President's Message

As we enter into a new season, the air has begun to cool and the leaves have begun to change and we are left with a feeling of renewal upon us. This past summer was one full of reflection, leaving us with the need for space and time to heal and begin moving forward.

However, before this healing can begin, it is necessary to first mourn the young lives that were taken and that went unacknowledged until this past May, with the first gravesite discovered on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. Our hearts, thoughts, and prayers are with the families and communities still seeking closure for this unnecessary and horrific loss. As the number of unmarked graves continues to rise, we will continue to stand in solidarity with Métis, First Nations and Inuit people in demanding answers and justice for these children.

So much has changed in so little time this past year, both within and outside our organization. The upcoming federal election offers the opportunity to exercise a very important human right and to vote to enact the changes Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks so rightly deserve at a policy level. Although some positive changes have been seen recently, including the prioritization of Métis women and girls with the Government of Canada through the Canada – Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Declaration, and Weaving Miskotahî initiative, it is important that we take the time to be kind to ourselves, to recharge with this season of renewal and most importantly, to support each other in these unprecedented times.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming engagements,

Melanie Omeniho
President
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation

The Métis Nation working group completed Weaving Miskotahâ following the memorandum signed on August 9th, 2021. As a living document, Weaving Miskotahâ is to be adjusted as new needs emerge in order to meet all of the needs of Métis people across the Motherland by seeking fair and equitable treatment, support and services, with significant policy and systemic change. Ultimately, we are accountable to the citizens of the Métis Nation and our process reflects our responsibility to inclusivity and co-development throughout all phases of our work.

LFMO Signs Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Canada

On August 9, 2021, President Melanie Omeniho and the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, signed the Canada – Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Declaration. This historic declaration between the Government of Canada and the national organization representing women of the Métis Nation commits the parties to work together to advance the priorities of Métis Nation women and girls.

This agreement will help to formalize the existing relationship with LFMO and to coordinate an approach to ensuring the safety and well-being of Métis Nation women and girls by identifying policy priority areas with federal departments specific to their needs. The declaration identifies the need for an intersectional and culturally informed gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) lens to advance these priorities.

This work undertaken through the declaration would be complementary to the work undertaken to implement the 2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan. LFMO also added their contribution, titled Weaving Miskotahâ, to the National Action Plan.

With the signing of the Canada – Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak Declaration, the Government of Canada and LFMO will continue to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship and work in partnership to address the many issues impacting Métis Nation women and girls.

A big thank you is necessary for all the wonderful work the Metis Nation Working Group, including technicians, from the Métis Nation Governing Members and the Métis National Council, along with other Métis subject matter experts, Elders and Knowledge Keepers. We thank each Métis Working Group member for their commitment in getting Weaving Miskotahâ finalized and officially handed over to Minister Bennett and the Government of Canada.
LFMO is proud to announce a new project, entitled “Reach for the Sky,” funded by the Government of Canada under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS) Program. This project will create space for Métis Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA folks to develop leadership potential and to expand their education and employment potentials. Through accredited learning opportunities, Reach for the Sky participants will gain knowledge about Métis women’s leadership roles from contemporary and historical contexts, with access to role models from our Métis communities while also developing skills to become leaders and mentors in their own right.

LFMO will work closely with our provincial women’s representative groups across the Métis Motherland and we will share information on our social media channels to identify participants, with the project focusing on three participant groups: high school youth, post-secondary students and young parents, so stay tuned!

Show Your Pride!

This past June, LFMO hosted the first of many “Show Your Pride” sessions, where we invited members of the Métis 2SLGBTQQIA+ community to come together as part of our ongoing work to help share the voices of gender diverse Métis folks in our advocacy work.

With such an appetite for this work, LFMO looks forward to the opportunities to continue the conversation. Join us Thursday, September 23 for our next meeting!

Please email tamsinf@metiswomen.org for more information.

Federal Election To Be Held September 20

Turning to the upcoming federal election, which will take place on Monday, September 20, remember to make your voice count!

Gender equality means women’s democratic leadership and participation at all levels. Exercise your right to vote and make a conscious decision to support candidates and parties committed to ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ persons. For more information, the Métis National Council has released a summary of the three main parties’ platforms.

Women of the Métis Nation actively support violence-free campaigning that upholds the safety and security of all women and children. On September 20, make a conscious decision to vote and vote with your conscience!
**LFMO's Youth Network**

At the end of August, LFMO held its inaugural Youth Network meeting to bring together the voices, perspective and wisdom that Métis youth hold across the Métis Motherland. With special thanks to Cassidy Caron, a powerful Métis youth voice who has helped lead this work, LFMO is working hard to ensure youth input on all of our projects.

Email cassidycaron@gmail.com to join us for our next meeting this coming November!

**Project Updates**

**Housing Experiences of Métis Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Folks**

This summer, LFMO hosted an engagement session to better understand the housing needs and experiences of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. Topics included the pandemic’s effects on housing situations; affordability and accessibility, especially for those with disabilities, mobility issues, those with young children and students’ housing experiences. We just launched our online survey to continue this engagement and research! Complete the survey for your chance to win a gift of thanks from LFMO.

**Feminist Response and Recovery Fund**

LFMO was announced as one of 237 projects that are set to receive funding through the Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE). With this funding, LFMO will help create further avenues for safety for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks through a Homeland-wide application of a Métis-specific Culturally Competent Gender-Based Analysis + (CCGBA+) tool. As part of this project, LFMO will also produce an online training program, as well as a number of digital shorts, developed closely alongside Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks.

**Métis Women’s Leadership Initiative**

Towards the end of this summer, LFMO received an initial investment from WAGE to develop Métis Women’s Leadership initiatives to strengthen and support Métis Women in their leadership goals and opportunities, so stay tuned for more updates on our work!

**Staff Updates**

**Janine Stingel**  
Senior Research Advisor

Janine Stingel is a Senior Research Advisor with LFMO. When Janine writes, she paints with words. Always thoughtful and eloquent, she holds a Ph.D. in History from McGill University and is the author of Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit and the Jewish Response (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000). Janine is a proud descendant of the Bobtail Métis in southern Alberta and has worked in Indigenous policy issues for over 20 years.

**Tamsin Fitzgerald**  
Director of Gender Equality Initiatives

Chances are you’ve seen Tamsin, either through e-mail or via the LFMO Facebook group! Tamsin is always ready with an encouraging smile or a helpful hand. Always a ray of positivity, she is the new Director of Gender Equality Initiatives, Tamsin works closely with the Department of Women and Gender Equality on the various projects that LFMO has with the department.

Our team is ever growing, and we are currently looking to hire a **Communications and PR Officer**!
LFMO's New Website

This month, LFMO launched its newly designed website! As one of our primary modes of communication, our new website aims to better reach Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks and to share information on issues that directly impact them in a more easily accessible way.

We encourage you to check out our website (www.metiswomen.org) so that you're continually in the loop on what we're up to over here at LFMO! We also encourage you to visit our new CONNECT WITH US page to share comments, suggestions, questions or anything else you'd like us to know.

Métis Matriarchs

Natalie Pepin from Edmonton, Alberta, knows that learning and sharing are intrinsically connected. A student at Harvard University, Natalie began to crave a life more rooted in the land, to her family and with those around her. Soon after she graduated, she went home to continue learning and from there, became inspired to help other people connect with arts, skills, stories, and traditional teachings.

This fall, she is hosting a series of Indigenous Culture workshops at Fort Edmonton Park Wednesday, with traditional stories and classes in birch bark basket making, traditional plant harvesting and jewellery making.

Tracie Léost, a Métis woman from St. Laurent, Manitoba, is making some big waves across the Métis Motherland and around the world. In 2015, she set off on a 115km run to raise funds for and awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada and just last fall, she launched Waanishka, with the goal of supporting other Indigenous youth in finding their culture.

She’s also recently been featured in a new series from the Olympics Channel, called “By Her Rules,” which tells the stories of five women from around the world who have used sports to create change.

Know a Métis woman or 2SLGBTQQIA+ person you want to celebrate? Email info@metiswomen.org and we'll feature their story!