

Otipemisiwak

The Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta

**Year-Round Traditional Harvesting
for Alberta Métis**

**Pilgrimage of Faith
to Lac Ste. Anne**

**Celebrating Our Heritage
at Métis Crossing**



Issue 3, Volume 1, August, 2004

Otipemisiwak

The Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta

Otipemisiwak is the Official Magazine of the Métis Nation of Alberta

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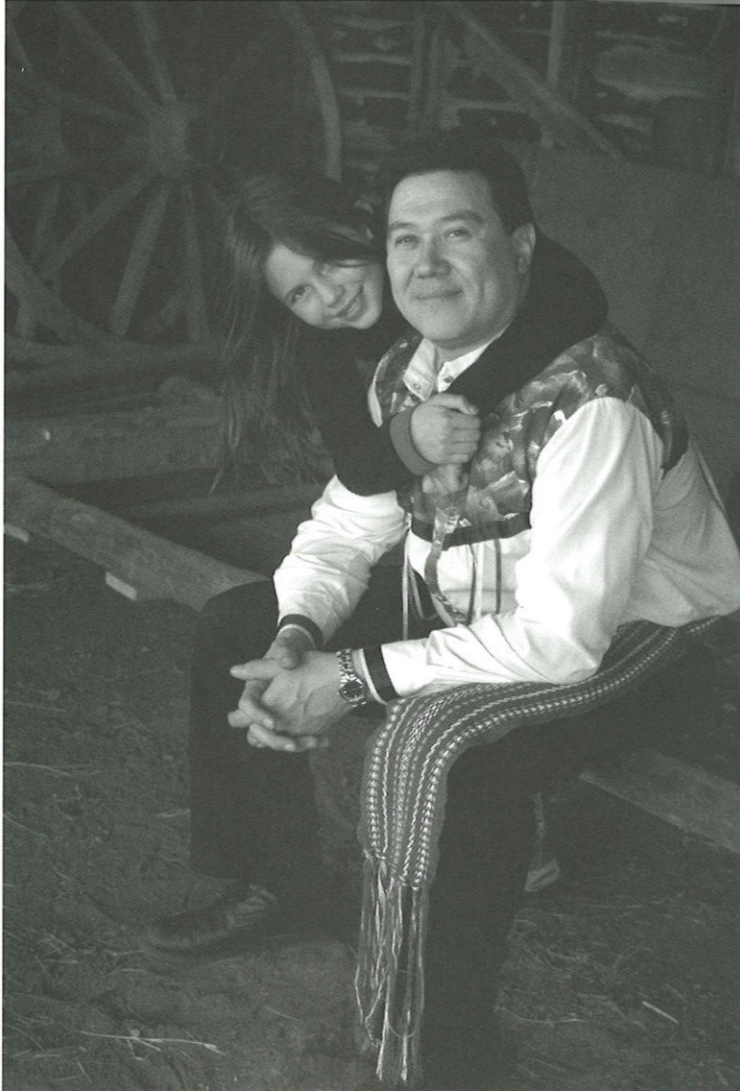
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Above: Rory Collins and his 11 year-old daughter Alana Ferrier share a family moment inside one of the historic buildings at Métis Crossing.

To learn more about Métis Crossing, turn to page 31 of this edition of Otipemisiwak, Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta.



Cover Photos by **Patricia Russell**

Beadwork on display inside the Métis Nation of Alberta's travelling museum currently located at Métis Crossing.

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Beadwork submitted by Marlene Lanz, Region III Vice-President

Otipemisiwak

The Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta

We encourage Métis to make submissions to our Nation's official magazine in the form of photos and articles telling stories about the events and people in your community.

Deadline for submissions is September 30

www.albertametis.com



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Otipemisiwak: The Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta
Volume 1, 3rd Edition - August, 2004

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings and welcome to another edition of our official magazine, Otipemisiwak-Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta, a printing that coincides with our Annual General Assembly in Wabasca, Alberta.

For 76 years, Métis have been coming to the Annual Assemblies to strengthen the fabric of our nation, woven through with our political aspirations, our cultural identity, our traditions, and our families. All tied together by our conviction to govern ourselves as Métis people, as the true Canadians. We can enjoy a surge of pride knowing that the Métis Nation of Alberta is the oldest Métis governing body in the Homeland.

Our Assemblies are where we meet to take stock of the year's accomplishments, to celebrate our achievements, and to decide on the continuing direction of our Nation. It is your chance to take part in determining that direction and to be part of the decision making process. It is every Métis citizen's opportunity to speak and be heard by the elected representatives.

We also come together to celebrate and reinforce what it means to be Métis, to reflect on the traditions that are tied so closely to our history. Métis were instrumental in the opening of the Western lands to the early fur trade industry, which led to the expansion of the Hudson's Bay Company in what was called Rupert's Land. And that led to the inclusion of the West as provinces and territories in the Dominion of Canada, all of this hundreds of years ago when machinery and technology were non-existent.

Métis worked tirelessly as guides, freight handlers, providers and interpreters for the early fur traders. Our ancestors shared the land, its resources, our medicines, the water routes, and our traditional skills. We taught the explorers how to survive in a



harsh and unforgiving environment. The strength and wisdom of our ancestors was key to the development of Canada, as we know it today. That sense of self-determination continues to be a fundamental ingredient in what it means to be Métis—"Otipemisiwak, the independent ones".

Self-determination and grit is a common theme you'll find in the stories about Métis in this month's edition of our magazine. The physical determination of one Métis woman who's won the chance to run in the Boston Marathon; the grit of a young boy, now a respected elder, determined to make his way in business and now rewarded with the country's highest honour as a Member of the Order of Canada; the determination of the Métis Nation of Alberta to build economic self-sufficiency with our Drilling Rig and Métis Crossing.

I have to say that the social and political events of this past year have made it one of the most remarkable

and celebrated years for the Métis, the year we won recognition and affirmation from the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled that Métis do have constitutionally protected rights. The unanimous and historic decision has opened the doors of opportunity for Métis everywhere, all across the Homeland.

A team of very capable negotiators is working tirelessly on behalf of Métis to reach an agreement with the Government of Alberta on harvesting rights for Métis in the province before the start of the fall harvest. Once signed, the agreement will ensure Métis harvesters will be able to exercise their constitutionally protected right to hunt, trap, gather and fish all year round without fear of prosecution or harassment. Contact the Métis Nation of Alberta's provincial office by telephone or check our website to find out the status of the agreement before going out to take part in the fall harvest.

Reaching this harvesting agreement will be recorded in our history as part of the turning point in

our journey towards self-government and self-determination; a journey that began over a hundred years ago when Louis Riel saw the injustices being delivered upon the Métis and took action. Now, the Métis Nation is rising again, as Riel envisioned it would, so many years ago.

We can celebrate the vitality that exists within the Métis community, vitality that's found in the wisdom of our Elders, in the value of our traditions, in the depth of our dedication, and in our respect for truth, justice, and honesty. That's part of what it means to be Métis.

Respectfully yours,

Audrey Poitras

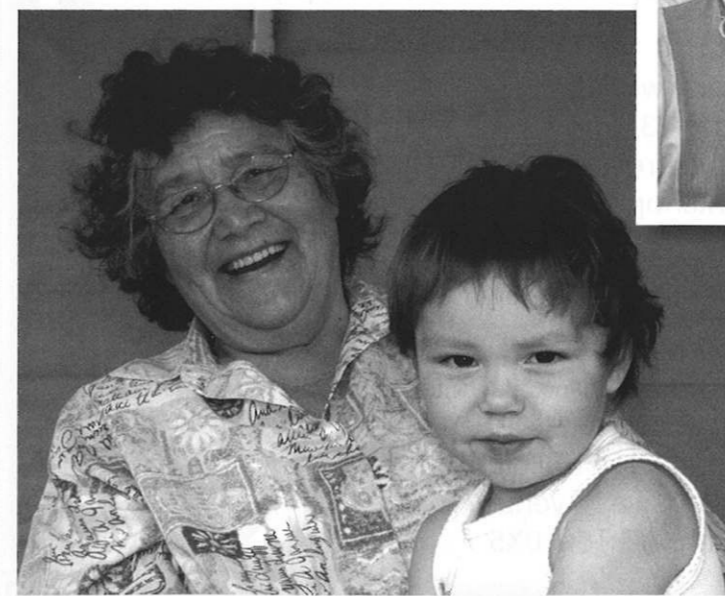
Audrey Poitras, President
Métis Nation of Alberta



Celebrating Métis Families

Left: Métis Elder Arema Laboucane and grand daughter at the Métis Nation of Alberta's family picnic (learn more about the family picnic on page 8).

Above: Roland (left) and Homer Poitras (right) pose with their 82 year-old father, Lloyd Poitras (middle).



MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Hello Friends, it is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the 76th Annual General Assembly of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

As we gather here in Wabasca, Alberta for this very special occasion, we can take the time to reflect on the contributions towards Nation building here in Alberta and throughout the country. As well, I say thank you to those Métis citizens who continue to make significant contributions to the well being of our province, our country and our Métis Nation.

I wish to express my appreciation to you, the Métis citizens, for giving me the privilege and honour of serving you as your Provincial Vice President of the Métis Nation of Alberta. As well, I wish to thank you for your guidance, wisdom and support during my term. I believe that we can continue to move forward as a Nation with your support. As Abraham Lincoln once said, "it is of the people, for the people and by the people".


We must remember that in addition to providing an opportunity to deliberate on the great issues of the day, the Annual Assembly is also a time of celebration of our

rich heritage and way of life. So make sure to enjoy the breathtaking views in Wabasca, and do a little jiggling when you hear that fiddle playing!


I wish each one of you a wonderful weekend, and a safe journey home!

Sincerely,

Trevor W. Gladue
Provincial Vice President



"Working With You!"



Trevor W. Gladue
Provincial Vice President

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Genealogy Workshops

Organized by the
Métis Nation of Alberta

Historical documents and srips can be made available to help you search the roots of your family tree.



Genealogy workshops will be held on September 8, October 13 and November 10, 2004 starting at 6:00 in the Provincial Office building in Edmonton. The workshop is free and our staff genealogist will be on hand to assist in the search of your family tree.

For more information, call Beatrice
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Order of Canada Bestowed on Métis Veteran and Elder

by Patricia Russell

Métis Veteran, Elder, and respected businessman Victor (Vic) Letendre is one of this year's recipients of Canada's highest honours for lifetime achievement, an appointment as a Member of the Order of Canada. Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada announced the appointment on July 29, 2004.

The Order of Canada recognizes outstanding achievement and service in various fields of human endeavour. Mr. Letendre received the appointment for his lifetime achievements in Industry/Commerce/Business.

Victor is originally from one of the oldest Métis settlements in Alberta, Lac Ste. Anne. He attended a Catholic church-run school until grade 7. As the second oldest among his six brothers and sisters, Victor took on many of the family responsibilities which included hunting moose, deer, and elk. By the age of 10, Victor knew enough about commercial fishing to go help his Dad on the Lac Ste. Anne. He entered the workforce when he was only 11 years old, to help support his family, by taking on the job of school janitor. He was responsible to start a fire in the stove every morning and then to clean up the school at the end of the day.

Victor joined the army in 1944. He completed the basic training in Camrose; his advanced training in Calgary, and was sent overseas to serve in the Second World War on the front lines in England, France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany with the Calgary Highlanders Regiment. Victor was wounded by grenade shrapnel on the Belgium front lines and was sent to recover in a hospital in England. He was voluntarily discharged on July 17, 1945.

A proud Métis, Victor overcame attitudinal and societal barriers to become a successful businessman and enjoyed a varied career that culminated with the purchase of his own roofing company.

A lifelong volunteer, he has been active with the Recovery Acres Society and the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta. One of the original members of the



MNA President Audrey Poitras and Metis Veteran, Elder, and businessman, Victor Letendre, who was recently appointed as a Member of the Order of Canada for his lifetime achievements in Industry/Commerce/Business.

Edmonton Native Youth Justice Committee, he is highly respected for his non-judgmental and supportive approach to problem resolution. He is also a member of the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta.

The strong sense of duty Victor displayed as a child has remained a central part of his character to this day. He continues to live in Edmonton, volunteering in the community, sharing his knowledge, and building on his strong Métis heritage.

Victor will attend a special ceremony later this month where he will be honoured as a Member of the Order of Canada from the Governor General of Canada.

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Year Round Harvesting Rights for Métis in Alberta

by Patricia Russell

The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) and the Government of Alberta are very close to reaching an agreement on harvesting rights for Métis in the province. Both Alberta and Métis technicians have signed-off on the text of a proposed Interim Harvesting Agreement and, at the time of writing, the Agreement is going through the process of being reviewed and submitted to Cabinet for approval. The discussions have been very positive, with both parties working toward the urgent goal of reaching an agreement before the fall harvest of 2004. Contact the Métis Nation of Alberta's provincial office by telephone or check our website to find out the status of the agreement before going out to take part in the fall harvest.

Métis harvesters will be able to exercise their constitutionally protected right to hunt, trap, gather and fish all year round without fear of prosecution or harassment.

What's at the heart of this agreement, legal-speak aside, is that Métis harvesters will be able to exercise their constitutionally protected right to hunt, trap, gather and fish all year round without fear of prosecution or harassment. Métis harvesters will no longer have to resort to the age-old practice of hiding their moose under a tarp and sneaking it home in the dead of night. Instead, Métis harvesters in Alberta will be able to hold their heads high and hunt with pride knowing that government enforcement agencies will now respect our rights to harvest.

Laws and regulations regarding firearms registrations and handling, automobile and boat licenses, commercial hunting, fishing and trapping



Audrey Poitras, President of the Métis Nation of Alberta and Cecil Bellrose, MNA Minister of the Métis Nation Agenda waiting for the Supreme Court's historic ruling in Powley last September. In less than one year, negotiators working on behalf of Alberta Métis signed-off on the text of a proposed Interim Harvesting Agreement with the government of Alberta.

and general safety and conservation rules continue to apply to all Métis harvesters, as they would to anyone harvesting (hunting, trapping, gathering and fishing).

If approached, harvesters must identify themselves as Métis to conservation officers. The Métis Nation of Alberta membership card will become the equivalent of hunting, trapping or fishing license.

Harvesters, without a Métis Nation membership card still have rights but will have to go through a process of proving, each and every time they are approached by conservation officials, that they are Métis. Having a valid membership card will be the proof required by conservation officers to allow Métis to harvest any time of the year and will also prevent fraudulent abuse of our hunting rights by non-Métis hunters. Consequently, it is essential for Métis to ensure their membership file at the Métis Nation of Alberta is current and up to date.

The Métis Nation of Alberta membership card will become the equivalent of hunting, trapping or fishing license.

The agreement also assures that Métis harvesters will continue to ensure our traditional values of conservation, preservation, and public safety are respected. MNA President Audrey Poitras says, "Métis know that certain responsibilities come with our rights. We know the importance of protecting and conserving our traditional food supply and that without a future supply of moose, deer, elk and other wildlife to hunt or fish to catch, there is no use to having our rights."

"Métis are conservationists," says Poitras, "We believe in the wise use of our natural resources by ensuring that fish and wildlife stocks remain healthy for the benefit of our children and grandchildren. That's how our ancestral and communal hunting practices work. Our traditional harvests are good examples for hunters across the country to follow."

Poitras says, "Our hunters share gifts of food with our Elders, the disabled, and with Métis families in need. Sharing the success of the hunt is a proud part of our culture as Métis people and that tradition is also protected in the agreement."

The standard application package includes a letter of introduction, a membership application fact sheet, a map of the Métis homeland, genealogy sources fact sheet, a blank family tree, a Consent to Release Confidential Information and a membership contact information sheet.

The Métis Nation Registry

Métis harvesters can prepare for the fall hunt by ensuring their membership in the Métis Nation of Alberta is current and up to date by contacting the Provincial Office at 1 800 252 7553 or 780 455 2200. The MNA membership card will identify rights-bearing Métis. However, Métis will still require firearms registrations and other licences required to operate boats and automobiles.

The process of applying for membership requires applicants to show proof that they meet the definition of Métis, which was ratified at the 2003 Annual General Assembly in Edmonton. (See the back cover of the magazine for the detailed definition of Métis). Métis can initiate the membership process by filling out the application package, which is available at any of the Métis Nation Regional offices in Lac La Biche, Bonnyville, Peace River, Slave Lake, Calgary, and Edmonton. Métis can also download and print the application package from our Internet website at www.albertaMétis.com or call the Provincial Office to have one sent by mail.

Family genealogy is key to the membership process. Applicants are required to submit a completed family tree listing ancestral birth dates and places. The Métis Nation of Alberta's genealogist holds free workshops once a month at the Provincial Office and is available to assist applicants to trace their family tree. Applicants are also required to submit a long form birth certificate or baptismal certificate indicating the names of parents, photo identification, Consent to Release Information form, and a Statutory Declaration signed by the applicant indicating they are not on an Indian Affairs registry.

Deliver the completed application forms to any of the regional offices or the Provincial Office either by mail or in person. Membership clerks at the regional offices and at the provincial office are available to answer any questions. The MNA's genealogist will verify the documents and may either continue to process the membership card or ask applicants for more information.

Métis Nation Family Picnic

by Patricia Russell

The Métis Nation of Alberta celebrated National Aboriginal Day this year with a special family picnic held at Métis Crossing, a site of historic importance to Métis in Alberta. The gathering attracted more than a hundred Métis, including Elders, parents, children, and youth for a social afternoon of games, music, food, and fun.

Entertainments for the children included a series of games, such as the three-legged race, egg races, a piñata stuffed with candies and prizes, and water balloons. Volunteers set up a special area, which included supplies for painting rocks, beading, and other arts and crafts. While volunteers kept the children busy, adults and Elders sat in the shade visiting and catching up on the latest news about families and friends.

An energetic and talented band of Métis musicians sang and played for the crowd from a makeshift stage on the back of a flat deck truck, draped in Métis colours. Rory Collins, Charles Shott, Brian Collins Jr, and Nathan

Anderson played for most of the afternoon.

A steady aroma of barbequed hotdogs and burgers wafted from the main house where volunteers put on a delicious lunch, which included a variety of salads and other tasty dishes. Carol Letendre spent the afternoon up to her wrists in flour and dough cooking her winning recipe of fried bannock.

Besides fresh bannock, another necessary ingredient at any successful Métis social gathering is the sound of fiddle music. If Region II Vice-President Homer Poitras is in the crowd, you can bet his fiddle is close by and the popular and polished musician will be called upon to play. Indeed, Homer delivered another great performance of fiddle-favourites and even played for the jigging portion of the talent show.

Clay Ladouceur, Tayola L'Hirondelle and Austin Franson won the kids jigging portion of the talent show. Blaine Desjarlais and Melanie Desjarlais won in the youth jigging category and Karen Desjarlais won the prize for

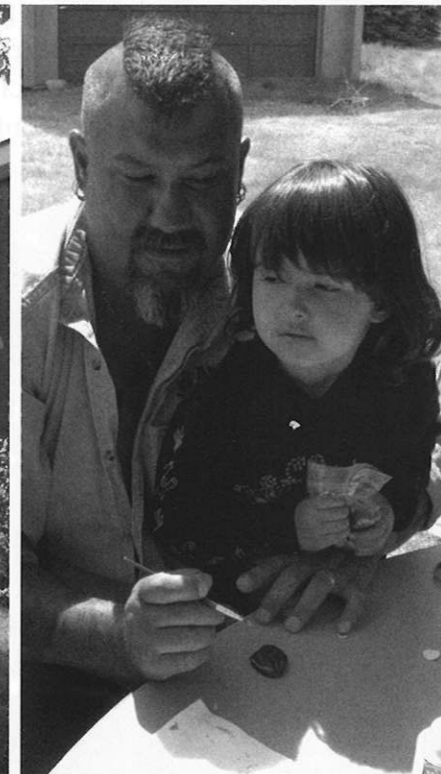
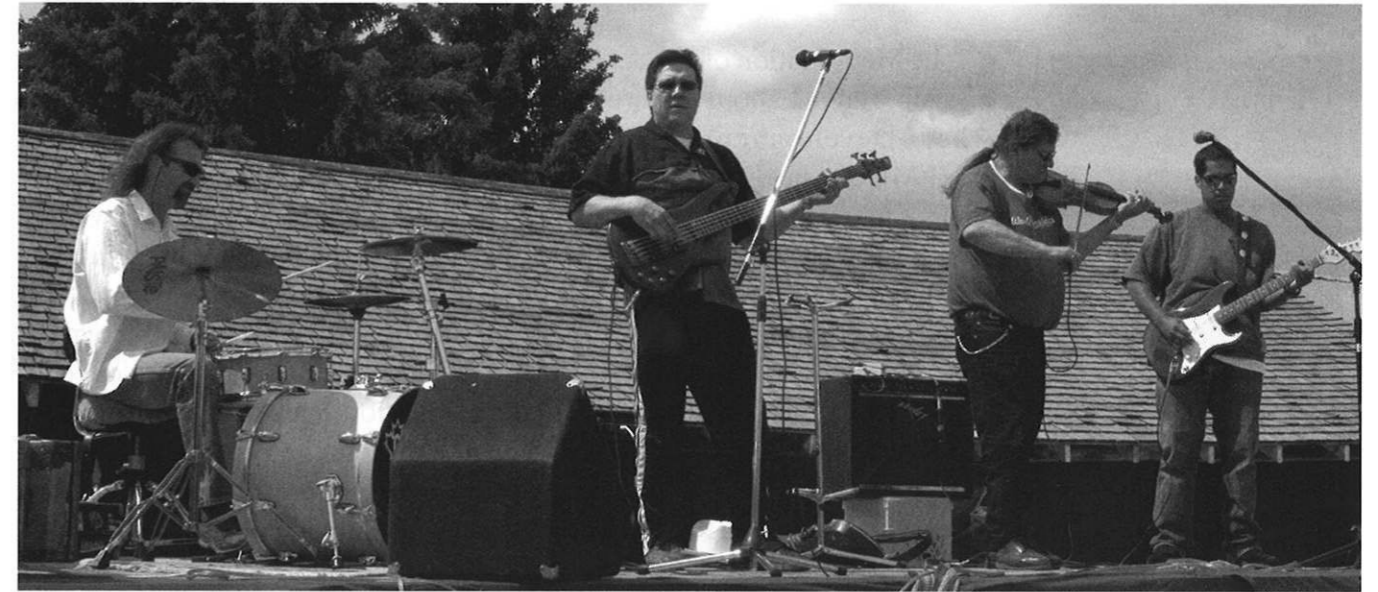


Left: Elizabeth Ashley and Jaclyn Smukowich race back and forth carrying raw eggs in teaspoons. Right: Carol Letendre, also competing in the egg race, volunteered to cook all the bannock served at the Métis Nation's family picnic celebrating National Aboriginal Day.

adult jigging. John Flathen and Clayton Johnson, two first time youth jiggers were also recognized for their talents and left with a prize. Alana Ferrier was the winner of the youth vocals category of the talent show. Blake Arcand, Terry Lusty, and Wendy Fayant, a first time performer, were the winners of the singing competition.

The event was organized by Kim Mueller, the Youth Programs Coordinator with the Labour Market Development Unit and was pulled together with the help of

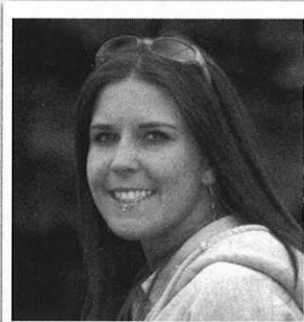
more than a dozen volunteers. A tremendous amount of unseen work happens behind the scenes when Kim is planning these events, placing the calls for equipment, food, prizes, and organizing the volunteers. The Nation is grateful to Kim and to the crowd of volunteers, which usually includes Amanda L'Hirondelle, Kris Gladue, Ron Harrison and many other people who give their valuable time to deliver the special events and family gatherings of the Métis Nation of Alberta.



Top: Nathan Anderson, drums; Rory Collins, guitar and vocals; Charles Shott, fiddle; Brian Collins Jr., guitar
Left: John Ashley getting ready to swing a broom at the dangling piñata.
Middle: Gordon Isaacs and his daughter Chenoa spend some time painting rocks in the arts and crafts tent.
Right: Austin Francin won third place in the youth jigging contest.

Labour Market Development Unit Annual Conference

by Roxanne Ropchan



Roxanne Ropchan is the assistant to the Director of Labour Market Development for the Métis Nation of Alberta.

The Métis Nation of Alberta's Labour Market Development Unit (LMDU) held its annual staff conference on June 14 - 18, 2004. Approximately 75 LMD staff members from all points of Alberta attended the four-day conference in Peace River, Alberta.

"It is a great occasion when we have the opportunity to come together with all the LMD staff, to meet and greet people we may have only talked to over the phone," commented Debbie Munroe, LMD Senior Administrative Officer.

The objective of the annual labour market development conference is to come together to affirm common objectives, to share experiences and lessons learned, to build friendships, and enhance teamwork. The conference included an overview of the operational review that took place in the fall and winter of this year. This review assessed the delivery processes at all 17 Métis Employment Service (MES) centres to ensure they are effective and efficient, economical, and, ultimately, providing client satisfaction. All the functions of the employment centres were reviewed including reception, client files, quality of labour market information, and the employment assessment / action planning process. All labour market staff was encouraged to participate in this exercise to learn more about effective service delivery.

At the conference, the operational review



MNA Labour Market Development staff from Metis Employment Centres across the province met in Peace River for the annual conference.



Above Left: President Audrey Poitras congratulated the Labour Market Development staff on their successful year delivering programs and services at the 17 employment centres across the province.

Above Right: Region III staff proudly sporting their team t-shirts, one indication of the high level of team spirit throughout the LMD conference in Peace River. Right: The Metis Nation of Alberta's Director of Labour Market Development, Lorne Gladue with Region VI President, Sylvia Johnson and Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras.



initiated an achievement and recognition awards ceremony to reward employment centres and individual staff members that have demonstrated and established role model service delivery practices. Recognition awards included best practices for service delivery, the survivor award, employer relations, client orientation, newspaper coverage, case management and follow-up, and continuous department service awards.

"This was the first formal recognition ceremony that the LMDU has done and it's certainly long overdue," said Lorne Gladue, Director of Labour Market Development. "Staff appreciation and recognition is so important. The success of the program lies heavily with those who

directly deliver the services to the Métis people of Alberta."

The conference also incorporated Métis trivia questions and other team challenges including role-playing exercises to test skills and assess client intake procedures.

"Together We Will Build A Nation"

Audrey Poitras
President - Metis Nation of Alberta

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percent staff turnover in this Region, every opinion, every suggestion, every bit of feedback is heard and taken into consideration. No position is higher than the other, no voice louder, and no person more important than the other. If the group succeeds, it succeeds together, if they fail - they support one another. Supervisors ensure that what they learn in their training is passed on to the rest of the staff and changes are implemented. Assessment is done afterwards to see which procedures are best and should be kept. Laughter is their best medicine; it's what keeps them going.

Region II is doing new things again this year. The Youth Pre-Trade program, in which 12 youth were exposed to carpentry, welding and small engine repair, wrapped up on July 30th. The feedback from the Youth and their parents has been nothing short of glowing. One parent remarked that she would like to see the program continue because it really gave her son an opportunity to learn about the different trades. It also gave him skills to use in his personal life. Most of the Youth are interested in pursuing a career in the trades. Region II is getting a head start preparing Métis to fill the predicted gap in the trades area of the labour market.

The region will also be running a Disability Program, which will be the first in the province. This project is slated to start in September 2004. With the assistance of the Disability Coordinator and Educational Psychologist, this project is becoming a collaboration of different professional expertise, to ensure the comfort and success of the clients.

The most recent achievement of Region II is an Internship contract with the Calgary Hitmen, which is the farm team of the Calgary Flames. Not only will Region II benefit from this high profile partnership, it has the potential to open more doors for the Labour Market Development Unit as a whole.

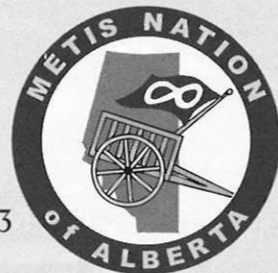
Dedication, hard work and believing in the programs have given this unit the drive to excel. This group has proven that big things do come from small places.

MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP



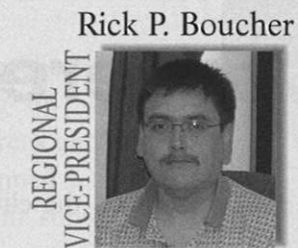
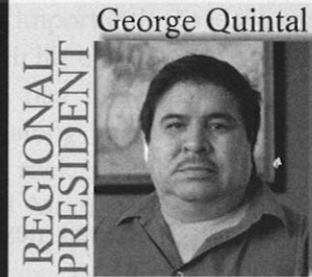
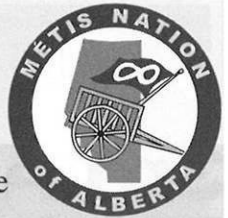
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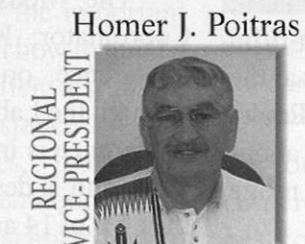


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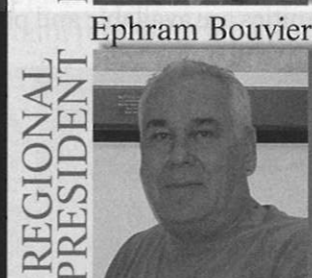
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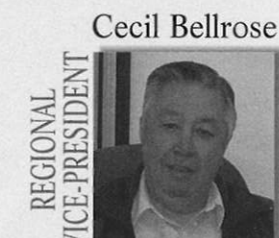
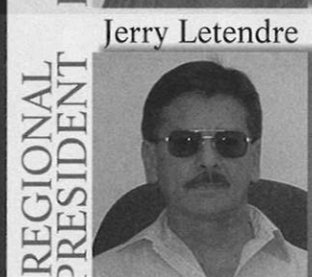
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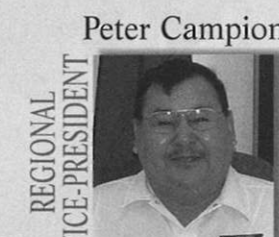
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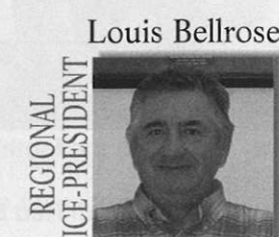
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Métis Families

Three Rounds of Five Generations

by Gayle McKenzie

My husband, Ray McKenzie and I are overjoyed to welcome our great grandson, Alexander Robert Dunham into our family. Alexander was born February 11th, 2004 at the Royal Alex Hospital in Edmonton. He is an exceptionally special baby, not only because he is such an incredible little man, but also, because he is the first child to make up the fifth generation of our living family, tracing back through his mother's line. Little Alexander becomes the third round of five generations for our family.

Alexander's Grandmother, Alanna Dionne, was the first child to start the fifth generation line in this family. Alanna's great-great Grandmother was

Victoria Belcourt Calihoo who lived to 104 years of age and could tell stories of her involvement in the last buffalo hunt of the Alberta Métis when she was 13. Her mother, a medicine woman from the Michael Band in Calahoo, Alberta, was married to Louie Calihoo. Victoria helped her mother treat people who were ill or injured in the buffalo hunts.

Nicole Dionne's great-great Grandmother was Elizabeth (Lizzie) Vandal nee Calihoo, Victoria's daughter. Elizabeth married Ben Vandal, a Metis interpreter who spoke Cree and worked for the Enoch Reserve near Stony Plain, Alberta. They lived on a homestead in Gunn, Alberta. Lizzie Vandal was 92 years old when she passed away in 1982.

I am the great-grandmother in this picture, posing with my father, 84 year-old Norman Vandal, great-great Grandfather to baby Alex. My Grandfather, Jerry Dion, was a nephew of Joe Dion, the first president of the Métis Nation of Alberta. If history repeats itself this baby is bound to have a very long life.



Left to Right : Alanna Dionne, (Grandmother), Gayle McKenzie (Great-Grandmother), Norman Vandal (Great-Great-Grandfather), Nicole Dionne (Mother), Alexander Robert Dunham (Baby)

Like many Métis families in Alberta able to trace their families back several generations, Alex will be able to trace his Métis ancestry back to Louie "L'Iroquois" Kwarakwante (1750) and Marie Patenaud (1803), Jacques L'Hirondelle (1759), Josette Pilon (1782) and Bernard Belcourt (1756). Baby Alex is a direct descendant of Gabriel Dumont

and Cuthbert Grant, two great Métis leaders.

Knowing the history of our family and being able to trace our Metis lineage is very important to us; it is an integral part of our identity and a means of preserving our Métis heritage.

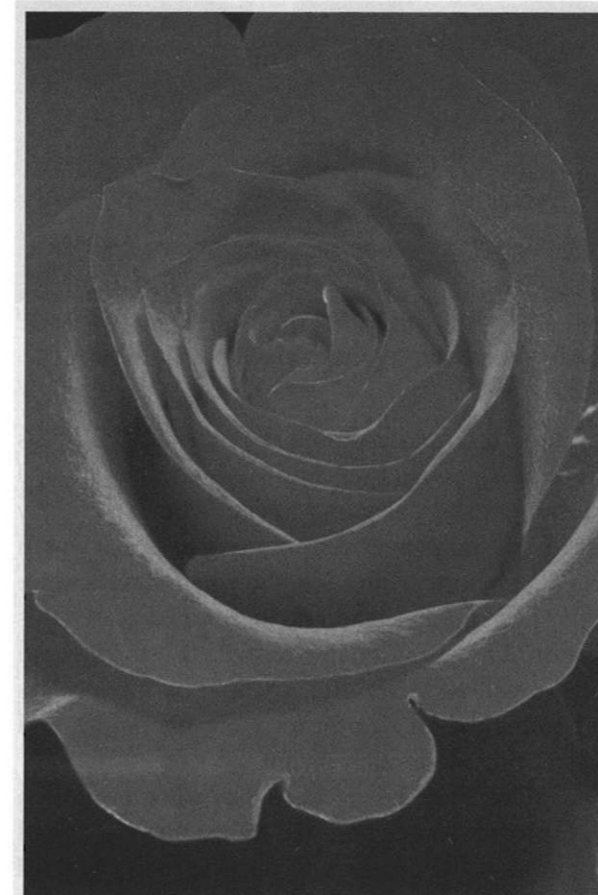
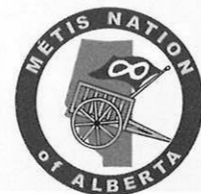
Genealogy Information and Sources



The Métis Nation of Alberta appreciates the genealogy information and family history books donated to the Métis Nation library. We have recieved generous donations from Mr. Britton Salois, Mr. Jack Golosky, Mr. Arthur New, Mr. Randy Ewen and Mr. Glenn Killips.

If you would like to contribute information to build up our library of genealogical sources, please contact Beatrice Demetrius at **(780) 476-2715 or 1-800-252-7553**

Métis Nation of Alberta
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John Baptiste Giroux and his family extend their heartfelt thanks to the President of the Métis Nation of Alberta and to the Region V President and all the friends who gave us their support during our time of bereavement in the passing of beloved wife, mother, and grandmother, Marguerite Giroux.

May God bless you all.

John Baptiste Giroux and family
July 2004

Becoming Métis

When his mother handed him a faded certificate that recorded her birth on a trapline, Terrance Armstrong began his journey home to his past.

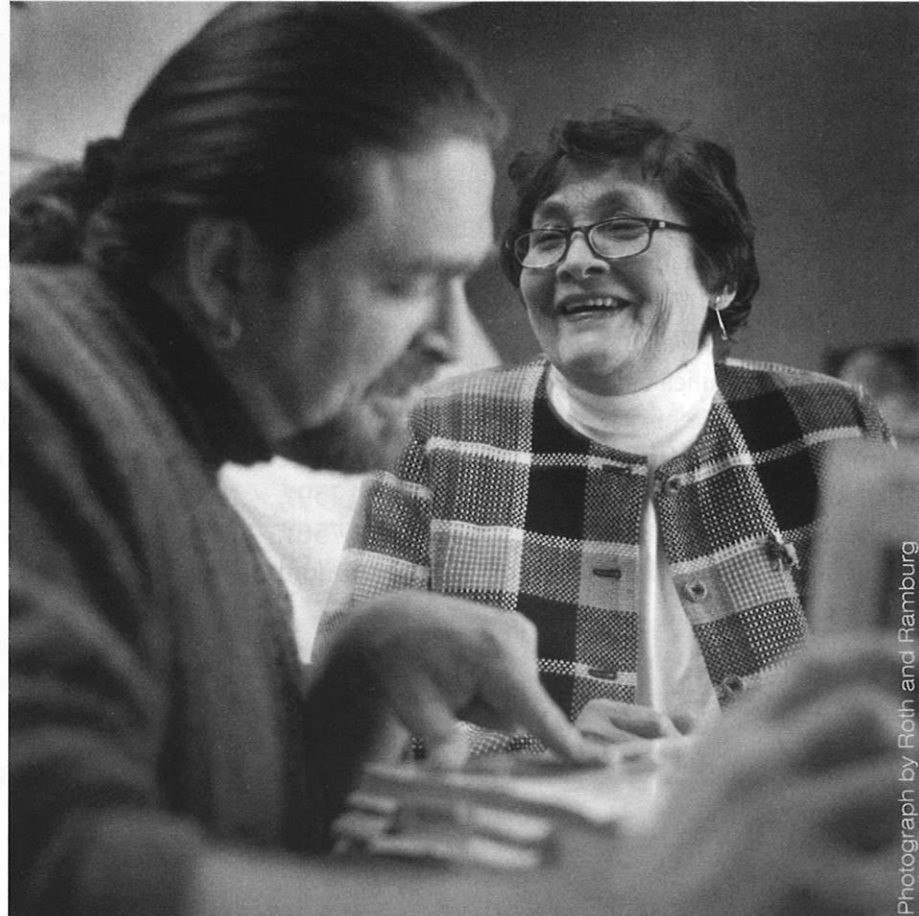
by Terrance Armstrong

I have few memories of my mother's family. In one, I am six and back in the kitchen of my childhood home. My maternal great-grandma Albertine is wearing a heavy, coarse black dress. In my memory she is very old, though her hair is jet black with only a few strands of gray. Great-grandma is sitting at the kitchen table and I am standing, facing her, my little belly pushing against her knees. She touches my face and speaks to me in a language I only hear my mom speak when her Native relatives and friends come to visit. Great-grandma seems to want an answer from me. She seems insistent, then frustrated, but I can't respond; I don't speak Cree and she doesn't speak English.

This memory always brought guilt along with sadness. Albertine died when I was still so young; I never really knew her. And when she died a door closed for my mom. With her Métis ancestry severed like an umbilical cord, my mother poured herself into her role as a middle-class housewife, Mrs. Jim Armstrong, married to an Irish-Canadian. As Métis have always done, "I adapted," she says.

My mother has the same dark skin as her relatives and my father has the same pale skin as his. I always knew that I stood somewhere in the middle. You should have seen me playing cowboys and Indians: I was forever switching sides, forever shooting myself.

As a young child, I understood the concept of mixed-blood and the joining of Aboriginal and European ancestry, but beyond that my understanding was a little mixed-up. When I came home from school



Photograph by Roth and Ramburg

Terrance Armstrong and his mother, Dorothy, look through a collection of old photographs inside the Musée Héritage Museum inside St. Albert Place.

one day and I had learned about the father of the Métis and the traitor, Louis Riel, my Métis mother looked away. I thought she was going to cry. When she finally responded she may have been counting to ten it was in the form of a rhetorical question: Do you understand we are Métis? I was confused and excited and I digested this information. There was a name for what I was? I began to define myself as Métis. But it would be many years before I embarked on a quest to rejoin my people and learn what being Métis really meant.

The Métis have been called Canada's Forgotten People. Historians agree that, the Métis, once so prized for their role in the creation of Canada, were pushed

aside once the country became a nation. The inclusion of the Métis, by name, as one of the country's Aboriginal peoples in the 1982 Canadian Constitution began to change that and some now say there is a rebirth in the Métis Nation. Perhaps it is better described as an emergence from a dark time in Canadian history.

Since 1996, when Audrey Poitras was elected as President of the Métis Nation of Alberta, over 20,000 Albertans have become card-carrying Métis, adding to the estimated 300,000 Métis across Canada. Before 1996, the Alberta Métis membership list held less than ten thousand names, Poitras says. "Our people are returning home."

It's a migration that may defy logic, as well as the odds; today home is a relative term. The western Métis define themselves as a nation within a nation with a historic homeland that reaches from Ontario to British Columbia. Except for a few Métis settlements that continue to thrive within that vast tract, the Métis occupy no specific place. Most are your neighbours in towns and cities across the country. What defines the Métis isn't a place; it's our history which unites us.

My family like all Métis can only be described as uniquely Canadian: hunters, trappers, midwives, clothing makers and entrepreneurs who adapted, lived and thrived between two worlds, but were above all Métis. My search started with little more than a few names and my mother's memories; our history lost along trap-lines and hunting trails.

My mother told me how Albertine had passed along bits of family history. I remember grandma making moccasins. She'd

sit on the floor, flat on her bottom, with her legs stretched out, sewing. That's when she'd tell me about my family. They were hard working, like all Métis and they were proud. Naha tagahkapewew [Look at that man], my great-grandmother once said to my mother, mweci apihtaw kosisan [He's handsome enough to be a Métis]! My mom smiled brightly as she shared this telling anecdote. Her memories spurred me on.

My search began in earnest when my mother handed me a faded copy of her birth certificate. It recorded that Great-grandma Albertine had delivered her somewhere on a trapline in northeastern British Columbia during the winter of 1941. A tangible connection with another time, another way of life, and a record of just one of the strong Métis women that I would meet, that piece of paper was the first of many pieces that I would find on my journey. Before my search was over, I would spend countless hours looking through libraries and community archives, sitting at my computer surfing the Net, or driving to meet long-lost relatives. Along the way and across two provinces, I bumped into countless others doing the same thing.

One of the first things I learned was that much of what I was taught in school simply wasn't true. Riel was not a traitor, nor had the Métis begun with him. In 1818 twenty-two years before Riel was born William McGillivray, chief director of the North West Company was already writing that the Métis "one and all look upon themselves as members of an independent tribe of natives, entitled to a property in the soil, to a flag of their own."

That same year, my great-great-great-great grandfather Louis

On September 27, 2002 the Métis National Council adopted a national definition of Métis which the four governing provincial bodies (Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia) that make up the Métis Nation have since ratified:

Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of Historic

Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

To become part of the Métis Nation, an applicant must present proof of his or her Historic Métis Nation ancestry through records, such as scrip, birth certificates and church records, that extend four generations into the past. Applicants must also present their own birth certificates and photo I.D.

Registration of Métis citizens is the responsibility of the provincial governing members of the Métis National Council.

Some Métis offices provide research help. Many applicants search scrip records on provincial and federal government archives online. They also consult genealogical societies and websites, libraries, churches and local archives.



Métis Leader Louis Riel, the founder of Manitoba and champion of Métis rights.



Photograph by Roth and Ramburg

Terrance Armstrong consults a map on the outskirts of St. Alberta with his mother, Dorothy.

Callihoo was paddling a North West Company canoe, taking European fur traders across the country. Louis was a Mohawk, writes Elizabeth Macpherson in *The Sun Traveller, The story of the Callihoo's in Alberta* (Musée Héritage Museum, St. Albert, Alta. 1998). According to the Jesuit records, "Alla an Nord, sy maria, y eut famille, n'en revint jamais" went North, married there, had a family there, never came back. He was born near Montreal and baptized at a Jesuit mission village that is now Ganawake. Louis eventually made his home in Alberta and began a dynasty of more than 2,000 descendants.

In those days Métis were trail-blazers who led explorers, missionaries and traders westward. They acted as middlemen between Aboriginals and the advancing Europeans, and as interpreters when treaties were negotiated. They were both bilingual and bicultural. D. Bruce Sealy writes in *The Other Natives, the Métis* (Manitoba Métis Federation Press, Winnipeg, Man., 1978). who... "pulled both ways incessantly and

sought a compromise between European and Indian ways; between paganism and Christianity between hunting and agriculture."

At the Alberta provincial archives in Edmonton, I discovered one of Louis sons, Thomas, a hunter and trapper like his father. In the Oblate Missionary records there, I found a priest's notes on the marriage of Thomas to Marie Findley in 1850. She was the daughter of a white trading post clerk and his Aboriginal country wife. And, in time, she would become my mother's great-great grandmother. The birth certificates of the couple's children were there, too, and Thomas's death certificate, dated 1874.

I unearthed the next and last mention of Marie among thousands of scrip records at the National

Archives; beside her name is her mark, an X. Starting in 1885, the Métis were granted paper scrip certificates that could be redeemed for cash or land. Each scrip was worth up to \$240, but like other Métis, Marie may have been pressured into selling it to a speculator for as little as \$70.

With her mark, Marie declared herself to be a mother, a widow and a Métis, just months after the Riel Rebellion. Signing on may have been her statement of pride and support for the Métis. Or it may simply have been a way that Marie, left alone with eight children, could feed her family.

By this time, much had changed for the Métis and what is called the "dark time" had begun. Across the Prairies, the buffalo herds, a traditional source of food, sinew and hides, were dwindling. And although the rebellion had won its major objectives land for the Métis and provincial status for Manitoba the victory was short-lived. A relentless tide of newcomers, many of whom were hostile to the Métis spread across the new

province. At the same time changes to the Manitoba Act eroded the ability of the Métis to claim their lands. In 1870, there were an estimated 10,000 Métis in Manitoba; over the next several years two-thirds or more headed west. And, dispossessed of their traditional territories, many were reduced to living on road allowances.

By the end of that century, Catherine Callihoo, one of Marie's children, had settled near Edmonton. In a 1901 census, I discovered that Catherine was then a single mother of two boys who supported her family by fishing and trapping, and making clothing, moccasins and beadwork. Astonishing to me, her annual income was listed as \$295, about five times that of many of her neighbours. Reading this census was especially moving for me: Catherine is the furthest back that my mother's memories through Albertine's stories can reach.

Like many Métis, Catherine and three generations of her family kept moving westward, away from the encroaching newcomers. During her lifetime, they continued trapping and hunting, always independent, always Métis, always proud. Mom tells me, "Grandma's moccasins and beadwork were the best I had seen, but she always said they weren't as good as Catherine's." My mom remembers Albertine laying the hide she was working with on her lap and shaking her head in wonder and saying "when I was young, I remember the white people used to come from miles around to buy [Catherine's] moosehide coats and gloves."

With each of my discoveries our family tree, as barren as a poplar in winter when I began, sprung new

life. And its roots penetrate deeper into the Canadian soil than I could have ever imagined. The union of Aboriginals and Europeans gave birth to the Métis Nation just as it gave birth to Canada. In a country now known for its diversity, the Métis may have been the first multicultural Canadians.

As I filled out the papers to become a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, I felt that I was ending one journey and beginning another. Following the lives of my ancestors had proved so difficult that sometimes I had almost given up. From time to time I would call my mother to report something I had found. I would hear her emotion filled voice, saying "I didn't think it was possible," and knew I would keep going. But now my original reasons for starting this search are obscure; I'm not the same person I was when I began.

I have discovered that I have a past and I have a future that has been shaped, even before I was born, by my ancestors. I feel that I can speak to them now, that they are giving me choices I never knew I had. I feel like I'm at a family reunion; I may have lost touch for a time, but my Métis culture was there, waiting for me to find it. I'm learning, but I still have a long way to go.

In my research, I came across a quote from Louis Riel that stays with me. In 1875, on the day this great Métis leader was to begin a five-year exile from Canada, he stood before his people in Manitoba and told them, "Pray that God may preserve the little Métis nation, and cause it to grow and remain faithful to its mission." I think of this and wonder if my great-grandma Albertine was telling me something like this in the kitchen that day.

The name Métis comes from the French word for 'cross-breed' or 'mixed'. To the Cree, Métis were known as *otepayemsuak* which means 'the independent ones'.

Although there are descendents of mixed European and Aboriginal ancestry right across Canada, the term Métis Nation refers to the Métis of the traditional homeland that stretches from Ontario to British Columbia. The Métis National Council are their elected representatives.

Once spoken by many western Métis, Michif is a language that combines French nouns with Cree verbs and some words from other Aboriginal groups.



The Métis flag (a white figure eight set sideways on a blue ground symbolizes the joining of two peoples) is said to be the oldest North American flag.

Métis fiddle music a variation on the jigs imported by the Scots and Irish is fast, furious and one-of-a-kind. The Red River Jig, Chicken Reel and Drops of Brandy are some of the best-known dances that combine waltzes and reels with native footwork.

Similar to the French-Canadian *ceinture fléchée*, the colourful finger-woven sash or arrow belt (named after its intricate zigzag design) is still worn for special occasions. Many Métis women developed their own designs, but sashes produced for sale or trade were woven to a standard pattern. Sashes woven today include several black strands signifying the 'dark time.'

Métis women customarily made all the clothing for their families. Decorating garments with intricate designs worked in European beads, the Red River Métis became known as the Flower Beadwork People.

Métis Youth Achiever

Shirra Letendre

by Shirra Letendre

My name is Shirra Dawn Elizabeth Powder Letendre. I'm 12 years old and I live in Gunn with my Mama and Papa, Carol Letendre and Ambrose Fisher. I have a special story I'd like to share with you about a really nice surprise I had at the end of the last school year.

First let me tell you about myself. I started Kindergarten at the Rich Valley School in 1997 when I was 6 years old and went to school there for 7 years. I'm very proud to tell you that I received a Perfect Attendance Certificate every year.

I consider myself to be a very athletic person and enjoy the outdoors most of the time. Some of my favorite sports are basketball, soccer, swimming and skating. For two years in a row, I tried out for the Knights of Columbus Free Throw Competitions. The first year, I won the first place medal and traveled to Barrhead, Westlock and Edmonton for competitions. The next year, I won a second place medal in Barrhead. I lost the first place medal by one basket. Can you believe it? Oh well, better luck next year.

My last year at the Rich Valley School was the most exciting of all. The end of the year was particularly exciting because, without my knowing it, the principal of the school had phoned my Mama to tell her that I was getting an award for Female Athlete of the Year. My Mama had called my Mom and Dad, Shawna Letendre and Larry Powder, again without my knowing, and invited them down for the big day. You can bet that I was really



Student achiever Shirra Letendre received seven consecutive perfect attendance awards from the Rich Valley School

surprised to see everyone there. But I was most surprised when the principal called my name and gave me the Certificate of Achievement for Female Athlete of the Year. Now, my name is on a special plaque that will hang on the wall in the Rich Valley School.

I would like to say to all students that if you work hard to achieve, you can accomplish a lot of things. Make sure you know who your friends are and if they really are your friends. Friends don't try to make other friends do things that are not right, like smoking, drinking or drugs. I will not say that I will never do them, but I will try my very best to stay away from them.

May the Great Spirit love you, guide you and protect you, and keep you in his heart.

Please call the Metis Nation of Alberta with your suggestions for the next Metis Youth Achiever to be featured in our official magazine, Otipemisiwak, Voice of the Metis Nation in Alberta. 1 800 252-7553 or (780) 455-2200.



12 year-old Métis youth, Shirra Letendre was the surprised recipient of her school's award for Female Athlete of the Year. Classmate, Terrance Schmidt, received the award for Male Athlete of the Year.

Honouring Our Métis Elders

Eva Ladouceur

by Patricia Russell

Eighty-two year-old Métis Elder, Eva Ladouceur settles back in her well-used easy chair, getting ready to talk about her life. Suddenly, with an excited burst of energy, she grabs the telephone and calls for a pickup from the DATS service for a ride to church on Sunday.

A respected and well-known member of the congregation of the Sacred Heart Church in Edmonton, it is a special place for Eva, a place where she can sing her praise to God without hesitation in the comfort of her faith. She has a favorite pew, which happens to be within earshot of the priest in the event she wants to comment on the sermon. And this Métis elder isn't shy about speaking up to share what's on her mind.

While Eva's spoken voice is strong and true, it's her comfort and willingness to publicly sing in Cree, her first language, that's attracted a considerable amount of attention. She's literally been in the spotlight, centre stage, in front of thousands of people, nationally and internationally, singing her heart out. Still, Eva says the most comfortable place for her to sing in either language is in the Sunday congregation, gathered to give thanks for God's grace. Eva says, "We have to give thanks to God all the free stuff he's given us. He's given us the trees, the birds, and all the animals. We have to be



Above: 82 year-old Métis Elder, Eva Ladouceur at the Métis Nation of Alberta's Open House in late March. Right: Strolling down Jasper Avenue in Edmonton in 1946.

thankful and not take advantage of what we have."

Eva has been singing in public since she was a 7-year old soloist in the convent choir in Fort Chipewyan. "I was in the convent for 14 months," Eva says. "The first time, I stayed four months. And then I went back for 10 months. My Dad came to get me and took me home to help my mother with my 11 month old brother, Gordon."

Eva's baptism certificate reads that she was born in Fort Chipewyan to Modeste Ladouceur and Louisa Cardinal Ladouceur. She's quick to correct the facts, saying, "I was born and baptized on the trapline at Big Point where my Dad had a house on the Athabasca River. But I was registered in Fort

Chip when I was 11 months old. That was the next time we went into town after I was born."

Jabbing her forefinger into the arm of her chair, emphasizing the point, Eva says, "I was raised with 6 brothers. I had to be tough growing up like that and it was a hard life compared to today." Jab, jab. Eva pauses for a moment comparing the past with the present; "People today don't understand what it's like to live in a world without machines. We had to rely on ourselves; we had to know how to survive, how to make do on the land. We had a garden, a couple of cows and some horses."

Another pause, another memory surfaces and brushes a smile across Eva's still beautiful face, "But you know, it was a good life, and there were a lot of good times, even during the toughest times."

Eva shuffles herself into another comfortable position in her chair and leans to the side. "You know, when I was a little girl I used to watch my Dad work and I would wonder why he did things a certain way. Things that made no sense to me. But I was young, what did I know?" Eva crosses her arms, grins, and continues, "When my Dad cleaned the barn in the winter, he didn't push all the cow dung and used hay out into the yard. He would pile everything up against the back wall and he would shape it like a wide ramp that was high at one side. And it would freeze like that. And I wondered why did he want to save all that?"

Eva continues, "And my Dad would pile the used batteries around the outside of the house. All the way around, about five feet high like an extra wall. Again I thought, how come?"

Eva goes on to describe how the main house of the Ladouceur trapline at Big Point was built on the Athabasca River delta. The rich delta soil produced robust gardens where her mother could grow a whole winter's supply of vegetables. During spring breakup, the water level would rise high enough to cover the shallow ground and replenish the soil's nutrients in preparation for another crop.

Pulling the descriptions of her childhood memories together, Eva leans forward saying, "Well, I remember one spring the ice jammed on the river and the water was coming up high and fast. So we had to move up onto the roof of the house. And we had to stay on the roof for a whole week! We had

a little tent up there to stay dry and a little stove for cooking. My cousin Felix Cardinal was with us. He and my brother, Frank, piled all our furs on the roof and that's where we stayed for a week until the water went down."

"It was amazing to see all the water and ice rushing by our little house," continues Eva. "And then it all started to make sense; I understood why my Dad put the batteries around the house. He was protecting it from the huge chunks of ice crashing and banging against the walls."

"The cows made it through the flood too," says Eva. "All the stuff my Dad piled in the barn was for the cows to walk on so they could be safe and dry. And they were up high enough to reach the hay so they could eat. That's the kind of ingenuity we had to rely on back then."

Another pause in the conversation and then she chuckles, "I remember watching a table come floating by our house. It must have come from a



Cousin Adeline Cardinal and 15 year-old Eva Ladouceur on the family trapline in 1937.

house upriver. Anyway, I laughed to see a rabbit and a skunk sitting side by side on top that table. They went floating down the river together. We laughed a lot about that, years later."

Eva's cozy living room is decorated with photographs of her children and grandchildren. One large portrait stands out from the rest of the framed pictures. It's a black and white portrait of a middle-aged Métis man with strong features, piercing eyes, and jet-black hair. "That's my Dad," Eva says pointing proudly at the image.

A table to the side of the room is crowded with memorabilia including an Esquao Award from the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. Eva graciously accepted the award in the spring as recognition for her effort to promote and preserve the Métis culture. She spoke in Cree during the awards ceremony, her language of comfort using the words she knows best.

For Eva, cultural preservation means being proud to sing and speak in her first language. She's

renowned for her sought-after talents as one of the few people always willing to sing the Canadian National Anthem in Cree. And not once go out of key.

Eva will be back in the spotlight in August, this time among her Métis family and friends when she'll be singing the National Anthem at the Métis Nations 76th Annual General Assembly in Wabasca.

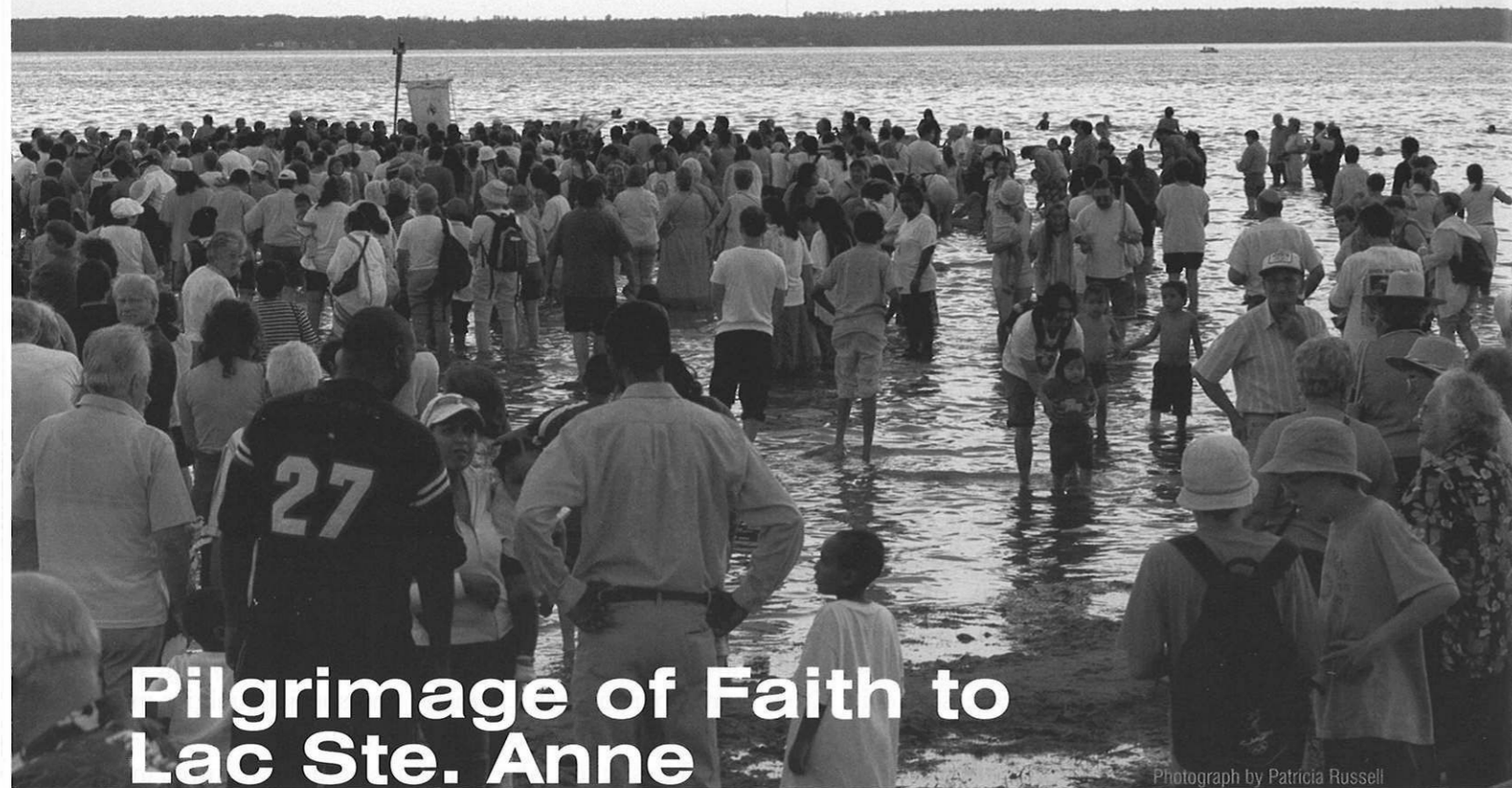
Don't be shy about asking her to autograph this page. But remember to offer tobacco in exchange for the autograph. Eva doesn't smoke but she certainly knows the importance of offering tobacco to Elders in exchange for their advice, wisdom, service or their songs.

The Métis Nation of Alberta is proud to feature the stories of our respected Elders, preserving a small part of their character and special qualities in Otipemisiwak. Please call the editor at 1 800 252-7553 to suggest who you think should be featured in the Elders' Spotlight for the next edition of the Nation's official magazine.

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Pilgrimage of Faith to Lac Ste. Anne

Photograph by Patricia Russell

by Patricia Russell

Every summer for more than 113 years, the historic Pilgrimage to Lac Ste Anne has drawn faithful Catholics of every colour and stripe to the shores of the blessed lake to visit old friends, to seek the waters reported healing powers, and to renew their faith. Except for the size of the gathering, which has grown from four hundred faithful souls to tens of thousands, Métis included, the summer of 2004 is no different. Métis from all points in Alberta and other provinces and territories come to celebrate Mass three times a day, to bathe in the water and to take part in a pilgrimage passed down one generation to the next.

Celina Olexin (nee Sanderson) has lost count of the number of times she's come to Lac Ste Anne: "Thirty years, maybe more. I come every summer for the Blessing of the Lake. I bring an empty bottle with me so I can fill it with Holy water after the Priest makes his blessing. I sprinkle the Holy water in my house and on myself when I think I need it."

Mrs. Olexin recounts memories shared by her mother, Margaret Sanderson (nee Ladouceur) of the family's annual pilgrimages from Lac La Biche to Lac Ste Anne back in the days when families travelled in a horse drawn cart. "Just imagine how long it took, at least four days, maybe five, depending on the weather. Imagine how hot it must have been wearing all those

layers of clothes. We have it so good now, with air conditioning in our vehicles. My mother said people came to Lac Ste Anne from everywhere back then."

— ∞ —
About 400 people attended that first pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne in 1889. In 2004, the pilgrimage destination is the largest annual gathering of Aboriginal people in the country.
 — ∞ —

HISTORY

Before the first Pilgrimage in the 1800's, Métis families, clans and Aboriginal tribes came to the lake called Manito Sakahigan in Cree, or Spirit Lake, for ceremonial summer gatherings around the time of the annual buffalo hunt.

Church records show that in 1841, a Métis man named Piche went to St. Boniface, Manitoba to ask the Church to send a priest to live among the Métis in this area. The following spring, the Bishop sent Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault, who spoke Cree, to live among the Métis. The "Alberta" Gabriel Dumont served as the priest's guide.

A small mission was built to house Fr. Thibault

who renamed the lake after his patroness, St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary and grandmother of Jesus. The little shack became the Oblate Priest's first permanent mission west of St. Boniface, Manitoba.

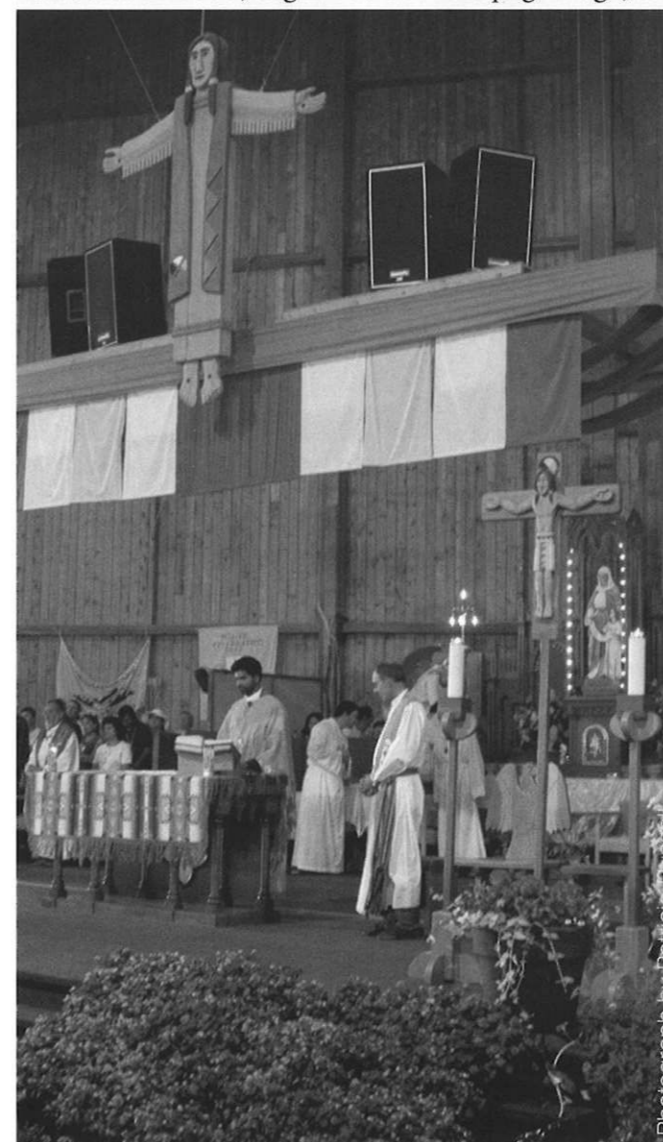
By 1887 the buffalo had disappeared, the lake lost its importance as a gathering place, and the mission was almost deserted. The Oblate Council and the mission priest, Father Lestanc, decided to close the mission. During a trip home to France, Fr. Lestanc paid a visit to the Shrine of St. Anne d'Auray and after praying there, changed his mind about closing the mission, and returned to Canada.

Father Lestanc built a new church at Lac Ste. Anne and in 1889, organized the first pilgrimage, an

old Christian practice of making a journey in faith to a sacred place seeking some blessing from God. Several hundred people came and Lac Ste Anne was a meeting place again.

July 2004

For six days out of the year, stores and restaurants are booming with business in Alberta Beach, a community built on the shore of Lac Ste Anne, serving customers who come to buy food, water, and other necessities - bug repellent and ice cream included. "Garage Sale" signs are everywhere, poking out of flowerbeds and lining the road like forgotten litter. The legion of signs is a hint that locals



Photograph by Patricia Russell



Photograph by Patricia Russell

Left: The Aboriginal influence over the pilgrimage to Lac Ste Anne is unmistakable with Masses held three times a day in a variety of Aboriginal languages.

Right: Celina Olexin lights a prayer candle in the shrine at Lac Ste Anne.

Facing Page: Hundreds of people move into the water hoping to receive the benefits of the lake's healing powers.

might be storing up their collectibles and junk, waiting to tempt at least one of the thousands of people who drive past and disappear in a cloud of dust heading toward the site of the pilgrimage.

Last week, it was a grassy field. This week, it's covered by a small city of tents, as many as 30,000 of the old blended with the new. State of the art, nylon, "fits your whole family" tents pitched next to traditional white canvas tents, with ropes stretched and knotted to motorhomes, like expensive tent pegs. All of these shelters covered in a patchwork quilt of blue and grey tarps, an added measure to keep out the unpredictable storms that come off the "Spirit Lake". The steady sound of hymns, prayers, and worship over the loudspeaker system remind the campers of their reason for coming to Lac Ste Anne.

The huge wooden shrine is the centrepiece of this faithful gathering. Mass is served in this shelter three times a day in Cree, Chipewyan, Blackfoot, Slavey and English. An Aboriginal version of Jesus hangs from the ceiling just above the altar. Hundreds of lit prayer candles twinkle in blue and red holders on shelves set up at either side.

∞

In May 2004, David Anderson, the former Minister of the Environment announced a designation of historical significance to the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage saying it is a place of social, cultural and spiritual Aboriginal rejuvenation.

∞

The oral history of the pilgrimage dates back to the late 1800's and is sprinkled with testimonials about the healing powers hidden in the lake and discovered by the truly faithful who are most in need of God's blessing; the sick, the infirm, and the crippled. Stories passed from one generation to the next recount incidents of miraculous healing. A mother carries her crippled child into the water, prayers are said, a blessing from the priest, and by the Grace of God, the child is able to walk out of the lake. Abandoned crutches and canes hang on the wall inside the shrine, implements left behind by the crippled or infirm who claim to have been healed by the sacred waters of the lake or by taking part in the healing Mass.



Photograph by Patricia Russell

Faithful Catholics wade into Lac Ste Anne and wait for the arrival of the Priest to offer a Blessing of the Lake, one of the high points of the annual pilgrimage.

The blessing of the lake is one of the most meaningful events of the pilgrimage. The most significant part of the ceremony takes place in the lake; the Cross, a Priest, and hundreds of people wade into the water. Elders, youth, parents with children in strollers, the disabled in wheelchairs, the infirm on crutches, they all go into the lake, some up to their ankles, others up to their waistlines, wheelchairs are pushed ahead until the occupants toes dangle in the water. Children splash around on inflatable water toys on the edge of the crowd. Overhead, thick water-soaked clouds threaten to burst. Intermittent flashes of lightening and the rumble of thunder add to the drama and energy of the scene, but the threat of rain does not deter the crowd of believers. A voice over the loud speaker jokes about how people are going to get wet either way - from the water below or from the water above.

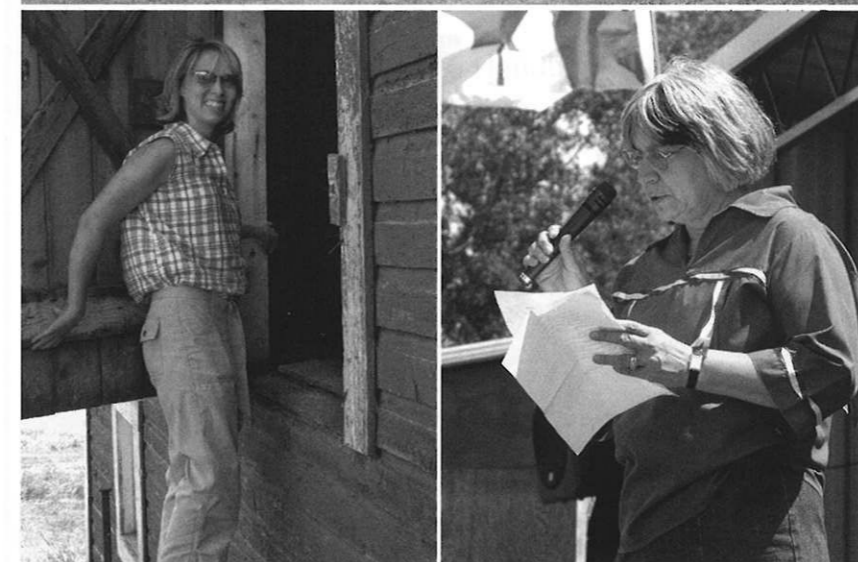
MÉTIS CROSSING

Site Blessing at Métis Crossing

by Patricia Russell

Members of the Victoria Landing Development Board picked a sunny June afternoon to hold a special ceremony blessing the Métis Crossing site near Smoky Lake. Hundreds of people including Métis Elders, leaders, dignitaries, children, and neighbours came to the afternoon event. Activities included

speeches, music, dancing, food, and conversation with old friends. These people were drawn together as a part of the development of Métis Crossing. Métis Elder Francis Dumais said a prayer in Cree asking for a blessing over the site and Pipe Carrier Eric Nystrom held a pipe ceremony.



Top: Guests at the Métis Crossing site blessing mill around the historic barn which will be restored and turned into a visitor service centre.

Bottom Left: Métis Crossing Project Manager Juanita Marios.
Bottom Right: Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras.

Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras says "Its wonderful to see a dream of the Métis Nation begin to take shape here at Métis Crossing. Many Alberta Métis can trace their history back to this area to the days of the fur trade and the opening of western lands to Canada." The historic area was the site of a large Métis community in the 1800's built around a major stopping point on the Victoria Trail, one of the oldest roads in Alberta. Traces of the Victoria Trail are still apparent at Métis Crossing; long, winding indentations in the ground lead towards the North Saskatchewan River, showing the route taken by Red River Carts heading to the steamboat and ferry landing.

The Métis Nation has ambitious plans for restoring the area to its former glory. Métis Crossing is being developed into a Métis Cultural Heritage Interpretive Centre using a Centennial Legacies Grant worth \$1 million dollars from the provincial government. The Belcourt-Brosseau Foundation also contributed \$620,000 for the purchase of the land, which was completed in 2001.

According to Project Manager Juanita Marios, the site plan will take a phased approach to development; the first will be complete in time to celebrate the provincial centennial next

Congratulations to the First Métis Female Athlete to Qualify for the Boston Marathon



AUDREY POITRAS
President

Métis Nation of Alberta
"Together We Will Continue To Build a Strong Métis Nation"



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100 Della Gray Building, 11738 Kingsway, Edmonton, Alberta T5G 0X5
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Gloria Gladstone
Okotoks, AB

Dear Gloria; *Gloria*

July 14, 2004

As President of the Métis Nation of Alberta, I am extremely proud to offer my congratulations on behalf of the entire Nation for becoming the first Métis woman to qualify to run in the Boston Marathon.

Your exceptional performance in the Calgary Marathon, running 26 miles in 3 hours and 31 minutes, is a proud tribute to your abilities as a trained and skilled athlete, determined and capable of pushing yourself as far as you can under the most physically demanding circumstances.

Gloria, your endurance through the pain and tears of the last nine miles of the race is a shining example of your Métis grit. You have found within yourself a source of determination that will carry you over great distances and help you to reach whatever personal goals you set.

Your nation, your family and your friends are behind you, Gloria. We're cheering you on, and encouraging you through the arduous training in preparation for the Boston Marathon. Congratulations.

I remain yours respectfully,

Audrey Poitras
Audrey Poitras, President
Métis Nation of Alberta



Métis Nation Economic Success - The Drilling Rig

by Patricia Russell

The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) reached a turning point in its journey towards self-sufficiency when the leadership, under the direction of President Audrey Poitras, took a chance on the Nation's own capacity and natural Métis instinct as entrepreneurs with sensible business acumen and bought a Drilling Rig. The oil and gas Drilling Rig is a concrete example of how successful our Nation can be when using the right combination of ingenuity, opportunity, reasonable risk, and foresight. In less

than two years, the rig has earned a reputation for credibility, reliability, and performance in an industry once closed to Métis.

In 2003/2004, the Nations numbered company continued on its successful start with pre-tax profits anticipated between \$850,000 and \$900,000. The declared dividends and management fees for 2002/2003 are valued at approximately \$120,000 combined and payable to the Métis Nation of Alberta. The rig will be paid off in two years and will show 11 million dollars in combined assets and retained earnings. Not shabby at all for an operation that started by scraping together the initial investment required to break into the oil and gas industry.



Photograph courtesy the Métis Nation of Alberta Archives



Photograph courtesy Western Lakota Drilling

Left: The Métis Nation of Alberta has 100% ownership of this automated TSM 7000 drilling rig which is currently under contract with Western Lakota Drilling and the EnCana Corporation. Right: President and CEO of Western Lakota Drilling, Elson MacDougald (far right) with the crew of the Métis Nation of Alberta's Drilling Rig. Twelve of the fifteen crew members are Métis, including the Rig Manager Merv Paul. (fourth from left, glasses)

The success story started more than three years ago when the Métis Nation of Alberta saw an opportunity to take part in the "Alberta Advantage", the resource rich oil and gas industry in the province. With forward-thinking determination, the leaders pushed ahead the idea of creating the Nation's own source of wealth and the ability to generate revenue and economic stability. The inspiration was bold and extreme: buy an oil rig, hire an outside company with industry connections to manage the operation, administer its business, train Métis employees and then invest the profits back into the Nation - an all around winning investment.

The leadership of the Métis Nation also saw the value of creating partnerships with companies steeped in professional expertise in the industry; companies such as the EnCana Corporation, an international leader in the industry and Western Lakota Drilling, one of the rare companies in Alberta that engages all Aboriginal groups in the province. Using financing from the Royal Bank of Canada and a training and employment contribution from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), the Métis

Nation purchased a state-of-the-art, fully automated TSM 7000 drilling rig from Western Lakota Drilling. Brand, spanking new, right out of the construction plant in Nisku.

The drilling rig is being operated under a 4-year Drilling Services Agreement with the EnCana Corporation, an agreement that guarantees revenue, jobs, and training for Métis. In conjunction with the sale of the rig, Western Lakota Drilling entered into a 5-year Management Agreement to manage the operations of the rig. The acquisition of the rig was finalized on July 22, 2002. Five days later, on July 27, and rather unceremoniously, the rig began drilling holes in the Greater Sierra gas field in north-eastern BC.

Since then, innovative and practical additions have been made to the rig allowing it to continue meeting and exceeding industry standards. The Nation has kicked it up a notch by building into the rig the capability to drill horizontally as well as vertically. The rig is now out-fitted with ponysubs, collars, pipe for horizontal drilling, an additional shale shaker, and a mechanical catwalk. The enhancements have increased the value of the rig by almost \$500,000 and are already paid for through rental revenue from companies willing to spend the extra money to use the latest equipment.



Western Lakota President and CEO Elson MacDougald presents MNA President Audrey Poitras with earnings from the Drilling Rig.

In terms of reputation, it's one of the two highest performing rigs in the entire EnCana fleet in northeastern BC, operating above industry standards in utilization rate and performance. The state-of-the-art rig recently drilled its 27th hole - that's more holes in one year than its nearest competitor. That kind of success translates into a reputation too valuable to be limited by the placement of a dollar figure.

Western Lakota anticipates moving the rig into the Grande Prairie region this summer where it will continue drilling on behalf of EnCana. The down time for the move is expected to be short. Western Lakota has other leads to solid contract opportunities for the

rig to continue operating while waiting for EnCana to begin its drilling season in the region.

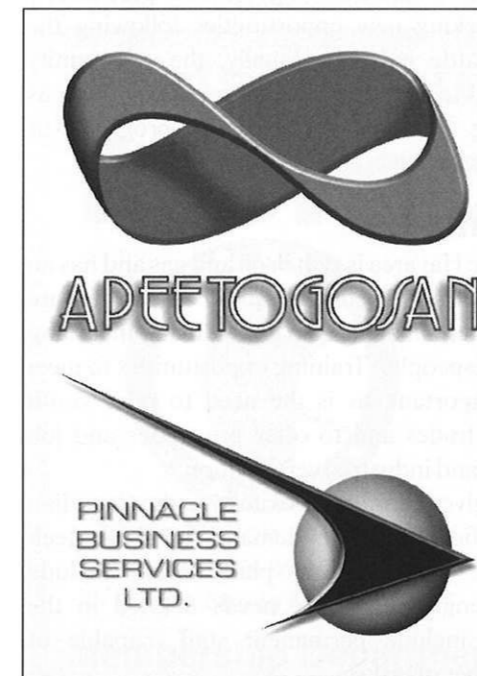
The Métis Nation's investment in the rig carries with it other economic opportunities for community businesses to take part in, opportunities separate from working as managers and employees on the rig. Numerous auxiliary rig services and spin-off industries are available for Métis investment such as a water-hauling sub-contract that's currently held by a private Métis company from the Peace River area. Other related possibilities can be tapped into through sub-contract arrangements with Western Lakota Drilling.

Still, there's more to the Drilling Rig than making and investing money. The Nation is also creating long-term investments in the Métis people it represents by including a valuable training component in the management agreement with Western Lakota Drilling. The training is possible through a government sponsored skills transfer program involving industry-training opportunities. The objective is to train skilled, qualified employees to work in the vibrant oil and gas industry as managers, drillers, motormen, and derrickmen. Since the rig went into operation, the number of Métis employees in the Western Lakota fleet has increased. Currently, 12 of the 15 employees

working on our rig are Métis, including the two most senior positions of Rig Manager and Driller. The Rig Manager, Merv Paul, was awarded the prestigious Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors (CAODC) Safety Award for 2003.

Western Lakota Drilling is expanding its range of community-based training opportunities for Métis employees. The company, with support from the Alberta Provincial Government, intends to manufacture a portable rig-training platform it will take into communities where numbers of potential rig employees are identified. It's an innovative idea to recreate field-working conditions giving trainees a realistic understanding of the expectations related to working on the actual rig.

The Métis Nation of Alberta's success in its venture into the oil and gas industry is truly paying off for the Nation as a whole, economically and socially. The financial investments and returns realized so far make Drilling Rig #3 the first profit-making venture the Nation has entered into over the course of its 76-year history. We have kicked open the door to economic self-sufficiency and are moving beyond the turning point in our journey towards independence.



Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc. provides repayable term loans for all types of business enterprises including Commercial Mortgages. Part of our role within the Métis Nation of Alberta is to assist individuals in applying for federal funding support through the various contribution programs of Aboriginal Business Canada.

If your goal is to become an entrepreneur, be your own boss and dictate your own financial path, we can possibly be the answer to your dreams. We can help you build a realistic business plan that will assist you in creating a viable and profitable enterprise. We will also help you in applying for a government contribution that will assist with some of the financial costs of getting started. We will assist you by providing a loan to cover the balance of your start-up costs.

Call or write to us today! Our staff will be more than pleased to help you realize your entrepreneurial goals.

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T5N 2N4

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Region III Strategic Planning

by Guido Contreras



Guido Contreras is a Labour Market Development Manager with the Métis Nation of Alberta.

The Region III Labour Market Development Unit (LMDU) and the Economic Development Office (EDO) partnered with all the Métis Locals in the Region to develop an extensive consultation with Métis people to establish a 5 year Strategic Plan. The intent of this consultation was to set the strategic direction for the next five years.

The consultation itself allowed LMDU and the EDO to increase capacity within the Locals and to enhance their visibility within the community. The Locals enthusiastically took charge of their responsibilities by organizing meetings, distributing surveys, conducting interviews, and hosting community workshops.

The logistics of coordinating a region-wide plan involved the Locals and a consulting group, which allowed us to tabulate opinions received in 400 returned surveys. Community consultation meetings were hosted in: Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Stettler (with Drumheller), Red Deer, Rocky Mountain House, Brooks, and Calgary (with Black Diamond)

In order to account for the vast differences between economic opportunities and the labour market in the region, LMDU divided the region into four quadrants. Each quadrant is linked to a main city (for example



Marlene Lanz is the Vice-President of Region III



Red Deer and area includes the cities of Red Deer, Rocky Mountain House, Stettler, Drumheller and surrounding communities) and priorities were set to optimize the opportunities inherent in each quadrant. The following indicate some of the priorities identified by the communities:

Lethbridge

Four main areas of need were defined in the Lethbridge area, which includes cultural recognition, education, training, and autonomy - to have a recognized Métis identity and not to be thought of as "natives."

Given the excellent potential for tourism, Métis in the region say there is a need to enhance opportunities for traditional culturally-based tourism and activities associated with tourism. Apprenticeship and the trades were found to be key to the community, as was increasing training opportunities for middle-aged Métis, particularly those who are seeking new opportunities following the collapse of the cattle industry. Finally, the community identified the need to enhance current programs, such as university funding, by either extending the programs or making them more flexible.

Medicine Hat

The Medicine Hat area is rich in oil and gas and has an extensive agricultural industry. Labour shortages are forecasted for all areas of the oil and gas industry, including trucking and tradespeople. Training opportunities to meet the demand is important, as is the need to raise youth awareness of the trades and to offer pre-trades and job readiness training and industrial certification.

In addition, given the close proximity to the Canadian Forces Base Suffield and the demand for high tech professionals, the new strategic plan should include researchers and engineers. The needs defined in the agricultural field include permanent staff, capable of performing a number of tasks.

As in all other sub-regions, Métis in Medicine Hat and area stressed the need to maintain the educational programs currently in place in order to meet the demands of highly skilled jobs. While they view health issues as important, the community also identified problems of under employment in this field.

Red Deer

The Red Deer area has a diverse range of industries. For example, there is extensive logging, forestry, tourism, and oil and gas in the vicinity of Rocky Mountain House. The City of Red Deer is a fast growing community that serves an extensive area in central Alberta. Industry and supporting services to the forestry and oil and gas industry are key components. Stettler has expanding oil and gas and agriculture.

In order to meet the demand in this quadrant, the community recommended training programs in the trades, oil and gas, and construction. They also emphasized the need to increase Métis entrepreneurship. For example, around the Stettler area, where one of the oldest historical Métis settlements existed, the community has the prospect of improving access to Buffalo Lake, which offers many opportunities in tourism related activities.

The Métis community needs to create or build upon existing partnerships with ATCO, Enmax, oilrigs, construction companies, the City of Red Deer, and the tourism industry. Enhancing these partnerships and linking them to training will allow Métis access to key sectors in the area.

Calgary

Calgary is one of the largest metropolitan cities in Canada. It is also the tourism gateway and the gateway to other industries with many of their head offices located in the city. Calgary is in the midst of an economic boom due to its wide recognition. There's a shortage of skilled workers in areas such as the trades, health, industry and education.

This extensive exercise in community consultation has provided LMDU with the guidance needed to implement programs targeting key industry sectors. As a result, Region III LMDU will implement an extensive agenda over the next few years to meet the demands of industry and the Métis community.

Partnering with Métis Locals in Region III was a successful endeavour reinforcing the Métis Nation of Alberta at the forefront of AHRDA delivery in Canada by developing programs and services from the bottom up.

www.albertametis.com

Update your Métis Nation of Alberta Membership

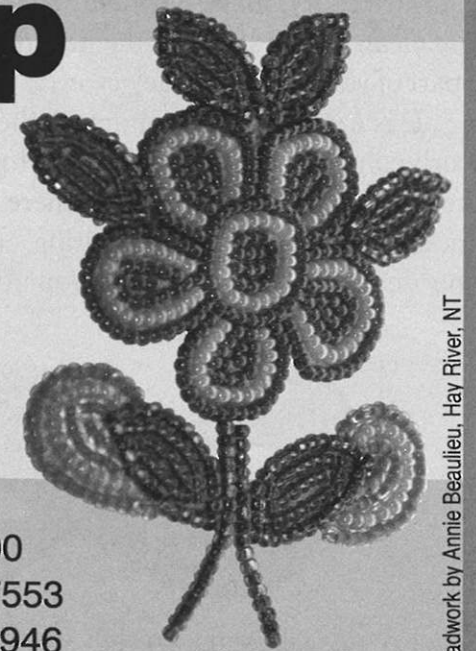


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 To Build A Strong Métis Nation."*

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Beadwork by Annie Beaulieu, Hay River, NT

Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc. Starting Your Own Business



by George Vass

At one point in time or another all of us have thought about starting our own business, even if this was only a part time business on evenings and weekends. There are many people who

have taken that thought and turned it into reality.

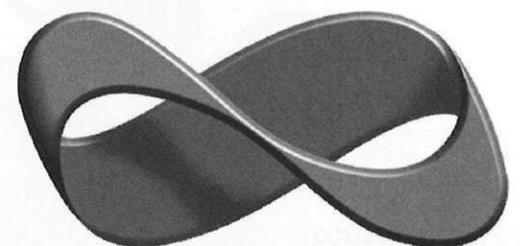
The road to self-employment and perceived independence is a long and demanding one. It takes determination and perseverance, and a lot of long hours. Running a business is not a 9 to 5 job; many successful business owners have to put in 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week. Your day does not end when the customers go home. You now have to balance your daily receipts, prepare your bank deposit, keep track of the payroll, check your inventory, make payments to your suppliers, and clean up the store for the next day. This is just a part of your daily routine!

It is easy to say that much of the background work can be done by hired help. However, if you are just starting out in business there is usually not enough cash flow to begin hiring employees. As one descriptive adage goes, 'you ARE the chief

cook and bottle washer'. Likely, as time progresses and your company grows, there will come a time when many of the necessary but mundane duties can be delegated to others. But even though you may have reached a stage in the growth of your business where you can afford the luxury of hiring employees to share the workload, you must now oversee the quality of their work. You must be certain that all of your hard work and the time dedicated to the development of your small business is not in vain.

Think outside the box and every day look for opportunities that will help you to stay in business.

Providing excellent customer service is one of the primary reasons that people will deal with your business. If your employees do not provide that same kind of top quality customer service as you do, sales will fall off and all of the hard work you have done to build up your business may be lost.



APEETOOGOSAN



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Just think about how you want to be treated when you enter a place of business, and how you feel after you leave. Think about the customer service you've received - is it poor or non-existent? In most instances, if the service is poor you will never go back to that business. This is how the majority of us feel. Therefore, it is vital to the growth of your business that you hire people that will work with you, and not against you.

The success of your business is determined to a large extent on how hard you are prepared to work. Managing your company's cash flow is another deciding factor of success, and an area that must be monitored carefully. The strength and growth of your business can be determined by how much cash you retain or reinvest into the business. It may be difficult at times, especially during the initial stages of the development of your business, not to pay yourself first. Especially after all of the long hours and stressful nights you've spent trying to balance the budget. But you must restrain yourself from drawing large sums of money out of

your business. In the long run it will pay off.

To ensure that you keep on track from the very beginning of your project it is imperative that you develop a business plan. The quality and completeness of your business plan will determine how successful you will be. The business plan is your guide to success and should be revisited every three to six months at least to ensure that you are meeting or exceeding the goals of your business plan. While the business plan helps you in obtaining financing for your business, it also serves as your roadmap; setting out the path you must take. As your business grows, you need to take time each year to review the parts of the plan that may be redundant or have not met your expectations, as well as look at other options to enhance your business. A key to the growth of your business is diversification - think outside the box and look every day for opportunities that will help you to stay in business.

Remember! You are your business and only you can make your business a success.



Receptionist, Pam Callioux also takes on the additional task of mailing out almost 3000 copies of our official magazine, *Otipemisiwak - Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta*. The magazine is free to Métis in Alberta. Call the Métis Nation of Alberta at 1 800 252-7553 to speak to Pam about putting your name on the official mailing list. Pam will be sure to put a copy of the magazine in the mail for you.

Métis Nation of Alberta Promotes HIV/AIDS Community Awareness

by Fran Hyndman

The Métis Nation of Alberta's Minister of Community Development, Marlene Lanz, is proud to announce the launch of another HIV/AIDS awareness project under the Aboriginal Community Development component of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Strategy.

The new project is called "Increase Your Knowledge, Reduce Your Risk: An HIV/AIDS Education & Awareness Workshop for the Métis Nation of Alberta" and will provide culturally sensitive HIV/AIDS training sessions to MNA Provincial Council members. The goal of the project is to increase their knowledge of HIV/AIDS and its impact on Métis communities and identify how they can address HIV/AIDS issues in their own communities.

The former Federal Minister of Health, Pierre Pettigrew, sent a letter to the Métis Nation of Alberta stating "Congratulations on your well thought-out project. I am confident that it will contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Aboriginal Community Development component of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Strategy."



Denise Lambert, HIV/AIDS Project Consultant; Marlene Lanz, MNA Minister of Community Development; Lina Racine, Program Consultant Health Canada HIV/AIDS Division; Fran Hyndman, MNA Tripartite Policy Advisor

MÉTIS WOMEN

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION / ACCOUNTING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The 39-week Business Program for Métis Women at The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology includes training in administration, microcomputers and accounting.

Funding is available for eligible clients from the Metis Nation of Alberta for living costs, childcare, tuition and textbooks.



Phone (780) 963-7333 by August 13, 2004 for more information or check out: <http://www.nait.ab.ca/asokan>



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Building Healthy Métis Communities in Alberta

by Fran Hyndman

The Métis Nation of Alberta is pleased to announce that additional funding from Health Canada's Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (ADI) has been granted which will fund a second diabetes conference planned for the 2004/2005 fiscal year. The conference will be held in February 2005 and will target Metis youth between 12 and 18 years of age. Planning for the conference is underway and is being led by the MNA Youth Advisory Committee, MNA Head Office staff, and an impressive group of partners who are working together to make this conference a huge success.

In addition, Building Healthy Communities Phase IV will work to achieve further objectives that include:

- Increased awareness about diabetes;
- Promotion of diabetes prevention activities and;
- Enhanced leadership skills and information about the health profession for Métis youth.

For more information please contact Fran Hyndman, Senior Policy Advisor (Health) at 1-800-252-7553 or 780-455-2200 ext 209.



The Métis Nation's Diabetes Advisory Committee
Back (left to right): Kris Gladue, Fran Hyndman, Odell Flett, Derek Bouvier, and Amanda L'Hirondelle
Front (left to right): Sharon Carberry, Vanessa Nardelli, Julia Chalifoux, Amanda Cardinal



Living Healthy with Diabetes

Building Healthy Communities is a collection of recipes for delicious meal options prepared by diabetics and shared with a nation. Copies of the cookbook are available from the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Call 1-800-252-7553 or (780) 455-2200

Hummus

- 1 can of chick peas, drained, reserving at least 1/3 cup liquid
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 cup tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Dash of olive oil

Place the chick peas in a food processor along with the garlic, lemon juice, olive oil and some of the reserved liquid. Process until desired consistency - the texture of the finished dip is up to you - make it totally smooth or leave some texture. Stir in the tahini, salt and lemon juice to taste.

Serve with whole-wheat pita crisp, crisp crackers or French bread slices.

Recipe submitted by Fran Hyndman, Edmonton, Alberta

Asani

Aboriginal Women's Vocal Ensemble

by Debbie Houle

This Aboriginal Women's Vocal Ensemble officially formed on April 24, 1997. The group is made of up three Métis and First Nations women; Sarah Pocklington, Sherryl Sewepagaham and Debbie Houle. Their name was taken from the Cree word "asiny," which means "rock." So you could say that Asani is an Aboriginal women's rock group.

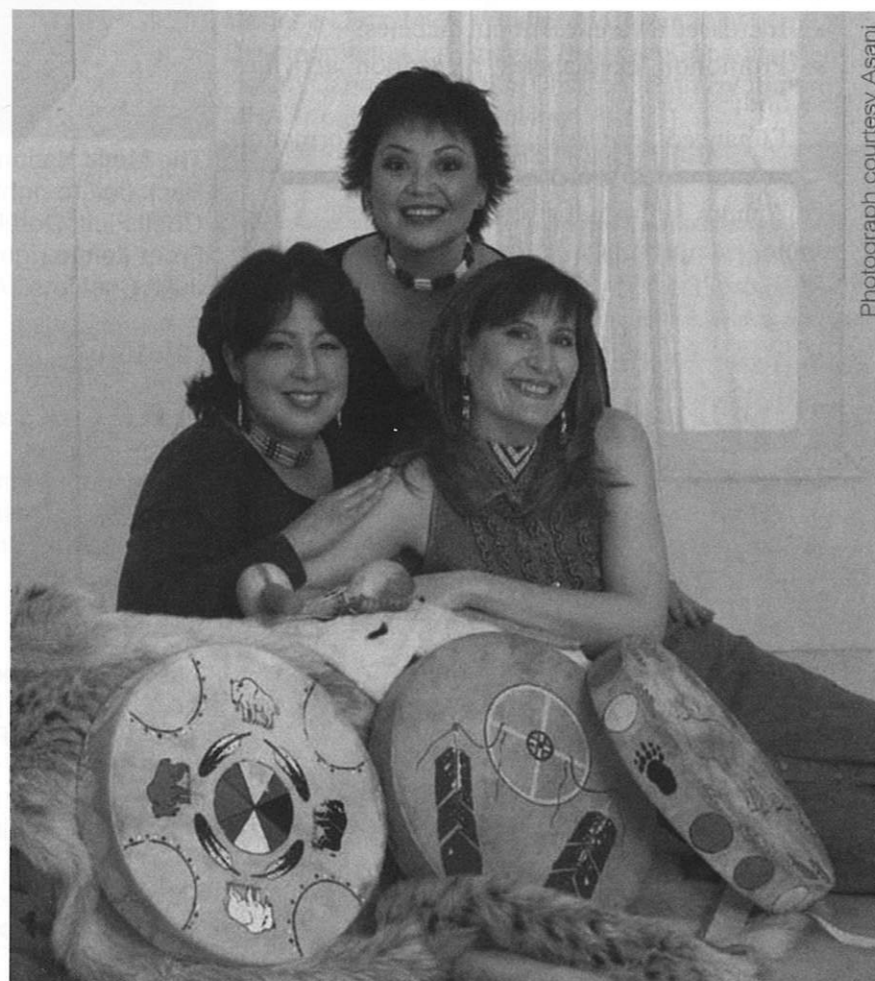
Sherryl Sewepagaham is from the Little Red River Cree Nation in John D'or Prairie in Northern Alberta. Sherryl studied classical voice and piano at the Royal Conservatory of Music at Alberta College. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Music Education at the University of Alberta and today is an elementary music educator at Prince Charles Elementary School here in Edmonton.

Sarah Pocklington is Cree-Métis and graduated from the vocal program at Grant MacEwan Community College. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English/Anthropology and a Masters Degree in Native Studies. Sarah has been teaching, developing courses, and conducting workshops in the field of Native Studies for the past 14 years.

Debbie Houle was born in Edmonton and raised in the Elizabeth Métis Settlement in Northeast Alberta. She has been singing since the age of five and studied voice briefly at the Grant MacEwan Community College in Edmonton, Alberta. For seven years she worked with the Métis

Settlement's Child & Family Services Authority and is now the Children's Services Sector Advisor for the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Asani's repertoire is comprised substantially of original compositions in Woodland Cree and English. Their musical styles encompass the spectrum from traditional songs accompanied by rattles and drums, to the contemporary sounds of jazz, folk and pop. They also perform their own arrangements of the music of Indigenous peoples around the world, including Tiddas and Ulali.



Asani: Debbie Houle (back), Sherryl Sewepagaham (left), and Sarah Pocklington (right)

Photograph courtesy Asani

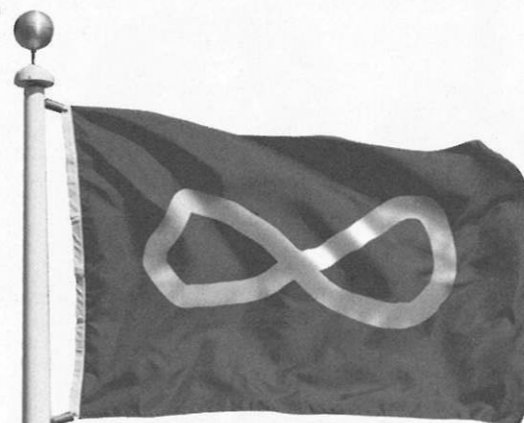


Asani performs at the Alberta Youth Achievement Awards in Edmonton

Photoby Patricia Russel

The members of Asani carry with them the traditional influences of Métis and First Nations music that has always been an integral component of their life. These women have attended several workshops offered by traditional singers and drummers where they've learned vocal and drumming styles. In addition, Asani has learned teachings about the role, place, and importance of Aboriginal music. In addition to their musical offerings, they have also developed and presented workshops locally, nationally and internationally on a variety of themes including "Education through Harmonization," "Working Together in Harmony," "Music and Arts as Tools for Transformation," and "Healing Through Music."

In July 2004 these three women travelled to Finland to perform at the Kaustinen Folk Festival and then over to Vancouver Island to perform at the Island Folk Festival. They have recorded their debut compact disc and will be having a release party later this year. For more information about Asani visit www.asani.org




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Employment & Training Assistance

Métis Nation of Alberta
1-800-252-7553



CFB Suffield Recognizes National Aboriginal Day

courtesy Region III



Photograph submitted by Jeannette Hansen

Members of the Metis Nation Region III and staff from the Miywasin Centre were invited to spend the afternoon at CFB Suffield in celebration of National Aboriginal Day. Marlene Lanz, Vice-President of Region III Metis Nation provided the opening address for this historic event.

The National flag of the Métis Nation flew and everyone stood proudly for the playing of our Metis National Anthem in front of the headquarters building at CFB Suffield.

Left: Region III Vice President Marlene Lanz delivered an opening address at a special ceremony held at CFB Suffield recognizing National Aboriginal Day. The military base honoured the Métis by flying the Métis National flag.
Below: The Métis National Anthem was played during a special ceremony held in front of the headquarters building at CFB Suffield recognizing National Aboriginal Day.



Photograph submitted by Jeannette Hansen

Featuring Medicine Hat Métis Local #8

by Jeannette Hansen, Local 8 President

The Métis Nation Local 8 resource office is now located in the Miywasin Centre at 517 3rd St. SE in downtown Medicine Hat and is open five days a week, Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30 pm over the summer months. Visitors to the Centre can tour the impressive collection of Métis artifacts the Local has put on display in the Miywasin Centre Cultural room. These include: fiddles, sashes, resource books, Red River cart, capote, moccasins, Métis flags, pictures and an assortment of Métis beadwork.

The Local continues to sponsor several activities throughout the year. Events such as our Annual Elders Appreciation banquet, Children's Christmas Party, Back to Batoche Youth Trip, Voyageur Canoe Trips for Youth, and History in the Hills Culture Camp at Cypress Hills Inter-provincial Park.

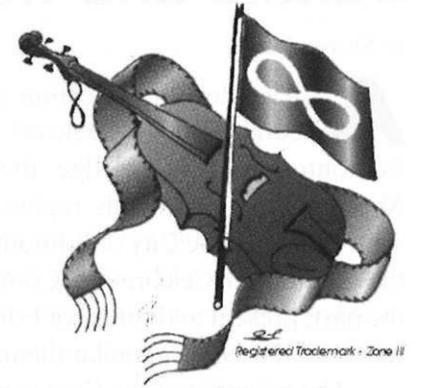
Our Local 8 membership benefits include: Leisure Centre swim passes for children and youth, scholarships at the Medicine Hat College, Summer Career Placements for Métis Students, summer barbeques, monthly potlucks, newsletters, genealogy resources, and referrals to our partner agencies for housing, counseling, youth programs and cultural programs.

This fall we will continue our partnership with Miywasin Society to deliver the Cultural Night Program, which includes michif language lessons, crafts, jigging, and fiddle lessons. This program will be available every Thursday evening, from September to June.

Our fundraising efforts include hosting one casino a year, running the concession at the Heritage Pavilion in Strathcona Park, and soon we will be selling Métis souvenirs in the Crafters Co-op in the Miywasin Centre.

Long-range goals for the Métis Local 8 include working in partnership with Miywasin Society to operate the Heritage Pavilion and to research our

Métis history by undertaking a Traditional Land Use and Occupancy study of Medicine Hat and Cypress Hills. Our research will also take us into Montana. The information gathered would be displayed at the Heritage Pavilion, where we plan to set up a Métis Museum. We have also established an Elders' Lounge, complete with comfy leather couches and free coffee, a place where storytelling is encouraged and our Elders are always welcome.



Photograph by Jeannette Hansen

Artifacts on display in the Cultural Room of the Miywasin Centre in Medicine Hat.

Asokan Project

Celebrating Aboriginal Women's Culture and Training



by Sharon Moren

Asokan Project is hosting a "Back to the Nest Reunion 2004" weekend on August 20-22 in Edmonton to acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people to this region. 2004 is the 100th Anniversary of the City of Edmonton and the theme of the Edmonton Celebration Committee is honouring the past, present and future of Edmonton. The Asokan reunion is based on a similar theme.

The meaning of the Cree word 'asokan' is bridge, reflecting Asokan Project's primary objective of bridging the gap between Aboriginal women and the existing labour market. The reunion will bring together program graduates including Métis, First Nations and Inuit from the past, whose divergent paths once met at NAIT and became a foundation for their success. Since 1991, approximately 260 committed and dedicated women have graduated from business programs sponsored by Women of the Métis Nation and later Asokan Project, two not-for-profit Aboriginal organizations.

Some graduates have gone on to achieve major accounting designations or become senior financial advisors and payroll managers, while others have

obtained positions where they have become an integral and valued part of the organization for which they work. The enhanced sense of self-worth and self-knowledge gained through training has had concomitant effects on the families of students.

Shelia Verbonac recognized the opportunity offered by Asokan Project and completed the Business Administration /Accounting program in 1996. Receiving a Clerk Typist Certificate after high school, Shelia had gone on to work with provincial power corporations in Saskatchewan and British Columbia for 10 years. Relocating from British Columbia to Alberta, Shelia met with challenges in her job search. She lacked formal computer training, and her work experience was limited to one area of employment. Accounting and mathematics had always held a strong interest for her in high school so Asokan Project's program appealed to her. According to Shelia, "The biggest challenge I faced was balancing homework and time with my family of three girls. Trying to focus on my homework and spend time with my children and assist them with their homework was difficult at times. One thought that was always on my mind was trying to reassure myself that I could accomplish this course."

Shelia's 8-week work placement was at Revenue Canada, now CCRA. After graduating, Shelia began working for Health Canada as an Administrative Assistant with a program called "Aboriginal Head Start" in urban areas of Alberta, the NWT and Nunavut, "Soon I was also looking after budgets and doing administrative work as I chose to focus on the financial aspect. I did this until I decided to return to school yet again." Shelia went on to complete a Diploma in Social Work in April 2003 and has since worked with



Left: Shelia Verbonac completed the Business Administration Accounting program in 1996.

Right: Diana Thordarson completed the Business Administration Accounting program in 2001.

the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FIHB) of Health Canada. In March of 2004, Shelia took on a special project to assist in planning the International Indigenous Conference for Health, Healing and Addictions to be held in Edmonton in 2006.

Shelia knows the cultural aspects/training of the Asokan program made an impact on her life and believes that aspect has led her to be involved with this conference, "The Asokan program increased not only my workplace skills, it assisted in increasing my self-confidence and pride." Shelia also realized what she was capable of with the support of other Aboriginal women. "We have the ability to make positive life choices for where we want to be in life. Believe in your own ability to accomplish whatever you have your sights set on. Never be afraid to ask for help or support; it's amazing what others have to offer. Don't give up."

Work placements are an important aspect of the Asokan Program. Cindy Castelletti, Office Manager for Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc. shares her experiences with Asokan Project's process and students, "The benefits of taking on an Asokan Project student were multiple. After observing our work placement student in action for a few days I felt

confident that she had been given the necessary skills to make a contribution to our office that would not require around the clock supervision. Not only was she able to help me in organizing the administration department, she was able to take on the tasks of the Administration Assistant. The length of the work placement component was long enough to provide potential employers with a fairly good sense of the student's present skills and their potential capabilities. Our participation with Asokan Project was a mutually beneficial relationship, and one that I would highly recommend to other employers who have the means to participate."

Diana Thordarson completed the Business Administration/Accounting program in 2000-2001. "After being out of school for 20 years, I realized I wanted to learn computer and accounting skills." Diana worked in banking and collections prior to taking the program and did her work placement at Zep Manufacturing. She went on to work for the Métis Nation of Alberta Employment Centre in Edmonton. "The Asokan program helped me become more employable and secure within myself, which helped me in acquiring the education I needed to have a fulfilling career." Diana has worked her way up to be an Employment Counsellor and says, "If you work hard, you can do anything you want."

Like the Eagle, a symbol of integrity, honesty, wisdom, spiritual understanding, beauty, freedom, and hope, these Métis women overcame their struggles, found friendships, enjoy success, re-discovered their heritage and have flown like the eagle. You are invited to join in the celebrations taking place at NAIT this August. Check the website for more information: www.nait.ab.ca/asokan.

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in your life?



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429 0675

MÉTIS WOMEN 39-WEEK BUSINESS PROGRAM

at NAIT includes training in administration, microcomputers and accounting.

Funding is available for eligible clients from the Metis Nation of Alberta for living costs, childcare, tuition and textbooks.



Phone (780) 963-7333 by August 13, 2004 for more information or check out: <http://www.nait.ab.ca/asokan>

Activities in Photos



A



B



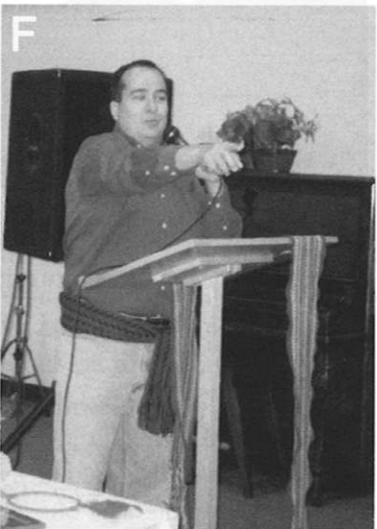
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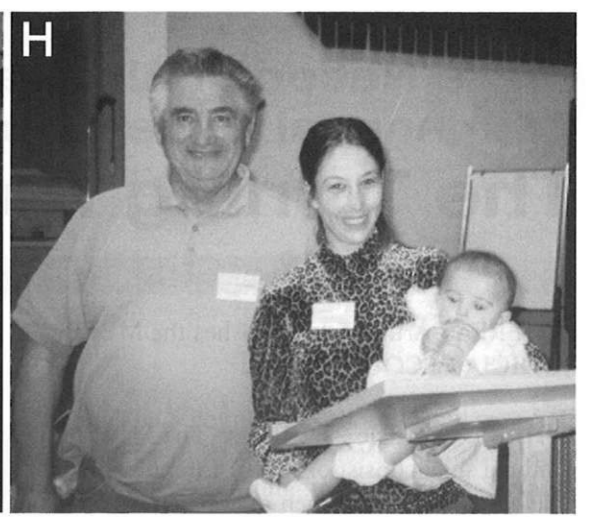
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F



G



H

A. Region VI Métis, Audrey Mitchell, from Grande Prairie entered the Ladies Traditional Dance category of the talent show at the National Aboriginal Day celebration in Peace River.
 B. Debbie Shapansky and Ruth Kidder, members of Métis Local #78 set up a Métis arts and crafts table at the National Aboriginal Day Celebration.
 C. The Red Willow Métis Dancers provided some of the entertainment at the Labour Market Development awards banquet in Peace River.
 D. Region VI held its 18th Annual General Meeting on June 12. (l-r) Regional President, Sylvia Johnson; Kim Mueller, LMD Youth Program Coordinator; Minnie Belcourt, Elder; Louis Bellrose, Regional Vice President.
 E. The Métis Nation of Alberta's Labour Market Development Unit held its annual conference in Peace River this year. Shannon Higginson, Janet Gardiner, Guido Contreras and Dave Ward at the awards banquet.
 F. MNA Vice President Trevor Gladue was the "Loonie Auctioneer" at the Region VI Annual General Meeting. Money raised from the auction went to the Marina Brothers Excellence in Education Bursary Award.
 G. Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc. annual general meeting on June 7 in Peace River. Outgoing board member Nelson Caron was acknowledged for his service and commitment to Apeetogosan. (l-r) Judy Daniels, Chair of the Apeetogosan Board of Directors; Nelson Caron; MNA President Audrey Poitras
 H. Region VI Vice President Louis Bellrose and Candice Paluck holding baby Dakota.

NESOKMAHTAN ENTERPRISES INC.

\$500.00
 Bursary
 Program

Deadline Date:
 September 30,
 2004

Investing into the future of Region VI Métis Students, Nesokmahtan Enterprises Inc. is giving students the opportunity to compete for their \$500.00 bursary program.

Please submit your letter of request to:
Nesokmahtan Enterprises Inc.
C/O Region VI Métis Nation of Alberta
9621-90 Avenue
Peace River Alberta T8S 1G8

The Métis Nation of Alberta
TOGETHER WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD A STRONG MÉTIS NATION

MNR Home Inside The MNR Métis Rights Trip/Life Labour Market Economic Development Affiliates Métis Crossing Youth Otipemisiwak
Home :: Métis Nation of Alberta :: History and Culture :: Membership :: Employment Opportunities

Welcome to The Métis Nation of Alberta!

Featured Stories

Alberta Métis Nation Leadership Supports MNC Position on the Federal Election
In an unprecedented decision fully supported by the Métis Nation of Alberta, the leadership of the Métis National Council is encouraging its Métis citizens to vote for Liberal Party candidates running in the Federal Election.
Read the full article here. >>

Métis Are A Distinct Aboriginal People
Métis leadership attending the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable in Ottawa are delighted by the Prime Minister's acknowledgement of the Métis as a distinct Nation of Aboriginal people in Canada.
Read the full article here. >>

Recognizing Region III Entrepreneurs
The Region III Council of the Métis Nation of Alberta paid honor to the region's Métis entrepreneurs.
Read about the event here. >>

News & Views

Poitras: "This is a very exciting day for the Métis people"
Read Audrey Poitras' statement to the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable.

Renewing and Transforming the Relationship between the Métis Nation and the Government of Canada
Read about the existing and future relationship between the Métis and the Government of Canada.

Paul Martin ready to rethink role of Louis Riel in Canada
Martin: "...recognition of Louis Riel's contributions to the Métis Nation and to Canada as a whole."

Louis Riel Needs No Pardon
Paul Martin's pledge to re-examine the historical place of Louis Riel has touched off an important debate.

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Check out our ARCHIVE.

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- Definition of Métis?
- Application Forms
- Genealogy
- Email Membership Department

Events:
- Coming Events

Contact Information:
Telephone: (780) 455-2200
Fax: (780) 452-8946
100-11738 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5
- Email Communications
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"Proud To Be Métis"
Métis National Anthem
[image]
Play Song

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Métis Nation of Ontario MPCBC METIS NATION OF SASKATCHEWAN

Otipemisiwak

The Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta

We encourage Métis to make submissions to our Nation's official magazine in the form of photos and articles telling stories about the events and people in your community.



Deadline for submissions is September 30

Otipemisiwak: The Voice of the Métis Nation in Alberta

Phone: (780) 455-2200 or 1(800) 252-7553 (Alberta Only)

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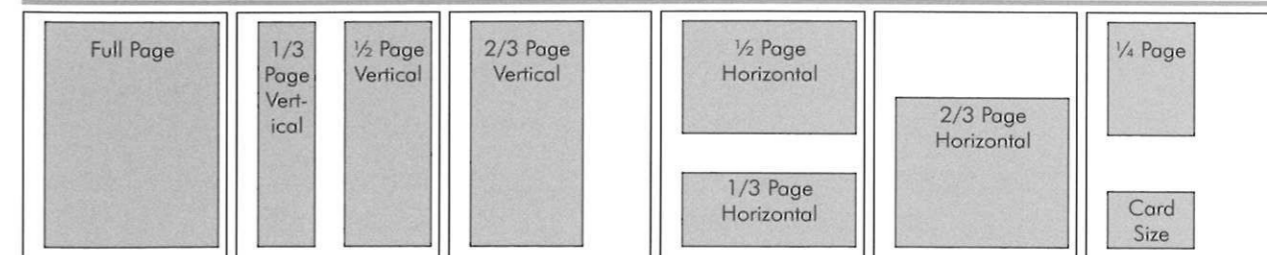
Email: communications@metis.org

#100 Delia Gray Building 11738 Kingsway Avenue Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5

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For more information on these rates, please contact Otipemisiwak at the Métis Nation of Alberta. Note that ads appearing on the back cover are in colour and are subject to a surcharge.

	AD DIMENSIONS		RATE PER ISSUE
	width	depth	
Centrefold	16 inches	10 inches	\$1,470
Full Page	7 ¼ inches	10 inches	\$788
2/3 Page Horizontal	7 ¼ inches	6 ⅝ inches	\$590
2/3 Page Vertical	4 ¾ inches	10 inches	\$590
½ Page Horizontal	7 ¼ inches	5 inches	\$513
½ Page Vertical	3 ⅝ inches	10 inches	\$513
1/3 Page Vertical	2 ⅜ inches	10 inches	\$395
1/3 Page Horizontal	7 ¼ inches	3 ¼ inches	\$395
¼ Page	3 ⅝ inches	5 inches	\$263
Card Size	3 ⅝ inches	2 ½ inches	\$133



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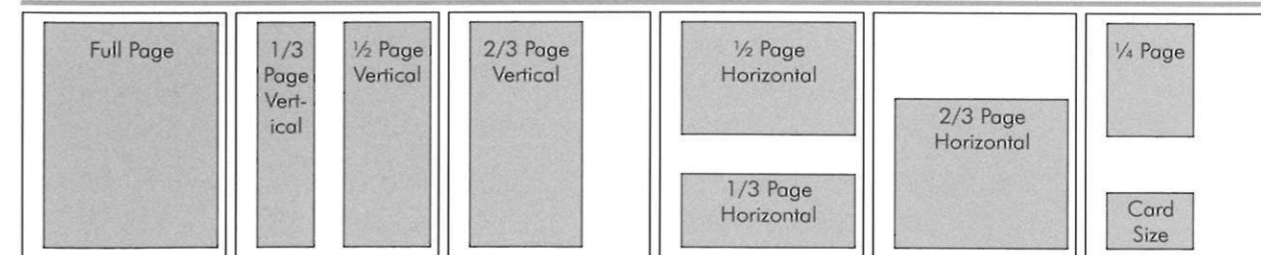
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¼ Page	3 ⅝ inches	5 inches	\$263
Card Size	3 ⅝ inches	2 ½ inches	\$133



National Definition of Métis

As Adopted at the MNC's 18th AGA in Edmonton, AB
September 27th - 28th, 2002

1.1 "Métis" means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of Historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Defined Terms in National Definition of Métis

1.2 "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland.

1.3 "Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-breeds as they were then known.

1.4 "Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within the meaning of s.35 of the Constitution Act 1982.

1.5 "Distinct from other Aboriginal peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.