

South West Region 2026 Year in Review AGA Report Out

This year has been a very busy year within the South West Region. Not only have we gathered together in celebration, we have worked hard to build. To build strong councils, strong leaders, and as a result a strong region.

The South West Region is home to over 4,000 citizens. Just like the roots of a 200-year-old oak tree, our roots are strong and resilient. We may be far from our historic home communities of Northwestern Ontario, Northern Lake Superior, Abitibi Inland, Huron-Superior, Georgian Bay, Mattawa/Ottawa River, or the Red River and beyond, but even the roots that are stretched this long distance will survive and play a vital role in the survival of the tree. They feed the trunk of the tree just as much as the closer roots. We persist in our remoteness and isolation from our homelands. Just like a tree whose roots communicate with other trees, we communicate with others and let them know of our existence and our truth.

This reinforcement of our role within the overall biosphere of our tree, our Nation, has taken on several forms this year. The pillars that we focused on were:

1. Being good relatives with the Nations whose lands we live on;
2. Building strong connections within the region;
3. Reinforcing the key roots by developing leadership;
4. Building a strong root system by engaging with citizens;
5. Regional identity.

I am excited for everyone to read this annual report, to see some of the hard work that everyone has put in this year to achieve our shared mission. Our mission - to build something our ancestors would be proud of. To build a strong, vibrant Nation for our children, and their children for generations to come.

Just like the 1200-year-old famed “Robin Hood Oak” of Sherwood Forest, our Nation’s tree will last for generations to come based on the roots we are growing and reinforcing today.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Anderson
Regional Councillor
South West Region



South West Region Leaders

Our region is made up of very hard working and dedicated volunteers that work hard every day to make connections, advocate, and build a strong community here in the south. I would like to take time to recognize those citizens that stepped forward to be leaders within our community. Without their on-the-ground work building community, all of us would be the poorer for it.

Regional Leadership Table

- Dana Robbins, President, Clear Waters Métis Council (CWMC)
- Pat St. John, President, Grand River Métis Council (GRMC)
- Derrick Pont, President, Niagara Region Métis Council (NRMC)
- Jake McNiven, President, Thames Blue Water Métis Council (TBWMC)
- Kathleen Anderson, Regional Councillor, South West Region – Chair

Local Leadership Teams

- Clear Waters Métis Council (CWMC)
 - Dana Robbins, President
 - Jonathan Raposo, Chair
 - Shawna Richard, Secretary
 - Thomas Dusome, Treasurer
 - Nancy Bouchier, Senator
 - Vacant, Youth Representative
 - Teresa Baxter, Women's Representative
 - Brian Lewis, Councillor-at-Large
 - Don Kennedy, Councillor-at-Large
 - Rosalie Vivian Shepherd, Councillor-at-Large
 - Philip Beauvais, Councillor-at-Large
- Grand River Métis Council (GRMC)
 - Patrick St. John, President
 - Craig Linklater, Chair
 - Amber Poenn, Secretary
 - Suzanne Lacroix, Treasurer
 - Diane Kilby, Senator
 - Vacant, Youth Representative
 - Vacant, Women's Representative
 - Maitland, Graham, Councillor-at-Large
 - Vacant, Councillor-at-Large
 - Vacant, Councillor-at-Large
- Niagara Region Métis Council (NRMC)
 - Derrick Pont, President
 - Brian Martin, Chair
 - Stephanie Flagg, Secretary
 - Tracy Boese, Treasurer
 - Jean-Jacques Séguin, Senator
 - Holden Shanks, Youth Representative
 - Giselle Legiehn, Women's Representative
 - Kevin Boese, Councillor-at-Large
 - Doug Hiltz, Councillor-at-Large
 - Lize Lance, Councillor-at-Large
 - Lorraine Martin, Councillor-at-Large
 - Graham Wing, Councillor-at-Large
- Thames Bluewater Métis Council (TBWMC)
 - Jake McNiven, President
 - Cora Bunn, Chair
 - Rhonda Gilpin-Hartley, Secretary
 - Jessica Notwell, Treasurer
 - Kevin Rath, Senator
 - Nathan Mohammed, Youth Representative
 - Shona Mohammed, Women's Representative
 - Kathleen McNiven, Councillor-at-Large
 - Dennis Bradbury, Councillor-at-Large

Regional Leadership Team

- Kathleen Anderson, Regional Councillor, South West Region, Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario (PCMNO)
- Kaitlyn Anderson-Mitchell, Regional Youth Representative, Métis Nation of Ontario Youth Council (MNOYC)
- Pandora Wilhem, Regional Women's Representative, Métis Nation of Ontario Women's Council (MNOWC)
- Jim Tolles, Captain of the Hunt Liaison, South West Region

Regional Civil Service

- Lisa Boivin-Rutherford, Regional Manager, South West Region, Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)

I would like to personally thank the local leadership team for their passion, commitment, and hard work in building a stronger community and region.

I would also like to thank all those that put up their hand to serve the citizens within the Windsor-Essex/Chatham-Kent area. Although we were not able to generate enough overall citizen interest to ensure the continuation of that local council, there were many citizens that spent years tirelessly trying to keep the council active.

It is thanks to these numerous volunteers of today and throughout the years that have built the MNO to what we have today. As volunteers, they work hard for you, the citizens living within their council areas. Maarsii!!

Being good relatives.

One of the most important things for all of us in our region to remember to do is to be a good relative. This is a principle that has guided me not just during my time as regional councillor, but throughout my entire life. What do I mean by "being a good relative"? It starts by recognizing that we do not have the privilege of living on our ancestral lands. That we too are guests on these lands. Yes, Métis have traversed these lands, both historically and contemporarily, but we did not settle here, make communities, had resistance against the intrusion of settlers on to the land and nor have we experienced the disposition from these lands. These are things that other Nations experienced here on the lands we now live upon. Being a good relative means honouring this truth in everything we do.

While keeping the principle of being a good relative close to our hearts, our leadership table has undertaken two key initiatives. First, we acknowledge at every opportunity that these are not our ancestral lands and therefore we do not recognize that we have any inherent land-based rights to the lands within our region. We have affirmed, and continue to affirm, that the South West Region of the Métis Nation of Ontario is a non-Rights bearing region when it comes to our land-based Rights. We do affirm that everyone of us that are MNO citizens have section 35 Rights, and we carry those Rights with us as we live on the land within our region.

To this end, we have also recognized that since these are not our lands, we cannot harvest within our region without the appropriate licenses. As a result, we do not have the right to manage this harvest.

Since the main role of a Captain of the Hunt is to manage the harvest within a region, there is no requirement to have one in our region. Therefore, in the interest of being a good relative, we made the decision to post for a Captain of the Hunt Liaison (COTHL) rather than a Captain of the Hunt (COTH).

Our new COTHL Jim Tolles works at the Captain's table to bring the concerns of citizens with harvester's cards. This new role works to promote harvesting to our citizens throughout the region. If you are a harvester or want to become a harvester, I encourage you to reach out to our COTHL Jim Tolles.

It is my belief that efforts like these will support our historic communities, and all of us, as we push back against the rhetoric of negativity and denialism that has unfortunately filtered into our daily lives.

Building Strong Connections throughout the Region and Beyond

A priority for me has been building strong connections between the different Councils and areas within the region. We have several key ongoing initiatives that we launched this year as a way of connecting all of us to each other and the broader Métis community within the region.

To build this strong connective tissue throughout the region, we created the regional leadership table



last year. This table convenes monthly and consists of the presidents from each council as well as myself as the regional councillor. We are supported in this work by Lisa Boivin-Rutherford, our regional manager. The six of us come together, rotating monthly through the council offices, to talk and deliberate the issues that face

not only our region, but the broader MNO as well. We like to have some fun while we do it, but make no mistake we take these responsibilities very seriously.

Discussions revolve around how to increase citizen engagement with everything from elections to our



constitution; how to best cooperate to increase Métis representation on the region's school boards; how to increase funding to our councils to allow them to provide more supports to citizens. As we gather, we get to know each other, build relationships, and build the future we all are striving for.

While building relationships amongst leadership is important, so too is the relationships with individual



citizens from across the region. To this end we launched "*Koffee with Kathleen*", which is our quarterly on-line gathering of citizens. These gatherings are held four times a year at both noon and 6:30 pm. Having two virtual sessions allows as many people as possible to join us for a lively discussion on just about everything related to MNO, self-government, and regional issues. Essentially anything that the citizens have on their minds and want to talk about. It allows people who face barriers to attending in-person events to meet their community and get to know one another. We also like to have a bit of fun while we gather. On May 4th, we celebrated everything Star Wars with our "*May the 4th be With You*" event. As we continue to have these events quarterly, we hope that we will see you out. Our next one is scheduled for August 25th.

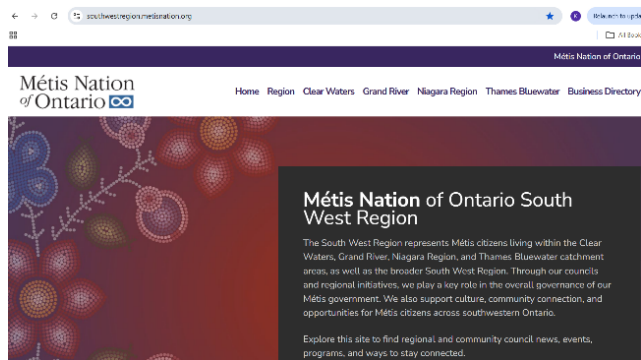
Also, on a quarterly basis, we publish our regional newsletter, recently renamed "*The Métis Quill*" or the Quill for short. The Quill is meant to highlight the work at the regional level, but also the great work



being done at the individual council level. This newsletter, sent directly to each citizen via e-mail, allows everyone throughout the region to get a sense of what is happening regardless where they live within the region. There are many reasons why someone may want to attend

an event outside of their council area, and the regional leadership table encourages citizens to attend events throughout the region.

Our other big initiative to increase connection amongst our citizens was the launch of our regional



website. It can be accessed through this link, www.southwestregion.metisnation.org. If you are looking for the latest news from across our region check it out. You will find the latest news, announcements, and pictures from each of the four community councils as well as the whole South West region. There are biographies, pictures and contact information for all the leadership within the region. If you haven't had a chance to meet your local leadership, feel free

to reach out and introduce yourself.

There is also a link to the MNO's business directory. If you are the owner of a business, I encourage you to register for the MNO's business directory. The MNO spends a lot of money annually on goods and services throughout the province and strives to purchase from Métis owned businesses as often as possible. As the Provincial Secretary for Economic Development and Government Infrastructure, I was pleased to put forward a motion at last year's AGA for the establishment of this directory. However, we can not support Métis owned businesses if we do not know they exist, so, I encourage you to register!

We also continue to post on our two social media sites. We have a page on Instagram and Facebook. If you haven't followed us yet, I encourage you to follow us today. Here are the links to our sites:

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/MNO.SouthWestRegion/>

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/mno_southwest/

Leadership Development

Our region would be nothing within our broader Nation without strong, knowledgeable local leaders. To provide our leaders the ability to connect, talk over issues that face them all, and build a peer support system, Lisa and I host three all council meetings a year. These meetings are designed to allow all the councillors from the four councils to connect, build friendships, share information, talk about potential solutions to common problems, and more. This year we focused on Métis culture and identity, Métis Historic Communities in Ontario through an exploration of the Expert Panel Report, and the very exciting topic of governance and governance best practices for councils. Here are just some of the pictures from our meetings this year:



Citizen Engagement

By far, my favourite part of serving as Regional Councillor is the time I spend connecting with citizens. I like to meet everyone where they are on their journey of connection to our Métis community and identity. Connecting with all of you is working towards building the foundation, or the roots if you will, of our tree, the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Our signature event of this year was our first annual regional rendezvous at Guelph Lake Conservation area. The 2026 rendezvous will be held at the same location, but on Powley Day, September 19th. I hope to see everyone there. Here are just some of the pictures from the 2025 rendezvous. At the 2026 rendezvous we will have vendors, musical entertainment, archery and hopefully axe throwing, canoeing, and so much more. I hope to see you there!



In the late winter of this year, Lisa and I had the pleasure of travelling throughout the region stopping at 10 different locations to meet and talk about our upcoming constitution, answer questions, and build that combined knowledge base for when the draft constitution is released this year. Here are some of the great pictures we took at these meetings. No matter whether the meetings were big or



small, everyone enjoyed the community feeling, and of course the food! One thing I have found in my travels, no matter where Métis people travel, there will be food and fun. If you missed these meetings, don't worry, we'll be coming back through the region to talk about the draft constitution early next year. We hope to see you out!

Regional Identity

Just as we are moving, adapting, and growing towards self-government, we as a region must move and adapt with the larger Nation. To signal this imminent change from the current not for profit corporate entity to a region that is part of an integrated self-governing Nation, the region has developed a new name and logo. This change from the non-descript "Region 9" to the more identifiable "**South West**" will allow us to more clearly identify with ourselves and our geographic location within the larger Métis Nation of Ontario.

With the new name comes a logo, specifically designed by a Métis artist to speak to our region. Taking the elements that came forward from our citizens in our logo contest we ran in 2025, this new logo is



designed to connect what makes our region so special, to us and to the overall Nation. The logo uses the water to represent a sash, a partial flower to connect us to the historic moniker of “the flower beaded people”, the roots of that flower to represent our connection to our ancestral lands, the sun to represent the beautiful sunrises and sunsets over the large water bodies we co-habitat with in our region. And of course, the Métis Infinity symbol, a symbol of our endurance and never-ending struggle for existence and rightful recognition. The colours of the logo are taken from our regional sash – green for the Carolinian forests, purple for the wineries, yellow for the agricultural fields, silver for the manufacturing, blue for the water systems, and red for the blood of our ancestors.

When the two items are brought together, we get a combined new region branding of:



SOUTH WEST REGION
MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO

We hope everyone sees themselves in our new rebranded logo.

Métis Nation of Ontario, Building a Nation

Your regional leadership also have responsibilities of representing our region’s views and interests at the broader MNO tables.

In June we gathered in Toronto with leaders from across the MNO to review a draft version of our



constitution. It was a time of deep conversation and learning. The two days were long, but we had the pleasure of hearing from Jason Madden, MNO’s head Rights lawyer from Aird and Berlis.

By the end of those two days I believe we all came away with a better understanding of the draft. The MNO’s drafters also left with a lot of things to

think about regarding all the participants thoughts and ideas. It was a great opportunity for all leadership across the province to gather and provide feedback to such an important document. We all look forward to seeing the final product.

During that meeting, I had the pleasure of participating in a panel with Regional Councillor (RC) Mitch



Case and RC Theresa Stenlund to talk about our views on the draft constitution, the process to date, and the importance of this next step on our journey to true self-governance for ourselves. The three of us come from diverse backgrounds, regions, and perspectives. It was a great opportunity to hear that all three of us can support this draft constitution.

In November, on Riel Day I went to the flag raising ceremony at the Ontario Legislature and took a



meeting with MPP Guy Bourgouin with RC Alicia Brink. We talked to him about important issues around resource extraction. The protection of the land is an important issue for all of us, while we need to look for the economic prosperity of citizens. We found a common understanding around the importance of protecting the lands during our discussion. Alicia and I also took the opportunity to correct some misunderstandings around the MNO.

Provincial Secretary

In addition to my duties as Regional Councillor, I have the honour of serving our nation in my official capacity as the Provincial Secretary of Economic Development and Government Infrastructure and on several boards.

These duties take me into many rooms, in many cities throughout Ontario and beyond. In these rooms, I not only advocate for all Métis here in Ontario, but for us here in the South West as well. Some of the highlights of these responsibilities over the past year have been:

MNC Critical Mineral Summit in Ottawa in January, where we worked through the tough balance of



protecting our relatives on the land, while building prosperity for our citizens through responsible resource extraction. It was a pleasure to work through these tough issues with one of our citizens from right here in the South West who works hard everyday to bring all of our hopes and dreams to fruition in her job at the Métis National Council (MNC).

In April, I was off to Thunder Bay to talk about MNO's Infrastructure projects. We toured the outside of



the new Indigenous Youth Transition House that the MNO has partnered with Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS), Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre (TBIFC), and Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA). The Thunder Bay Indigenous Youth Transition House will offer housing to Indigenous youth aged 18-29 experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, using a culture first approach, supporting each youth with individualized wrap-around services and culturally enriched programming. Pictured here on the left with President Froh; Provincial Secretary Mitch Case, PS for Education; and Dale LeClair, MNO's CEO.

We then had the pleasure to head over to the location of the new Métis Early Learning Child Centre. We



got to tour the inside of the building and have the staff explain the future layout. We are pictured here with some of the fabulous Education and Training civil service that is bringing our dreams of more Métis centric early learning centres to fruition. While in Thunder Bay we also talked about the Powley Institute and worked out plans for its future. It truly is a pleasure for me to work with our civil service as we bring our infrastructure projects to reality.

In May, I was back in Ottawa to attend the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NAACA)



Conference. I attended this in conjunction with Robert Lennox, Métis Infinity Investment's (MII) new CEO. We are pictured here with Jen St. Germain, MNO's Chief of Staff and Deputy CEO. Together Robert and I joined Indigenous leaders from across the country to celebrate the success of NAACA, learn from the case studies of other nations, while creating important contacts for the future.

I also made time within my busy schedule to take every opportunity to speak to groups about who the



Métis are. It really amazes me that even today, after so much time, people have so many misconceptions on who we are. This education has been a passion of mine for years and I continue to enjoy talking and educating anyone who is willing to listen. I am pictured here at an event with the Ursuline Sisters of Chatham.

In addition to my Provincial Secretary duties, I also sit on several boards across the MNO. They are:

- Métis Infinity Investments (MII), Board Chair
 - MII is our economic development arm for the MNO. Its mandate is to build wealth for the MNO so it can be a sustainable government and support all of its citizens.
- Métis Nation of Ontario Cultural and Land Trust Commission (MNOCC), Board Member
 - MNOCC is our charitable entity. It is a CRA registered charity and has recently added our land trust to its mandate. If you're looking to make charitable donations, I encourage you to donate to your own community through MNOCC. MNOCC's mandate is the preservation of our culture within Ontario. This includes funding towards the MNO's educational institute, the Powley Institute.
- Powley Institute, Board Member
 - As mentioned above, the Powley Institute is the MNO's educational institute, along the lines of Saskatchewan's Gabriel Dumont Institute. It is just starting up, but the plans are amazing. So, stay tuned for some exciting developments next year!
- Finance and Audit Committee, Committee Member