

## **MNO President Margaret Froh - Biography**

Elected in May 2016, Margaret Froh is the first woman to serve as President of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). She lives in Barrie, Ontario, which is within the traditional territory of the Georgian Bay Métis Community.

Margaret is one of eight children born to Frank and Marie (Marchand) Froh. Growing up, Margaret spent her youth fishing and canoeing and was active in air cadets and sports. Her parents instilled strong values in their children, including the importance of volunteerism and education.

Originally from the Qu'Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan (near Fort Qu'Appelle), Margaret has lived in Ontario for over 20 years. She moved to Ontario in 1993 to attend law school at the University of Toronto and has made Ontario her home. She decided to pursue a law degree after volunteering on a legal defence committee for Mary Pitawanakwat, an Ontario Ojibway-Potawatomi woman who was fighting discrimination within the federal public service.

Margaret wanted to gain a legal education and skills in order to advocate on behalf of her own people and other Indigenous peoples. She has spent her career working on behalf of Métis, First Nations and Inuit peoples. This work has included:

- Acting as Aboriginal Issues Coordinator for the Law Society of Upper Canada, where she established a formal partnership between the MNO and the Law Society, which included the first Louis Riel Day event. This partnership and annual event continues to this day. In recent years, Margaret has also chaired many of these Louis Riel Day events.
- Acting as part of the in-house legal counsel group for the Chippewas of Rama First Nation where her work focused on strengthening the First Nation's governance, law and policy.
- Since 2013, Margaret has worked for the MNO as its first in-house legal counsel and Director of Strategic Policy, Law and Compliance. Until her election as President, she served as the MNO's Associate Chief Operating Officer (ACOO). In these roles, Margaret has become familiar with the management and oversight of all aspects of the MNO's province-wide operations, including working with all of the MNO Branches, Community Councils and the Provisional Council of the MNO (PCMNO).

In addition to her work for the MNO and her other community volunteer activity, Margaret sits on various committees and advisory groups focusing on access to justice for Indigenous peoples in Ontario. She brings a Métis voice to these critical discussions of justice and child welfare, including:

- The Debwewin First Nation Jury Review Implementation Committee; the committee tasked with overseeing Ontario's implementation of the 2013 report

issued by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Frank Iacobucci regarding the lack of First Nation representation on Ontario Juries; and

- the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Group that advises the Attorney General on Indigenous justice issues.

Over the last 20 years, Margaret has also served in elected and executive positions—including the role of President—of various boards of Indigenous community organizations, associations and businesses operating at the local, provincial and national levels in Canada.

Notably, Margaret is the former President of the Indigenous Bar Association in Canada (IBA), a national professional association of Métis, First Nation and Inuit lawyers, judges, law professors and law students. She is the current Chair of the IBA's Law Student Scholarship Foundation. She has chaired numerous committees of the IBA, including the IBA Ethics Committee, and served as Chair of the Steering Committee for the *Accessing Justice & Reconciliation* national community-based research project working with Indigenous communities to revitalize Indigenous law in Canada.

In addition to her volunteer work at the national level, Margaret supports an exciting local initiative aimed at raising awareness around the need for mental health supports for youth in the region, and with a local animal rescue. One of her favourite activities is mentoring Indigenous youth and encouraging them on their academic and professional journeys.

Margaret also shares her knowledge and leadership experience in her role as faculty for the Banff Centre's Indigenous Leadership & Management Program (now the Lougheed Leadership Institute). Margaret teaches part-time for the Banff Centre and has helped Métis, First Nations and Inuit leaders from across Canada develop their leadership skills, with a particular focus on nation-building and good governance. She has also taught as Adjunct Faculty at the University of Toronto Faculty Of Law, and has lectured on Métis, First Nations and Inuit legal issues across Canada and internationally.

A former competitive athlete and inspired by her very active mother, Margaret has been working on getting fit again. She happily reports that she is in better shape entering her 50's than she was in her 40's. She is an avid yoga practitioner and works out daily. She enjoys cooking, gardening and being outside and enjoying nature. Her first freighter canoe outing in Blind River while attending the MNO North Channel Métis Council 2015 Annual General Meeting (AGM) has inspired her to get back to her canoeing roots, so watch for her soon on Lake Simcoe and the surrounding waterways!

Margaret and her spouse, Rachel, live in Barrie. They will soon celebrate their sixteenth anniversary. Margaret is a proud auntie of 26 nieces and nephews.