

The Path to Self-Government

Since its creation in 1993, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) has moved forward as a government to advance the rights, interests and aspirations of Métis citizens in Ontario. The MNO Statement of Prime Purpose declares that our “rights are recognized and affirmed under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982” and that we have the “inherent right of self-determination and self-government”. The MNO has been directed through Annual General Assembly resolutions over the last 25 years to establish processes to engage in government-to-government negotiations to advance self-government, Section 35 rights and to address outstanding claims of Métis communities.

WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR

The MNO took another step forward in December 2017 with the signing of the *MNO-Canada-Ontario Framework Agreement to Advance Reconciliation*. The MNO has provided updates about the Framework Agreement on the MNO website, in the *Métis Voyageur*, at a provincial self-government workshop held with community leadership on May 26, 2018 and Jan. 19, 2019 and during the 2018 Annual General Assembly.

The MNO established a negotiations committee to advance self-government negotiations and their work has been informed by the recommendations from the MNO Commission on Métis Rights and Self-Government *What We Heard Report*, and discussions are guided by the MNO's *Statement of Prime Purpose*.

TAKING THE NEXT STEP

At a negotiations committee meeting on Nov. 15, 2018, Canada discussed with the MNO negotiations team an approach to advance self-government. This approach would work to ensure MNO has a foot in the door to self-government and at the same time safeguards that there will still be plenty of time for Métis rights-holders to be meaningfully engaged and involved in all aspects of building and ratifying a constitution before full self-government can be realized. The negotiations committee expressed support for this new approach and moving forward with the development of a draft template Métis self-government agreement to be brought back for further review.

On Jan. 12, 2019 discussions were held with all MNO Regional Consultation Committees on this innovative approach to advance Métis self-government. A draft core Métis self-government template agreement was developed, through discussions Canada is having with MNO as well as other Métis governments. On Jan. 13 the Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario (PCMNO) reviewed and approved, in principle, moving forward to advance this draft Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement. On March 11, 2019 another meeting was held with Regional Consultation Committees to review the details of the confidential draft agreement. As negotiations have been ongoing the agreement has had to remain confidential but updates continue to be provided to leadership and MNO Citizens more widely.

It should also be recognized that self-government will only be fully realized when Métis Section 35 rights holders all across Ontario have been fully engaged and consulted and have through a province wide referendum developed, approved and ratified the Constitution and this agreement specifically.

For more than 25 years, the MNO has been pressing governments to move forward on its promise of reconciliation. This is the next step. This new process is an opportunity for the MNO to lock in a self-government negotiation mandate now that will be difficult for any future government to take away. **It also means that the MNO will have time to properly engage and consult with all Métis citizens across Ontario on self-government and on their visions for the future.** Once this recognition is locked in, the real work begins.

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

With self-government now within reach, we must discuss and decide what kind of government we want as we move toward full Métis self-government. This will require direct engagement and consultation.

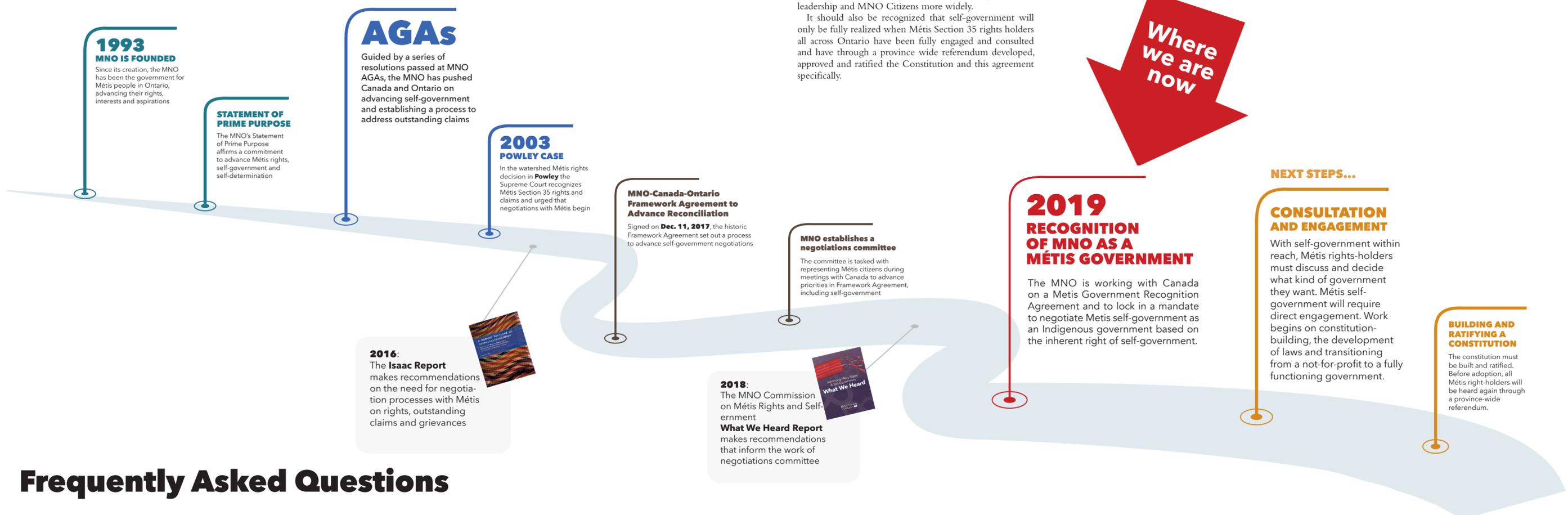
The MNO will have to create a constitution informed by its Métis citizens during an extensive consultation process. The constitution will set out governance structures, how decisions are made, the rights and values of citizens, requirements for citizenship, the process for making laws and how to resolve disputes.

WE WILL DO THIS WORK TOGETHER

Fully recognized self-government will not be realized until Métis rights-holders all across Ontario are engaged and ratify a constitution, through a province-wide referendum.

The MNO is taking self-government seriously and will follow a communication and engagement plan to ensure Métis are informed and engaged throughout the process.

Self-government is a goal that has driven the MNO since its founding. To achieve it, Métis will have to work together to move the process forward and make it happen. ∞



Frequently Asked Questions

What is reconciliation?

While the term “reconciliation” is increasingly used to describe any initiative done with or for the benefit of Indigenous peoples, real reconciliation requires that substantive issues such as Métis rights, self-government and outstanding claims against the Crown be dealt with.

The Supreme Court of Canada has held that reconciliation is a process guaranteed to Aboriginal peoples by Section 35 of *Constitution Act, 1982*. This process requires that Aboriginal rights and claims protected by Section 35 be determined, recognized and respected by governments through honourable negotiations leading to just and lasting settlements (i.e., modern day treaties or other constructive arrangements).

What is the MNO-Canada-Ontario Framework Agreement to Advance Reconciliation all about?

The Framework Agreement is about building and strengthening a government-to-government relationship with the Métis Nation of Ontario and to advance reconciliation.

Why was the signing of the MNO-Canada-Ontario Framework Agreement to Advance Reconciliation important?

MNO has been directed by a series of resolutions from MNO Annual General Assemblies to engage with Canada and Ontario to establish negotiations processes that advance self-government and recognize Métis rights, interests and outstanding claims.

This Agreement marked a significant breakthrough because Canada has historically denied Métis self-government, rights and claims. These denials led to long and expensive litigation such as Powley, MMF and Daniels. The MNO seeks to advance reconciliation and self-government without having to spend decades and millions of dollars in the courts.

Métis living south of the 60th parallel have been excluded from Canada's claims negotiation processes for almost 50 years. Despite Métis inclusion in Section 35 and successive court victories, Canada has not amended its policies to include Métis. As a result, there have been no negotiations of real substance on Métis self-government, rights and outstanding claims.

The Framework Agreement establishes a formal negotiations mandate to deal with the unique rights, needs and aspirations of Ontario Métis.

Unlike previous federal policy approaches to dealing

with Métis—which solely focused on programs and service delivery or the development of Métis institutions—these negotiations deal with big issues such as Métis self-government, rights and outstanding claims against the Crown.

Why is this opportunity so significant?

The MNO is working to ensure Métis rights holder in Ontario have a foot in the door to self-government regardless of any future changes in the federal government. This approach is working to will lock in recognition of MNO and secure a mandate for self-government negotiations. At the same time this opportunity would ensure there will still be plenty of time for Métis rights-holders to be meaningfully engaged and consulted in all aspects of building and ratifying a constitution before full self-government is realized.

Who will be part of developing and ratifying a constitution?

The constitution will set out governance structures, how decisions are made, the rights and values of citizens, requirements for citizenship, the process for making laws, how to resolve disputes, etc. Métis citizens in Ontario that meet the MNO's definition of citizenship will be responsible for developing and ratifying the constitution. It will be up to Métis rights-holders to work together to decide what their government will look like and what protections will be built in to ensure the rights of future generations are protected.

Does this process include all Section 35 Métis rights holders in Ontario including those that ancestrally connect to the West and to communities within Ontario?

Yes, this new process involves all Section 35 rights holders. This new process requires that Métis citizens that meet the MNO's current definition of Métis citizenship be meaningfully engaged and consulted in the development of laws, policies and in building and ratifying a constitution.

Does this work to advance Métis self-government have anything to do with the Métis National Council (MNC)?

No, the MNC has absolutely no role in these negotiations. Métis self-government has been at the heart of the MNO's mandate since 1993. This is about advancing the Section 35 rights of Métis citizens in Ontario and protecting and advancing these rights for future generations of Métis in Ontario.