

Provincial Métis Youth Council Election 2021

Chief Electoral Officer's Election Report



Métis Nation – Saskatchewan

Jan. 5, 2022

President Glen McCallum
Métis -Nation Saskatchewan

Dear President McCallum:

It is my pleasure to submit the Chief Electoral Officer's Election Report on the conduct of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan's 2021 Provincial Métis Youth Council Election.

The election was held on November 6, 2021 and was administered in conformance with a set of Election Rules which were formally adopted by the Provincial Métis Youth Council. My Election Report covers all aspects of the election including the Declaration of the Election, the Nomination Process, Advertising, the Voting Process, the Election Results and Election Costs.

This was the first time the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan conducted online voting for one of its elections. The process was very cost effective and should be considered for similar elections and by-elections in the future.

Submitted respectfully,

Gwen LaFond
Chief Electoral Officer

Introduction:

In July of 2021, the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MN-S) approached me and requested that I conduct a province-wide election for a youth representative on the Provincial Métis Council (PMC). The election for a President of the Provincial Métis Youth Council (PMYC) was open to all Métis youth citizens who were 16-29 years of age. MN-S requested that the election be held using online voting, rather than the traditional in-person voting, as it was felt that such a format would be readily embraced by today's Métis youth.

Dorothy Myo (Senior Director of Policy and Research) and Janice Braden (Office of Policy and Research) from MN-S were tasked with introducing the current Provincial Métis Youth Council representatives to my election team and facilitating several election planning sessions. Lorne Gibson (Election Consultant) and I participated in several video conference calls with the Provincial Métis Youth Council to explain the *Métis Elections Act 2007* and how PMC elections were administered according to this statute. However, since the election of a Youth Representative to the PMC was not covered by the *Elections Act*, a new set of election rules needed to be established and agreed upon for the conduct of the PMYC election.

The process of setting the basic rules for the conduct of the election involved a series of meetings and discussions between election officials and PMYC representatives. The election process was broken down into phases and foundational components and discussed to obtain agreement on how the PMYC election would be held. Efforts were made to model the PMYC election after the PMC elections, where practicable, and considering the inherent differences between in-person voting and online voting. This process culminated in the adoption of an agreed upon set of Election Rules which were used to guide the election process. This was an essential step in preparing for this election since this was the first time a provincial election would be held for the position of PMYC President and there were no rules to guide the process. In the past, Métis youth citizens at large had not participated in the selection of a PMYC President. The PMYC President was selected internally from among the Council's youth representatives. For this election to have integrity, it was necessary for all participants – candidates and voters – to know in advance how the election would be administered so that each could participate fully.

The Chief Electoral Officer's election website mnselection.ca was modified and used for the PMYC President election and all relevant election materials were posted on this site for the benefit of prospective candidates and voters.

Election Calendar and Declaration

The PMYC decided that candidate nominations would open on October 16 for six days and that there would be two days of voting ending on November 6. These decisions set the parameters for the development of our election calendar (see Appendix 1). This meant that the election period would be 21 days. The Declaration of the Election (see Appendix 2) was issued by the Chief Electoral Officer on Oct. 16 and candidate nominations opened at 9am. Nominations closed at 2:00pm on Oct. 21.

Online voting opened at 7:00am on Nov. 5 and closed at 8:00pm on Nov.6.



Nomination Package

A nomination package was created for prospective candidates. It was an online fillable form that the candidate could download and complete from the mnselection.ca website. The nomination requirements consisted of the following components:

- candidates had to be nominated by 5 Métis Citizens and the nominee signatures had to be witnessed;
- candidates had to provide a criminal record check and vulnerable sector check that was current within 30 days of the election;
- candidates had to supply a profile picture and vision statement; and
- all components had to be submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer before the close of nominations.

Election Considerations

Since we were in the midst of a global pandemic, an online election was the ideal solution to keeping voters and election workers safe. It provided an opportunity for us to learn how well voters accepted this method of casting their ballot and was considered a pilot study for other future elections.

We received considerable feedback from voters and candidates following the PMC election. Due to the pandemic, voters found it difficult to obtain information on candidates and the election process. Therefore, in this election the Chief Electoral Officer decided to reach out in some non-traditional ways to candidates and voters with important election information:

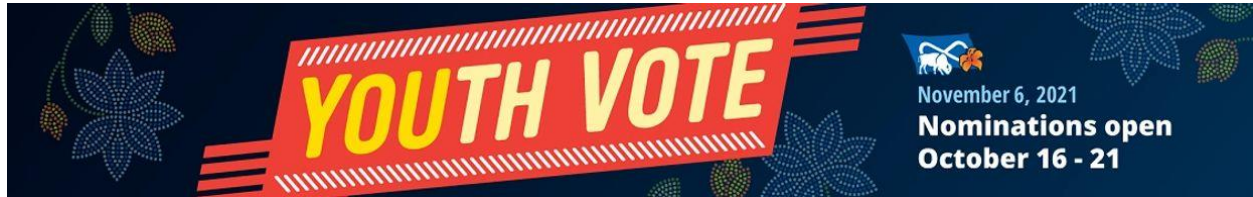
- an online PMYC Election workshop was hosted by the Chief Electoral Officer via zoom on Oct. 3 & 4. President McCallum provided a welcome speech, Ms. Myo provided an overview of the PMYC duties and responsibilities, and the Chief Electoral Officer gave an introduction to the election process and highlighted important information;
- candidate information on the election website included a profile picture, stated the region in which the candidate lived and included a statement about their vision as the PMYC President;
- the election website provided a link to an all-candidates forum hosted by Eagle Feather News on Oct. 25th which could be viewed by voters at any time.

Posting all the information for voters on the election website provided a consistent and convenient way for people to obtain information in one place. This worked well and also helped to ensure a clear and concise advertising message.

Advertising for the Provincial Métis Youth Council Election

At the Sept. 21st PMC meeting there was considerable discussion about the difficulty the PMYC was experiencing achieving quorum and moving ahead with its meetings. Concern was expressed that there may not be enough youth engagement to hold a provincial PMYC election. After a thorough discussion, however, the PMC passed a motion to further support the PMYC election by earmarking an additional \$50,000 towards election advertising.

The Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S) communications team and the Chief Electoral Officer worked together to develop an advertising strategy that came together very quickly to support the election which was just weeks away. They developed visual identity for the election and the wordmark that it is up to *YOUTH*, which appeared on all of the advertising materials and was incorporated into the election website.



The main focus was on digital advertising through social media platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, since the target age group was 16-29 year old youth. In addition to this, mass emails were sent to ensure that all citizens would be informed about the election. It was hoped that a complete mailout to all Métis citizens would encourage broader engagement on the part of all age groups who would support and encourage the youth to participate in the election by running as a candidate or voting. Advertising was also directed toward educational facilities and posters were sent to the regional offices.

There were several phases to the advertising campaign:

- creating an awareness that there was an election approaching and highlighting the important election dates
- ensuring youth were aware of the PMYC election workshop which took place Oct. 3rd and 4th
- ensuring prospective candidates were aware of the Nomination period, Oct. 16th to 21st
- promoting the All Candidates Forum hosted by Eagle Feather News on Oct. 25th
- advertising the 36 hour online voting period on November 5th and 6th
- general promotion of the election and where to find all the information.



Advertising results:

- Five citizens attended the PMYC election workshop on October 3 and six citizens attended on November 4;
- Three citizens attended the All Candidates Forum on Oct. 25, however, there were 1K views on the Eagle Feather News Facebook page by November 5;
- There were 4.5K views of the YouTube ad as of November 5, however, it is not known how many of those who viewed the ad were youth citizens;
- The posters advertising the election were placed in highly visible locations, for example in downtown Saskatoon. Unfortunately, many of the posters sent to the regional offices may have arrived too late to have had much of an impact;
- Email messaging was highly effective and resulted in a number of calls to the Chief Electoral Officer's office requesting more information on the election process. We also saw a spike in online voting after the November 5 email was sent out.

Several news releases were also issued and the Chief Electoral Officer participated in media interviews on the following dates;

- October 4 and Nov. 4 MBC Radio
- October 12 Meadow Lake Now
- October 15 Eagle Feather News

While the PMYC Election received relatively little media attention it must be noted that the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations election was also taking place at the same time. Several elections have taken place over the past year which may have contributed to election "news fatigue".

In terms of advertising, our message was clear. People understood how to vote and were able to vote effortlessly. The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer did not receive any calls or emails from persons indicating that they could not vote or didn't know how to vote.

Voting Online

The Métis Citizenship Registry provided the Chief Electoral Officer with a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet of eligible voters that was uploaded into the online platform that hosted the election. To be eligible to vote, Métis Citizens had to be between the ages of 16 and 29 as of Oct. 16, 2021. Voters went to the mnselection.ca website and found a highly visible "Vote Now" icon. After clicking the "Vote Now" icon, voters were taken to the online voting application. The voting application required a two-factor authentication - the voter was required to log in with their Métis Citizenship number and birth date.

Welcome to the Métis Nation Saskatchewan - Provincial Métis Youth Council (PMYC) President Election

Candidate information can be found on here:
www.mnselection.ca/list-of-pmyc-candidates

Provincial Métis Citizenship #



Sign in to vote

To log in and cast your vote, simply enter your Provincial Métis
Citizenship Number and Date of Birth

Provincial Métis Citizenship #

Date of Birth

Month

Day

Year

Login

For assistance please email info@mnselection.ca.

Once the voter successfully logged in, the names of the three candidates appeared in a random order. The voter then selected the candidate of their choice, confirmed their selection and submitted their vote.

On election night at approximately 6:00 p.m., a message appeared on the voting website indicating that “voting is now closed”. This message was not supposed to appear until 7 p.m. This issue was quickly identified, and immediate steps were taken to remove the message and re-open the voting portal. Upon further investigation it was later identified as a daylight saving time issue with the programming. The Chief Electoral Officer, immediately contacted the candidates to let them know that this issue had been encountered and that voting would be extended until 8:00 p.m. The MN-S communications team and the election staff took additional steps to let the public know about the time extension.

Overall, there were 209 voters in this election out of approximately 5400 eligible electors. We had several calls from Métis citizens who were ineligible to vote, because they were outside the youth age bracket. No calls were received from eligible voters who claimed to be unable to vote and no one claimed to be disenfranchised by having to vote online.

Candidates and Results

There were three candidates in the election for PMYC President. Autumn LaRose-Smith received the greatest number of votes and was declared elected to the position of President of the PMYC on election night shortly after the poll closed.



Autumn LaRose-Smith - ELECTED

Number of Votes Received: 98
Percentage of Votes Received: 47%



Cody Demerais

Number of Votes Received: 91
Percentage of Votes Received: 44%



Jade Rooney

Number of Votes Received: 20
Percentage of Votes Received: 9%

Positive Lessons

- 1) Having a dedicated website with all of the information in one place was convenient and efficient.
- 2) There was consistent, clear messaging on when to vote, how to vote and where to vote.
- 3) Working with the MN-S Communications team to help design and get the messaging out to Métis citizens worked really well. Clear guidelines and roles were established and maintained.
- 4) The Citizenship Registry information provided appeared to be accurate and only the Métis Citizens eligible to vote were able to do so.
- 5) Métis youth were able to vote for the first time in an online provincial election.
- 6) There were very few complaints with this election, and an external Complaints Officer was not required. The Chief Electoral Officer performed this role in the PMYC election.
- 7) Online voting was cost effective and allowed eligible voters to cast their ballot at their convenience regardless of where they were located.

Future Considerations

- 1) Currently the term “youth” is defined as persons 16-29 years of age. This allows individuals who are still in high school to be eligible to run as candidates in this election. Considering that the position of PMYC President carries important full-time responsibilities, the PMC and MNLA may want to review this aspect of the candidate eligibility criteria.
- 2) Election Rules adopted for this election stated that a current criminal record check and vulnerable sector check must be current within 30 days of the election. Consideration should be given to expanding this time frame to three months.
- 3) There should be greater lead time to engage citizens prior to the election.
- 4) Consideration should be given to using online voting for PMC by-elections.
- 5) Policy should be developed regarding the expectations and requirements for non-partisanship on the part of MN-S staff and elected PMC members during elections.

Election Costs

Cost Breakdown

CEO Fees	\$	13,068.16
Election Consultant Fees	\$	7,649.00
IT Fees	\$	2,325.00
DCEO Fees	\$	462.50
Website hosting and electronic voting	\$	11,848.42
Hotel Cost for nominations	\$	1,332.00
Encore All Candidates Forum	\$	3,387.51
Mailout/Stamps	\$	6.11
	\$	40,078.70
Budget	\$	50,000.00
	-\$	9,921.30

Advertising

Direct mail postcard -postage	\$	7,259.88
Direct mail postcard - printing & mail prep	\$	1,915.03
Mass E-mail to Citizens	\$	379.19
Bus Shelter & Bench ads	\$	9,766.00
Radio spots -MBC	\$	3,685.50
Print ads, Eagle Feather & Northern Pride	\$	3,800.00
YouTube Ads	\$	4,745.00
Video production -	\$	500.00
Facebook post boosts - Oct/Nov.	\$	4,921.00
Indoor banners & TV (U of S and U of R)	\$	5,238.60
	\$	42,210.20
Budge		50,000.00
	-\$	7,789.80
Total budget	\$	100,000.00
Total Spent	\$	82,288.90
Savings	\$	17,711.10

*The advertising expenditures & Encore all Candidates Forum were determined by the MN-S Communications team.

Appendix 1

October						
2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 PMYC Election Workshop 2:00pm via Zoom	4 PMYC Election Workshop 6:00pm via Zoom	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 Thanksgiving	12	13	14	15	16 (+21) Declaration of Election Nominations open 9am -5pm
17 (+20) Nominations open from 9am -5pm	18 (+19) Nominations open from 9am -5pm	19 (+18) Nominations open from 9am -5pm	20 (+17) Nominations open from 9am -5pm	21 (+16) Nominations open from 9am -2pm withdrawal deadline 5pm	22 (+15)	23 (+14)
24 (+13)	25 (+12)	26 (+11)	27 (+10)	28 (+9)	29 (+8)	30 (+7)
31(+6)						

November						
2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 (+5)	2 (+4)	3 (+3)	4 (+2)	5 (+1) Voting Opens 7:00am	6 (+0) Election Day Voting Closes 7:00pm
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Appendix 2



Saskatchewan Provincial Métis Youth Council Declaration of Election

WHEREAS the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan is committed to an open, transparent and democratic process for the election of President, for the Provincial Métis Youth Council;

WHEREAS the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, at its Legislative Assembly held on February 20, 2021, approved and appointed me as the Chief Electoral Officer for the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan;

NOW THEREFORE, I hereby declare, pursuant to the Provincial Métis Youth Council Election Rules 2021 and every enabling power, that:

1. A general election shall be held in Saskatchewan for Métis Youth Citizens of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan;
2. Election day shall be the **6th day of November 2021**;
3. The day of the advance vote is the **5th day of November 2021**;
4. Nominations open at **9:00 a.m.** on the **16th of October** and close at **2:00 p.m.** on the **21th October 2021**;
5. The election shall be conducted fairly and impartially in accordance to the Provincial Métis Youth Council Election Rules, 2021.

Declared in the City of Saskatoon in the Province of Saskatchewan, this 16th day of October 2021.

Gwen LaFond
Chief Electoral Officer



Information on the 2021 Provincial Métis Youth Council Election is available at: www.mnselection.ca

