

OTIPEMISIWAK

(Oh-t-paym'-soo-wuk) — The people who own themselves

Issue 1 / 2019

The Health & Wellness Issue

Danielle Murray

Yoga instructor and Métis health advocate on sharing positivity

Focus on Health

Highlighting the MNA's health care services and programs

Soccer Success

Two Métis women excel on international stage

Métis Doula

Noreen Utri passes along her maternal wisdom

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA

MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA

YOUTH & SENIORS GATHERING

JAN 18-20, 2019

Delta Edmonton South



... UNITING GENERATIONS ...



- ∞ Story-telling sessions
- ∞ Cultural workshops including Métis beading, jigging, Michif, traditional medicine, & more
- ∞ Banquet & dance with music by *Rockin' Fiddle* (for registrants only)

FRIDAY, JAN 18

6 – 10 pm: Meet & Greet

SATURDAY, JAN 19

8:30 am – 4 pm: Main Event
6 – 10 pm: Banquet,
Entertainment, & Dance

SUNDAY, JAN 20

8:30 am – 12 pm: Main Event
Continues

MNA citizens experiencing travel & accommodation barriers, contact youth@metis.org



Space is limited. Register now by emailing youth@metis.org or contact the Youth Team at the MNA head office, **780-455-2200 Ext. 249.**



@ABMetisyouth

#UnitingOurGenerations

albertametis.com

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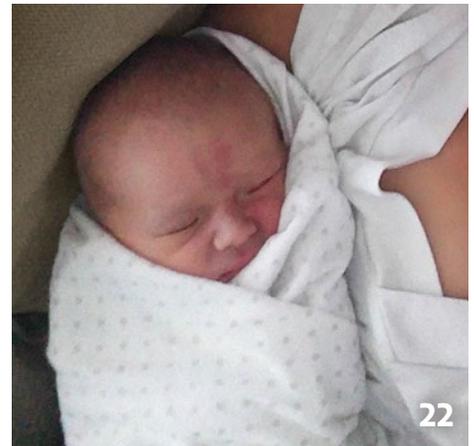


On the Cover: Métis health advocate, Danielle Murray, with her children Isabella and Molly. Photo by Des Iles Photography.

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A Healthy Start to the New Year



Happy New Year and thank you for picking up our first *Otipemisiwak* issue of 2019. With the new year upon us, I am inspired and energized to keep pushing our Nation forward. One of the many ways we continue this advancement is through a number of health, wellness, and youth initiatives. To highlight this important work, we have dedicated this issue to the health of our Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA).

From mental health supports and services to opioids addictions programs and Naloxone training, our drive to improve the wellbeing of MNA citizens is unwavering. Flip to page 12 to read more about our current projects.

We also went into the community to learn about the health and wellness efforts of a few gifted MNA citizens. On page 16 you'll find the story of Danielle Murray; a yoga instructor and corporate wellness specialist who battled mental health challenges before embarking on her current path.

Flip to page 22 to read about dedicated doula Noreen Utri. Noreen is an empowered childbirth advocate and helps her clients with everything from pregnancy health, birth plans, and breastfeeding techniques.

We also had the pleasure of speaking with young soccer stars Mariah Kylo and Bailey Richarde. On page 20 you'll learn how the pair proudly represented Alberta and Western Canada in Greenland's 2016 Arctic Winter Games and Toronto's 2017 North American Indigenous Games; bringing home silver and fourth place, respectively.

In this issue you'll also find: a winter recipe; photo galleries of Métis Week and the MNA community Christmas party; event recaps including the Provincial Council inauguration and John McDonald's retirement; and much more.

Please read on and enjoy these stories of Métis dedication, passion, and perseverance.

If you'd like to submit artwork, poetry, recipes, or stories to be featured in future issues of *Otipemisiwak*, flip to the back cover to learn how.

Best wishes,

Audrey Poitras
President,
Métis Nation of Alberta

EVENT RECAPS

BY OLIVIA BAKO + AMY DILLON + LEANNE MILLER



Region Six President, Carol Ridsdale, speaking to youth at the HEADSTRONG Summit.

HEADSTRONG Anti-stigma Mental Health Summit

ON OCTOBER 13, 2018 the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) hosted the first ever Métis specific HEADSTRONG Summit in Partnership with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) at Delta Edmonton South Conference Centre. HEADSTRONG is a one-day anti-stigma summit developed by the MHCC to empower youth to be brave, and speak-up about mental health in their communities. The summit had four Métis youth speakers who all bravely shared their stories about living with mental health challenges. Listening to the stories of Brittany Johnson, Aura Leddy, Jessica Mayhew, and Luc Gauchier helped youth address the common issues of stigma surrounding mental health. Stigma is a common factor preventing individuals from seeking help. Elder Doreen Bergum was

present to support the youth and share her story about her connection to the Métis community. The youth took part in cultural activities such as jigging lessons and a beading workshop. This summit brought together 50+ Métis youth leaders from all six MNA regions to develop a plan to change the way their community associates stigma with mental health. The youth in attendance left with the knowledge to speak-up against stigma in their community, reach out to other youth in need, and a stronger connection to their Métis culture.

For more information about Metis specific health care services and programs, turn to page 12. ∞



Métis Week 2018

EACH NOVEMBER, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) Provincial Head Office celebrates Métis Week to commemorate the outstanding contributions of Métis people to Canada. Provincial Head Office hosted several events November 12-17, including a proclamation ceremony at Edmonton City Hall, the Louis Riel Commemorative Walk, Family Day, and many more. Every year, Métis Week centers around November 16th, the day the Right Honourable Louis Riel was hanged. On this day we gather at the Alberta Legislature building to honour Riel's sacrifice and carry on his vision of a strong Métis Nation.



2018 Youth Art Contest Winners

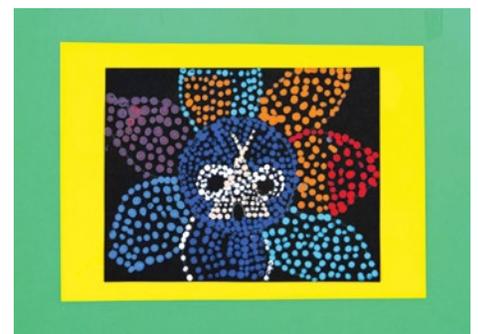
EVERY YEAR, during Métis Week, the MNA holds a youth art contest. Over one-hundred young artists from across the province submitted their representations of Métis culture. The winner of each age group will have their artwork recreated as a lapel pin for Métis Week 2019.



Jayla Bezuidenhout, age 7



Austan Najmi-Beauchamp, age 13



Aiden Alexson, age 8



New MNA Provincial Council Sworn-in at Packed Ceremony

THE NEWLY ELECTED Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) Provincial Council (PC) were officially sworn-in Saturday, October 20, 2018. Provincial Council were amongst family, friends, and community at the River Cree Casino in Edmonton. One by one, each council member was called to the stage to read and sign their solemn oath to the Nation and its citizens. Some were joined by family members and mentors who shared histories of dedication, pride, and continued determination to make a difference. The packed ceremony came just a day after their first PC sitting on October 19, 2018 at the MNA Provincial Head Office. The 14 Provincial Council members hit the ground running with many initiatives in each region during Métis Week (November 12-17, 2018). [∞](#)

The newly elected members are as follows:

- Provincial President** – Audrey Poitras
- Provincial Vice President** – Daniel Cardinal

- Region One President** – James Cardinal
- Region One Vice President** – Jason Ekeberg

- Region Two President** – Duane Zaraska
- Region Two Vice President** – Andrea Sandmaier

- Region Three President** – Lawrence Gervais
- Region Three Vice President** – Judy Gentes

- Region Four President** – Dr. Tracy Friedel
- Region Four Vice President** – Gary Gagnon

- Region Five President** – Elmer Gullion
- Region Five Vice President** – Hilda Lambert

- Region Six President** – Carol Ridsdale
- Region Six Vice President** – Conrad DeLeeuw

PHOTO:

(Back L-R) Dr. Tracy Friedel, Lawrence Gervais, James Cardinal, Conrad DeLeeuw, Gary Gagnon, Jason Ekeberg, Duane Zaraska, Carol Ridsdale, Elmer Gullion.
 (Front L-R) Audrey Poitras, Hilda Lambert, Andrea Sandmaier, Judy Gentes, Daniel Cardinal.

Honouring the Career of John McDonald

AFTER DEDICATING NEARLY 70 YEARS to his country and community, John Kenneth McDonald celebrated his retirement with the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta on Oct. 19, 2018 at the River Cree Casino.

John has been an outstanding role model for Indigenous youth and a bright example of what tireless dedication can achieve. He and his partner, Myrtle, leave behind a decade-long legacy at the *Bold Eagle* program, a summer military/employment program for Indigenous youth. John also served as President of the Korea Veterans Association Unit 21.

Born in 1933 in Neepawa, Manitoba, John began his illustrious career with the Canadian Army in 1950. For almost 40

years, he travelled the world to serve his country, taking on many roles including Gunner, Corporal, Sergeant Major, and Chief Warrant Officer.

In the 1980s he settled in Edmonton, and for the next 17 years worked for the City of Edmonton as a Maintenance Engineering Analyst. In 1989, he retired from the Canadian Armed Forces Militia and nine years later retired from the City of Edmonton.

It wasn't until age 57 that he discovered his family connection to a long line of Hudson's Bay Company explorers and traders, and their Swampy Cree wives.

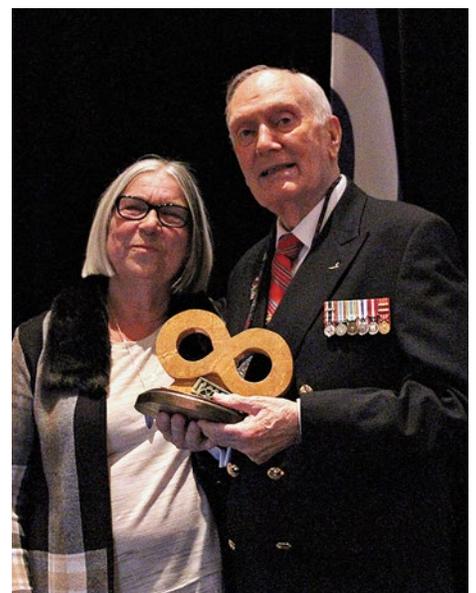
From that time onwards, John has dedicated himself to his community. The community in turn has honored the well-decorated veteran with the Aboriginal Role Model of Alberta for Indigenous Youth award, The Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, The Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal, The Canadian Special Service Medal, and The Korea "Ambassador Peace" Medal, to name just a few.

The MNA was honoured to be among friends, family, and colleagues to toast John's retirement from the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta. Many in attendance stood to speak of John's strong character, passion, and dedication.

The MNA thanks John for his service and contribution to our community and wishes him the best in his retirement. ∞



PHOTOS: (From Top) Métis Child & Family Services Jiggers; Member of the Aboriginal Veterans Society; John being presented with a gift; John McDonald with MNA President Audrey Poitras.



John McDonald

EVENT RECAPS





Christmas Celebrations

ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, we gathered at the Radisson Hotel, in Edmonton, to celebrate the holidays at the Métis Nation of Alberta Christmas Party. The afternoon was all about kids and families with fun cultural activities and a visit from Santa. The evening brought a delicious dinner followed by a dance with entertainment from *Nicely Put Together Band*.



Metis Health Services and Programs



The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) has several initiatives underway to understand the health needs of Métis Albertans and improve access to health care services and programs, specific to Métis communities. Read on to find out more about each initiative.

Medically Necessary Accommodations

In June 2018, the MNA furnished a one-bedroom suite and a barrier-free two-bedroom suite in the



Métis Capital Housing Corporation’s Renaissance Tower for Métis citizens travelling to Edmonton for medically-necessary appointments or treatments.

Five families and a total of 14 people have stayed in the suites, including a senior and her daughter, a mother and her three children, a husband and wife, and a senior with her two daughters and grandson.

“I am so grateful to the Métis Nation of Alberta for assisting with medical lodgings for my child to attend an appointment with the Neurologist in Edmonton,” says a Region 6 citizen who stayed in a suite. “Our family has had to deal with a variety of medical and financial difficulties in the past couple of years and it has been truly a blessing to receive this help. We did not expect to stay in such a beautiful place; that alleviated a lot of the stress we were dealing with facing our medical concerns. I know that this service is a great assistance for our Métis people, I was not sure if I could take my child to their appointment without this help.”

To learn more about these accommodations and the applications process, visit albertametis.com/medical-accommodations

Chronic Disease

Together with the University of Alberta School of Public Health and the Analytics and Performance Reporting Branch of Alberta Health, the MNA is part of an ongoing project to study diabetes and heart disease in Métis Albertans.

Past studies have found a growing number of Métis Albertans are living with chronic diseases, especially diabetes and heart disease. This project will explore the number of Métis with chronic disease, their types of medications and treatment, and common complications of those diseases. The health report will be available in the coming months.

Maternal & Perinatal Health

In partnership with the University of Alberta’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the MNA is leading a project to better understand the experiences of Métis women during pregnancy and childbirth.

There is little information available on the strengths, challenges, and needs of Métis mothers and newborns. This study will help the MNA implement Métis-specific health programs and services and document important practices related to pregnancy and childbirth.

The MNA will be organizing regional consultations and is looking for Métis women to share their experiences. Specifically, this study aims to understand the perspectives of Métis women related to the influences of colonialism, intergenerational trauma, resilience, cultural healing, and traditions on pregnancy and childbirth.

Addictions (Alberta Treatment Standards Project)

Through online surveys and face-to-face gatherings at the MNA's Health Forum on Nov. 3, the MNA and its health care partners are working together to create a minimum standard of care for patient safety, quality of care, and supports and services for addictions.

The feedback gained will be used to advocate for safer and more appropriate health care regulations of addictions treatment and ensure a strong Métis voice is represented.

Harm Reduction (Opioids)

MNA staff have been travelling across the province to offer free naloxone training and distribution of a lifesaving medicine that can reverse opioid overdose.

Since June 2018, we have trained 422 people, many of whom had personal experiences with opioids. Some shared stories of losing a loved one, or how their teens or their teen's friends use opioids, while others expressed shame to admit they carried a naloxone kit.

Opioids affect people from all walks of life and the MNA will continue offering this free training into 2019 throughout Alberta.

Cancer

Throughout 2018, the MNA hosted a series of focus groups in Edmonton and Calgary with Métis citizens to learn about the experiences of people who had or currently have cancer.

Their stories will be included in an Alberta Métis Cancer Journey Resource Toolkit. The toolkit will help Métis Albertans experiencing cancer. The resource will have information about cancer, receiving a diagnosis, treatment

options, holistic healing, the road to recovery, managing palliative care, resources and supports, and individual wellness plans.

At the focus group, participants said they found comfort in researching symptoms, treatment options, and survivorship rates of their



specific diagnoses.

The group also talked about humour and a large support system helping through tough

situations. Others shared how doctors often ignored their symptoms, forcing them to advocate for themselves to get screened and receive proper treatment.

We also learned about a need for a centralized resource of programs and services and a person to guide patients and family through the system.

More focus groups are planned in 2019 as we gather firsthand experiences to better inform the Alberta Métis Cancer Journey Resource Toolkit.

Community Health Nights

Community Health Nights increase Metis Citizens' awareness on various topics.

In June 2018, the MNA hosted a Community Health Night on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The evening provided educational information about the cause and prevention of FASD, the experiences of people with FASD, and support for their caregivers.

Participants at the session said they learned how to work and communicate with people who have FASD and find support programs. Others said they felt the Community Health Night was non-judgmental towards mothers of children and adults with FASD.

The presentation is available to view on the Métis of Alberta Facebook Page. In October, a second

Community Health Night was held with a focus on maternal health and family planning. Métis doctor Cassandra Felse-Durksen, a specialist in women's health at the Indigenous Wellness Clinic presented at the MNA head office in Edmonton. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about reproductive health, sexual health, and reproductive life planning among other topics.

The next Community Health Night is scheduled for January 23, 2019 and will focus on family law. Specifically, child custody and parenting will be discussed by family law attorney Ning Ramos at the MNA head office (#100 11738 Kingsway NW, Edmonton, AB). Register online at mnafamilylaw.eventbrite.com 

For more information on Métis health services & programs, please call 780-455-2200 or email health@metis.org

90 YEARS OF MÉTIS NATIONHOOD

A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY

From humble beginnings in 1928 to today, the Métis Nation of Alberta has a strong history of nationhood. For 90 years we have fought to ensure our way of life, identity, and rights are recognized and together, we will continue to tackle difficulties and celebrate triumphs with one common goal, to propel the nation forward.

2006: New MNA Membership Cards

The MNA issues its first new membership card, based on the requirements of the National Definition of Métis for Citizenship within the Métis Nation, to MNA President Audrey Poitras.



1928: Association de Métis Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest

Métis in the Cold Lake area organize after the federal government transfers control of natural resources to the province. Concerned about the impact on Métis living on Crown land, they form the Association des Métis Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest. In 1932, the Association is organized more formally and becomes the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA).



1991: The Métis Nation of Alberta

The MAA officially becomes the Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNA). The name change is an unambiguous assertion of Métis nationhood.

1920

1970

2010

1938: Métis Population Betterment Act

Alberta adopts the Métis Population Betterment Act, creating the province's 12 original Métis colonies (now known as Métis Settlements).



1982: Constitution Act, 1982

After intense consultations with the MAA, led by President Sam Sinclair, Premier of Alberta, Peter Lougheed, proposes the final wording for what would become s. 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982: "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed." "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" is defined to explicitly include the Métis.

1987: MAA-Alberta Framework Agreement

The MAA becomes the only Métis government in Canada to have a framework agreement with a provincial government. The agreement provides the MAA with stable funding to pursue the priorities of the Métis Nation within Alberta.



September 19, 2003: R v Powley

The Supreme Court of Canada confirms that s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 protects Métis rights.

1961: Métis Association of Alberta is formally registered

Under the leadership of Adrian Hope (President 1961-67), the MAA formally registers as an association, giving it access to federal funding.



April 14, 2016: Daniels Decision

The Supreme Court of Canada confirms the federal government is responsible for dealing with Métis issues.



February 1, 2017: MNA-Alberta Framework Agreement

Alberta and the MNA sign a renewed 10-year Framework Agreement, in which Alberta “recognizes the MNA’s representative role on behalf of its citizens.” The Framework Agreement includes commitments to deal with Métis harvesting, consultation, and other rights related issues.



August 7, 2016: New Objective: Negotiating a Modern-Day Treaty

The MNA Annual Assembly votes to amend the MNA Bylaws to include negotiating a modern-day treaty on behalf of Métis in Alberta as one of the MNA’s objectives and to adopt a new Oath of Membership.



April 13, 2017: Canada-Métis Nation Accord

Canada and the Métis National Council and its governing members, including the MNA, sign the Canada-Métis Nation Accord.

2011

2018



January 30, 2017: MNA-Canada MOU on Advancing Reconciliation

Canada and the MNA sign the Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Reconciliation (MOU), putting the MNA on track to negotiate a modern-day treaty for Métis in Alberta.

November 16, 2017: MNA-Canada Framework Agreement on Advancing Reconciliation

Canada and the MNA sign the Framework Agreement on Advancing Reconciliation. This marks the beginning of formal negotiations towards the recognition of Métis rights, resolution of long-standing grievances (such as those relating to the scrip system), and the establishment of modern self-government for the Métis Nation of Alberta.



July 19, 2018: MNA-Canada Consultation Protocol Agreement

Canada and the MNA sign the Consultation Protocol Agreement. It outlines clear roles, responsibilities, and a method for consultation between the MNA and Canada.



A Lifetime Journey

Métis health advocate comes full circle with her health and wellness

BY OLIVIA BAKO

Danielle Murray knows what it's like to go from peak athlete to rock bottom.

She began figure skating at age 3 and moved into competition at age 12. For the next eight years, she trained up to five hours a day both on and off the ice. However, once she hit her 20s, she lost that structure.

"When I retired from skating, that stopped, and I pulled back from fitness because I had been doing it every day all day for so many years," she recalls. "I started enjoying life's indulgences, going out more, having some beers and eating some pizza, and I ended up gaining quite a bit of weight, probably about 50 pounds from where I am now."



Without a healthy outlet, her high-stress sales and marketing job piled onto her mental health struggles and she ended up hospitalized.

"I was not well mentally, and I was absolutely physically not well. Using alcohol and things like that to deal or not deal with my problems, which is something I find a lot more common than people admit," she says.

She's since been diagnosed with clinical depression and anxiety. However, her hospitalization was the turning point in her life where she reconnected with fitness and wellness; made possible with support from her family.

Everyday Danielle's mom and her best friend Tamara would get her up and out of bed to take her to yoga. Practising yoga was the only time she felt better and relaxed. Soon, she fell in love with it.

Now she's back on top. She's happier, healthier, and helping others feel the same through yoga.

"I will say moving into yoga saved my life; I don't know if I'd still be here today," she says. "I'm so grateful for the support I had from my husband, family, and friends that helped guide me down that path."

Meanwhile, she continued working in sales but decided yoga was the path she needed to follow.

"With anxiety a lot of people that have it feel they can't calm down," she says. "They feel like there's a weight on their shoulders or on their chest. What happened with yoga, especially the breathing exercises and the practises helped me be able to learn how to bring myself back down when I felt like I was on the edge of panic attacks. It gave me some really valuable tools to cope with my mental health challenges."

Feeling inspired to share this positivity with others, she took her first

yoga teacher training in Victoria, B.C. in 2008 and began offering yoga classes in Whitecourt at a local fitness centre and out of her home. Life also happened, and Danielle married Tom Murray in 2007, and had two daughters; Isabella, 8, and Molly, 6.

"They're listening to everything I say, and we all have these things that we are uncomfortable with about ourselves," she observes. "I want to show them [how] to have a positive mindset approach to wellness and do it because



you want to feel good, and you want to do the things you enjoy."

For five years Danielle continued teaching training. She was taking teacher intensives in Edmonton with instructor Michele Theoret, at Empowered Yoga school, who eventually invited her to assist with teacher training there.

"Sometimes I feel yoga can appear a little inaccessible when people say, 'I'm not flexible, I'm not this, I'm not that.

I'm out of shape. I can't come,' but it's all about learning about your boundaries, limitations, and personal strengths through practice and going from there," Danielle points out. "We had the same idea: to make yoga fit the person, not the person fit yoga."

With her teaching taking her around Alberta and as far away as Phoenix, Arizona, Danielle's growing reputation caught the attention of Lululemon two years ago. She's been a Lululemon Ambassador ever since, building relationships with the community, reaching out, and supporting people in their wellness.

"The greatest thing that it means for me is that I get to meet so many interesting people all the time within the community, just through my role as an ambassador," she says. "I've met so many fantastic students and had so many wonderful opportunities to teach at amazing events, like the Lululemon 10k this year."

After clocking so many kilometres on the road, last year Danielle and her family moved to Edmonton to be closer to her extended family. Although she continues to do teacher training, she's also turned an eye to corporate wellness — a full-circle transformation for someone who once worked in a high-pressure environment.

"Coming back and now trying to provide the tools that were so, so important and crucial in my wellness and my mental health, it's been really fulfilling for me to help people out, and in a way that's approachable and accessible," she adds.

"Especially in our society today, we have so much pulling us. We have emails, we have schedules, kids' demands, pulling us from the moment and that's why anxiety is so prevalent.

*“I will say
moving into yoga
saved my life; I
don’t know if I’d
still be here today.”*





Parents and professionals, there's this drive to do it all and be it all and be the best all the time. Yoga is what we really need to bring us back to what's important; to get back in our own bodies and really engage with and acknowledge our feelings, both physically and mentally."

Besides the physical benefits like strength and flexibility, Danielle has learned to be more self-aware through meditation. Meditation, she emphasizes, is not about stopping your thoughts or emptying your brain, but about being present.

"Meditation is actually about sitting and engaging in the moment," she

explains. "You sit, and you breathe, and you close your eyes, then you might notice a distraction come up. Maybe it's a thought, maybe it's a sensation. You notice your distraction, you acknowledge it, and then you come back. It ends up looking like a cycle."

Not only has yoga and self-awareness taught Danielle to recognize her feelings, it's also taught her when to reach out to others and the importance of community support.

This led her to explore her Métis heritage.

"Knowing who you are and knowing what you need is at the root of

wellness," she says. "That identification of 'This is who I am, this in my gut is what I know and what I need,' and being able to identify that."

Danielle didn't learn her great-grandmother was Métis until she passed when Danielle was a teen. Her mom and grandmother researched their genealogy and registered the family as Métis citizens, but at the time Danielle didn't pay much attention.

Since having her own family she wanted to learn more about her great-grandmother's life. She found out her great-grandmother was one of eight siblings and left school in late elementary to stay home and raise them.

She wants to share this new-found connection with her kids and teach them to be proud of who they are and feel a sense of belonging.

"I want my kids to learn where they came from and not only learn about it but be so proud. I think of the story and history of our heritage; we are such a strong and resilient people." ∞



As a corporate wellness consultant, Danielle works with organizations to provide in-house initiatives, employee engagement strategies, and health & wellness focused experiences. She currently leads corporate retreats with Holos Refuel, and The Holos Group. For more information visit daniellemurrayyoga.com

PHOTOS BY DES ILES PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP); HANNAH HAMILTON PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTTOM)

Métis Soccer Stars

Excel on International Stage

As teammates representing Alberta and Western Canada, Mariah Kylo and Bailey Richarde have spent the better part of the last five years playing together, bringing home silver from Greenland's 2016 Arctic Winter Games (AWG) and finishing fourth at Toronto's 2017 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG).

As individuals, they've won provincial championships and have spent more of their lives on the soccer field than off.

Hailing from Fort St. John, B.C., Mariah, 17, has played soccer since she was four years old. She started playing competitively for the Fort St. John Strikers at eight and won multiple indoor and outdoor tournaments before graduating high school.

As her love for the game and skill on the field grew, she became captain of the Strikers at age 11.

"My passion for soccer really picked up in my U12 year," says the midfielder. "Just the team and the team building we did was awesome, and that's when we

started improving — going to a lot of tournaments and summer camps."

The opportunity to captain showcased her leadership qualities, so when the chance to co-captain the Northern Alberta team at the AWG came in 2016 she embraced the opportunity.

"I knew most of the girls on the team before we went, so I knew what their play was like," she recalls. "It was easy to coach that group because we've been friends for a long time, so I knew how to push them to be their best."

"[Greenland] was freezing, but it was one of the best experiences of my life," Bailey adds. "The atmosphere when you're playing, when everyone is cheering and chanting your name, it was so fun."

Despite losing to Alaska in the 2016 gold medal game by a narrow 2-1 score, the women capitalized on the momentum and brought home gold from Alberta provincials in Calgary later that week.

Bailey, 18, was raised in Grande Prairie but frequently made the two-and-a-half-hour drive to Fort St. John to play with the Strikers. Like Mariah, she's played soccer since the age of four.

After years of being teammates, Bailey and Mariah established a strong friendship during high school in Grande Prairie, before they came together on the continental stage for the 2017 NAIG.

"It was such a crazy experience to be a leader for all those girls there,"

Both on and off the soccer pitch, two Métis women are setting a positive example for other young Indigenous athletes across the country

BY OLIVIA CONDON

Mariah says. “It felt especially good because Alberta hasn’t done well [historically], so to get to the bronze-medal game was great. It was really good having Bailey there because I felt like we pushed the other girls to try harder.”

The two women co-captained the NAIG team. Bailey says that it was their closeness that made them an unstoppable force of leadership.

“We had to set a good example for the other girls,” she says. “We kept pushing the girls no matter what. It didn’t matter if we were down 2-1 or 7-0, we’re not going to give up. We had to put in 100 per cent all the time.”

But it was a close 2-0 loss to Saskatchewan that highlighted the trials of leadership when things don’t go exactly as planned.

“When we were losing, a lot of the girls were getting down, and it can be frustrating as a player when people aren’t trying as hard anymore, so you have to keep it positive,” Mariah explains.

After graduating from high school this past June, both women received calls to join the Grande Prairie Regional College Wolves for the outdoor season.

“Honestly, it was really exciting to play with [Mariah] because we have such good chemistry together and we know how each other play,” Bailey says.

Paving the way for other Métis athletes, both are aware of their possible influence on young Indigenous women within their community and Mariah

says she won’t let the chance to be a positive role model go to waste.

“I am very proud of my Métis/Cree heritage,” she says. “I love being able to represent my province and heritage and to be a leader, not only as a woman, but as a proud Métis person.”

With high school behind them both women are looking forward to pursuing post-secondary educations, but neither have plans to quit soccer anytime soon.

“Physically keeping active is important for me; I really like when you have to push yourself more to be better,” Mariah notes. “But the mental part of the game is huge... I look back on the game to see what I can fix, and there’s always room to improve.”

Mariah moved back to Fort St. John at the end of September to play indoor with the Strikers, and is hoping to advance her education after the snow melts.

“After the winter, I will move back to Alberta — Grande Prairie or Calgary — to become a personal trainer then pursue a degree in education,” she says.

Similarly, Bailey sees soccer as a way to stay active and busy.

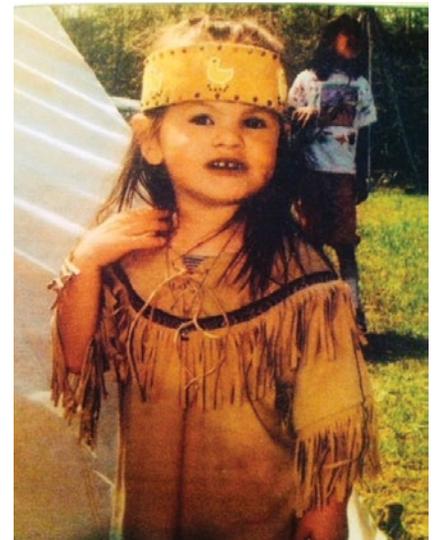
“I love playing. I feel like it keeps me out of trouble,” she says. “It always makes me happy. If I’m feeling down I know I can go play the game and walk out with a smile on my face.”

She plans to continue with the Wolves next season and is looking into taking Kinesiology in Grande Prairie or Kamloops in the near future. ∞



ABOVE: Mariah (left) and Bailey (right) on their way to the 2016 Arctic Winter Games.

BELOW: Mariah as a child at Doig (Reserve) Days.



Métis Doula

Empowering Mothers

BY KELLY JOHNSTON

It's 2 a.m. and Noreen Utri has just woken to the sound of her phone ringing. She answers in a hushed voice so as not to wake her family, asking a few simple but vital questions. She ends the call with words of encouragement, love, and assurance that she will be there soon.

Noreen Utri is a doula, and her job is just getting started.

Noreen has always been fascinated by birth and long before she became a doula she felt a special connection to the process. The oldest of four children, Noreen was 18 years old when she watched her baby sister come into the world. She stayed diligently by her mother's side during her difficult postpartum recovery period. It was then she realized the incredible importance of family and support for a birthing mother.

Years later, when Noreen became pregnant with the first of her own three children, she wanted to connect with her physical, mental, and spiritual body. She turned to her Métis family for knowledge and support; particularly her aunt, Brown Bear Woman.

"I wanted to honour the traditions of my ancestral roots, and my Auntie helped me to rediscover them," Noreen says. "I practiced 'quiet birth,' the tradition of having the mother and all attendants making as little noise as possible during labour, so as to encourage the baby not to be scared to join us. It helped me to focus all of my energy and intention on the task at hand."

She also wanted her family there. During her youngest child's birth Noreen's eldest daughter, mother, and grandmother all joined her in the delivery room.



"In Métis culture, this was how knowledge was passed down, and I took great comfort in them being there."

She also opted to delay non-essential interventions, such as weighing and bathing, in favour of immediate breastfeeding. Luckily, all these practices were supported and encouraged by her midwife.

She also chose this care as it helped her feel closer to her Métis culture and create the birth experience she needed.

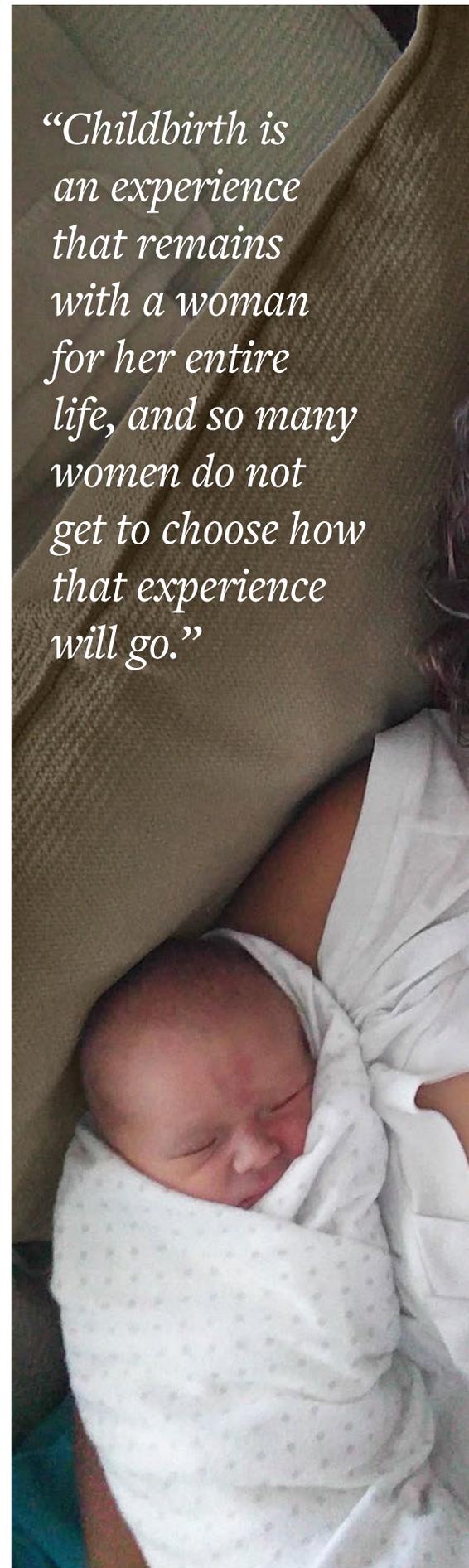
"As they were for our ancestors, midwives are there for the mother from the beginning to the end," she says. "My midwife helped me to understand each stage of pregnancy and how to prepare mentally and physically."

This positive personal experience led her to become an advocate for natural and empowered childbirth — when a mother feels confident and prepared, so she may have a safe, loving, and dignified experience — and it wasn't long before she realized birth work was truly her calling.

She eventually began training to become a doula.

"It was a struggle," she admits.

"Childbirth is an experience that remains with a woman for her entire life, and so many women do not get to choose how that experience will go."





“Finding the balance between completing my education while running my day home and being a wife and mother was not always easy. I really had to persevere. But my desire to be able to help others kept me going.”

After two years of hard work, Noreen achieved her certification as a birth and postpartum doula in May 2018. She didn't stop there.

Today, Noreen is also a certified lactation educator, childbirth educator, and certified Energy of Birthing practitioner. With her range of training, experience, and naturally calm and intuitive persona, her business, *Heart to Heart Doula Care*, is thriving — primarily by word of mouth.

From her perspective, she sees the role of midwives and doulas as more essential than ever.

“Childbirth is an experience that remains with a woman for her entire life,” she says, “and so many women do not get to choose how that experience will go.”

This is particularly true for Indigenous women. Currently, the policy in Alberta is that pregnant women living on remote reserves must leave their communities and travel to a major centre to receive hospital care. Often, this means women are alone and vulnerable during one of the most intimate times of their lives.

“It can be stressful, even frightening, to try to navigate an unfamiliar medical system,” she says. “Indigenous women have reported discrimination and even mistreatment in hospitals. None of these things are conducive to a peaceful birth.”

So what does a doula do?

“Pretty well everything except deliver babies!” Noreen says with a laugh. “A doula can provide information about staying healthy (both mentally and physically) during pregnancy, as well as be a source of accountability for those goals. Doulas also help women create their birth plan, which essentially means, ‘My body, my birth, my way,’ explains Noreen.

In the fervour of labour, a doula can coach the mother based on her birth plan and help her advocate for herself should things go awry — a common occurrence in any birth setting.

From a postpartum perspective, Noreen provides support through the healing process and helps mothers establish a proper breastfeeding technique and routine. She is also a baby-wearing advocate.

“Wearing your baby is not only a beautiful way to help your baby feel safe and calm, it's also very practical. I love helping mothers learn how to do it.”

Some doulas also assist with childcare, preparing meals, light housecleaning, and running errands — all tasks that can become incredibly daunting when a mother is preoccupied with her new baby. As a journeyman chef and seasoned homemaker, Noreen enjoys this aspect of the job.

“It's what I do for my own family.”

While midwifery is an option potentially offering more culturally-appropriate care, it is only available for women who are considered low-risk (a mixture of age, health, and the likelihood of complications) and able to secure a spot on the - very long - midwife waitlist.

Many women, despite their intention to birth with a midwife, simply never get the chance. Engaging with a doula is a good way to ensure, regardless of the care obtained, a woman can still create a birth experience aligning with her personal and spiritual values.

Noreen believes the key to an empowered birth starts with education: “There are so many things to consider. My goal is to help women be fully informed about the choices they'll make during the process.”

Finally, Noreen stresses, support from a community is key.

“It doesn't matter whether it's simply the birth partner or a whole group of family and friends, as long as everyone is there to love and support the birthing mother.”

Noreen looks forward to the reward that comes with serving mothers; whether helping create ideal birth plans, providing physical, mental, and emotional support during labour, helping a woman learn how to breast-feed or baby-wear, or passing along her hard-earned maternal wisdom. ∞

MétisWorks Contractor Database

The Métis Nation of Alberta is pleased to announce MétisWorks – an online resource for Métis-owned businesses and contractors. The MétisWorks database aims to increase the visibility of Métis entrepreneurs, helping to build relationships within their communities, while connecting them with opportunities across the province.

Have a job that needs to be done? Try one of these Métis-owned businesses today!

1198625 Alberta Ltd

Hauling Hotshot

Edmonton
780-203-4231
j_young@shaw.ca

AAA Precision Industries

**Crane & Project Management
Rentals**

davepiche1962@gmail.com

Acreege Development Solutions Ltd.

Acreege Development

Millarville
403-815-0004
clayton@adsLtd.ca

Action Plus Flooring

Flooring Supplier

Cold Lake
780-812-4065

A-Plus Welding Inc.

Welding & General Contractors

Devon
780-239-7639
dlamy@apluswelding.ca

Boissy Welding Ltd.

Welding

Rocky Mountain House
403-304-2702
650cabwl@gmail.com

Carvel Electric Ltd.

Electrical Contractors

Stony Plain
587-520-1872
jordan@carvelectric.com

**Dreamcatcher 2000 Consulting
Renewable Energy Technologies**

587-717-6782
lmleumearns@gmail.com

Elavation Safety Ltd.

Safety Services

Cochrane
403-808-4304
frontline.4@hotmail.com

GB Holdings Ltd.

Earthworks Company

403-472-3056
gbhold@hotmail.com

**Gray Owl Property Inspection
& Services**

General Maintenance

St. Paul
780-646-3678
grayowlpropertyinspection@gmail.com

Hawksly Knight Industries Ltd.

Solar Photovoltaics

Edmonton
780-660-3133
mrcritchie@hawksly-knight.com

Iron A Welding Ltd.

General Maintenance Contractors

Tilley
403-377-2034
ironawelding@msn.com

JAKOM Inc.

Crane Rental Oilfield Services

Bonnyville
780-573-9829
cody@jakom.ca

Jayde Builders

Building Construction

587-286-4228

Jewell Services Inc.

General Contractors

Athabasca
780-213-4410
jewellservices@explornet.com

Lac La Biche Building Products

Timber Mart Building Supplies

Lac La Biche
780-623-0470

Marczyk Stake & Lath

Oilfield & Road Construction

Products

High Prairie, Alberta
1-780-523-4266
marlenemarczyk@yahoo.ca

Northern Mobile Service Ltd.

Maintenance Consulting

Spruce Grove
780-940-2392
Wade@northernmobile.ca

Pro Rescue Services Inc.

Safety Services

Stony Plain
780-289-2762
office@prorescueservices.com

Rainy Creek Ranch

Guest Ranch

Sylvan Lake
403-872-2557
mcleodbs@explornet.com

Rivet Management Ltd.

Design & Construction

Sherwood Park
780-243-5115
nicole@rivetmanagement.com

Rowland Consulting Ltd.

Hauling, Construction Consultants

Beaumont
780-808-9014
ryanrowland@shaw.ca

**S. Basinger Welding &
Fabrication Ltd.**

Welding & Mechanical Construction

Sherwood Park
780-920-8788
Sjbweld@hotmail.com

Sharon Kaup

**Custom Greenhouse Container
Services**

Onoway
780-967-5331
kauptns@gmail.com

SMG Métis

General Maintenance Contractor

Fort McMurray
780-880-1288
mxcfleet@shaw.ca

Solar Ninjas Energy

Electrical Services

780-264-9059
stephen@solarninjas.energy

Steelhead Ventures Ltd.

Water & Sewar Services

Cochrane
403-899-0655
shane@steelheadventuresLtd.com

Sure Shot Wireline Inc.

Abandonment Down Hole

Perforating

Bonnyville
780-573-8147
brenda@sureshotwireline.com

Wan Wan Roofing

Roofing Services

Bonnyville
780-573-3059

Warrior Consulting

Energy & Environment Services

Blackfalds
403-304-6828
matt@warriorconsulting.net

**MetisWorks will be
launching at the 2019
Business Mixer as an
online database.
For more information,
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metisworks@metis.org**

MÉTIS LAND: RIGHTS & SCRIP CONFERENCE

After Confederation in 1867, Louis Riel and the Métis Provisional Government negotiated for rights to their homeland. As a result, Canada promised land to the "Half-breeds." This promise was poorly executed and many Métis families lost their land. Learn how this impacted Métis in Alberta and what Canada is doing about it now.



February 8-9, 2019

**Lister Conference Centre,
University of Alberta**

Presentations & Panels:

- Keynote: Métis Scrip 101 with Dr. Frank Tough
- Edmonton River Lots
- Future of Métis Land Claims in Alberta
- Sharing Circle with Métis Knowledge Holders & Scrip experts
- Hirsekorn Case



This event will be **LIVE STREAMED** on the MNA Facebook page



Old-Time Baked Beans

(Adapted from the Métis Cookbook and Guide to Healthy Living; recipe courtesy of Alma Desjarlais)



Ingredients:

- 1 lb or 2 cups beans (rinse well if canned)
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ cup molasses
- 1 medium onion
- 6 cups cold water
- ½ cup brown sugar (or 2 tbsp. plus 2 tsp. of Splenda® Brown Sugar Blend)
- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- ½ lb lean meat on hand, cubed (moose, venison, bison, pork chop)

Instructions:

If using dried beans: rinse, soak, and cook according to package directions (usually 60 minutes). If using canned beans: rinse thoroughly.

Add all ingredients into a slow cooker or heavy bottom pot and cook on low (or 300°F) for 5-6 hours. Add water or no salt added stock if liquid is needed.

*If using meat with very little fat, try adding during the last hour of cooking instead of at the beginning.

Serve on whole wheat toast with a side salad.

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MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA

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Growing Small Business

March 7, 2019

Edmonton Inn

& Conference Centre

11834 Kingsway Ave., Edmonton



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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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