

**MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL  
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Minutes of the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly held March 31-April 1, 2007 in the Mambo Ballroom of the Pacific Palisades Hotel, 1277 Robson Street, Vancouver, B.C., prepared by Karen Miller, Raincoast Ventures Ltd.

**DAY 1 – MARCH 31, 2007**

**1. OPENING CEREMONY**

**1.1 Opening Prayer**

The Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) Annual General Assembly was called to order at 9:10 a.m. Senator Margaret Penner offered an Opening Prayer.

**1.2 Opening Remarks – National Spokesperson**

Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson thanked Senator Penner for her prayer on behalf of the WMN, and presented her with a gift of appreciation.

National Spokesperson McPherson formally introduced special guests: Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras; Métis Nation British Columbia President Bruce Dumont; and Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians Senior Advisor Wayne Lord.

**1.3 Introduction of Chair – Michelle LeClair-Harding**

**It was MOVED (Ella Mayer, MB) and SECONDED (Jackie Bouvier, SK)**

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

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 1-3-31-07)**

**1.4 Acceptance of the Agenda**

**It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Rose Bortolon, BC)**

That the Agenda for the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly scheduled March 31-April 1, 2007, be accepted as presented.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 2-3-31-07)**

**1.5 Roll Call**

The roll call was undertaken. Refer to Appendix A for a list of voting delegates.

**2. GUEST SPEAKERS**

**2.1 Métis Nation British Columbia President Bruce Dumont**

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) President Bruce Dumont welcomed the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) to Vancouver, and acknowledged that the Assembly was taking place on the traditional territory of the Squamish First Nation. He thanked Senator Penner for her Opening Prayer; noting his honor at having the opportunity to address Métis women from across the homeland; and wished the WMN success in its deliberations.

MNBC President Dumont recognized WMN National Spokesperson McPherson as a colleague working in the interests of Métis people and communities across Canada. He acknowledged Minister Rose Bortolon, and Director Victoria Pruden, with respect to their responsibilities for the

organization of the Métis women in the province of BC; as well as Tresley Tourond, Minister of Youth, and accompanying youth attending the AGA.

The sacrifices made by the Métis women over the years, with consideration of their responsibilities for families, men folk, and careers, were acknowledged relative to efforts towards advancement of the Métis women's agenda.

MNBC President Dumont advised that the MNBC includes the women's voice at all levels in its governance structure and decision-making. He referenced his family history and respectfully acknowledged the significance of his mother's skills, dedication and contribution to Métis family life. He commented on the importance of preparing for the future, and recognized the significance of the role of Métis women.

The Assembly was informed that the Métis Nation Relationship Accord signed with BC considers six key areas: Health, Education, Economic Development, Housing, Métis Identification and Data, and Renewal of the Tripartite Process. Education was seen as key to improving the economic conditions of Métis women.

MNBC President Dumont closed with a reading of a poem written by his sister, Marilyn Dumont, entitled "*Blue Ribbon Children*".

On behalf of the WMN, Melanie Omeniho presented MNC President Dumont with a beading box for his fiancé.

## **2.2 Welcoming Remarks – Hosting Provincial Spokesperson**

Minister for Métis Women, and Interim Spokesperson for the Métis Women's Secretariat BC Rose Bortolon welcomed delegates to the Assembly; acknowledged Senator Penner for the Opening Prayer; and recognized that the Assembly was being held on Coast Salish territory.

Ms. Bortolon indicated that the First BC Métis Women's Summit was recently held in Vancouver, and that a strategic planning process was undertaken, including a recommendation to change the name of the "Métis Women's Secretariat BC" to "Assembly of BC Métis Women".

Recognizing the enthusiasm, strength, wisdom and power of Métis Women, Ms. Bortolon suggested that energy be channeled through the comfortable, open forum of the Annual General Assembly to create an effective strategic plan to support advancement of the Métis Women's agenda. She expressed appreciation for the leadership of Rosemarie.

## **2.3 Jennifer Brown, Métis National Youth Advisory Council President**

Métis National Youth Advisory Council (MNYAC) President Jennifer Brown extended greetings to all. She provided information regarding the MNYAC – a 10-member committee with seven active female members. Although the MNYAC had no budget allocated to them, a Métis Nation Council (MNC) staff member was providing part-time assistance. The National Youth Conference and Role Model Program were anticipated to continue.

The Assembly was apprised that the MNC had started a Métis Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy. As well, Ms. Brown expressed appreciation for funding provided so that the recent Michif Language conference in Winnipeg could be attended by five Métis youth.

The WMN National Spokesperson and Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras were both acknowledged as strong role models for Métis women.

## **2.4 Audrey Poitras, President Métis Nation of Alberta**

Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) President Audrey Poitras conveyed greetings from the MNA Council, staff and members, and recognized that the Women of the Métis Nation meetings were always productive. Further she indicated she looked forward to providing a keynote speech during the evening session.

## **Health Break**

The Assembly recessed at 9:47 a.m. and resumed at 10:05 a.m.

## **Agenda Varied**

The Agenda was varied at the Assembly to allow for a presentation by Wayne Lord at this point.

## **2.5 Wayne Lord, Senior Advisor, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians**

Wayne Lord, Senior Advisor, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians (OFI), provided an overview of his position and background in public service noting that he accepted a secondment to work on domestic Aboriginal issues in Canada. He referenced his interest and experience in post-Powley initiatives, noting that he would like to provide additional assistance to the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) in advancing their agenda. The new government wants to do business with plans that are capable of being realized. Mr. Lord recognized that the Women had leaders who were prepared to be accountable and work with the government to advance a defined agenda and objectives, in a consistent way.

Mr. Lord referenced the National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS). The government had committed to the NAWS, provinces were engaged, the Interdepartmental Committee was starting to meet, and funds would be made available for preparations. It was suggested that the WMN should come forward in advance of the Summit to help the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Interdepartmental Committee to format the NAWS agenda. Further, Mr. Lord emphasized the importance of both an Action Plan and Implementation Plan coming out of the NAWS. Priorities of the new government were being explored and an expenditure review was being undertaken to reallocate funds to various issues. Preparation for the NAWS was encouraged, with inter-jurisdictional cooperation emphasized.

Mr. Lord conveyed support for the organization and accountability of the WMN.

Referencing his Aboriginal ancestry, Mr. Lord stated that Canada was never empty, it had a long history – and the Aboriginal, French and English were part of that history. The Aboriginal reality was being recognized by mainstream society. Mr. Lord expressed that he was proud to represent Canada in many international forums, and in particular as an Aboriginal civil servant. He noted that in the daily efforts to represent the issues among other Canadians, the WMN was a very important part of the future of Canada.

Mr. Lord wished the WMN all the best in their gathering, and welcomed questions.

The following commentary and questions were expressed:

- Melanie Omeniho recognized that Mr. Lord had been a tremendous assistance to the WMN; and informed the Assembly that OFI had committed to ensuring levels of funding consistent with the current year. Additionally, other resources may be available through project funding as determined by strategic planning.

- Rita Cullen recognized women’s groups in eight regions of Manitoba and queried whether funding and resources should be sought individually or collectively.
- Sue Dahlseide commented that communication about culture is the responsibility of women in educating their own families; and suggested that the question “Who are the Métis?” should be a part of public education (including tourism).
- Michelle LeClair-Harding indicated that the WMN had been participating with NWAC in organizing the NAWS, and asked if OFI would support regional meetings for the WMN to prepare for the NAWS.
- In relation to the post-Powley decision, Ella Mayer commented on the earlier National Aboriginal Resource Allocation Model (NARAM), and asked if the government would look to the Métis women regionally to undertake an enumeration of Métis children as they are born, so that a full youth membership list could be created.
- Mr. Lord was thanked for the tremendous support for Métis women on a national and regional level.

The following highlights of Mr. Lord’s response to WMN delegates were noted:

- the organization of the WMN with a clear agenda allows government representative to work with the group towards furthering their interests;
- while strong local organizations were encouraged, often more has been accomplished by rolling up community level priorities;
- values of community, family and “help yourself” were referenced as a natural fit within government’s values and platforms;
- the importance of matching interests was articulated;
- the ability of women to tell the family story is critical to advancing the culture and history one person at a time;
- there is a national affinity of Aboriginal people towards new immigrants; an explanation of the history and culture should be undertaken by individuals, and in particular those stepping forward to participate in the political arena;
- Métis women’s organizations could reach out to new immigrant women as there is some sharing of interests and challenges (i.e. employment, preservation of culture etc.);
- each organization would likely get \$35,000-50,000 to prepare for the NAWS;
- when governments talk about own-source revenues, rights-based agendas are not well supported; indicators and data are required by governments and all of those around the table hold this type of information (i.e. culture, heritage, intellectual property, traditional knowledge) that could be very valuable;
- having a good data set that cannot be manufactured could be a business line as both government and private industry value information;
- meetings at the community or regional level should be directed towards articulation of interests – put them in terms of what it means towards making stronger communities for everyone (i.e. maintenance of common order in the bush could be accomplished by government working with harvesters);
- while community consultation and community validation was important, the window of time for planning around NAWS is very small; issues need to be articulated so that the civil servants can provide support;
- the NAWS action plan and implementation could involve an “ask” for resources to take it back to the communities so that the implementation plan coming out of the NAWS could have the necessary validation at the community level;
- Canada’s new government gives close consideration to good ideas that are broken down into practical, realizable steps with accountability being a key component;

- the WMN is organized, confident and has capacity, commitment, ability and intelligence;
- information should be collected for Métis reasons, as intellectual property, and not for reasons that may be perceived as an interest of the government of Canada;
- an enumeration done by Métis could be challenged by statisticians;
- when the national Census and Aboriginal People's Survey (APS) was done there was a large difference in the statistics (i.e. 800,000) between those acknowledging Aboriginal ancestry, and those that identify specifically;
- OFI contributed \$250,000 to the APS; the results at that level of statistics are very powerful;
- attendees were encouraged all to answer all census questions; and to tell the government what information they should be collecting.

Chair LeClair-Harding indicated that Mr. Lord would be present over the two days of the Assembly and would likely be prepared to answer individual questions.

Melanie Omeniho recognized MNC staff members Andrea Still and Duane Morrisseau for their efforts to assist and support the Métis Women; Zoran Vidic, MNC Communications Director; contractors Patricia Russell, and Wenda Watteyne hired to assist the WMN in preparing for the NAWS, and with policy paper development; Karen Miller, Raincoast Ventures Ltd. for assistance with recording the details of various meetings; and Victoria Pruden for her assistance in coordinating the Assembly.

### **3. BUSINESS MEETING**

#### **3.1 Minutes of Previous AGA**

##### **It was MOVED (Lucille Thompson, MB) and SECONDED (Sharon McBride, ON)**

That the Minutes of the Women of the Métis Nation 2006 Annual General Assembly held March 31, 2006 be adopted with amendment to the Listing of delegates to correct the spelling of delegates: Brandy Bulycz, Eva Pritchett, Doreen Bergum, and Carmen Gravel.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 3-3-31-07)**

#### **3.2 Financial Report**

*Related materials provided in the Women of the Métis Nation AGA Agenda package: Métis National Council Secretariat Inc. Statement of Revenue and Expenditures for 29A – INAC – Women of the Métis Nation for the period April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006, (Unaudited); and for the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 (Unaudited).*

Muriel Parker provided an overview of the unaudited financial statements. While some charges related to the 2007 Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) Annual General Assembly (AGA) were prepaid, others had not yet been accounted for. She acknowledged that the WMN portfolio bags were provided to delegates as a gift in recognition of the late arrival of previous funding.

Ms. Parker acknowledged Sharon McBride as the WMN Treasurer. Additionally, the AGA was appraised that audited financial statements would be presented at the Métis National Council AGA as part of the accountability of the national organization.

**It was MOVED (Sharon McBride, ON) and SECONDED (Roxanne Goodon, MB)**

That the Métis National Council Secretariat Inc. Statement of Revenue and Expenditures for 29A – INAC – Women of the Métis Nation for the period April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006, (Unaudited); and for the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 (Unaudited) be accepted as presented.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 4-3-31-07)**

**Health Break**

The Assembly recessed at 11:22 a.m. and resumed at 12:55 p.m.

**3.3 Annual Report presented by National Spokesperson**

*Related materials provided in the Women of the Métis Nation AGA Agenda package:*

- *“Preserving the Past, Preparing for the Future” Annual Report March 31-April 1, 2007;*
- *Women of the Métis Nation Protocols and Principles;*
- *Métis National Council 2006-2007 Capacity Workplan: Women of the Métis Nation, Communications, and Professional Development;*
- *Report from the Women’s Secretariat of the Métis Nation of Ontario; and*
- *Report from the Métis Women’s Secretariat – British Columbia.*

Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson invited delegates to refer to the seven bulleted points on page 7-8 of the Métis National Council (MNC) 2006-2007 Capacity Work Plan relative to directives given to the WMN to act and assist Métis women in Canada. She noted that the WMN had met with Theresa Doré, Aboriginal Peoples’ Program Directorate (APPD) and Elaine Lavallée and that an opportunity was provided for each of the provinces to write a proposal for funding. Some misunderstanding was recognized on the part of the regional office with respect to conditions for funding. Collaborative work of the national and regional offices was encouraged, while allowing each of the provincial organizations to be individually accountable.

Request for action (RFA) items were referenced and it was noted that Darren Kondysar, MNC Director of Finance, accomplished the detailed financial work. The WMN budget was included with the overall MNC budget.

The Assembly was apprised that Women’s organizations were not required to incorporate as the WMN was grassroots, regionally and provincially driven. Appreciation was expressed to the women present for their support towards a unified approach.

National Spokesperson McPherson indicated that discussions with Wayne Lord had been very helpful over the past few years, as he was committed to assisting. Additionally, the MNC Board of Governors (BOG) had been helpful; and MNC President Chartier had indicated that WMN portfolio holders would be invited to future relevant meetings.

The meeting was apprised that Native Woman’s Association of Canada (NWAC) had invited the WMN Board to meet on Monday, April 2, 2007. Additionally, a meeting was held with Parliamentary Secretary Rod Bruinooge relative to the potential for advancing the Métis agenda.

WMN Board members were introduced.

Sue Dahlseide commented on the governance structure of the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) and its Métis Centre Governing Committee (MCGC). It was recommended (in part due to NWAC lobbying efforts) that a Métis woman sit as a MCGC voting member.

Senator Cummings thanked the WMN for its support and expressed that the Saskatchewan delegation was proactively working for the advancement of the Métis Women's agenda. In response to her query on whether the provincial women's organizations must incorporate to receive core funding; clarification was offered that a regional committee could apply for funding without being incorporated.

Melanie Omeniho commented on challenges encountered by the WMN due to funding considerations; recognized the priority of having as many delegates as possible at the Assembly; and acknowledged volunteer efforts to write proposals, and communicate via email rather than holding in-person Board meetings. She indicated that a national newsletter would be developed for digital transmission, in addition to some hard copies for dissemination to the communities to inform a wider audience.

**It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Sharon McBride, ON),**

That the verbal report by Women of the Métis Nation National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson be accepted.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 5-3-31-07)**

**3.4 National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS)**

Andrea Still, Métis National Council (MNC) Special Initiatives Manager, advised that the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador were co-hosting a one-time National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS). Ms. Still had been participating on the NAWS planning committee in representation of the WMN. The planning committee had been meeting frequently, and while a theme was discussed, topics had not been formalized.

The WMN Board put forward topics for discussion at the NAWS that were Métis-specific focusing on the four priorities of: traditional knowledge – its preservation and transmission, health, education and family violence. Policy papers developed for the NAWS would be presented to Minister Prentice, Prime Minister Harper, and all of the premiers.

Delegations were restricted to 10 people per organization to present the policy papers at the NAW. The WMN Board would discuss the delegate selection process, and would provide related direction to staff.

National Spokesperson McPherson confirmed that Wenda Watteyne had been contracted to work on the priority list for NAWS and related policy paper development. It was recommended that the WMN go forward to the NAWS with a 10-year plan and an implementation plan. Measures of success for goals and commitments would be reviewed within a five-year period and identification of measures was necessary (i.e. women in better professions).

The small window of opportunity for input into NAWS was emphasized, so that clarification could be provided through the discussion on day two of the Assembly as part of the strategic planning.

Delegates offered the following comments relative to planning for the NAWS:

- work was done by the Métis Centre @ NAHO with regard to traditional knowledge; education is required as to what traditional knowledge means so that it is taken from the “ethereal” to the “real”;
- a paradigm shift to look at “Family Harmony” rather than the negative context of violence was suggested;
- facilitated workshops on family violence were held throughout BC with positive results;
- rampant exploitation of children and incest was commented on recognizing affects such as violence, suicide, “don’t talk/don’t tell” paradigm etc.; data collected could be used to generate additional attention on the topic;
- in Alberta there was a “protection of children involved in prostitution” Act, with a bill in the house to change it to “protection of sexually exploited children”;
- violence against women was acknowledged as a topic likely on the NAWS agenda;
- youth groups have expressed confusion relative to Métis identity and their differences from other Aboriginal people, and an interest in traditional knowledge;
- Elders were often forgotten; Métis seniors are experiencing considerable challenges and abuse.

Chair LeClair-Harding invited delegates to consider sharing papers had been developed as a result of workshops etc. Delegates commented on various work, papers and published reports that could be shared.

### **3.5 New Business (including resolutions)**

No new business was presented.

## **ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED**

The Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly held March 31-April 1, 2007 adjourned on Day 1 – March 31, 2007 at 2:00 p.m., and set the time to reconvene on Day 2 – April 1, 2007 at 8:30 a.m.

## **DAY 2 – APRIL 1, 2007**

## **ASSEMBLY RECONVENED**

Chair Michelle LeClair-Harding reconvened the Assembly at 9:10 a.m. Senator Margaret Penner offered an Opening Prayer.

### **4 GUEST SPEAKERS**

#### **4.1 Métis National Council President Clément Chartier**

Métis National Council (MNC) President Clément Chartier offered greetings to Elders, Senators, fellow Métis leaders recognizing that all present belonged to the Métis Nation. He emphasized the importance of everyone in the nation having voice and a forum to express; and acknowledged that Rosemarie McPherson and Jennifer Brown had a voice at the table of the Board of Governors on behalf of women and youth.

MNC President Chartier indicated that it was helpful when the courts of the land (i.e. *Powley*) reaffirm who the Métis are. He added that only a people could determine their own criteria to state who are its citizens; and the Supreme Court of Canada accepted that and left it open. With respect to the geographic traditional homeland and language of the Métis, the President expressed that all Métis citizens had a role to preserve and protect. He commented on the importance of the women’s voice, noting: “A Nation is not dead as long as the heart beats in the women.”



The Assembly was apprised that a priority was placed on a Métis-specific approach to move forward initiatives discussed within the Kelowna Accord. A MNC/Canada Working Group was formed to consider ways to advance the Métis agenda. Post-*Powley* resources used towards registering Métis citizens were extended for a one-year period, with some reductions in funding in areas of research. MNC President Chartier indicated that elders were being interviewed to capture and preserve the past, and that the Métis Archival Project was underway.

While a private Member's Bill for implementation of the Kelowna Accord was forwarded to the Senate, at present there was no legal binding of the government to action the items. MNC President Chartier encouraged women and their families to write to the government to express the importance of moving these items forward.

Existing Aboriginal and treaty rights recognized under Section 35 were referenced as a fall back if the right of self-determination was not successful. Programs and services at the federal level have been missed by Métis as a result of the government view that Métis were a provincial responsibility under Section 91.24. Many court cases had been fought to defend Métis harvesters, and included cultural aspects telling the Métis story of preserving the past and protecting the future. The President referenced various court cases in progress, and advised that a decision on the *MMF v. Canada* land claim was anticipated in 2007.

MNC President Chartier acknowledged that relationships were important throughout the Métis Nation, to overcome obstacles. He added that a meeting was held recently with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) leadership. The President emphasized the importance of the women's organizations being involved to ensure the specific voices were heard and recognized formally. Additionally, recognition of the youth components of each organization was important. A conference on the well-being of the Métis child was anticipated; and it was hoped that the organizational committee would meet in the near future to finalize arrangements.

The Métis Archival Project (MAP) launch and symposium to occur May 4-5, 2007 was announced. Declarations of the Manitoba Act, Scrip applied for, and census information was collected with some technology available to allow visitors to reference their own family tree.

President Chartier thanked the WMN for the opportunity to present an update on behalf of the MNC, adding that the MNC was the collective voice for the Métis people to continue to work towards a great future. He acknowledged that the WMN continue to play a significant role in advancing the Métis agenda.

WMN National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson thanked MNC President Chartier for his words, and for his advocacy and support for the WMN to ensure the WMN portfolio holders and experts continued to be invited to relevant meetings. She further expressed a happy birthday to Stephanie McPherson and the young granddaughter of Sylvia Johnson.

## **5. STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP**

Wenda Watteyne expressed appreciation for the opportunity to play a role in assisting the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) in preparing for the National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS) including policy development. In terms of the Capacity Development Workplan there was a commitment to develop a 3-5 year plan; and some planning was needed for the annual workplan as well as in advance of the NAWS.

## 5.1 National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS)

The Assembly was apprised that the National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS) was planned June 20-22, 2007 in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, co-hosted by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) priorities had been brought forwarded to the NAWS planning committee; and the deadline of May 15, 2007 for policy paper development was recognized. The NAWS was planned as a multi-jurisdictional event with the provinces at the table; in addition to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Canadian Heritage and Health Canada, and Aboriginal organizations. A sum of \$35,000-\$50,000 was notionally approved for participation by Métis women's groups and 10 seats at the NAWS were available for WMN representatives.

Ms. Watteyne indicated that the NAWS was a one-time opportunity. As such, there was need to have a clear and focused agenda; with a priority placed on developing an action and implementation plan. Limited time to prepare for the NAWS was acknowledged, with regional buy-in necessary. Following the NAWS, validation of the action and implementation plan could be sought from the communities. The importance of goals and markers with indicators to measure progress was emphasized, with consideration to data collection as a potential asset towards own-source revenue.

A summary of policies developed for the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable process was referenced, noting that key background information on Métis rights, governance and structure would be included in the policy papers developed for the NAWS. Four priority areas were previously identified by the WMN: preservation and protection of traditional knowledge; health; education; and family violence. Development of a database of Métis women with expertise in various areas, training and development, and other initiatives were recognized as priorities previously articulated.

A broad visioning exercise was undertaken, and Ms. Watteyne posed the following questions:

- What are the issues you want to see addressed?
- From a regional perspective, what are your priorities?
- What is going on in the communities now (i.e. BC Family Violence workshops; Royal Commission; sexual exploitation; report presented to International Crime Prevention Conference; petition; legislation in Alberta) outcomes, reports and areas where women are taking action?
- What does community well-being mean to you?
- In a perfect world where would you see yourself in 10 years?

The following items would be informed by the discussion: Workplan for 2007-2008; Annual Capacity Workplan; development of a 3-5 year Business Plan; and plan and policies for presentation at the NAWS.

In discussion, the following comments were offered by delegates:

- "Who are the Métis?"; traditional knowledge is part of it recognizing that the Métis have a unique identity as a people;
- refrain from using the term "Aboriginal", and use the term "Métis";
- development of curriculum or partnering with a university to have a Department of Métis Culture and Métis Knowledge was suggested, with a means to do research and information

- gathering so stories are not lost (i.e. knowledge of medicines and hunting) and with a Métis Women's Studies curriculum within the Department;
- knowledge from elders should be owned; a grant could be secured to develop cultural knowledge (i.e. rat root, sage – why it is used and where it is harvested);
  - tenured university professors in the Department of Indigenous Knowledge are not academics, but rather are men and women that studied with an Elder;
  - part of the long term goal is becoming autonomous and not defined by the outside world, with less inner conflict as a result of shame; healing in the present and preparing for the future is important for Métis women;
  - Métis are in the middle and not recognized; younger people should be educated with the language; be visible and heard to enable overcoming the shame and stereotypes;
  - women are the catalysts to move on and be seen – “I am Métis” – wear it on our foreheads – on our persons (we have our culture, we have our traditions – spoken in Michif);
  - keep knowledge in order to end the exploitation;
  - traditional knowledge about medicines came from our grandmothers who were Indian; we need to recognize that and honor that Indian grandmother;
  - denial and the shame must be considered; we have denied who we are many times for convenience and expedience;
  - teach Métis stories so children do not deny who they are and youth are not left behind;
  - women in the communities throughout the region want to belong to the larger organization;
  - part of the NAWS discussions should include young women's (15-20) issues that are significant to Métis; young women need to be mentored as leaders of the future;
  - suggestion to start a young women's group to bring in representatives of each province/region and groom them for greater participation at the WMN table;
  - consider developing archives so that control can be kept by Métis;
  - oral history should be documented (elders would talk on a one-to-one basis);
  - medicines are important and should be protected, and the use should be respectful;
  - “Road Allowance” Métis, lost their identity upon moving to the city as a result of the pressures of discrimination;
  - a copy of Audrey Poitras speech from March 31, 2007 should be archived and a copy provided to all delegates;
  - start planning now for youth and children by having some form of communication; send newsletters/newspapers to women and have key people in areas to convey information through forums in remote areas (i.e. get computers in the north; advertising of forums to encourage women to attend and bring their children, etc.);
  - in order to be true leaders we need to deal with our own healing, share stories, and trust one another, work with each other to create safe places for ourselves and our children and bring that home to our children within our communities;
  - new Federal Species at Risk Act was referenced – recognizing intergenerational impacts for children and grandchildren – put this on the agenda for NAWS – loss of species equals the loss of Aboriginal rights, and responsibilities to the future and children.

### **Health Break**

The Assembly recessed at 10:30 a.m. and resumed at 11:08 a.m.

Ms. Joanna Seraphim, indicated that she was a student in post-secondary studies and recognized that in previous years Métis-specific curriculum was requested, but the government declined and stated that First Nations studies were more relevant.

Five phrases in the Michif language were highlighted on the back of the Assembly delegate name cards for the women to practice and share.

The Assembly was informed that gifts presented to the women during the March 31, 2007 evening session were not funded through WMN resources, but rather were provided as personal gifts from the WMN Board members. Additionally, on behalf of the BC Women, Rose Bortolon made a presentation to WMN Board members, Duane Morrisseau, Andrea Still and Victoria Pruden in appreciation for their hard work on behalf of the WMN.

Wenda Watteyne, Facilitator, focused attention on the production of an action plan and requested ideas on: how the objectives should be undertaken; who would do it; timeframe (short, medium, long term goal) with consideration to the four priority areas: traditional knowledge, health, education and family violence.

Points in the ensuing discussion included:

- on the topic of shame, the government has positioned the Métis as non-existent;
- resources are needed to travel; reach people and restore identity to the young people by visiting the communities/grass roots level and being visible;
- emphasize the importance of the Métis language by speaking it;
- as part of a 10 year goal: record some spiritual songs so the spirituality does not get lost; it is easier to teach if you are singing the language;
- focus on the teachings of who the Métis are in order to turn the feelings of shame around and diminish the racism that is felt as a result of the shame and accompanying negative energy;
- use different positive words rather than talk about family violence – which may attract it;
- we cannot rely on schools to do it for us so we need to educate the children and youth;
- some regions may demonstrate support of male counterparts; there needs to be some recognition of the WMN provincial affiliates – regional politicians must recognize this; it can come from the MNC to the regional affiliates;
- schools are attempting to bring culture into the curriculum so the school was more responsive to Aboriginal children; significant efforts may be undertaken with little progress noted (other than hot lunch program);
- the education system, with all of the bureaucracies, are not responsible to teach culture, but the women can be responsible for this at home;
- “Melanie’s bag of tricks” (i.e. flags, stories and Métis cultural items) was commented on, noting schools request presentations on Métis culture;
- some school curriculum relates to Aboriginal peoples of Canada; identification of the Métis and their contribution to the development of Canada can be presented by guest speakers in the classroom bringing pride to the Métis children in the class, and awareness of Métis among other children who will be the leaders of the future;
- “healing and awareness” captures all of the four priorities;
- with regard to the Métis-specific Aboriginal Head Start programs – the women should be strong with Health Canada with regard to the schools being closed in urban centres; culture was taught along with counting and singing in Cree and Michif;
- something should be raised about survivors of orphanages at the NAWS (as Métis they could not go into residential schools);
- stories shared with children and grandchildren do not always fall on deaf ears;
- having Women’s voices heard is a priority;
- suggestion that a person be appointed to the Citizen’s Appeal Panels for Social Services;
- other community volunteer opportunities can contribute to furthering the awareness of what it means to be Métis;

- Cree lessons taped by relatives have been successful in teaching children their language;
- four issues that Métis children face are: abandonment, abuse, isolation and identity;
- giving children a traditional name was suggested;
- artists and visionaries bring people their freedom, and there are many around the table;
- arms length of politicians should mean within reach when needed;
- life in a one room house on a road allowance, with braided rugs, mud floor cleaning with a goose wing, and caring for family by mother (i.e. throwing representative of residential school out) was referenced relative to teaching children to have a strong identity (land was lost, family members lost to Indian schools, etc. but identity will not be lost!);
- energy through holding hands around the table was appreciated;
- NAWS agenda item suggested: environment – species at risk with a policy paper developed;
- sharing of ideas toward reclaiming language and heritage was emphasized (i.e. cultural baskets and elders in schools with PowerPoint presentations);
- a proposal was developed for the Aboriginal Education School Board Advisory Committee so Métis crafts and cultural items can be shown to all students – funding was received to make baskets and presentations for 15 BC schools (including games for 3-5 year olds);
- suicide topics should be included; family violence can lead to suicide and people need to be educated in order to prevent this;
- partnering with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami or the Assembly of First Nations was suggested towards preserving “intellectual property rights”; protect what was given to Métis people (by not passing on traditional medicines);
- there are few teachers to teach the Aboriginal cultural studies as it really happened;
- curriculum has been rewritten to show the Aboriginal perspective and present Métis and others in a positive light;
- digital resources, teacher’s manuals, and summer institutes have been developed to assist the mainstream teachers in telling a true story;
- unity, respect and support for one another should be further encouraged; regions are different and there are diverse ways of doing things but a united voice should be heard by the women without getting too involved in the politics;
- payment to residential school survivors discussed in the media was commented on noting that Métis women should speak about the issue and support their brothers and sisters.

### **Health Break**

The Assembly recessed at 12:16 p.m. and resumed at 1:33 p.m.

The Assembly was reminded that the comments provided by the women would be included in strategizing done by the WMN Board.

Discussion resumed regarding strategic planning ideas with the following comments offered:

- communications position papers and statements prepared for the NAWS regarding the four main issues could be combined in a package to take out to people with concise key messages;
- economic development and women’s economic security are tied to health and healthy families and keeping families violence free;
- youth identity re-enforcement could be focused on through concentrated 21-day cultural camps including elders, with topics of language, traditional knowledge, practical skills, history, cooking/recipes and bringing differences to the table to identify similarities;
- everyone can make a “Melanie’s bag of tricks” starting with items provided to delegates such as the “Riel’s Honor” video, “The Trial of Louis Riel” book etc.;

- Métis Legacy II is a book with traditional stories, legends and examples of traditional beadwork done through Pemmican Publications as the publishing arm of the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF); negotiations are underway to put Métis Legacy I and II into the school curriculum;
- economic development for Métis women and Métis people is a priority; if a Métis woman was prepared to go on social assistance to support her family then she was far less apt to tolerate abuse in the home;
- Canadian Heritage was approached for slippage money to do beading boxes at the Assembly;
- with regard to economic development, although resources could not be provided through Canadian Heritage for a cottage industry, they could be provided as seed money to build a grant program for Métis women across Canada (so women could borrow money from the fund to start their own cottage industry; potentially a stock of items could be developed for sale and marketing around the 2010 Olympics);
- KIVA – an organization that does micro-loans for Aboriginal people around the world – posts a profile on their website; contributions can be sourced internationally;
- opportunities are available; there is some potential for sale of real Aboriginal artwork/crafts around the 2010 Olympics (i.e. home-tanned beaver hides mounted on willow boughs);
- transportation is one of the initial industries started by the Métis in Canada; economic opportunities are available in this industry;
- suggestion that the Women’s leaders negotiate with governments (regionally and provincially) to sit on health authorities, commissions and boards; and
- suggestion that the women consider Métis role models and focus on the positive things at the NAWS to celebrate the work done by good people.

Ms. Watteyne advised that the WMN commentary would feed into policy papers due mid-May 2007, and for development of an implementation plan. Additionally, she would follow up in the regions. She noted that concern was expressed relative to the Métis “getting swallowed up with First Nations and Inuit agendas”; and she agreed to follow up on this together with Andrea Still.

## 6. CLOSING CEREMONIES

Delegates expressed their appreciation for the Women of the Métis Nation (WMN) Annual General Assembly, noting the sentiment of being honored to be present with all of the beautiful, intelligent Métis women around the table. Senator Margaret Penner was thanked for her participation and prayers.

WMN National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson acknowledged Senator Penner and all women present for their participation and ownership of the WMN with the goal of getting stronger. She wished all delegates a safe trip home.

**CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER**

The Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly held March 31 – April 1, 2007 concluded on Day 2 – April 1, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. Senator Margaret Penner offered a Closing Prayer.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly held March 31 – April 1, 2007, and incorporates any and all corrections made at the time of adoption.

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Rosemarie McPherson, National Spokesperson

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Michelle LeClair Harding, Chair

- Appendix A: List of Voting Delegates, Alternates and Guests Present
- Appendix B: List of Acronyms
- Appendix C: List of Motions

**MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL  
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**March 31-April 1, 2007**

**Appendix A  
Listing of Voting Delegates, Alternates and Guests present**

<p><b>British Columbia</b> Toni Appleby Kim Bayer Rose Bortolon Tanya Davoren Annette Maurice Peggy Olanski Margaret Penner, Elder Victoria Pruden Samantha Sainsregret</p>	<p><b>Alberta</b> Lorelei Chernow Sue Dahlseide Marge Friedel, Elder Yvonne Giroux Sylvia Johnson Christie Ladacuer, Youth Gloria Laird Melanie Omeniho Sheena Phillips Liz Shapley</p>	<p><b>Saskatchewan</b> Lilliane Aubichon Jackquie Bouvier Wanda Bouvier Senator Nora Cummings, Elder Nelda Laliberte Stella Laliberte Eva Pritchett Gail Roy Nancy Roy Crystal Senger</p>
<p><b>Manitoba</b> Brandy Bulycz, Youth Rita Cullen, Elder Roxanne Goodon Jeanette Johnson Ella Mayer Stephanie McPherson, Youth Yvonne Mercredi Muriel Parker Margie Ranville Lucille Thompson</p>	<p><b>Ontario</b> Rosalyn Calder Cindy Gaudette Carmen Gravel Alison Kroft Sharon McBride Shirley Lynn Pantousou Evelyne Powley Jennifer Sebe Pauline Sulner Senator Audrey Vallee</p>	

<p><b>Non-Voting Delegates/Guests</b> Stephanie Albiston, BCYMYC, MNBC Jennifer Brown, Métis National Youth Advisory Council President Clément Chartier, President, MNC Joanne Dante, BC Bruce Dumont, President, MNBC Michelle LeClair Harding, Chair Wayne Lord, Senior Advisor, OFI Rosemarie McPherson, National Spokesperson Duanne Morriseau, MNC</p>	<p>Audrey Poitras, President, MNA Patricia Russell, Consultant Joanna Seraphim, Guest (student) Andrea Still, Special Initiatives Manager, MNC Tresley Tourond, BCUMYC, MNBC Zoran Vidic, Communications Director, MNC Wenda Watteyne, Facilitator Lynne Widdows, Aboriginal Program Officer, Canadian Heritage – BC/Yukon</p>
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**MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL  
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
March 31-April 1, 2007**

**Appendix B  
List of Acronyms**

AFN	Assembly of First Nations
AGA	Annual General Assembly
APPD	Aboriginal Peoples' Program Directorate
BOG	Board of Governors
CAP	Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
ITK	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
KIVA	Kiva Microloans (Kiva is a Swahili word meaning "agreement" or "unity")
MCGC	Métis Centre Governing Committee
MMF	Manitoba Métis Federation
MNA	Métis Nation of Alberta
MNBC	Métis Nation British Columbia
MNC	Métis National Council
MN-S	Métis Nation Saskatchewan
MNO	Métis Nation of Ontario
NAHO	National Aboriginal Health Organization
NAWS	National Aboriginal Women's Summit
NWAC	Native Women's Association of Canada
OFI	Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
PCH	Department of Canadian Heritage
RFA	Request for Action
WMN	Women of the Métis Nation

**MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL  
WOMEN OF THE MÉTIS NATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
March 31-April 1, 2007**

**Appendix C  
List of Motions**

**It was MOVED (Ella Mayer, MB) and SECONDED (Jackquie Bouvier, SK)**

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

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 1-3-31-07)**

**It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Rose Bortolon, BC)**

That the Agenda for the Women of the Métis Nation Annual General Assembly scheduled March 31-April 1, 2007, be accepted as presented.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 2-3-31-07)**

**It was MOVED (Lucille Thompson, MB) and SECONDED (Sharon McBride, ON)**

That the Minutes of the Women of the Métis Nation 2006 Annual General Assembly held March 31, 2006 be adopted with amendment to the Listing of delegates to correct the spelling of delegates: Brandy Bulycz, Eva Pritchett, Doreen Bergum, and Carmen Gravel.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 3-3-31-07)**

**It was MOVED (Sharon McBride, ON) and SECONDED (Roxanne Goodon, MB)**

That the Métis National Council Secretariat Inc. Statement of Revenue and Expenditures for 29A – INAC – Women of the Métis Nation for the period April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006, (Unaudited); and for the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 (Unaudited) be accepted as presented.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 4-3-31-07)**

**It was MOVED (Melanie Omeniho, AB) and SECONDED (Sharon McBride, ON),**

That the verbal report by Women of the Métis Nation National Spokesperson Rosemarie McPherson be accepted.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Motion: 5-3-31-07)**