

PRINCIPLE #23: **ACCOUNTABILITY TO CITIZENS** FAQs



Principle #23(c): Accountability to Citizens

In addition, the Constitution will provide for, among other things: ...

(c) processes, institutions, or self-government structures that support accountability to citizens, such as a citizens assembly, annual gatherings, etc. that provide an opportunity for the Métis Government (and its various self-government structures) to report on progress made and for citizens to directly provide policy guidance or direction to their elected representatives;

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT FOR THIS PRINCIPLE

Métis have a long tradition of gathering in assembly when issues of importance need to be discussed or when key decisions need to be made. Assemblies allow for all citizens to come together and share their views on important issues that affect the whole collective. Assemblies also support direct, participatory, democratic decision-making, which are also hallmarks of many Métis communities.

Today, the MNO continues to host an Annual General Assembly (“AGA”) each year. The AGA supports direct accountability to citizens as MNO citizens can ask questions about the various reports presented, hear directly from their elected officials, and bring motions to set the direction of the MNO for the year ahead.

The AGA is the highest authority in the MNO’s current governance structure, as it is the body that includes all citizens and all voices and perspectives can be heard and considered.

Other Indigenous governments also have traditions of annual gatherings or assemblies that serve similar functions to the MNO’s AGA. Some of these other Indigenous governments have chosen to record the importance of their gatherings in their Constitutions, as a way of preserving this important tradition for future generations and increasing their government’s accountability to citizens.

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS

The [Tlicho Constitution](#)¹ outlines that the Tlicho Government is composed of three institutions, one of which is the Annual Gathering (s. 6.1). The Constitution sets out that:

- 7.1 The Tlicho Assembly shall convene an Annual Gathering of the Tlicho, which shall be held on a rotation basis in each Tlicho community. The purpose of the Annual Gathering is to bring people together to share in the social, political and cultural activities of the Tlicho. Among other things, the following matters shall be attended to at the Annual Gathering:
- (a) an open forum shall be held where Tlicho Citizens may ask questions, make recommendations and provide broad policy directions to the Tlicho Assembly;
 - (b) nominations for the Grand Chief shall be announced in the year of an election;
 - (c) annual reports including financial reports on the activities of Tlicho Government and its institutions shall be presented;
 - (d) debate, consideration and approval of proposed amendments to the Tlicho Agreement [Treaty] or to this Constitution; and
 - (e) consider approval of motions from the Tlicho Assembly [the Tlicho legislature or law-making body].

The [Nisga'a Constitution](#)² also includes a section that provides for "Special Assemblies" on matters of importance to the Nisga'a Nation. Notably, unlike the Tlicho Constitution that requires an annual gathering the Nisga'a Constitution does not require an Assembly be held each year and also does not outline a list of what must be considered at each Assembly:

- 30(1) *Wilp Si'ayuukhl Nisga'a* [Nisga'a legislature or law-making body] may call a Special Assembly of the Nisga'a Nation to consider any matter of importance to the Nisga'a Nation.

...

- (5) Subject to the rules of procedure for Special Assemblies:
- (a) every Nisga'a citizen has the right to attend and speak at a Special Assembly; and
 - (b) every Nisga'a citizen who is at least 18 years of age and attending a Special Assembly has the right to vote at the Special Assembly.
- (6) A Special Assembly may make recommendations to Nisga'a Government regarding a matter in respect of which the Special Assembly was called.
- (7) A recommendation made by a Special Assembly must be considered by Nisga'a Lisims Government or a Nisga'a Village Government, as the case may be, as soon as practicable, after the Special Assembly.

¹A copy of the Tlicho Constitution is available at:

<https://tlicho.ca/sites/default/files/documents/government/tlichoconstitution.pdf>.

²A copy of the Nisga'a Constitution is available at:

<https://www.nisgaanation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Constitution-of-the-Nisgaa-Nation-1998-10-01-1.pdf>.



In addition, many other Indigenous governments have included processes that support direct accountability to citizens, such as requirements to consult with citizens about key issues, rights of citizens to information held by the Indigenous government, or requirements for all-citizen votes on important issues. For example:

- the [Tla'amin Constitution](#)³ outlines that "The Tla'amin Government or a Tla'amin Public Institution may not enter into a transaction that results or could result in the sale or lease of a significant parcel of Tla'amin Lands, unless that transaction is approved in advance by a majority of Tla'amin Citizens who vote in a referendum that is held in accordance with a law made by the Tla'amin Government" (s. 23).
- The draft [Heiltsuk Constitution](#)⁴ includes that "Subject to reasonable limits prescribed by Heiltsuk law . . . every Heiltsuk citizen has . . . the right to be informed and consulted, publicly express views and opinions and access public information, including Heiltsuk legislation, in relation to internal Heiltsuk Nation affairs" (s. 8(b)(iv)).

WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW / EXISTING MNO EXAMPLES

As outlined above, the MNO already includes an Annual General Assembly as a key part of its governance structures and processes.

The MNO AGA, as the highest decision-making body within the MNO's governance structure, is open to all citizens and allows for all citizens to hear, vote on, and shape the priorities of their Métis Government.

The MNO also has also put in place processes that allow for citizens to virtually attend and observe open meetings of the Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario ("PCMNO"), and written summaries of PCMNO meetings are posted online. These support transparency and accountability to citizens about how the MNO's government operates and how decisions are made.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you believe that the Annual General Assembly should be included in the MNO Constitution, to continue providing direct, accountable participation of citizens in governance matters?
 - o Should it continue to be called an "Annual General Assembly" or is there another name that should be used?
- Are province-wide plebiscites or all-citizen votes another way that the MNO can ensure all citizens, no matter where they live, have a say over important decisions?
- What other processes would support the Métis Government's accountability to citizens? (e.g., developing an access to information law, having virtual participation in assemblies or meetings (where possible), etc.)

³A copy of the Tla'amin Constitution is available at:

<https://www.tlaaminnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Tlaamin-Constitution-April-5-2016-consolidation.pdf>.

⁴A copy of the draft Heiltsuk Constitution is available at:

<https://www.heiltsuknation.ca/heiltsuk-constitution>.



- Is it important that personal information (e.g., citizenship info), private or other sensitive and confidential information is kept protected by the Métis Government?
- What processes would support regional or local governance structures being accountable to citizens in their areas?