


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?

A PLAINSPEAK DOCUMENT



This booklet was produced by plainspeak.ca. Any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of plainspeak.ca. Plainspeak.ca acknowledges the many contributions of the Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO), including its senior policy advisors Kelly Campagnola and Jeffrey Warnock, Associate Director of Education and Way of Life Brian Tucker, PhD and MNO legal counsel Jason Madden (Pape-Salter Teillet LLP).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

plainspeak.ca

c/o Centre for Social Innovation

215 Spadina Avenue, Suite 415

Toronto, ON

M5T 2C7

Phone: **416 828 1293**

Email: **info@plainspeak.ca**

Website: **www.plainspeak.ca**

MESSAGE FROM THE MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO PRESIDENT



Too often the Métis have been the forgotten ones in Canadian classrooms and in our country’s law and policy. A long history of government neglect, broken promises, and colonial policies have had a negative impact on our Métis communities. Our people have had to struggle on many fronts, yet throughout their history they’ve maintained their pride, their communities, their way of life, and their culture.

Since its founding, the MNO has represented the will and aspirations of its citizens and communities. It has governance structures at the local, regional and provincial levels to ensure that the voices of its citizens and communities are heard. It also has governance structures that ensure that the viewpoints of women, Senators, youth, veterans, and Captains of the hunt are taken into account in decision making. This has allowed the MNO to support its communities in striving toward the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose and to continue to move toward self-government.

Today 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 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. These are the things—the glue—that bind us together as a People. Working together, we can continue to make the MNO stronger for the benefit of our future generations.

Margaret Froh

MNO President

February 2017



Statement of Prime Purpose

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.

Therefore We Declare:

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*



Community and Culture

The Métis—as an Aboriginal people—were born from these lands long before Canada became Canada and Ontario became Ontario. Our ancestors emerged with their own collective identity, language (Michif), culture and way of life along the waterways and lakes of what is now known as Ontario. It is our unique emergence and pre-existence that makes us an Indigenous people.

While First Nations are our family and relations, our rights—as Métis—flow from our distinctiveness as communities and as a people. Our rights are tied to the land and our pre-existence on them. Our rights are not derived from other Indigenous peoples, nor do they trump or limit the rights of other Indigenous peoples. Our rights co-exist with First Nations in the same way our families have co-existed together for generations.

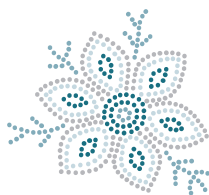
More specifically, our communities arose in various regions around the Great Lakes and along the waterways associated with the fur trade network. These communities were interconnected by the highly mobile lifestyle of the Métis, the fur trade, seasonal rounds, extensive kinship connections and a shared collective history and identity. Regional in nature and indivisible from each other, these communities persisted through time to become the vibrant, contemporary communities they are today.

The MNO represents contemporary Métis communities throughout Ontario. Some of these communities, such as in the Sault Ste. Marie region and others, possess section 35 rights because of their historic pre-existence and continuity. Others, such as in locations like Toronto, are equally vibrant communities made up of our citizens, but they are not in Métis traditional territories.

Flowing from this, our citizenship and contemporary Métis communities throughout Ontario are made up of those who share our vision as set out in the MNO *Statement of Prime Purpose* and include:

- ∞ the descendants of historic Métis communities from throughout Ontario that continue to live in their traditional territories or live outside of their home community in Ontario;
- ∞ the descendants of historic Métis communities from other parts of the Métis Nation in western Canada who now make Ontario their home; and
- ∞ citizens who may not meet the current requirements for MNO citizenship, but who have been grandfathered in based on principle and respect for their contributions to the MNO.

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.



Metis identity and citizenship

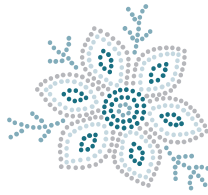
The Métis are a distinct Indigenous people with a unique history, culture, language and territory. Métis identity, or “being Métis” includes self-identifying as Métis and having an ancestral connection to a historic Métis community. In addition, one’s personal identity includes all aspects of their Métis culture including language, their place on the land, their community, and their family history. Although Métis identity is deeply personal, at the same time it has common threads that bind together all MNO Métis citizens and communities.

Citizenship in the MNO is limited to individuals interested in furthering the objects of the MNO, as laid out in the Statement of Prime Purpose, and to individuals who are Métis within the definition adopted by the MNO. This definition requires that all new citizens meet the following requirements—a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation. The MNO Registry Policy provides clarity on what this definition means.

Based on this definition and its Registry Policy, the MNO maintains the only recognized provincial Registry for Métis. The Registry was established in 1994 to identify and register Métis citizens who meet the definition of Métis as well as harvesters who are eligible rights holders in the province of Ontario.

Métis people who are ordinarily citizens of Ontario can make an application for citizenship to the MNO. The applications are independently assessed by the MNO Registrar based on the MNO Registry Policy, which has been adopted by the MNO Annual General Assembly. MNO citizenship can only be granted to applicants who meet the requirements of the MNO Registry Policy.



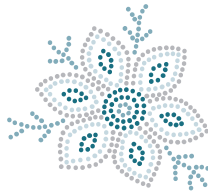


The Benefits of MNO Citizenship

The following are some of the benefits of MNO citizenship:

- ∞ The pride of being a citizen of the MNO and being a part of contemporary Métis communities throughout Ontario that come together to celebrate Métis culture and history.
- ∞ All citizens are able to participate in the MNO's governance structures (e.g., by voting for and electing leadership at the local, regional and provincial levels, by attending and voting on resolutions at the MNO Annual General Assemblies, and by running for public office at the local, regional and provincial levels).
- ∞ Potential eligibility for Métis programs and services in the areas of training, housing, health and well-being, education, and economic development.
- ∞ Receiving MNO communications including the Métis Voyageur and other MNO publications.
- ∞ Participating in Métis community events, meetings, and consultations.
- ∞ Sharing in potential benefits flowing from negotiated agreements with the federal government, provincial government, or industry.

- ∞ Eligibility to apply for MNO Harvester Cards that verify you are a Métis rights-holder able to exercise collectively held s. 35 harvesting rights as set out in the MNO Harvesting Policy.
- ∞ Are there other benefits you believe derive from MNO citizenship that are not on this list? What benefits do you believe will be important in the future for you, your family and community?



The Road Ahead

Some of the issues we need to discuss in the area of culture and identity are:

- ∞ 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?



We invite you to provide the MNO with your responses and feedback on these issues related to identity, culture and community. Please provide your comments in writing:

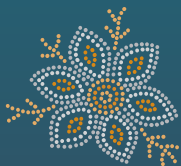
BY MAIL

Métis Nation of Ontario
500 Old St. Patrick St, Unit 3
Ottawa, ON
K1N 9G4

BY EMAIL

Kelly Campagnola, *Senior Policy Advisor*
KellyC@metisnation.org

Jeff Warnock, *Senior Policy Advisor*
JeffreyW@metisnation.org



MÉTIS NATION *of* ONTARIO COMMISSION *on*

Métis Rights
& Self-Government