

## COLETTE SUROVY BIO for MNOWC



### **Region 1 Women's Representative (MNOWC)**

Colette was elected to the MNOWC in September of 2017. First and foremost, she is a strong & proud Métis woman, married with two grown daughters, three grandsons and a granddaughter. She was born and raised in Kenora with four sisters and 2 brothers by a Métis father and French/Métis mother. She was an adult before she found out about her Métis ancestry. Her family traces back to the Red River Settlement and she has been on a continuous journey to learn about her family, culture & ancestral stories.

Colette's career path and focus throughout her life has been with mainly Métis & First Nation women. Work included being Financial Director (5 yrs) at Migisi Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centre, Executive Assistant (14 yrs) at Women's Shelter, Saakaate House and Executive Director (6 yrs) at Women's Place Kenora - Women's Resource Centre prior to her retirement in 2017.

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Colette was elected to the Kenora Métis Council in 2006-2011 as the Women's Representative. After completing her term, she continued to be involved in Council activities and meetings. She held several portfolios during her time on Council. The two prominent ones were Language Revitalization and Housing. There were no fluent Michif speakers in Region 1 and the fight to reclaim Michif continues in her community. Colette acquired funding for a project called "Sharing Our Michif Language". This included a highly creative, intergenerational 20-week Michif course and an action-packed youth summer Michif camp both of which were quite successful.



*Sharing Our Michif Language*

In 2009, the Kenora Affordable Housing Group was formed to seek Indigenous funding for transitional housing in Kenora. As a founding member, Colette co-chaired this group and in 2010, they were approved for a three-million dollar project that included seven transitional & ten permanent rent-geared-to-income housing units. Completion of this project was a joyous culmination of many years of fighting to acquire transitional units for women fleeing violence after 100% of units were cut in the 90's.

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A highlight of her term on Council was when she was asked to be a delegate for MNOWC (formerly known as the Women's Secretariat of MNO) for the creation of Les Femmes Michif Otipimisiwak in 2010.

Meeting and networking with Métis women from across the homeland was inspirational & motivated her to further the fight for systemic change and equity for Métis women.



*LFMO Inaugural 2010 AGM with Ontario Delegation*

Volunteerism has been a pivotal piece of Colette's life. She has volunteered for numerous gatherings, groups, charitable boards, councils and collectives. She was a crisis line volunteer for the Kenora Sexual Assault Centre Crisis Line and for many event committees such as Sisters In Spirit, Take Back The Night, Louis Riel Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Fall Harvest, December 6<sup>th</sup> and International Women's Day. She volunteers to facilitate workshops on a variety of topics such as healing blankets, rock painting, medicine teachings, etc. Colette was a co-

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founder of the Sweetgrass Film Festival that featured Indigenous women's film productions and ran for three years in Kenora. She is currently exploring expanding the vision of the festival. In 2016, she co-founded along with 6 other women, Kenora's first Indigenous women's microlending circle.



***Maang Gaanoodaagozid (Loon's Call)  
Women's Drum Group***



***Inspiring Women's Walk of Fame  
IWD 2013 with Elder Nancy Morrison***

Colette & the Kenora Métis Council secured funding for an anti-racism conference in 2018 called Standing Up To Racism. Keynote speakers were brought in, a local film production trailer premiered about the impacts of local racism, an Indigenous movie producer was invited to screen his film production and local schools participated in the School Laundry Project. This initiative invited students grades 1-6 to host a discussion in their classroom on racism and express their feelings about it through a clothing art project by creating their own clothesline for the classroom that was later displayed at the conference.

Here in Ontario, Métis women are facing a multitude of issues such as murdered and missing Indigenous women & girls, reconciliation, language revitalization, environmental defense, education, inequity in all aspects of life, traditional way of life and violence against women.

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In her role of Region 1 Women's Representative, Colette's goals are to listen to Métis women, be a partner with Métis women in identifying and addressing needed change, promote Métis culture and way of life, raise Métis women's voices and call out systemic inequities in our communities and region. In order to be the most effective, she's committed to working on a strong foundation and solid governance structure for our Métis Nation of Ontario Women's Council. This is a number one priority for Colette, so MNOWC can move the Métis women's agenda forward.

Historically, Métis women were traditionally strong leaders in their communities. We need to reclaim our identities and values in all our future nation building strategies in this region and across the province.

