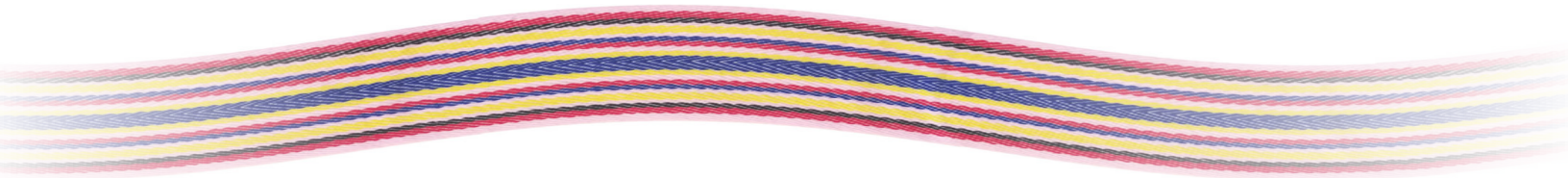




**DEEPLY ROOTED  
IN OUR RED RIVER MÉTIS HOMELAND**



**2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# GREETINGS FROM SPOKESWOMAN ANITA CAMPBELL

March 19, 2022



What a year it has been! As the Spokeswoman of Infinity Women Secretariat (IWS) it is always a pleasure sharing with you the celebration of the past year's successes in this report, and all that we have accomplished for our Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals.

This report could not exclude mentioning the Pandemic, as it had such an impact on our delivery plans for programs and services, but it also brought with it, a year of growth for IWS and gratitude for all the Métis women in our lives. The overwhelming success of our online meetings, workshops, consultations, and social media connections was evident by how many of our Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals participate and engage with IWS daily. I would like to take this time to thank you, our IWS members, for all that you do and all you have given back to IWS, making sure your voices are known and heard.

IWS continues to engage with our members to ask them what they feel are the current needs/issues of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, especially while the pandemic continues to impact our way of life. IWS sends virtual hugs with our care "Wellness Packages" to IWS members who participate in our programs and services through surveys, as a way for them to know we are here to help, and we care. These 'Wellness Packages' have been an overwhelming success and have provided

that much needed "out-reach" to them, especially dealing with wellness issues during Covid.

The work IWS is already doing provides a good model and a strong foundation for implementing the many programs, services, supports and resources in an integrated, and gender-sensitive way. As a woman-led organization who has traditionally served Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, IWS is exploring including its audience in some of the related programs, to include men and boys who are also impacted by the issues Métis women face. As we move ahead, it will be important to enhance current initiatives and ensure that Métis women can be part of the design and leadership of how programs and policies are created and defined, in addition to how they are delivered to all Métis Citizens.

The signing of the Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement was a pivotal moment in our history. As a proud Affiliate of the MMF, Infinity Women Secretariat remains deeply linked to our Métis Government, the seven Regions of the MMF, Affiliates, and partners. With the continued support of President David Chartrand, along with that of the MMF Cabinet, the Vice-Presidents and Regional Executives, provides IWS the foundation to continue empowering our Métis women. Their encouragement for the work IWS accomplishes is genuinely appreciated.

The IWS Board of Directors continue working on the governance and advocacy capacity of Infinity Women Secretariat, meeting virtually, and updating the IWS Strategic Plan. During the 2020/2021 fiscal year, the Board of Director's held seven virtual meetings, having become pros with Zoom! IWS and the MMF has always taken everyone's health seriously and will continue to take safety precautions while monitoring the COVID situation here and within the world.

As this is an election year, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and recognition to the IWS Board of Directors and how privileged I am to work with such a distinctive, exceptional, and educated group of Métis women. Their dedication and commitment towards moving our collective Métis Women agenda

forward will sustain IWS for years to come. I would also like to extend appreciation to the IWS Team – our staff and consultants, who are behind the scenes helping us to achieve our goals.

In closing, Infinity Women Secretariat will continue to function like a sisterhood, fostering the next generations in a transparent, open, and inclusive manner. IWS believes strongly in the principles of kindness, caring, and compassion. Something our Métis foremothers in history had, and the Métis women leaders of today shape this nation to be. We urge you to remember who you are – a proud member of the Red River Métis.







# ANNUAL REPORT

Infinity Women Secretariat works to continuously surpass its goal to provide more programs, services, supports, and resources to care for the needs of Métis women. Our Board members engage the IWS members in their home communities of their respective Region providing them with the support and resources they need. As of March 31, 2021, our IWS membership had reached 543 members.

This year, IWS increased the Human Resource capacity to meet the ever-increasing programming and support needs of our Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals. During the 2020-21 fiscal year, a Summer Student Coordinator was hired, and following that, the Student Internship program was created. This program will not only build their connections with IWS, but ensures they remain connected with their Métis Government throughout their education into their envisioned future career.

IWS is now delivering 11 projects and services with the assistance of five funders, including your Métis Government. IWS is currently researching more project-based funding proposals as our membership continues to grow. Our programs, services, and supports are membership-based, and to become a member of Infinity Women Secretariat, Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+

Our IWS Beading nights have been a big hit while we continue to connect virtually; 25 Métis women and their families attend each night run over 8 weeks, with 2 full sessions offered and completed in the 2020/2021 fiscal year, and there is always a waiting list. IWS Members are enjoying learning how to bead – but also meeting new people across Manitoba with whom to share stories in a safe space.

The pandemic continued to inspire IWS to create innovative new strategies to deliver our programs and maintain our connections with IWS membership virtually. Both Infinity Women Secretariat and IWS members gradually adapted to the reality of virtual meetings. Our Métis women are asking for online workshops, in leadership, governance, employment and upgrading, which were some of the programs delivered in the 2020-2021 fiscal year. IWS worked with MMF-IT and other partners to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering IWS online workshops. All participants would still gain new knowledge and skills that they could apply in their community, workplace and anticipated future careers.

# IWS during COVID

IWS collected homemade face masks for

**3000** elders & **418** children

distributed over 2400 face masks to elders and families.

The Métis pantry assisted over



**735** staff

over a period of eight weeks.

**IWS** membership



**543** members

**IWS** beading nights

**25**

Métis women and their families  
**PER 8-WEEK SESSION**  
sharing stories in a safe space

**IWS** delivering

**11**



projects

**HR** capacity

Summer Student Coordinator  
**HIRED**



Student Internship Program  
**CREATED**

**online** workshops



leadership  
governance  
employment  
upgrading

# PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND SUPPORTS

## IWS SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH STRATEGY

Since its launch at the 8th Annual General Assembly, the updated IWS website and new Facebook page have been very successful in reaching IWS members and the public. As a result, more people are aware of what IWS is doing, keeping up to date with current announcements, and signing up for IWS workshops. The Youth Outreach Worker and IWS Board of Director Provincial Youth Representative have proven essential in maintaining these connections with our IWS youth members.

IWS created a "Wellness Survey" with Probe Research to assess the current needs of Métis women and girls along with the impacts of COVID-19. To be delivered in the 2021-22 fiscal year, participants will be invited to partake and receive a wellness package upon completion to let them know that IWS continues to think about their health and well-being during these difficult times.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Infinity Women Secretariat has never stopped working towards ending violence against Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals. The "Pey Key Way Ta Hin/Bring Me Home" program design is being drafted, and further funding opportunities explored.

IWS was part of the development of a national action plan in response to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. A Family Support Worker will be hired to work within Métis communities with MMIWG2S survivors and family members, providing much needed outreach at this critical time..

## EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE

Infinity Women Secretariat, in partnership with the MMF-ELCC Department is nurturing the next generation of Métis Citizens with the Métis Child Care Strategy. The "Métis Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework" will outline a Métis Women-centered governance model that supports Métis-led ELCC decision making and defines a high-quality and inclusive Métis childcare model.

IWS is creating, renovating, and building Child Care Centres across Manitoba. Congratulations to IWS member Kyra Hebert for naming the Centres – "Little Infinity Child Care Centre." The first is being developed in St. Andrew, Manitoba, to meet the needs of Métis Citizens working in Winnipeg, Selkirk, St. Andrews, and the surrounding areas. More ELCC Centres will follow in the other Regions of the MMF.

# PROSPERITY THROUGH INNOVATION: MÉTIS WOMEN IN MANITOBA

Despite the challenges presented by the continued COVID-19 Pandemic, Infinity Women Secretariat delivered the Second Cohort targeting Métis mothers and caregivers living in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. IWS worked once again in collaboration with the Louis Riel Institute – Louis Riel Vocational College (LRVC) and the MMF through the Métis Employment & Training (MET) department. Working together with the IWS Board of Directors, MMF Cabinet, representatives from each Region, MET, and the LRVC, IWS created a successful recruitment strategy for participants. This strategy also included recruitment of prospective employers for Work Placements. Twelve participants graduated the 2nd Cohort, with six gaining meaningful full-time employment; two received employment within MMF Regional Offices.

The design of each Cohort is based on the needs specifically identified by IWS members in their respective Region and their specific Métis communities (urban, rural, and northern). After the successful delivery of an in-person Cohort in 2019, IWS adapted the existing PTI curriculum into a virtual workshop series to enhance the employability of participants during the Pandemic. Using an innovative format facilitated by LRVC, it was identified that Zoom was the best software to deliver the curriculum, where the Facilitator could interact with participants in a virtual classroom setting. The updated curricula proved to be successful, meeting participants' learning needs with selected topics relevant to their employment and upgrading needs.

IWS also delivered the Lunch and Learn – virtual version where Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+

entrepreneurs and leaders were invited to present to PTI participants, sharing their stories of how they achieved their current careers. This engagement engendered confidence in participants, and mentors learned from the life experiences of participants.

IWS continues to take 'Action for Employment', working with MET and employers across Manitoba to place participants into practicums aligning with their envisioned career pathways. The Work Placement and newly developed Employment Internship program gave participants the tools to slowly re-integrate back into the workforce, helping them learn the skills necessary for sustainable employment and economic prosperity.





# EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY FOR MÉTIS WOMEN AND GIRLS – SUMMER STUDENT OPPORTUNITY

IWS' Summer Student Employment Program' (SSEP) was offered for another summer and worked together with MET to pair bright young Métis women within promising positions.

Developed as a proactive way for IWS and the MMF to assist students facing financial difficulties during the pandemic, Métis students gain employment, training, and mentoring by employers in their Region, fully funded by the MMF. Employers gain a fully funded student for the summer and 17 students were placed with 15 employers in multiple Regions of the MMF in the summer of 2020, and IWS anticipates even more for the summer of 2021!

The IWS Employment Referral Centre has become a central access point for Métis women in school to apply for jobs, connect with employers across Manitoba, and for employers to apply for Métis students. A Métis Employment and Women Entrepreneur Database is being created as a result of the work done in building this project beyond the scope of summer employment.





# EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS WOMEN FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES

IWS invited key Métis women leaders from a variety of political and public institutions to speak at the online leadership workshops, along with Facilitators who teach leadership development skills. This would instill confidence in Métis women to run for leadership positions in a variety of public institutions. By raising awareness to their own leadership skills, Métis women are empowered and create stronger communities in Manitoba.

After it became clear that an in-person workshop would not be possible before March 31, 2021, Infinity Women Secretariat adapted the online workshop format and revised curricula for a series of online Leadership Workshops to be delivered to Métis women across Manitoba. Delivered February to March 2021, the topics would not only teach Métis women about leadership but also bring awareness to civic engagement and the role of Métis women in Public Institutions. The curriculum was merged into the following six topics:

- Self-Care – Intentionally You
- Leadership 101
- Leadership Development
- Leadership in Action
- Civic Engagement
- A Life You Will Love

The series taught professional leadership development with a focus on the importance of attitude that would build confident female Métis leaders of today and tomorrow!

After the overwhelming success of the online Leadership Development Workshop series a funding proposal for the project “Métis Women Leadership and Empowerment” was submitted and accepted by MMF – Urban Program for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) to continue delivering the program. The aim is to promote awareness of the strength and potential of Métis women, nurturing new Métis female leaders who can contribute to our Manitoba Métis community and society. IWS will set the path as a role model for leadership development for Métis women.



# ENHANCING GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY CAPACITY IN IWS

IWS unveiled the “Visioning Pathway – Infinity Women Secretariat 2020-2028 in it’s place of honour in the boardroom of the IWS office at 11-150 Henry Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

IWS is perpetually striving to enhance the governance and advocacy of Infinity Women Secretariat. IWS continued to meet virtually throughout 2020-21 with AHA! Graphic Facilitation to create the Infinity Women Secretariat Strategic Plan. Developed to be a living document, the document will grow and change as IWS expands its service and program scope.

Through virtual workshops, AHA! Graphic Facilitation assisted IWS in developing a five themed Strategic Plan for the Organization, with several strategic goals to help achieve each theme area. This plan will help IWS make progress towards its Vision over eight

years. The IWS Board and staff can prioritize which elements to focus on each year and create projects with goal champions, that achieve the strategic goals. IWS wrapped up the development of Vision and Mission Statements this spring and presented it to key members of the Métis Government and Community. Having the input of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals experienced in the procedures and policies of government was essential in this process. Taking their considerations into review, revisions are being drafted for the document.

The next session with the IWS Board of Directors is being planned for Summer/Fall 2021 to work on the Mandate. IWS is also looking to hire a Facilitator to deliver governance, advocacy, and Board training through workshops to Métis women. Plans are underway for delivery in the Winter 2021-22





# MÉTIS WOMEN IN ACTION – RECOGNIZING MÉTIS WOMEN IN ACTION TO CANADA

Infinity Women Secretariat was approved for funding to recognize the important role of Métis Women - how they not only shaped the history between the Métis Government and Canada but continue to impact our Red River Métis today. Métis women have always been the heart of the Métis Nation, leading by example.

Throughout 2020-2021 IWS began showcasing Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals online

through the IWS website, Facebook, consultations, and workshops. Plans are underway to develop an online platform to launch the virtual Manitoba Métis Women Recognition Program in 2021-2022. It will highlight the achievements of Métis women of all ages, celebrating their successes and contributions.



# MÉTIS WOMEN AS NATION BUILDERS – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE


As there is little published primary research on the role of Métis women in Métis communities and political activities, it is necessary to hear and learn directly from Métis women. IWS has a partnership with the University of Manitoba for the recruitment of Métis women and girls from each Region of the MMF for this important project. The interviews will speak directly with Métis women, including Elders, political leaders, and community members to gather the oral histories of Métis women past, present, and future. Once all the stories have been collected, the report will be shared and owned by IWS.



# OUR WORK

## A SUMMARY

in **2021**

 **455,000**  
in project revenue

 from  
**6** project funders

delivered **11**  projects reaching **543** members, their families, and their communities



# OUR GATHERINGS



# INFINITY WOMEN

Infinity Women Secretariat (IWS) is a non-profit, provincial organization that connects and empowers Métis women throughout the Province of Manitoba. Incorporated on April 23, 2013, IWS has already become well known in our Métis communities, our Métis Government, and all throughout our Métis Nation Homeland. IWS is an affiliate of the Manitoba Métis Federation.

The key objectives of Infinity Women Secretariat are:

- Promote, Empower and Enhance our social, economic, and political well-being;
- Preserve and Safeguard our history, values, culture, language and traditions;
- Foster grassroots initiatives;
- Advocate and Facilitate effective means of addressing Métis women's issues, either individually or as a collective; and
- Encourage and Support the full participation of all Métis women within and outside the Métis Nation.

works with hundreds of Métis women and girls across the province. We provide information and connect them to Métis-specific programs, services, and supports, in addition to advocacy. IWS fosters this through cultural, social, and economic programs, community engagement, leadership, and governance development.

Infinity Women Secretariat comprises of a Board of Directors: Spokeswoman (elected Province-wide), seven Regional Directors (elected regionally), an appointed provincial Youth Representative. In addition, IWS is comprised of staff, and a consultant/advisor.

Our office is located at the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) Home Office:

✉ 11-150 Henry Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 0J7

☎ (204) 586-8474 ext. 2775

@ IWS@mmf.mb.ca

🌐 infinitywomen.org

📘 facebook.com/Infinitywomensecretariat





# BIOGRAPHIES: BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## ANITA CAMPBELL - SPOKESWOMAN

WINNIPEG REGION

[acampbell@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:acampbell@mmf.mb.ca)

Anita is a Métis woman from the community of Duck Bay, spent her childhood and teenage years in the City of Winnipeg and after high school moved to the City of Thompson, where she spent 35 years living and working. Anita is married to Mike McIvor and has a blended family of 3 sons, 2 daughters and 5 grandchildren. She enjoys spending quality time with her family and friends, reading, and travelling.

Anita received her education through the Red River College Business Management Program, along with numerous workshops/seminars, training sessions and mostly through life learning opportunities/experiences. Anita is currently with the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) Home Office in Winnipeg in the position of Chief Administrative Officer, as of September 1, 2016, in addition to being a Caucus and Cabinet Member.

Currently, she is the MMF - Minister of Finance and Human Resources, Minister of Information Technology; sits on the Boards of LRCC, MEDO, is a Trustee to Métis N4, Chair of the Finance & HR Committee, is a member of the HRD Committee, the Early Learning & Child Care Committee, the Provincial Education Committee, and Chairs the Regional Administrator's Committee, just to a name

a few. She's had also taken the lead role in the review and revisions of the By-laws for the Métis Child & Family Services Authority, the Michif Child & Family Services Agency, the Métis Child, Family & Community Services Agency, and the Louis Riel Institute. Recently she has undertaken the Co-chair for the Metis COVID-19 Response Team. At times the work and the demands may seem overwhelming, but Anita loves what she is allowed to do – to help people, especially Métis Women. She puts her best efforts forward on a daily basis to achieve all that is asked of her to meet the needs of Métis citizens.

Previous to working with the MMF, Anita was employed with the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre for 35 years and held the position of Executive Director for 23 years. Anita played a major role in the development of programs and services that address the social, education, cultural, employment and training issues throughout the province, and strives to ensure that programs and services are offered to assist Indigenous Peoples with gaining a better quality of life. In addition to managing multiple programs and services, Anita also oversaw the operation of several properties and a staff complement of 65+ individuals.

Under the direction and leadership of Anita Campbell, the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre had taken on several projects which have become self-sustaining within the City of Thompson including Thompson Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Thompson Neighborhood Renewal Corporation, Futures and the Nanatowiho Homeless Shelter to name a few. Anita's leadership and encouragement has also given Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre the "push" it needed to realize its dream of a "One-Stop-Shop" where urban Indigenous peoples can access programs and services from one location. The dream of a new Friendship Centre came to fruition under Anita's leadership and held its official Grand Opening in May of 2011.

In addition to her work with the Friendship Centre, Anita has held a variety of positions on various Boards and committees relevant to Human Resources/Finance Management; Policy Development; Employment, Education and Training; Community Development; Economic Development; and Women's Issues including: Past Chair of the City of Thompson's Housing Task Force; Past Member of the National Urban Aboriginal Strategy; Past Chair of

the Thompson Urban Aboriginal Strategy; Past Board of Director of the Spirit Way Inc. (Wolves Project); Past Chair of the MMF Provincial Management Board and Thompson Local Management Board to name a few, with many organizations and groups at the municipal, provincial and national levels, promoting the retention of the diverse Indigenous culture, languages, values and traditions.

For her commitment to working with community, Anita was presented the provincial award for Community Development from the Original Women's Network in 2001, the Interprovincial Association on Native Employment (IANE) Bill Hanson Award in 2007, the Thompson Trail Breakers Award for Community Leadership in 2011 and she received the Governor General of Canada's Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers in recognition of outstanding Indigenous Leadership in June 2017.





## ADRIENNE CARRIERE – VICE SPOKESWOMAN

### WINNIPEG REGION

[acarrie38@gmail.com](mailto:acarrie38@gmail.com)

Adrienne Carriere is a Métis woman from San Clara, Manitoba and has resided in Winnipeg since 1991. She has been a member of the Executive with both the St. Norbert Parish-La Barriere Parish Métis Council and the South-Central Métis Council. She is currently a member with Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Local. Adrienne served on the Local Advisory Committee (LAC) for the Winnipeg Region for four years and was a Board Member with the Louis Riel Institute. She is currently the Infinity Women Secretariat Vice-Spokeswoman and Board Representative for the Winnipeg Region and looks forward to continuing her work as an advocate to ensure Métis women and children have more opportunities and options available to them.

Adrienne graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work degree in 1994 and worked at the Native Women's Transition Centre where she provided support to women and children who experienced domestic violence. She was a strong advocate to the women when dealing with Child and Family Services, Manitoba Justice, Employment and Income Assistance and other systems. She accepted a position with the University of Manitoba Access Programs in 1997 as an academic counsellor and provided support and advocacy with Indigenous students who experienced academic, social/personal and financial barriers to education. She completed a Masters' Degree in Adult Education in 2006 and became the Associate Director of Access and Aboriginal Focus Programs in 2012. She is currently the Indigenous Lead in the Division of Extended Education at the U of M and teaches in the Applied Counselling Certificate Program as well as the Faculty of Social Work.



## DEE CHABOYER - SECRETARY THOMPSON REGION [dchaboyer@mamowwetak.mb.ca](mailto:dchaboyer@mamowwetak.mb.ca)

Dee Chaboyer is a Métis woman from the City of Thompson. She later relocated with her family to Lynn Lake where she spent 11 years before returning to Thompson in 1990, where she currently resides today.

In 1993 Dee graduated from Keewatin Community College with a diploma in Business Administration, Accounting Major. After graduation she became a participant of the Single Parent Job Access Program and was placed with the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre for 6 months of work experience in the finance department and 29 years later remains with the organization. In 1994 Dee was offered the full-time position of Financial Administrator and since 2006 has held the positions of Assistant Director, Director of Operations and currently holds the position of Executive Director.

In addition to her work with the Friendship Centre, Dee is involved with many organizations and groups at the municipal and provincial and federal levels.

Dee's involvement includes current Secretary of Infinity Women Secretariat Inc; Secretary/Treasurer of the Manitoba Métis Federation - Thompson Local Advisory Committee; Chairperson of the Indigenous Advisory Board – Reaching Home, Canada's Homelessness Strategy; Northern representative and Chairperson for the Manitoba Aboriginal Head Start; Co-Chair of Thompson's Community Wellness & Public Safety Advisory Committee, President of the Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation; Vice-Chairperson of the Thompson Urban Aboriginal Strategy; Member of the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centre's Finance/Personnel Committee and Technical Advisory Committee; Manitoba Representative on the National Expert Advisory Committee – National Association of Friendship Centres, to name a few.

Dee believes in providing the education, knowledge and skills necessary for the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous people.





## BRANDI VEZINA – TREASURER

### SOUTHEAST REGION

[brandivezina@hotmail.com](mailto:brandivezina@hotmail.com)

Brandi Vezina is a singer/songwriter and mindset coach from Stony Point, Manitoba. She teaches women to love themselves so they can show up more powerfully in their lives. She has written 3 books, has a podcast, Going Inward with Brandi Vezina and YouTube channel. She has worked with organizations across Turtle Island and is a strong advocate for Mother Earth and all animals.

Brandi's music carries powerful messages combined with pop and country elements. She was inspired to write about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG2S) throughout Turtle Island. Her music is heard on SiriusXM Indigiverse, CBC Country and North Americana channels.

Brandi is grateful to be an IWS Board of Director, representing the Southeast Region. She currently holds the position of Treasurer and is honoured to work for the betterment of our Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals.



## KIMBERLY (KIM) THOMPSON

### NORTHWEST REGION

[jklnthompson@gmail.com](mailto:jklnthompson@gmail.com)

Kim Thompson is a proud Métis Woman born in Thunder Bay, ON, but her family roots come from the community of Duck Bay. She moved to Dauphin as a young child and has lived there the majority of her life. Kim obtained her Business Administrative Diploma (Assiniboine Community College) in 2007. Kim currently works for the Provincial Government as a Medical Transportation Coordinator and currently sits on a few boards with the Department of Families. Kim formerly worked as the Community Liaison Worker out of the Northwest Métis council advocating and supporting the Métis people in the Northwest Region.

Kim was elected in a position on the Infinity Women's Representative board in September 2018 and has attended multiple meetings and workshops over the years to gain knowledge on programs and services available for Métis Women.

Kim is a single mother of two beautiful daughters, one handsome son and one free spirited grandson. She loves spending time with family and friends, traveling, camping and hiking. Kim is always on the look out for new adventures and new opportunity to help our Métis Woman strive.

# JOAN CHURCH

## SOUTHWEST REGION

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My early years were spent at Bowsman Ridge, a mainly Métis settlement at the foot of the Porcupine Mountains where my dad trapped, and my mother raised babies. My siblings and I spent our time outdoors playing and exploring the forest next to our house and enjoyed the company of many cousins. We learned to set snares and use a 22 before we started school and to clean chickens and fish. We hand washed, melted snow for water, and used a handsaw to cut wood. My mother was a great cook and provided fresh bread and bannock daily to go with our meals of mainly wild game or small animals and potatoes.

When it was time to go to school, we moved to the town of Swan River where we remained until I was 17. I did not graduate high school - I took the scenic route and joined the school of Hard Knocks. This life experience took me to mid 20's when I was given a lifetime opportunity to become a teacher. I graduated in 1981 from Brandon University with a Bachelor of Education degree. Thank you very much BUNTEP!

I got my first teaching job in Waywayseecappo and spent two years there. I then moved back home to raise my daughters and have my fifth baby. I worked as a substitute teacher and also as a housekeeper in a local hotel until I eventually got a job as a literacy instructor. I taught literacy there for 12 years, then moved to Brandon for a year until I returned to Swan again to be with my mom. My late friend and mentor Elbert Chartrand hooked me up with a position in the SVSD; I remained there until my retirement in 2013.

Growing up time I was involved with the Friendship Centre Movement as a service user then as a volunteer - close to 30 years of volunteerism until Chim's passing. Under Elbert's mentorship I became a board member involved at all three levels: first on our ECFC board, then as the National Board member for MAC, and then as the President of MAC. My role on the ECFC board was governance when we attended meetings at the national level. While a board member of the Friendship Centre, Elbert then appointed me to the LMB board for the NW and I held that position until my retirement and relocation.

I joined the SW Region in the fall of 2014 and am a member of the Westman Local and I have become active once again as an elected member of IWS.

I sold my home and moved to Brandon in June 2014 and started working on a casual basis in the addiction field. I secured a part time permanent position with the Addictions Foundation as a Residential Care Worker and retired from that at the end of May 2020.

I have always been an avid beader. I found it to be a wonderful and productive way to spend the nights while at work and have continued the art into my retirement. This is my second season teaching beadwork to our Infinity Women Secretariat members on Zoom and I am thrilled to share my traditional knowledge with so many enthusiastic women!

I am blessed with five beautiful daughters, 17 adorable grandkids and two of the sweetest great-grandsons. I'm always looking for a husband, not necessarily my own, and I look forward to continuing to serve IWS with dignity, pride and a great sense of humor:

"Our humor leads us through the darkness of our past and into the sunlight of the future..."

Ekosi





## BEVERLY (BEV) WEBB

### INTERLAKE REGION

[bwebb07@hotmail.com](mailto:bwebb07@hotmail.com)

Bev is a Métis woman born in Fisher Branch, MB, where she was raised by her paternal grandparents in the Marble Ridge District. She married her husband Bill in 1977. They raised their family, and still live just down the road from where she grew up. Bev has grown from a mom of 3 to now Mom to 6: Clint (Kelly), Garrette (Shannon), & Christa (Tyler). She is Nan to 8 grandchildren. Clint's children are Tristan, Cassidy, and Brody; Garrette's children are Trenton, Kirstyn, and Owen; and Christa's children are Wyatt and MacKenzie. Bev and Bill are Great Grandparents to Morgan (Trenton) and also have 5 fur babies.

Bev is a retired Health Care Aide of over 20 years. She is a member of the Interlake LAC Board for 25+ years, and newly appointed to the Interlake PAC. She has been a member of the Métis Child, Family, and Community Services (MCFCS) agency board for 8 years. Bev still enjoys working part time guarding at the Ashern, Arborg, and Fisher Branch RCMP detachments. She takes pleasure in volunteering for various organizations; her favourite is the Samaritans Purse – Operations Christmas Child Shoe Box Gifts.

Her hobbies include knitting, crocheting, cross-stitch, rock painting and other crafts. In addition, she has a beautiful yard, flowers and garden that she takes pride in. Bev is very fond of babysitting, grandparenting, and spoiling the grandkids. She loves sugaring up the kids before returning them to their parents!! There is always a multitude of snacks and entertainment for when the kids go to visit, and always little presents that she "found" in her travels.

In all of the things that Bev has done, she feels the greatest adventure that she has been able take on was to be a stay-at-home mom. She only went back to work after her children were grown. She says that they may not have had as much as most people, but she cherished that time with her children.



# ALYSSA THOMAS – PROVINCIAL YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

## SOUTHEAST REGION

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Alyssa Thomas is a young woman from the Southeast region who has been actively involved in the Métis community for most of her life.

Since 2018, Alyssa has held the appointed position of Infinity Women Secretariat Youth Representative on both the IWS Board of Directors and the MMF's Provincial Youth Advisory community. Through these positions, Alyssa provides a female youth perspective and encourages youth involvement at the provincial level. Alyssa also holds a position on the MMF's Southeast Regional Youth Advisory committee. Over the years, Alyssa has volunteered at many community events by serving Elders and facilitating kid's games.

Currently, Alyssa is a first-year law student at the University of Manitoba, Robson Hall. She is an active member in the student body and is currently the first representative for the Environmental Law Student Group. Alyssa also has a volunteer position with Pro Bono Students Canada, where she works on a legal research project with the Manitoba Eco-Network.

Prior to law school, Alyssa graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring Political Science at the University of Winnipeg. Throughout her first degree, Alyssa maintained an above 4.0 GPA and has been recognized for her academic achievements through many prestigious awards. Most notably, Alyssa was awarded the Dieter Hoehne Memorial Scholarship as the highest standing Indigenous student in the University of Winnipeg's Political Science department in 2018, and in 2020, the Yvonne Prefontaine Memorial Award recognized her outstanding work in politics courses.





# BIOGRAPHIES: STAFF AND CONSULTANTS



## CATHY SOMERSET – PROVINCIAL ADVISOR, ELCC

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Hello! Cathy Somerset is a Métis mom of four hilarious and marvellous children plus a son-in-law; she has a boy sandwich (girls on the outside boys in the middle). Proud of her Métis heritage, Cathy's mother, Terry Somerset, is a descendant of the Nolin sisters. Cathy enjoys sharing stories of her mom and children and their fun adventures.

Cathy has a passion for Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) and has been in the childcare field for over 30 years. She started at the YMCA-YWCA in the Leaders Program teaching swimming and was a summer camp counsellor at different YMCA camps across Western Canada. Next, Cathy went to Red River College to achieve her Early Childhood Education II. Then in 2018, she attended Assiniboine College to receive her Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Program Management. Working in various Childcare settings, including home, infant, preschool, and school-age, Cathy has learned many lessons in her career as an ECEIII working her way up to becoming an Executive Director in two different Child Care Centres.

She joined IWS in October 2019 as the Provincial Advisor ELCC. The journey with IWS has been full of growth, a walk of faith and a realization of how the MMF works hard for its Citizens. IWS is giving Cathy many opportunities to join initiatives, programs, and work in partnership with multiple departments of the MMF. The sense of honour it brings to have a job you love and the ability to impact so many people is humbling. With new projects on the horizon, IWS is continuously moving forward for the Métis Women of Manitoba.

Her life quote, "Kindness first – it's harder than it sounds but always worth it."

## SANDRA (SANDY) GAGNE – DIRECTOR OF IWS CHILD CARE CENTRES

[sandra.gagne@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:sandra.gagne@mmf.mb.ca)

Hi, my name is Sandra (Sandy) Gagne, and I am a proud Métis Woman.

I was born in Flin Flon, MB. I was married in 1971; my husband passed away in 2004. I am blessed to be called mother, grandmother, and great grandmother having 6 daughters, 8 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. I extended that care to children with additional support needs as a loving foster parent for 20 years.

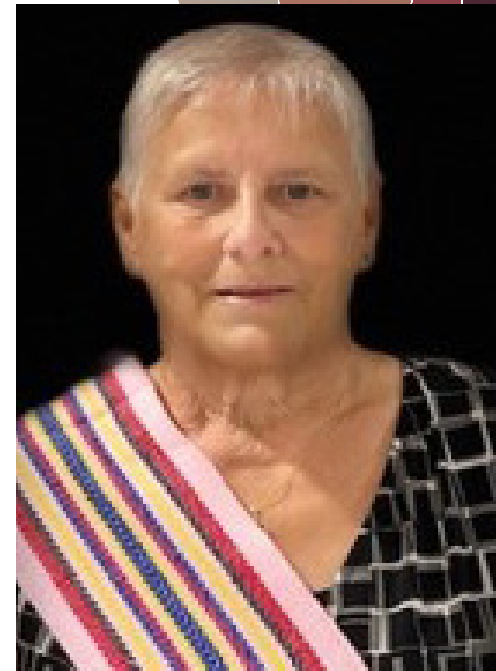
I lived in Thompson, MB, for thirty-two years. I was the Northern Rep for the Métis Authority on the Métis Child Family and Community Services board. I was part of the Agency Launch in June of 2004.

I am an Early Learning Child-Care III, having been in the Childcare field since 1984, for over thirty-seven years. I did my Early Learning Child Care Education through Child Care Based Learning Program, Early Learning Aboriginal Child Care through Red River Community College.

I worked at Thompson Children's World Daycare, Inc. for seven years on the floor as a Childcare Assistant (CCA) and became the Centre's Director in 1991 for eleven years. When I left Thompson Children's World Daycare, I worked at Juniper Preschool for two years as the Director.

I moved to North Battleford, SK, in 2006 and worked there in the school system as an Education Assistant with "Children with Additional Support Needs" for seven years. I returned to Thompson, in 2014. to work at Keewatinowi Awasisak Opi Ki Wak, Childcare Center, Inc as the Assistant Director. I became the Director in 2016.

I accepted a job with Infinity Women Secretariat as the Director of IWS Child Care Centres, which started on Aug.4th, 2021. It was a memorable Canada Day this year as I moved to Winnipeg on July 1st, 2021, for this new part of my journey!





## KARRIE BURZUIK – SENIOR PROJECT OFFICER

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Karrie Burzuik (B.Sc., Indigenous Language Specialist) is honoured to be a part of the Infinity Women Secretariat. An Indigenous Educator, she has been using her skills over the past two years coordinating projects and initiatives with multiple workshops, activities, and consultations. Her passion is to assist Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals regain their identity, overcome barriers, gain confidence in themselves as leaders, and become prosperous in their future careers. Providing education in Métis traditions, culture, and Indigenous languages, Karrie feels she has come full circle, as it was originally the MMF who awarded her the Métis and ACCESS bursary in university. In addition, she received a Medal of Recognition and certificate with Promoting Aboriginal Student Success, Business Council of Manitoba Education Award, NAAF award, and multiple scholarships over her education and career.

A proud member of the MMF Selkirk Local with ancestry connected to the Red River Métis, Karrie has always been proud of her roots. She spent several years interpreting our natural and cultural heritage with Parks Canada Agency. An avid writer and dibaajimowikwe (storyteller), Karrie enjoys sharing stories in Anishinaabemowin, French, & Spanish! Currently learning Michif, Karrie is working on her next language revitalization aspiration. Her future dream is pursuing her Master's in Indigenous Languages Revitalization and to become a Project Manager.

Crafting is an art she learned from her mother. She knits, beads, embroiders, and creates dreamcatchers; she gifts them to those most precious to her - the children. As a Sundancer, she believes in nurturing all children, who are our future. Karrie is a dancer - she was taught the Red River Jig as a young girl by her Nana, a well-known Métis elder in her home community, and loves Latin dance. She enjoys swimming, kayaking, camping, nature walks, and winter activities with her fiancé Dan and stepson Owen.



## SEANA LEVESQUE – FACILITATOR

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Seana is the new Facilitator for the Infinity Women Secretariat (IWS) with five years of experience working with the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) in various departments. She brings a positive and magnetic energy to the team.

Starting her career with the MMF in 2017 as a Business Administration practicum student under the Métis Economic Development Organization (MEDO), she has dedicated her professional life to the Red River Métis Government. She has gained valuable on the job experience working with several departments within your Métis Government such as the Office of President David Chartrand, Tripartite Self-Government Negotiations (TSN) and the Manitoba Métis Heritage Fund (MMHF). Seana is living proof that with hard work, dedication, and a willingness to learn, you can achieve anything you put your mind too.

As a mother, sister, daughter, aunt, cousin and friend, Seana knows and understand the struggles woman face and is ready to put in the work to have the voices and Rights of our Métis woman recognized. As an Indigenous woman who once struggled to understand her own identity, she believes Women are the ties that bind our families together and hold our loved ones close. Seana is very excited to get started on delivering the various programs, services, and supports offered to the women of the Red River Métis Nation, through IWS. She is an asset to the IWS team.

A quote by W.E.B. DuBois – “In this world there is no force equal to the strength of a woman determined to rise”. Seana believes this to be true and is looking forward to advancing the agenda of the IWS Spokeswoman and Board in supporting Red River Métis Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals.





## RACHEL WILLAN – FAMILY SUPPORT COORDINATOR

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My name is Rachel Willan. I am the proud Métis mother of seven children and married to Matthew Willan who works with youth who are incarcerated through Manitoba Justice.

I have been in recovery since April 23, 2007.

I have been instrumental in social Justice & human rights issues, advocating to ensure MMIWGTS folks are not forgotten. I have participated in the National Inquiry to help develop recommendations for women like myself. It is my hope to see our nation fully independent with our own Métis-based policies, procedures, mandates, and laws put in place to help end this ugly chapter in Canadian history. I have made it a personal mission as I have survived many colonial systematic barriers along with my children and husband.

I'm very honoured to be the Family Support Coordinator for our Infinity Women Secretariat within our Métis Government.

Miigwetch



## NATALIE KULCZYCKI – BUSINESS NAVIGATOR

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Natalie, one of the newest members of the IWS team, is a Métis woman from the Winnipeg Region. She has a deep-rooted passion for local small business and is honoured to be developing and managing the Infinity Women Secretariat Métis Entrepreneurship Program.

Natalie owned and operated a small business (Fit 4 Two Winnipeg East) for seven years. During this time, she not only supported women through wellness and community, but she also gained extensive knowledge of what it takes to start and run a successful business in Manitoba. Outside of business ownership, Natalie has held roles within local businesses assisting in developing their sales, marketing, management and client services departments. With over 15 years of business experience, Natalie brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to empower Métis Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals to make their business dreams a reality.

A self-proclaimed 'lifelong learner', Natalie holds a Diploma from Robertson College in Multimedia Marketing but also believes that one must continually develop and hone their skills in our ever-changing world. With that in mind, she has also taken Continuing Education courses through The University of Winnipeg in Marketing, Communications and PR, attended countless seminars and webinars and continues to look for opportunities to learn.

Natalie is a mother of two active boys and proudly puts on her 'Hockey Mom' hat in the Winter and "Baseball Mom" hat in the Summer. An avid runner, Natalie started running as an outlet when her boys were young. Since then, she's ran a marathon, five half marathons and several 10K, 5K and relay events. Natalie, her husband, and their boys all share a love and appreciation of the outdoors and enjoy spending weekends exploring the many great rural areas of Manitoba.

## RANDI STAPLES – PROJECT COORDINATOR

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Randi Staples is amongst the newest hires into Infinity Women Secretariat, joining in mid-February 2022. She has taken on the role of Project Coordinator.

Randi is a Métis citizen of the Winnipeg Region.

For many years it has been her passion to become an integral part of the Métis community. She started her journey by returning to college to obtain a diploma in Community Services and went on to complete her Addictions worker certificate.

She is passionate about family and makes her relationships her top priority. Randi has two young daughters at home who are 7 and 10 years of age. She strives to be the best role model possible to foster their growth and confidence as they learn to navigate their way through life as young Métis women. She also has three fur babies; dogs are her most loved animal and that number would be more if she were allowed! Randi loves cooking and baking but her main hobby is crafting on her Cricut when she has time.







## CHLOÉ ARBEZ-RONDEAU – YOUTH OUTREACH WORKER

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As a new hire with Infinity Women Secretariat, Chloé Arbez-Rondeau is proud to join and work with a team of hardworking Métis women. Growing up francophone, she obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Arts with a French major as well as obtaining a Social Service Diploma. She values the difference of languages and the importance of being kind, empathetic and helping one another.

Chloé loves traveling, the outdoors and the environment so much that she tends to plants indoors during winter and grows small vegetable crops during the summer. Walking with her partner and the family dogs, hiking, camping, and kayaking are essential activities that she cannot live without. In addition to languages, Chloé also loves culture and cuisine, which represents important values that bring family and community together.

Chloé is excited to be part of the IWS team and looks forward to working with Métis girls, women, and members of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community as the Youth Outreach Worker. It is her goal to empower, listen, and share resources with the Métis youth community.



## OLIVIA DAOUST – STUDENT INTERN

[olivia.daoust@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:olivia.daoust@mmf.mb.ca)

Olivia Daoust is a bilingual (English & French) student from the Winnipeg region.

Olivia joined IWS in the summer of 2020 as the Summer Student Coordinator for the IWS Employment Strategy for Métis Women – Summer Student Opportunity. She has also held the role as Program Assistant through the 2020-2021 winter season. In 2021, Olivia had a summer opportunity with an outdoor education organization, where she learned about how land-based education programs are run in Indigenous communities. Olivia is currently working as a Student Intern, where she is using the knowledge acquired through the summer, as well as personal experiences, to develop the IWS 'Land-Based Education' program.

Olivia is a third-year student at the University of Manitoba. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Environmental Studies (Hons.) with a focus on Northern Studies and a minor in Geography. She is an avid backcountry camper, hiker, hunter, and fisher. Olivia is passionate about land-based education, climate change, conservation, wildlife, and Indigenous heritage. She also is reconnecting with her roots through beading!

Olivia is the Secretary for the Environment and Geography Student's Association (EGSA) in the Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources, as well as the Secretary for the University of Manitoba Wetlanders. Olivia plans on pursuing a Bachelor of Education and a Masters in Land-Based Education. Olivia loves to travel, read, play hockey, and get outside!

## KAITLYN CLARKE – STUDENT INTERN

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Kaitlyn joined IWS in the summer of 2021 as the Summer Student Coordinator for the "Employment Strategy for Métis Women – Summer Student Opportunity", better known as the IWS Summer Student Employment Program (SSEP). Currently Kaitlyn is one of IWS's Student Interns, assisting with IWS projects, Governance and strategic planning. She will resume her position as Summer Student Coordinator for the summer.

Kaitlyn is a student at the University of Manitoba, pursuing her Bachelor of Arts degree double majoring in Criminology and Political Studies. Her plan is to attend law school after obtaining an undergraduate degree, with the end goal of becoming a criminal defense lawyer and a fierce advocate for justice. Kaitlyn is also a member of the U of M Bison Women's Track and Field team competing in weight throw for the indoor season. This summer her goal is to represent Team Manitoba and the Red River Métis Nation in Niagara at the Canada Summer Games, competing in hammer throw. She has also been chosen as an assistant coach for the 2023 North American Indigenous Games in Halifax.

Community participation and leadership is also important to Kaitlyn. At school she is the Director of Communications for the University of Manitoba Sociology and Criminology Association of Students (UMSCAS). In her community, Kaitlyn is one of the Youth Representatives for the St. Norbert Parish La-Barrier Métis Council. She is also a board member on Heritage St. Norbert advocating for, and ensuring, Métis history is adequately documented and celebrated in St. Norbert history.





## WEI XIE – SENIOR CONSULTANT

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Wei Xie is a senior management consultant with over twenty years of experience in policy analysis, organizational development, and information/knowledge management. Working for Métis Nation for more than a decade, she has provided inter-disciplinary expertise to support the Canada-Métis Nation Permanent Bilateral Mechanism and develop policy and research partnerships and priorities with levels of governments and policy stakeholders.

She has demonstrated her intensive experience in the public policy domain, including capacity development, social policy development, economic policy development, environmental sustainability, compliance behaviour and risk management.

Over the past eight years, Wei has provided Senior Advisor service to the IWS to develop various project initiatives and provide project design, implementation, and reporting services over the past eight years. The project ranges from enhancing IWS governance capacity, leadership development, economic development, family violence prevention, prosperity through innovation, Gender-Based Analysis capacity and overall policy and program development.



# CONTRIBUTIONS

INFINITY WOMEN SECRETARIAT APPRECIATES  
THE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:



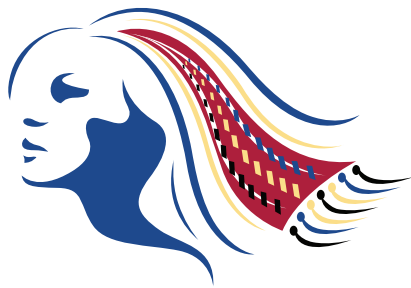
Canada 

Indigenous Services Canada

Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs

Department for Women and Gender Equality





# INFINITY WOMEN

SECRETARIAT ∞

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