On behalf of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation (LFMO), I would like to thank you for your continued support of our work. As one of our priorities to improve communications, we welcome you to the very first issue of LFMO's newsletter. We will update those whose interests we represent, governing members, our provincial organizations and our partners on the work we have been doing and our vision for the future. We look forward to creating the changes that we envision together.

This past year has been one of rapid change and unusual circumstances. Despite having to take a different approach to our work, we are well on our way to completing all of the objectives set forth for 2020-21. On the heels of our Second Annual Women's Forum, we re-evaluated our workplans based on your feedback and participation. We heard that communication is very important, and alongside our increased social media presence and updated website, we look forward to bringing you newsletters to continually update you on the status of our work and projects.

Our ongoing work has led us to foster significant relationships with government partners, national Indigenous women's organizations, as well as rights-based organizations to ensure that the topics concerning Métis women are kept at the forefront and that Métis women are represented at these tables.

We will be launching some exciting initiatives in the coming months and we look forward to creating more environments where Métis women can GET LOUD.

Melanie Omeniho
President
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak
COVID-19 has impacted all of us and understandably, many of us have felt overwhelmed. In addition to sending out a limited supply of thermometers and hand sanitizers, LFMO launched some exciting projects to help deal with the stress and uncertainty.

**Grandmother Ribbon Campaign**
Thanks to the vision and insight of our Métis sister Brenda White from Prince Alberta, SK, we launched the hugely successful Grandmother Ribbon campaign to share the message that there is light at the end of the reality we are currently experiencing due to COVID-19. Time will pass and will make way for better, brighter days when we can join again as strong Métis women, kinship networks and communities.

We are sending out purple Grandmother Ribbons and encourage you and your loved ones to hang them in your windows, on your front lawn or around your neighbourhood and online. We have sent out almost 2,500 ribbons that have reached Métis families as far away as Australia!

Purple is the healing colour of our grandmothers. Combining the calm stability of blue and the fiery passion associated with red, purple is a sacred colour that represents spirituality, justice and royalty. One of the most expensive colours as dye, throughout history purple has been almost exclusively worn by revered and sacred figures and so carries the message of ceremony and tradition. Purple both calms and stimulates the body, so that we may heal and self-reflect at the same time to create a balance of harmony and awareness. Email info@metiswomen.org for your purple ribbon, share it on social media and tag us!

**Métis Graduate Recognition Project**
Many high school graduation ceremonies were cancelled last year due to the pandemic; in response, LFMO launched a Motherland-wide initiative to recognize the hard work of these Métis grads and to help them celebrate with their families and close friends.

LFMO will make a social media announcement this month to gather names for this year's Métis high school graduates so that their accomplishments can be celebrated too.

If you already know a Métis high school graduate and you would like to nominate them to receive a gift from us, please email graduates@metiswomen.org!
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO) has been the lead on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) file on behalf of and through the confirmation of the Métis Nation and its governing members even prior to the inception of the National Inquiry process.

On June 29, 2019, we released a report entitled “Métis Perspectives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People” through various engagement opportunities, community feedback, Métis subject matter experts and most importantly with the input of Métis families and survivors. Our report identified 62 Métis-specific Calls for Miskotahâ (change) that are intended to bring change to the lives of Métis women, girls, LGBTQ2S+ people and their families. A copy of that report is available here. What is clearly evident is that the framework must be a whole of government approach that will activate lasting systemic change.

Last fall, the Government of Canada approached us to engage across the Métis Nation to express Métis perspectives on the development of a framework for a National Action Plan. We reached out to governing members as well as the Métis National Council to recommend members of a Framework Committee, as well as a youth member and Elders, to review guiding questions for engagement sessions and to develop a document outlining Métis perspectives on the framework.

In light of our current reality with COVID-19, face-to-face engagements did not proceed as originally planned. Beyond an engagement session held at LFMO’s Women’s Forum in March 2020, we have hosted 15 sessions across the Motherland via online meeting software. To date, we have engaged with over 300 people. The interim report on our Implementation Framework is available HERE.

What’s Next
LFMO is actively engaged in the development of the National Action Plan to end Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. Along with federal, provincial, and territorial governments, we participate on the Core Working Group and have representatives on other sub-working groups such as Data, Urban, Federal and the Family and Survivor’s Circle.

LFMO and the technical working group are also preparing a specific Métis chapter which will provide guidelines to the implementation of the 62 Calls to Miskotahâ in the Métis Perspective of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA report as well as the 29 Métis-specific Calls for Justice as outlined in the report of the National Inquiry. This draft will be completed in early May 2021.

We will also continue to schedule bilateral meetings with the Métis Nation governing members and the Métis National Council.
Our Project Updates

Housing Experiences of Métis Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Folks
Following amazing engagement at our Women's Forum in Spring 2020 on the housing experiences of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks, LFMO also completed a literature review of available Métis-specific housing research and data. Soon we will be hosting a national engagement session to keep the conversation going and to hear especially about the impacts of the pandemic on housing situations for Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks and their families. Please stay tuned on our social media pages so we can hear your input!

Commemoration of Missing and Murdered Métis Women and Girls
LFMO's Grandmother's Wisdom Circle, comprised of strong Métis matriarchs and knowledge keepers from across the Motherland, has guided the creation of a "Kiyas Kiskisowin Oma" (Remembering) Toolkit to honour survivors, families and those we have lost. Our Grandmother's Wisdom Circle has also overseen the creation of a new sash to honour, comfort and encourage survivors and families during their time of healing.

Métis Women's Health
LFMO just began a five-year project this year to expand LFMO's health policy capacity! Recently, we hosted an engagement session to better understand Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks' experiences of racism in healthcare settings and just last month, we also hosted a health and wellness workshop for Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks to gather together and to hear from practitioners and presenters.

Forced and Coerced Sterilization
LFMO has also been working hard to create video shorts to help ensure Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks know their rights when at the doctor's, hospital or emergency room. Thanks to fantastic input at our Women's Forum, we were able to develop and launch our "Kokum Chat" video. Watch it here as Kokum Linda and Kokum Loretta talk about the rights of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks across the Motherland, informed consent and their own experiences with forced and coerced sterilization. Please also check out our policy paper on forced and coerced sterilization.

Gender-Based Violence Toolkit
Continuing our work to create safer conditions for Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks, LFMO has been building a trauma-informed gender-based violence (GBV) toolkit for service providers across the Homeland to use when helping Métis clients fleeing domestic violence. Just recently, we completed our evaluation framework after finishing our research and data collection stage. Right now, we are developing the plans for our community consultations, where we will pilot test our toolkit!

Violence Prevention Project to Engage Métis Women on Shelter Needs
We recently began a project to pilot a sustainable Métis-led second stage transitional housing service. Following the first year of engagement to better understand the shelter needs of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks, LFMO will help develop the pilot shelter and its Métis-specific programs, to ultimately create a best practice model and guide for existing shelter service providers when assisting Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks.
Métis-Specific Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC)
LFMO has two projects focused on Métis ELCC. As part of our "Building Pathways" project, we have been engaging with Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks on Métis ELCC best practices, gaps and priorities so that the federal government's policies better represent Métis communities. As part of our "Gaining Knowledge" project, LFMO has been able to participate at major tables related to ELCC and to provide advice to the federal government on its programs and policies. Stay tuned for our survey, launching soon, so that we can hear from you about your ELCC experiences and how the pandemic has impacted you and your family.

Youth Engagement and Gender Equality
Youth voices are so important and they are especially important in all the work we do. As part of our Youth Gender Equality project, we are working to create more space for youth engagement among young Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. Soon we will launch an online engagement session geared to youth to better understand issues affecting them, so stay tuned!

Climate Change Impacts and Métis Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Folks
Early this year, LFMO started a project, "Mothers of the Land, Water and Skies", to engage with Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks on climate change impacts and their own experiences, concerns and recommendations. In working to amplify Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA folks’ voices and inform federal policy addressing climate change impacts, we will also be hosting an engagement session this summer. Stay tuned for more details!

Métis Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People and the Economy
So many Métis women's and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks' jobs have been impacted because of the pandemic. Just last month, LFMO hosted an engagement session to further talk about this, as well as short-term contract work (the "Gig Economy") and the Right to Disconnect for those who have found themselves working from home. We just recently submitted our Final Report to Employment and Social Development Canada to talk about the economic realities and opportunities of Métis women’s and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks and our policy recommendations to the federal government.

ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL AGREEMENT

As part of LFMO’s relationship with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), LFMO has an Engagement Protocol Agreement (EPA) in place. This agreement supports our engagement, research and policy development.

This means working together with ESDC and Métis communities to establish priorities, nurture our relationships and to inform ESDC’s policies, programs and services so that they align with the needs of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks.

LFMO has also been able to refer this EPA as we create new relationships with ESDC; in the development of new projects, the EPA has been a mechanism to ensure LFMO's autonomy over its work. It is also a flexible vehicle for ESDC to flow additional engagement funding to LFMO, such as for our Early Learning and Child Care project.
Do you know a Métis woman or 2SLGBTQQIA+ person you would like to lift up and celebrate? Does your mom, kokom, auntie or friend need a shout-out because of how wonderful they are?

One of LFMO’s ongoing projects is our She is Indigenous campaign, an online social media awareness campaign that celebrates the strengths and contributions of Métis, First Nations and Inuit women across the country. Each week, we share the stories of three incredible Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA people - community members, teachers, mothers, grandmothers, doctors, artists, authors, postal service employees, nurses and more, and we would love to share your story!

We developed the campaign in partnership with national and provincial Indigenous organizations and with funding from the Government of Ontario. Launched in June 2019, this campaign has continued because of the tremendous amount Indigenous women and the value, joy, strength and light they bring to everyone around them.

Here is Shani. Coming from a family with deep Métis roots and a history advocating for Indigenous rights and services, Shani is helping pave the road for the future generations of Indigenous people in Alberta – including her kids.

If you would like to be featured or if you know an Indigenous women you would like to celebrate, please reach out to us on our social media (@SheIsIndigenous) or by emailing sheisindigenous@gmail.com! Follow us for their incredible stories!
REACHING IN AND REACHING OUT

LFMO works tirelessly to engage at all levels of government and civil society to ensure the expressed needs and concerns of Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks across the Motherland are always seen as a priority. We are committed to amplifying the voices of grassroots Metis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks across the Motherland.

Office of Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime and in Partnership with Reconciliation Canada Indigenous Circle
As part of this work, LFMO participates alongside national level Indigenous organizations and representative bodies to amplify Métis women's and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks' experiences of crime. This Circle works on the national response and action to the MMIWG Calls for Justice as well as other justice-related challenges.

Indigenous Women’s Advisory Circle on Indigenous Women's Well-Being
This committee enables the ongoing and participatory forum to advise departments more broadly on current and emerging issues within the social determinants of health, with a particular focus on gender. Recently, LFMO became Co-Chairs.

Métis Housing Technical Working Group
We also regularly participate in a Housing Technical Working Group with the governing members, the Métis National Council, Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation to understand the housing needs, realities and priorities of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. As part of this work, we are also part of a data sub-working group to establish a foundation for data gathering related to housing across the Motherland.

Métis Nation Senior Officials
Along with the Métis National Council and governing members, we actively contribute to discussions impacting the Métis Nation to provide a gender-based analysis and Métis women's perspectives on priority areas determined through the permanent bilateral mechanism on a Nation-to-Nation basis between the Métis Nation and Canada.

WAGE Ministerial Advisory Council
As part of this council, LFMO participates in the exchange of views, experiences promising practices and research on issues related to GBV by providing evidence informed advice on current and emerging issues, challenges and opportunities related to preventing and addressed GBV.

WAGE Indigenous Women's Circle
LFMO regularly meets with other National Indigenous Women’s Organizations to provide strategic guidance and expertise to inform federal efforts to address the systemic inequalities that Indigenous women experience, particularly related to issues of gender-based violence, economic insecurity and Indigenous leadership.
LFMO looks forward to announcing an exciting new project geared towards Métis youth leadership skills and employment development. Keep watching to find out what it is and how you can get involved!

AND!

Check out our social media channels for upcoming engagement opportunities in the following areas in the coming months! We want to hear from you about...

- Housing Experiences of Métis Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Folks and Families
- Métis Early Learning and Child Care Quality Improvement
- Métis Women’s Environment and Climate Change Concerns and Experiences
- Gender-Based Violence National Action Plan engagement
- LFMO's Gender-Based Violence Toolkit community consultations
- Understanding the shelter needs of Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks

FOLLOW US!

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