

TRUE NORTH

a chat with new Board member Karen MacKinnon

During the AMM's 9th Annual Convention in November 2007, a change to the AMM by-laws was carried by the delegate body. The change deemed that the Northern District, previously represented by one AMM Director, would now be represented by two. An election was held shortly afterward and Councillor Karen MacKinnon of the City of Flin Flon was newly elected to serve on the AMM Board. (Thompson Councillor Oswald Sawh was acclaimed to his position as Northern Director.) The Leader sat down recently with MacKinnon to get to know her a bit and introduce her to our members.

Having just attended her second AMM Board meeting on September 25, MacKinnon is still getting her feet wet. However, her reasons for running for the Northern Director position are clear. "I am of the strong opinion that people have to work together," she says. Fittingly, although it took some prodding, that is also one of the reasons why she decided to run for Flin Flon Council in the first place during the 2006 election. "A couple of people approached me about it," she explains, "but I had never actually given it any thought." However, "Flin Flon has been very good to me and my family, and I felt like it was time to give something back."

Her love of her community is always evident as she describes moving to the community over three decades ago from Nova Scotia. "In the '70's, unemployment was high and the community was even then recruiting from the East Coast," she explains. It has turned out to be a good fit for MacKinnon and her family (husband Barry works for HudBay Minerals). What does she love most about Flin Flon? "The people," she says without hesitation. "The people are just fantastic. It's also a very safe community."

Flin Flon also has the distinction of being one of the few municipalities in Canada that, as a border community, belongs to two provinces – in this case Manitoba and Saskatchewan. "We are



now recognized as a municipality in Saskatchewan as well as Manitoba," she notes. "We belong to both the AMM and to SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association)."

Even after serving less than two years on Council, MacKinnon knew that she wanted to contribute more. "Flin Flon has never had a representative on the AMM Board, and I felt that it was time that Flin Flon got involved. My Council was also very supportive," she stresses. She also strongly feels the time was right for the Northern contingent on the board to expand to two directors. "It's such a large and important part of the province," she says, "and the value of the north is going to expand even more, with all the resources there. It is a unique part of the province with unique issues."

MacKinnon leads a very busy life aside from her political activities. As Sales and Promotion Manager for three publications – the Flin Flon Reminder, Cottage North Magazine, and the Northern Visions Gazette (on the Saskatchewan side) – she is a busy lady who, in her own words, "loves my job." She again gives credit to her Council for being supportive of her work and to her employer for being flexible regarding her Council, and now AMM, responsibilities. While MacKinnon notes she has a "major learning curve" ahead of her on the AMM Board, she feels just as strongly that cooperation is the key to success in any organization. "I look forward to working not only for my region, but for the whole province," she says. "I feel very strongly that we all have to work together to find out what our members need." 