

Metis Women of Saskatchewan Inc. Report

To The

Metis Nation Legislative Assembly

By

MaryAnn Gagnon

President

Welcome Senators, Elders, Elected Leaders, fellow Metis citizens and Metis Women delegates and guests. Welcome to the Metis Nation Legislation Assembly. It gives me great pleasure to be part of the assembly to participate in the important issues and discussion that we as leaders engage in at these assemblies. I believe that our work towards unity will enhance the path for our youth to carry on in the future for the betterment of our Metis people and Nation.

The Metis Women of Saskatchewan had much discussion around the long-term plans for the organization. In the late fall, the board of directors did board training and looked at where we are, and where do we want to go, and how do we get there. We needed to look at the organizations mandate and it's goals as well as the structure. This was so important as we experienced difficulties getting representation from the regions at the table. There was a need to go through an educational process about the organization. The Metis Women's mandate of the Corporation is as follows: The Mission of the Metis Women of Saskatchewan is to promote social change to achieve social, economic and political equality for Metis women. The Metis Women's goals are as follows:

- A) Promote the development of programs and services which seek to address issues and rights of Metis Women and which improves conditions which are unique to their circumstances and needs;
- B) To support and act in solidarity with the Metis Nation-Saskatchewan in addressing issues rights and needs which pertain to all of the membership of the Metis Nation.

The specific objectives of the corporation include the following:

- A) To carry out ongoing consultations with it's local chapters for the purpose of identifying the issues, concerns and needs of Metis Women and their families;
- B) To plan programs and services and to seek funding resources for their delivery;
- C) To deliver culturally sensitive programs and services for which funding is obtained and which are tailored to the needs of Metis women and families and which are culturally sensitive;
- D) Where program delivery by the Corporation or any of it's chapters is not feasible, to negotiate with existing government or other organizations access to and availability of services which address the needs of Metis women and families;
- E) To share information with the Metis Nation-Saskatchewan from the community level concerning the needs and conditions of members which need to be addressed by the Metis Nation;
- F) To support and cooperate with the Metis Nation – Saskatchewan Provincial Government, and Federal Government in seeking resources, developing programs and delivering services directed to the needs of all it's members.

I must commend the Board of Directors for the hard work and dedication to the Metis Women of Saskatchewan Inc. In the last year, as we have accomplished many positive successes and faced and overcome many barriers, and challenges of which we have worked through. Metis Women of Saskatchewan are continuing to work towards increased efforts in developing strategic plans in researching and accessing funds for programs and services for the Metis Women at the community level. In the last few months, some of those plans have begun. The Metis women have made positive steps towards building relationships with the departments that may be in the position to assist the Metis Women of Saskatchewan in obtaining the funds needed to assist the Metis women at the community level. There is more recognition from the Provincial government authorities and community based organizations that the Metis women of Saskatchewan are in existence, and very much active. When we talk about positive steps, I see these tiny steps as positive and have great potential for major growth.

The Metis Women of Saskatchewan also hold a sit at the tables of the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth. The principal task of the council will be to determine and implement a strategy to advance the agenda of School Plus initiative. The council is an implementation group, sharing the responsibility of the implementation of School Plus with Government. The council has the capacity and opportunity to make a difference. Members are responsible to carry the message back to their own broad sector. Another initiative that can be beneficial to the Metis Women at the community levels.

The Metis Women of Saskatchewan held an Annual General Assembly in Lloydminster on February 22, 23, 2003. The assembly was a two-day event. The first day of the assembly

provided the women with various workshops such as Justice issues, Housing, Violence Against Women, Tripartite Process, and the development of the Metis Women Perspectives 2003/04 Tripartite Work plan. I felt it was important that the Metis Women that attend this year's conference be involved in the development of the 2003/2004 Tripartite workplan. We found that this conference was the great opportunity to include the Metis Women from the local levels to participate and provide feedback on the specific topic of inclusion in the work plan and to be able to prioritize the deliverables within the 2003/04 work plan. This exercise also allowed the women to learn more about the Tripartite Process, and the roles and responsibilities of the board of directors.

The second day of the Assembly was the political part of the two-day event, which was the election and executive reports. Unfortunately, and sadly to say the assembly was short lived as there were many issues that arose and needed to be addressed. The most outstanding issue and seems to always be a problem is the Metis Women of Saskatchewan bylaws. The Metis Women have been conducting business without ratified bylaws.

The Metis Women board of directors set a date to host a special meeting, which was held on June 29, 2003 in Moose Jaw, where the Metis Women of Saskatchewan Inc bylaws were ratified. The board and delegation were pleased that finally the bylaws were ratified, the boards goal is to move on with setting a date for a Annual General Assembly as quickly as possible, pending funding availability. The board is currently in the process of submitting proposals to various government agencies for financial support to enable the Metis Women to bring the delegation of women from the regions to participate in the Annual General Assembly. The Metis Women are also looking at asking the regions to consider providing some assistance by possibly hosting the

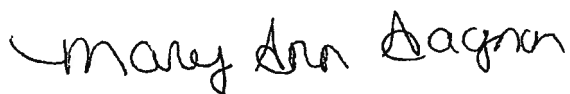
AGM, providing meals, entertainment, donation of some hotel costs, etc, if so please forward your thought and ideas to the Metis Women of Saskatchewan Inc.

Within the Tripartite Process, as the Tripartite Coordinator I attend Tripartite Management Committee meetings three times a year. The make up of the Tripartite Management Committee is representatives from the Provincial Government, Federal Government and MNS – Tripartite Minister Allan Morin. My role as committee member is to bring to the table updates on the Metis Women Perspectives workplan deliverables on a quarterly basis. I also provide the committee with feedback from the women on the initiatives that we are engaged in. At first I was only to discuss Metis Women Perspectives issues at the table but as time went on the committee started to ask about the Metis Women of Saskatchewan. Now I provide the committee with a two-fold report, both involving MWP and MWS. For those who are not aware of this, the Metis Women of Saskatchewan wear two hats. One is the MWP that deal with the Tripartite Process and the MWS that deals with the political agenda for MW. I have provide the women with copies of the MWP quarterly report that have been submitted to the MNS Tripartite Unit and forwarded on to the two levels of government. If you have had an opportunity to read through the reports you will have read about the work that has been accomplished by the Board of directors within the Tripartite Process.

We need to be a strong body, a united group in order for the Metis Women of Saskatchewan to have the recognition that we rightfully deserve. Not only recognition but to have the equality that seems to have been pushed under the carpet. As I mentioned in previous speeches, the Metis Women focus on six key principals such as: **Access, Equality, Right to be involved in the Metis Governance Process, Recognition of Women's Involvement, Quality, Accountability**

I believe as women we need to find ways to build on a communication strategy, which will ensure that all women in the Province have access to information pertaining to Metis Women of Saskatchewan. The word communication looks like such a long word but the definition is simply this "exchange of information or opinions".

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ann Gagnon".

MaryAnn Gagnon

President

Metis Women of Saskatchewan Inc.