Advancing Métis Rights & Self-Government

What We Heard
The input, ideas, proposals, statements, suggestions, points of view, and perspectives set out in this What We Heard Report (the “Report”), the Technical Report on the Findings of the MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government (the “Technical Report”), and the underlying feedback, do not necessarily reflect the views of the Métis Nation of Ontario (“MNO”) and are without prejudice to the legal positions of the MNO and the rights-bearing Métis communities in Ontario it represents. Neither the Métis Nation of Ontario Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government (the “Commission”) nor the MNO are endorsing any of the specific input, ideas, proposals, statements, suggestions, points of view, or perspectives that emerged during the Commission process and that are outlined in this What We Heard Report, the Technical Report, and the underlying feedback. This What We Heard Report, the Technical Report, and the underlying feedback, have been developed solely to facilitate discussions and consultation within the MNO and should be used for no other purpose.
August 2017

Thank you to everyone who participated in the commission process and for your contributions at this important moment in our history as we aspire to create an even stronger, healthier future for our Métis families, communities and our entire nation.

From late winter till the last days of spring, the MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government travelled to every community council and heard about the aspirations and desires for our nation. The turnout of our MNO citizens was outstanding; citizens of all ages and all areas came out to contribute. We were also pleased to sit with the Veterans Council, the Youth Council and the Women’s Council to include their aspirations and desires.

Our citizens are truly engaged and care deeply about the future of our communities and the broader MNO.

This Commission, along with other initiatives we are leading to increase communication across the nation, is Métis good governance in action. A fundamental component of good governance is ensuring that all of our citizens feel they have a voice and an opportunity to be heard. That is why we established this Commission. The findings of the Commission through the What We Heard Report will contribute substantially to the MNO’s ongoing efforts to extend and build upon the remarkable achievements of the past 24 years in advancing Métis rights and self-government as we continue our way forward on the road of self-determination.

This is an important and extraordinary time for the MNO and we are incredibly proud of all of your contributions. The stars are truly aligning, both legally and politically, at both the provincial and federal levels. With your continued support, and by working together, we can truly reach our highest potential as set out in the Statement of Prime Purpose.

We express our thanks to all who contributed and thank the Commissioners for their incredibly important contribution. We thank the staff across the secretariat who contributed to the success of the Commission.

Merci – Marsee – Thank you

Margaret Froh, President
France Picotte, Chair
August 2017

A year ago, each of us agreed to be part of the MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self Government. We each agreed as we saw the tremendous value and need for this nationwide engagement during this historic time in our history. The MNO currently has a critical opportunity as we negotiate for recognition of our rights and to establish full Métis self-governance. Our actions today will become our legacy for future generations.

During the months of community engagements, as we had the opportunity to interact with each of the communities across the MNO, as well as the Youth Council, Veterans Council and Women’s Council, we were impressed with the commitment and vision presented by every individual who participated in the Commission process.

The following report represents what we, the Commissioners, collectively heard during the many engagement sessions as well as our recommendations.

We would like to thank all of the citizens from every region as well as the Youth Council, Veteran's Council, Women’s Council, and all of the Community Councils for welcoming us into your communities to share your hospitality as well as your thoughts, hopes and vision for an evolving MNO.

We would also like to express our thanks to the Provisional Council as well as to the MNO Secretariat and staff for your support and confidence.

Merci – Marsee – Thank you,

Victor Brunelle
Karen Drake
Pearl Gabona
Senator Marlene Greenwood

President Nelson Montreuil
President Kim Powley
Paul Robitaille
The Métis Nation of Ontario (“MNO”) has a long, rich and proud history. Historic Métis communities have existed and continue to exist along the waterways of Ontario, around the Great Lakes and throughout Ontario.

The story of the Métis people is one of resistance against the constant encroachment on Métis lands as Canada pushed to ‘settle’ the country; and as the push of settlement swept across the country, it was met with Métis and First Nations resistance. While the government of the day recognized it had to treat with First Nations, the Métis were by and large turned away at the treaty tables. The Métis people were constantly pushed off their lands only to end up living on scraps of Crown land.

The realities for Métis people today are very much shaped by the history of colonization and the legacy of Canada’s colonist policy -- residential and day schools; government child welfare policy; health policy; access to education; justice; poverty; and racism. In spite of all of these challenges, the Métis people are still here today. In fact, there is a growing sense of pride among MNO citizens, especially Métis youth.

Many Michif speakers have been lost and many traditional knowledge holders have passed on, leaving holes within our communities and our nation. Veterans, who fought so bravely for this country, have been left aside without proper recognition or compensation for their contributions. Métis people continue to suffer the impacts of racism and poverty and experience challenges (with specific challenges for women, youth, and seniors) across all of the social, economic, health, employment, and education indicators.

In 1993, the MNO was founded through the will of Métis people and Métis communities coming together throughout Ontario to create a Métis specific governance structure to advance Métis rights and claims in Ontario. The MNO is authorized, through democratic governance structures at the local, regional and provincial levels, to represent the collectively-held rights, interests and claims of modern-day Métis communities.

At its original meetings, Métis representatives from communities throughout the province set out the foundational vision for the MNO. This vision is encapsulated in the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose (Attached as Appendix 1) (the “Statement”). The Statement sets out where we came from and where we want to go. It remains a source of strength and is at the center of our strategic approach to advancing Métis rights and self-government.

The Statement also affirms that the MNO was created to represent Métis people and communities in Ontario. Specifically, the document states,

“We, the Métis are a people of the lands which gave rise to our history and tradition and culture. We call those lands the Métis Homelands. The Homelands stretch from the lakes and rivers of Ontario; cross the wide prairies; traverse the mountains into British Columbia and into
the far reaches of the Northwest Territories. They include the hills and valleys of the north-central American States. These are our lands. They are Métis lands. They are the lands of our past which nurture us today and which we value as the precious foundation of our future.”

The MNO’s governance structures at the local, regional and provincial levels are grounded on the assertion of our history, tradition and culture. The MNO has a strong province-wide governance structure including an objectively verifiable centralized registry of over 19,000 citizens and 29 Chartered Community Councils; with democratically elected leaders at the local, regional and provincial levels. Our Métis Public Service in Ontario is over 200 strong and is located in 29 offices across the province. We have elected representative councils for youth (Métis Nation of Ontario Youth Council “MNOYC”), women (The Métis Nation of Ontario Women’s Council “MNOWC”), and veterans (Métis Nation of Ontario Veterans’ Council “MNOVC”); and an Annual General Assembly where our government and public service report to and receive direction from Métis Nation citizens between elections.

Ontario and the MNO work collaboratively together on a number of agreed commitments. On November 17th, 2008, a MNO-Government of Ontario Framework Agreement was executed to strengthen the relationship between Ontario and the MNO, enhance the capacity of the MNO, recognize the distinct identity and culture of the Métis people, and, improve the quality of life of Métis children, families, and communities in the province. This agreement was renewed for a five-year term in 2014 and committed the MNO and Ontario to jointly pursuing discussions with the Government of Canada on Métis rights issues and the Crown’s consultation duties.

Canada and the MNO signed a Memorandum of Understanding on February 3, 2017.

This MOU, among other things, re-iterates Canada’s commitment to working, on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis with the Métis Nation, through bilateral negotiations with the MNO.

The MOU also establishes a time-limited exploratory discussions table between the MNO and Canada with the goal of arriving at a mutually-agreeable framework agreement by the end of 2017. This framework agreement would establish a formal negotiations process between the parties to advance reconciliation based on mutually agreeable subject matters.

The MNO has also built a notable communications network to reach its citizens and partners throughout the province. The Métis Voyageur, the MNOs bi-monthly newspaper, reaches over 12,000 Métis households as well as governmental and nongovernmental partners. The MNO also maintains a website at www.metisnation.org to keep Métis citizens connected and informed. Finally, the MNO undertakes a robust public affairs and media relations program to promote and highlight Métis issues and interests in the province.
BACKGROUND FOR THE COMMISSION

A) CONTEXT FOR COMMISSION

The MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government (the “Commission”) was established to undertake province-wide consultations with MNO citizens on MNO’s governance structures. Specifically, the Commission asked how we can better reflect Métis community, identity and culture within our governance and how we can move forward on issues related to harvesting and self-government.

The creation of the Commission is both timely and significant, in light of recent court decisions (the Daniels Decision of April 14, 2016); the tabling of the federal report and recommendations of the Minister’s Special Representative Mr. Thomas Isaac on Reconciliation with Métis; Section 35 Métis Rights in July 2016; the recent passage of the Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act in December, 2015; and clear, unambiguous federal commitments and intentions to advance reconciliation for the Métis Nation.

There is also clear recognition in the federal arena that reconciliation must be action oriented, that this action must be swift, and that the process of reconciliation must fully acknowledge the rights of the Métis people, as enshrined in s. 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

These watershed events (and others) are the culmination of decades of dedicated effort and reflect the collective aspirations of the Métis Nation, aspirations which within the MNO are articulated in the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose, a document that continues to define our strength as a people, a nation and a government.

It is within this ground-breaking conversation, and a climate of reconciliation and relationship-building, that the work of the Commission is situated.

The findings of the Commission will contribute substantially to the MNO’s ongoing efforts to extend and build upon the remarkable achievements of the past in advancing Métis rights and self-government. The findings will also greatly assist the MNO in moving forward with this agenda in the years to come, as we work together to consolidate the accomplishments of those who have come before us and lay a solid foundation for those who will follow.

B) THE COMMISSION

On August 27, 2016, during her State of the Nation address at the 2016 MNO Annual General Assembly in North Bay, President Margaret Froh announced the formation of the Commission, and the PCMNO named and appointed seven MNO citizens from across Ontario who would serve as Commissioners.

Commissioners were selected to represent the MNO’s diverse communities in Ontario, with care taken to ensure a balance of age, gender, language, geography, and diversity of roles within
the MNO. The MNO President serves as an ex-officio member.

The names of the seven Commissioners are listed below (in alphabetical order). A more detailed biography of the Commissioners can be found in Appendix 2 to this Report:

- Victor Brunelle, Moon River Métis Council
- Karen Drake, Thunder Bay Métis Council
- Pearl Gabona, Oshawa and Durham Métis Councils / MNOWC
- Senator Marlene Greenwood, North Bay Métis Council
- President Nelson Montreuil, Mattawa Métis Council
- President Kim Powley, Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council
- Paul Robitaille, Thunder Bay Métis Council / MNOYC

C) PURPOSE AND MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission was established to document, through a process of consultation and engagement with MNO citizens from across the province, Métis community members’ perspectives on the following: MNO’s governance structures; how the MNO can better reflect Métis community, identity and culture within our governance; and how we can move forward on issues related to harvesting and self-government.

The findings of the Commission, as set out in this What We Heard Report, is anticipated to become an essential component that will help guide MNO’s broader collective effort to continue to advance Métis rights and self-government, including its work at the federal and provincial levels.

The mandate of the Commission is set out in the Terms of Reference, which can be found at Appendix 3 to this Report.
OVERVIEW OF THE COMMISSION PROCESS

A) OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

As noted above, the Commission was tasked with engaging in province-wide engagement sessions on issues related to Métis rights and self-government. The Commission was also tasked with preparing a What We Heard Report on the findings of these engagement sessions and to present the Report at the 2017 MNO Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Kenora, Ontario for consideration. While a draft report was prepared in advance of the AGA the final Report was not able to be presented to the Assembly in the summer of 2017.

From the end of February 2017 to the first week of June 2017, the Commission held 32 community engagement sessions across the province. Approximately 1400 people attended these sessions. The sessions included representatives from all of the MNO Chartered Community Councils, members of the Provisional Council of the MNO, Senators, Youth, Women’s Representatives, Veterans, and others.

A list of the dates and locations of the community engagement sessions can be found at Appendix 4 to this Report.

The sessions focused on 4 major topics: Métis Governance; Métis Identity Culture & Community; Harvesting; and Métis Self-Government. Informational booklets on these four subjects were developed and circulated to all participants prior to the beginning of the sessions. These booklets contained helpful resource materials, along with a series of important questions to consider. These booklets were also posted to the MNO website at http://www.metisnation.org/governance/governing-structure/mno-commission-on-Métis-rights-and-self-government/.

B) STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

All of the sessions had a common agenda and proceeded in a similar fashion. After an opening prayer, usually given by a Senator, France Picotte (MNO Chair) or Todd Ross (past Special Advisor on Tripartite) welcomed participants and set the context for the sessions. This was usually followed by opening remarks by the President of the local MNO Chartered Community Council and in many cases by the Regional Councillor. Several of the sessions also had Captains of the Hunt present who would provide welcoming remarks. Other members of the Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario (“PCMNO”) and MNO staff members were also in attendance during a number of the sessions. Every session opened with the playing of the song “We Aspire” written by Amanda Rheame based on the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose.

At all sessions, either MNO President Margaret Froh or Chair France Picotte provided a presentation entitled “The Métis in Ontario – Telling Our Story”.

Following this presentation, President Froh or France Picotte introduced the first topic of conversation, Métis Governance. At this time the floor was opened for questions and comments.
President Froh or France Picotte would then proceed to introduce the other 3 major topics of conversation at which point participants would be asked to provide questions and comments. Frequently, President Froh, Chair Picotte, Todd Ross, or the Commissioners would provide participants with follow-up questions and engage in a dialogue on the issues and concerns they had raised.

Upon the completion of the 4 major themes, President Froh or France Picotte gave some brief, concluding remarks and a Senator would close the session with a prayer. Most of the sessions lasted approximately 4 hours. Senior Policy Advisors at the MNO would take notes during the sessions and would record the conversations using digital recording devices. An outside firm was contracted to transcribe the audio recordings from each meeting for data analysis purposes. At all of the sessions, the MNO also indicated that participants could make their views known by leaving notes with MNO staff, via the MNO web site, or by writing to the MNO by mail/email.

C) OPENING PRESENTATION

As noted above, every engagement session began with a presentation by either President Froh or Chair France Picotte entitled “The Métis in Ontario – Telling Our Story”. A video of the presentation can be found at the following link: http://www.metisnation.org/news-media/news/engagement-sessions-1/. The presentation focused on:

- The history of the Métis in Ontario;
- The Constitutional protection of Métis Rights;
- The Supreme Court of Canada Decision in R. v. Powley;
- The History of the MNO and its institutions (including: the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose; the MNO’s governance structure; the MNO-Ontario Framework Agreement; the Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act; the MNO Chartered Community Councils; and the PCMNO);
- The Interim Harvesting Agreement between the MNO and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources;
- The Daniels v. Canada decision;
- The Isaac Report (entitled A Matter of National and Constitutional Import); and
- The MNO-Canada Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Reconciliation.

D) ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS

In order to facilitate discussion, a series of questions were posed during the community engagement sessions. These questions can be found at Appendix 5 to this Report.
WHAT WE HEARD

A) OVERVIEW OF THIS SECTION

As noted in the terms of reference found at Appendix 3 to this Report, the Commissioners were tasked with preparing a What We Heard Report documenting the feedback received throughout the Commission process. The Commission received feedback in the following ways: the discussions at the engagement sessions (and the written transcripts of the audio recordings of these discussions); written feedback provided to MNO staff; and notes taken by the Commissioners. This section of the What We Heard Report is dedicated to providing an overview of the Commission’s findings. These findings are based on the sources of feedback noted above.

Analysis of the Session Transcripts

Under the supervision of Dr. Storm Russell, MNO Policy and Research Analysts have prepared a Technical Report entitled “Technical Report on the Findings of the MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government” (the “Technical Report”). The Technical Report synthesises and analyses the transcripts of the consultation meetings and the written feedback provided both during and after the meetings. Dr. Storm Russell’s team has also been involved in collecting this data and organizing it by session.

The Commissioners have had the opportunity to review this Technical Report and the findings below are based on some of the content of the Technical Report. In addition to the findings of the Technical Report, the Commission’s findings are based on the Commissioners’ overall impressions of the principles, issues, or themes that emerged during the Commission process as well as summary of what the Commissioners heard during the engagement sessions themselves.

Details of this Report

The What We Heard Report makes no attempt to reproduce verbatim every suggestion made in every community engagement session; this would simply not be feasible in a report of this size and scope. However, all comments have been captured verbatim and are documented in over 1000 pages of written transcripts (that are fully inclusive of all conversations that occurred during the 32 MNO Commission sessions), as well as the written feedback provided to the Commission both during and after the sessions. Many of these comments and suggestions have also been captured in the much larger, complementary Technical Report that has been used to inform the development of this final What We Heard Report. The comments, questions, and concerns raised throughout the Commission process will be invaluable in informing MNO’s advocacy efforts with government and other partners going forward, and will do much to highlight citizens’ needs and priorities across a wide range of areas, including housing, health, education, economic supports, harvesting, land-use, among others.

The Commissioners developed a series of recommendations on each of the four main topics of the Commission. These recommendations were generated based on a review of the feedback received and the themes and issues that emerged. The recommendations and the feedback reflected in this What We Heard Report should be viewed as a resource to assist the ongoing work of the MNO, but it does not provide “answers” or a prescriptive “road map” for what should be done. The Commission process was focused on introducing important and complicated issues to all MNO citizens so a transparent, frank and open discussion could be had within the MNO on Métis Rights and Self-Government. Further work will be required.
The first topic discussed during the Commission was Métis Governance. The MNO’s governance structure has been successful because it was built by Métis citizens and communities, and because it is based on fundamental Métis values and principles. The MNO Statement of Prime Purpose guides everything that the MNO does, particularly when it comes to nation building. Our communities and citizens continue to be the heart and soul of the MNO, so it is vital for our citizens to understand the MNO, what it can do, and how to fully participate.

The MNO has a unique governance structure that is different from that of other Indigenous peoples, the provincial government, and the federal government. It has governance structures at the local level (Chartered Community Councils), at the regional level (Regional Councilors, Youth Representatives, and Captains of the Hunt), and at the provincial level (MNOWC, MNOVC, MNOYC, and the PCMNO).

These governance structures work to implement the direction provided by the MNO General Assembly (AGA). All citizens can attend the AGA and vote on resolutions that will guide the MNO’s direction for the coming year. These governance structures also work to ensure that the voices of its citizens and communities are heard, both inside the MNO and outside the MNO.

The MNO also has governance structures that ensure the viewpoints of women, Senators, youth, veterans and Captains of the Hunt are taken into account on decision making, which is essential to ensure the balanced, thoughtful decision making that our citizens and their future generations deserve.

The Commission consultation questions related to Métis governance focused on the MNO's governance structure, how we currently govern ourselves, and how we operate as a nation. Participants at the Commission sessions were invited to discuss how the MNO can get citizens more engaged in the governance structure and to provide ideas on how the MNO can ensure our citizens and Community Councils are actively participating in the MNO. Participants were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of the MNO's communication tools, including the Voyageur and the MNO website, with a focus on how the MNO can better keep...
citizens up to date on negotiations, court cases, MNO policies, and MNO initiatives.

The themes that emerged from the analysis of participants’ responses to the questions on MNO Governance can be generally grouped into two categories. The first set of themes related to the MNO’s Governance Structure and the other set of themes related to the work of the MNO Secretariat.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Foster Open and Effective Communication

It became clear during the Commission sessions that the participants wanted to see the MNO improve its communication strategy. Additionally, participants frequently stressed the importance of advance notice with respect to community events, as many people find out about events after they have been held. We also heard from Community Councils at a number of sessions that out-dated contact information was a huge barrier to engaging with citizens. Throughout the Commission process we heard a number of suggestions that could help to foster open and effective communication, some examples include:

• Additional support and resources for new citizens who are trying to navigate the MNO’s complex governance structures;
• Providing all MNO materials and services in French;
• Providing a public computer at each MNO office for citizens to view MNO updates and communications;
• That the MNO and Community Councils use more telephone town-halls, radio, television and social media as a resource to advertise events;
• Two new articles in the Voyageur, one that gives regular progress reports from the Public Service, Community Councils, and the PCMNO, as well as a new article that provides answers to frequently asked questions; and
• The development of an MNO communications plan.

Increased Participation of Women, Youth, and Veterans

The Métis Nation of Ontario Women’s Council (MNOWC), the MNO Veteran’s Council (MNOVC) and the MNO Youth Council (MNOYC) all expressed a need for additional support and funding. The MNOVC also suggested that they should have official representation on the Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario (PCMNO). MNOWC, MNOVC and MNOYC also requested financial support and administrative support for communications and event planning as well as funding to allow for additional participation in policy development, consultation, and education on behalf of the MNO.

Engage and Support Chartered Community Councils

Métis citizens are the heart and soul of MNO and are represented at the local level through MNO
Chartered Community Councils (“Community Councils”). The local Community Councils are an important communication hub for the MNO and play a significant role in fostering community empowerment and development for Métis citizens living within the geographic territory of that council.

Throughout the Commission process we heard wide spread calls for additional support to Community Councils. Participants stated that many Community Councils lack the infrastructure to fully engage the Communities they represent.

We heard a number of specific recommendations to better support the Community Councils, including:

- Hiring a staff person in the communities that would be dedicated to helping the Community Councils manage administrative work, including the coordination and organization of community events;
- Establishing consistent funding for the Community Councils to cover the costs associated with communicating with citizens, and with hosting and organizing events;
- Compensating Community Councilors for the time and energy they put into community engagement, organizing cultural events, educating the public, and participating on Boards and other volunteer committees; and
- Further collaboration/partnership between the MNO’s Public Service and the Community Councils going forward.

**Ensuring All Voices are Heard**

Throughout the Commission process participants proposed a series of ideas to help ensure that the voices and opinions of all citizens are being heard. Some of the proposals included:

- The ability to vote on ordinary and special resolutions at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) remotely;
- Some participants expressed concerns regarding the issues that arise when there is an inability to get or maintain quorum at the AGA. As a result, we heard from some participants that a better process to deal with quorum issues at the AGA should be developed so proposed resolutions can still be voted on;
- Continuing to broadcast the AGA via video streaming in the future; and
- Expand geographic areas that Community Councils serve if there are unrepresented areas to ensure they are able to participate in MNO governance.

**Streamline and Rationalize the Election Process**

We heard participants express the importance of feeling able to actively participate in the MNO’s election process. Some participants expressed an interest in having the MNO review the electoral process related to the locations that citizens are allowed to vote in. We heard that some citizens who live in two regions would like the ability to participate in elections in either region, if they so choose. Some participants also expressed concerns about the lack of communication regarding advanced polling.
MNO SECRETARIAT

Registry

Throughout the Commission process we observed a broad agreement amongst participants regarding the need for the Registry to increase supports and training for individuals applying for citizenship. In the opinion of many, the application process is creating barriers to participation in the MNO. We heard that there exists a need to clarify and simplify the application as well as the approval processes, as participants stated that they do not have access to the resources to complete the genealogical research, nor do they have the funds to pay a professional to assist them with their genealogical research when they run into problems. Participants were cognizant of the fact that the MNO Registry is underfunded, and there were universal calls for the need to seek additional funding. Participants also requested that the MNO seek additional funding to research MNO historic communities.

Many participants commented on the unreasonably long processing time for citizenship applications and made calls for this to change. Specifically, participants raised concerns about the lack of efficiency when individuals from the same family apply for citizenship cards and suggested a new process whereby citizenship cards from registered family lines would be expedited. Many participants stated that the extended timeline associated with receiving a MNO citizenship card discourages them from participating in MNO governance and MNO community events. Additionally, Community Councils called for an update of all MNO citizen contact information stored in registry as it is not up to date. There were also multiple suggestions that the MNO Registry should institute mandatory response times.

Program & Infrastructure Development

There was broad agreement amongst participants regarding the need for Métis Community Centres. Participants expressed interest in having a space where they can gather to practice their culture, hold meetings, access programs and services, and celebrate community events. Participants also stated that Community Centres will increase Métis pride and will increase the sense of community.

We heard from participants who were concerned that the MNO needs to be more mindful of citizens living in rural communities to ensure they are given the same opportunities that citizens living in more populous areas receive. Additionally, participants identified the need for a full time employee at the front desk of all the MNO offices, as citizens want to interact with staff members when they come into the office in search of information regarding MNO governance or when they are accessing programs and services.
MÉTIS GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1
The MNO should develop a communication strategy with a specific emphasis on facilitating communications between the various components of the MNO’s governance structures and MNO staff. This strategy should focus on developing local supports and building capacity for community councils, with particular attention paid to establishing a process for sharing best practices amongst councils.

RECOMMENDATION #2
The MNO should undertake a review of the electoral process and provide recommendations for reform with a specific emphasis on ensuring all citizens’ voices are being heard.

RECOMMENDATION #3
The MNO should prioritize the acquisition of core governance funding for Community Councils, the Métis Nation of Ontario Women’s Council, the Métis Nation of Ontario Veterans’ Council, and the Métis Nation of Ontario Youth Council.

RECOMMENDATION #4
The MNO should prioritize the acquisition of funding for the MNO’s registry while in the interim focusing on the development of policies that will promote a more efficient and streamlined application review process.

RECOMMENDATION #5
The MNO should develop a registry communication strategy to increase the number of updates applicants receive throughout the application process.

RECOMMENDATION #6
The MNO should prioritize the responsible acquisition of property and community spaces for Métis citizens.
The Métis people in Ontario are beginning to receive the recognition that they deserve - that of a rights bearing, Indigenous peoples of Canada - but there is more work ahead. An important part of the MNO's work in following the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose is promoting Métis identity, culture (including Michif), and community in order to better support our proud Métis families and vibrant communities.

Family connections and relationships are at the heart of our communities, and it is within communities that the Métis culture is nurtured and sustained. Métis culture includes music, dance, language, art, food, trapping, fishing, hunting, gathering, medicines, and spirituality. Métis people celebrate their culture in their communities through gatherings, arts, crafts, music, dance, and through the practice of their traditional way of life on the lands and waters.

The Commission consultation questions related to Métis identity, culture and community focused on how the MNO can better support our citizens in celebrating our identity, community and culture and how we can strengthen our sense of community among Métis in Ontario. Participants at the Commission meetings were invited to discuss the supports that would be most helpful to communities and families to facilitate the transfer of traditional knowledge to future generations. Participants were also asked to comment on some of the ways the MNO could work to educate the public, school systems, governments, and industry on Métis identity, culture and community. Additionally, participants were asked to comment on how the MNO can reach out to people who have not applied for MNO citizenship.

The themes that emerged from participant’s responses to the questions on identity, culture and community can be generally grouped into four main themes:

- Outreach and Engagement (Internal and External);
- Infrastructure Development;
- Cultural Resources; and
- Citizenship

"FAMILY CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES, AND IT IS WITHIN COMMUNITIES THAT THE MÉTIS CULTURE IS NURTURED AND SUSTAINED."
OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT - INTERNAL

There was broad agreement amongst participants on the need for advanced notice of meetings and cultural events. Many participants raised concerns about barriers caused by lack of transportation to community events, specifically with respect to youth and senior citizens. We also heard from participants about the importance of developing resources for knowledge holders and Michif speakers, potentially in the form of a documentary, television series, or radio show that includes the stories and photos of MNO citizens, both men and women. Participants made a number of recommendations on how the MNO can increase the outreach and engagement of Métis people in Ontario, including:

- Local radio and television should be leveraged more heavily to advertise cultural events to MNO citizens;
- The MNO should update the MNO website to make it more user-friendly and increase the use of social media; and
- The MNO should develop an education kit, train the trainer programming, and culture protocols specifically for Community Councils, to empower them to deliver more educational content to MNO citizens and members of the broader community.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT – EXTERNALLY

There was broad agreement amongst participants on the need to educate the public about the Métis in Ontario. Participants stated that the MNO must continue to work with proponents, municipalities, ministries, and the public at large to help them understand that Métis are unique and distinct from other Indigenous people. Emphasis was placed on the importance of educating teachers and administration in the French and English school boards all the way through from primary education into high school. Participants
also strongly emphasized the need to overhaul the current curriculum to properly tell the story of Métis in Ontario. Participants also called for additional representation of Métis at the school board level and funding for the MNO education branch so they can expand their mandate.

**INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Participants emphasized the need to develop infrastructure to support and strengthen cultural connections and called for Métis community centres and land based infrastructure to be established for cultural pursuits like hunting, camping, and fishing. Participants felt land infrastructure is/was crucial for facilitating culture sharing with Métis who did not grow up on the land. Participants also called for the creation of a cultural space where individuals will feel comfortable expressing themselves as Métis and practicing their Métis culture, keeping in mind that one expression of culture is not more correct than another. Participants also discussed the interest in having annual local community events where Métis can come together to celebrate culture with a focus on music, art and dance.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Some participants expressed an interest in having a more open minded approach to the development and promotion of cultural resources and practices from the MNO. Some participants highlighted the importance of allowing citizens to express Métis culture the way that they were raised to do so, and it was noted that this expression of Métis culture can vary between communities and families. In contrast, there were some participants who called for the MNO to develop more resources that can provide clarification and cultural protocols for MNO citizens who have not grown up with the traditional Métis way of life. Despite the differing opinions on the types of cultural resources that should be developed, there was broad agreement on the importance of inclusivity when it comes to the development of any cultural resources in the future.

Participants identified the need for both physical and virtual/web-based resources and supports, as well as knowledge exchange and mentoring among community members and knowledge holders. Supports for Michif language preservation/acquisition were also identified, as was the need for activities and resources for adults and older Métis community members wishing to connect more closely with their culture, heritage, and spirituality. Emphasis was placed on the importance of ensuring these resources are available in both English and French. Some of the proposals suggested with respect to cultural resources included:

- Creating community culture kits with a focus on Métis spirituality;
- The continuation of the March Break culture camp;
- The creation of adult culture camps;
- Promotion of the sash and the development of a “Flash Your Sash” Program at schools for Métis youth;
- Rendezvous Events;
- Highlighting the importance of food in Métis culture;
- Selling MNO clothing at MNO offices; and
- Fiddle lessons and beading workshops.
CITIZENSHIP

Participants identified the lack of knowledge regarding the benefits of citizenship as a barrier to applying for citizenship. Participants also noted the issues associated with living in more rural locations and not receiving the same access to programs, services and cultural activities as a barrier to applying for citizenship. In response to this issue, participants made a number of suggestions:

- That the MNO develop and provide materials related to the values of the Métis and the benefits of being a registered MNO citizen, specifically focusing on the importance of community, culture and spirituality;
- That the MNO continue to promote the sash and Métis flag in public spaces, as a way of increasing Métis pride and interest in the Métis community; and
- That the MNO should develop resources to empower citizens to tell their stories, as this will build capacity and pride within our communities.

MÉTIS IDENTITY CULTURE & COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1
The MNO should continue to work on the development of educational curricula with a particular focus on telling the story of Métis in Ontario.

RECOMMENDATION #2
The MNO should continue to work with both the Federal and Provincial Governments to ensure that the Métis are being adequately consulted on the development of any and all cultural competency training materials (including materials used to train government employees or the public) that highlight Indigenous communities in Canada.

RECOMMENDATION #3
The MNO should prioritize the acquisition of funding to increase MNO capacity to participate in curriculum discussions, development, and delivery.

RECOMMENDATION #4
The MNO should create a Métis cultural strategy with a renewed focus on cultural symbols like the sash and the Métis flag. The cultural strategy should prioritize the documentation of historic Métis community narratives—with specific emphasis on Métis Women and two-spirited community members—and the development of education materials, which will empower Community Councils to tell their stories.
RECOMMENDATION #5
The MNO should prioritize the acquisition of funding to engage in a cultural commission so our communities can continue the discussion about defining and understanding Métis culture – both historic and contemporary.

RECOMMENDATION #6
The MNO should prioritize the creation of an MNO welcome kit that provides cultural resources to MNO citizens and information on how they can get involved in MNO governance structures.
HARVESTING

Harvesting is an integral part of Métis culture. It is a collectively-held right that comes with responsibilities and a commitment to protect the land, water and animals that Métis communities rely upon. In order to oversee and regulate the Métis harvest in Ontario, the MNO Harvesting Policy was adopted. Harvesters Cards are issued based on our Policy. Both the MNO Harvesting Policy and the system for issuing Harvesting Cards are part of Métis self-government.

The MNO Harvesting Policy encourages and provides guidelines for safe harvesting and good conservation practices. It also supports the collection of information on the Métis harvest. The Captains of the Hunt play a central role by providing support in the issuance and renewal of Harvesters Cards, managing the harvest for conservation purposes, talking to harvesters, and dealing with incidents that arise with Ontario’s enforcement officers. When Métis harvesters are hunting with non-Métis, the non-Métis must ensure they hold the required Ontario licenses and are adhering to Ontario regulations as the MNO Harvesting Policy does not cover non-Métis harvesters.

As a part of our 2004 Harvesting Agreement, the MNO was limited to issuing 1250 Harvesters Cards (this was increased to 1450 in September of 2015). While this specific cap on Harvester Cards was intended to apply only for a short time, pending the completion of an Independent Review of the MNO Harvester Cards system, it has taken until now to finalize a mutually agreeable process to undertake this review, which is underway and nearing completion.

Upon completion of the review, the findings will be made available to all MNO citizens. MNO is confident that this review will result in a very positive outcome and the MNO will be in a good position for future negotiations with Ontario regarding Métis harvesting rights and the removal of the cap on the number of Harvester Cards. Simply put, constitutionally-protected Métis rights cannot be capped.

The Commission consultation questions related to harvesting focused on how our harvesting policy should evolve to deal with issues such as co-management, enforcement, and the mobility of Métis harvesting rights. Participants were asked to identify priorities for future harvesting negotiations, to discuss the MNO harvesting map, and to tell the Commission how the MNO can assist citizens in completing the process to obtain a Harvesters Card. The themes that emerged from the responses to the questions on

“HARVESTING IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF MÉTIS CULTURE. IT IS A COLLECTIVELY-HELD RIGHT THAT COMES WITH RESPONSIBILITIES AND A COMMITMENT TO PROTECT THE LAND, WATER AND ANIMALS THAT MÉTIS COMMUNITIES RELY UPON.”
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harvesting centered around two main categories: Harvesting Policies and Practices (including issues related to enforcement and co-management); and Mobility.

**HARVESTING POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

One of the issues that dominated the harvesting discussion during the Commission was how to best regulate harvesting (including how to ensure compliance with MNO harvesting policies and the potential consequences for non-compliance). A number of participants also raised the issue of the important role that Captains of the Hunt (as part of a larger system of oversight) could play in monitoring and ensuring compliance with existing harvesting policies and practices (as well as new policies, practices, and procedures that are developed in the future).

**Regulation of the Harvest - Ensuring Compliance**

During the Commission process participants discussed the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms that are in place to ensure that harvesters are complying with the MNO Harvesting Policy. Participants discussed a variety of proposals that they felt may help to strengthen the mechanisms to ensure compliance now and in the future (some of which are already in place pursuant to the MNO Harvesting Policy), including:

- The use of gradual punishments such as fines or suspending a harvester’s card for a specific length of time for violations;
- The possibility of revoking a harvester’s card for violations;
- The introduction of a sentencing circle for those who violate the harvesting policy; and
- The introduction of a tribunal or committee that reviews potential violations.

Regardless of which enforcement mechanisms were being discussed, it was re-iterated that the Captains of the Hunt should play an integral role in ensuring that harvesters comply with the rules and harvest in a safe manner. Some participants suggested that the Captains of the Hunt (as part of a larger system of oversight) should be granted more of an authoritative role that could include some additional enforcement powers which have yet to be determined.

**Regulation of the Harvest - Community Harvesting**

We also heard a number of suggestions about adapting the existing regulatory policies and practices to allow for and encourage community harvesting. Nothing specific about how this would work emerged from the sessions, but the interest was expressed on several occasions.

**MNO Supports for Harvesting and Harvesters**

Another issue that was raised quite frequently was how the MNO could better support both harvesting practices and individual harvesters. Some suggestions we heard included:

- Improving the availability of safety/training courses (for all ages and with flexible scheduling);
- Providing more information, education, and support for harvesters during the initial
application process (and on an ongoing basis);
• Providing training, additional resources, and supports for the Captains of the Hunt;
• Improving communications (particularly between harvesters and Captains of the Hunt); and
• Increasing the scope of the harvester’s survey to include more details and opportunities to provide additional information.

Managing the Harvest (Conservation, Resources Management, Licensing, and Carding)

Another issue that emerged during the harvesting discussion centered on the concept of co-management and conservation. Across the Province we heard participants acknowledge and re-iterate the importance of conservation and of taking responsibility to manage resources for future generations.

Many participants referred to the need to track, monitor, protect, and conserve wildlife populations, beyond simply moose and other large game. Some participants suggested that MNO Captains of the Hunt could play an important role in this regard. Other participants recommended that there needed to be an effective means of sharing information about the harvest, including where stocks are healthy, where stocks might be on the decline, and where there were populations at risk and vulnerable to over-harvesting. Participants suggested that it was harvesters themselves that needed to be actively involved in gathering information on resource levels.

On the issue of managing the harvest participants re-iterated the importance of taking a collaborative approach on this issue, specifically with First Nations and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (“MNRF”). We heard time and time again that the MNO should forge a better relationship with conservation officers and First Nations on this issue. Specifically we heard calls for improving information sharing and cooperation between all of the relevant parties and heard that Captains of the Hunt should be provided with access to information on animals, resources, etc.

The harvesting issue was, understandably, an issue that attracted a significant amount of attention during the Commission process. As a result, the Commission heard a variety of proposals on the issue of co-management of the harvest/conservation, not all of which have been repeated in this report. However, some examples of proposals we heard on this topic, includes the following:

• It was suggested that the policies and management practices related to harvesting and mobility needed to be species-specific and some expressed support for the idea of limits and restrictions in the name of conservation;
• The development of a system for more accurately monitoring the number of animals or resources harvested in a given area;
• Focusing on identifying and bringing to justice those who contravene MNO harvesting policies;
• Developing additional resource management tools;

“ACROSS THE PROVINCE WE HEARD PARTICIPANTS ACKNOWLEDGE AND RE-ITERATE THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVATION AND OF TAKING RESPONSIBILITY TO MANAGE RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.”
• It was also suggested that different kinds of harvesting cards could be issued for different intended purposes (including a card for foraging plants, a fishing card, a big game card, etc.); and
• Participants also flagged an issue regarding the inconsistencies in the age limits for training and obtaining licenses, with the Government of Ontario allowing individuals to go through the process at a younger age than the MNO process.
MOBILITY

One of the issues that sparked the most discussion and debate throughout the Commission process was with respect to the mobility of harvesting rights. When the topic of mobility was raised, responses centered around: (i) the criteria and conditions under which mobility rights may be developed; and (ii) specific policies and procedures that might be required to effectively manage mobility.

In general, we heard wide-spread agreement about the need to support mobility of harvesting rights, albeit with certain conditions and caveats attached. We also heard about the need for policies and procedures to be introduced to govern mobility.

It should be noted that there was a wide divergence of opinions on what this mobility should look like in practice and a diverse range of opinions on how mobility rights could be developed and supported. For example, some felt that mobility should mean that individuals who no longer reside in the territory where they have harvesting rights should be granted harvesting rights in the area where they presently live. Others conceived of mobility in a broader sense where a process could be developed to seek permission to harvest in any other harvesting territory within the Province of Ontario. Some went further and called for open mobility of harvesting across provincial boundaries (a position that other participants were expressly opposed to). In other words, no consensus emerged on what mobility could or should look like in practice.

We also heard about the principles that should guide any discussion around the mobility issue, including the importance of conservation and the need to protect and effectively manage resources. We also heard that the MNO should be accorded responsibility for governing and controlling practices related to mobility of harvesting rights in Ontario, as well as for the development of policies and procedures to support implementation. In other words, we were left with the impression that regardless of what mobility may look like it should be for the Métis to determine.

We heard a number of reasons why the MNO should pursue mobility, including: the history of the Métis as a travelling/mobile people; the availability of resources; extensive kinship ties; the fact the law currently supports mobility rights for First Nations and the inequity in denying this for the Métis; and concerns about losing or not being able to utilize harvesting rights.

At a number of the sessions participants put forth a variety of policy proposals and potential criteria for determining whether an individual should be granted mobility rights, including a connection to and active participation with the local community, which was a criterion that was frequently mentioned. Other policies, criteria, and conditions regarding mobility that were raised during the sessions (some of which stood in stark contrast to one another), included:

- Introducing residency requirements as part of any system of mobility (e.g. living in the community for one or several years to qualify for mobility rights, with certain exemptions being made for people in the military or in school);
- In contrast, other participants’ comments focused more on developing a system that empowered community councils or citizens from a particular area to have the right to accept or refuse harvesters who do not presently have harvesting rights in that area (e.g. the creation of a committee that works in conjunction with community councils to administer any system involving mobility of harvesting rights or empowering the community councils themselves to administer any system involving mobility of harvesting rights);
• Involving the Captains of the Hunt in administering any system that included mobility;
  and
• The introduction of a formal notification or approval process.

A number of participants, when discussing the mobility issue, also raised concerns about the MNO Traditional Harvesting Territories map, including the need to examine how the territories are drawn (based on history, community knowledge, etc.). The boundary/borders issue was one that many felt needed to be addressed as part of any discussion regarding mobility.

**HARVESTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION #1**
The MNO should prioritize the development of additional harvesting policies and procedures to address issues related to co-management, qualifications/training for Captains of the Hunt, potential enforcement mechanisms for non-compliance with harvesting policies, etc. The MNO should consider establishing a harvesting policies and procedures committee that could regularly and consistently engage with communities to review and update harvesting policies/procedures on an ongoing basis. To ensure the sustainability of the harvest as more people obtain their Harvesting Card, there is an urgency to ensure this is in place.

**RECOMMENDATION #2**
Throughout the Commission process the Commissioners heard a diverse range of opinions regarding mobility, likely because so many perspectives on this issue stemmed from deeply personal stories and experiences. As a result, there is still a notable lack of consensus on the mobility issue. While the Commission heard wide-spread agreement about the need to support mobility of harvesting rights, in order to ensure that any proposed mobility system is well-developed and consistent with the wants/needs of communities, the MNO should establish a commission to further explore this issue. This commission should engage in further consultation and engagement with citizens, including Métis harvesters. As part of the commission’s mandate, a priority should be to speak with citizens and explore/develop a set of Métis values and principles (e.g. conservation, community sharing, kinship ties, etc.) that would help inform the MNO’s approach to mobility both now and in the future. The commission’s mandate should also involve the development of proposed set of policies and procedures with respect to mobility.
RECOMMENDATION #3
The MNO should engage in a process of reviewing the harvesting map that underlies the 2004 MNO-MNR Harvesting Agreement. As a part of this process the MNO should consult with citizens on issues and concerns surrounding the areas and their borders so that this can be addressed in any future discussions on this issue.

RECOMMENDATION #4
The MNO should prioritize improving education for all of our harvesters on harvesting issues and place a greater emphasis on supports for transferring harvesting knowledge to our younger citizens.

RECOMMENDATION #5
The MNO should explore ways to improve the existing harvesting surveys in an effort to prioritize a more data-based approach to conservation. As a part of this the MNO should consider developing more detailed policies and procedures with respect to such surveys.
The final topic discussed during the Commission sessions was Métis self-government. Métis self-government has its origins in the historic Métis communities in Ontario. While travelling across large regions and certainly in the communities where they settled, Métis were responsible for the “rules” that governed their communities. They were, in other words, self-governing.

Over time, the Canadian and Ontario governments took control of the lands already inhabited and relied upon by historic Métis communities as well as our First Nation relations. These governments passed laws, regulations and policies that either adversely affected or completely ignored the self-government, rights, interests, and way of life of Métis communities.

The self-government portion of the sessions asked participants to: (i) provide key considerations and priorities to bring forward to the MNO's ongoing discussions and negotiations with the Government of Canada; and (ii) suggest core principles to guide the development of an MNO Constitution.

It should be noted, before examining the responses to these two topics, that we heard from participants that discussions regarding self-government should be consistent with and respectful of efforts being made with respect to the assertion of Métis rights (for example the Treaty 3 half-breed adhesion negotiations) as well as broader rights negotiations with the Crown.

**PRIORITIES IN NEGOTIATIONS**

In spite of decades of denial of the Métis by successive federal governments, finally and at long last, a Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Reconciliation was signed between the MNO and Canada (February 2017). It signals action in response to the 2016 Supreme Court of Canada's Daniels decision which found that Canada has jurisdiction with respect to dealing with the Métis on a nation-to-nation basis.

The MNO has begun exploratory discussions with Canada with the purpose of securing a formal negotiations table by the end of 2017 on issues of

“While travelling across large regions and certainly in the communities where they settled, Métis were responsible for the ‘rules’ that governed their communities. They were, in other words, self-governing.”
self-government, rights, and outstanding Métis claims against the Crown. The specifics of what would be on the negotiations table remains undetermined. In light of these recent developments, the Commission consultation questions related to self-government asked participants to identify concerns/priorities for future negotiations with Canada. This section of the report will outline what we heard were priorities.

**Health & Social Programming**

There were nearly universal calls for both the Governments of Canada and Ontario to strengthen and extend health and social programming and services. With respect to healthcare programs and services some participants suggested that funding be provided to establish a non-insured benefits program that would provide health care services and programs, similar to the one provided to First Nations. Others expressed hesitation in adopting the same type of programs available to First Nations but nevertheless called for equal access to services. While the MNO has not seen a consensus emerge on precisely how this improved health and social program funding should be delivered or structured, nearly everyone the Commission heard from on the issue of self-government expressed that a priority in negotiations should be securing funding for a variety of health and social programs and services, including (but not limited to):

- Elder Care
- Dental Care
- Orthotics
- Hearing devices
- Natural /Traditional Medicines
- Vision/Eye Care
- Emergency Services
- Physiotherapy
- Prescriptions
- Assistive/Mobility Devices
- Mental Health & Addictions
- Funding for autism, speech pathology, developmental delay, and physical disabilities.
- Improving access to primary health care and specialist care.
- A more robust travel expenses fund (and other supports) for those required to travel long distances to access health care services.

We also heard additional proposals throughout the engagement sessions that would provide specific or targeted health and social programming for certain groups, including:

- Targeted programming and resources for veterans;
- Targeted programming and resources for Métis seniors and more vulnerable populations (e.g. low income); and
- Targeted programming and resources for Métis citizens living with a disability.
**Education & Training**

In nearly every community we heard that there was a need for the Governments of Canada and Ontario to provide additional funding for education and training in order to cover the full costs. Many expressed concerns about the current funding structures that were in place, which limited financial assistance to certain areas of study, did not cover the indirect costs of education, or often only covered one or two years of post-secondary education. Many participants also requested that the funding for education be made available for students in all programs (regardless of the subject matter or the age of the applicant), including undergraduate degrees, masters, PhDs, and professional degrees.

There was a lack of consensus on precisely how the post-secondary funding should be delivered. Some of the proposals we heard focused more on ensuring full coverage for post-secondary studies while others raised the possibility of establishing a debt relief or OSAP repayment program for Métis students who have completed their studies.

We also heard a number of proposals throughout the Commission to potentially improve education and training services, including:

- Simplifying the application process for receiving financial support, including simplifying the forms required to apply for funding; and
- Providing support for adult education programs (i.e. a lifelong learning model of funding supports that would provide support for upgrading certification and skills later in life).

**Housing**

In a number of communities, we heard that affordable housing should be a priority in any future negotiations. We heard calls for improved access to affordable housing, a lack of access to Métis specific housing, as well as concerns about the length of the waiting lists for housing. We also heard that the process for applying for housing was overly complicated.

We also heard that Métis seniors need assistance to allow them to live at home longer. We heard others call for increasing the number of long term care or community living facilities for Métis seniors, additional support for family care-providers in our citizens’ homes, and increased funds to renovate/repair/upgrade existing homes and to improve home accessibility.

**Taxes**

Participants from many communities offered comments about taxes, with many suggesting tax exemptions or tax reductions for Métis community members. Regardless of what form tax exemptions or tax reforms could potentially take, it was generally agreed that tax related matters be a part of future negotiations with federal, provincial and local governments.
Additional Issues/Priorities

Over the course of 32 Commission sessions we heard a diverse range of priorities on the topic of self-government (some of which touched on the relationship with the provinces or local municipalities in addition to negotiations with the Government of Canada). We have not listed every priority that was raised (or addressed the frequency with which they were addressed) but some priorities that stood out included:

- The development of a Métis Citizenship Card that is a recognized form of Government Issued I.D.;
- Conducting further research into the issue of cross border travel for Métis (including any relevant history surrounding the Jay Treaty);
- Social justice, family welfare, and CAS issues;
- Support for LGBTQ2S Métis;
- Justice related programming (e.g. restorative justice programs);
- Environmental, natural resources, co-management, and conservation concerns;
- Economic and Business Development – specifically mechanisms for Crown resource revenue sharing agreements, a Métis business network, support for Métis businesses (especially small businesses), and employment/training programs for Métis;
- Strengthening relationships and exploring collaborative projects and partnerships between the MNO, MNC, and First Nations communities;
- Sustainable and long-term core governance funding for the MNO’s operations, including community councils (sufficient enough to provide for paid positions for community councils), registry, etc.;
- Child care funding;
- A process for addressing Métis claims and treaty rights; and
- The development of policies regarding adoptions and adopted people being embraced in the community.

CONSTITUTION BUILDING

In addition to identifying priorities for future negotiations, the Commission also took time at the sessions to engage in a discussion around constitution building.

A constitution is developed through meetings with the various Community and other Councils and governing bodies of the MNO. It involves listening to Métis communities and citizens. It must be accepted by a vote of MNO citizens. The Métis Nation of Ontario’s constitution will be the Métis Nation of Ontario’s highest law. A Métis Nation of Ontario Constitution would hold at its core the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose.

Creating a constitution is a chance for all Métis communities and citizens to consider how best to implement the basic elements of Métis rights and self-government. It will turn the values in the Statement of Prime Purpose into law and rules for governing. Having a constitution will also support nation-to-nation, government-to-government negotiations with Canada and the province. It further recognizes and supports the Métis Nation of Ontario as the legal and legitimate voice of the Métis communities and citizens it represents in Ontario.

During the Commission sessions the consultation questions related to constitution building focused on what principles should guide the development of an MNO Constitution and what
key elements and principles should be included in an MNO Constitution. The Commission received a number of suggestions with respect to the development of an MNO constitution, including the following:

- A constitution should include the *Statement of Prime Purpose*;
- The MNO should ensure that we avoid the problems with the system imposed on First Nations (via the Indian Act, INAC, etc.);
- The constitution should be easily understood by all and overly technical and complicated language should be avoided;
- The constitution should be legally binding, enforceable, and should follow the parameters of the law;
- The constitution should acknowledge our ongoing obligation as stewards of the land as well as our relationship with the other indigenous peoples in Canada;
- The constitution should enshrine: a recognition of MNO democratic processes; core financial stability; control of the MNO citizenship registry; and control over the development of Métis educational curricula;
- Any MNO Constitution should include a dispute resolution mechanism (possibly an ombudsman) and should ensure an equal playing field when issues arise. We heard that any dispute resolution mechanism should be based on traditional and alternative methods of dispute resolution;
- Any MNO Constitution should include a way to amend, change, or alter the constitution after it is developed; and
- Developing a process for fostering debate when constitutional disputes arise and ensuring the constitution can be adequately enforced (one proposal that was raised suggested that the Senators could play a role in this).

**MÉTIS SELF-GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION #1**

The MNO should emphasize and rely upon the priorities identified through the MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government in ongoing negotiations with the Governments of Ontario and Canada.

**RECOMMENDATION #2**

The MNO should begin the process of developing an MNO Constitution. The first step in this process should be the development of a commission or engagement process with MNO citizens that would focus on informing and designing a process for the development of the MNO’s constitution.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government required a great amount of support to develop materials, coordinate and support the 32 sessions, and collect and compile the information for the final What We Heard Report.

The MNO Commissioners would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank, first and foremost, everyone who came out to meet with us and who gave so generously of their time, and who offered their thoughtful comments and suggestions. Your contributions to these important conversations have been invaluable.

Second, we would like to thank the following MNO community and staff members who have provided tireless support throughout. In particular, this Commission would not have been possible without the substantial contributions of each of the following people:

- Members of the Community Councils and their volunteers. Your contributions have been so much appreciated.
- Members of the MNOWC, MNOYC, MNOVC, the Captains of the Hunt and the PCMNO, and especially PCMNO Chair France Picotte who attended every session.
- Todd Ross, Special Advisor on Tripartite who provided overall coordination support throughout the life of the Commission and assisted in the preparation of the final What We Heard Report.
- Wenda Watteyne, Joanne Meyer, and Jennifer St. Germain, from MNO’s Executive Team.
- Kelly Campagnola and Jeffrey Warnock, past MNO Senior Policy Advisors, who were crucial to the success of the Commission, both in attending all of the sessions and in assisting in the preparation of the final What We Heard Report.
- Hank Rowlinson, Glen Lipinski, and Beth Boros, from MNO’s Community Relations team, who played such an important coordination role throughout.
- Dr. Storm Russell, MNO Senior Policy and Research Analyst, and Alisha Kaba, Jennifer Kong and Cody Carmody, Policy and Research Analysts, who led the analysis of the MNO Commission data and the production of the Technical Report.
- Mike Fedyk and Marc St. Germain of MNO’s Communications team, who led the production of all the MNO Commission materials and the final What We Heard Report.
- Monique Richard, Kristina Jewell, Lane Bourbonniere, and Sue Johnston, who coordinated all travel and provided ongoing project coordination and administrative support throughout this ambitious undertaking.
- MNO’s program staff at each of the MNO offices who were so forthcoming in assisting at each of the sessions.
MNO STATEMENT OF PRIME PURPOSE

Where we got our name

The paternal ancestors of the Métis were the former employees of the Hudson Bay and Northwest Fur Companies, and their maternal ancestors were Indian women of the various tribes.

The French word “Métis” is derived from the Latin participle mixtus, which means “mixed;” in French “mele”; it expresses well the idea that is sought to be conveyed.

However appropriate the corresponding English expression “Halfbreed” might have been for the first generation of the mixture of blood, now that European blood and Indian blood are mixed in every degree, it is no longer general enough.

The French word “Métis” expresses the idea of this mixture in the most satisfactory manner possible, and thus becomes a proper race name.

“Why should we care to what degree exactly of mixture we possess European blood and Indian blood? If we feel ever so little gratitude and filial love toward one or the other, do they not constrain us to say: “WE ARE MÉTIS!”’ — Louis Riel, 1885

Who we are as a People

We, the Métis are a people of the lands, which gave rise to our history and tradition and culture.

We call those lands the Métis Homelands. The Homelands stretch from the lakes and rivers of Ontario; cross the wide prairies, traverse the mountains into British Columbia and into the northern reaches of the Northwest Territories. They include the hills and valleys of the north-central American States.

These are our lands. They are Métis lands. They are the lands of our past which nurture us today and which we value as the precious foundation of our future.

As Métis who live in the Homelands, we hold it to be a fundamental truth that we are one of the Aboriginal peoples of the Americas.

The Métis Nation continues today to be the embodiment of our past, the source of sustenance for our present while giving rise to our hopes and aspirations for the future.
We are a Nation, born of independence, and self-sufficiency whose teachings are founded on the values of honesty and truth. We are proud of our rich heritage. We are inspired by the values and traditions of our ancestors. The strength of our society is based on democracy, freedom, fairness, equality, generosity, justice and the customary and written law of our people. Above all, we cherish harmony and peace.

As Aboriginal people we hold sacred the rights of the individual and of the collective. We have respect for each other, for the land and for the animal and plant life that surrounds us. We are people who honour and respect the family, our elders who hold the key to the past, and our children, who are our future.

Guided by our spiritual values we aspire to attain our highest potential.

**Now therefore we declare as follows**

We, the Métis Nation, are a distinct Nation among the Aboriginal peoples in Canada and as such our Aboriginal and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

We, the Métis Nation, have the inherent right of self-determination and self-government.

We, the Métis who live within the Métis Homelands of Ontario, desiring to bind our people together to collectively promote our common cultural, social, political, and economic well-being, have founded the Métis Nation of Ontario, to be our representative body with the following aims and objectives:

- to research, publish and promote the genealogical documentation of the Métis, and to establish and maintain a registry of the Métis Citizens of Ontario;
- to establish democratic institutions based on our inherent right of self-government;
- to encourage the full participation of all Métis in the Métis Nation;
- to promote and foster community development;
- to re-establish land and resource bases;
- to develop prosperity and economic self-sufficiency within the Métis Nation;
- to provide care and support necessary to meet the fundamental needs of the citizens of the Métis Nation;
- to promote the improved health and wellness of the individual, the family and the whole Métis community;
- to establish effective means of communication for the Métis Nation;
- to encourage academic and skills development and to enable citizens of the Métis Nation to attain their educational aspirations;
- to promote the history, values, culture, languages and traditions of the Métis Nation and to create an awareness of our proud heritage;
• to promote Métis artistic and cultural achievement;
• to ensure that Métis can exercise their Aboriginal and Treaty rights and freedoms and in so doing, act in a spirit of cooperation with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
• to establish good relations and maintain our historic alliances with all Aboriginal peoples for the pursuit of our common interests and goals;
• to continue our affiliation with the Métis National Council for the representation of the interests of the Métis Nation in Ontario at the National and International levels;
• to gain the recognition and respect of the Métis as a Nation and a people.
• to protect and preserve the land and waters within our homelands for future generations.
APPENDIX 2

PROFILE OF MNO COMMISSIONERS
(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

VICTOR BRUNELLE
Born and raised in Lafontaine, Ontario, a small community west of Midland, Victor Brunelle is a proud Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) citizen and descendant of the historic Drummond Island Métis community. Vic now lives in Huntsville—MNO Georgian Bay Region 7. Multilingual, Vic speaks French, English and some Michif. Married with three adult children and now many wonderful grandchildren, Vic worked for over 20 years in the construction business, eventually owning and operating his own business. Vic presently serves as Vice President of Rendezvous Lafontaine Complex—an adult retirement complex for people 55 years and over. Vic also has experience working with organizations such as Credit Union and the local government Parks and Recreation. Vic is an active volunteer and community member, having served for 15 years as a volunteer fireman. He greatly enjoys the outdoors and the traditional Métis way of life. A keen and active MNO Harvester, Vic takes great pride in his Métis heritage.

KAREN DRAKE
Karen Drake is an Assistant Professor at the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law at Lakehead University and the Chair of the MNO Thunder Bay Métis Council. Her teaching and research interests include Canadian law as it affects Aboriginal peoples, Métis law, and Anishinaabe law. She is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Lakehead Law Journal and was formerly Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Indigenous Law Journal. She previously clerked with the Ontario Court of Appeal and with the Federal Court and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Indigenous Bar Association.

PEARL GABONA
Pearl Gabona is a proud Métis woman whose family originated in Moon River. She prides herself on her involvement with her family as a wife, mother, grandmother and elder. Pearl has a passion for working with those with special needs. She has a grandson with autism and also volunteers as a respite worker for a child with fetal alcohol syndrome. As a retired police detective, Pearl has great empathy for, and experience working with, victims of sexual and physical abuse. She is a pioneer of women in law enforcement. Pearl has served two terms on the Women’s Secretariat of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNOWC). In her role as a member, she has participated in various conferences and seminars regarding violence against aboriginal women and women’s issues. Pearl is a strong advocate for women’s rights and Métis issues.
SENATOR MARLENE GREENWOOD

Senator Marlene Greenwood was born, raised and has lived in North Bay her entire life. She did not discover her Métis heritage until 1971, but quickly joined the Métis movement that same year. Prior to the formation of the MNO, she held several different positions with local Métis associations including President. She is also one of the MNO's earliest citizens—becoming a MNO citizen in 1994. Her late husband Norman Green was also an MNO citizen before his passing in 1995. She is currently a Senator for the MNO North Bay Métis Council—a position she has held since 1997. In 2012, she received the Suzanne Rochon-Burnett Volunteer of the Year Award. Senator Greenwood has two grown sons, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

NELSON MONTREUIL

Nelson Montreuil became an MNO citizen in 1996 and was instrumental in re-starting the MNO Mattawa Métis Council (MMC) in 2008. He has been President of the MNO MMC ever since. Nelson’s family was identified in the Mattawa Report as one of the root Métis families in the region. His great-grandfather was identified as a Métis guide in 1903 and his grandfather was a cedar strip canoe builder and a trapper. Nelson continues the family tradition and has maintained a 100 square mile registered trap line since he was a child. Nelson is also a canoe builder, guide and owner/operator of Algonquin North Wilderness Outfitters. He was a canoe instructor for 15 years and is a trapper and gun and hunting instructor. As an MNO Harvester, he has a deep interest in Harvesting issues. Nelson is also a strong supporter of Métis youth and regularly gives trapping workshops to MNO Captains of the Hunt and at events such as the annual Infinite Reach March Break Camp. Nelson retired last year after 35 years with Dupont as a Manager. He is married with two children and has three grandchildren.

KIM POWLEY

Kim Powley is a very well-known and proud MNO citizen. She is also the daughter of Steve and Brenda Powley. Kim is a very active member of the MNO, both as a volunteer and an elected representative. She currently serves as the President of the MNO Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council. Kim has a passion for the outdoors and fishing, although she says she usually catches more sun rays than fish! Kim spent her summer visiting remote and isolated communities in the North as part of her work with Census Canada.

PAUL ROBITAILLE

Paul Robitaille holds a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science from McMaster University and a Forest Technician Diploma and Certificate in Aboriginal–Canadian Relations from Confederation College. Paul is now completing a Master's Degree in Forestry at Lakehead University, exploring methods of building collaboration both within and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities within Ontario’s natural resource sector. Paul is actively involved within the MNO, serving as an Infinite Reach Facilitator, Youth Representative on the MNO Thunder Bay Métis Council and now, as the Region 2 Representative on the MNO’s Youth Council. Paul also represents the Region 2 Consultation Committee in forestry-related consultation matters—working with both industry proponents and provincial administrators, developing opportunities for Métis citizens to meaningfully engage in lands and resources issues. He also ensures that Métis Aboriginal Rights are respected and upheld as development occurs and that the benefits and opportunities associated with resource development are shared equitably with and among Métis peoples. Paul is excited to bring a youth perspective to the Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government and to working with each of the MNO’s communities and constituencies to develop collaborative processes that will benefit our entire Nation, now and into the future.
APPENDIX 3

TERMS OF REFERENCE
MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO COMMISSION ON MÉTIS RIGHTS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT

Objective

The primary purpose and objective of the MNO Commission is to document, through a process of province-wide consultation and community engagement, MNO citizens’ perspectives on MNO’s governance structures; how we can better reflect Métis community, identity and culture within our governance; and how we can move forward on harvesting mobility and self-government.

The Commission’s findings will be documented in a report entitled: What We Heard: Results of the Métis Nation of Ontario Commission’s Consultation on Métis Rights and Self-Government.

The findings of the Commission, as set out in the What We Heard Report, will be combined with information gathered from other sources, and used to help guide MNO’s broader collective efforts to continually advance Métis rights and self-government, including in its work at the federal and provincial levels.

Composition of the MNO Commission

Commissioners will be appointed to represent our diverse community in Ontario, with care to ensure balance on gender and language. Five to eight Commissioners will be selected seeking representation, with care to ensure balance of gender and language, as follows:

- Senators/Elders
- Youth
- Harvesters
- Geographic balance (North-South as well as East-West)
- MNO President (ex-officio)

Mandate, Role and Responsibilities

The mandate of the MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government is:

- To engage MNO citizens and Métis communities across Ontario on issues related to Métis rights and self-government, both broadly and more specifically as the discussion relates to mobility of Métis harvesting rights
- To listen to MNO citizen’s perspectives, and gather information from MNO citizens and communities on the issues outlined under Consultation Topics and Questions
- With the assistance of the MNO policy team, Communications Branch and MNO legal counsel, prepare a report entitled “Advancing Métis Rights and Self-Government: What We Heard”
- Assist the PCMNO Executive in developing a larger synthesis report and associated set of recommendations for advancing Métis rights and self-government that incorporates
the findings from the MNO Commission community consultations, as summarized in the *What We Heard Report*.

**Approach and Guiding Principles**

The MNO approach in advancing the broader Métis rights agenda is strategic and iterative in nature; proceeding logically and thoughtfully; and continually informed by input received from the MNO citizenry and Métis communities across Ontario.

The work of the MNO Commission will reflect this approach, and be guided by the principles and values set out in the *MNO Statement of Prime Purpose*, as well as the following additional principles:

- Comprehensive and inclusive;
- Respectful of regional and local community needs mandate;
- Focused and informed.

**MNO Commission Activities**

To facilitate discussions and communications among MNO citizens, the MNO Commission will:

- Attend engagement meetings with MNO citizens and Métis community members;
- During the engagement process, sit in on presentations that will help inform MNO citizens and Métis communities about key events described in the Métis rights timeline, the impacts of each to date, and potential implications moving forward. This includes presentations regarding MNO governance structures, self-government and harvesting;
- Listen to and record MNO citizen comments, discussions and perspectives on key rights and self-government issues resulting from the key events described in the Métis rights timeline;
- Help prepare a report entitled *Advancing Métis Rights and Self-Government: What We Heard* that describes thematically the results of the engagement sessions and consultations with MNO citizens and communities, for submission to the PCMNO Executive;
- Working with the PCMNO Executive, develop a broader report and set of recommendations for advancing Métis rights and self-government in Ontario and beyond, over the short, mid and longer term for presentation to the PCMNO;
- With the PCMNO Executive, present the key findings and recommendations from the MNO *What We Heard Report* and community consultations to the 2017 MNO AGA.

**Timeframes**

The preparation for the Commission will begin immediately and occur through the fall and early winter, with community engagement sessions beginning in February 2017 and concluding in May 2017. At the conclusion of the consultation meetings, the Commissioners will, supported by the policy team and MNO legal counsel, prepare a written report and recommendations to be provided to the PCMNO and then presented to the MNO AGA in August 2017.
LOCATIONS
SCOPE AND REACH OF CONSULTATION

The Commission was tasked with engaging in province-wide consultations on Métis rights and self-government issues with all MNO citizens. The Commission was also tasked with preparing a “What We Heard” report on the results of these engagements and to present the report at the 2017 MNO Annual General Assembly in Kenora Ontario for consideration.

From the end of February 2017 to the first week of June 2017, the Commission held 32 community consultation meetings across the province. These meetings included participation from approximately 1400 MNO citizens. These meetings also included representatives from all of the MNO Chartered Community Councils, members of the Provisional Council of the MNO, Senators, Youth, Women’s Representatives, Veterans, etc.

Specifically, the 32 meetings were held in the following locations:

1. MNO Great Lakes Métis Council (Owen Sound) – February 28, 2017
2. MNO Georgian Bay Métis Council (Midland) – March 1, 2017
3. MNO Moon River Métis Council (Foley) – March 2, 2017
4. MNO Youth Council (Toronto) – March 4, 2017
5. MNOWC (Toronto) – March 5, 2017
6. MNO Toronto and York Region Métis Council (Toronto) – March 7, 2017
7. MNO Oshawa and Durham Region Métis Council (Oshawa) – March 8, 2017
8. MNO Peterborough and District Wapiti Métis Council (Peterborough) – March 9, 2017
9. MNO Clear Waters Métis Council (Brantford) – March 20, 2017
10. MNO Grand River Métis Council (Kitchener) – March 21, 2017
11. MNO High Land Waters Métis Council (Kingston) – March 27, 2017
12. MNO Mattawa Métis Council (Mattawa) – March 29, 2017
13. MNO North Bay Métis Council (North Bay) – March 30, 2017
14. MNO Ottawa Region Métis Council (Ottawa) – March 31, 2017
16. MNO North Channel Métis Council (Blind River) – April 4, 2017
17. MNO Sudbury Métis Council (Sudbury) – April 5, 2017
18. MNO Credit River Métis Council (Mississauga) – April 26, 2017
19. MNO Temiskaming Métis Council (Temiskaming Shores) – May 3, 2017
20. MNO Northern Lights (Cochrane) – May 4, 2017
21. MNO Timmins Métis Council (Timmins) – May 5, 2017
22. MNO Atikokan and Area Métis Council (Atikokan) – May 7, 2017
23. MNO Thunder Bay Métis Council (Thunder Bay) – May 16, 2017
24. MNO Greenstone Métis Council (Geraldton) – May 17, 2017
25. MNO Superior North Shore Métis Council (Terrace Bay) – May 18, 2017
26. MNO Northwest Métis Council (Dryden) – May 28, 2017
27. MNO Kenora Métis Council (Kenora) – May 29, 2017
28. MNO Sunset Country Métis Council (Fort Frances) – May 30, 2017
29. MNO Chapleau Métis Council (Chapleau) – June 1, 2017
30. MNO Veterans Council (Toronto) – June 3, 2017
31. MNO Niagara Region Métis Council (Thorold) – June 5, 2017
32. MNO Windsor-Essex-Kent Métis Council (Windsor) – June 6, 2017
CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Métis Governance

• How can we get our Métis citizens more engaged in MNO activities and initiatives at the local, regional and provincial levels? What do you see as barriers to get citizens more engaged and how can we remove those?
• We have our Métis Voyageur and website to communicate with our citizens; what more do we need?
• What can we do to ensure that Métis citizens are kept up to date about negotiations, court cases, MNO policies and initiatives?
• How can we ensure that each of our governance bodies, Councils, and citizens are active participants in the MNO?
• Are there ways to ensure our MNO website is working well for Métis citizens everywhere in Ontario?

Métis Identity, Culture & Community

• How do you think we could better celebrate Ontario Métis identity, culture and community? How could we further promote these in how we organize ourselves, engage our citizens and make decisions?
• How could we better support our communities in celebrating and supporting Ontario Métis identity, community and culture, including Michif?
• How could Métis culture be further integrated into MNO governance structures, policies, procedures and decision-making?
• In a rapidly-changing, modern world, what supports would be most helpful to communities and families to facilitate the transfer of Métis traditional knowledge to future generations?
• What are some of the ways that MNO could work to educate the public, school systems, governments and industry on Métis identity, community and culture?
• How best can we strengthen our sense of community among Métis throughout Ontario?
• How should information, opinion or practices shared by an individual person be evaluated prior to it being considered “Métis culture” or “Métis traditional practice”?
• What additional supports would be most helpful for people who are applying for MNO Citizenship?
• How best can we reach out to people who have not applied for MNO Citizenship?
Harvesting

- The MNO Harvesting Policy is based on Métis jurisdiction, customs and traditions – how should it evolve to deal with issues such as co-management, enforcement, or the mobility of Métis rights between our communities?
- What should our priorities be for our future harvesting negotiations with Ontario?
- How does our Harvesting Policy need to evolve? What are the key issues that need to be addressed?
- How could we develop a revised harvesting map that is consistent with common understandings and what has been learned over the years? What type of process should be followed?
- Should our Harvesting Policy allow for Harvester Card holders from different regions to harvest in other regions? How should these types of mobility issues be addressed? Who gets to decide?
- How do we deal with enforcement issues when a Métis harvester violates our laws in relation to conservation, safety, wastage, etc.?
- How do you see Métis being involved in co-management initiatives with other governments or First Nations?
- Should our Harvesting Policy allow for Métis rights-holders who do not live in Ontario to obtain a Harvesters Card?
- How can we assist MNO citizens in completing the process to obtain a Harvesters Card? What works best? What about people who want to be verified as a Métis rights-holder, but may not harvest?

Métis Self-Government

- What should the priorities be in our future negotiations with Canada?
- What concerns should the MNO pursue in these negotiations?
- What do you think are the most important principles that should guide the development of the MNO Constitution?
- What processes would work well for engaging with MNO citizens and communities during constitutional development?
- What key elements and principles should be included in a constitution?
- Do we want to have a process of dispute resolution? What will this process look like?