

First-Ever Two-Spirit Michif Local Makes History

History was made on Wednesday, August 7 at the inaugural meeting for the new Two-Spirit Michif Local – the first of its kind in the Métis Nation.

Nearly 30 Métis Citizens, officials and allies gathered at the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) headquarters to vote for executive representatives of the new local, agree on future plans and share support for the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

“Two-Spirit folks are important, we’re gifted, we’re valuable contributing members to society,” said interim co-chair Chantal Fiola at the meeting. “Sometimes some folks forget about that, but we won’t let them forget.”

Fiola was later elected secretary-treasurer. Charlotte Nolin was elected vice-chairperson, and the other co-interim chair, Nicki Ferland, was elected as chairperson.

For Ferland, the importance of having a local (a community-level association, representing groups of Métis citizens) specifically representing Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ citizens

is manifold. For one, it creates a safe space for 2SLGBTQ+ Métis folks to engage with the government on a more fundamental level.

For another, the local will ensure the MMF includes 2SLGBTQ+ citizens in policy and governance.

“The Two-Spirit Michif Local will respond to the unique needs of Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Métis people in the Winnipeg region,” said Ferland. “We’ll make sure that we’re considered when the MMF is making decisions that [impact] our distinct political and emotional and spiritual needs and interests.”

Already, the local has attracted mainstream media attention. Both Ferland and Dr. Fiola were interviewed for an article on CBC, while Nolin was interviewed on-air for Radio-Canada, both on Tuesday, August 13. Ferland and Fiola also appeared on Global News’ Morning Show on Monday, August 19 to discuss the local.

“It feels great to be getting some press, because it means that there’s some good potential for us to establish meaningful partnerships with other

Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ organizations around Winnipeg and Manitoba and the Homeland,” said Ferland.

While the executive team has their hands full getting the local up and running, they already have big plans in store for the future – including hosting a national Two-Spirit summit in 2020. “2020 is a big year, being the hundredth anniversary of the provisional government established by Riel,” said Ferland.

“We’re hoping ... to bring together Métis people and our First Nations cousins and allies from across the Homeland to talk about the biggest areas of concerns and interests for Two-Spirit people at the moment.”

Métis Citizens in the Winnipeg Region interested in joining the Two-Spirit Michif Local can email the executive team at 2smichiflocal@gmail.com and fill out a local transfer form at the Winnipeg Metis Association office.

