

Métis Nation of Ontario

The following Resolution was approved by the 2023 Métis Nation of Ontario 30th Annual General Assembly held August 18-20, 2023:

It was MOVED (Mitch Case) and SECONDED (Jordyn Playne)

WHEREAS beginning in the late 1700s distinct Métis communities emerged along the fur trade routes and waterways in some parts of what would ultimately be recognized as the province of Ontario and before Canada became Canada;

WHEREAS these Métis people and their communities (often described or known as “Halfbreeds” in the historic record) developed their own group identities, culture, way of life, and were interconnected to each other as well as to other Métis communities that emerged in the North-West which form the Métis Nation today;

WHEREAS despite being historically acknowledged and/or recognized as distinct Indigenous communities by other Indigenous peoples, the Crown, outsiders and settlers, Ontario Métis were largely excluded from the historic treaty-making process with the exception of the ‘Halfbreeds of Rainy River and Lake’ collectively adhering to Treaty 3 in 1875;

WHEREAS the history of Ontario Métis—and the impacts of the Crown’s failure to recognize these Métis communities and their unique rights and interests—has often been ignored, misunderstood, disparaged or denied as a part of the process of colonization in Canada;

WHEREAS despite successive Crown governments denying the very existence of Ontario Métis, these distinct Métis communities—with their own unique histories, identities, culture and way of life—have persevered to ensure colonization, ignorance, and the power of Canadian law to deny, control, destroy, and exterminate Indigenous communities does not succeed and make Ontario Métis a mere fact of history;

WHEREAS these Métis communities joined with other Indigenous peoples, including non-status Indians in the mid 1900s, to push for recognition through pan-Aboriginal organizations that ultimately led to Métis inclusion—as a distinct Aboriginal peoples—in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* (“**Section 35**”);

WHEREAS despite express Métis inclusion in Section 35 the subsequent constitutional conferences held in the 1980s as well as the Charlottetown Accord constitutional process—which led to the negotiation of the Métis Nation Accord in 1992—ultimately ended in failure;

WHEREAS a distinct group of Ontario Métis and their communities, along with other Métis from western Canada who now make Ontario home, came together in 1993 to create the Métis Nation of Ontario (“**MNO**”)—as a distinct Métis government—with its upmost priority being the

advancement of its citizens and communities, including implementing the inherent Métis right to self-determination and self-government;

WHEREAS within the MNO Statement of Prime Purpose—that has guided the MNO’s development and evolution as a Métis government over the last 30 years—the following objectives are identified as priorities:

- 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 promote the history, values, culture, languages and traditions of the Métis Nation and to create an awareness of our proud heritage;
- 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;

WHEREAS in 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Final Report (“**RCAP**”) was publicly released and included important research, conclusions and recommendations about the Métis Nation and Ontario Métis communities, including:

... [a]ncestors of today’s Métis Nation established communities in parts of what is called the Métis Nation homeland in north central North America. The better-known settlements were at Sault Ste. Marie in present-day Ontario ...

It is indisputable that the distinct Métis communities of Ontario — in locations as widespread as ... Moose Factory (on James Bay), Sault Ste. Marie and Rainy River (in the north and west of Thunder Bay) — have long and unique histories, as well as indisputable claims to recognition of their Aboriginal origins and entitlements.

WHEREAS despite the findings and recommendations within RCAP and the facts of history that confirm the existence of Ontario Metis, the Ontario Government denied the very existence of Ontario Métis communities—and any Métis rights “whatsoever” in the province in the 1990s;

WHEREAS the Ontario Government’s denial of all Métis in the province required the MNO to advance the *Powley* case—as a Métis rights test case—for all Ontario Métis (as well as the entire Métis Nation) all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada;

WHEREAS during the *Powley* decision’s decade long litigation battle—that culminated in an unanimous Supreme Court of Canada being rendered on September 19, 2003—the facts of Métis history at Sault Ste Marie and the Upper Great Lakes began to be better understood and shared within the governments, the public-at-large, and First Nations;

WHEREAS following the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in *Powley*—and based on historic and contemporary relationships—the MNO and the Chiefs of Ontario signed a Political Protocol in 2004 that committed the parties to work together on common issues and the MNO engaged in ceremonies with the Anishinabek Nation to rekindle historic alliances;

WHEREAS following the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in *Powley* the MNO began processes of engagement and ultimately negotiations with both Ontario and Canada in order to implement Section 35 as well as the *Powley* decision in Ontario;

WHEREAS in 2010—following the election of new First Nation leadership—the MNO-Chiefs of Ontario Political Protocol was unilaterally cancelled by First Nations without any explanation to the MNO and the MNO’s offers to meet have been for the most part refused;

WHEREAS despite the refusal of the Chiefs of Ontario and Anishinabek Nation to meet with the MNO, relationships between Métis and First Nation continue to exist at a personal and familial, and some formal and informal relationships continue to exist at the local level;

WHEREAS despite the lack of formal engagement or dialogue between the MNO and Ontario First Nations, the MNO has continued to pursue reconciliation with Crown governments to ensure the promise of Section 35 and the *Powley* case are implemented;

WHEREAS over the last 20 years of hard work, dedication and collaboration between Métis citizens, communities, the MNO and Crown governments has resulted in:

- harvesting agreements, framework agreements, the formal recognition of 7 historic Métis communities in Ontario and many other agreements being negotiated with the Ontario Government;
- the evolution of the MNO Registry into an objectively verifiable system that identifies Métis rights-holders as well as formal negotiations with the Federal Government on Métis claims and self-government, including the signing of the Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement in June 2019, the Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Implementation in February 2023, and the introduction of Métis self-government legislation into Parliament in June 2023.

WHEREAS despite these successes it has become increasingly apparent in recent months that the media and the public-at-large remain largely unaware of Ontario Métis history that is well-documented and has been repeatedly recognized by governments, RCAP, *Powley*, and the courts;

WHEREAS some academics—who hold themselves out to be “experts” on Métis history and identity without any qualifications or objectiveness—are increasingly promoting themselves and fraudulent narratives that the only “real Métis” come from the Red River (despite the Powleys, the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community, other Ontario Métis communities as well as Métis communities in other parts of western Canada not being simply diaspora communities from Manitoba);

WHEREAS due to the lack of any opportunity to engage with First Nations in recent years, misinformation about the MNO, the MNO Registry, Ontario Métis history, Métis rights, and the agreements the MNO has negotiated and signed with other Crown governments have increasingly caused friction in our relationships and previous alliance with First Nations;

WHEREAS the MNO—as a Métis government—that will always continue to work to advance the rights and interests of its citizens and the Métis communities it represents in Ontario has an

obligation to pursue education and information initiatives on Ontario Métis history as well as build relationships and partnerships with First Nations, public institutions, media, Crown governments, and the public-at-large:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2023 MNO Annual General Assembly directs the MNO to consult on, develop, and implement the following strategy if appropriate funding and budgets can be secured and/or identified by the PCMNO:

1. The MNO develop and initiate a multi-year and multi-faceted strategy entitled “**Revitalizing Our Stories, Histories, Alliances and Relationships**” that may include the following components:

a. Telling Our Stories and Histories

- i. Launching a R. v. *Powley*: 20 Year Anniversary video
- ii. Writing and publishing an MNO 30 Year Anniversary Book: Our Story So Far to be released in late 2023 or 2024.
- iii. Host an annual “Telling Our Stories Conference” to bring Métis youth, Elders, community leaders and citizens together to share our history and stories.
- iv. Identifying opportunities and publishing materials that better explain Ontario Métis history and the seven rights-bearing Métis communities the MNO represents in user-friendly, interactive, and readable formats as well as materials that better explain the MNO as a Métis government, the agreements the MNO has with other governments, where Métis land related rights exist (and don’t exist) in Ontario, etc.
- v. Documenting the stories of Elders and Métis families through interviews, videos and mechanisms that preserve Ontario Métis stories for future generations.
- vi. Commission updated historic reports on the Métis communities that the MNO represents that incorporate additional research that has been undertaken as well as the work within the MNO Root Ancestors documents.
- vii. Update the MNO website to include more information on Ontario Métis history, including, the creation and evolution of the MNO.
- viii. Undertake Métis journalism initiatives, including establishing a Métis journalism endowment.

b. Building an Ontario Métis Educational Institute

- i. Work with governments to secure funding for the establishment of a Métis educational institute (i.e., The Powley Institute: A Centre of Excellence for Ontario Métis) like what Métis governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta have in order to research, publish, and promote Ontario Métis history.
- ii. Establishing a working group of advisors and academics, including, Ontario Métis academics and that may include students, writers, Métis community knowledge-holders, to share research and information, advise the MNO on research needs and opportunities, identify and undertake research priorities, etc.
- iii. Work with Ontario educational institutions to identify opportunities to research and promote Ontario Métis history as well as put increased focus on ensuring the Chair of Métis Studies at the University of Ottawa is achieving results for Ontario Métis.

c. Rekindling and Renewing Our Historic Alliances and Relationships with First Nations

- i. Attempt to meet with First Nations leadership in person to discuss this strategy
- ii. Develop and send letters to all Ontario First Nation Chiefs as well as an open letter to First Nation friends, family and kin that explains the current situation from the MNO's perspective and request dialogue or meetings to occur. These letters will also include information about Ontario Métis history, the MNO, Métis rights, etc.
- iii. Work with willing First Nations to enter into potential arrangements that acknowledge where the MNO does not claim land related Métis rights or interests, but where significant populations of Métis may now live as guests in the traditional territories of First Nations.
- iv. Work with willing First Nations to enter into potential arrangements that acknowledge historic alliances, the differences between Métis and First Nations rights in given region and/or mechanisms to work together more broadly or on specific issues (i.e., MNO support for specific Treaty Land Entitlements, Additions to Reserves or other settlements).

d. Defending Métis Youth, Families and Communities

- i. Creation of social media accounts, as distinct from the MNO as a Métis government, to educate on Ontario Métis history as well as respond or 'fact check' misinformation that is being circulated online.
 - ii. Promoting Ontario Métis history, identity, rights and culture to ensure that Métis youth are not bullied or harassed online and to create an environment where Ontario Métis identity and pride is nurtured and flourishes.
 - iii. Writing letters to educational institutions to make sure Métis students feel safe.
2. That any engagement with First Nations in a given region be driven by the Métis community in that region in order to respect historic relationships, protocols and alliance between the Métis and First Nation that are of those territories.
 3. That any communications materials prepared in relation to this resolution, related to a specific Métis community represented by the MNO, be subject to that community's approval.
 4. That the **"Revitalizing Our Stories, Histories, Alliances and Relationships"** strategy be an evolving document, which the MNO will undertake ongoing consultations on with citizens and communities, and that results from the strategy will be guided by the PCMNO and a report on the strategy will be made to every MNO Annual General Assembly going forward.
 5. This document would be translated into French, Michif and Anishinabek.

RESOLVED (AGA230819-03)