

OTIPEMISIWAK

(Oh-teh-pim-swak) – The people who own themselves

Issue 3 / 2019

Métis Housing

We explore the services
offered by Métis Housing and the impact
it's had on our community



New Housing Programs!

After years of negotiations, Métis Capital Housing
is excited to offer citizens four new
housing programs

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE



MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA

MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA

HEADSTRONG YOUTH SUMMIT

MAKE
STIGMA
EXTINCT!



HEADSTRONG is a national health promotion program from the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This initiative aims to de-stigmatize youth mental health by inspiring them to be brave, reach out, and speak up. We're inviting **Métis youth aged 12 to 29** to join us at the summit to help make stigma extinct!

**JAN
11**

**Pomeroy Hotel &
Conference Centre
Grande Prairie • 8am-9pm**

Guest Speakers Include:

- **Author Jesse Thistle**
- **Charlie Kerr of Hotel Mira**



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

HEADSTRONG



For more information contact
Christine at 780-455-2200 Ext. 249
or email youth@metis.org



**BE BRAVE
REACH OUT
SPEAK UP**

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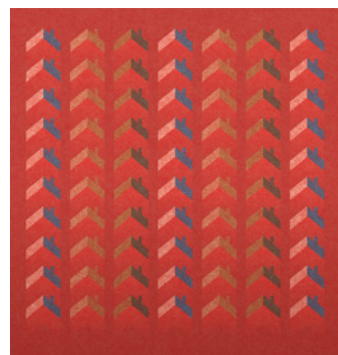
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On the Cover: An illustration representing this issue's Métis Housing theme as a symbolic element in the Métis sash.

CONTENTS

ISSUE 3 / 2019

Event Recaps

- 5 **Annual Golf Tournament**
- 6 **Camp Wohelo**
- 8 **Summer at Métis Crossing**
- 10 **Annual General Assembly**



Features

- 12 **New Housing Programs**
After years of negotiations, Métis Capital Housing is excited to offer four new housing programs to MNA citizens
- 14 **Métis Housing**
We explore the services offered by Métis Housing and the impact it's had on our community
- 18 **Métis Housing Timeline**
Important milestones from the past 38 years
- 20 **Family Reunification Program: A Mother's Success Story**
Elaine shares her experience with the Family Reunification Program
- 21 **Profile: Denise Fayant**
Métis Urban Housing's Director of Housing for Calgary and Rural South
- 22 **Profile: Marilyn Gladue**
Métis Urban Housing's Director of Housing for Edmonton and Rural North



- 23 **Facility Operations**
The Inner workings of Métis Urban/Capital Housing
- 26 **Nihgi Seniors Lodge**
Four Métis seniors share their stories

News

- 28 **Historic Self-Government Agreement Signed**
- 29 **In Memoriam**
Tom Ghostkeeper
- 30 **Harvesting Highlights**

Ensuring We All Have a Place to Call Home



Welcome to our third issue of Otipemisiwak for 2019. It has been an exciting year full of wins for us, including the long awaited, and deserved recognition by Canada of our inherent right to self-government, the signing of the harvesting policy, and the new housing announcement.

In this edition, we are excited to showcase the important work of our affiliates Métis Urban and Métis Capital Housing Corporations (MUHC and MCHC). For decades, both MUHC and MCHC have helped fulfill the housing needs of our people with income-based rent programs, accessible seniors' units, the Family Reunification Program, and so much more.

We are also very excited to offer four new housing support programs for MNA citizens. On October 2, 2019, MCHC announced the down payment assistance, home repair, and rental supplement programs for families and students. To learn more about what's available, flip to page 12.

Having witnessed the early beginnings of our housing branch, I know the role it has, and continues to play, in the lives of Indigenous Albertans. We understand the various needs of our community and designed these new housing programs to meet those needs.

These initiatives have been many years in the making and are a positive result of our negotiations with Canada following their recognition of our inherent right to self-government.

I hope you read on and enjoy learning about the impactful work our Housing team does and the many lives they touch.

Many thanks,

Audrey Poitras
President,
Métis Nation of Alberta

EVENT RECAPS

BY AMY DILLON + LEANNE MILLER



Fore!

THE 22ND ANNUAL Audrey Poitras Golf Tournament, held on June 7, 2019 at Legends Golf Course, was monumental! Every year, we host this tournament to help raise money for the MNA benevolent fund, an MNA program that helps families with funeral costs after the loss of a loved one. This year, we surpassed our fundraising goal and raised over **\$37,000.00!**

Not only did we play golf, but we had fundraising games at several holes, lots of swag, hole-in-one prizes, and bannock chili dogs!

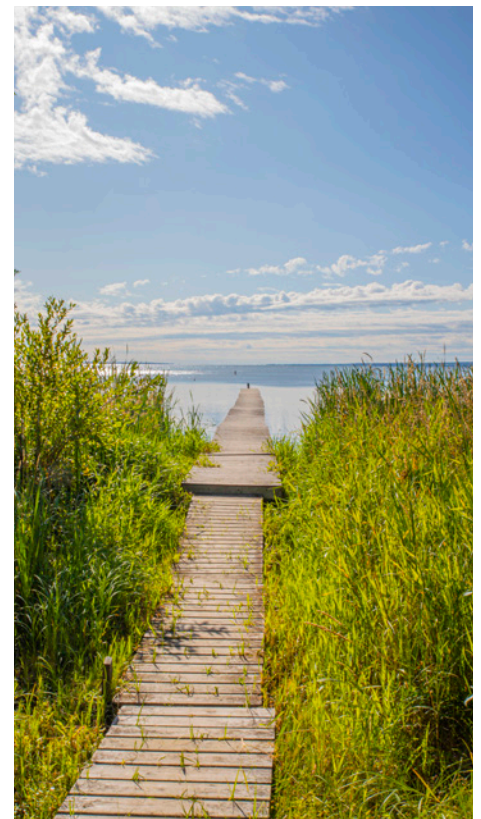
We could not have done this without our community's help, and we want to say **THANK YOU** to everyone who made this year's event better than ever!





Camp Wohelo

PASSING DOWN OUR CULTURAL traditions and teachings to our youth is essential in keeping our culture alive and thriving. Throughout the year, our Youth Team offers culturally-driven programs and services to do just that, and this year's Oskâyak Kapayshiw was no exception. Campers learned trapping, jigging, beading, and finger weaving. This experience allowed them an opportunity to learn to live off the land and to participate in a canoe expedition, but most importantly, the opportunity to connect with their Métis culture and heritage. They made lifelong friendships and can't wait for next year's Oskâyak Kapayshiw!



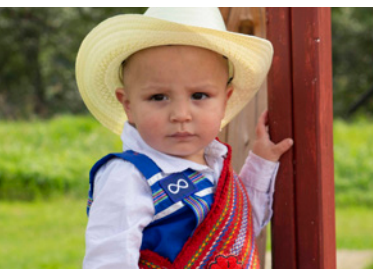


“We felt like we belonged. One of the best camps we’ve been to.”



Summer at Métis Crossing

MÉTIS CROSSING IS ALBERTA'S premier destination for Métis cultural events, such as the annual Voyageur Days and National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations.



Voyageur Days

Voyageur Days journeys into the past of Métis peoples, highlighting the activities they embarked on, and what makes them unique. It was a beautiful day along the North Saskatchewan River as hundreds of people came to camp for the weekend or just to spend the day celebrating Métis culture. The event included activities such as voyageur games, jigging contests, live music, and more!





National Indigenous Peoples Day

Celebrating the Indigenous people of our country is an important part of reconciliation and recognition of the past, present, and future for all Canadians.

This year, we did just that – celebrated our Métis heritage and culture at this one-day event at Métis Crossing.

The event was filled with laughter, dancing, food, and fun!



91st Annual General Assembly

Our Journey of Recognition Begins:
The Future is Now!

AUGUST 15 – 18, 2019 marked the 91st Annual General Assembly for our Nation, and it was a time of celebration and recognition of self-governance. The assembly, graciously hosted by MNA Region Two, saw hundreds of citizens coming together to vote, support, and learn about what self-governance means for our Nations' future.

With the historic signing of the Métis Nation of Alberta Self-Government Agreement with the Government of Canada on June 27, 2019, Canada finally recognizes our right to self-government. This assembly was a celebration of this milestone, and one of recognition for our past and for our future.

As with every assembly, we hold a Youth Conference, and this year's focus was on Métis governance systems, structures, and how to become more involved in the process.

There was also the annual tradeshow which showcased 40 vendors who displayed their businesses, products, and services to assembly attendees. Other events included a meet & greet, as well as the banquet and awards ceremony to recognize our unsung heroes who give endlessly to their Métis communities.

We welcome you to read the annual report on our website at albertametis.com.





New Housing Programs Announced

After years of negotiations, Métis Capital Housing is excited to offer four new housing programs to MNA citizens



On July 19, 2018, Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) President Audrey Poitras, on behalf of Métis nation citizens, signed a 10-year, \$500 million Métis Nation Housing Sub-Accord. The signing of this accord allows for Métis Nation Governments from Ontario to British Columbia to design and deliver housing services to their citizens.

As a result, the MNA's housing branch, Métis Capital Housing Corporation, has designed four new programs to support Métis families and students in need of rental supports, home repairs, and down payment assistance for home buyers.

Corrine Card, the Director of Métis Capital Housing's newest department, Strategic Initiatives, was the person tasked with leading the design and details of these exciting new programs. Corrine has experience working in the housing industry and has spearheaded many pivotal housing initiatives making her a valuable team member in the design and delivery of these new programs.

Launching four major housing programs simultaneously, however, is not for the faint of heart.

PHOTOS: MNA President Audrey Poitras (left) and MCHC Director of Strategic Initiatives Corrine Card announce four new exciting housing initiatives on October 2, 2019.

As of October 15, 2019, MNA citizens all over Alberta can apply for the following programs:

- **Down Payment Assistance Program:** providing up to 5% down payment to a maximum amount of \$20,000.00 per approved applicant.
- **Home Repair Program:** providing a maximum of \$20,000.00 per approved applicant.
- **Rental Supplement Program:** paying up to \$5400 per year, for a maximum of 2 years. MCHC will also pay applicants security deposit to a maximum of \$850 per application.
- **Rental Supplement Program for Students:** paying up to \$2400 per year, per approved applicant. MCHC will also pay applicants security deposit to a maximum of \$850 per application.

There can be difficult adjustments and unforeseen challenges in the first few weeks of launching any initiative, let alone four!

In anticipation of this publication, there were many questions, so Corrine sat down and answered them here for us.

Q. How have things progressed since the announcement of the four new housing initiatives?

A. There is much to do yet. I am getting lots of calls and questions from people hearing the announcement.

Q. We know these programs are designed to respond to the housing needs of Métis families and students, how much interest has there been so far?

A. Oh my goodness! There has been so much interest, along with lots of questions, and lots of excitement. We are hoping these programs can help many Métis citizens.

Q. What is the most important message you want to get out to those interested in applying for one of these new housing programs?

A. If these programs are not working for you, share your challenges with us. We are always looking for feedback on what our citizens needs are. Share what those needs are, because if you don't, they may go unaddressed. The reality is we can't help everyone, but we are going to continue to try with these and future programs.

Q. Will there be other programs launched from the Strategic Initiatives Department in the future?

A. Yes, absolutely. We are always looking for ideas for services and programs. Additionally, I have other programming I'm interested in researching further.

Regarding the needs of our citizens, and as new information becomes available to us, we will continue to develop future programming to address those needs.

This is an exciting time for the MNA and Métis Housing alike, and if you have questions on these, or any other programs Métis Housing offers, please visit metishousing.ca find details on all programs and services offered. You can also reach Métis Housing toll free at 1-877-458-8684. 

Métis Housing

We explore the services offered by Métis Housing and the impact it's had on our community

BY LEANNE MILLER

Home is the place where our story begins and where all roads lead back to. Métis Urban Housing Corporation (MUHC) and Métis Capital Housing Corporation (MCHC), have helped over 8650 people find that place. Since the beginning, in 1982, the goal of Métis Housing has been to provide safe, affordable, and suitable homes to low income, Indigenous families throughout Alberta.

It has been a long road of trials and triumphs but strong leadership and determination, have ensured Métis Housing remains a key support in Alberta's Indigenous community. Let's take a look at where it all started.

In 1981, former MNA President (1988 – 1993), Larry Desmeules was hired to explore opportunities with the new Rural Native Housing Program. In 1982, he began liaising with officials from Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation and created a proposal to start MUHC, to service a housing need within the community. The following year, MUHC was allocated \$2 million and purchased its first 20 homes, improving the lifestyles of Indigenous people in Alberta and providing a positive example of what can be accomplished by Métis people. To this day, MUHC remains the largest Indigenous-owned and operated affordable and subsidized housing organization in Canada.

To this day, MUHC remains the largest Indigenous-owned and operated affordable and subsidized housing organization in Canada.

In 2007, sister company, MCHC was incorporated and took over management of several MUHC units after their operating agreements expired.

With so much already accomplished, Jeanette Hansen, Métis Housing Board Member, says they're not done yet. "There's still a lot that we need to do," she explains. "A lot of rural areas don't have housing and we need to meet their needs too."

The Métis Housing boards are consistently working with the Government of Alberta and Métis Housing staff to develop long-range plans to rebuild existing housing units and set a solid foundation for long-term viability. Métis Housing staff have decades of knowledge and experience in the housing field, adding strength and stability to ensure efficient operations for today and tomorrow.

Government Support

In November 2017, the Government of Canada (GoC) and the MNA signed the Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation which promises "... to ensure the unique needs and the existing structures dealing with Métis housing in Alberta are understood and considered in any national Indigenous housing approaches or strategies."

This promise is addressed within the Métis Nation Housing Sub-Accord. Signed in May 2018, the accord provides the Métis Nation \$500 million over 10 years, a substantial contribution that will be split amongst the five governing members of the Métis National Council (i.e. Métis Nation British Columbia, Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, Manitoba Métis Federation, and the Métis Nation of Ontario). The accord prioritizes the Métis Nation determining and addressing housing needs, including buying new properties, repairing existing ones, and providing rent supplements to families in need.

In an accompanying media release Audrey Poitras, President of the MNA, stated "through this accord, Canada is helping our housing programs, like Métis Urban Housing Corporation and

Métis Urban Housing Corporation (MUHC):

∞ 505 housing units in 14 urban centers: Bonnyville, Ft McMurray, Cold Lake, Lloydminster, St. Paul, Grande Prairie, Lac la Biche, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Peace River, Rocky Mountain House, Slave Lake, Calgary, Edmonton

∞ Rent based on 25% of family's gross income

Métis Capital Housing Corporation (MCHC)

∞ 354 houses in Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Peace River, Edmonton, and Calgary

∞ Rent is 20% lower than Alberta market standards

∞ Offers resident services via Nihgi Seniors Lodge, Renaissance Tower, Voyageur Manor, and Family Reunification Program



Métis Capital Housing Corporation, provide affordable and culturally-appropriate, sustainable solutions for our citizens.”

Seniors

Caring for Métis seniors remains a top priority. There are various housing programs and services offered by Métis Housing for our seniors.

Firstly, the Nihgi Métis Seniors Lodge; a 40-unit, fully-serviced, assisted living facility in Edmonton. The staff at Nihgi lodge ensure the best care is provided to their residents by offering meals, laundry, and cleaning services.

Secondly, the Renaissance Tower; a 90-unit residential complex serving Métis seniors and people with disabilities. As Marilyn Gladue, Director

of Housing in Edmonton and Rural North proudly affirms, “tenants who struggled finding accessible units that met their needs are now in units; a definite improvement in their lives.”

Families

The Family Reunification Program (FRP) is dedicated to reuniting Indigenous parents with their children by providing housing placements in a safe and secure environment. Read more about the FRP on page 20.

Métis Housing continues to strive

for excellence in everything they do. As well as continuing to house low to moderate income Indigenous families, seniors, and youth, they aim to provide social programs assisting families in need. At the same time, they also want to increase the number of properties to support the needs of our Métis community. The FRP team are doing amazing work advancing our Nation and bringing our community to where the heart is – home.



Tenant Testimonials

Rocky Ward

“My dad told me about Métis Housing in 1992 so I looked into it and applied. Because I was a single mom with three children, the wait wasn’t too long.

The experience I had was amazing. The home I was moved into was well maintained and so clean; the walls were white, the carpets were new, and it was just amazing.

I work with former students of residential schools, providing resources and giving talks. A few years ago I was asked to speak at a staff retreat for Métis Urban Housing. While I was there I saw this lady that looked familiar and it turned out to be my old Tenant Relations Officer (TRO), Denise Fayant. She was absolutely wonderful as my TRO. Every time she came to my home she treated it, not like Métis Urban Housing but like it was my home. She was always so supportive.

Living in Métis Urban Housing is what gave me the springboard to buy my home. When



“Living in Métis Urban Housing is what gave me the springboard to buy my home.”

I was working a job and had three children at home, I didn’t have a lot of money so only a portion of my wage went to my rent and utilities. I paid a minimal amount and when I went to Grant McEwan they lowered my rent again so I could handle it. I always paid the rent on time and because I didn’t have the extra expenses, I was able to save a little bit of money.

When I started working full time, they told me my rent was going to be bumped up – and rightly so.

Then I thought; the amount I am now paying for rent, I could pay toward a mortgage. So then the money I saved, I was able to put down as a down-payment and I bought my first house in 1999! I attribute that all to Métis Urban Housing. Denise made me a proud home owner while I was still renting because she treated me with dignity and respect like it was my home.”



What's Next?

Métis Housing recently unveiled four new financial housing support programs, including down payment assistance to help

MNA citizens purchase their own home. President Poitras explains the value of this new initiative, "If we can assist families with a down payment; now they are paying into their own home instead of renting from someone else. They are actually generating an asset that is very valuable to a family." Read more about these exciting new initiatives on page 12.

How to Apply

The following are the required documents for applications (Not including down payment assistance, home repair & rental supplement programs):

- Proof of Indigenous Ancestry – MNA citizenship card, status card, or Inuit status
- Alberta Health Care – for all persons on the application
- Letters of Reference from:
 - Current / previous landlord; or
 - Two personal reference letters
- Police Information Check (PIC) – for all persons aged 18 - 64 on the application
- Medical Letter - if you require a disabled or handicapped unit
- Canada Child Tax Benefit Notice of Assessment from the previous year
- Income Tax Notice of Assessment from the previous year
- Income verification – pay stubs / direct deposit confirmation / letter from employer

Housing Support

After hours emergency contact:

- Edmonton and North: 780-717-9005
- Red Deer and South: 403-333-6490

Do you, or someone you know need housing services? Reach out today.
metishousing.ca

Tenant Testimonials

Amanda Edgi

Amanda is a current Métis Urban Housing Corporation (MUHC) tenant, a single mom with two kids, and a university graduate. She discovered MUHC while struggling to provide for her family and complete her Bachelor of Social Work.

"It was terrible, the rent was high, and my kids and I were living off microwave food for three months, I lost a lot of weight, my sanity.... I was at the point where I was ready to quit university. We were just going to pack up whatever clothes I could fit in my car and just leave Alberta.

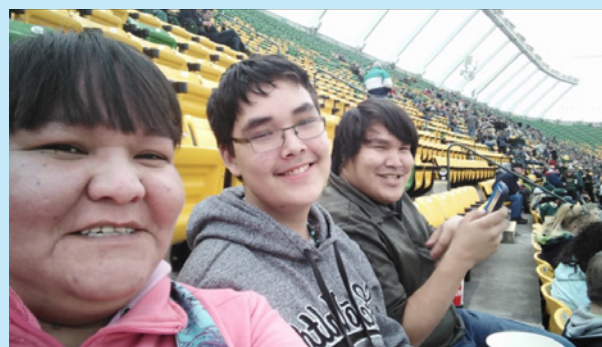
Then my friend encouraged me to go talk to Métis Housing. She was like "This is what you are training for. If you are going to advocate for other people you need to advocate for yourself."

So, we went to Métis Housing; oh, I feel like crying just thinking about this. I told them our situation was different, and explained that I was ready to quit school, ready to lose my sanity. I told them about the weight I lost and that my education wasn't important compared to my sanity.

I knew Métis Housing didn't provide emergency housing, but the office helped me update my file info.

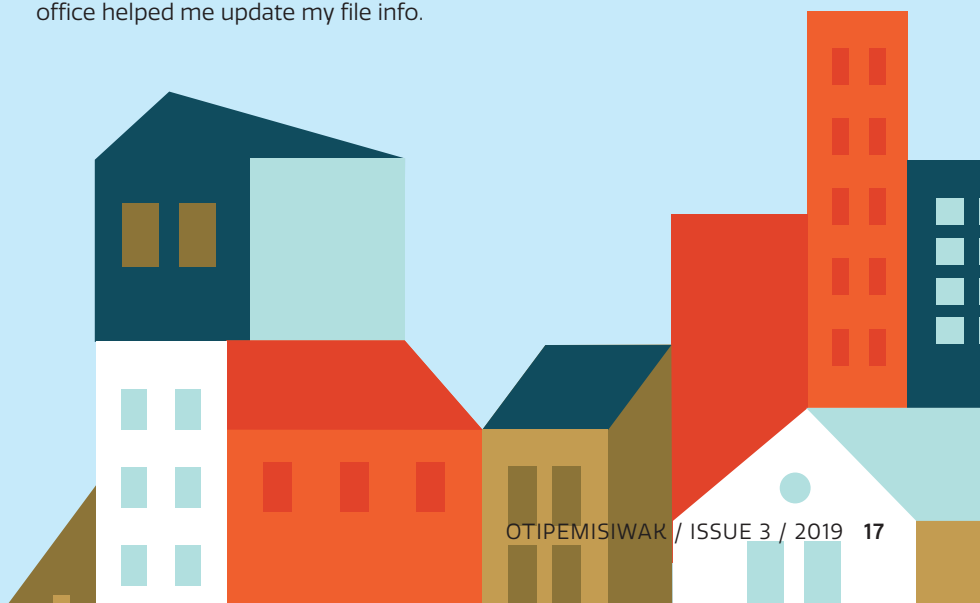
I hadn't even included my continuing education into university, so that was important and (helped add urgency to my situation).

I grabbed all the documents to update my file. We soon got a call and were told to go to an address and call back.



We moved in and were sleeping on the floor, but it was a safe, dry, and clean but we were so grateful! It was the first good night's sleep we had in a while because in our previous place we slept with the lights on to keep the cockroaches away. Because of the move into Métis Housing, I was able to finish school, it took a while to get over not having to worry about cockroaches or anything, but I graduated in 2014.

It's been a time of reflecting on the challenges we've had over the years and having Métis Housing; I'm so grateful."



Métis Housing Timeline

BY DENISE FAYANT & AMY DILLON

1983

MUHC allocated \$2 million and purchases its first 20 homes.

Denise: "They moved into the second building (adjacent to our current site), they had truckloads of people waiting for their keys to move into these units."



1982

Desmeules liaises with Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) and creates a proposal to start **Métis Urban Housing Corporation (MUHC)**

Denise: "[It] was just [Joyce Carrier], Art L'Hirondelle and Larry Desmeules in a small site on 127th St. and 127th Ave."



1981

MNA hires **Larry Desmeules** to investigate opportunities with the new **Rural Native Housing Program**.

1989

Denise: "There were only ten of us then: Gordon Watson, Tim Schraeder, Sylvia R. (original branch Manager), Erica J., Terry House, Hazel Willier, Nora Courterielle, Art L'Hirondelle, Wilmar Desjarlais, and Bev Erasmus."



"**Larry Desmeules** was the MNA president at the time and he would come by before every Christmas with his white truck... filled with turkeys and he'd drop off a turkey for each and every one of us."

1990

Stan Daniels Manor, a 27-suite apartment building for seniors, acquired by MUHC



1993

12 units built in Lac la Biche and later dedicated to **Art L'Hirondelle**. Art, along with Andy Jackson and Ephram Bouvier were integral to the growth and direction of MUHC. Art passed in 2007. The MNA offers a scholarship to Métis students in his name.

Photo: Audrey Poitras, Rose, and Tom Galenza pose in front of Art L'Hirondelle Manor



1994

Two four-plexes built in **Slave Lake**.



2007

Sister company **Métis Capital Housing Corporation (MCHC)** incorporated.

2012/13

MCHC acquires **Family Reunification Program**. Read more about the FRP on page 20.

Boyle Renaissance Tower construction begins.

Denise: "We broke ground for the Renaissance Tower. [It] was a \$22 million, 120,000 square foot complex with a 90-unit, senior-friendly, barrier-free residential complex that caters to the needs of Indigenous seniors and people with disabilities.

Calgary's MUHC seniors building is named after **Ephram Bouvier** (pictured above). Ephram worked for MUHC for many years before passing away in 2011. His contributions are still felt.



2014

Tenants begin moving into **Boyle Renaissance Tower** in Edmonton.



2010

Construction of **Voyageur Manor** completed in partnership with the **City of Edmonton**.

The Cornerstones Plan grant of \$2.5 million funded the construction of 13 row homes and the renovation of three existing homes.



2017

Government of Canada and MNA sign **Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation** which promises "... to ensure the unique needs and the existing structures dealing with Métis housing in Alberta are understood and considered in any national Indigenous housing approaches or strategies."

2008

Operating agreements for the first set of MUHC units come to a close.

After renovations and upgrades, expired MUHC units are transferred to MCHC.

MCHC acquires **Nighi Seniors Lodge**, a 40-unit fully serviced living facility in North-central Edmonton.



2018

Métis Nation Housing Sub-Accord is signed providing \$500 million over 10 years.



2019

MUHC and MCHC develop four new housing support programs to help citizens with down payments for their own home, rental supplements for families and students, as well as home repair supports.

Family Reunification Program: A Mother's Success Story

Elaine is a young, single Mom with two sons who recently graduated from the Family Reunification Program (FRP). The FRP focuses on and is dedicated to reuniting Indigenous parents and their children by providing long-term housing with support services. This is Elaine's success story in her own words.

"I have two sons: Grason (5) and Carter (3). I was in a Family Enhancement Agreement for support through Child and Family Services (CFS). When I moved in to the FRP it was mostly to deal [with the health challenges] with Carter.

I left my home town in High Prairie and moved to Edmonton where I knew no one. I was 18 at the time and never lived in the city alone, so it was a big adjustment. When I moved into FRP I got hooked up with all these different types of specialists and it was good; [doctor] appointments for Carter every other week. Doctors now say Carter will grow at his own pace, in his own time.

The FRP provided counselling with Elders and parenting groups, anger management, and stuff like that. They had a bunch of other [supports] offered too that really helped a lot.

Looking back, at the two years in FRP, most of the programming helped me find my voice and become the person I am today and see how other people parent. Where I'm from, there are a lot of teen parents. Seeing how other people parent, was great.

Advice I would give to any parent thinking of going into the FRP program is you have to have a strong head on your shoulders... You have to be willing to put in the work.

I'm glad I went [through the program] because now I know what kind of parent I am. I have my own voice and I stand up for myself." ∞



The goal of the **Family Reunification Program (FRP)** is to reunite families with their children in a safe and healthy environment, building their skills and ultimately closing their file with Children and Family Services (CFS).

FRP staff receive around 150 placement requests annually from all over the province. There is a real family dynamic among FRP staff. All work toward a common goal: strengthening and building resiliency of everyone in the program.

The Family Reunification Program provides:

- 24-hour routine and emergency support
- Parenting skills development
- Employment and educational planning for parents
- Support for children to develop various skills
- Child care
- Mentorship programs



Profile: Denise Fayant

BY DALE LADOUCEUR

In 1989, Denise Fayant walked in to Gordon Watson's office at Métis Urban Housing Corporation (MUHC) and was hired on the spot. Thirty years later, she is MUHC's Director of Housing for Calgary and rural Southern Alberta and she's helped hundreds of Indigenous families find homes and gain resilience. Digging deeper into her formative years, it was evident just how deep Denise's own resilience ran and what drove her to make a difference for others.

At an early age, Denise had to tread through the instability of poverty, addictions, child abuse, and spousal abuse. "My late brother and I were abused by our mom. Once my dad beat her she would turn around and take it out on us. That was just a vicious, vicious cycle."

Because of the instability, her family was constantly on the move. "We were moving around so much: different schools, different towns, different friends, different teachers," Denise recalls.

As a result, Denise missed a lot of school to stay with her youngest brother because their parents were drinking heavily. "There were times when we were abandoned by Mom because she would go looking for dad for money and have to leave us home alone. I didn't know how to cook so we'd eat dry macaroni and powdered milk. We'd be crying and upset because nobody was there. We were just told to stay in: 'don't go anywhere, don't open

the door for strangers because of the 60's scoop,' right?"

Denise continued to rear her brother while the abuse escalated. "At 15, I ran away from home. Cops found me and that's when mom said I was going to my Granny's. I thought 'Yay' because Granny was a phenomenal woman."

Denise's Granny lived between Fishing Lake Settlement and Frog Lake Reserve in a little place called Clearwater Lake. "My happiest memories, my most peaceful times were at Granny's. She was such a beautiful soul. She was my light, she taught me so much about our culture and that's what I want to go back to, where I feel the best; that's my element," she explains.

Denise stayed with Granny, connecting with positive people, and watching how couples and families would interact. "I thought 'Wow, that's good! That's healthy!' Before that point, my normal was totally abnormal, totally dysfunctional. I really liked seeing [positive relationships] and I really enjoyed that environment, so I really stepped out of my zone and navigated towards those people."

It is Denise's ability to empathize that sets her apart from others in the housing industry. "It is easy for me to connect regarding domestic abuse, I can relate to that. Child abuse, I can

relate to that. When Moms call saying their daughters were molested, I can relate to that. On so many different levels, all that pain and struggle I had - to turn that around and help people now is what I want to do for as long as I can."

Denise now looks forward to living the serene life her Granny led, continuing her work. "Having that connection to Mother Earth by making heart medicine and helping people from far and wide. The canning, the gardens, chickens, cows, horses, living off the

"On so many different levels, all that pain and struggle I had - to turn that around and help people now is what I want to do for as long as I can."

land, hunting, snaring rabbits; I was taught all of that. There was no running water, power, heat, we really lived off the land and I LOVED it. That was my best, (most) peaceful, serene time in my life. Being there and learning from her; that's what I want to go back to. Back to my roots" ∞



Profile: Marilyn Gladue

BY DALE LADOUCEUR

When first meeting Marilyn Gladue it is easy to see why she has excelled for so long in an industry with turnover, on average, after 3.5 years.

Marilyn has been the Director of Housing for Edmonton and Rural North for Métis Urban Housing Corporation (MUHC) for over ten years. Previously, she worked on the front lines of housing our Indigenous people for over a quarter century. Marilyn is warm with an air of experience earned. Her deep alto voice is welcoming and resonates with years of difficult decisions and hard truths.

Describing the humble beginnings of the fledgling, Indigenous-owned MUHC, with their entire first office space only slightly larger than her current office, Marilyn waxes nostalgic of those formative years. She remembers, “Just two of us split the whole portfolio.” She then applied to be Branch Manager staying in that position from 1998 to present day. (The title of Director was added in 2017).

As Marilyn speaks, her phone chimes constantly and she keeps one eye on the messages while she reflects on how she has stayed motivated and passionate over the decades in such an emotionally demanding role. “Well, my first thought is; I love, love working with people. For as long as I can remember, a lot of my jobs in my early years had always been

as a service provider. I was working, in restaurants, with the public all the time. I was always on the front end [connecting] with the public and I treasure those experiences. I treasure my experiences today because it has helped me to learn about people and their challenges, their successes, and the variety and difference of our people.”

Marilyn exudes passion when she speaks about helping house our people and it’s obvious she fervently wants her clients to succeed. Her faith in their success often ignites their own self-belief, “...sometimes that’s all a person needs; to believe that they can do it. That they can accomplish anything,” she says.

It isn’t easy; guiding people to a more positive outlook. Doing so requires experience, understanding, and patience with the growth process. “Often, my job is dealing with a difficult tenant. I sometimes have to make the decision whether their tenancy is going to continue or end. That is the most difficult aspect of my duties. The other 10 percent of my role is what makes me stay: hearing those success stories of people moving on to bigger and better things. The hugs, the tears, the appreciation when they have been given the opportunity to succeed. That’s what’s kept me here this whole time; that’s all it takes.

“Seeing the families grow... the little

ones now graduating and choosing a career. That fills my heart... I see really positive changes!”

Those changes emanate from the larger picture that Indigenous people have unique needs. Indigenous service providers must understand where their clients come from to help them survive and thrive.

Marilyn has helped many thrive because she is connected with their communities, knows their stories, and remembers their faces. She also has a thorough understanding of the impacts of an affordable housing shortage.

*“Seeing the families grow...
the little ones now graduating
and choosing a career.
That fills my heart... I see
really positive changes!”*

“The lack of affordable housing in this province is the biggest housing issue facing us. (When a person outside of the Indigenous community), talks about subsidized housing, there needs to be a different view of it. We’re not giving needy families a hand-out, we’re giving them a hand-up.” ∞

The Inner workings of Métis Urban/Capital Housing: Facility Operations

BY DALE LADOUCEUR

The Maintenance Department at Métis Housing, headed by Director of Facility Operations, Darlene Sutton, is a dedicated group of highly skilled teams maintaining over 800 units throughout Alberta.

Twenty staff make up the Maintenance Department: Two teams in Calgary and three in Edmonton. Each with experience in home renovations, such as painting, plumbing, electrical, carpentry, and cabinet making.

“Typically, the Maintenance Department does preventative maintenance through to full renovations,” explains Darlene.

Preventative maintenance is a key focus for Darlene’s team and a driver for positive tenant-maintenance relationships. “When they are there to fix a tap, for example, the other staff are walking around the house to see if there’s anything else







Before



After

they can do. That makes the tenant feel that we care about their family's safety," Darlene says.

Although the work can be rewarding, the team also faces distressing circumstances. For this reason, Darlene prioritizes the mental and physical health of her staff. "We always make sure our teams work 8:30-4:30, Monday to Friday for a good work/life balance," she explains. "We talk and debrief as a group, so we know if there is a staff member that needs to talk, because it can affect them... We've had examples where some of the guys have gone into units and it's been heartbreaking to see some things."

Despite the physical and emotional challenges of the job, the team feels a sense of pride and fulfillment from the positive impact they make Darlene explains. "The reward of this work is looking back at the home we just renovated, knowing that this home is for a new family, to start a new life on the right path. We feel that's our payback and we're quite proud of that." ∞

Why Units Sit Empty

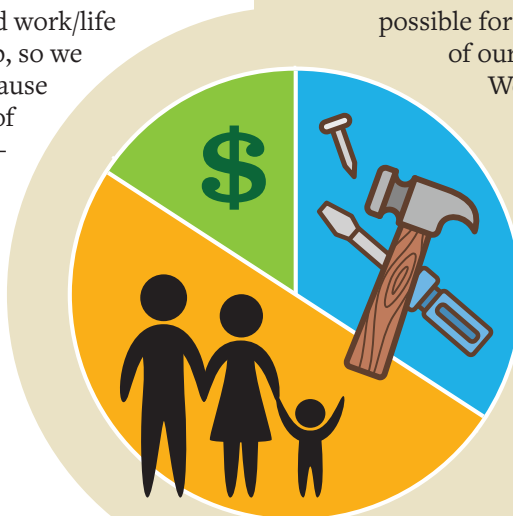
When taking part in community events Métis Housing staff occasionally get asked why a unit sits empty for so long when the demand for housing is so high. The answer is a bit complex as it depends, not only on funding, but on determining factors of suitability with each family.

The budget to address repairs and renovations on available units is done in June every year. Any home that becomes vacant after June does not get addressed until the next funding cycle. That budget is submitted to the Provincial funding body and awaits approval, usually by spring the following year. If outside contractors are needed, a bidding process occurs (a requirement for provincial government funding) for those repairs and renovations and this can take up to six weeks. When the right contractor is chosen, the work can begin.

Once the unit is ready, there are important considerations matching a family to a home. It is vital families are set-up for success, so consideration is given to their job location, schools, transportation, community health etc. Often the families next on our waitlist are in lease and need to give notice before vacating. Some families have mental or physical challenges and the unit may not be suitable for their needs or may need to be modified.

It is crucial we utilize the scarce funds in the most productive way possible for the continued success of our tenants and our work.

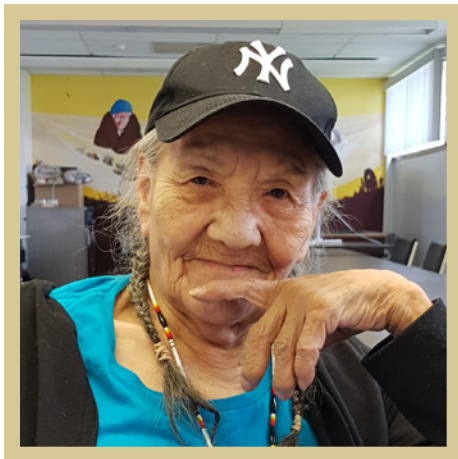
We at Métis Urban and Métis Capital Housing are providing affordable and subsidized housing as well as the support our families need for a safe, healthy home environment, before transitioning to a permanent home or home ownership. ∞





Nihgi Seniors Lodge

Métis Housing has played a part in many of our citizens lives in various ways. We wanted to share some of those stories with you, so we interviewed four of our Métis seniors. We hope you enjoy reading their tales. To read the full interviews with our Métis seniors, please visit metishousing.ca



Mary Anne Sawan

Born in Fort a La Corne Saskatchewan, (now the James Smith Reserve), Mary Anne Sawan, lived a life rich in many different and challenging experiences. Speaking candidly about some of them, Mary's voice is soft but fearless as she thinks back to some of the key moments of her life.

Mary Anne went to school at an Anglican boarding school in Saskatchewan. After schooling and

helping out at home, Mary Anne soon was married in The Pas, Manitoba to Lawrence Magillivry. She recalls, "I met him when he was working on the railway track as part of an Extra Gang. My cousin and I and another girl were there in the café talking but there were lots of those [rail worker] guys there."

Soon a distant courtship developed but only because Lawrence persisted. "Lawrence use to write to me and I ignored the letters," she explains. "We got married a year after we met. Mary had two children with Lawrence: Gilbert and Shirley.

Mary Anne and her family set roots in Edmonton after she was sidelined due to sickness and they ended up staying.

When asked what she would like to share with everyone, Mary paused. Her voice softened even more before answering, "The most important message I could tell you is; I see all the things happening to young people and it's hard. It's hard to see them go through that. I try my best to try and

talk to kids but I have a hard time. Quit smoking and quit doing all these things that are bad habits. Take care of yourself."



Mable Skaaning

Mable Skaaning was born in Fairholme, Saskatchewan in her grandfather's homestead. Life was often hard for young families growing up in remote, northern communities. "Most of mom's kids were born in the bush," explains Mable, "There was 12 of us but four died before they lived. One was 13 that took care of me, but she got pneumonia and passed on."

When asked about her working life, Mable shared she found all kinds of work she enjoyed. "I did everything, I worked in a hospital in Kindersley in North Battleford. I worked and lived in a priest seminary and washed and ironed clothes." After moving from Saskatchewan to Alberta, Mable waitressed in Edmonton and also worked in the general hospital in Calgary.

"I lived in Holden, (near Sherwood Park) in a trailer with two dogs. I could have bought a new trailer and stayed there but..." Mable's eyes flash a bit of regret which quickly dissipates.

"One important message I'd like to share: I'm a good person. Try and live your life in a good way. Mom and dad - love them no matter what! My mom and dad were very poor. Some days you (could) barely eat, but you still love your mom and dad!"



Peter Demcheson

Born on a homestead farm in Manitoba, Feb 7, 1935, Peter Demcheson grew up a hard-working, soft-hearted man. His dad, born in 1902, one of 460 farmers that received homesteads, got a quarter section of land in Fork River; 30 miles West of Dauphin, Manitoba.

"After harvest, Peter told his Dad he was "going to go to work." So, on November 5, 1949 he got his first job with Abitibi pulp and paper.

After that, Peter was offered a job as a high rigger for Ontario Hydro. He remembers "dangling 260 feet from a crane, taking forms off the cement walls." Throughout his life, Peter earned a reputation for hard work and ingenuity.

In 1953, Peter moved to Alberta. In 1966, Peter's Dad passed away, prompting him to return to farming, buying

one in Smith. He then brought his mom to live with him there, "...to help with cooking and making decision about the farm." His mom lived to 97, passing in 2010.

"I would say live and love. Be good to others, do unto others as they do unto you..." Peter continues, "Try and look out for your life, don't do stupid things. Don't think about spending your money on lottery tickets, hoping and praying – forget about that.

What a person does in life [is what matters]. I had chickens, I milked a cow, butchered beef every fall and the deepfreeze would be brimming full, and last until next fall. It's a good feeling of the harvest in the fall. I've always had a happy smile because the good Lord gave you everything you need, only you have to look after it. Act responsibly, don't go giving it away."



Leonard Okanee

Leonard's easy smile is infectious, winning you over within the first few minutes of meeting him. His smile says a lot about his philosophy on life, the choices he's made, and only hints at the challenges he's overcome. Challenges that almost had him lose the battle, were it not for his wife's singing, one war-weary day.

Surviving abuses from the residential school system, the injustice weighed on Leonard to the point where he sued them for damages. The difficulty was Leonard has COPD, (Chronic

Obstructive Pulmonary Disease – a condition effecting breathing). COPD interferes with how much oxygen reaches his brain and, in turn, interferes with Leonard's memory.

"When I first talked to the lawyers and the government rep in court," explains Leonard, "I told them the story and the second time, the story changed a little bit." As a result, the court dropped the case.

This only added to his pool of anger, which was growing since he was a child, having "been thrown from foster home to foster home." In 1983, while working at a pulp mill, Leonard, who had established himself as an artist, lost his right arm.

Not long afterwards, having pawned everything to feed his painkiller addiction, Leonard found himself sitting on the floor of his home. He recalls one day "All I could hear was my wife singing a tune in the kitchen while she was

cooking. I thought, what the hell is she so happy about?"

Leonard decided then and there, "I'm gonna quit feeling sorry for myself and do something." He got up from the floor, walked into the kitchen and told

his wife, "I'm going to go back to school!"

That first nervous day back to school resulted in both a Bachelor of Arts and Social Work degree. Leonard immediately got a job at Poundmaker Lodge as a counselor and soon made supervisor. He remembers, "I was making good money and was able to buy a house just a few blocks from Nihgi Lodge.

"What I would like to pass on to you is this; With my early circumstances, and my disability, I overcame all that and ended up doing what my dream was, of becoming a counsellor. There's no such thing as I can't do it. Just do it, because if I can do it, you can do it!"



Historic Self-Government Agreement Signed in Ottawa

BY AMY DILLON

On June 27, 2019, after over 90 years of perseverance and struggle, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) signed the first ever self-government agreement between the Government of Canada and a Métis government.

The Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement (the “Agreement”) was signed by MNA President Audrey Poitras, MNA Vice President Dan Cardinal and the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Canada’s Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, in a special ceremony held on Parliament Hill. The MNA Provincial Council, Elders, and youth were also in attendance to witness this historic event.

Almost 135 years after Louis Riel fought and died for self-determination of the Métis, his vision of Métis self-government has finally been realized.

“Our ancestors, who shared Louis Riel’s vision for the Métis Nation to be self-governing and independent within our Homeland, tirelessly built the MNA as their self-government over the generations,” explains MNA President Poitras.

“It’s a great day for the Métis Nation within Alberta,” President Poitras adds.

Now, Canada formally recognizes that the Métis Nation within Alberta, as represented by the MNA, holds the inherent right to self-government. No other self-government agreement between Canada and an Indigenous nation provides for this kind of upfront rights recognition.

The Agreement lays out the following next steps for its implementation: the negotiation of a fiscal and intergovernmental agreement; the approval of a constitution for the Métis Nation within Alberta by MNA citizens; the development of a transition

plan; and the passage of federal recognition legislation.

“Now the hard work begins,” says MNA Vice President Dan Cardinal.

“Now we can build a constitution for the Métis by the Métis. That is self-determination in action. Our citizens will have the power to make the decisions that matter most to them.”

In addition, the Agreement clearly defines a process for the MNA and Canada to implement the agreement that will recognize Métis jurisdiction and law-making power in core self-government areas such as citizenship, leadership selection, and governmental operations. It also sets out a process for the negotiation and recognition of additional powers (for example, language, culture and heritage, education, housing, environment, and others).

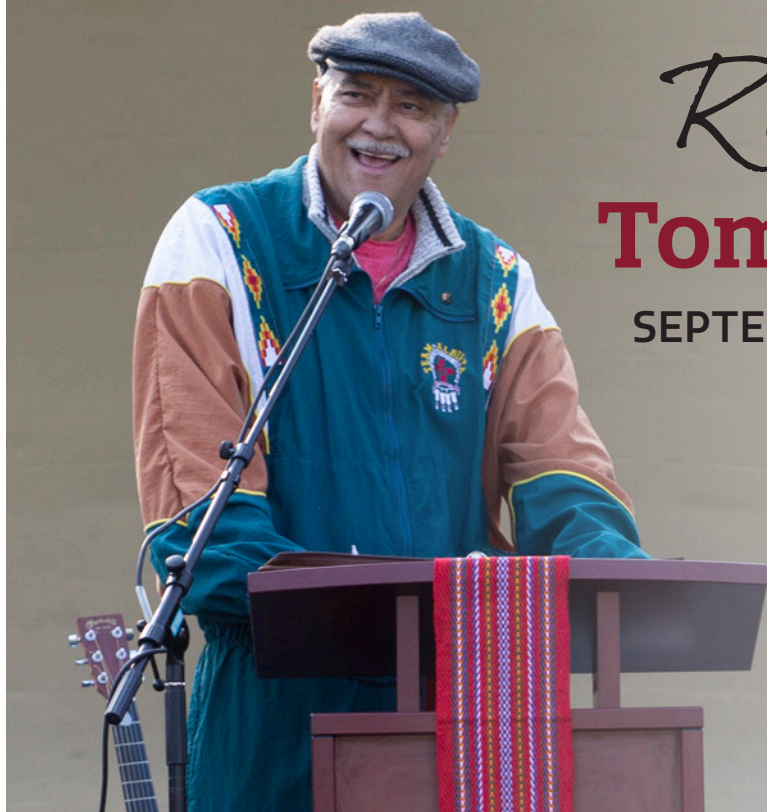
To learn more about what the Agreement means for MNA citizens or to review the list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and responses, please visit: albertametis.com/self-government ∞



PHOTO: Leaders from the Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation of Ontario, Government of Canada, and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan sign the first ever self-government agreement between the Government of Canada and Métis governments.

Remembering Tom Ghostkeeper

SEPTEMBER 4, 1951 – MAY 14, 2019



On May 14, 2019, we bid farewell to a wonderful member of the MNA community. Tom Ghostkeeper was a proud Métis man with a fun-loving, jovial nature. He served as President of MNA Local 1904 in St. Albert and had crowds laughing as an emcee at several MNA events.

Tom was a family man and is survived by his wife of 44 years, Martha Ghostkeeper, his three children and 13 grandchildren.

Originally from Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement, Tom enjoyed playing slow pitch, hockey, and curling and was also a volunteer firefighter with High Prairie, High Level, and Athabasca Fire Departments.

Tom's absence will be felt at the MNA and we send our condolences to his family. ∞



PHOTOS: Tom Ghostkeeper speaks at the 2016 MNA Annual General Assembly at Métis Crossing (bottom & middle) and acts as Master of Ceremonies at the Loutit Race opening ceremony in 2018 (top).

Harvesting Highlights

BY LEANNE MILLER

Harvesting is a right we as Métis people have always held. While it has been a long road toward recognition of this right, we are closer now than ever. The Métis Nation has never supported the harvesting policy set out by Government of Alberta (GoA), but with the current government, we had to make moves to protect our rights as harvesters. On February 1, 2017, the GoA signed a framework agreement committing to recognize and respect Métis rights in Alberta.

This progress was further bolstered by another agreement, signed August 2017, A Way Forward: Métis Harvesting in Alberta. It was this agreement which identified the need for collaborative engagement sessions with the people most affected by the province's

harvesting policy — the harvesters. Then on March 12, 2019, the MNA and the GoA signed the Métis Harvesting in Alberta Policy, which expanded harvesting areas for our citizens. With this, the policy does not include southern Alberta as a recognized harvesting area. We do not agree with this decision and will continue to fight for this right.

As of September 1, 2019, under the new Métis Harvesting in Alberta Policy, we have processed over 2000 applications and have started issuing new cards to approved harvesters. We captured a picture of the first card to be issued!

Apply for your harvesting rights at albertametis.com today. ∞



UPCOMING EVENTS

Keep your eye out for these important events! Our programs, services, and events are wholly inclusive of our Métis community and we encourage everyone to come, participate, and celebrate in our vibrant Métis culture.

HEADSTRONG Youth Anti-Stigma Summit January 11, 2020

Pomeroy Hotel &
Conference Centre,
Grande Prairie

HEADSTRONG is a national health promotion program from the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This initiative aims to de-stigmatize youth mental health by inspiring them to be brave, reach out, and speak up. We're inviting Métis youth aged 12 to 29 to join us at the summit to help make stigma extinct!

Youth & Seniors Gathering February 7–9, 2020

This important cultural event aims to connect our seniors and youth by sharing stories, food, and cultural activities.



**Want to receive MNA
updates to your inbox?
Sign up on our events page
at AlbertaMetis.com today!**



HARVESTING CONSERVATION PRACTICES



Métis people have been harvesting plants and animals as a means of survival for hundreds of years and are rooted in traditional belief systems and ways of life. Métis harvesters maintain a fine balance between meeting the needs of their people and protecting wildlife and their habitats.

As part of implementing the new Métis Harvesting in Alberta Policy, we want to share important practices, for your consideration, before your next harvest.

Harvest what is available and take only what you need. Métis harvesting is, by its very nature, conservation focused. These traditional practices include no big game hunting from January to July, as well as no harvesting of female game if accompanied by offspring less than one-year old.

- Know your species, and their appropriate ages for harvesting, as well as breeding season management practices.
- Harvest where the environment is healthy, and populations are plentiful.
- Be aware of current rules and regulations surrounding gun safety.

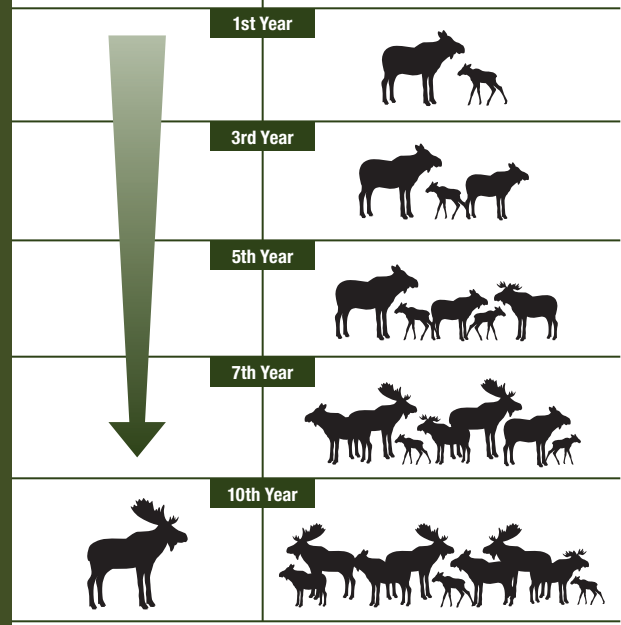
The rules and knowledge of harvesting are handed down through generations. Let's ensure we preserve plant and animal habitats for our future harvesters.

Choose Today for a Choice Tomorrow

Results of Shooting an Adult Female



Results of Shooting an Adult Bull



For more information call 780-455-2200 or email harvesting@metis.org

SHARE YOUR STORY

Over the years we have had many inspiring, talented, and interesting citizens share their stories with us for the Otipemisiwak Magazine. We want to hear from you. Help us make this publication even better by sharing your stories, poetry, recipes, photography, and more. Email us at mna@metis.org to learn how you can contribute.



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