Beyond the Numbers!
What follows is a collection of first-hand accounts of the struggles and achievements of Metis clients from across Ontario. This snapshot moves beyond a statistical analysis of performance measures and instead illustrates success through the eyes and words of the real people beyond the numbers....
The MNO has focused a great deal of attention on the educational needs of Métis people and removing the barriers that hinder the full participation of Métis in the Canadian economy. In 1998, through the Province of Ontario’s Student Opportunity Trust Fund program, the MNO established a bursary trust fund at 32 colleges and universities across Ontario. Bursaries are awarded each year to Métis students from the interest that accumulates annually. This has been a highly successful program assisting students in all fields of study as they prepare to enter Canada’s economy.

Kevin Lannigan, a proud citizen of the Metis Nation of Ontario, was working as a heavy machinery manufacturer for Euclid Hitachi, when he heard of a job opening within the company. His colleagues insisted he didn’t have a chance of landing the job as no one had ever been hired for the position from within.

With the help of the Metis Nation of Ontario, Kevin was funded $500 to complete a course to upgrade his skills. After passing the course, he applied for the coveted position and got the job.

Kevin continued to upgrade his skills, including several training courses at the Canadian Institute for Non-Destructive Examination (CINDE), paid for by his employers. Last year, he advanced to a position in management.

However, this did not mean that Kevin’s job was safe. When the economic recession caused the auto industry to deflate, he was informed that any further training he required could no longer be funded by his employers. At the same time, his wife had been laid off from her job also in the auto industry, leaving the couple in an unfortunate financial situation.

With a wife and young daughter to support, Kevin decided to contact Elaine Jeffery, the Regional Employment and Training Coordinator for Region 6. With Jeffery’s assistance, Kevin was able to complete a training course during his vacation time and landed a position in the Bruce Peninsula area. This position, while still in the same field, has proven to be more challenging, satisfying and also more financially rewarding.

FUELLING A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY:
Métis Scholarship & Student Bursary Program

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KEVIN LANNIGAN
HAMILTON • HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR

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MÉTIS STUDENT BURSARIES AWARDED

MÉTIS STUDENT BURSARIES Are available at these Institutions

UNIVERSITIES
ALGOMA
BROCK
CARLETON
LAKEHEAD
LAURENTIAN
OTTAWA
QUEENS

COLLEGES
RYERSON
TRENT
TORONTO
WESTERN

ALGONQUIN
CAMBRIAN
CANADORE
COLLEGE BOREAL
CONESTOGA
CONFEDERATION
FANSHAWE

GEORGE BROWN
GEORGIAN
HUMBER
LAMBTON
LOYALIST
MOHAWK
NIAGARA

NORTHERN
OCAD
ST. CLAIR
ST. LAWRENCE
SAULT COLLEGE
SHERIDAN
SIR SANDFORD FLEMING

Shaking things up in a shaky economy

KEVIN LANNIGAN
HAMILTON • HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR

VOYAGES • SPRING 2010 • MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Positive directions

In 2002, Maria Macedo was embarking on her postsecondary education. She had just begun the Social Services Program at Confederation College in Thunder Bay. Like many other students, Maria was struggling financially to put herself through school. She heard about the Métis Nation of Ontario’s Education and Training programs and services, she applied for funding to help her cover the cost of tuition for her first year. She also participated in the Summer Training Program where she earned a salary and gained valuable work experience. After completing the Social Services Program, Maria moved from Thunder Bay to Ottawa to participate in the Early Childhood Education Intensive Program at Algonquin College.

Maria says that she has always been a child advocate but that her specific training and experience has allowed her to find a suitable career. She had three work placements: Dilico Anishinabek Family Care Centre in Thunder Bay, the Kanata Research Park Family Centre and the Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre. Through these experiences, Maria has learned that she loves working with early childhood learners. She finds working with young children especially rewarding.

The MNO was instrumental in helping Maria on her career path. She says, “I never would have gone back to school and gotten where I am now without the support of MNO.” She hopes other Métis youth will learn about the programs and services offered through the Education and Training branch of the MNO. “Making the decision to go to school was a major thing in my life. The MNO made it possible for me.”

When asked what advice she would give to other Métis youth looking for opportunities, she says to trust your instincts: “Even if you’re not sure where you want to go, go with your instincts and what you feel is best for you. You never know where it’s going to take you but if you listen to your instincts, you will move in a positive direction.”

As for Maria, she is currently teaching pre-school at the Kanata Research Park Family Centre, which is something she has always wanted to do. Congratulations to Maria for finding her dream job!

Métis at Law

John Ramsay graduated from McGill University’s Law Faculty program in 2007, with the help of the Métis Nation of Ontario Education and Training branch’s Student Bursary program that allowed him to write his bar exam.

Since his graduation, John has competed for and successfully obtained a full-time position at the Crown Attorney’s office in Ottawa. He attributes his success to the encouragement of his family, and ongoing support from the Métis Nation of Ontario.
When Velvet Johnson began her studies with the aid of MNOTI funding, she had no idea this decision would eventually lead her to a handful of siblings she had never met.

While working for the Métis Nation of Ontario, she had seen letters of thanks pour in, many saying the funding they received had helped them to achieve their highest goals. She decided to take a leave of absence from her job to go back to school, where she enrolled in a one-year Aboriginal Studies program. Velvet graduated with honours, her name appearing on the dean’s list both semesters and was graded second highest in her department. A year later, she was asked to fill a position in the program teaching a course about genealogy. This marks her third year as the Introduction to Genealogy instructor.

Having learned the far reaches of genealogy through her studies and teaching, Velvet decided she would try to find out more about her father’s family. She made an online posting, knowing only her father’s full name and her paternal grandmother’s name.

A few weeks later, she received an e-mail from a woman who had typed her paternal grandmother’s name into a search engine; Velvet’s posting was at the top of her results. The two corresponded before meeting for the first time. Velvet reconnected with her father and found out she had several siblings she had no knowledge of. With her father’s help, she researched the family to find she was related to the MNO President at the time. In months to follow, she would also meet one of her father’s sisters, all seven of her siblings and many close cousins.

“It was fate. What are the chances that [my sister Michelle] would happen to type in her grandmother’s name and find me?” Velvet said.

Through the same posting, she also met her younger sister, Natasha Rodgers, who has since embraced her Métis heritage and is receiving MNO funding for her studies in Aboriginal Education.

“It’s a fantastic service,” Velvet said. “If it weren’t for MNO Education and Training, I never would have gone back to school and researched my family and found my sister who has also benefited from it.”

**MÉTIS WAGE SUBSIDY**

The Métis Nation of Ontario Education and Training branch’s Métis Wage Subsidy assists clients who are having difficulties accessing employment due to lack of recent work experience or shortage of work. A subsidy is provided to the employer in order to provide on the job work experience.
As his Métis ancestors once did, Marcel Labelle is using the tools and skills given to him by nature to provide for himself and his family. After a vision sent him on a soul-searching journey to the Rocky Mountains, Marcel turned what began as a hobby into a prosperous career.

Marcel lives in Arthur but remains connected to his Métis roots in Mattawa where he still has a trap line. In 2007, he was the recipient of the MNO’s Education and Training branch’s Métis Cultural Economic Development (MCED) grant. Marcel used this funding to build a traditional birch bark canoe with the tools and technology available to Aboriginals prior to European contact. He has also received a grant from the Ontario Arts Council as part of their Aboriginal Arts Projects program.

Since receiving his grant and building his first full-sized birch bark canoe, Marcel has been asked to speak in front of universities, colleges and other groups across Ontario. Marcel has also taught a course at Trent University in Peterborough.

Marcel has shared his craft at Toronto’s Canadian Aboriginal Festival, made appearances on CityTV’s Breakfast Television and APTN’s Fish out of Water.

Marcel’s canoe-crafting has even gained him international recognition. Marcel spoke in February 2010 at the Smithsonian Institute. His presentation explores how canoes helped to improve the fur trade on the Hudson River. Marcel will discuss the difference between the birch bark canoes built by Aboriginal people and the models built by European settlers.

Currently, he is building a canoe that will be donated to the Niagara Region Métis Council upon completion.

For more, visit Marcel’s website at www.birchbarkcanoes.ca
Growing up, Natasha Rodgers heard whispers of her Métis background but only began to research it in her late teens after the passing of her mother. She wanted to reconnect with her father, who had been absent during her childhood, but ended up with this and much more – a sister she didn’t know she had and a newfound rich family history.

In her search for her father, Peter Johnson, Natasha stumbled upon a biological sister whom she had never met, and together they discovered their paternal Métis heritage.

This opened up a whole new world of opportunities for Natasha, who continues to research the Métis history on both sides of her family and hopes to use this knowledge in her career as a teacher.

“I feel as though I have a better understanding of where other Aboriginal children are coming from and the difficulties that may be present in their home life and at school,” said Natasha. “This will make me a stronger person and a more advanced teacher.”

Natasha, who taught at Hillcrest Public in Mississauga last semester and is now teaching at Holly Meadows Elementray in Barrie, feels honoured to be a representative of Métis culture and history by providing her colleagues and students with “a better insight into the societal and educational issues and concerns evolving around Metis, First Nations and Inuit peoples.”

With a distinct heritage of her own, Natasha is a living example of the multifaceted history each person has and should be proud of. “We as teachers need to understand and acknowledge diversity issues so that we can better serve and educate all students we teach.”

**MÉTIS STUDENT BURSARY:**
In 1998, the Métis Nation of Ontario established a bursary program, to assist Métis students in their pursuit of post-secondary education. The initial investments were matched by the Province of Ontario’s Student Opportunity Trust Fund program.
Alison Powell received funding from a Métis Nation of Ontario Education and Training branch in her final year studying the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) at Queen's University. The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program educates students on situations surrounding Aboriginal learners. The curriculum revisits Aboriginal history to consider the challenges and celebrate the achievements made by Aboriginals in the education system. It also considers the struggles that still need to be overcome. Alison describes the program as open, supportive and safe, adding that it has empowered her as a teacher and as a Métis woman.

During her program, she was given the remarkable opportunity of traveling to a city called La Ceiba in Honduras. There she completed her alternative practicum, working with grade one students who were ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. Alison thanks Region 1 Employment and Training Coordinator Dana O'Donnell and the Northwest Métis Council for their help and hard work, saying, “I wouldn’t have been able to achieve any of this without [their] support and encouragement.”

Alison is currently employed as a sixth grade teacher at Sacred Heart School in Sioux Lookout.

“I WOULDN’T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE ANY OF THIS WITHOUT THE MNO’S EDUCATION AND TRAINING BRANCH SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT.”

Métis singer finds a voice

Tina Roy always wanted to be a musician and when she was unable to find work in her field, she applied for a Métis Cultural Education Development program grant. After recording her first full-length album with financial help and support from the Métis Nation of Ontario, she felt like her dreams were just beginning to come true.

Tina was struggling to find a job while also performing at local bars, coffee shops, and schools. “I couldn’t find work so I decided to make my own work,” said Tina. She had heard about funding available to Métis youth and contacted local Employment & Training Officer Pam Jones to find out more.

Upon receiving her grant Tina purchased the equipment she would need to record the album and began the process immediately. Most of the work on the album took place between January and April, months she spent traveling and recording when inspired. “It was great to be able to bring my equipment on the road with me and record on my own time,” said Tina, who recorded in such cities as St. Catharines, Whitefish, Sudbury and her hometown of Warren.

The album was completed and released in April and can be purchased at the 20-year-old musician’s shows. Apart from local performances, Tina has played several venues in Southern Ontario including the Northern Lights Festival in Sudbury.

In addition to her performances, Tina also hosts and coordinates song writing workshops, live sound tutorials and teaches guitar lessons.
I am a 37 year-old mother of 3 children and with careful consideration, organization, funding, and support from Métis Nation of Ontario I was able to go back to school full time for two years and become a Registered Practical Nurse.

In 2002, I took a course at Career Canada College and became a Lab Technician but was unsuccessful in finding a fulltime job in the field. I settled to work in the Lab at CHEO (Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario) for many years as a clerk but grew unhappier as the years passed. Although my job was fulfilling in many areas, I missed the people contact.

In 2007 I was laid off work and my whole world flipped around. At the time it seemed like the worst thing that could have happened to me and my family but once I contacted the Métis Nation of Ontario, they reassured me and gave me hope again. They helped me focus on upgrading my education by pursuing my dreams of becoming a Practical Nurse.

It was enjoyable and a lot of fun, but challenging at the same time. It required all of my time and a lot of support and patience from my family but I thrived in it. I made new friends and got a lot of hands on experience in my practicums at different hospitals (surgery, rehabilitation, mental health unit, etc.).

In June of 2009, I graduated and was offered a job as a Practical Nurse in the Mental Health Unit a week after my graduation! I’m also working as a Lab Technician part time in the same hospital. No need to worry about finding work in this field!

I’m amazed at the positive transformation in my life both for me and my children since my career change. This field is very rewarding and I encourage anyone who thinks they would like this kind of work to give it a shot. It’s never too late to go back to school and with the Métis Nation behind you, you are sure to succeed!

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL AND WITH THE MÉTIS NATION BEHIND YOU, YOU ARE SURE TO SUCCEED!

Renee Belisle
Ottawa • Lab Technician

RENEE BELISLE
OTTAWA • LAB TECHNICIAN

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

• Career counselling
• Skills development
• Pre-employment supports
• Resume assistance
• Employment readiness training
• Essential skills assessments
• Training & mentoring
• Life long learning

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAMS

Wage Subsidy: A subsidy for employers to provide on the job training

Employability Program: Provides skills required to enter the job market

Mobility Assistance: Helps individuals secure employment outside their residence

Training Purchases: Funding for clients who require special training

Youth Programs: Assists Métis youth through internships, on the job training & other youth projects.

Self-Employment: Supports the entrepreneurial spirit of Métis people.

Training Strategies: Development of labour market strategies for Métis communities.

Apprenticeship Support: Increases number of Métis people in skilled trades

Disabilities Support: Assistance for persons with disabilities in employment and education pursuits

Job Creation Partnership: Employment that provides benefit to clients, community and/or local economy

Contact:
Tel: 613-798-1488
Tel: 1-800-263-4889 (toll free)
training@metisnation.org
www.metisnation.org

The MNO currently operates 9 regional employment and training offices that provide community-based, client-focused, programs and services across the entire Province. These locations also provide employers with a direct link to the Métis workforce across Ontario.