President's Message

2021 certainly has been a year of stillness, but also one of great change, opportunity and brightness.

Here at Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, we want to offer our sincerest congratulations to Cassidy Caron, the newly elected President of the Métis National Council and the first ever Métis woman to hold this title. LFMO has enjoyed a wonderful working relationship with President Caron over the years, and we are extremely honoured and proud to continue this relationship as she steps into her new role.

Last month, LFMO - along with Indigenous people and communities across our nation - gathered in person, online and in spirit to recognize both the National Day of Reconciliation on September 30 and the Sisters in Spirit Vigil on October 4 to honour the lives of those lost and those who have never come home. We are here, we are listening, and we will continue to make your voices and your stories heard.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming engagements,

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

With roots in the Métis communities of Batoche and St. Louis, SK, President Caron has worked extensively in research and program initiatives by and for Indigenous peoples throughout Canada, extending from areas such as Indigenous justice and crime prevention, women’s safety and wellness, education, cultural safety through to Indigenous health and health promotion, reconciliation, youth programming, mental health, addictions and wellness, economic development, food security and Indigenous governance and beyond. President Caron's goal has continually been to explore and utilize innovative approaches to community development and Nation building, which together promote effective collaboration and understanding between Indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

President Caron brings to her new role a vast and vibrant political career. She served a four-year term as a provincially-elected representative of the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) and as the Provincial Métis Youth Chair and MNBC's Minister Responsible for Youth. Through her role with MNBC, President Caron supported the coordination, design, resourcing, implementation and evaluation of innovative and culturally-grounded engagement and leadership development opportunities for Métis youth within all levels of MNBC’s governance. Gaining valuable experience as an advocate for the Métis people working closely with cabinet ministers, senior officials and ministerial special representatives, President Caron also negotiated and designed Métis youth-specific funding provisions and policy considerations at the provincial and national levels.

President Caron is a passionate public speaker, talented facilitator and strong advocate. She works with the community at heart and is guided by her ancestors who led before her, while being mindful of the generations of leaders who will come behind her. She recognizes the power of bringing together individuals from all walks of life to work together in a spirit of collaboration and harmony, while respecting one another’s history, traditions, ways of knowing and being, to co-create a positive, healthy and beneficial pathway forward for all.

"I wholeheartedly applaud and congratulate Cassidy Caron on her election on November 30th. We have enjoyed a longstanding relationship with President Caron through her close work with Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak. She has chaired our assemblies, served on our Métis Nation Working Group on MMIWG2S, and has led National Métis Youth work with LFMO. She is an amazing Métis Woman, and will serve the Métis Nation with a dynamic and innovative approach to leadership within our Nation."

- Melanie Omeniho, LFMO President
On September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, LFMO staff took the day to reflect, to connect with community and family and to heal together. LFMO staff also took the time to reflect on what this day means to them. To all First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals and families who have been impacted by historic and current policies and programs such as the residential and day school systems and the Sixties Scoop. We see you and we hear you. You are strong, you are loved and we support you.

Sisters in Spirit

LFMO always stands in support with the families and communities who have known or been impacted by Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks, but October 4 marks an important day, a day where we come together to honour our Sisters in Spirit.

Every October, families and communities across the country gather to honour our sisters we have lost and our sisters who have not yet come home. We stand alongside them to offer support, to educate the public and to commemorate the lives of our Indigenous sisters and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks.

LFMO has been continually engaged in the development of a National Action Plan to end Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. On behalf of and through confirmation of the Métis governing members, we have been the file lead and this year released our own Métis-specific Action Plan, called Weaving Mishkotaha, highlighting the Métis-led work that is already underway and the steps we can take together in implementing the 62 Calls for Mishkotaha and the National Inquiry’s 231 Calls for Justice.
The first LFMO virtual Youth Network Gathering was empowering. It was so nice to connect with Cassidy Caron, Grandmother Linda and the many other wonderful Métis women who attended. Connecting with Métis women and Elders is something that I have been hoping to do more of, and LFMO’s youth engagement really helps make this happen, especially in our virtual world. Thank you for getting us together and look forward to meeting everyone again soon.”

- Meagan Peacosh

Mothers of the Land, Waters and Skies

Understanding the disproportionate & negative impacts that climate change has had on Indigenous people and especially Indigenous women is now being noticed by policy makers, and LFMO's new Mothers of the Land, Waters and Skies project will explore these specific impacts on Métis women. From rising food insecurity to the adverse impacts on Métis women’s reproductive health to the disappearances of many land-based traditions and knowledges, our project aims to understand not only what these impacts are but also seeks to harvest these traditional, land-based knowledges and environmental stewardship practices to help Métis women fight climate change, reconnecting them and their communities with the natural environment. Stay tuned for an announcement!

Grandmother Ribbons

As the days grow shorter and colder, it’s more important now than before that we seek community, connection and healing. This is why we are continuing our Grandmother Ribbon campaign, to spread the word that there is indeed light at the end of COVID-19, when we will be able to gather together again. We want to share with you a symbolic message of hope for yourself, your family and other women and our communities that hope abounds.

Purple is the colour of hope, of healing and of our Métis Grandmothers. Combining the stability that blue brings with the fiery passion of red, purple is a sacred colour that represents spirituality, justice and ceremony.

You may have seen these purple ribbons flying in your communities earlier this year and last year, and now is the chance for you to get your own! To get some ribbons for yourself, email info@metiswomen.org! Be sure to share your ribbons and tag us online too!
LFMO's New Team Members

Nilou Agharazi
Nilou has close to 20 years of experience in different industries and finance positions. Her career in non-profit organizations began with “CARE Canada”, whose focus on empowering women and girls in developing countries inspired Nilou and where she discovered that when women and girls are involved in our economic and educational activities, we can find a way to overcome poverty, build hope, inclusion and equality opportunities in the community together.

Nilou also worked for many years at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a non-profit organization in Canada that serves as a national voice of over 65,000 Inuit. Nilou became very interested and began to learning about Indigenous history, land, their rights and interests. Combining these experience, Nilou turned to LFMO to jointly pursue a world of hope, inclusion and social justice for all Indigenous people. Nilou is enjoying her role and is proud to work for LFMO.

Sydney Riddiford
Sydney has always had a passion for environmental, women's and Indigenous advocacy. After completing her Bachelor's at Carleton University, she pursued a career in environmental policy. Although not of Indigenous blood herself, Sydney's adoptive family is comprised of passionate, community driven Inuit men and women from the Northwest River in Happy Valley, Labrador.

Sydney has made herself into somewhat of a Jane of all Trades through hobbies, "side gigs" and courses on anything from green architecture to geographic information systems, to learning how to restore furniture and make her own household cleaning products and toiletries. As the new Environmental Policy Analyst and Administrator for LFMO, she hopes to channel all that passion and energy into listening, learning, and advocating for indigenous womxn's environmental rights, and in supporting her team members on all of LFMO's ongoing work.

Brenda Joy Sinclair
Brenda Joy is a Cree-Michif mother and grandmother from Northern Alberta with over 45 years of experience working within her Métis-Cree communities in areas of mental, emotional, spiritual health and well-being. Her work as an Indigenous Life Skills Coach, Spiritual Mentor and Elder’s Helper have given her the necessary traditional knowledge, understanding and sensitivities to assist communities in addressing the ongoing historical traumas affecting Aboriginal peoples. Well known for her skills as a proposal writer, program designer and community-capacity builder, she continues to provide support and leadership as a local Métis president within the Metis Nation of Alberta, Zone IV Region.

She has also been involved with Alberta Justice, both as an Indigenous Gladue Report Writer as well as an Elder and Knowledge Keeper. She remains committed to the immediacy of action necessary for the surviving, healing and thriving of our Métis women and girls.

Brenda Joy believes strongly in the innate ability of our Métis women to be the positive, healing force that will bring us, generation by generation, to be the fulfillment of our Métis birthright; a Nation; healthy, whole and prosperous. As our new Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher, she is excited to now be a working member of one of Canada’s strongest Métis Women’s organizations!
Rochelle Richards

Rochelle is a proud Métis mother of three beautiful children. Despite negative stereotypes and statistics around teenage pregnancy, as a young mother Rochelle was determined to pursue a worthy education. Graduating with a BA and B.Ed from the University of Winnipeg, majoring in Aboriginal history minoring in Anthropology, Rochelle is the first in her family to obtain a post-secondary education. Throughout her studies, Rochelle was determined to research and reconnect with her community, which in turn inspired her to become an agent of change in Canadians' relationship with Indigenous people in our classrooms and communities. Rochelle aims to inspire the community to speak out and connect to create positive changes within different institutions and governing bodies. To Re-Tell the true history of Indigenous/Métis peoples and the governments mistreatment, in the hopes to improve life conditions of Indigenous/Métis people today. Rochelle wishes to help restore the balance with equity and equality for Indigenous/Métis people.

"I stand up and speak out about the importance of respecting our Indigenous/Métis people and communities. I wish to inspire growth in future generations to support the TRC Calls to Action for our people and to improve the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

I believe education is the key to healing the residual effects of trauma affecting Indigenous/Métis communities. To create change for future harmony within society and amongst Indigenous people is to create conversation about the controversies regarding society's strained relationship with governing bodies and Indigenous communities.

I want to reclaim our traditional teachings and sacred relationships with the land and with our spirituality. I want to see these valuable traditions and ways of knowing become more readily available to all Indigenous/Métis Families. I want to be a voice for the community and help create avenues for change and I want to help support and connect families/communities to have meaningful relationships among each other.

Policies and programs that foster and facilitate authentic experiences and connections, like land-based learning and connecting with Elders, also facilitates traditional knowledge sharing. I believe my paths align with LFMO to allow me an opportunity to continue to be a voice for Métis women. I feel confident and excited to serve my community with my position as IELCC manager of programs and policy. I look forward to being a community voice and creating paths for change for our Métis communities."

- Rochelle Richards

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

@womenofthemetis

Women of the Metis Nation - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak

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