



MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The MNO Registry Review



1. What is the Registry Review?

The Registry Review—also known as the “Registry and Self-Government Readiness Process” or the “RSRP”—marks an important milestone in the MNO’s ongoing self-government journey as a Métis government. Specifically, it involved an independent review of the Métis Nation of Ontario’s (“MNO”) nearly 24,000 citizenship files by an independent consulting firm, Know History, to determine whether the files meet the current requirements for MNO citizenship as set out in the MNO Bylaws and MNO Registry Policy. The review, which took over three years to complete, was initiated by the Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario (“PCMNO”) in [October 2017](#). Interim results of the review were publicly discussed in January 2020, with the final results of the Registry Review being publicly released in June 2021.

Throughout the course of the review, the PCMNO and the MNO administration also provided regular updates on the progress of the Registry Review, including: memos to all citizens, updates at MNO Annual General Assemblies (“AGAs”), articles in the Métis Voyageur newspaper, and maintaining a dedicated [website](#) with readily-available materials that all citizens can access.

2. Why did the PCMNO initiate the Registry Review?

The PCMNO launched the Registry Review as part of the work needed to prepare the MNO for formal self-government and Métis rights negotiations with Canada and Ontario. As “aboriginal rights” protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, the Crown would only negotiate self-government and Métis rights with the MNO if the MNO could establish that it represents rights-bearing Métis consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in *R. v. Powley* (“*Powley*”). In *Powley*, the SCC held, among other things, that:

verifying membership is crucial, since individuals are only entitled to exercise Métis aboriginal rights by virtue of their ancestral connection to and current membership in a Métis community.

It has long been the MNO’s position that all citizens who meet the citizenship criteria are Métis rights-holders – not just those who hold MNO Harvester Cards. However, it was understood back in 2017, when the Registry Review was initiated, that some MNO citizenship files may not meet the MNO’s current citizenship requirements as outlined in the MNO Bylaws and the MNO Registry Policy as a result of certain legacy issues. For example, similar to other Métis governments from Ontario westward, the MNO’s definition of “Métis”, as set out in the MNO Bylaws, has changed over the last 28 years. In addition, in the MNO’s early years, there was little to no funding or capacity to support the MNO’s centralized registry.

Building off of the momentum of several years of previous work to refine and strengthen the MNO registry system, the Registry Review was an effort to identify and address these outstanding legacy issues head on, in a transparent and accountable manner.

3. What criteria did the independent reviewer use in the Registry Review?

In reviewing each citizenship file, the independent reviewer, Know History, applied the following four criteria for MNO citizenship as outlined in the MNO Registry Policy:

- i. Self-Identification as Métis (i.e., proof that an individual self-identifies as Métis by way of signing the MNO Oath of Allegiance);
- ii. Proof of Historic Métis Nation Ancestry (i.e., establishing an ancestral connection to a Métis Ancestor as described in the MNO Registry Policy);
- iii. Distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples (i.e., not registered with another Aboriginal nation or on another Aboriginal list); and
- iv. Accepted by the Métis Nation (i.e., completion of the MNO citizenship registration process).

The above criteria aligns with the National Definition of Métis approved by the Métis governments that form the Métis National Council, the Supreme Court of Canada's direction in *Powley* as well as the MNO's assertions with respect to the Métis citizens and communities it represents in Ontario.

4. Why are the results of the Registry Review significant?

As a result of the Registry Review, the MNO now has further clarity around: *who* exactly the MNO represents and *where* those citizens ancestrally connect to. That is, the Registry Review confirms that the MNO represents verified section 35 rights-holders who ancestrally connect to all seven of the Historic Métis Communities in Ontario, as well as to other parts of the Historic Métis Nation Homeland west of Ontario. The results of the review also further confirm the credibility, reliability, and legitimacy of the MNO's centralized Métis citizenship registry as an objectively-verifiable registration system based on the application of stringent criteria.

5. Hasn't the credibility of the MNO Registry system already been confirmed through previous independent reviews and audits?

The MNO Registry—which was created in 1994 “to identify and register Métis citizens and harvesters who are eligible rights holders in the province of Ontario”—has undergone several independent reviews and audits since its creation. For example, the *Métis Nation Registry Operations*—which are national standards to govern Métis registries co-developed by Canada, the MNO, and other Métis governments in 2015—provide that the MNO Registry will be audited every three years. The MNO understands that these audits are critical as they provide third-party confirmation that the MNO Registry is objectively-verifiable and consistent with the

SCC's direction in *Powley*, allowing the Crown to rely on the MNO Registry for the purposes of identifying Métis section 35 rights-holders (e.g., for the purposes of harvesting).

The most recent federal audit of the MNO Registry was conducted in 2017 by an independent auditor selected by Canada (i.e., BDO). This 2017 audit concluded that:

the current MNO registry application process as it presently operates reflects the *Powley* decision, demonstrates objective verification for citizenship and is maintained with care and in a professional manner.

The MNO Registry, namely the MNO Harvester Card System, also underwent an objective and independent provincial review (known as the "Independent Review") around this same time, with the final results being released in 2018. The Independent Review—which was motivated by a commitment made in the MNO-Ontario interim harvesting agreement and conducted by independent consulting firm, InterGroup Consultants—concluded that: 100% of the 88 Métis Family Lines submitted by the MNO were "verified" as being part of Historic Métis Communities, and that 100% of the randomly-selected 328 Harvester Card files were "verified" as meeting the criteria set out in *Powley*. This work paved the way for the MNO and Ontario to negotiate and sign a new *Framework Agreement on Métis Harvesting* in April 2018, which removed the Harvester Card cap under the previous interim agreement.

6. What's the difference between "Complete," "Missing Documentation," and "Incomplete" files?

During the Registry Review, citizenship files were designated as either: "Complete" (meaning they contained all the documents needed to demonstrate a genealogical connection to a Métis Ancestor and a signed MNO Oath of Allegiance), "Missing Documentation" (meaning they included documented proof of a Métis Ancestor but needed additional documentation to support genealogical connection(s) or, in some cases, were only missing a signed MNO Oath of Allegiance), or "Incomplete" (meaning they lacked a historic document of any records evidencing an ancestral connection to a Métis ancestor as defined by the MNO Registry Policy).

Citizens with "Complete" files were issued a new MNO citizenship card and were also provided with information about which of the seven identified Historic Métis Communities in Ontario they connect to, or where their Métis Ancestor was documented in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland. Citizens with "Missing Documentation" or "Incomplete" files were provided with notice of the documentation needed to complete their files, information on how to submit such documentation for re-assessment, and contact information and resources to assist citizens with any questions. All citizens were advised of the status of their file by letter.

7. What are the key findings from the Registry Review?

Of the 23,978 MNO citizenship files reviewed during the Registry Review, the final report concluded that:

- **A total of 71% of all MNO citizenship files (17,014 MNO citizens) were confirmed as having “Complete” citizenship files** (i.e., their file included all the necessary documentation required to meet the MNO’s current definition for citizenship and the MNO Registry Policy).
- Another 1.4% of MNO citizenship files (330 MNO citizens) could “Complete” their file if they signed the MNO’s required Oath of Allegiance, and another 4.7% (1,132 MNO citizens) could “Complete” their file simply by providing missing genealogical documents. **If these outstanding requirements were met, a total of 77% of MNO citizenship files (18,476 MNO citizens) would be confirmed as “Complete”.**
- A total of 22.5% of current MNO citizenship files (5,402 MNO citizens) were determined to have “Incomplete” files.
- As a part of the review, 1,061 MNO citizens' files were determined to be inactive because of death, suspension, or withdrawal and were removed from the MNO Registry. At the end of the review, less than 1% of files reviewed remained “In Process”.
- Of the MNO citizenship files that are “Complete” (17,014 MNO citizens), based on the primary documents provided to the MNO Registry, these files demonstrate the following:
 - A total of 23% of the MNO’s citizenship (3,904 MNO citizens) ancestrally connect to Métis communities in western Canada through Métis Scrip (2,470 MNO citizens), Métis land grants issued under the *Manitoba Act, 1870* (768 MNO citizens), or other historical documentation from 1901 or earlier (666 MNO citizens).
A total of 9% of the MNO’s citizenship (1,522 MNO citizens) ancestrally connect to the historic Métis community in Northwestern Ontario, with 884 MNO citizens being descendants of the “Halfbreeds of Rainy Lake and River” who collectively adhered as a Métis community to Treaty 3 in 1875 and another 638 MNO citizens ancestrally connecting to other historic Métis families and settlements in the region.
 - A total of 49% of the MNO’s citizenship (8,332 MNO citizens) ancestrally connect to the Great Lakes Métis community that was recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Powley*. This community includes well-known Métis populations and settlements at Fort William (present day Thunder Bay), Michipicoten, Sault Ste. Marie, Killarney, and Georgian Bay/Penetanguishene.
 - A total of 6% of the MNO’s citizenship (1,045 MNO citizens) ancestrally connect to the historic Métis community in the Abitibi-Temiscamingue region.
 - A total of 13% of the MNO’s citizenship (2,211 MNO citizens) ancestrally connect to the historic Métis community in the Mattawa region.
- Collectively, the MNO’s citizens with “Complete” files can be broken down as having a Métis Ancestor from Western Canada (23%), Northwestern Ontario (9%), the Upper Great Lakes Region (49%), and Northeastern Ontario (19%).

- In addition, many of the MNO's citizens with "Complete" files have Métis Ancestors from two or more Métis communities within Ontario. For example, of the 17,014 MNO citizens with "Complete" citizenship files, 13,110 trace to one Ontario Métis community, with approximately 39% (5,082 MNO citizens) of that number ancestrally connecting to two or more historic Métis communities in Ontario.
- Additional research will be undertaken in the future in order to assess further ancestral connections between historic Métis communities in Ontario as well as with those in Western Canada.

8. My file was designated as "Missing Documentation" or "Incomplete." Is it possible for me to complete my file and, if so, how and by when do I need to do this?

As noted above, as part of the review process, citizens with "Missing Documentation" or "Incomplete" files were provided with a letter notifying them of results of their file review, the documentation needed to complete their file, information on how to submit such documentation for re-assessment, and contact information and resources to assist with any questions. As such, it is possible for citizens to complete their files by providing the necessary documentation to the MNO Registry as outlined in their assessment letter. Re-assessment requests are ongoing.

In 2017, when the PCMNO initiated the Registry Review, it directed that citizens be "provided a fair and reasonable amount of time to provide the necessary documentation to the MNO Registry." The timeline for doing so has yet to be determined, but may be discussed during the MNO's province-wide consultations with all MNO citizens (as discussed below). In the meantime, the MNO continues to encourage citizens to complete their files as soon as possible.

9. Did citizens with "Missing Documentation" or "Incomplete" files lose their MNO citizenship?

No. All citizens—regardless of whether their MNO citizenship files have been designated as "Complete," "Missing Documentation," or "Incomplete"—continue to be MNO citizens. The Registry Review—as an internal, administrative process that assessed the completeness of all MNO citizenship files based on the MNO's current citizenship requirements—does not and cannot, on its own, change the fact of whether someone is an MNO citizen. This is because citizens (i.e., currently members of the MNO Secretariat) can only be removed in accordance with the MNO Bylaws, which currently do not authorize the removal of MNO citizens by reason of a "Missing Documentation" or "Incomplete" file designation. Future steps, however, may be determined through the MNO's province-wide consultations with all MNO citizens (as discussed below).

10. What are the next steps?

On May 28, 2021, the PCMNO passed a resolution approving of and directing the MNO administration to implement the following next steps related to the Registry Review:

1. Develop and release a series of communication tools in order to engage with MNO citizens on the outcomes of the Registry Review;
2. Undertake province-wide consultation with MNO citizens through a series of virtual Town Hall meetings open to all MNO citizens during the summer of 2021;
3. Develop a “What We Heard” report based on the province-wide consultations to be publicly released following review and consideration by the PCMNO; and
4. Based on the “What We Heard” report, look towards a province-wide vote (in Fall/Winter 2021) and/or Special Assembly on MNO citizenship (in Fall/Winter 2021 or early 2022, subject to public health and safety requirements) to guide further decision-making on next steps related to the Registry Review final report and/or potential amendments needed to the MNO Bylaws and MNO Registry Policy.

For further information and questions on the Registry Review and upcoming engagement sessions, please see the MNO’s website and/or contact 613-798-1488 xt. 116 or email rsrp@metisnation.org.