GUIDED BY OUR SPIRITUAL VALUES, WE ASPIRE TO ATTAIN OUR HIGHEST POTENTIAL

— From the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Gary Lipinski
President, Métis Nation of Ontario

In my previous career as teacher at Fort Frances High School, prior to being elected as a full-time Métis political leader, there was a student in one of my classes who was always struggling. He was able to pass most of his tests but it was only with the greatest difficulty. On one occasion, however, he did very well and received an “A.”

That evening after marking papers, I phoned his parents to inform them of their son’s achievement. When I called and identified myself to the father as his son’s teacher, there was a noticeable change in his voice. Clearly he was expecting a negative report and it was reflected in his tone. Naturally, as I explained my reason for calling, his voice became more at ease but the biggest change my call caused was to his son.

I assume that the father spoke with his son about this achievement because the next day the son came to school smiling and had an enthusiasm for learning that had not been there before. That positive attitude carried over for the rest of the school year and demonstrated first-hand one of the most valuable life lessons, the power of positive support and encouragement.

It was with that young person in mind, that in my President’s Report at the last Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Sault Ste. Marie I called upon all MNO citizens to “aspire to attain our highest potential.” This report describes how we are working towards that goal but it is also a challenge to all MNO citizens to work to ensure that our young people meet that objective by becoming all they can be.

It is for young people, so the next generation will take up their rightful place within our communities, province and country. The MNO as the government of Ontario Métis citizens has focused on advancing Métis rights, setting up financial accountability and delivering programs and services for our people, as we continue to build towards self-government. All of which builds a foundation for our young Métis to someday inherit and continue to build upon. The MNO offers many programs that assist young people from supporting pregnant mothers, right up until children grow into young adults. In this report you will hear the voices of our many young MNO leaders who are participating at every level in advancing the MNO agenda.

Unfortunately there are still too many Métis youth who are not completing high school and many more who do not go on to post-secondary education, even though they have the ability to do so. That encouragement can come from parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, neighbors, friends or any other adults who cares for a child.

It is by encouraging our young people to seek out all the opportunities that are available to them and by helping them plan for success, that we can create intergenerational positive effects. If our children go on to higher education, the result will be well paying jobs and a better lifestyle which will foster the preparation and expectation that they will go on to higher education needs to start early as well as making plans so that dream can become a reality.

Just as one phone call those many years ago led to the encouragement one young person needed, today young people across the homeland also need our support and encouragement. That encouragement can come from parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, neighbors, friends or any other adults who cares for a child.

To a large extent everything the MNO is doing and has done should understand the value of higher education, the skill sets and it provides and have something they can aspire to.

This is something that must start at a very early age and part of it is encouraging our children to dream the dream and knowing what doors will open with education. Setting up the preparation and expectation that they will be going on to higher education needs to start early as well as making plans so that dream can become a reality.

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The MNO Statement of Prime Purpose calls on all MNO citizens to “aspire to attain our highest potential.” This report describes how we are working towards that goal but it is also a challenge to all MNO citizens to work to ensure that our young people meet that objective by becoming all they can be.
Preserving the past for the future

Why Way of Life matters to youth

These are our lands. They are the lands of our past which nurture us today and which we value as the precious foundation of our future.

—From the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose.

The words of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Statement of Prime Purpose express the deeply rooted connection Métis people have to their natural environment. It is this connection that guides the need to protect Métis traditional land use, culture and rights for the future generations.

In accordance, the MNO established the Lands, Resources and Consultations (LRC) Branch in 2009. MNO staff work with community leadership to serve and respond to the diverse needs of Métis citizens, their communities and their region, while providing the necessary scientific and technical expertise required by the larger Métis collective.

“By aggregating resources and working together as a Nation,” said MNO President Gary Lipinski, “we can ensure that all Métis citizens and regional rights-bearing Métis communities can be more effectively engaged in meaningful consultations on issues, policies and projects that affect our rights, interests and Way of Life.”

The Métis Way of Life Framework (WOLF) is the MNO’s unique way of documenting Métis Traditional Knowledge acquired through time spent living on the land. Traditional knowledge is part of the collective memory of a community and it is passed down orally from one generation to the next through songs, stories, actions and observation. WOLF also encompasses all aspects of the Métis Way of Life including biological, ecological, economic, social, cultural and spiritual.

“The goal of WOLF is to document the Traditional Knowledge of the MNO so that it cannot be lost, so that our history, stories and contributions will carry on for generations to come,” said President Lipinski.

These documentation are critical because it allows MNO communities to determine the potential effects of proposed development projects. It also assists MNO communities in their consultation activities and ensures that Métis culture is maintained in the future.

Each new road, mine, forestry operation and energy project has an impact on the surrounding habitat and the Métis Way of Life. In order to assess these changes, MNO communities, working together under MNO Regional Consultation Protocols, engage in consultations with project proponents.

An essential part of this consultation project is the incorporation of Métis Traditional Knowledge and land use information into the project assessment phase.

“The overarching goal of the protocols is to ensure that all MNO citizens who are members of regional rights-bearing Métis communities have an opportunity to be consulted on policies, plans, projects, and developments that have the potential to impact the collective rights and interests of the MNO,” stated President Lipinski.

Each protocol includes a regional consultation committee comprised of the MNO’s regional councillor, a representative from each community council in a given traditional territory and the Captain of the Hunt. The committees work in collaboration with the MNO staff to ensure that consultations are inclusive, transparent and meaningful.

Since the creation of the LRC Branch, the MNO has made great strides toward ensuring that proponents and all levels of government recognize the need for including Métis interests in planning and resource consultations throughout Ontario.

The MNO continues to build relationships with Ontario’s leading mineral developers and recently attended the 2013 Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) Convention. The MNO has also engaged with numerous proponents and organizations through Traditional Knowledge seminars and information exchanges. Consultation committee meetings have been provided by the Ontario Power Generation, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Goldcorp Inc., Tembec and the Niagara Region Wind Corporation to name a few.

The MNO is helping build capacity and preparing its communities for consultations by providing expertise and training. Over the past few weeks, the MNO has delivered training to Métis communities across the province on how to conduct effective and meaningful consultations.

“The driving force behind the MNO consultation committees is to preserve the Métis Way of Life for our future generations,” said President Lipinski. “The decisions that happen today will affect the future children of the Métis Nation.”

With this in mind, the MNO encourages youth participation. Most recently in Regions Seven and Eight, youth have been invited to join the consultation committees when meeting with proponents.

“The decisions made today are going to affect us in the future,” said Mitch Case, Provisional Council of the MNO (PCMNO) Youth Representative. “We need to be present throughout consultations to bring the youth voice to the table. Ultimately it is our future they are fighting for and we should want to have a say.”

The MNO also provides opportunities for youth and knowledge holders’ to engage in knowledge exchanges. Through these exchanges youth are taught about the different aspects of Traditional Knowledge such as medicinal plants, fishing, trapping and the Métis Way of Life in general as a way to protect and preserve it. The Captains of the Hunt have also met with youth to teach them about traditional knowledge collection, in hopes they will soon be conducting it themselves.

“It is crucial for youth to be involved,” said Case. “We need to prepare ourselves to be ready to take on the responsibility that has been cared for by our elders and preserve the work that has been done through the generations on our behalf.”

The MNO is helping build capacity and preparing its communities for consultations by providing expertise and training. Over the past few weeks, the MNO has delivered training to Métis communities across the province on how to conduct effective and meaningful consultations.

The training, funded by the New Relationship Fund (NRF), included a session on collaboration and an issues and opportunities analysis. Participants from all regions attended separate two-day training sessions where they gained knowledge that will enhance their communities’ ability to conduct meaningful consultations with proponents.

“Working together,” said President Lipinski, “we can ensure that our lands, culture and Way of Life are preserved into the future so that generations to come can share and rejoice in all things that make us proud to be Métis.”
Cost sometimes makes post-secondary education seem out of reach but there are measures that Métis individuals and families can take that will make the dream of higher education a reality.

Government of Canada Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) are a great way to plan for a child’s future education costs and can be an important component to ensure it will happen.

RESPs are a tax-sheltered education savings accounts that are registered with the Government of Canada. RESP can be opened at most financial institutions, such as banks, credit unions, or through a certified financial planner.

There are three types of RESPs:

1. Family RESPs: In a Family RESP money can be put aside for one or more children that are related to the donor by blood or adoption.
2. Individual RESPs: Through an Individual RESP contributions are made for one child whether they are related to the donor or not.
3. Group RESPs: Group RESPs allow contributions for one child and the savings are combined with those of other Group RESP donors. The group savings are usually put in low-risk investments. These plans are provided by group dealers.

Those who open a RESPs are eligible for the Canada Learning Bond and the Canada Education Savings Grant.

The Canada Learning Bond is $500 offered by the Government of Canada. Also, a child could get $100 every year until he or she turns 15 years old to a maximum of $2,000.

To be eligible for the Canada Learning Bond the child must be born after December 31, 2003 and the parent must receive the National Child Benefit Supplement under the Canada Child Tax Benefit (also known as the family allowance).

The Canada Education Savings Grant is money that the Government of Canada will add to RESPs savings. This grant has two parts:

1. Basic Canada Education Savings Grant
   No matter how much money a family earns, the Basic Canada Education Savings Grant will give 20 per cent on every dollar of the first $2,500 contributed to a child’s RESP’s each year. This means that for every $10, the government will add $2.

2. Additional Canada Education Savings Grant
   Depending on the net family income, an extra 10 or 20 per cent could be received on every dollar of the first $500 saved in a child’s RESP’s each year. This means that for every $10 saved, the government will add an extra $1 or $2.

Many individuals are now providing a financial contribution to a child’s RESP at events such as baby showers, birthdays, good grades incentive and graduations as a method of helping to both support and encourage higher education!

For more information:
Call: 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) or Toll free at: 1-800-926-9105
Visit: CanLearn.ca
Or visit a Service Canada Centre near you
This information is from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada at CanLearn.ca

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**REGISTERED EDUCATION SAVINGS PLANS**

How to build for a child’s future

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...We (youth) need to do our part to prepare ourselves to be ready to take on the responsibility that has been cared for on our behalf.

— Mitch Case
Youth role critical to MNO Community Councils

Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO) citizens volunteer thousands of hours every year to support the work of chartered MNO community councils. MNO community councils do everything from hosting fish fries to engage proponents in Duty to Consult meetings.

To create more opportunities for MNO citizens to network, almost every week of the year, the MNO and its councils organize functions and events that strengthen Metis communities.

This year, community festivals were held near or in Windsor, Bancroft, Fenise, Dryden, Sudbury, Port Dover, Port McNicoll, Iroquois Falls and Welland. In Port Frances and Pelt-Mono community council members helped develop museum exhibits and participated in the grand openings. Local banding workshops were held in Guelph, conservation efforts in Oakville and weekly youth group meetings in Georgian Bay.

Other exciting events have included numerous jigging, historical and seasonal celebrations, medicine pouched making workshops, Metis information booths at community and educational events, and creating Metis specific floats for community parades. These help foster cross-cultural understanding and acceptance within Ontario communities and they would not be possible without the dedication of MNO community council members.

One of the key members of any MNO community council is the youth representative, each who provides a voice for Metis youth in their respective council.

“As youth representative we hold events for children and youth so they can meet each other and know that they are not alone,” said MNO Credit River Metis Council Youth Representative Talitha Tolles. “When I was growing up, before we knew we were Metis, I had a really hard time because I couldn’t identify with other kids. I joined the council because I want the kids who were like me to experience that there are other people who are just like them.”

“Youth representative, we listen to ideas from youth and represent the youth voice within council, said Danielle Secord, Youth Representative for the MNO Georgian Bay Metis Council. “We also teach Metis youth about Metis arts and culture and promote Metis assets and events within our region.”

Secord admits that there are some challenges youth representatives need to overcome.

“Finding ways to get the teenagers involved is a bit challenging. We are trying to create activities that appeal to the age group such as communicating electronically,” she explained.

There are numerous advantages to being involved with local MNO community councils. One of which, highlighted by Tolles, is the ability to build connections and create a sense of community.

“Building a sense of community is extremely important. Just through my council I know that every person will support me no matter what; they really do want the best for us,” said Tolles. “So many people I have met through the MNO have offered so much advice and support and the information I have gained from MNO Senators is priceless.”

Recently, the MNO Georgian Bay Metis Council used its funding of $3,000 from Bruce Power for the purpose of an education bursary entitled the “Helen Bradley Memorial Bursary.” Senator Dora MacIntosh presented this bursary to Youth Representative Secord during the May 1 council meeting.

MNO community council members are the forefront of the MNO who help people like Tolles, discover who they are and ultimately are creating a larger and more united Metis Nation. To ensure the MNO is providing the best support it can, it embarked on an asset mapping project.

Through this project the MNO was able to discover both the assets that were useful and available for positive well-being as well as the shortfalls in order to rectify any concerns or issues. The project also helps others identify their own personal assets. youth representative Danielle Secord identified that she is looking for ways to better connect with fellow youth representatives to share ideas on how to get more youth involved.

MNO youth representatives have recently participated in MNO community council Governance and Finance training and consultation training. The seminars explained the role of community councils and covered everything from how to run effective meetings and engage citizens in council activities to budgeting and the various financial practices, regulations and legislation that community councils follow and how to conduct meaningful consultations. This training provides a refresher course for MNO community council members while training the youth who are attending for the future roles in the MNO.

“Everything the MNO does ultimately builds a foundation for our children and youth to someday inherit,” said MNO President Gary Lipinski. “It is crucial that young people are involved in the activities of MNO so they will have the knowledge and training to build on.”

Youth involvement in the MNO community councils also open doors to other opportunities outside of the MNO. Tolles recently started a new position as Aboriginal Program Facilitator for Me to We, a partner of Free the Children. She says she owes her new position to her involvement in the MNO community councils.

“I would not have my current job without the volunteering I have done with the council,” said Tolles. “The amount of experience I gained by volunteering really gave me the upper hand through the interview process and being able to showcase my experience through articles in the MNO Metis Voyager really helped. I couldn’t have done it without the support and encouragement of the MNO Credit River Metis Council members.”

Along with pertinent work experience, MNO community councils sometimes can support youth in other ways as well.

It is crucial that young people are involved in the activities of MNO so they will have the knowledge and training to build on...

— President Lipinski

Youth participation on the community level is essential to the growth and prosperity of the MNO. MNO community council member’s involvement is what fosters a strong and united Metis Nation and their encouragement and support is helping shape the Metis leaders of tomorrow.
In November 17, 2008, Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) President Gary Lipinski and the Honourable Brad Doguid, who was then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, signed the historic MNO-Ontario Framework Agreement. The Framework Agreement established a collaborative relationship that reinforced the commitment of both parties to work together to improve the well-being of Métis children, families and communities while building knowledge and understanding of Métis culture among all Ontarians. Few agreements between a Métis government and another government have proven more valuable to building a brighter future for the Métis people than the Framework Agreement.

The Framework Agreement was timely and necessary as the Métis population in Ontario is increasing dramatically. Métis represent fully one-third of the entire Aboriginal population in Ontario. Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey states that 96,020 Ontario residents self-identified as Métis compared to only 73,605 in 2006; an increase of nearly 7 per cent. The Métis population is also young with over 20 per cent being 15 years or younger, suggesting that Métis youth will play an increasingly important part in Ontario’s future.

Since becoming Premier and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs respectively, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne and the Honourable David Zimmer, have continued to cooperate with the MNO in advancing the goals of the Framework Agreement and it has created a number of important advances in the last year. A key area where the MNO is working hard to ensure that the interests of young Métis are protected concerns efforts to reform the Aboriginal Child Welfare System in Ontario.

For the last two years, the MNO has provided Métis Education Kits to community members, educators and school boards. The wide use of these led to the first review of Métis content in Ontario’s thirteen universities faculties of education in a report entitled Our Place in the Circle (Dixon 2012). This report is a step towards a better understanding of the needs of Ontario’s teachers and classrooms to provide improved strategies in educating students about the Métis.

The MNO has also commissioned a research report entitled Repairs on Métis Education in Ontario’s K-12 Schools. This promising research examines barriers and opportunities for Métis education in Ontario’s ländergarten to high school classrooms. The researchers contacted school boards, directors of education, as well as government officials. The findings show several promising practices which address pedagogical, curricular, and staffing needs. Each addresses the importance of awareness, understanding, and appreciation of Métis knowledge, history, learners, families, and communities in Ontario’s schools.

The significance of this report, and others, is its potential to help improve educational outcomes for Métis students and Métis content in Ontario curriculum.

In 2010, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities sponsored MNO research on the opportunities and barriers Métis post-secondary learners face in Ontario. As historically there has been very little research conducted on the subject, the MNO report entitled Research on Effective Practices to Support Métis Learners’ Achievement and Self-Identification Project, was ground breaking because it offers a greater understanding of barriers and opportunities facing Métis students today. Recommendations to improve the system include building partnerships between the MNO, post-secondary institutions, and the Ministry.

Continues to build a brighter future for Métis young people

The MNO has worked tirelessly with the Ontario government and other Aboriginal partners to address the issue of violence against Aboriginal women. Many of the women who suffer violence are young and their lives are forever scarred by the experience.

The MNO has participated in five summits on ending violence against Aboriginal women as an active member of the Joint Working Group since its inception in 2010, and is a full signatory to the Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women.

Most recently in September, MNO President Lipinski and MNO Chair France Picotte participated with the Joint Working Group in a meeting with the Minister responsible for women’s issues and Premier Wynne.

The meeting was the first opportunity for the Joint Working Group, which consists of ten provincial ministries, to report on its progress. The MNO commended the Government of Ontario for supporting efforts to reduce the very high rates of violence affecting Metis, First Nations and Inuit women in Ontario and called upon the two lead Ministers to report back to their cabinet colleagues on progress and ongoing challenges articulated in the meeting.

The MNO has also been integrating awareness about the initiative within the MNO and in particular the Women’s Secretariat of the MNO has been heavily involved in this critical issue.

A major aspect of the MNOs work in the area of violence against women is the new Victim Services Program. The program goal is to expand the range and variety of culturally relevant victim services available to Métis women and children in Ontario. The program is a support system to be integrated with main stream victim services programs in order to help understanding of who Métis people are and the underlying issues and histories that surround them.

These are just some of the recent highlights that add to the foundation that has been built through cooperation and collaboration since 2008. More details on some of these programs can be found throughout this report.
Amanda Desbiens is part of a team of Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) staff who work in programs that make a difference in the lives of Métis children and their families. She works in the MNO Healthy Baby Healthy Children (HBHC) program, which along with Canadian Prenatal/Postnatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and the Community Action Plan for Children (CAP-C) are programs the MNO operates that provide assistance to mothers during pregnancy and families with children under six years of age.

Desbiens has worked as a HBHC Coordinator since 2005 and in that time has been able to help Métis families live healthier and happier lives. In her role, she provides cultural support, advocacy, information and prenatal and postnatal health intervention to families who are at risk. Desbiens has many experiences with families that the program has helped support from pregnancy onwards. “Families I have worked with have indicated that they are doing well and have fruitful happy lives,” said Desbiens. “A teenage mother who asked for help with parenting and coping with stress and anxiety worked with the program through participating in home visits, family wellness planning and peer support. Currently, she is a functioning single mother, enrolled in university, has re-established key family relationships and indicates her daughter is doing well developmentally.”

The MNO HBHC program, funded by the provincial government, is a prevention and intervention program for families in the pre- and postnatal period as well as children 0-6 years of age. The program is designed to support all families requiring holistic parent-child relationships and family support services by providing an environment for the healthy development of children through home visits, services coordination, advocacy and referrals. It includes preparation for birth, parenting, child development, safety, family health, breastfeeding, addiction, mental health and housing support. The role of HBHC workers is to provide culturally supportive health programs and services that help foster healthy and happy futures for Métis children and youth. This is what led to the development and the continuation of the HBHC program. The HBHC program provides many culturally appropriate participant based activities including Gestational Diabetes, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and healthy relationship building workshops. “One great component is we are able to offer culturally appropriate activities for these children in order to enhance self-identity and self-esteem,” said Desbiens. The MNO North Bay office where I am located is very much involved with the Best Start Initiative to ensure that any Métis child being seen in the community is being referred to the appropriate cultural services if there are issues.

Desbiens, who specializes in FASD, has seen many success stories from her clientele over the years. “As a HBHC Coordinator I also provide direct support to families who may feel their children and/or grandchildren may have FASD,” said Desbiens. “Recently I was supporting a family through a process of acquiring diagnosis of FASD through our partnership with Motherisk. I was able to increases awareness of the child’s unique needs, both internally and externally which is why I view it as a success.”

The HBHC program also provides transportation for families with children to help get to medical appointments, provide a clothing exchange program and provide client supplies such as baby clothing, diapers and car seats. “We also facilitate access to a cost-free provincial telepsychiatry program which is available to the public should they require support services for mental health,” stated Desbiens.

“HBHC is an amazing program that really helps our Métis families acquire support in times of need,” she continued. “The most rewarding part of my job is to see families use the tools they’ve learned to enrich their lives, as well as providing opportunities to them that they would otherwise not have the chance to participate in.”

The public can access the HBHC program and its services by self-referral or through referrals from external agencies. The MNO HBHC program provides assistance in a variety of means including in-office visits to an accessible building, home or community visits and telephone support.
MNO Education & Training programs
open doors for Métis youth

To encourage academic and skills development and to enable citizens of the Métis Nation to attain their educational aspirations...

– From the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose

As stated in the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Statement of Prime Purpose, the MNO has always made education a high priority. A key objective of the MNO is to ensure young Métis citizens uncover and embrace the will and determination to live a successful life. In its pursuit of achieving this goal, the MNO offers a range of supports and services for the educational success of all Métis across Ontario—beginning in early childhood, continuing through kindergarten to grade 12, on to post-secondary education and into adulthood.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Recognizing the absence of dedicated post-secondary financial assistance for Métis students, MNO initiated a bursary program in 1998. Métis students can apply for the Métis Student Bursary Program (MSBP) at the financial aid office, Aboriginal student liaison centre or through student support services at the participating college or university. There are currently 36 schools across Ontario offering the bursary. Applications are available to students following registration in the fall. Deadlines are school specific and bursary recipients are announced at the beginning of each school year. Students may reapply for bursaries and/or scholarships each year when they register for school. The amount of bursaries will vary depending on the accumulation of interest each year.

MÉTIS YOUTH PROGRAM

In order to gain pertinent work experience that will help jump-start careers, the MNO also provides services for training in the workplace. The Métis Youth Program (MYP) is designed to provide support to unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 30 through a number of program options that are available through individual client purchase or as community-based programming. Assistance can be provided through three ways: the MNO internship program, the community service program or the labour market information program.

MNO Internship Program

The MNO Internship Program supports internships with employers that provide youth with skill enhancement, work experience and entrepreneurial assistance to help them make a successful transition into the labour market.

Community Service Program

In order to create opportunities for youth who face barriers in finding employment the MNO offers the Community Service Program. The program provides support and develops work opportunities for such youth through participation in community service projects. The aim is to help young people develop the life skills and work experiences necessary to enter the labour market.

Through the Labour Market Information Program, the MNO provides youth with labour market information they need to make decisions about their education and careers.

Summer Career Placement Program

A Summer Career Placement (SCP) program is also provided to Métis students who are seeking summer employment opportunities. Employers from the private, public and non-profit sectors can receive wage subsidies and/or mandatory employer related costs to create beneficial job experience opportunities for Métis youth.

The MNO continues to foster partnerships between communities and school boards, colleges and universities, and other key stakeholders to foster a culture of lifelong learning in communities that support student education.

PARTICIPATING COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Region 2:
- Confederation College
- Lakehead University

Region 3:
- Northern College

Region 4:
- Sault College
- Algoma University

Region 5:
- Cambrian College
- Canados College
- Laurentian University
- College Boréal
- University of Sudbury

Region 6:
- Carleton University
- Queen’s University
- Algonquin College
- Loyalist College
- St. Lawrence College
- University of Ottawa

Region 7:
- Sir Sanford Fleming College
- Georgian College
- Trent University

Region 8:
- Ryerson University
- University of Toronto
- George Brown College
- Humber College
- Sheridan College
- York University
- Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD)
- University of Ontario Institute of Technology
- Seneca College

Region 9:
- University of Western Ontario
- Brock University
- Conestoga College
- Fanshawe College
- Lambton College
- Mohawk College
- Niagara College
- St. Clair College
Melanie-Rose Frappier is a Métis high school student from Sudbury who has plans to one day become an orthopedic surgeon. Like many youth her age, Melanie-Rose has worries about the transition from high school to university but after attending the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Infinite Reach program’s March break camp, she realized for the first time that she wasn’t alone.

The MNO Infinite Reach: Métis Student Solidarity Network is comprised of incoming and upper year post-secondary students who have the common goal of working together to enrich and enhance their post-secondary education experience. The program is designed to ease the transition of Métis students to post-secondary education by creating a network of Métis students from across the province that can share experiences and support one another in their academic pursuits.

An integral part of the Infinite Reach Network is to ensure that Métis high school students can accomplish the transition to post-secondary studies knowing they will be supported by members of the Métis community. A key way this is accomplished is through the Infinite Reach March break camp. The camp is designed to engage young Métis students interested in higher education in a retreat that focuses on the benefits of college and university education. Students also learn about Métis history and are involved in cultural activities throughout their stay.

“The camp helped me make decisions and they answered my questions in regards to post-secondary education and the different options available,” said Melanie-Rose. “It’s comforting to know that there are people out there to help me and I have made friendships that will last a lifetime.”

The Infinite Reach March break camp is a great opportunity for high school students to build connections with Infinite Reach facilitators and fellow students before attending post-secondary institutions.

“Melanie-Rose thoroughly enjoyed the camp,” said her Mother Huguette Trottier-Frappier. “They were able to talk about their fears, concerns and worries. It was the first time in her life she didn’t feel alone. She felt more encouraged and excited about the future knowing when she does go to university, she won’t be alone.”

The relationship between incoming students, facilitators and other Infinite Reach community members is determined by the needs of individual first year students. Some students may wish to communicate with facilitators through email for quick advice regarding university life and some may want to meet with their facilitators for coffee or at cultural events. The goal of the Infinite Reach program is to create a community of students who can easily connect with one another.

“Instilling the importance of education is the first step towards something that is truly great,” said Tegan Mandeville, an Infinite Reach Facilitator at Loyalist College. “And you can’t know where you are going in the future if you don’t know where you come from in the past. Being able to help them through this process is pretty amazing.”

MNO Infinite Reach facilitators are upper year students who can offer assistance to incoming students by helping them adjust to university life. They also work to create and maintain a sense of community among Métis students. Throughout the year, Infinite Reach facilitators host cultural and informative events to connect students to the local MNO community councils and to the various programs, services and events of the MNO. The Infinite Reach Network serves as a community of learners with the ability to inspire Métis students to achieve their full potential and provide the support of the Métis community.

“The camp was an experience of a lifetime. I made so many good friendships and I will never forget it,” said Melanie-Rose. “I wouldn’t have wanted to spend my March break any other way!”
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YOUTH LEADERS SPEAK ABOUT METIS RIGHTS

As a youth, these cases mean everything to my future and the generations which will follow. The federal government has a duty to consult with our Nation and will hear my voice...

—Jennifer Henry

Still ongoing is Daniels v. Canada. The January 8 ruling by the Federal Court of Canada declared that the federal government has jurisdiction for Métis under s. 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. The decision stated that the federal government has exclusive legislative authority with respect to “Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians.” The case effectively found that Métis are “Indians” within the meaning of s. 91(24).

As a youth, these cases mean everything to my future and the generations which will follow,” she continued. “The federal government has a duty to consult with our Nation and will hear my voice. Although we may not see the changes happening immediately, the Daniels case and others like it, ensure that the federal government realizes we are here and we are a strong and vibrant Nation.”

The Alberta Métis harvesting rights case R. v. Hirskenow is also still ongoing. The case dates back to the 2007 cancellation of a Métis harvesting agreement that implemented the Powley decision in Alberta. Following the cancellation of this agreement, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) proceeded to organize traditional hunts across the province to protest the cancellation. At which time Métis citizen, Mr. Hirskenow was charged and later convicted for hunting without a license. The case was brought to the Alberta Court of Appeal and the verdict has not yet been released.

“We have lost too many years fighting these issues in court,” stated Henry. “It is now time for the federal government to recognize the Métis Nation and being the process of working together and begin negotiations on the many important issues we face. Only when we work together can we make a positive change and have our rightful place within the Canadian Federation fully appreciated.”

AN UPDATE ON MNO FINANCES

Setting an example of fiscal responsibility

By Gary Lipinski

One of the most important things we can do for future generations is to leave a legacy of a strong, financially solvent Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). Leaving behind a financially sound MNO will help ensure that generations to come are able to continue and build upon our work to advance the interests of and for Métis citizens in Ontario.

In 2008, we were in a serious financial situation and on the verge of bankruptcy. If we had not been able to work collectively and to make a change in the way that we were spending and managing funds, we would have been in a much worse situation.

In 2009, we took action to get our debt under control and to improve our financial management. We reduced our debt significantly and have continued to work towards improving our financial situation. In 2013, we have successfully reduced our debt by over $1 million.

It is our collective effort and the dedication of our employees that has allowed us to make progress in reducing our debt. However, we know that we still have more work to do.

Today, we are much closer to our goal of having a financially sound MNO. We are working on a new financial plan that will allow us to continue to make progress towards reaching our goal.

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—Jennifer Henry
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Discovering, building & promoting Métis identity
THE MNO SUMMER CULTURAL PROGRAM

As I have come from a background that had consis
tuted of very little to no Métis knowledge or teachings,” said Genevieve Rouleau, a previous Summer Youth Cultural Interpreter (SYCI). “I’m very privileged and honoured to have been selected to participate,” said Parker. “This opportunity is very important to me because I have gone through everything possible in trying to complete my business plan and now with the support of the MNO Generation Innovation challenge I have completed it.”

The judges included: Chinyere Eni, National Director, Aboriginal and Public Sector Markets at RBC; Peter Smith, President Commerce Assessment Group; Larry Mah, Director of Programs at Youth in Motion, and Paul Ungerman, Manager of Government Affairs at Union Gas. Contestant Renée Michaud, a Liaison Officer with the University of Ottawa, placed second for her business plan for a mobile restaurant (food truck) that would serve Aboriginal cuisine cooked over a wood fire. Proposed menu items included deer sausage, buffalo burgers and side salads while promoting Aboriginal cultures through her truck design and music. Michaud’s goal is to provide a “cultural experience for the eyes, the ears and also the taste buds.”

Although the judges were very impressed by Michaud’s passion they believed the business plan required a little more work due to the competitiveness of the mobile food industry.

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Welcome to the President’s Update on Children and Youth - Summer 2013, Issue no. 76.

The leaders of tomorrow today

Young Métis are stepping up to fill leadership positions in the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) and among them are Jennifer Henry, Provincial Council of the MNO (PCMNO) Post-secondary Representative; Mitch Case, PCMNO Youth Representative; and MNO Youth Council (MNOYC) representatives Kristie Cauette, Janine Landry, Brianne Goselin, Sylvie Forest, Phoebe Mandry, Kyle Grenier, Nicholas Delbaere-Sawchuk and Alexander Young.

The MNOYC is part of the MNO governance structure with the mandate to identify issues impacting Métis youth and to work with the MNO to ensure those issues are addressed. Métis youth are represented by the PCMNO Youth Representative, who holds a voting seat on the PCMNO and each MNO community council has a position for a local Youth Representative who promotes youth initiatives, works directly with the MNOYC and represents the voice of Métis youth in his or her area.

Members of the MNOYC take part in meetings across the province, including the MNO’s Annual General Assembly, attend national conferences such as the National Métis Youth Role Model Conference and also sit on the Métis National Advisory Council. The MNOYC representatives are elected in province-wide elections held every three years.

Our mandate is to prepare and make sure we are ready to someday do our part in the leadership of the Métis Nation...

—Mitch Case

“Our mandate is to prepare and make sure we are ready to someday do our part in the leadership of the Métis Nation,” said Case. “We try to involve ourselves as much as we can to bring the youth voice and opinion to all aspects of the Métis nation.”

Participation at the community, regional and provincial level enables Métis youth across Ontario to have a voice and ensures Métis youth are engaged in all levels of governance, decision-making and policy-making, both within and outside of the MNO.

Métis students, please stand up!

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTARILY SELF-IDENTIFYING AS A MÉTIS STUDENT

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) encourages students to self-identify in order to show pride in their culture and heritage. In the past, due to prejudice and discrimination, Métis young people were often afraid to self-identify, especially in schools, and as a result the Métis became known as the “forgotten people.” Fortunately, the same increase in pride that led to the creation of the MNO helped us understand that the first part of asserting Métis rights is asserting Métis identity. Supporting schools in developing policies for voluntary, confidential self-identification of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students is one of the main strategies under the Province of Ontario’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework released in 2007.

The MNO has been a vocal supporter of this self-identification approach and has not only encouraged students and families to self-identify but has worked with school boards to encourage policy development and implementation. While the Ministry of Education has recently reported that every school board has adopted an Aboriginal self-identification policy, these remain at varying stages of implementation. As such, the ability to acquire detailed data on Métis student achievement and graduation rates will require a sustained effort.

Métis families and communities are encouraged to self-identify as it can result in added funding and resources dedicated to Métis students but more importantly, it can bring greater visibility to Métis students in the school system. This data is critical to determining the successes and challenges that may still exist within schools across Ontario. The ability to have Métis specific data on students will allow for programs and resources to be targeted to assist students to be all they can be.