

**MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION
ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
March 31, 2006**

Minutes of the **Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly** held March 31, 2006 in Room 24 of the Manitoba Metis Federation at 150 Henry Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Original draft Minutes by: Amy McPherson. Redraft of Minutes by: Karen Miller, Raincoast Ventures Ltd.

1. OPENING CEREMONY

1.1 Opening Prayer

The Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly began at 9:30 a.m. Elder Mary Pangman offered an Opening Prayer.

1.2 Opening Remarks

Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson welcomed attendees, noting that 10 official delegates from each of the Governing Member provinces had been invited to participate. She explained the meaning conveyed by the gift bag prepared for each delegate, and expressed appreciation for the efforts of staff and WMN representatives in preparing the gifts.

1.3 Introductions

Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) National Spokesperson welcomed and introduced special guests in attendance:

- Clément Chartier, Métis National Council President;
- Audrey Poitras, Métis National Council President and Métis Nation of Alberta President;
- David Chartrand, Manitoba Metis Federation President; and
- Jennifer Brown, Métis National Youth Advisory Council President.

2. GUEST SPEECHES

2.1 Clément Chartier, Métis National Council President

Métis National Council (MNC) President Clément Chartier welcomed attendees, and conveyed regrets on behalf of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan President.

MNC President Chartier acknowledged that the Métis Nation faced many obstacles, and emphasized the need to work collectively on resolving issues. He commented on the change in the national government, and recognized the work done to advance the Métis agenda under the previous government – including the momentum created through the building of the Métis Nation Framework Agreement and establishment of negotiation processes. Further, he acknowledged the importance of moving forward on a distinctions-based approach and a multilateral process. Examples of successes were highlighted in areas of Métis Nation childcare, Métis Nation Housing Institute, and Métis Nation Centre of Excellence and Innovation.

In conclusion, President Chartier reiterated the imperativeness of Métis leadership, Youth and Women working collectively towards initiatives in the best interests of Métis citizens.

2.2 Audrey Poitras, Métis Nation of Alberta President

Métis National Council (MNC) Vice-President and Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) President Audrey Poitras welcomed attendees, and expressed appreciation for the invitation to participate in the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) Annual General Assembly (AGA). She also recognized the challenges encountered relative to participation by such a large compliment of women's representatives from across the Métis Nation.

MNC Vice-President and MNA President Poitras appraised the AGA of challenges experienced by the Métis women in Alberta, and advised of a resolution passed at the MNA AGA resulting in the formation of a women's department within the MNA.

2.3 Jennifer Brown, Métis National Youth Advisory Council President

Métis National Youth Advisory Council (MNYAC) President Jennifer Brown welcomed attendees, and expressed appreciation for the invitation to participate on behalf of Métis youth. She called attention to the pride of all delegates in the efforts of the Women of the Métis Nation National Spokesperson towards advancing the Métis Women's agenda, and for her pursuit of related funding opportunities.

MNYAC President Brown assured the assembly of the MNYAC's support, and recognized opportunities for joint ventures between Métis Youth and Métis Woman to be considered within the annual work plan of the WMN.

2.4 David Chartrand, Manitoba Metis Federation President

Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) President David Chartrand commented on the outcome of the 2006 federal election, and emphasized the importance of the Métis Nation standing collectively. He provided a brief update on the Manitoba land claim case and extended an invitation to attendees to participate in the related activities commencing in April 2006. Further, he announced that the MMF would hold a mortgage burning ceremony mid-April 2006, to celebrate the building purchase made five years previously. Additional recent building purchases in Thompson and The Pas were acknowledged.

The Women of the Métis Nation were encouraged to stand united with their families, communities, and Métis governments. MMF President Chartrand reflected on the potential strength of the Métis Nation realized through strategizing on family and community issues; and emphasized the philosophy that strong families resulted in strong communities and Nations.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

3.1 Appointment of Chair

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Jacquie Bouvier, SK)

That the Women of the Métis Nation appoint Michelle LeClair-Harding as the 2006 Annual General Assembly Chair.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 1-3-31-06)

3.2 Approval of Agenda

It was MOVED (Muriel Parker, MB) and SECONDED (Melanie Omeniho, AB)

That the Agenda for the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly scheduled March 31, 2006 be adopted with amendment to include new item: "Discussion on Aboriginal Women's Program Funding", prior to "Reports".

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 2-3-31-06)

3.3 Approval of Minutes – April 12-13, 2005 Annual Forum

Approval of the Minutes of the 2005 Annual Forum was deferred pending their distribution to all delegates.

Health Break

The meeting recessed at this point, and resumed with all of the same persons in attendance.

4. DISCUSSION ON ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S PROGRAM FUNDING

4.1 Canadian Heritage

Elaine Lavallee, Canadian Heritage (PCH), advised that PCH had made structural changes so that all Aboriginal programs were now contained within one program, with no changes to the program guidelines.

In response to questions posed by delegates with regard to core funding options available to the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN), Ms. Lavallee indicated that the WMN was considered a department within the incorporated Métis National Council (MNC); and that core funding was not allocated to the MNC for women's issues as core funding had been provided to another women's group.

Further, the assembly was apprised of PCH policies, noting that staff must work within the approved guidelines. It was noted that national women's groups were able to apply for \$250,000 in core funding available through PCH; and that some project-based funding was available for application by provincial women's groups.

Request for Action (01)

The WMN agreed to consider more projects that would impact communities, and requested that the national Métis leadership negotiate with the provincial leadership in the interests of funding Métis women's initiatives.

5. REPORTS

5.1 National Spokesperson – Rosemarie McPherson

Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson expressed appreciation for the assistance of Métis National Council (MNC) communications staff in developing the newsletter distributed to all delegates.

Further, WMN National Spokesperson McPherson indicated that while attending a law symposium, she had engaged in conversation with Wayne Lord, Office of the Federal Interlocutor (OFI), about the WMN funding allocation of \$75,000 – which had been lower than the proposed \$165,000. It was emphasized to Mr. Lord that due to the expense involved, women's meetings could not be held in some of the provinces. As a result, OFI had agreed to the full proposed funding amount of \$165,000.

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Gail Rhodes, BC).

That the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly accept the National Spokesperson's report as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 3-3-31-06)

5.2 Financial Report – Melanie Omeniho

Melanie Omeniho, Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) Board member, provided a verbal financial report, noting that negotiations had resulted in an Office of the Federal Interlocutor allocation to the WMN of \$165,000. As the original Contribution Agreement was for \$75,000 the Métis National Council (MNC) had assisted by covering the shortfall and would be reimbursed once the WMN received the funding. To date \$23,000 was outstanding.

The cost of meetings was acknowledged, recognizing that WMN Board meetings had been held in Winnipeg and Vancouver, in addition to two conference calls and the Annual General Assembly presently being held in Winnipeg.

In response to a query with respect to a finalized financial statement for WMN, Ms. Omeniho indicated that a verbal report was provided to reconcile with the budget. A financial statement would be included within the MNC's formal reporting.

Request for Action (02)

It was requested that the budget report presented include the phrase "the 11 months ended February 28, 2006"; and that MNC staff make the necessary amendment.

It was MOVED (Muriel Parker, MB) and SECONDED (Ella Mayer, MB),

That the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly accept for information the financial report as verbally presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 4-3-31-06)

Agenda Varied

The agenda was varied at the meeting to consider Item 3.3, Approval of Minutes, at this point.

3.3 Approval of Minutes Cont'd.

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Eva Pritchett, SK),

That the Minutes of the April 12 and 13, 2005 Métis Women's National Forum be adopted with requested amendments.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 5-3-31-06)

5.3 Provincial Reports

5.3.1 Manitoba – Muriel Parker

Muriel Parker advised that the Métis Women of Manitoba did not receive any core funding and were therefore only able to hold one Board Meeting in November 2005 and a working meeting in Dauphin. As a result, proposals were denied upon submission.

On behalf of the Métis Women of Manitoba, Ms. Parker thanked the Manitoba Metis Federation for assistance with travel and gatherings. Additionally, she recognized that through Human Resources Development Training the women had been able to hire an office staff member for nine months with hopes of gaining an extension.

Challenges faced by the Métis Women of Manitoba were acknowledged, with note that work was being done to reach an agreement with an accounting firm to complete the audited financial statement required by Canadian Heritage – although this was not budgeted for within the project-based funding received.

5.3.2 Saskatchewan – Mary Ann Gagnon

Mary Ann Gagnon advised that while there was little movement in Saskatchewan for a period of time, having a delegation at the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly made them feel part of a larger entity. Impacts to the women, and challenges resulting from the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan elections were noted; and hope was conveyed that progress would be made in Saskatchewan in the near future.

5.3.3 Ontario – Evelyn Powley

Evelyn Powley expressed that work was being done to rebuild the Métis Women in Ontario. In collaboration with the youth, work was being undertaken on a project proposal for submission to the Canadian Women's Foundation. The project would include 12 young Métis women (age 12+) involved in a two-week canoe expedition focusing on contemporary and historical traditions and cultures of Métis women. The project would encompass critical analysis of interconnecting issues facing Métis women currently, and include educational workshops on the continuum of violence.

5.3.4 Alberta – Melanie Omeniho

Melanie Omeniho advised of a Métis Women in Alberta meeting held in August 2005 which resulted in a successful application for resources for an additional meeting. She further indicated that a Métis Women's department was being established within the Métis Nation of Alberta.

5.3.5 British Columbia – April McLean Collart

April McLean-Collart noted that the Métis Women's Secretariat British Columbia was going through a reconstruction process, and that several regional bi-elections for representatives and alternates were being planned. Effective April 1, 2006, the women in BC were dissolving their society and would no longer be incorporated. The provincial Métis organization was actively supporting ongoing governance funding for the women. Application would be made for regional project funding to assist with capacity building and women's gatherings. Additionally, the women were actively working to increase capacity in the communities and regions.

6. DISCUSSION ON INCORPORATION

Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson reminded that national groups must be incorporated in order to receive any core funding from the government. She acknowledged that the WMN anticipated the need to struggle for funding as a result of the conflict between Métis grassroots structures and funding policies.

WMN National Spokesperson McPherson added that the WMN Steering Committee had recommended that guidance be sought from all provinces with respect to the potential for incorporation of the WMN. The importance of maintaining unity in lobbying strategy among the provinces was emphasized.

6.1 Saskatchewan

Comment from Saskatchewan was offered that the federal government had not funded a Métis Women's national group in the past several years; and concern was expressed that the \$250,000 earmarked for women's programs was not reported on. It was felt that the Women of the Métis Nation should work on capacity building through other means; and then approach the federal government relative to their accountability for funds expended on behalf of Métis women.

6.2 Manitoba

The Métis Women of Manitoba's experience within the umbrella of an incorporated organization was commented on, noting that much work was done to complete onerous applications and detailed proposals for relatively insignificant project funding.

Suggestion was offered that the Women of the Métis Nation incorporate to become eligible for core funding; and approach the Office of the Federal Interlocutor to match the \$250,000 available through Canadian Heritage.

6.3 Alberta

The meeting was informed that the Women of the Métis Nation Steering Committee had not yet had the opportunity to meet with the government or the Métis National Council (MNC) Board of Governors to explore funding options. Although it was recognized that the Women of the Métis Nation being an independent, autonomous, incorporated body could create some problems and political issues, the MNC National President and the Board of Governors had been very supportive.

It was suggested that all circumstances and options be reviewed, leading up to the topic of incorporation being discussed in a year.

6.4 Ontario

Canadian Heritage policy relative to funding of national bodies was referenced in addition to HRSDC and other bureaucratic processes. Caution was expressed that there was still no guarantee of core funding even if the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) became incorporated. Additionally, it was noted that mandatory reporting could be a costly endeavour.

Ontario suggested that other options be pursued to source a mechanism (i.e. legal associates) towards the independence of the WMN while still working with the Métis National Council structure.

6.5 British Columbia

British Columbia emphasized commitment to working with the Women of the Métis Nation for the betterment of all Métis citizens in Canada. Support was expressed for the recommendations of the Métis National Council being followed through and reflected by the Women's Secretariat.

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (April McLean Collart, BC),

That for the interim, the Women of the Métis Nation Board continue its work for the upcoming year and report back at the 2007 Annual General Assembly with options and recommendations relating to the responses of: the Métis National Council Board of Governors; each of the provincial Métis Women's groups; and the federal government.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 6-3-31-06)

7. WOMEN'S SPECIFIC INITIATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chair LeClair-Harding introduced the topic of Women's specific initiatives and recommendations and requested delegates to identify their areas of interest. In discussion, the following priorities were recognized:

- regional workshops on proposal writing;
- regional workshops on strategic planning;
- begin work towards partnering with the Youth Secretariat to create a "Traditional Knowledge Keepers Conference" (also consider partnership with Culture and Heritage);
- resolution for the Métis National Council (MNC) to continue to push forward the initiatives of the Kelowna Accord with regard to the childcare initiative;
- ensure that elders' services are available for institutionalized women (partnering with an Elders' Support Committee);
- creation of a National Métis Women's Recognition Award;
- production of a quarterly newsletter;
- meetings with the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; and
- website development to update information.

8. 2006-2007 WORK PLAN

The Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) Annual General Assembly delegates offered suggestions on the following areas of development for the 2006-2007 workplan:

- Capacity Building
- Website Building:
 - Sample proposals
 - Funding locations/options
- Strategic Planning
- Partnerships
- Priorities.

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Muriel Parker, MB),

That the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly accept the Protocols and Principles as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 7-3-31-06)

A detailed discussion of each of the areas for development in the 2006-2007 work plan ensued, with the following highlights noted:

- **Capacity Building:** As building capacity within all of the respective regions was recognized as a priority, and some success with small projects was acknowledged, it was suggested that all regions forward the proposals and templates they have developed to the national office to be shared among the provinces.
- **Website Building:** The Assembly indicated an interest in developing a WMN website to include a confidential listing of professional Métis women in Canada who could be an asset to the WMN. The contact list would remain confidential through the Métis National Council office and would only be accessible to the WMN Steering Committee.
- **Strategic Planning:** The Assembly recognized the benefit of the WMN working collectively with the youth to hold a conference with a focus on Traditional Knowledge keepers; and acknowledged the need for retention of culture and heritage.
- **Partnerships:** The following partnerships were suggested:
 - Youth – Traditional Knowledge Keepers conference;
 - Justice – Justice systems; Métis identity; Prostitution/gangs; Statistics/rates; violence against women; services to incarcerated women;
 - Métis National Council – suicide; and
 - Environment – invitations to meetings were acknowledged and further consideration may be given to this theme.
- **Priorities:** The Assembly identified the following issues of high priority:
 - Women’s Health and Wellness;
 - Education;
 - Family Violence; and
 - Métis Culture and Preservation.

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Ester Auger, AB),

WHEREAS the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) works collectively with the Métis National Council (MNC); and

WHEREAS the Kelowna Accord addressed many of the issues that are a priority in the Métis Community;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the WMN fully support the MNC's position on moving the Kelowna Accord forward for the benefit of all Métis people across the Homeland.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 8-3-31-06)

CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER

The Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly held March 31, 2006 concluded at this point.

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This is a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly held March 31, 2006, and incorporates any and all corrections made at the time of adoption.

Michelle LeClair-Harding, Chair

Rosemarie McPherson, National Spokesperson

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: List of Voting Delegates, Alternates and Guests present

Appendix B: List of Motions

MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION - ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LIST OF VOTING DELEGATES, ALTERNATES AND GUESTS PRESENT

British Columbia	Manitoba
Joyce Beck April McLean Collart Donna Langenbach Michelle Lavergne Peggy Olanski Darlene Odinson Shelly Paradis Gail Rhodes	Brandy Bulycz Isabelle Desjarlais Jeanette Johnson Ella Mayer Yvonne Mercredi Stephanie McPherson Muriel Parker Margaret Ranville Elaine Spray Lucille Thompson
Alberta	Ontario
Ester Auger Doreen Bergum Irene Collins Marge Friedel Marilyn Gordey Gloria Laird Margaret Ann Northey Melanie Omeniho Sheena Phillip Joan Soloway	Patricia Albert Coral Dodds Carmen Gravel Shirley Hanslip Lois McCallum Lynn Pantuso Barbara Parker Brenda Powley Evelyn Powley Jo Anne Young
Saskatchewan	Non-voting delegates / Guests
Violet Besplug Jackquie Bouvier Nora Cummings Zelda Laliberty Eva Pritchett Nancy Roy Crystal Senger Gainita Vandassell Rebecca Vermette	Jennifer Brown, Métis National Youth Advisory Council President Clément Chartier, Métis National Council President David Chartrand, Manitoba Metis Federation President Elaine Lavallee, Canadian Heritage Michelle LeClair Harding, Chair Rosemarie McPherson, National Spokesperson Mary Pangman, Elder Audrey Poitras, Métis Nation of Alberta President

MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION - ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
MOTIONS

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Jacquie Bouvier, SK)

That the Women of the Métis Nation appoint Michelle LeClair-Harding as the 2006 Annual General Assembly Chair.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 1-3-31-06)

It was MOVED (Muriel Parker, MB) and SECONDED (Melanie Omeniho, AB)

That the Agenda for the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly scheduled March 31, 2006 be adopted with amendment to include new item: "Discussion on Aboriginal Women's Program Funding", prior to "Reports".

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 2-3-31-06)

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Gail Rhodes, BC),

That the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly accept the National Spokesperson's report as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 3-3-31-06)

It was MOVED (Muriel Parker, MB) and SECONDED (Ella Mayer, MB),

That the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly accept for information the financial report as verbally presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 4-3-31-06)

It was MOVED (Melonie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Eva Pritchett, SK),

That the Minutes of the April 12 and 13, 2005 Métis Women's National Forum be adopted with requested amendments.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 5-3-31-06)

It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (April McLean Collart, BC),

That for the interim, the Women of the Métis Nation Board continue its work for the upcoming year and report back at the 2007 Annual General Assembly with options and recommendations relating to the responses of: the Métis National Council Board of Governors; each of the provincial Métis Women's groups; and the federal government.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 6-3-31-06)

It was MOVED (Melonie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Muriel Parker, MB),

That the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly accept the Protocols and Principles as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 7-3-31-06)

It was MOVED (Melonie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Ester Auger, AB),

WHEREAS the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) works collectively with the Métis National Council (MNC); and

WHEREAS the Kelowna Accord addressed many of the issues that are a priority in the Métis Community;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the WMN fully support the MNC's position on moving the Kelowna Accord forward for the benefit of all Métis people across the Homeland.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 8-3-31-06)