



# Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta

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## Office of the President

February 3, 2024

Shannon Dunfield  
Otipemisiwak Métis Government  
Citizens' Council Representative  
Grande Prairie Métis District

### **RE: Mandate Letter for Citizens' Council Representatives**

Dear Representative Dunfield:

Once again, congratulations on your election as the Representative for the Grande Prairie Métis District on the first elected Citizens' Council of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. As President of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, I look forward to working with you and your fellow Citizens' Council colleagues as we continue to implement the inherent rights our ancestors fought and died for.

As a Citizens' Council, it is our collective duty to uphold, implement, and advance the purpose, goals, and responsibilities of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution (Constitution). By working together, I look forward to advancing the rights of the Métis Nation within Alberta and improving the lives of our Citizens, families, and communities.

In order to assist you in undertaking your important new role, this letter sets out some important history and background about our government, our collective roles and responsibilities as a Citizens' Council, and some priorities for our four year mandate, as well as your personal roles and responsibilities as a Citizens' Council Representative.

### **The History and Evolution of Our Self-Government**

For over two centuries and since the days of Louis Riel, the Métis Nation—as a distinct Indigenous People—has fought to have our nationhood, identity, and rights, including our inherent rights of self-determination and self-government recognized by Canada.

Since the early 1900s, and, after Canada's 'Halfbreed scrip system' dispossessed our people in what is now known as Alberta, our ancestors and communities came together, as the Métis Nation within Alberta, to exercise and implement our inherent rights of self-determination and self-government.

Throughout our history, our ancestors created and mandated various democratic governments to represent the Métis Nation within Alberta. In 1928, they first established L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest, which then became

the Métis Association of Alberta, the Métis Nation of Alberta, and ultimately the Otipemisiwak Métis Government as a part of our self-government journey.

For close to a century, our Alberta Métis-created self-government structures have been mandated to put in place a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada. Unfortunately, until recently, the federal government failed to recognize our Métis government as a government.

This is why the self-government agreements negotiated and signed with Canada in 2019 and 2023 are so significant. Through these legally binding agreements, Canada formally recognized our Métis government as an Indigenous government. While we always knew we were already a Métis government, Canada no longer denies this reality.

This is also why Bill C-53 is so important. Once Bill C-53 is passed, it will confirm in federal law, once and for all, that we are a Métis government. Our next step after Bill C-53 passes is to negotiate a modern-day self-government treaty with Canada that will be constitutionally protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

By reaching a constitutionally protected modern day treaty with Canada, we will finally secure the nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship many of our ancestors fought and died for, as well as ensure the protection and continuation of our people and nation forever, as embodied in our Infinity Flag.

### **The History and Context for Our Constitution and Government**

While the Métis Nation within Alberta has always possessed the inherent rights of self-determination and self-government, our previous governments relied on corporate bylaws to govern our affairs, instead of having a constitution developed and ratified by our Citizens as Métis law. This was always a missing piece in our self-government.

For generations, our Citizens and communities had repeatedly called for a constitution—as Métis law—to be developed and ratified by our Citizens and communities. After years of consultations, in November 2022, our Constitution was ratified by our Citizens in the largest ratification vote ever undertaken by an Indigenous nation in Canada.

In this historic ratification vote that spanned an entire month, all our Citizens had an opportunity to vote on our Constitution at the ballot box, online, or via mail in ballot. Of those Citizens that voted, an overwhelming 97% voted in favour of adopting our Constitution.

In September 2023, the first province-wide election under our new Constitution was held. Again, our Citizens came out in record numbers to show their support for the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and to exercise their democratic rights. This province-wide election recorded the largest voter turnout for any election ever held by a Métis Nation government.

These historic milestones demonstrate the tremendous support the Otipemisiwak Métis Government has from our Citizens and communities. Today, we have over 65,000+ Citizens who willingly mandate the Otipemisiwak Métis Government as their government. Notably, we have the largest citizenship registry within the entire Métis Nation.

As the first elected Citizens' Council, we have a heavy burden to uphold the trust that has been placed with us as well as work to honour and implement the Constitution that was developed by our people; for the betterment of our people.

## **Our Constitution and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government**

### ***The Seven Parts of Our Constitution***

Our Constitution—as Métis law—establishes the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. Our Constitution has seven distinct parts. These include:

1. Foundational Principles
2. Our Métis Bill of Rights
3. Overview of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government
4. Our Relationship to the Alberta Metis Settlements
5. The Importance of Métis Lands
6. The Officers and Institutions of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government
7. General Provisions

### ***Foundational Principles (Part 1)***

Part I of our Constitution affirms that the Métis Nation is a distinct Indigenous people with a defined Homeland, the Métis Nation within Alberta is a part of the larger Métis Nation, the Métis Nation within Alberta mandates the Otipemisiwak Métis Government as its government, and that our Constitution is our highest law.

In our Constitution, the “Métis Nation within Alberta” includes all our Citizens as well as our communities and territories throughout Alberta. In order to become a Citizen, an individual must meet the following definition for Métis Nation citizenship:

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.

While our Constitution recognizes there is only one Métis Nation that spans the three prairie provinces and extends into contiguous parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the northern United States, it is *only* our government—the Otipemisiwak Métis Government—that represents the Métis Nation *within* Alberta.

Consistent with our Constitution, we are now using the terminology of the Métis Nation *within* Alberta, instead of Métis Nation *of* Alberta, because this language better reflects

the reality that there is only one Métis Nation and that we represent a distinct part of the larger Métis Nation (i.e., the Métis Nation within Alberta).

It is also important to remember that there have always been various Métis governments that represent different Métis collectivities that make up the Métis Nation. No entity from Manitoba (or elsewhere) has ever—or will ever—speak for our Citizens and communities here in Alberta. Our government has been built by Alberta Métis for Alberta Métis.

### ***Our Métis Bill of Rights (Part 2)***

It is telling that right after we set out who we are—as the Métis Nation within Alberta—in Part I of the Constitution, our Métis Bill of Rights is then set out in Part II of our Constitution.

The protection of both the individual and collective rights of our Citizens and the Métis Nation has been a constant theme in our 200+ year history as an Indigenous people. A Métis List of Rights formed the basis for our ancestors' negotiations with Canada back in 1869/70.

This Part of our Constitution sets out fundamental rights that each of our Citizens hold as individuals, as well as the rights our Citizens and communities, which make up the Métis Nation within Alberta, hold collectively.

As we undertake our work as a Citizens' Council, we must work together to ensure we respect, advance, and uphold these Métis rights. Our history shows that many of our ancestors gave their lives to uphold these fundamental Métis rights.

As a Citizens' Council, we must honour their sacrifices by ensuring we protect, advance, and honour these individual and collective rights, which Métis hold so dear.

### ***Overview of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (Part 3)***

#### ***Our Government's Purpose***

As set out in Part III of our Constitution, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's purpose is anchored on three foundational pillars:

1. Improve the well-being of our Citizens and communities;
2. Advance, protect, and secure the Métis rights, interests, and claims of our Citizens and communities; and
3. Provide fair, responsible, transparent, and accountable representation for our Citizens and communities.

## *Our Government's Goals and Responsibilities*

Our Constitution sets our clear goals and responsibilities for our government. This list was extensively debated, added to, and reviewed as a part of the consultations on the Constitution. It must guide our work as a Citizens' Council.

As per Section 13.2 of the Constitution, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's goals and responsibilities are:

- a) To protect the planet, land, water, animals, and environment for future generations, including our relationship and responsibilities to all things;
- b) To repatriate, secure, and protect lands, resources, cultural artifacts, and sacred sites for the benefit of the Métis Nation within Alberta, its Citizens, families, and the communities of its Territories;
- c) To protect and promote Métis traditional and cultural knowledge;
- d) To advance and secure the recognition of Métis rights and interests within Alberta and Canada;
- e) To research, publish, and preserve the distinct history of the Métis Nation within Alberta's places, families, and communities of its Territories;
- f) To maintain a single, credible, objectively verifiable, and non-political Register of Citizens for the Métis Nation within Alberta;
- g) To build and maintain mechanisms, structures, and Institutions to enable the Métis Nation within Alberta to be independent and self-determining;
- h) To operate in a transparent and fiscally responsible manner;
- i) To enable Citizens to pursue their best life based on their own personal choices and spirituality.
- j) To improve the quality of life of Citizens by providing social, economic, spiritual, cultural, public safety, justice, and health supports that are specifically designed and tailored for their unique needs and realities;
- k) To ensure Citizens have meaningful ways to be consulted and participate in the initiatives of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government at all levels;
- l) To provide mechanisms for dispute resolution that promote reconciliation and the restoration of good relations;
- m) To ensure the distinct voice of the Métis Nation within Alberta is heard nationally and internationally;
- n) To collaborate with other Métis governments to coordinate delivery of programs and services to Citizens;
- o) To work with other Indigenous peoples and their governments by supporting, building, or rekindling relationships, kinships, confederacies, and alliances; and
- p) To maintain productive relationships with all levels of Canadian government in pursuit of reconciliation through collaborative partnerships.

As a Citizens' Council we must do our best to make tangible progress on each of these goals and responsibilities over our mandate.

## *The Four Branches of Our Government*

Within the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, there are four different branches that are each mandated to respect and uphold our Constitution, as well as work together while respecting each branch's separate and distinct roles and responsibilities.

The four branches that make up the Otipemisiwak Métis Government are:

1. **The Citizens' Gathering:** This institution continues our longstanding Métis self-government tradition of our Citizens coming together in the summer to share in Métis history, culture, and traditions. The annual gathering also provides an opportunity for all Citizens to be updated on the work of their government and have the opportunity to have their voices heard in between province-wide elections by asking questions, providing their views, and tabling proposals.
2. **District Councils:** These are the 22 democratic self-government structures that will represent our Citizens and Métis communities for the purpose of good governance and effective representation at the District (i.e., local) level. District Councils deal with all matters that are in their express authority and responsibility as set out in Chapter 15.7 of our Constitution. Some of these matters include consulting with Citizens in a District on issues within their jurisdiction; overseeing Institutions to develop and deliver programs and services to Citizens living in a District; administration of the business of a District; consultation and accommodation with Alberta, Canada, industry, and third parties in relation to Métis rights; dealing with Métis land related issues in a District, and other matters. Where no District Council has been established or a District Council declines to undertake its authorities under the Constitution, the Citizens' Council is authorized and responsible to undertake these matters.
3. **The Citizens' Council:** This 25-member provincial self-government structure is comprised of an elected President, Women's Representative, Youth Representative, and Citizens' Representatives from each of the 22 Districts that make up the Métis Nation within Alberta. Each Citizens' Council Representative is responsible for representing the rights, interests, and claims of the Citizens in their respective District in relation to matters not assigned to their District Councils and for working with other members of the Citizens' Council to advance the purpose, goals, and responsibilities of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. The authority and responsibility of the Citizens' Council is set out in Chapter 16.19. In addition, the Citizens' Council has the "exclusive power to enact laws in relation to all aspects of the inherent jurisdiction and rights of the Métis Nation within Alberta and all matters falling with the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's purpose, goals, and responsibilities" as set out in Chapter 16.20 of our Constitution.
4. **The Judicial Branch:** This branch resolves disputes arising within the Otipemisiwak Métis Government related to citizenship, elections, the validity, application and interpretation of Otipemisiwak Métis Government laws, regulations, policies, actions, and decisions as well as other matters that have

been assigned to it through an Otipemisiwak Métis Government law. The Judicial Branch is currently composed of a single body—the Judicial Tribunal—established by the *Judicial Branch Act*.

#### ***Our Relationship to the Alberta Metis Settlements (Part 4)***

Our Constitution acknowledges our shared history with the Alberta Metis Settlements, and our respect for the existing jurisdiction, powers, and responsibilities of the Alberta Metis Settlements as Metis governments. This includes their ownership of Métis Settlement lands, how an Alberta Metis Settlement could participate in the Otipemisiwak Metis Government (if they so choose), and how members of the Alberta Metis Settlements may register and continue to be Citizens of our government (if they so choose).

#### ***The Importance of Métis Lands (Part 5)***

Our Constitution makes clear that land is fundamental to the Métis Nation within Alberta's future and provides direction to try to repatriate, hold, steward, and protect Métis lands, including seeking reconciliation to address the effect of Métis scrip.

#### ***The Officers and Institutions of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (Part 6)***

Our Constitution provides authority, including roles and responsibilities for a Chair, Ombudsman, Auditor General, and Institutions.

#### ***General Provisions (Part 7)***

This part of our Constitution includes various provisions related to our *Code of Ethics Act*; how our Constitution does not negatively impact, restrict, or surrender any Métis right, interest, or claim; how a future treaty with Canada will be ratified; how to amend our Constitution; and transition requirements.

#### **Our Authority, Responsibility and Powers as a Citizens' Council**

Representatives of the Citizens' Council are mandated to work together to uphold and honorably implement our Constitution and the laws made under it, consistent with our authorities, responsibilities, and powers that are set out in the Constitution.

Chapter 16.19 of our Constitution, states that our "Authority and Responsibility" as a Citizens' Council, "extends to all matters not assigned to District Councils related to the good governance of the Métis Nation within Alberta and the advancement and protection of Métis lands, rights, interests, and claims, including the following:

- a) repatriation, ownership, and management of lands for the use and benefit of the Métis Nation within Alberta as a whole;
- b) negotiation, on behalf of the Métis Nation within Alberta, of a modern-day treaty relationship with the Crown through a land claims agreement or other

- arrangement as called for and contemplated within the meaning of section 35(3) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*;
- c) negotiation regarding outstanding collective Métis claims against the Crown, including any claims relating to Métis scrip;
  - d) overseeing Institutions to develop and deliver programs and services for the benefit of the Métis Nation within Alberta and its Citizens;
  - e) delegation of authority and responsibility for specified matters to District Councils; and
  - f) approving an annual budget of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and providing financial accountability to Citizens.”

Our “Legislative Powers” as a Citizens’ Council are set out in Chapter 16.20 of the Constitution, which reads:

The Citizens’ Council has the exclusive power to enact laws in relation to all aspects of the inherent jurisdiction and rights of the Métis Nation within Alberta and all matters falling within the Otipemisiwak Métis Government’s purpose, goals, and responsibilities established under the Constitution.

So, as a Citizens’ Council, we have both the “Authority and Responsibility” set out in Chapter 16.19 as well as the “Legislative Powers” in Chapter 16.20. These dual roles complement each other.

In exercising our constitutional authorities, responsibilities, and powers, we must also always keep in mind, and work to protect, the rights set out in our Bill of Rights, while also advancing the purpose, goals, and responsibilities of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government in Chapter 13 of our Constitution (and summarized above under “Our Government’s Purpose” and “Our Government’s Goals and Responsibilities”).

### **Our Priorities as the First Citizens’ Council of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government**

As the first Citizens’ Council ever elected under our Constitution, we have much to do over our four-year mandate. In order to focus our efforts, I wanted to set out some of our priorities in this letter so we do not lose sight of the results we need to achieve for our Citizens and communities.

#### *Implementing Our Constitution*

As the first Citizens’ Council, our overarching priority must be to work together to fully operationalize our Constitution and our Métis laws. Central to this will be to ensure that District Councils are put into place as soon as possible, as well as move forward in putting in place the Officers and Institutions set out in our Constitution.

The full implementation of our Constitution will take time and we must ensure that we have appropriate budgets in place to undertake this important work (so we do not run deficits as a government). However, we must all work together to fully implement the vision for self-government that our Citizens have endorsed in our Constitution.



Because the Citizens' Council is also a legislative body, each member of the Citizens' Council has a responsibility to review and be familiar with our Constitution and the laws of our government. You will often be called upon to explain these laws to Citizens living in your District, District Councils, and third parties.

To support you in this role, we will be undertaking a series of meetings and workshops to review our Constitution and laws as well as answer any questions you may have. You must also proactively review our Constitution and our Métis laws as a part of your role.

### *Reviewing Our Existing Métis Laws*

In order to meet the requirements of our Constitution and hold the first Otipemisiwak Métis Government election in September 2023, many of our Métis laws that are currently in force needed to be passed on an expedited basis. I have heard from Citizens and communities that a more extensive engagement, review, and consultation process on these laws is required, which may lead to future legislative amendments.

As such, I will be recommending to the Citizens' Council at a future meeting that we undertake a review of all of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's current laws and undertake consultation with our Citizens, communities, District Councils, and Institutions on these laws in order to exceed the consultation requirements set out in our Constitution.

Through this consultation process, legislative amendments may be identified for future consideration by the Citizens' Council. This process will need to be developed and approved by the Citizens' Council. I also hope that through this process we will receive important input from our Citizens and communities on future legislative priorities (i.e. other Métis laws) that our Citizens' Council should develop and pass.

### *Other Citizens' Council Priorities*

As a part of my campaign for President, I set out an ambitious platform that I believe we have a mandate to implement. In particular, with the collaboration and support of the Citizens' Council, I hope to make progress in the following priority areas:

1. Implementing Métis Self-Government
  - a. Ensuring the passage of Bill C-53 by Parliament.
  - b. Negotiating and reaching a modern-day self-government treaty with Canada, and undertaking a province-wide ratification process of this treaty with our Citizens.
  - c. Negotiating a fiscal financing agreement with Canada to ensure ongoing and stable funding to support the Otipemisiwak Métis Government.
2. Advancing Métis Rights and Claims
  - a. Working with Canada on the development of a Métis claims process to address outstanding Métis claims related to Métis scrip, and other Métis community specific land related claims.

- b. Working towards the recognition of Métis harvesting rights in southern Alberta.
  - c. Ensuring the honourable implementation of the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate our communities by:
    - i. Engaging with Alberta to ensure District Councils are recognized for the purposes of consultation and accommodation.
    - ii. Updating the MNA-Canada Consultation Agreement to be consistent with the Constitution and our Métis laws.
    - iii. Ensuring any benefits from Métis consultation or accommodation go to legitimate Métis rights-holders and those directly impacted at the District level.
    - iv. Pursuing litigation, if required, to ensure governments respect the legitimacy and authority of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and District Councils with respect to Crown consultation.
3. Advancing Economic Reconciliation and Repatriation of Métis Lands
  4. Métis Child and Family Services
    - a. Working towards the establishment of a Métis Child and Family Services Agency;
    - b. Implementing the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's jurisdiction as recognized in *The Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families* (Bill C-92)
    - c. Developing an Otipemisiwak Métis Government's Métis Child and Family Services Law.
  5. Improving the Health and Wellness of Métis Babies, Youth, Families, and Communities, including building out existing Métis Health Supports
  6. Pursuing the Development of a Métis Justice Strategy

### **Your Mandate as a Citizens' Council Representative**

#### *Your Role and Responsibility*

As noted above already, and consistent with Chapter 16.4 of our Constitution, each Citizens' Council Representative has the following role and responsibility:

- Represent the rights, interests, and claims of the Citizens in their District in relation to all matters not assigned to a District Council; and
- Work with other members of the Citizens' Council to advance the purpose, goals, and responsibilities of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government.

The distinct and complementary roles and responsibilities for the President, Women's Representative, and Youth Representative—as members of Citizens' Council—are set out in 16.2, 16.5 and 16.6 of our Constitution.

### *Your Work and Activities*

Based on the overall mandate, responsibilities, and priorities of the Citizens' Council, you will have much to do in your legislative capacity as a member of the Citizens' Council. It will be essential for you to become well-versed and knowledgeable in relation to our Constitution and our Métis government's laws.

You will also play a supporting role to ensure that a District Council is established within your District as soon as practicable. This may include working with elected District Captains as well as MNA Locals participating in the transition to a District Council.

In recognition that we are the first elected Citizens' Council, the following are some of the additional concrete activities each member of the Citizens' Council can undertake:

1. Educate our Citizens, communities, other governments, industry and third parties on the Otipemisiwak Métis Government.
2. Work to ensure the Métis self-government structures and institutions that make up the Otipemisiwak Métis Government are respected by other governments (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), industry, and other third parties.
3. Engage and consult with our Citizens and communities on an ongoing basis to inform the work of the Citizens' Council.
4. Act as ambassadors of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government by attending events, workshops, or meetings in your District, including identifying opportunities available to educate or promote the Otipemisiwak Métis Government.
5. Identify opportunities to promote the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, our Citizens, or District Councils through public relations, communications, media, etc.
6. Prepare for and participate in all meetings, workshops, training sessions, etc. of the Citizens' Council.

Of course, the list of activities set out above is not exhaustive, and each Citizens' Council representative has flexibility to develop approaches within their District to fulfill their responsibilities, consistent with our Constitution and duly passed Métis laws, as well as available or approved budgets.

### *Your Responsibility to be a Role Model and Ambassador for Our Government*

As a Citizens' Council Representative, you are a public official of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. As such, you are a role model for our youth, Citizens, and communities. You are also the on-the-ground ambassadors of our government. We rely on you to be respectful and professional because your actions reflect on the Métis Nation within Alberta as a whole.

In fulfilling your roles within and external to our government, you must be professional and remain aware that you represent our government and Citizens. Our Citizens are counting on their leadership to represent them in a way that honours our ancestors, our Constitution, and the hard work of our staff and Administration, in a manner that reflects the best of us—as the Métis Nation within Alberta.

As set out in section 5(b) of our *Code of Ethics Act*, you have the following obligations as a public official in our government:

- a) conduct yourself in accordance with your oath of office, the Constitution, and our laws;
- b) conduct yourself in a dignified and professional manner at all meetings and in all communications as a part of their duties;
- c) maintain loyalty and accountability to the Métis Nation within Alberta;
- d) conduct yourself in a manner which does not tarnish the image of or otherwise bring disrepute to our government or the Métis Nation within Alberta;
- e) perform your duties in such a manner that public confidence and trust in the integrity of our government and the Métis Nation within Alberta is preserved; and
- f) perform your duties in a manner free from bias or prejudice.

While negative comments on social media and from elsewhere are realities that all elected leaders face in today's society, you must ensure you respond professionally to constructive criticism and engage with others in a respectful way. With that said, you should not engage with individuals who are being abusive or threatening. If those type of situations emerge, they should be reported to ensure your safety and that of other Citizens is maintained.

As we work together, we will develop further policies, procedures, and guidance on how to best engage and deal with difficult situations (if and when they arise). Always remember that the vast majority of our Citizens strongly believe in and support the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. As well, we want our Citizens to always know that we strongly support them while we fulfill our duties, regardless of different views that may emerge on specific issues.

#### *Upholding Our Métis Laws and Complying with Our Code of Ethics*

As a Citizens' Council Representative, you must also ensure that you are aware of and fully compliant with all of our Métis laws, including the *Self-Government Act* and the *Code of Ethics Act*, as well as the policies and procedures of our government and its Institutions.

## ***Respecting and Engaging Our Government's Administration***

In fulfilling your responsibilities as a Citizens' Council Representative, you must respect the distinct roles, responsibilities, and authorities of our Administration (i.e., our Métis public service).

Our Administration is made up of extremely skilled, well-respected, and professional employees who work tirelessly on behalf of our government. As a Métis government, we strive to be a great employer for all of our staff and provide a safe, respectful, and professional workplace. We also seek to encourage our own Citizens to want to work for their government.

In order to continue to be a great employer and attract top talent, our Administration cannot be politicized and elected officials cannot disrupt or interfere with the reporting structures and policies and procedures that exist for staff. We must ensure that we are not directly interfering with the role and responsibilities of our Administration for the purpose of stable, effective, and accountable governance.

All of our staff report up to their immediate supervisors and the Directors of the department they work in. Each Director then reports up to, and is accountable to, our government's Senior Executive Officer (SEO). The SEO, as the head of our Métis public service, is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of our Métis government and is the person to whom our Administration and staff are ultimately accountable to through the organizational structure of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's Administration.

Our SEO (Aaron Barner) ensures that the direction provided by the Citizens' Council is acted upon, consistent with our Constitution and laws, as well as our Administration's policies and procedures. While we provide political direction to our Administration and discharge our roles as set out in our Constitution and laws, our Administration ensures its reporting and accountability structures, as well as policies and procedures, are followed.

Our Administration is also ultimately responsible for the approval of all financial expenses to ensure that expenditures align with budgets that have been approved as well as with our funding arrangements with other governments and third parties. Individual Citizens' Council Representatives have no authority to authorize individual expenditures on behalf of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government.

As a Citizens' Council, we will work to ensure that we utilize the proper lines of communication to uphold a framework of neutrality that respects the distinction between politics and the day-to-day operations of our Administration. As such, all Citizens' Council Representatives must direct their questions, requests, or inquiries to our Administration through the office of the SEO. For example, if you would like a briefing or information about a department's work, those sorts of requests must be made through the SEO's office.

As set out in section 8 of our *Code of Ethics Act*, "unless authorized under Otipemisiwak Métis Government Law, a public official may not direct an employee in the performance

of the employee's duties, without prior approval of the Senior Executive Officer." Citizens' Council Representative must respect the reporting structures set out in our Constitution and Métis laws. Public officials should not be directly engaging with our staff to influence the neutral delivery of our programs and services or the Administration's decisions.


In addition, individual Citizens' Council Representatives have no authority to direct or manage staff members within a District Council or within an Institution of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. Again, this is to ensure we respect our Constitution and laws, as well as ensure proper lines of communication between staff and senior management are maintained without political interference.

As we continue to implement the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, we will be providing additional training on these matters as well as developing further policies and procedures to ensure our Administration is able to continue to do the excellent work they do for our government on a day-to-day basis, without political interference.

### **Moving Forward**

Once again, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues to deliver results for our Citizens and communities and advance Métis rights throughout our term. I hope you have found this letter helpful as you begin your work as a Citizens' Council Representative. By working together, we will continue to build a stronger and more united Métis Nation within Alberta and achieve the purpose and goals set out in our Constitution.

Yours sincerely,



Andrea Sandmaier  
President  
Otipemisiwak Métis Government