This is a redraft of the MNO’s Interim Registry Policy based on input and direction from Phases I and II of the MNO’s province-wide consultations on the MNO Registry. The clear direction from these community consultations was to update the policy in order to make it more respectful and reflective of the unique history and realities of Ontario Métis communities, as a part of the larger Métis Nation. This draft was tabled with 2012 MNO AGA as a part of reporting back on the two-year consultation process. The draft will also be circulated throughout the MNO for feedback from MNO citizens, Community Councils, etc. prior to any determinations with respect to next steps being made. Proposed additions to the policy are in red and underlined.

This is the general MNO Interim Registry Policy. Further details may be obtained in the Interim Guidelines. This Interim Policy includes the attached Interim Guidelines, a Backgrounder and Appendices. The MNO Registrar must follow the directions in this policy.

Self-Identification

This means that applicants to the MNO Registry must see themselves and identify themselves as distinctly Métis. This requires that individuals make a positive choice to be culturally and identifiably Métis. Being Métis is to be part of a proud and old culture and aboriginal society. If an individual identifies as an Indian (whether status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty) one is identifying as a different aboriginal people – not as Métis. An individual does not become Métis because one is simply not permitted to register as an Indian or Inuit. An individual is not Métis if they are registered as an Indian or Inuit on another aboriginal registry. An individual is not Métis simply because he or she has some aboriginal ancestry, but does not have Indian or Inuit status. An individual does not become Métis simply because he or she has Indian ancestry with parents who do not live on a reserve or parents who cannot pass on Indian status to them.

Proving Historic Métis Nation Ancestry

This means that an applicant must have an ancestral connection to the historic Métis society people (- the “Historic Métis Nation -”), who emerged in the territory that was often called the “historic Northwest” (also known as “west central North America”) prior to Canada becoming Canada. The “Northwest” was a geographic perspective from Lower Canada and encompassed a large area spanning from parts of what is now known as Ontario to the Prairie Provinces to parts of what is now British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States.

The “Northwest” was an area where European settlement was initially discouraged in order to facilitate the fur trade and where Canada’s expansion westward did not begin until the mid to late 1800s. These unique historic facts enabled the Métis Nation to develop undisturbed for several generations, and ultimately emerge as a new and distinct aboriginal people. This Métis people developed a shared identity, language, culture and way of life, with regional variations, throughout much of the Northwest. The ‘nationhood’ of this Métis people was facilitated through the networks of the fur trade, their diversified economies as well as their extensive mobility and kinship connections throughout settlements and locations in the Northwest.
For the purposes of identifying whether the applicant’s Métis ancestor was living within the Historic Métis Nation Homeland, the Métis Nation Homeland is considered the land that the historic Métis Nation lived in, used and occupied as its traditional territory. The Historic Métis Nation Homeland was quite large and the limits were not clearly defined. It is a general theory that this territory covered “west central North America” or the “North West” but there were also no hard borders to the Historic Métis Nation Homeland.

In what is now known as Ontario, the Metis Nation developed settlements and used extensive territories along the strategic waterways of Ontario and throughout the Great Lakes, as a part of the larger fur trade network. These settlements and territories were inextricably connected to each other as well as the rest of the Métis Nation through trade, economic inter-dependence, mobility of the people and kinship connections.

While Métis people living within these settlements and territories moved between settlements and within their territories based on their way of life, historic circumstances and needs (i.e., harvesting, economic drivers, forced relocation, etc.), identifiable Métis populations that are rooted in the historic Métis populations within these settlements and territories were maintained. Today, these populations of Métis people sustain regional Métis communities throughout Ontario that are inextricably connected to each other as well as the larger Métis Nation. These regional Métis communities in Ontario, which are a part of the Métis Nation, are generally depicted on the map that is attached as Appendix A.  

The regional communities include sustained and dispersed populations from well-known Métis settlements that were at or near established fur trade posts at Saint Marie’s (Sault Ste. Marie), Killarney, Fort William (Thunder Bay), Nipigon House, Michipicoten (Wawa), Lac La Pluie (Fort Frances), Fort Temiskaming (Temiskaming) and Moose Factory. As well, populations from important historic Métis settlements and locations (i.e., Pembroke, Mattawa, Sturgeon Falls, Bruce Mines, River Valley, Rosboro/Schreiber/Terrace Bay, Timmins, Rainy River, Kenora, etc.), that were located at or near strategic fur trade water bodies and waterways in Ontario (i.e., the Upper Great Lakes, Lake of the Woods, the Nipigon watershed, Ottawa River, French River, Mattagami River system, etc.), make up the regional Métis communities throughout Ontario.

In addition, some regional Métis communities and settlements in Ontario emerged based on unique historical circumstances and situations. For example, a significant and well-known Métis population was forced to relocate from Drummond Island in the early 1800s. This Métis population settled in the Penetanguishene area (Midland) as well as in locations in and around Lake Huron and Georgian Bay (i.e., Parry Sound, Discovery Harbor, Lake Simcoe, Owen Sound, Kincardine, etc.). This population now forms a regional Métis community that has been and continues to be a part of the Métis Nation. Other Métis populations and settlements within Ontario also have their own unique histories, as a part of a larger regional Métis community (i.e., Bureligh Falls Métis from Moose Factory moving to Cochrane/Timmins/Chapleau, etc.).

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1. It should be noted that this map is only a general representation based on available research and information at this time. Additional historic research continues to be undertaken by the MNO with respect to Métis in Ontario, which may require this to be modified or adjusted in the future.

2. The Métis families in and around this post became beneficiaries to the Halfbreed Adhesion to Treaty #3 and have treaty rights throughout the Treaty #3 territory.
It is important to emphasize that the settlements and locations identified above are not an exhaustive list the settlements, locations or geographic extent of regional Métis communities in Ontario. The MNO continues to undertake research to better understand and document Métis history in Ontario, but applicants have increasingly asked for additional guidance in order to better understand the Métis people (i.e., the Métis Nation) the MNO represents and what is required in order to demonstrate “historic Métis Nation ancestry.”

These examples are also provided to make it very clear that Ontario Métis settlements and communities are a part of the historic Métis Nation for the purposes of this policy, and that all applicants do not need to demonstrate an ancestral connection to the Prairies or that their ancestors received Métis land grants under the Manitoba Act or Métis scrip under the Dominion Lands Act. Ancestral connections to Ontario Métis settlements, locations and communities, which are a part of the larger Métis Nation, are sufficient for MNO citizenship registration pursuant to this policy.

Individuals who ancestrally connect to Ontario Métis settlements and communities, which are a part of the larger Métis Nation, meet the requirements of the MNO’s definition for Metis citizenship. This definition is consistent with the Métis National Council’s National Definition of Métis. At this time, the MNO asserts that the Historic Métis Nation Homeland, within Ontario, is the territory identified in the map attached as Appendix A. If an applicant can demonstrate a genealogical connection to a Métis ancestor who identified or was recognized as a Métis who lived in this territory in between the late 1700s to the beginning of the 1900s or later, that will suffice to demonstrate an ancestral connection to a Métis ancestor.

More specifically, proof of “historic Métis Nation ancestry” requires a genealogical connection to a “Métis ancestor” – not an Indian or aboriginal ancestor. This Métis ancestor must be connected to the Historic Métis Nation, as generally discussed above. Connection to the Historic Métis Nation means that an applicant’s “Métis ancestor” must have identified or been identified by others as a Métis who lived in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland at a time after the Historic Métis Nation came into being, which is generally considered to be the late 1700s. In light of this, and without more, evidence of an Indian or aboriginal ancestor who lived outside the Métis Nation Homeland prior to the late 1700s does not provide sufficient proof that an applicant is Métis. Moreover, and without more, evidence of an individual having an Indian or aboriginal ancestor who lived within the Métis Nation Homeland prior to the late 1700s does not provide sufficient proof that an applicant is Métis.

In applying this policy statement, the MNO recognizes that its identified Métis communities and traditional territories in Ontario are not defined with absolute precision. So, for example, if an applicant has a Métis ancestor who lived just outside one of these identified Métis traditional territories or over the United States or Quebec border the applicant may meet the requirement for demonstrating a Métis ancestor.

3 Many historic documents identify mixed-race aboriginal individuals using terms other than “Métis”. Such terms may include but are not limited to: chicot, bois-brule, half-breed, French breed, other breed, etc. There is no requirement that an applicant must provide a document that specifically uses the term “Métis”. Documents using these other descriptive terms may, taken together with other evidence, be acceptable as proof of Métis ancestry.
Community Acceptance
This means being accepted as Métis by the right-bearing Métis collective – the Métis Nation. It is part of the basic theory of “peoplehood” that the people defines itself and its citizens. While many may lay claim to being Métis Nation citizens, it is the role of the people themselves to determine who its citizens are and the terms on which those citizens will be accepted. The Métis Nation is not obliged to accept all claimants. The Métis Nation is in the process of developing national guidelines for acceptance and enrolment. In the meantime, the MNO, as the representative government of the Métis Nation in Ontario, accepts all applicants who meet its registration requirements by registering them with the MNO. Registration as a citizen of MNO constitute acceptance by the rights-bearing Métis community – the Métis Nation.

Within 6 months of submitting their application to the MNO Registry, an applicant whose application is not complete or has not been approved by the MNO Registrar shall be notified in writing. Such notice shall contain the reason(s) the application is not approved (i.e. more information needed, failure to establish that claim Métis ancestor is Métis, etc.). If the application is incomplete, the onus is on the applicant to provide the needed information to the MNO Registry. There is no appeal process for applications that are incomplete. If the application has not been approved for other reasons, applicants have two levels of appeal, as set out below.

 Appeals
The MNO will have a two-stage appeal process. The first stage is a reconsideration of the application by the Registrar. Stage one is a prerequisite for stage two. In stage two an applicant may appeal the reconsideration decision of the Registrar. That appeal application will be reviewed by an independent genealogist with experience in Métis genealogy. The decision of the appeal genealogist will be final and binding on MNO and the applicant. All applications for reconsideration and appeals must be in writing. All reconsideration decisions of the Registrar and appeal decisions by the independent genealogist shall be in writing with reasons and shall be delivered in a timely manner. The MNO may impose fees on applicants for reconsiderations and appeals. In the event that finances are not provided from government to support the Registry, the appeal process may be streamlined or terminated.

 Independent and Confidential Registry
MNO shall maintain the Registry as a confidential registry and shall not permit any access to individual files of registry decision making by anyone other than registry personnel and the Registrar. No PCMNO members shall take part in the decision-making with respect to any individual files. No information shall be disclosed from any file without the consent of the applicant or citizen.

 Security
The MNO shall make every effort to protect the Registry from fire, theft, mischief and loss of electronic data.
Pending Applications
The MNO shall only accept files that are complete. Only files that are complete will be listed as pending applications. If a file is incomplete or rejected the MNO Registrar will notify the applicant within a timely manner.
Appendix A