

PRINCIPLE #23: **INCLUDING CITIZENS WITH DISTINCT PERSPECTIVES AS PART OF GOOD GOVERNANCE**

FAQs

Principle # 23 (e): Including Citizens with Distinct Perspectives as part of Good Governance

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

(e) processes, institutions, or self-government structures that support inclusion and participation of all citizens, including those with different perspectives (e.g., Elders, Senators, youth, women, men, two spirit and LGBTQIA+, veterans, citizens with disabilities, etc.);

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT FOR THIS PRINCIPLE

Inclusive practices that support all citizens - including those with different perspectives such as Elders, Senators, youth, women, men, two spirit and LGBTQIA+, veterans, citizens with disabilities, etc. - being able to participate in and shape their government is a hallmark of good governance. It helps ensure that the government is able to meaningfully represent all its citizens, not only those that are most vocal or those who have the same background, perspectives, or experiences as whichever leaders may be elected from time to time.

Other Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments have adopted various practices to try and advance the goal of including different perspectives in governance. Some governments have chosen to adopt particular positions or governance structures that are responsible for representing distinct perspectives (e.g., having a Youth Councilor or a Women's Council). Other governments have chosen to make consideration of different perspectives mandatory for all elected leaders, or required as part of all key decisions (e.g., the Government of Canada requires all Treasury Board funding decisions to include a Gender-Base + Analysis for how the funding will support or include women and gender diverse individuals).

The MNO has a long history of working to include different perspectives and voices within and as a part of its governance processes. For example, among other things, the MNO has established a Youth Council, a Women's Council, a Veterans Council, and a Two Spirit LGBTQ+ Council. A number of MNO Chartered Community Councils also have established specific positions for Senators, women and youth representatives.

While there is always room for improvement, a Constitution provides the opportunity for the MNO, the Métis communities in Ontario, and MNO citizens to re-envision how to ensure that the future Métis Government continues to include, value, and respect these different perspectives as part of its governance and decision-making in the future.

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS

The [Tlicho Constitution](#)¹ is an example of an Indigenous constitution that does not include any separate structures or positions for different perspectives of its citizens. Instead, it places the responsibility on the Tlicho Government as a whole to “exercise all powers and authority consistent with the Constitution” which provides that the government “shall...allow for the full and free expression and participation of all Tlicho” (s.5.2(d)).

The [Nisga'a Constitution](#)² includes various sections that recognize the important role that Elders have within their Nation, including the responsibilities of Elders in guiding the government in light of Nisga'a traditional laws, values, and practices:

3. *Simgigat, Sigidimhaanak* [individuals who are Nisga'a chiefs and Nisga'a matriarchs, respectively, in accordance with the traditional laws and practices of the Nisga'a Nation], and respected Nisga'a elders:
- (a) nurture the spirit of the Nisga'a Nation;
 - (b) provide guidance to interpretation of the Ayuuk [the traditional laws and practices of the Nisga'a Nation];
 - (c) advise Nisga'a Government on matters relating to the traditional values of the Nisga'a Nation, through the Council of Elders provided for in this Constitution; and
 - (d) contribute to the unity of the Nisga'a Nation, and the harmony of individuals and families within the Nisga'a Nation, during times of personal or national dispute.

Because of this important responsibility, the Nisga'a Constitution establishes an Elders Council that is made up of Elders who are chosen and appointed by the Nisga'a Lisims Government and are required to meet when called upon to provide advice to the government (s.27). The Nisga'a Constitution outlines the responsibilities of the Elders Council such as providing advice on constitutional amendments, resolving disputes, Nisga'a culture, assisting with filling vacancies in Nisga'a Village Government positions, and advising on Nisga'a law and traditions, etc.

In addition, the Nisga'a Constitution outlines that the Nisga'a Lisims Government Executive includes the Chairperson of the Council of Elders (s.36 (a)) who is responsible for presiding at meetings of the Council of Elders “and is the liaison between the Council of Elders and the Nisga'a Lisims Government Executive” (s.39 (4)). This reflects the important principle that roles and positions set out in a Constitution should have corresponding responsibilities.

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>.



The [Tla'amin Constitution](#)³ outlines the ability for the Tla'amin Government develop advisory bodies that are responsible for providing advice on various interests to the government. While not specifically limited to only certain interests or perspectives (e.g., youth, women, Elders, etc.) this provides flexibility for the Tla'amin Government to hear from different viewpoints, as needed:

46. The Tla'amin Government may establish one or more community advisory bodies to provide input into the development of Tla'amin Law and policy direction.
47. Advisory bodies will be composed of Tla'amin Citizens and other individuals who represent various interests relevant to the Tla'amin Nation, as determined from time to time at a Tla'amin General Assembly or by the Tla'amin Government.

The draft [Heiltsuk Constitution](#)⁴ is another example of an Indigenous government that has taken various steps to include distinct perspective within its governance structures. For example, they have included the following requirement regarding youth participation:

15. The Heiltsuk government will, through the enactment of legislation, establish governance processes and procedures for each of the Heiltsuk governing institutions, including consideration for fair and reasonable representation for youth in governance.

The Heiltsuk Constitution also includes recognition of the important role of women and matriarchs in their Nation and establishes the "*Wumaqs du Mnuyaqs Council*" as one of their governing institutions (s. 13). This Council has the constitutional responsibility to "act in a political advisory role to the Joint Leadership Assembly" (s. 25(3)). Specifically, the Heiltsuk Constitution outlines the various responsibilities of the Women's Council as a part of Heiltsuk governance:

32. The *Wumaqs du Mnuyaqs* [a Heiltsuk person of high rank and knowledge who identifies as a women or a Heiltsuk person who is a sister or friend of a Heiltsuk person who identifies as a women] Council will advise the Joint Leadership Assembly and, as requested, other governing institutions, including to:
 - (a) support, enhance and uphold *Hailzaqvla* [the language of the Heiltsuk Nation] and Heiltsuk culture and tradition to promote a strong sense of Heiltsuk identity, place, and pride;
 - (b) foster collaborative governance that enhances social, cultural, educational, judicial, economic and familial well-being in the Heiltsuk Nation;
 - (c) uphold and support Heiltsuk values and morals to promote health and wellness within Heiltsuk society and the *wazw:wuisaxv* [the territory of the Heiltsuk Nation];
 - (d) the promotion of healthy lifestyles that include emotional, mental, physical and spiritual balance;
 - (e) the resolution of disputes within the Heiltsuk government;
 - (f) uphold *gvilas* [ancestral Heiltsuk governing authority over all matters related to the territory of the Heiltsuk Nation and Heiltsuk people], including the articulation, interpretation and application of *gvilas*;

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>.



- (g) collaboration between governing institutions and with social service agencies, to support and ensure the safety and well-being of children, youth and women in prevention of family violence and neglect; and
- (h) collaboration between governing institutions to articulate and develop Heiltsuk legislation to protect women, children, youth, and all those at risk.

In addition, the Heiltsuk Constitution does not only rely on a Women's Council for ensuring that women's perspectives are included in their governance. It outlines the requirement that the entire Heiltsuk Government "honour, endorse and practice the principles of the Heiltsuk Women's Declaration" which is attached to their Constitution as an appendix (s. 29).

The [Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution](#)⁵ also includes specific positions for a Youth Representative and a Women's Representative on the provincial Citizens Council of their government (s. 16.1). Similar to the examples of other Indigenous Constitutions (outlined above), the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution outlines specific responsibilities of each of these positions, including consulting with citizens who are youth or women (respective) about various matters and bring those views and perspectives back to the Métis Government (s. 16.5, 16.6, and 16.23).

Notably, while these other Indigenous governments have all worked to include different perspectives at the provincial or national level of their government, none of these examples specifically address requirements for including various perspectives as part of local or regional governance structures. An example of an Indigenous government wishing to build youth participation into their governance from the ground-up is the Gila River Indian Community in the United States of America. The youth in their community developed processes that paired youth with tribal government officials in their community so that youth could gain a close-up view of self-government in action and prepare future generations of leaders.

WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW / EXISTING MNO EXAMPLES

As noted above, the MNO has established a number of advisory councils which represent distinct interests and perspectives within the MNO, including a Women's Council, Youth Council, Veterans' Council and Two-Spirit LGBTQ+ Council. The Youth Council President sits on the Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario ("PCMNO") and, similar to Regional Councilors or the President, is part of the provincial-governing body of the MNO.

Each MNO Chartered Community Council has an elected position reserved for a Senator. The Senators from all MNO Chartered Community Councils meet annually and once every four years (at the same time as the PCMNO elections) they choose four Senators who sit on PCMNO, including on Senator who also serves on the MNO Executive.

⁵A copy of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's Constitution is available at:

https://albertametis.com/app/uploads/2023/09/Otipemisiwak_Metis_Government_Constitution.pdf.



In addition, the MNO recently established provincial secretary roles under section 14 of the MNO Secretariat Bylaws that provide various PCMNO Councilors with specific responsibilities. To date, there is a provincial secretary portfolio for Seniors and liaison portfolios for each of the MNO's advisory Councils, including the Veterans Council, the Women's Council, the Youth Council, and the Two-Spirit LGBTQ+ Council.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the important Métis traditions about having different roles or perspectives included in governance? (e.g., Métis traditions for roles that youth, women, knowledge-holders, etc. fulfill)
- How can these traditional roles and responsibilities be included in the MNO Constitution? (e.g., including ways for training youth in governance positions, for consulting with knowledge-holders about various issues, etc.)
- Should the MNO Constitution include a requirement that all elected officials and all governance structures work to include different perspectives as a part of their responsibilities?
 - o For example, by including a declaration similar to the Heilsuk Nation that all government officials and structures are required to uphold?
 - o Or by requiring consultation with different groups or perspectives as part of decision-making, similar to the requirement to consult with women and youth in the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution?
- Should the MNO Constitution include specific roles within the provincial, regional, or local governance structures for certain perspectives? (e.g., a women's representative, a youth representative, etc.)
 - o If so, what are the responsibilities of these different positions? Are these also responsibilities of other elected officials? How can this avoid duplicative or overlapping responsibilities so people have a clear understanding of their mandate and role?
 - o Should this be at all levels of the government, or only some (e.g., provincial but not local)?
- Should Métis citizens who have distinct perspectives have the ability to gather and discuss specific issues and solutions as a group? (e.g., through having an annual gathering, advisory group, or other institutions)
 - o How can these discussions best be shared with and inform the Métis Government? (e.g., having a requirement that these groups report back to the Métis Government? Having a liaison to report back and share perspectives? Etc.)
- How can the MNO Constitution ensure that any structure (e.g., Council) or representative with the responsibility to represent certain perspectives (e.g., women, youth, two-spirit, etc.) is accurately informing themselves of the views of those citizens?
 - o For example, required meetings with the constituency to bring their views forward prior to decisions/ discussions, regular information sharing, etc.