



MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO - FACT SHEET

Identification of Historic Métis Communities in Ontario

Background

- In 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized in *R. v. Powley* (“*Powley*”) a Métis community with a communal right to hunt for food in and around Sault Ste. Marie that is protected as an “aboriginal” rights within the meaning of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.
- This *Powley* case provides the framework for identifying Métis communities in other areas of the province as well as the rest of Canada.
- Courts across Canada have repeatedly emphasized that the Crown and Aboriginal peoples should negotiate on these issues, not rely solely on the courts. In fact, the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that the Crown has a duty to negotiate with the Métis specifically.
- For many years, Ontario and the MNO have worked together to strengthen their relationship and to advance reconciliation. This has included the signing of a relationship Framework Agreement in 2008, [renewed in 2014](#), which led to initiatives that aim to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of Métis children, families and communities across Ontario.
- Guided by the Framework Agreement and consistent with Ontario’s constitutional obligations to the Métis, Ontario and the MNO worked together to arrive at common understandings on where there were historic Métis communities in Ontario that met the evidentiary requirements of the *Powley* test.
- This collaborative work, amongst other things (i.e., see MNO Fact Sheet on Independent Review of the MNO Harvesters Card System), included the exchange and review historical reports regarding historic Métis communities in Ontario. These reports have been prepared by independent professional historians and other experts regarding Métis populations in particular areas in the province.
- Based on the legal framework set out in *Powley*, in August of 2017, the Métis Nation of Ontario (“MNO”) and the Government of Ontario (“Ontario”) jointly announced the identification of six historic Métis communities in the province that meet the *Powley* test criteria in addition to the historic Sault Ste. Marie community recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Understanding the Collaborative Process on Identifying Historic Métis Communities

- In order to move forward MNO and Ontario recognized that they had to arrive at common understandings on where there were historic Métis communities in Ontario (other than Sault Ste. Marie) that met the evidentiary requirements of the *Powley* test.
- Through a collaborative process, six historic Métis communities in Ontario were identified, in addition to the community recognized in *Powley*.¹ This included reviewing the evidentiary record to see if there was “a group of Métis with a distinctive collective identity, living together in the same geographic area and sharing a common way of life,” which is how the Supreme Court of Canada defined a “Métis community” in *Powley*.
- To meet the *Powley* test evidence that shows a Métis community had a distinct collective consciousness (i.e., asserted their rights as Métis), unique cultures traits, customs, traditions, were recognized by the Crown, other individuals or groups, including, other Indigenous peoples, were a collective (not just mixed ancestry families living together) was required. Based on a review of evidence, the following historic Métis communities and their geographies were identified:
 - **Rainy River / Lake of the Woods Historic Métis Community**
- *The inter-connected historic Métis populations in and around: Lac La Pluie (Fort Frances); Rat Portage (Kenora), Eagle Lake (Dryden/Wabigoon) and Hungry Hall (Rainy River). The Lake of the Woods area includes Rat Portage, White Fish Lake, Northwest Angle, Wabigoon and Long Sault.*
 - **Northern Lake Superior Historic Métis Community**
- *The inter-connected historic Métis populations north of Lake Superior, including the Métis people who worked for period of time or settled at: Michipicoten, Pic River, Fort William, Nipigon House and Long Lake.*
 - **Abitibi Inland Historic Métis Community**
- *The inter-connected historic Métis populations at the inland posts between New Post and Timiskaming, including: Frederick House, Abitibi House, Kenogamissi, Flying Post, Mattagami and Matachewan as well as the historic Métis population at the Moose Factory Post and environs, several families of which were inter-related to members of the historic Abitibi Inland Community and migrated south to become a part of this community.*
 - **Sault Ste. Marie Historic Métis Community**
- *The historic Métis population at Sault Ste. Marie and environs, which the courts recognized extended as far as “Batchewana, Goulais Bay, Garden River, Bruce Mines, Desbarates, Bar River, St. Joseph’s Island, Sugar Island and into Northern Michigan.”*

¹ Descriptions of these communities are available online at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historic-m%C3%A9tis-communities/>

- **Mattawa/Ottawa River Historic Métis Community**
- *The historic Métis population centred at Mattawa and spanning the Ottawa River from Lac des Allumettes (Pembroke) to Timiskaming and environs.*
- **Killarney Historic Métis Community**
- *The historic Métis population at Killarney and environs.*
- **Georgian Bay Historic Métis Community**
- *The inter-connected historic Métis populations at Penetanguishene and Parry Sound and environs.*
- As a part of identifying the historic Métis communities, Verified Métis Family Line (VMFL) documents that identified some of the families who made up these historic Métis communities were also prepared, and, ultimately publicly released by the MNO as well. These documents show what Métis families made up these historic Métis communities at relevant times and how these families had ancestral connections (i.e., kinship) to show they were a community, not just mixed ancestry families living beside each other. This genealogical information, that demonstrates a Métis collective, is an important element of identifying historic rights-bearing Métis communities.
- It is important to note that genealogical evidence of mixed ancestry individuals alone is not enough to establish a historic Métis community. This genealogical information needs to be put together with the historical evidence describe above. This is the difference between rights-bearing Métis communities in Ontario and westward and those groups claiming to be “Métis” in Quebec and the East Coast. Those groups have no historic evidence of collective identification and assertions as being Métis with rights until very recently. Their claims are opportunistic; not grounded in history.