



**THE WISDOM OF
HONOURING
OUR METIS ELDERS**



A METIS ELDER'S WELLNESS CONFERENCE

Conference Summary

March 25 - 27, 1998

Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

Sponsored by:

Metis Family & Community Justice Services Inc.

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THE SENATE OF CANADA
THE HON. THELMA CHALIFOUX



LE SÉNAT DU CANADA
L'HON. THELMA CHALIFOUX

Ottawa K1A 0A4
CANADA

March 23, 1998

GREETINGS
FROM

THE HONOURABLE THELMA J. CHALIFOUX
SENATE OF CANADA

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I SEND GREETINGS TO YOU IN CELEBRATION OF THE FIRST ANNUAL SASKATCHEWAN METIS ELDERS CONFERENCE. METIS ELDERS HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY, NOT ONLY WITHIN OUR EXTENDED FAMILY STRUCTURES BUT ALSO IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR NATION.

WE AS ELDERS ARE THE KEEPERS OF OUR HISTORY, OUR CULTURE AND OUR IDENTITIES. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH OUR HISTORY AND OUR CULTURE. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS ELDERS TO GUIDE AND ADVISE OUR LEADERS IN THEIR DECISION MAKING AS IT AFFECTS OUR NATION, OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR FAMILIES.

IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR CHILDREN KNOW THEIR IDENTITIES AS WITHOUT OUR IDENTITIES OUR SPIRITS ARE LOST.

ONCE AGAIN, HAVE A WONDERFUL CONFERENCE. MY PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU.

SAFE JOURNEYS.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thelma".

THE HONOURABLE THELMA J. CHALIFOUX

**HONOURING THE WISDOM OF OUR METIS ELDERS
CONFERENCE SUMMARY
March 27, 1998
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan**

Background:

The conference was attended by almost 200 Metis Elders and about 20 young people from GED program at the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Prince Albert. The young people acted as small group facilitators and information recorders. Prior to the conference, a steering committee was formed and the steering committee established a purpose for the conference.

“The mission of this conference is to provide Elders in Metis communities the tools to re-assert their cultural and traditional leadership role in improving and maintaining their own personal wellness, and the wellness of their families and communities.”

Also prior to the conference, a number of interviews were held with members of the conference steering committee, senators, and elders from across Saskatchewan. They were asked to identify the issues and challenges that elders in communities faced that could be discussed at an Elder's conference. This information led to six major discussion topics for the conference.

- Defining the Role of Elders today – in the family and community.
- Strengthening the Metis Identity
- Strengthening the Metis Family
- Strengthening the Metis Community
- Strengthening the Metis Community Leadership
- Strengthening Metis Self-Reliance

These topics were the focus of discussion in the 11 small discussion groups that were formed at the conference. Each group had about 14 elders and 1 or 2 young people.

In addition, on the second day, Elders were interviewed or asked to record their own histories and stories. Several elders that volunteered to be video-taped, had their personal history recorded in that fashion. Several groups also held a discussion on the definition of “Metis”. A database form was completed by each of the Elders and a database will be developed from these forms for use by schools, conference organizers, and community groups. Pictures were taken for a later poster series. This conference report was developed for distribution at the closing of the conference.



Discussion Themes:

In reading the reports of the youth facilitators, groups have added several major themes to the six previously identified which should guide future activities (e.g. conferences).

- A lack of communication. The Elders feel they are being left out of the activities of the community. They are not being asked to participate in the ongoing business of the community and they are not informed about events that are planned or occurring.
- The Elders are concerned about the youth. There are very limited opportunities to interact with the youth. The youth appear to not be interested in what the Elders have to contribute. If the Elders cannot interact with the young people then they are afraid that there will be no cultural knowledge passed on to future generations. There is also some fear of another kind. Sometimes there is abuse of Elders by young people, sometimes in their own homes. There is often nowhere to turn.
- The Elders want more conferences where they can interact among themselves. At these conferences they also want to interact with young people. The Elders appear to be very firm that these Elders conferences should be free from direction by the political leadership. Political people can be asked to speak but should have no control of the agenda or the conference process.
- The Elders want to be consulted in decisions of the Metis Nation at the local, area and provincial levels. They suggest that Elder's Councils be formed at the local and area levels to work with the leadership. Elders want to be involved such key decisions as "who is Metis" and the enumeration project that has now been started. Elders want to be a stabilizing influence in the Metis Nation. When they speak, they want to be heard. They want to be respected for their contributions.



Ideas/Suggestions/Solutions:

The following is a brief summary of some of the suggestions from the discussion groups:

Defining the Role of Elders today – in the family and community:

The role of an Elder is to:

- pass on the language (Michif, Cree, Dene, Sauteaux, French, etc.)
- show respect to other elders in the community
- bridge the gap between Elders and youth
- provide a sense of pride in the Metis heritage and traditions
- tell stories and legends
- offer guidance (not lectures)
- teach language classes (Michif, Cree, Dene, Sauteaux, French, etc.)
- teach other First Nation teachings
- hold/lead/support summer cultural camps
- tutor students to help them cope with life
- talk to young people about traditions, customs, languages
- act as counsellors in schools
- teach parenting programs
- teach children in schools about culture, history, the present, and the initiatives that Elders have taken
- form partnerships with youth to solve problems
- Age does not have very much to do with becoming an elder – you have to earn the respect of the community to become an elder.
- Elders need to earn the respect of the locals if they want to be involved
- Should have a knowledge of history and traditions
- Person must be honest, spiritual, wholistic, and be able to offer guidance and spiritual healing
- Elders should have time for others and respect others
- Elders should be good role models to others
- Elders should take time to help others

In developing elders there should be:

- More Elder's conferences with young people involved
- Advertise conference better next time, let more elders come
- Keep Elder's Conferences non-political, politician can be invited to speak but should have no control over the conference
- Arrange transportation and accommodation better for next year
- More elders in the community
- More cultural gatherings
- Help for elders to heal from residential school experiences



Elders have the knowledge that needs to be preserved. To ensure the culture is preserved we must:

- Teach youth that Elders are always willing to give advice
- Change education system to include more Cree, Saulteaux, Michif language
- To preserve our culture we must use education (use the Elders to teach the youth)
- Children need to be taught to be thankful for parents and grandparents.
- Recognize that Television is a bad influence.
- Recognize that children are stuck between the Metis and the white people
- Teach children that when they are in trouble that the Elders want to hear it from them first not from the police or a friend
- Teach children need to learn to work because this forces you to put limits on yourself.
- Sit down and discuss things with children and grandchildren

Strengthening the Metis Identity:

- Create legislation within the Metis Nation to define who is a Metis (trace Metis heritage, how many generations, etc.)
- Elders make final decision on applications for Metis membership
- Elders should control the enumeration
- Put a system in place to identify Metis and abolish the "self-identifying Metis" clause in the constitution.
- Schools should teach the Michif language
- Use the Elders in the school system
- Youth have activities and invite other Metis youth to participate
- Write letters to the government to change the school curriculum to include more Metis content (the Metis history now taught in schools is not correct)
- Do not use the term "Aboriginal" to apply to Metis. The definition is too broad
- Create our own newspaper that will show our point-of-view
- Request the New Breed to have "report cards" on areas and districts rating what they are doing for our people (what they are spending on education and other things, what they are working on in government, right now it is political propaganda)



Strengthening the Metis Family:

- Teach people to be parents.
- Laws regarding child abuse/neglect hinder parental discipline - confront the lawmakers
- Teach the young people to bake traditional foods, teach traditional music (fiddle)
- More activities in which Elders and youth interact
- Form youth committees to help Elders in the community
- Have youth camps with Elders as story-tellers
- Get more government funding and programs for Metis youth
- In the current situation where mothers have had children with many men and fathers children with many women, some of these next generation "brothers and sisters" are unknowingly having romantic relationships with each other, there needs to be an education of the youth of this problem

To ensure more Elder involvement in the family and the community:

- Begin at the local level
- Balance involvement of men and women
- Opening & closing prayers at all meetings
- Request guidance and direction from elders at meetings. Elders should be asked to speak before any important decision is made.
- Teach culture, language and traditions at every opportunity
- Elders should be role models for children
- Inform elders of all meetings. Use a mailing list so all information goes to Elders.
- Elders should be involved in the enumeration process
- Community should have a phoning committee to contact Elders a few days prior to events
- Use radio, television, newspapers to cover events
- Pass on traditional values and ways
- Funds needed to assist Elders to reach out to youth in school
- Leaders should seek help from Elders
- Code of ethics needed for leaders - elders should be involved in enforcing violations of the Code (e.g. revoke membership).
- Every Area should have an Elder's Council
- Elder's councils should be set up by Elders with assistance from Local presidents and Area directors
- Elder's Councils should train, support, and nurture young leaders in the locals, the area leadership and the MNS leadership
- The Senate should be elected from all the province and not just selected locals.
- Elders should choose the Senators for the Metis Nation



- Metis Elders should be assigned to check applications for Metis membership so that cards are not handed out to non-Metis.
 - A land base should be obtained before self-government even considered.
 - We are fighting too much among ourselves and are not yet ready for self-government
 - Work on self-government in phases
 - Strengthen the Constitution (e.g. define who is Metis.
 - Elders should work on a definition of who is Metis at this conference.
 - Elders should be a stronger voice in MNS and affiliates
 - Elders must watch leadership more closely and stand up for their rights.
- To ensure appropriate care for elders;
- Set up Elder care homes for Metis so that they are accessible to our own people in our own facilities
 - Family members are sometimes physically abusing Elders. Some Elders fear the young people - even their own children.
 - Addictions are interfering with family relationships (e.g. grandchildren living with Elders are using drugs and alcohol)
 - Train family members in how to help Elders
- To help many of our people out of poverty:
- Employment equity should be strengthened in government jobs, banks, and other businesses.
 - Our people should put jails, welfare workers, and taxis out of business by straightening out ourselves.
 - People should be hired by MNS and affiliates for their qualifications not for who they know.

Strengthening the Metis Community:

- More communication in the community, let elders know what is going on
- Use sentencing circles more frequently. Elders should participate in all sentencing circles.
- Involve the youth in stopping the drug dealers
- Elders suffer abuse from drug dealers
- Government should pay at least 50% of the cost of medications for low-income families (especially elderly people)
- Ambulance costs too high from small communities to cities.
- Push social assistance to respond better to medical needs.
- Provide support for children in hospital care.
- Provide more medical support locally.
- Create a local committee for wellness (to identify where to get cheaper medications, lower funeral costs, etc.) (Peter Bishop would like to be on such a committee)



- More training in how and what to eat, how to take your sugar count, how to administer insulin, etc.
- Lobby for a live-in wellness centre for Aboriginal people with diabetes like the one in Edmonton.
- New year should be set aside as a traditional day for Metis

Strengthening the Metis Community Leadership:

- Create a position of "honorary senator" to help the active senators in case one is ill or cannot attend (like a "vice-president")
- Ask elders to speak at meetings of leaders
- People don't have time to raise children and teach culture - they are too busy making money
- Elders would like to have someone to tell stories to and teach - if youth are not interested? - Get the family involved together to learn about the old ways and how to be strong, caring, and helpful.
- Elders worried that the youth are not interested and there will not be any Elders in the future to teach the culture etc.
- Open more programs where youth and elders can participate (elders can teach about the dangers in the community)
- Senate should have more power
- Metis politicians are being controlled by federal & provincial governments
- Develop more Metis lawyers, judges, etc.
- Elders know what the problems are -- uninterested youth, Metis people not taken seriously, drug and alcohol abuse, gambling.
- Learn what the youth are interested in
- Teach that Metis people are just as important to the community as anyone else
- Teach youth about addictions
- Allow people to make mistakes and learn and change
- more conferences involving Elders and youth
- Make sure you know what the leader is interested in before electing them (e.g. are they interested in just the political Metis people or everyone)
- Learn how to grow together
- Let every person's voice be heard - everyone has the right to stand for what they believe. Don't punish people because they have a different point of view.
- Don't neglect people problems - if we do then our problems will drive us apart
- Change the constitution so that we can remove a president if they are not



- doing anything for the people
- Put a spending limit on the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan and spend more on education and elders (especially low income elders)
- Tell the community everything - when there is a secret that when it eventually comes out it creates confusion and anger
- Involve the youth in decisions. Establish youth shadow leadership (e.g. youth locals, youth PMC. etc.).
- Listen to communities, let communities have a say in decisions
- Local Presidents should get out and visit with the Elders monthly.
- Hold workshops in communities
- Locals should have people that check up on elders regularly.
- Elders should have a say in all meetings
- Send out Newsletters monthly and include a financial report
- Leaders should find funding for seniors housing.

Strengthening Metis Self-Reliance:

- Create Metis Home Care
- Train Metis volunteers
- Train Metis youth to work with elderly health needs (youth should work along with Metis Elders) to assist with chores, cleaning, shopping, taking medications, transportation, writing, translating, etc.
- Take control of our own social services
- Create our own health plan, define our health rights, work towards our own health care.
- Health care benefits for Elders - Medications too expensive.
- Develop support groups and seminars to provide education on options
- Increase the involvement of the extended family in assisting each other
- Children taken from Metis families should be placed in Metis foster homes (to avoid the problems of physical, emotional, and mental abuse that occurs when children are placed in non-Metis homes)
- Create Metis run businesses
- Taxes are too high, fight the government for tax reduction
- Pensions too small
- Metis people should control conservation issues (e.g. too much clear cutting affecting trapping)
- Elders should be used to control hunting and fishing in their locals/communities
- Our people should be trained to be resource officers
- Trapping and hunting being abused – the whole animal is not being used.
- Teach our own people and other cultures our own ways regarding hunting.



- (e.g hunting is used to feed family and community – not as a sport)
- Deal with overhunting in the same way we dealt with night-hunting and artificial lighting.
- Elders who try to intervene in problems to offer help are being treated with disrespect by government officials.
- Publicize the destruction of traplines and wildlife by large forest companies and force companies to pay compensation

What is Next?

This is a first annual conference. We have made some mistakes but hopefully we will learn. We need to start planning for a conference for next year.

There will be a full conference report mailed to each participant about the end of April 1998. We ask you to read it and implement some of the suggestions.

The suggestions and ideas from this conference will be forwarded to the MFCJS Board for consideration and action. The MFCJS Board and staff will forward these recommendations to the appropriate people and report at the next conference.

A data base of Elders willing to be resources in communities will be developed and made accessible to communities, likely using the technology of the internet.

The stories and histories collected will be compiled by the Gabriel Dumont Institute.

The challenge is also a challenge to each participant. Take what you can back to your communities and to discuss these same things with them. The challenge is for all of us to do what we can to keep the momentum going which has been created at this conference.



METIS ELDER FIRST ANNUAL HEALING CONFERENCE

Presented by Metis Family and Justice and Metis Employment and Training

Funded in part by Health Canada, Saskatchewan Justice, Social Services, Justice Canada

Tuesday: March 24

-Buses arrive at P.A. Inn

-Hotel Registration

-Conference Registration

DAY 1 - Wednesday : March 25

7:30 to 8:30 AM Breakfast

-location -Conference Room

8:00 to 9:00 AM - Late Registration

9:00 to 12:00 P.M. Plenary Session

9:00 Grand March "Senators"

9:15 Opening Prayer by Senator "Nora Ritchie"

9:25 Greetings on Behalf of Metis Nation Vice President "Murry Hamilton"

9:35 Welcome and Proclamation by Mayor of City of Prince Albert "Don Coty"

9:45 Welcome by Metis National Council President "Gerald Morin"

9:55 Greetings from Metis Women of Saskatchewan President "Andrea Petit"

10:05 Welcome by M.P. Churchill River "Rick Laliberte"

10:15 Provincial Wellness Perspective Deputy Minister "Glenda Yeates"

10:25 Aboriginal Liaison Role Assistant Deputy Minister "Vic Taylor"

10:35 Greetings from the Minister Health Canada "Doug Sutherland"

10:45 Key Note Speaker Elder "Louis Dorion"

11:15 Provincial Partnership Perspective Social Services Minister "Honourable Lorne Calvert"

11:25 Metis Nation Perspective Metis Nation President "Clem Chartier"

11:35 Signing of the M.O.U.

11:45 Press Conference

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Background - Saskatchewan Experience "C. Lance LaRose"

- Why and How did we get here?

- Workshop Process

- Small groups

- Instructions on the process that will be used in the small group meetings

- Small groups each assigned two topics to review and make recommendations for action (develop a number of goals and assign responsibility and time lines)

- Facilitators will report back at facilitator meeting at end of day.

3:00 PM - Nutrition Break

- 3:15 Small Group Session
4:00 Conclusion of Day
6:00 Supper - Main Conference Room
7:00 Evening Entertainment
- Fiddlers
- Dance Groups

DAY 2 - Thursday

- 7:30-8:30 Breakfast Conference Room
9:00 Opening Prayer
9:15 Large Group Discussion-Review and make recommendations for action on previous day discussions giving priority to what can be done at the community level
10:30 Nutrition Break
10:45 Continue Small Groups with two new issues
12:00 Lunch
1:00 Small Groups - Story Telling and Discussion for Dada Base collection of personal histories for GDI Library
2:30 Nutrition Break
3:00 Small Groups Continue
4:00 Closing for the Day
6:00 Supper Conference Room Key Note Speaker Minister "Keith Goulet"
7:00 Play by Suntep Theater "Honoring our Metis Elders"

DAY 3 - Friday

- 7:30-8:30 Breakfast
9:00 Opening Prayer
9:30 Plenary Session - Facilitators
- Conference summary
- What is our basic strategy?
- What happens next?
10:30 Closing remarks and Ceremonies Senator "Nora Ritchie"
11:00 End of Conference and Lunch

*Dr. Bronfman Historical Soc.
Fortier*

HONOURING THE WISDOM OF OUR METIS ELDERS ELDER INTERVIEW FORM

First Names: <i>John</i>	Last Name: <i>BOUCHER</i>	Interview Date: <i>March 26/98</i>
Current Mailing Address: <i>St Louis Sask S0 [redacted]</i>		
Phone Number: [redacted]	Community: [redacted]	
Are you a Veteran? Yes No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Languages Spoken: <i>English or French</i>	

If asked would you be willing to:		
a. Speak to students in school?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No
- Participate in training?	Yes	No
- Participate in sentencing circles?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No
- Participate in family group conferences?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No
- Participate in community justice forums?	Yes	No
- Teach traditions?	Yes	No
- Teach traditional dance?	Yes	No
- Teach traditional foods & cooking?	Yes	No
- Teach trapping?	Yes	No
- Teach language?	Yes	No
- Assist in mediating a family dispute?	Yes	No
- Translate in the court?	Yes	No
- Other services? (Specify)		
Would you expect an honorarium? <i>7</i> No Yes Amount? _____	Would you expect expenses to be paid? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	



Name: BOUCHER JOHN	
Birth Date: JUNE 27/38	Birth Place: P.A.
Father's Name: J. BERCHMANS	Mother's Maiden Name: DLAINY
Father's Home Community: ST LOUIS	Mother's Home Community: JACK FISH
Names of Brothers & Sisters in Order of Age: MARLEINE	
Spouse Name (first spouse): DOWNNA	Spouse home community: CALCARY
Names of Children with first spouse in order of age: CHERYL DORI JODY	
Spouse Name (second spouse - record others on back of page):	Spouse home community (second spouse):
Names of Children with second spouse in order of age:	

Would you tell me some highlights of your childhood? Where did you live? What was your father's occupation? What did you like to do? Memorable events?



Name: _____

Would you tell me about your schooling? Where did you attend school? What level of education did you achieve? Do you remember your teachers or classmate? What were some highlights of your school experience?

Tell me about leaving home. Where did you go? Did you work? What jobs did you have? What are some of your most memorable achievements or experiences?



Name: _____

Tell me about your spouse/family. What are the highlights of your family life?

As you look back on your life, what are the things that are the most important to you? What would you want your children/family to remember about you?



Name: _____

If a young person came to you for advice about how to live their life, what is the most important thing that you would tell them?

Is there anything else that you would like to say about your life?

