## ABOUT THE MNC EXPERT PANEL

The Métis National Council (MNC) Expert Panel was created in 2021 by a unanimous MNC General Assembly resolution. Each MNC Governing Member appointed a trusted Métis Expert to the Expert Panel with proven knowledge in relevant fields such as Métis Nation history, governance, and law. The Expert Panel worked independently, without political interference.

## What was the MNC Expert Panel's mandate?

The Expert Panel was given a two-part mandate by the Métis National Council General Assembly, in which they were tasked with investigating the MNO's asserted historic Métis communities through the lenses of: 1) the Métis Nation's National Definition, and 2) contemporary Métis governance.

#### **Was the Expert Panel independent?**

The MNC Expert Panel was the Métis Nation's chosen pathway to address the issue in a responsible, transparent, and objective manner. For this reason, they were mandated to work independently during the investigative process, free from political direction or interference by the MNC Governing Members that appointed them.

## What evidence did the Expert Panel examine?

During its year-long investigation, the Expert Panel gathered over 50,000 pages of evidence, heard from over 160 witnesses from across the Métis Nation–including elders, youth, academics, and past political leaders–conducted field visits to each of the Métis communities in Ontario, and openly received additional submissions from any other interested party.

## What ethics protocols did the Expert Panel follow?

In keeping with ethical research guidelines when working with Indigenous peoples, the Expert Panel conducted field visits to each of the Métis communities in northern Ontario, and considered input from respected Métis academics and other interested parties.

#### What did the Expert Panel conclude?

Citing overwhelming historical evidence and decades of clear recognition by contemporary Métis Nation leaders from Manitoba westward, the MNC Expert Panel concluded that "[T]hese communities meet the parameters of the National Definition of the Métis Nation, as adopted by the Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta (now the Otipemisiwak Métis Government), Métis Nation British Columbia, and Métis Nation of Ontario in 2002 and are part of the Métis Nation Homeland."





## THREADS OF THE SASH ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The MNC Expert Panel required each examined community to prove their connection to the Métis Nation to meet the National Definition using robust and credible evidence, stating:

"if a community asserts its identity as either Métis or Halfbreed and is part of the Métis Nation, that assertion must be recognized as valid **provided it is credible and evidence-based.**" (pg. 12)

The Expert Panel considered four criteria, referred to as the "Threads of the Sash", in its application of the National Definition. Communities must provide compelling evidence for all four to meet the threshold of being Métis Nation communities.

The framework centres connectedness to the Métis Nation, recognizing that simply being "mixed does not mean Métis" (pg. 13). When woven together, the Threads of the Sash "provide a measure to indicate if these 'communities' and/or individuals fulfill the National Definition and rightfully belong to the contemporary Métis Nation as part of our Homeland." (pg. 115)

The Threads of the Sash are:



ANCESTRY AND KINSHIP with Métis families and to other Métis communities;

POLITICAL ACTION on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective;

COMMON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS that are known markers of Métisness; and RELATION TO THE LAND which show common values and practices.

In reviewing the totality of the evidence through the National Definition and *Threads of the Sash*, the Expert Panel definitively concluded that:

"The Panel finds that these communities meet the parameters of the National Definition of the Métis Nation, as adopted by the Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta (now the Otipemisiwak Métis Government), Métis Nation British Columbia, and Métis Nation of Ontario in 2002 and are part of the Métis Nation Homeland." (pg. 118)

Through the *Threads of the Sash*, the Expert Panel also affirmed that the Métis Communities in Ontario are Métis Nation Communities, not simply mixed-ancestry, non-Status Indians, or settlers:

"Through our work as a Panel, <u>we determine that the communities are neither non-Status Indians nor are they fully assimilated. As the evidence below shows through our Threads of the Sash assessment, we affirm that these communities are part of the Métis Nation Homeland." (pg. 120)</u>



## ABITIBI INLAND HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITY

The Expert Panel determined that the Abitibi Inland Historic Métis Community "meets the threshold and is a member of the Métis Nation" (pg. 164) as per the National Definition and contemporary Métis governance. This is based on the totality of evidence it examined.

The Expert Panel also recognized that, "The historical record establishes a significant regional-

based Métis community in this part of northern Ontario with sufficient evidence of outside ascription and considerable indirect evidence of self-ascription..." (pg. 172)

Evidence cited by the Expert Panel to affirm that the Abitibi Inland Historic Métis Community is a Métis Nation community, using the *Threads of the Sash* assessment, included:

#### **Ancestry & Kinship**

with Métis families and to other Métis communities:

"The collective identity of the Historic Abitibi Inland Métis Community is evident through intermarriages, residency patterns, and political advocacy... there are many lines of kinship connection-strong evidence of collective community identity." (pg. 166)

#### **Political Action**

on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective:

"The negotiations leading up to Treaty 9 considered the issue of Métis inclusion or granting of Halfbreed scrip as was the policy for Métis out west. This is based on their distinction between those mixed-ancestry individuals who followed the Indian mode of life (primarily fishing, hunting, etc.) and those Halfbreeds who were engaged in the fur trade and lived in or near the various posts and forts of the HBC."

(pg. 169-170)

"[A]s a result of being left out, the 'Halfbreeds of Moose Factory' as a collective and independent group sought redress for their claims through a petition in 1905... If there were no distinctive Halfbreed families or communities within the territory, there would have been no need for deciding the question of Halfbreed inclusion." (pg. 170)

#### Social, Cultural & Relation to the Land

"[A]ll available Métis Nation Homeland maps produced by the MNC prior to 2018 have encompassed the AIMC's coastal settlements at Moose Factory and Fort Albany." (pg. 172)

"Red River jigging and fiddle music has long been considered a Métis tradition. It is interesting that Red River fiddle music was played by Jimmy Swain "an old Albany River guide and mail carrier" who guided the 1905 Treaty Commissioners through the territory." (pg. 171)



# GEORGIAN BAY HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITY

The Expert Panel determined that the Georgian Bay Historic Métis Community "clearly meets the threshold and is a member of the Métis Nation" (pg. 145) as per the National Definition and contemporary Métis governance. This is based on the totality of evidence it examined.

The Expert Panel also recognized that "the community strongly satisfies each of the four Sash Thread of distinct Métis ancestry... and cultural

distinctiveness even through the 20th century with kinship connections that run throughout Georgian Bay (e.g., from Moon River to Penetanguishene), Killarney, Sault Ste. Marie, and as far west as Red River and Alberta." (pg. 153)

Evidence cited by the Expert Panel to affirm that the Georgian Bay Historic Métis Community is a Métis Nation community, using the *Threads of the Sash* assessment, included:

#### **Ancestry & Kinship**

with Métis families and to other Métis communities:

"The ancestry and ethnogenesis of the Georgian Bay Métis are documented... This community is connected to the Sault Ste. Marie Historic Métis community and is a component of the Upper Great Lakes Métis Communities." (pg. 147)

#### **Political Action**

#### on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective:

"There are several instances of political action taken by the Métis in Penetanguishene and surrounding areas. There is a history of direct action, of resistance to Crown policies, and of petition-writing from the community members to government authorities around land and annuities (policy of giving annual gifts)."

(pg. 150)

"The Penetanguishene petition is likely the earliest example in a 'long line of Métis communities utilizing petitions as a tool of collective political expression to assert their rights and interests.' This was also the case in other parts of West Central North America, including Sault Ste. Marie, Red River, and Batoche."

(pg. 150)

#### Social, Cultural & Relation to the Land

"The manner that outsiders describe this community, and its relationship to land and water, is clear. This was verified during our visit, when we heard about fish camp locations, as well as locations where the Rougarou resides. In 1862, a report from William Gibbard (Superintendent for Fisheries in Lake Huron and Lake Superior) identified an area between Shawanaga (near present-day Parry Sound) and Matchedash Bay (near present-day Waubushene) as the location fished by 'All Penetanguishene Halfbreeds." (pg. 153)



# THREADS OF THE SASH KILLARNEY HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITY

The Expert Panel determined that the Killarney Historic Métis Community "meets the threshold and is a member of the Métis Nation" (pg. 154) as per the National Definition and contemporary Métis governance. This is based on the totality of evidence it examined.

The Expert Panel also recognized that the community "has a long history and is a hub within the larger Upper Great Lakes Métis regional community" with "its own unique history and

political conflicts with settlers and others. The culture and lifestyle are similar to other Métis communities" (pg. 157) and it is "recognized in historical documentation as a 'small half-breed village." (pg. 156)

Evidence cited by the Expert Panel to affirm that the Killarney Historic Métis Community is a Métis Nation community, using the *Threads of the Sash* assessment, included:

#### **Ancestry & Kinship**

with Métis families and to other Métis communities:

"Similar to the Georgian Bay Historic Métis Community, the community is linked to the arrival of people from Drummond Island following their dispersal after the War of 1812. We see some kinship and social connections extending westward to Sault Ste. Marie and eastward to Georgian Bay." (pg. 156)

#### **Political Action**

on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective:

"[T]here is historical record of 1838 which asserts that there were earnest solicitations from the Half Breeds for the 'same privileges and advantages as the pure Indians.' These are the same requests we see by Métis across the Homeland and, as we have indicated throughout this Report, set the stage for further relations between Métis and the Crown." (pg. 156)

#### Social, Cultural & Relation to the Land

"There is some documentation of fiddle music and jigging... This community, though small, weaves together a similar small number of Sash Threads. On their own, these threads might barely meet the threshold, if at all. However, when the community's connections to Drummond Island, Sault Ste. Marie, and Penetanguishene are considered, the weaving of these threads becomes stronger." (pg. 157)



## MATTAWA/OTTAWA RIVER HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITY

The Expert Panel determined that the Mattawa/ Ottawa River Historic Métis Community "meets the threshold and is a member of the Métis Nation" (pg. 158) as per the National Definition and contemporary Métis governance. This is based on the totality of evidence it examined.

However, the Expert Panel notes that there "are some unresolved concerns around the historical relationship with Mattawa," (pg. 163) and that,

"more work is needed to share the stories and better articulate the Mattawa community's history and its relationship to the Métis Nation and commends the community for the recent work they have undertaken to do so." (pg. 161)

Evidence cited by the Expert Panel to affirm that the Mattawa/Ottawa River Historic Métis Community is a Métis Nation community, using the Threads of the Sash assessment, included:

Ancestry & Kinship with Métis families and to other Métis communities:

"[T]he Mattawa region clearly shows familial ties from Mattawa to other Métis communities in Ontario and across the Homeland. The Panel believes that this mobility amongst communities, and the knowledge mobility that accompanies it, is an important indicator of Métis identity, connection and belonging and that the Mattawa community is representative of this mobile kinship community network." (pg. 160-161)

"Despite the influx of settlers into the Mattawa area beginning in the late 1870s, members of the Mattawa community remained a visible presence and maintained their distinct identity." (pg. 160)

#### **Political Action**

on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective:

"Their commitment to the Catholic Church is seen in their 1865 petition to the Oblate Bishop of Ottawa, for an additional mission. This petition, like the many others sent by Halfbreed/Métis communities, shows collective political action on behalf of the Métis community and their First Nation neighbours." (pg. 161)

#### Social, Cultural & Relation to the Land

"As trading companies began leaving the area, people of mixed ancestry continued to work as independent traders, in the timber industry, guided tourists, and farmed. This group valued Catholicism and practised communal rites such as baptism, confirmation, godparenting, and marriage." (pg. 162)



## NORTHERN LAKE SUPERIOR HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITY

The Expert Panel determined that the Northern Lake Superior Historic Métis Community "clearly meets the threshold and is a member of the Métis Nation" (pg. 132) as per the National Definition and contemporary Métis governance. This is based on the totality of evidence it examined.

The Expert Panel also recognized a regional Métis community in the Upper Great Lakes, of which the Northern Lake Superior Historic Métis Community is an indivisible part, and that "Clearly there were communities of 'Halfbreeds' in this area, characterized by their involvement in fur trade enterprises, their unique amalgamation of religious practices, and their political actions." (pg. 138)

Evidence cited by the Expert Panel to affirm that the Northern Lake Superior Historic Métis Community is a Métis Nation community, using the Threads of the Sash assessment, included:

Ancestry & Kinship
with Métis families and to other Métis communities:

"Fort William also served as the birthplace of Métis leader Nicholas Chatelaine." (pg. 133)

"There are many examples that show how Métis in the Northern Lake Superior Métis Community maintained kinship with other Métis or Halfbreeds in Ontario." (pg. 134)

#### **Political Action**

#### on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective:

"Members of this community also participated in petition alongside Indians, engaging in several 1880's petitions which identified the 'Half-breeds' as separate from 'Indians.'...The issuing of petitions for the benefit of their community are strong indications of collective political action and satisfy this Threads of the Sash requirement, petitioning being a typical Métis response to colonial practices over their communities." (pg. 135)

"[I]t was in the Lake Nipigon region that one of the first modern-day Métis political associations was formed. These organizations are the political precursors to the MNO. In 1965, the Lake Nipigon Métis Association was founded." (pg. 136)

#### Social, Cultural & Relation to the Land

"The communities were distinct from First Nations in many respects, including food, clothing, music, dance, economic pursuits, religious beliefs focused on Catholicism, language (usually multilingual), etc. Historical reports provide extensive evidence of distinct social and cultural practices along with values and customs characteristic of other well-known Métis communities." (pg. 137)



## RAINY RIVER/LAKE OF THE WOODS HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITY

The Expert Panel determined that the Rainy River/ Lake of the Woods Historic Métis Community "clearly meets the threshold and is a member of the Métis Nation" (pg. 124) as per the National Definition and contemporary Métis governance. This is based on the totality of evidence it examined.

The Expert Panel also recognized that "The community is clearly located within the 2018 map and within what would be considered Western

Canada, as per the National Definition," (pg. 125) and "evidence of outside ascription and collective understanding as a separate people from European and First Nation groups... that it seems difficult to imagine anyone arguing otherwise." (pg. 130)

Evidence cited by the Expert Panel to affirm that the Rainy River/Lake of the Woods Historic Métis Community is a Métis Nation community, using the Threads of the Sash assessment, included:

#### **Ancestry & Kinship**

with Métis families and to other Métis communities:

"The Panel affirms that according to both the National Definition and contemporary Métis governance, mixed-ancestry individuals living here most undoubtedly meet the parameters of this component of the Threads of the Sash analysis." (pg. 129)

#### **Political Action**

on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective:

"This is the community that signed an adhesion to Treaty 3. There can be no clearer example of nationhood assertion than to enter into treaty negotiations with another nation on behalf of the Halfbreeds as a people distinct from their First Nation relatives. It may be true that a number of Halfbreeds joined Treaty 3 but a good number decided to remain separate and independent from the reserve (Couchiching) and now form an active and distinct Métis community." (pg. 129)

#### Social, Cultural & Relation to the Land

"They participated in Catholic services when possible like other well-known Métis communities. In addition, the women made maple sugar like other well-known Métis communities, they acted as interpreters as a result of being multilingual, a common characteristic of Métis communities... The historical record is replete with evidence establishing similar characteristics of this community with other Métis communities." (pg. 130)

"Its fur trade lifestyle shows a relationship to land similar to other Métis harvesting communities." (pg. 130)



## THREADS OF THE SASH SAULT STE. MARIE HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITY

The Expert Panel determined that the Sault Ste. Marie Historic Métis Community "clearly meets the threshold and is a member of the Métis Nation" (pg. 138) as per the National Definition and

contemporary Métis governance. This is based on

the totality of evidence it examined.

The Expert Panel also recognized that "the threads of this community... connect across the Upper Great Lakes and the Métis Nation Homeland,"

(pg. 145) situating the regional Métis community in the Upper Great Lakes, of which the Sault Ste. Marie Historic Métis Community is an indivisible part, within the broader Métis Nation's history and contemporary governance.

Evidence cited by the Expert Panel to affirm that the Sault Ste. Marie Historic Métis Community is a Métis Nation community, using the Threads of the Sash assessment, included:

Ancestry & Kinship
with Métis families and to other Métis communities:

"The connections between this community and others in the Upper Great Lakes is indisputable. The ancestors of Steve Powley, for instance, participated in the Mica Bay uprising, which as noted above, the MNC described as one of the Nation's 'crystalizing' events." (pg. 142)

#### **Political Action**

on behalf of a distinct Métis community as a collective:

"In 1838, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) correspondence book recorded that Louis Nolin and Louis Garneau hosted a ball in Sault Ste. Marie, on the Michigan-side of the river. The HBC feared this to be an organizing tactic by Métis in Sault Ste. Marie." (pg. 143)

"[T]he Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816 'sent shockwaves throughout the Upper Great Lakes Community'... Several Sault Ste. Marie Half-breeds reacted to this event by arming themselves (and several Ojbway), planning to travel to Red River to attack Selkirk supporters." (pg. 143)

If the Battle of Seven Oaks sent shockwaves into the Upper Great Lakes, the Mica Bay affair inversely sent shockwaves into Red River." (pg. 143)

#### Social, Cultural & Relation to the Land

"The social and cultural elements of this community are clearly ones that find parallels with other Métis communities." (pg. 144)

"In Sault Ste. Marie, these Threads of the Sash are particularly strong, finding evidence in the historical record. The MNO submission clearly indicates the importance of (maple) sugaring and fishing for Upper Great Lakes Métis and, particularly in Sault Ste. Marie." (pg. 144)

