily registering under the *Indian Act*, triggered their removal from the Métis registry;
- when the Cunninghams registered under Bill C31 it triggered their removal from the Métis registry; they argued in court that under Section 15 of the Charter, that was discriminatory; they argued that they should have access to benefits and opportunities from both registries, which the Supreme Court of Canada did not agree with; and
- the Métis Nation Constitution will be a useful vehicle for exercising rights.

During an ensuing discussion with participants, comments were offered regarding information provided on the back of Métis registry cards, related to residency. In response to questions raised, Jean Teillet explained that processes related to residency were different for general registries and band registries.

Ms. Hodgson-Smith added that bands had the power to develop their own registry lists, noting that it was possible to be on a Section 10 list but not be out of the *Indian Act*.

A member suggested that government was using their own legislation around the *Mclvor* and *Cunningham* cases to create divisions between Aboriginal people. As such, their legislation should be maneuvered to strategize or build on Métis rights and agendas. A Métis Nation Act could dictate through constitution, how government related on a government to government level. A Métis Nation Act could force government to treat the relationship with respect.

MNC President Chartier explained that the Métis Nation Relationship Act intended to define the relationship with Canada. With the *Cunningham* case, the Supreme Court of Canada referenced the right to determine citizenship. In 1993, MN-S adopted a constitution which had never been registered federally or provincially. The Supreme Court of Canada agreed with the MNC that Métis were distinct people, and their rights did not flow from Indian ancestors, but from Métis who developed into a distinct people with distinct cultures, traditions and practices. The Court further confirmed that the land was important to Métis culture and heritage. He added that amendment to the Indian Act would enable Métis people to withdrawn from it. It was noted that Métis people had developed their own unique cultures and customs depending on where they lived.

Jean Teillet clarified her understanding that Métis would not be defined what they did, noting that some Métis people were fur traders, some were hunters, some were farmers or otherwise. Métis would likely be defined by their culture. Boundaries could be identified where the stories and genealogical connections stopped. It was suggested that below the lake (Hay River) should be included as part of the Métis Nation. Ms. Teillet reviewed some key components that required consideration before negotiation should ensue, including determining membership and a governance structure, based on Métis customs, values and traditions. A Métis Constitution needed to have jurisdiction and reflect Métis people. It should reflect government of the people, by the people, for the people. Adopting a constitution similar to federal governments would not work.

It was further suggested that membership and citizenship aspects of the Métis Constitution be considered as separate pieces. Founding members of the MNC should not have more say than others. Regarding membership, it was suggested that a definition be set and not changed.

MNC President Chartier added that in 1993 the Métis in the NWT decided not to join the Métis government as they were in the process of negotiating a land claims agreement with federal government and did not want to jeopardize the positions they held.

The WMN Interim President extended gratitude for the comments provided, noting that efforts were needed to move the Métis Constitution forward, piece by piece.

Health Break

The Assembly recessed at 2:20 p.m. and reconvened at 2:35 p.m.

4.3 Financial Report

Related on-table information:

- Document titled “Métis National Council – 2011/2012 Funding Arrangements, for the Period Ending March 31, 2012, Women of the Métis Nation”
- Document titled “Métis National Council – 2011/2012 Funding Arrangements, for the Period Ending March 31, 2012, National Aboriginal Women’s Forum”
- Document titled “Métis National Council Secretariat Inc., Schedule of Revenues and Expenditures for the Year Ended March 31, 2011 (unaudited)”

- Document titled “Women of the Métis Nation – 2011/2012 Funding Arrangements”

Interim President Omeniho introduced Monelle Bailey, WMN Treasurer, before leading the Assembly in a review of the on-table documents provided. During a review of the “Métis National Council – 2011/2012 Funding Arrangements, for the Period Ending March 31, 2012, Women of the Métis Nation”, she noted that money received through AANDC/OFI through basic organizational capacity needed to be spent prior to March 31, 2012.

It was MOVED (Sharon McBride, ON) and SECONDED (Helene Johnson, SK)

That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation appoint Andrews & Co. as its Auditor for the next fiscal year.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-04)

It was MOVED (Sherry Arko) and SECONDED (Beatrice Demetrias, AB)

That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation receive for information the financial documents provided.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-05)

4.4 Bylaw Review

4.4(a) Overview of Incorporation

Related information:

- *Métis National Council, Policy for the Establishment of an Institution of and by Métis Women”, adopted June 14, 2010*

Kathy Hodgson-Smith displayed the WMN’s Certification of Incorporation, dated December 2010, and offered the following additional comments:

- a new federal law coming into force in 2014 will require the bylaw to be revised; this would be discussed at the next Annual General Meeting; and
- the operating name of the organization was “Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak”.

4.4(b) Presentation of Le Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak By-Laws

Related information:

- *“Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws”*

Kathy Hodgson-Smith led the Assembly in a review of the revised bylaws, and offered the following additional comments and clarifications:

- consideration could be given to including a dispute resolution process in the bylaws, prior to the process for “removal of the Director”; and
- a governance body was separate from an incorporated body; if a director is removed from the incorporation, it is for the purpose of the incorporation only.

It was MOVED (Sherry Arko) and SECONDED (Susie Hooper)

That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation direct that Section 6.0(a) of the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws be revised to read: “The Board shall consist of a maximum of six (6) Directors which shall be comprised of the National President and a minimum of four (4) Provincial Spokespersons”.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-06)

ADOPTED

Ms. Hodgson-Smith reviewed bylaw revisions requested at the October 23-24, 2010 WMN National General Assembly, and confirmed they had been acknowledged in the revision provided.

ADJOURNMENT

The Métis National Council, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation National Assembly held March 30-31, 2012 adjourned on March 30, 2012 at 4:30 p.m. after setting the time to reconvene at 9:00 a.m. on March 31, 2012.

**MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
LES FEMMES MICHIF OTIPEMISIWAK
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

Minutes of the **Métis National Council, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation** National Assembly held March 30-31, 2012 in the Queen Elizabeth Room at the Delta Edmonton Centre Suite Hotel, 102nd Avenue, Edmonton

DAY TWO – MARCH 31, 2012

OPENING PRAYER AND WELCOMING REMARKS

5. Welcoming Remarks and Opening Comments

Chair LeClair confirmed that a quorum was present and called the National Assembly to order at 9:20 a.m. Elder Gloria Laird offered an Opening Prayer.

4.4(b) Presentation of Le Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak By-Laws (Continued)

Related information:

- *“Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws”*

Kathy Hodgson-Smith welcomed further comments on the revised bylaws, and offered the following responses to questions raised:

- in the event of the organization’s dissolution, the remaining assets would be transferred to the members, the regional provincial organizations; this could be specified in the bylaws; and
- liability insurance is referenced under Article 9.0(iv): “The LFMO shall provide liability insurance necessary to protect the Directors while acting within the scope of their office, where funding is available”; a board governance workshop could be arranged to explain what members are liable for.

It was MOVED (Lee Fraser) and SECONDED (Sherry Arko)

That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation direct that the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws be ratified as amended.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-07)

Announcement

Interim President Omeniho welcomed the following participants who arrived after the self-introductions on Day One, to introduce themselves to the Assembly:

- May Henderson (SK)
- Louise Oeke (SK)
- Yvonne Geraty (SK)
- Shirley Ishister (SK)
- Patty Tait (SK)
- Brenda Bourque Stratichuk (AB)

6. Strategic Planning and Priorities

Interim President Omeniho explained that a long term plan was needed for the Women of the Métis Nation. She offered the following comments:

- the Women of the Métis Nation could be the recognized voice of Métis women nationally and internationally;
- it is important to raise awareness of issues related to Métis Women in Métis communities;
- a democratic governance model needs to be established; and
- the WMN could participate effectively at all levels of Aboriginal and Canadian government.

She further suggested need to:

- maintain the cultural distinctiveness and identity of Métis Women;
- enhance the role of Métis women as keepers of Métis knowledge;
- focus on cultural development of young Métis and Métis people as a whole;
- preserve the Métis languages;
- develop a plan to address health issues;
- address issues of violence against Métis Women, including raising awareness and promoting health;
- enhance the social economic development of Métis women and the Métis community;
- assist the MNC in strengthening Métis nation citizenship;
- work with federal government in the development of a long term economic development strategy;
- recruit a full time Executive Director to assist with WMN programming and oversee the WMN National Office;
- create a user-friendly navigable and interactive website for all women to access and use;
- keep Métis women informed of work being done.

The Interim President added links to key documents could be posted on the new WMN website, such as policy papers from the first Women's Conference. Links to reports related to Violence Against Aboriginal women; education and learning; economic development; and, traditional knowledge and knowledge keepers, could also be provided.

The Interim President welcomed comments related to WMN strategic planning priorities, which prompted the following:

- we need ideas for teaching young people traditional languages;
- the WMN could get the resources needed to deliver programs at the community level;
- we need economic development strategies;
- we need to look at self-sufficiency and generating our own resources;
- we need a development corporation or development mechanism to generate resources, with government funding to subsidize programs and services
- we need to prioritize our priorities;
- address issues facing survivors of residential schools, and violence
- many people were directly or indirectly impacted by residential schools;
- preventative measures / programs are needed to prevent intergenerational impacts of abuse;
- more programs need to be set up for Métis women;
- Métis culture, heritage and traditions should be integrated into women's justice system programming;
- health is a big issue for ourselves, our children and grandchildren;
- domestic violence, poverty and homelessness face many Métis women;

- we need committed efforts to bring our children home from foster care; parents need care to make sure they're prepared to have their children back;
- we need Métis specific victim services;
- we need to support Métis youth, many of which are struggling in a predominantly non-Aboriginal programs; there is hatred and shame in the community; young people are being abused;
- more Elder/Youth gatherings should be held to teach the youth and let them know they're cared for, and can provide opportunities for women to share stories;
- a formal connection is needed with young women to join the generational gaps between youth and Elders;
- Métis women's histories should be recorded; we need to record our grandmother's authentic stories;
- talk to young people about important topics such as sexual health/education;
- health care, housing, transportation and culturally appropriate care need to be considered;
- self-sufficiency is essential;
- more international efforts are required (i.e. through the UN);
- we need to maintain a positive approach;
- greater effort should be made to involve Manitoba in our circle;
- BC has the highest poverty levels of Aboriginal people in Canada;
- a national policy on health is needed;
- capacity building is needed to provide opportunities and safe places at the community level, where Métis people can share their sacred stories with others;
- we should each be mentoring two or three community members;
- it is important to teach young people traditional languages;
- focus on some traditional health practices, such as midwifery;
- some Elders and parents are afraid to seek help; getting them some help could reduce the number of children in care;
- people have stopped taking time to visit or a cup of coffee; everyone seems to communicate electronically;
- historically, traditional medicine men treated Métis people holistically;
- include a place on the WMN website to which Métis stories could be submitted;
- include a place on the WMN website where Métis products could be purchased;
- the WMN website should be interactive, provide links to meetings and gatherings;
- consider branding WMN; make branded products available online;
- create something similar to an "Order of the Shawl" which WMN could honour others with;
- the WMN should look after the women, children and grandchildren across the nation
- we need focus on individual responsibility for environmental issues;
- the WMN President needs staff;
- heal from the past, cope with the present, plan for the future (i.e. economic development, education);
- violence against women need to be addressed; it would be helpful to know how many women are missing in each province;
- communications of programs and services available to Métis people in each province;
- educate the children; they are the future;
- teaching criteria in Ontario requires teaching some Métis-specific curriculum modules (who the Métis are and what we stand for)
- resources are needed to support networking amongst members;
- a Métis cookbook can share stories and recipes;
- a healthy balance is needed in the list of priorities; communication is critical;

- advocate to include Métis people in statistics,
- we need to protect our land from major developments such as Enbridge;
- we need to look after ourselves – self-care is essential;
- use your BC Métis ID whenever possible; and
- opportunities for information between provinces is essential.

The Interim President acknowledged the need to work on and identify “Source of Sorrow” issues, while moving forward with building on strengths. She suggested the development of a National Steering Committee focussed on bringing the children home, with the involvement of one member from each province, and led by Shirley Ishister, SK. Gloria Laird’s involvement would also be invited. Currently over 60% of children in foster care were Aboriginal.

7. WMN COMMUNICATIONS

7.1 Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) Website

Neil Perrier commented regarding his assistance in the development of the WMN website, designed to assist in communications, and easily enable WMN members to submit and share information.

During a live demonstration of the new WMN website (www.MétisWomen.org) Mr. Perrier offered the following comments:

- tabs across the home page (provided for demonstration purposes only), currently include:
 - Home
 - About WMN:
 - this lists:
 - the Board of Directors, their position, and province
 - the “WMN Priorities”
 - the “WMN Bylaws”
 - President’s Letters
 - WMN Projects:
 - Health
 - Education
 - Economic Development
 - Violence Against Women
 - Reports:
 - the President’s Annual Report
 - Links
 - Media Centre:
 - this could be used to communicate with constituents regarding ongoing projects, connections to others regarding the projects
 - Glossary of Terms:
 - this will explain terms used within the website
 - Forum:
 - this allows WMN to exchange ideas and assist the organization in developing its policies
 - users login, and can submit comments categorized by topics
 - this is a page where members could “chat”
 - Contact us:
 - This will enable users to send an email
- the website includes links to the MNC and provincial organizations

- segmenting information on the website should be by topic first, rather than by region first
- the website would not be operational until finally approved by the board

During discussion on the website the following comments were offered:

- documents and information can be posted under the “Media Centre” tab;
- a message in Michif could be included on the opening page;
- the website should include a calendar, where pertinent events can be posted;
- the glossary of terms should be changed to “Glossary”; two sub-headings are needed: “glossary of terms” and “glossary of acronyms”;
- under “WMN, Board of Directors” each Director should have an email address indicated for users to click on; this section should also be on the “Contact Us” page;
- the site will be open to everyone; as such restrictions are needed to weed out any inappropriate comments;
- we need to ensure the site will be registered to and owned by WMN;
- indicate a place where each province can indicate health and well-being activities in their areas, available (i.e. addictions and violence treatment centres); this would need to be submitted by provincial leadership;
- the “Home” page refers to agencies, but doesn’t say a lot about the WMN; the “About WMN” should be indicated under the “Home” page;
- options for website maintenance will be considered;
- efforts will be made to respectfully include links to regions, without making Manitoba’s absence obvious;
- each region should include a link to regional women’s groups;
- we need a place for posting a research paper or videos;
- links across the bottom of the home page to the provincial organizations, could indicate province’s women’s groups, if they exist; otherwise the provincial organization link will remain;
- develop a Métis women’s website for provincial organizations that do not have one;
- text should be included describing the organization and the meaning of “Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak”; it will be phonetically spelled out to assist the reader;
- a policy paper has been developed on Violence Against Métis Women; it would be helpful if it could be posted on the site;
- it could be useful to include a link to women’s representatives and their communities; if there’s a student that comes in; it would be helpful for their families to be aware of Métis connections nearby;
- we should explain the design of the WMN logo, and acknowledge the designer of the logo (Christi Belcourt) plus a link to her website;
- participants can submit proposed changes to the website;
- rename the “Presidents Letter” to “Message from the President”;
- include a repository for documents; and
- include a link the WMN eNewsletter.

He displayed a MNC webpage which included Métis-specific information (documents, videos, photographs) categorized by time frame (i.e. Origins from 1650, Identity from 1870, Rebirth from 1960 and New Directions 2012-2075).

Mr. Perrier thanked participants for their comments and offered the following:

- the website was a living tool, that would evolve overtime;
- efforts would be made to determine whether or not chat forum could be included; and

- a link to the MNC's website could be included on the WMN site.

7.2 Brochure

Printed copies of draft "Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, Carrying on Business as Women on the Métis Nation" were distributed for information. The Interim President encouraged members to review the brochure, which wouldn't change as frequently as the website. Once finalized, it could be provided at meetings, where information on the organization should be delivered.

Health Break

The Assembly recessed at 1:00 p.m. and reconvened at approximately 1:25 p.m.

Announcement

Chair LeClair invited participants interested in nominating someone for the position of WMN President in the upcoming election process, to complete and submit a "Declaration of Candidates Form" prior to 2:00 p.m.

Announcement

Chair LeClair announced winners of contests referenced earlier.

8. Cultural Activity: Beading Workshop

Jaime Koebel, MNC, led the Assembly in brief cultural activity. Participants were welcomed to seek further information on her artistic accomplishments at www.JaimeKoebel.com.

Health Break

The Assembly recessed at 2:35 p.m. and reconvened at 2:45 p.m.

ELECTIONS

9.1 Overview of Voting Procedures

Kathy Hodgson-Smith led the Assembly in a review of an overhead presentation titled "Le Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Election Regulations".

She explained the WMN's voting procedures which governed the election of the President of the Le Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO), noting that:

- all delegates at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) were voting delegates for the purposes of electing the President;
- each delegate in attendance shall cast a ballot;
- anyone nominated would need to be present at the time of the vote;
- voting shall be by show of hands or by secret ballot, as determined by motion of a majority of the delegates at the AGM;
- the number of votes cast will be recorded in the minutes;
- any delegate may nominate a candidate for election by submitting a nomination in writing to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) at the time of the nominations';
- all nominations will be recorded in the minutes of the LFMO;
- a nominee must accept the nomination; if a nominee does not accept a nomination, it must be declared; a nominee's acceptance or non-acceptance will be indicated in the minutes;
- a tie vote will be broken by the CEO putting the names of the two candidates names in a hat a drawing one name; any appeals to the process will be noted in the minutes;

- the AGM chairperson will be deemed to be the Chief Electoral Officer for the purpose of the election; and
- the results of the election will be recorded in the minutes.

Roll Call

Chair Michelle LeClair held a Roll Call, and confirmed delegates in attendance.

9.2 Voting

The Chief Electoral Officer confirmed her earlier call for nominations for the position of Women of the Métis Nation President.

She confirmed that Melanie Omeniho was nominated twice, and had consented to the nomination.

9.3 Announcement of President and Acceptance Remarks

The Chief Electoral Office announced that given there were no further nominations, Melanie Omeniho was acclaimed to the position of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation President.

President Omeniho acknowledged the strength in the room and in the nation, noting that she looked forward to the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation moving forward without limitations. She encouraged consideration of a succession plan, and the engagement and mentoring of young people, as fresh ideas were needed to continue to make the organization vibrant.

OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Bylaw Amendment - Dispute Resolution Clause

A member supported the inclusion of a process in the bylaws, prior to the process regarding the removal of a member. It was noted that mechanism was needed to ensure a final and binding decision, in the event a member needed to be promptly removed.

***Request for Action (RFA-NGA1201-02):** It was requested that Kathy Hodgson-Smith draft a revision to the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws to incorporate a “dispute resolution” process.*

10.2 National Standing Committee to Bring Métis Children Home

It was MOVED (Karen Laroque, SK) and SECONDED (Sherry Arko)

That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation support the establishment of a National Standing Committee to bring Métis children home.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-08)

10.3 WMN Logo

It was MOVED (Donna Wright) and SECONDED (May Henderson, SK)

That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation adopt the Women of the Métis Nation logo as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-09)

10.4 Lessons Learned

The President recognized the following “Lessons Learned” for future meetings:

- begin all meetings with a round of self-introductions
- a three day process will allow an afternoon for each of the provinces to caucus

CLOSING REMARKS

Chair LeClair led the Assembly in a roundtable of closing remarks. During the process, comments were often regarding:

- the importance of sharing and communicating ideas;
- the commendable accomplishments and commitment of President Omeniho and the Board and Directors;
- anticipated benefits of having a Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) website;
- commonalities amongst participants;
- opportunities to continue sharing;
- results of the significant efforts of Métis women;
- the strength and power of prayers;
- the importance of seeking the return of the children;
- benefits of providing regular WMN newsletters;
- opportunities to be supportive, inclusive and respectful of diversities;
- benefits of working collaboratively;
- the importance of being transparent and accountable;
- appreciation for the President's commitment to mentor young women;
- strengths in working collaboratively with the MNC and other provincial organizations;
- contributions of MNC Staff;
- the significant contributions members make to their communities; and
- the positive atmosphere at the meeting.

Chair LeClair commended the positive atmosphere, thanked participants and others for contributing to the success of the event, and extended gratitude for the opportunity to assist the WMN in its Assembly.

Kathy Hodgson-Smith extended gratitude for the presentation of the Queen's Medal. She encouraged participants to maintain their collective approach and vision for moving forward.

President Omeniho recognized delegates for their openness and participation and Lynnette Davies, MNC, for her many contributions to the success of the event. Kathy Hodgson-Smith was thanked for her ongoing support. Michelle LeClair was thanked for her support as Chair. Further thanks were extended to the MNC staff and the Recording Secretary. The Assembly was informed that an eNewsletter would be provided, similar to the MNO's. When users signed up as members on the WMN they would receive eNewsletters as they were available. She stressed the need to design a program where women could be "honoured with a shawl".

CONCLUSION

The Métis National Council, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation National Assembly held March 30-31, 2012 concluded on March 31, 2012 at 4:15 p.m. with a Closing Prayer.

* * * * *

ADOPTED

This is a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Minutes of the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation National Assembly held March 30-31, 2012 and incorporates any and all corrections made at the time of adoption on March 16, 2013.

ATTACHMENTS:

- List of Voting Delegates present – Day 1
- List of Voting Delegates present – Day 2
- List of Additional Information Items Provided
- List of Resolutions

List of Voting Delegates Present – Day One
The Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation, National General Assembly
held March 30-31, 2012

British Columbia

Sherry Arko
Clara Morin Dal Col
Lee Fraser
Susie Hooper
Lynette La Fontaine
Sadie Luken
Kerry Marion
Denise Porter
Donna Wright

Saskatchewan

Monelle Bailey
Debbie Downing
Helene Johnson

Alberta

Linda Boudreau
Lorelei Chernow
Beatrice Demetrius
Bev Guillion
Joanne Gunville
Doreen Hayes
Gloria Laird
Amanda L'Hirondelle
Marianne Stepien

Ontario

Chris Acton
Juliette Denis
Pearl Gabona
Jo-Anne Hamelin
Sharon McBride
Lisa Pigeau
Brenda Powley
Patricia Taylor
Barbarane Wright

List of Voting Delegates Present – Day Two
The Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation, National General Assembly
held March 30-31, 2012

British Columbia

Sherry Arko
Sandra Conlin
Clara Morin Dal Col
Lee Fraser
Susie Hooper
Lynette Lafontaine
Sadie Luken
Kerry Marion
Denise Porter
Donna Wright

Saskatchewan

Monelle Bailey
Debbie Downing
Yvonne Geraty
May Henderson
Shirley Ishister
Helene Johnson
Karen Laroque
Shauna Laroque
Louise Oeke
Patty Tait

Alberta

Beatrice Demetrius
Joanna Gunville
Doreen Hayes
Gloria Laird
Brenda Bourque Straticchuk
Lauralee Turno

Ontario

Chris Acton
Alvina Cimon
Juliette Denis
Pearl Gabona
Jo-Anne Hamlin
Sharon McBride
Lisa Pigeau
Brenda Powley
Patricia Taylor
Barbaranne Wright

***Additional Information Items Provided at the
The Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation, National General Assembly
held March 30-31, 2012***

MNC Report regarding the “National Métis Women’s Assembly Project Report, Including the Period July 15, 2012 to November 15, 2010, Submitted to the Office of the Federal Interlocutor”, dated January 28, 2011

MNC Worksheets on “Building Blocks for a Constitution”

MNC Document titled “National Definition for Citizenship with the Métis Nation and Acceptance Process, In-Principle Ratified, Adopted and Unratified Sections”

Women of the Métis Nation Press Release regarding “Women of the Métis Nation Echo Concern over Federal Government’s \$10 Million Dollar Plan for Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women”, dated November 24, 2010

Document titled “Report on the International Expert Group Meeting on Combating Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls: Article 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, dated March 27, 2012 and submitted by Celeste McKay, Celeste McKay Consulting

**List of Resolutions and Decisions of the
The Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation, National General Assembly
held March 30-31, 2012**

<p>That the Agenda for the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation National General Assembly scheduled March 30-31, 2012 be accepted as presented.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-01)</p>
<p>That the Minutes of the Women of the Métis Nation National Assembly held October 23-24, 2010 be accepted with the following amendment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - append to Motion: 09-10-23-10 the following: “with authority to legal counsel to make amendments as necessary to meet incorporation requirements, while keeping true to the intent of the bylaws as passed by the body”; - revise Motion: 01-10-23-10 to indicate May Henderson representing Saskatchewan; - revise Motion: 12-10-23-10 to correctly spell: Susie Hooper and Clara Morin Dal Col; - utilize a basic resolution numbering system, and append to future WMN minutes a summary of the meetings decisions. <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-02)</p>
<p>Request for Action (RFA-NGA1201-01): <i>It was requested that the appendices referenced in the 2010 National General Assembly Minutes be provided electronically to WMN Members.</i></p>
<p>That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation receive for information the “Report on Women of the Métis Nation Activities 2010-2012” and the related update.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-03)</p>
<p>That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation appoint Andrews & Co. as its Auditor for the next fiscal year.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-04)</p>
<p>That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation receive for information the financial documents provided.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-05)</p>
<p>That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation direct that Section 6.0(a) of the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws be revised to read: “The Board shall consist of a maximum of six (6) Directors which shall be comprised of the National President and a minimum of four (4) Provincial Spokespersons”.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-06)</p>
<p>That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation direct that the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws be ratified as amended.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-07)</p>
<p>Request for Action (RFA-NGA1201-02): <i>It was requested that Kathy Hodgson-Smith draft a revision to the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Bylaws to incorporate a “dispute resolution” process.</i></p>
<p>That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation support the establishment of a National Standing Committee to bring Métis children home.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-08)</p>
<p>That the Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: Women of the Métis Nation adopt the Women of the Métis</p>

ADOPTED

Nation logo as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (NGA1201-09)