

Towards a Métis Nation of Ontario Constitution



# Statement of Principles

Métis Nation  
of Ontario   
—SELF-GOVERNMENT—



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# Background & Context for this Statement of Principles

*For more than two centuries, the Métis communities that emerged in areas surrounding the Upper Great Lakes and in what is now known as northern Ontario have asserted themselves as distinct Indigenous communities. Our communities have struggled, along with other Métis communities in what is now western Canada, to be recognized as distinct Indigenous communities by the Canadian state and to reconcile their unique identities, culture, and rights with Canadian law.*

## THE CREATION OF THE MNO AS A MÉTIS GOVERNMENT

As a part of this ongoing struggle, a distinct group of Ontario Métis came together in 1993 to form the Métis Nation of Ontario (“MNO”) as a province-wide, democratic, and Métis-specific government. They adopted a [Statement of Prime Purpose](#) and [incorporated a Secretariat](#) under Ontario law to act as the legal arm of their government until they are able to negotiate and implement a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship and agreement with Canada that is protected by [section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982](#) (“Section 35”).

Since 1993, this distinct group of Métis in Ontario have continued to develop and evolve the MNO into a democratic and accountable Métis government anchored on the collectively-held rights, interests, and claims of the Métis Communities in Ontario it represents, the rights of all Indigenous peoples recognized in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), and the promise of Section 35 to the Métis peoples.



## POWLEY CASE CONFIRMS THE EXISTENCE OF MÉTIS COMMUNITIES AND MÉTIS RIGHTS IN ONTARIO

As a part of this history, the MNO supported Steve and Roddy Powley—two MNO citizens and Métis harvesters—in their fight against the Government of Ontario (“Ontario”) in order to ultimately prove before all levels of court in Ontario and at the Supreme Court of Canada that the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community—as a part of the Great Lake Métis—possesses a Métis right protected by Section 35.

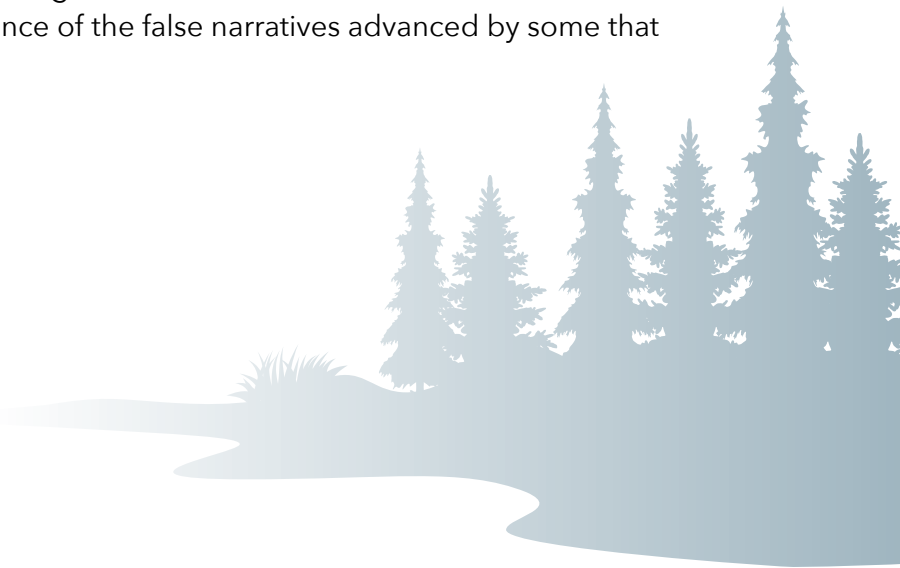
Prior to the *Powley* case, Ontario denied the very existence of any Métis people, Métis communities, or Métis rights in the province. In [\*R. v. Powley\*](#), the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously rejected well-entrenched Métis denialism and refused to accept the position that the only Métis come from the Red River in Manitoba. In rejecting these flawed arguments, the Supreme Court of Canada concluded:

*Members of the Métis community in and around Sault Ste. Marie have an aboriginal right to hunt for food under s. 35(1). This is determined by their fulfillment of the requirements set out in Van der Peet, modified to fit the distinctive purpose of s. 35 in protecting the Métis.*

In *Powley*, the Supreme Court of Canada also affirmed the “status of Métis people as full-fledged rights-bearers” and “the inclusion of the Métis in s. 35 is based on a commitment to recognizing the Métis and enhancing their survival as distinctive communities.”

Since 2003, *Powley* has been celebrated and relied upon by other Métis communities and governments from Ontario westward in order to prove and negotiate Métis Section 35 rights.

Today, *Powley* remains the only Supreme Court of Canada decision that has recognized a Métis community possesses a Section 35 right. As the seminal case on Métis Section 35 rights, *Powley* continues to stand in defiance of the false narratives advanced by some that the only “Métis” are the Red River Métis.





## MNO'S SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS AND AGREEMENTS WITH ONTARIO AND CANADA

Based on the facts of history, the *Powley* case, and other court decisions dealing with Métis rights, interests, and claims, the MNO has negotiated two harvesting agreements with Ontario in [2004](#) and in [2018](#).

In 2015, the Ontario legislature unanimously passed the [Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act](#) that recognizes the MNO's unique province-wide governance structure. This same year, the MNO also signed a [Consultation Agreement](#) with the Government of Canada ("Canada").

In 2017, after a decade of collaborative negotiations, the MNO reached [common understandings with Ontario](#) that seven historic Métis communities emerged in the Upper Great Lakes region or in northern Ontario, including the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community, prior to effective Crown control in those regions. This same year, the MNO signed a [Framework Agreement](#) with Ontario and Canada that committed to formal negotiations, including about Métis self-government.

In 2019, the MNO and Canada signed a [Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement](#) that recognized the Métis Communities Represented by the MNO possess the inherent right to self-government protected by Section 35.

In 2023, the MNO and Canada signed a [Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement](#) ("2023 Self-Government Agreement"). Based on this agreement, the MNO is now federally recognized as a Métis government that represents a Métis collectivity that holds Section 35 rights. The 2023 Self-Government Agreement also commits Canada to negotiating a self-government treaty with the MNO that will be constitutionally protected under Section 35.

## **MNO CONSTITUTION: The Next Step in MNO's Self-Government Journey**

As a part of its ongoing self-government journey, MNO citizens, the Métis Communities in Ontario, and successive MNO Annual General Assemblies have called for the MNO to develop and adopt a Constitution—as Métis law—instead of continuing to rely on corporate bylaws and related documents.

In addition, in order to ultimately implement a self-government treaty with Canada, the MNO is required to adopt a Constitution that addresses the requirements in the MNO's 2023 Self-Government Agreement with Canada, which requires a Constitution that addresses the following matters:

- the definition of, and requirements for being, a Citizen;
- the Governance Structures of the Métis Government that represent the Métis Communities Represented by the MNO at the local and regional levels;
- the processes for leadership selection;
- financial management and accountability of the Métis Government to its Citizens;
- enactment and amendment procedures for Métis Government Laws;
- the delegation of Jurisdiction and Authority to Governance Structures;
- internal appeal and redress mechanisms; and
- amending processes for the Constitution.

As a first step in the development of its Constitution, the MNO undertook a [Registry Review](#) process to ensure all of its citizens are Métis rights-holders and to provide clarity as to “who” the MNO represents for the purposes of a Constitution.

The Registry Review process was initiated in 2017 and concluded in 2023 following a province-wide plebiscite and an MNO Special Assembly approving amendments to the MNO Bylaws to allow for the removal of citizens from the MNO Registry whose files do not meet current citizenship requirements. Through this process, over 6,000 citizens were removed from the MNO Registry following a transparent and fair appeals process being undertaken.

While the Registry Review was ongoing, the MNO has built the capacity of its Self-Government Branch, negotiated an Interim Fiscal Financing Agreement with Canada, and signed Regional Implementation Agreements (“RIA”) and developed RIA Workplans with each MNO Region that include commitments for how a Constitution will be developed, consulted on, and ultimately ratified. Moreover, the MNO has developed a plan to ensure a province-wide consultation process on the development of a Constitution (the “MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan”).



## MNO SELF-GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan supports the MNO's commitment that citizens and the Métis communities represented by the MNO must be engaged throughout the Constitution development. It aims to empower all citizens to learn about the MNO and Métis self-government and build a Constitution that they can believe in, support, and rely on into the future.

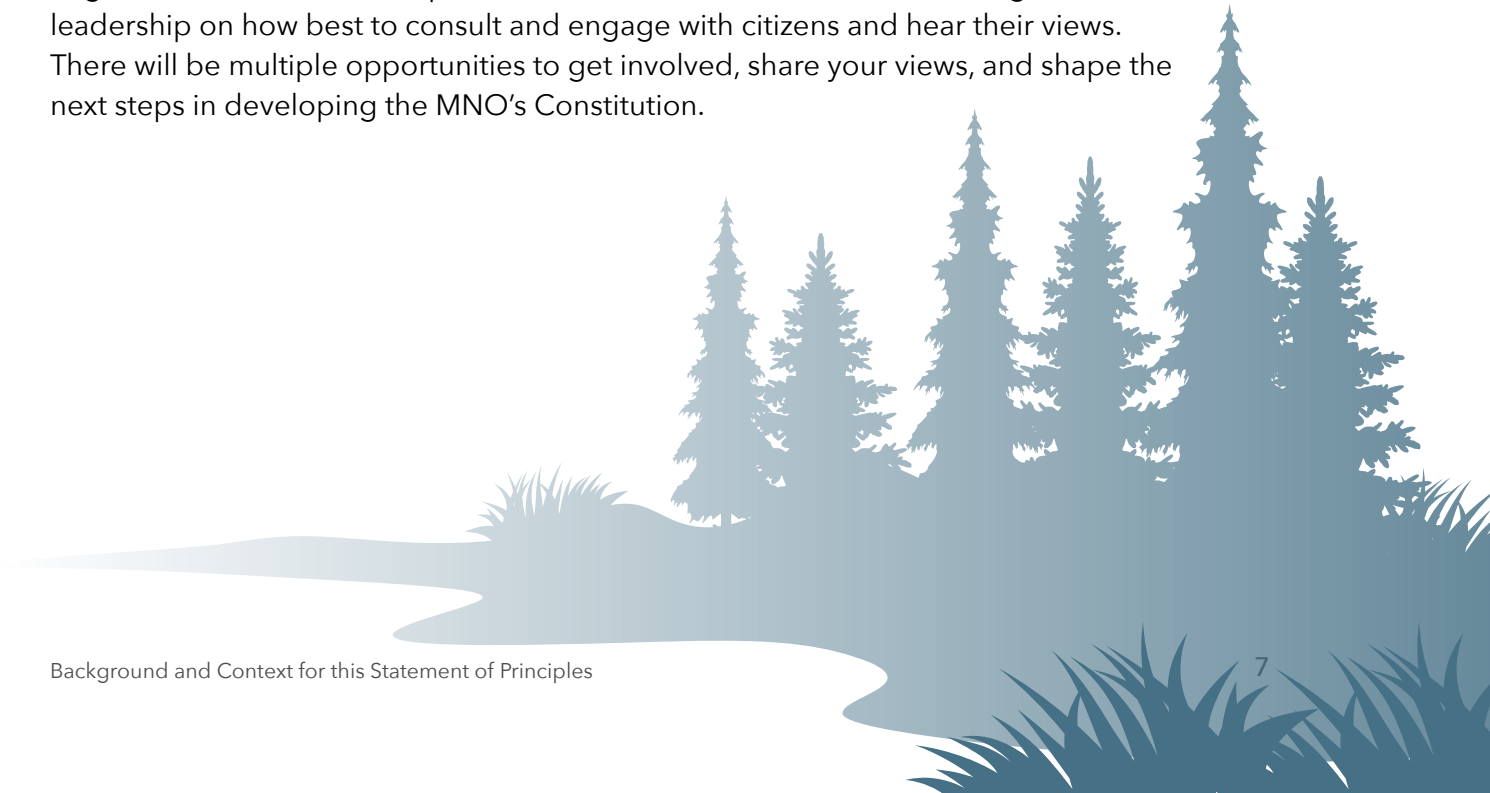
The Plan includes 5 Streams:

- i) Understanding Métis Self-Government;**
- ii) Embracing Métis Values and Guiding Principles;**
- iii) Mapping Our Future;**
- iv) Drafting Our Constitution; and**
- v) Other Matters.**

Throughout 2024, MNO citizens were provided opportunities through Stream 1 to identify the foundational principles and values of the Métis in Ontario and provide feedback about what self-government means to them and what is important for the MNO's future Constitution. Based on these consultations, this Statement of Principles for Consultation on an MNO Constitution ("Statement of Principles") was developed.

In 2025, the MNO is now engaging in the next step in its self-government journey by initiating Streams 2 and 3 and beginning province-wide consultations on this Statement of Principles.

In addition, Regional specific and supplemental engagement will be undertaken by MNO Regions, consistent with the processes in the RIA and the direction of Regional leadership on how best to consult and engage with citizens and hear their views. There will be multiple opportunities to get involved, share your views, and shape the next steps in developing the MNO's Constitution.



## WHAT IS THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES?

This Statement of Principles has been developed based on the MNO's history, evolution, its current governance structures, as well as feedback received from MNO citizens and elected leadership to date.

It is intended to help guide the MNO, Métis communities in Ontario, and MNO citizens as they work towards drafting an MNO Constitution.

### What is a Constitution?

A constitution is a document that outlines the fundamental values and principles—often referred to as the supreme law—by which a Nation or People is organized and governed.

A constitution answers the key questions, such as “who are our people”, “how do we decide things”, “what our government look like”, and “how do we take care of one another?”

A constitution is meant to reflect the people and therefore no two constitutions are the same. Each People, Nation, and Government is unique and therefore each of their constitutions will also be different. The MNO's Constitution will reflect us, the Métis in Ontario, and our shared understandings of what our Métis Government will do for our collective well-being.

### Nothing in this Statement of Principles is written in stone or has been pre-determined.

The Statement of Principles is now in the hands of all citizens and the Métis Communities in Ontario. It has been developed to help facilitate extensive engagement, consultations, debate, and dialogue throughout the MNO on where there is agreement or disagreement on what is in the document so far, as well as what is missing or needs more discussion. It is also expected that some aspects of the document may be contentious and require further consultation.

Importantly, this Statement of Principles does not change anything about the MNO's current governance structures (e.g., PCMNO, MNO Chartered Community Councils, advisory bodies, etc.), policies (e.g., Registry policy, Harvesting policy, etc.), or agreements (e.g., Harvesting Agreement, Regional Consultation Protocols, Self-Government Agreements, etc.) in any way. It is a document to help guide discussion about what future changes might be included in the Constitution, but this Statement of Principles is designed to be the beginning of that discussion, not the end.

**The consultation process on this Statement of Principles will not be rushed.**

Based on the engagement and consultation process that will be undertaken throughout 2025 on the Statement of Principles, the MNO will gauge whether further consultations are required or whether a draft Constitution can be developed and brought out for consultations in 2026.

At the same time, the MNO continues to advance its negotiations with Canada on reaching a self-government treaty with the federal Crown as well as ensuring other aspects of the MNO's 2019 and 2023 self-government agreements with Canada are fulfilled.

**Like the Registry Review process that took many years to complete, the process to arrive at a Constitution may take a similar amount of time.**

Future consultations will be informed by the reactions and feedback received on the Statement of Principles. Following the consultation process on the Statement of Principles, the feedback on the document will be used to inform the drafting of an MNO Constitution.

Additional consultation on specific issues identified through the Statement of Principles consultation process may be required, and is planned as a part of Streams 3, 4, and 5 of the MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan.

Regardless of the ultimate consultations timelines on the Statement of Principles, it is important to emphasize that the MNO has committed to undertaking a province-wide vote—where all MNO citizens who are age 16 years or over—will have their say as to whether the MNO ratifies a future draft Constitution.

**At the end of the day, whether the MNO ultimately adopts a Constitution will be in the hands of all of its citizens and the Métis Communities in Ontario, where it should be.**



# Next Steps and Engagement

The ideas and feedback gathered through Streams 2 and 3 on this **Statement of Principles** will shape our future Constitution. All MNO citizens are welcome to join conversations, share ideas, ask questions, and work together.

We will learn and work together to create solutions guided by our Métis values and traditions.



## How to Get Involved

There are plenty of ways to get involved and share your views about Métis self-government and feedback on the Statement of Principles. Whether it's through mail, the Métis Voyageur, Town-Halls, email, or social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, @ X, or the MNO website, we've got you covered.

To find out more about the next engagement session, please contact your Regional Councillor, Council leadership, Regional Manager, or be in touch with the MNO Self-Government team at:

**Email:** [Self.Government@metisnation.org](mailto:Self.Government@metisnation.org)

**Web:** [www.metisnation.org/Self-Government](http://www.metisnation.org/Self-Government)

**Mail:** **Métis Self-Government**  
**Suite 1100, 66 Slater Street,**  
**Ottawa, ON**  
**K1P 5H1**

**Call:** **1-800-263-4889 Ext. 7**

## Moving Forward Together

This is just the beginning. The ideas and responses shared in consultation about this Statement of Principles will guide the next steps in our evolution as a Métis government that reflects the voices, values, and hopes of MNO citizens and the Métis communities in Ontario. Together, we are building a stronger future for generations to come.



# Statement of Principles

## Where We Got Our Name

*The paternal ancestors of the Métis were the former employees of the Hudson Bay and Northwest Fur Companies, and their maternal ancestors were Indian women of the various tribes. The French word “Métis” is derived from the Latin participle mixtus, which means “mixed” in French “mele;” it expresses well the idea that is sought to be conveyed. ... However appropriate the corresponding English expression “Halfbreed” might have been for the first generation of the mixture of blood, now that European blood and Indian blood are mixed in every degree, it is no longer general enough. The French word “Métis” expresses the idea of this mixture in the most satisfactory manner possible, and thus becomes a proper race name. Why should we care to what degree exactly of mixture we possess European blood and Indian blood? If we feel ever so little gratitude and filial love toward one or the other, do they not constrain us to say: “we are Métis!”*

– Louis Riel, 1885



## Who We Are As a People

We, the Métis, are one of the Indigenous peoples of North America;

We are the descendants of the unions between First Nations women—Anishinaabe, Cree, Assiniboine, Dene—and European men—voyageurs, fur traders, and freemen—but we cannot be reduced to a mere mixing of blood lines and ancestries;

Over generations, these unions gave birth to a new Indigenous people—the Métis. As a people, we are comprised of interrelated and interconnected Métis communities located throughout the historic North-West, including within what is now known as Ontario.

We are a people born of the land and our existence is rooted in love, kinship, freedom, trade, resistance, resilience, and collective action. We share a history, kinship, spirituality, values, language, laws, traditions, music, dance, art, customs, and have our own territories throughout the North-West;

Within what is now known as Ontario, our communities emerged in regions surrounding the Upper Great Lakes as well as along strategic waterways and fur trade routes located in northern Ontario. Our communities were—and remain—interconnected to each other as well as to other Métis communities and collectivities that make up the Métis people today;

Our communities were comprised of families and kin who were often identified as—and identified themselves as—Halfbreeds, Métis, métisse, Bois-Brûlé, chicot. Our Métis ancestors asserted themselves as collectives and communities with their own unique rights and interests, but were often faced with Crown indifference, disrespect, and denial (Figure 1);

Today, our Métis Communities in Ontario continue to exist with our own stories, collective identities, language, culture, and way of life that is all our own. What distinguishes us from our First Nation and European forebearers is that we identify with a history, culture, and way of life that is distinctly Métis;



**Figure 1. George McPherson and Family**

Our unique identity is grounded on the history of our people and communities emerging, forging alliances, and standing up for our rights and interests as Métis, including:

- our historic relationships and alliances with other Indigenous peoples in Ontario as well as our connections to Métis communities located further westward (Figure 2);



**Figure 2. Transfer of the Michif Song in Belcourt North Dakota, 2004**

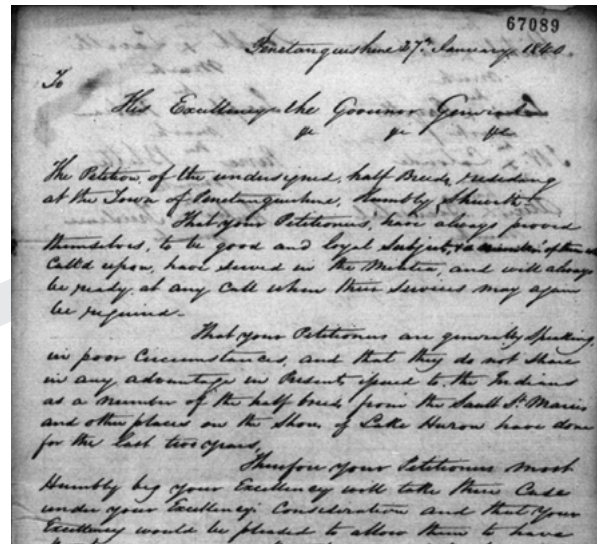
- our diplomatic relations with the British Crown through trade and present giving;
- our participation in the War of 1812 and subsequent forced relocation from Drummond Island in 1828 due to the imposition of the international border;
- our participation—with our Anishinaabe kin—in the events at Mica Bay in 1849 that ultimately led to the negotiation of the Robinson Huron and Superior Treaties with the Anishinaabe; and

- our advocacy, petitioning, and collective assertions as historic treaty-making with other Indigenous peoples continued in what is now northern Ontario, including Treaty 3 and Treaty 9 and their related adhesions (Figure 3);

For the most part, the Crown, through its various representatives and governments, refused to recognize, deal with us, or respect us as a distinct Indigenous people and communities. This denial and disrespect towards our inherent, collective, and pre-existing rights and interests—as Métis—underpins our challenging relationship with Canada and Ontario and requires reconciliation;

Where solemn promises were made to our ancestors by the Crown with respect to protecting our rights, interests, or unique land interests, those commitments were breached or ignored by successive governments. These broken promises include, among others: the commitment made by Treaty Commissioner Robinson in 1850 to our Métis ancestors at Sault Ste. Marie for the “free & full possession of their lands”; the adhesion to Treaty 3 signed with the Halfbreeds of Rainy Lake and River in 1875; and Canada’s constitutional duties and obligations for just settlement with our communities that are rooted on the honour of the Crown, the *Royal Proclamation, 1763*, and s. 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, that require redress and restitution (Figure 4);

Even in the face of Crown denial and disrespect as well as Canada’s colonial and assimilationist policies, our citizens and communities have relied on each other, organized, and done whatever they could to protect and preserve our distinct existence as Métis. Caught between two larger identities and cultures, we have struggled for more than two centuries for the recognition of our own unique identity, culture, and governance, as well as reconciliation with the Canadian state;



**Figure 3. Penetanguishene  
Petition, 1840**



**Figure 4. Métis signatures on  
Halfbreed Adhesion, 1875**



Our struggle has included protecting our unique stories, identities, language, and cultures by coming together—as the Métis in Ontario—to build a strong, democratic, and federated Métis government—the Métis Nation of Ontario—for the purpose of negotiating a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with the Crown and ensuring the ongoing survival of the Métis Communities in Ontario and the empowerment of our citizens;

Our collective efforts have included organizing politically in the 1960s to advance our rights, including fighting alongside other Indigenous peoples for the constitutional protection of Indigenous rights. In 1982, we, along with other Métis communities and collectivities, were successful in securing our inclusion in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* as well as the constitutional protection of existing “aboriginal” and “treaty” rights. For the first time, we—as Métis—were acknowledged as a distinct rights-holding Indigenous people;

In the early 1990s, we participated through the Métis National Council in the negotiation of the Métis Nation Accord as a part of the Charlottetown Accord constitutional process. Following the rejection of the Charlottetown Accord, Crown governments returned to their long-standing denial of our unique rights, interests, and claims, which led to our ‘hunt for justice’ in the courts (Figure 5);



Figure 5. Métis Nation Accord, 1992

In 1993, we began to organize as a distinct Métis collectivity in Ontario that is comprised of the descendants of the historic Métis communities that emerged in Ontario as well as other citizens of the Métis Nation who now make Ontario home. We adopted a Statement of Prime Purpose and established the Métis Nation of Ontario as our Métis government;

Since that time, we have developed and evolved our democratic, inclusive, accountable, and transparent Métis government that is grounded on the inherent and constitutional rights of the Métis Communities in Ontario. Our government was founded on protecting and advancing Métis rights and self-government. We have developed advisory councils that recognize the important role that Senators, youth, women, two spirit and LGBTQIA+, and veterans have as part of our government;

We have built an objectively verifiable registry that identifies our citizens who are the descendants of the historic Métis Communities that emerged in Ontario as well as other citizens of the Métis Nation who now live in Ontario and willingly chose our government to represent them;

We have built democratic and accountable self-government structures at the local, regional, and provincial levels to represent the unique rights, needs, and interests of the Métis Communities in Ontario as well as for all of our citizens, wherever they live throughout Ontario;

We have built a province-wide program and service delivery system to provide social, economic, and cultural supports to the Métis Communities in Ontario as well as to our citizens who live in Ontario but who may live outside of the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario;

We have advanced Métis rights by supporting Steve and Roddy Powley as members of the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community. In 2003, in *R. v. Powley*, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the “status of Métis people as full-fledged rights-bearers”, the “inclusion of the Métis in s. 35 is based on a commitment to recognizing the Métis and enhancing their survival as distinctive communities”, and that the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community’s “aboriginal right to hunt for food protected under s. 35” flows from “the special aboriginal relationship to the land” (Figure 6);



**Figure 6. Steve Powley**





**Figure 7. Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement signing, 2019**

We have negotiated various arrangements with Canada and Ontario that recognize our communities, our rights, our outstanding claims, our need for reconciliation, as well as our unique self-government, including two self-government agreements with Canada as well as the *Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act* that the Ontario legislature passed in 2015 (Figure 7);

We have been mandated by the Métis Communities in Ontario and our citizens—as the Métis in Ontario—to negotiate a nation-to-nation, government-to-government treaty with the Crown that recognizes our inherent right to self-government and that is protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*;

Now, as the Métis in Ontario, we have come together to declare as follows:



## Foundational and Guiding Principles and Values

1. The following are the foundational and guiding principles and values of the Métis in Ontario that will inform the development of our Constitution and guide the decision-making of our future Métis Government:

- **Respect and Our Relationship to the Land** – We respect each other, the land, water, air, and all living things around us, including other Indigenous peoples and other governments, and keeping our agreements and promises with them.
- **Love and Kindness** – We put family and community first, building strong connections by giving selflessly, showing kindness, and supporting one another with patience, love, and generosity.
- **Resilience and Strength** – We are strong and resilient, facing challenges with courage and adaptability, standing together for our families, communities, the Métis in Ontario and the Métis Nation as a whole.
- **Collectivity** – We pass on our Métis history, stories, culture, way of life, perspectives, languages, and wisdom with pride and responsibility in who we are, as Métis.
- **Spirituality** – We honour the diversity of each person’s unique connection to the Creator, God, and the natural world.
- **Hard Work** – We value hard work and efficiency, following the example of our Métis ancestors.
- **Joie de Vivre** – We bring joie de vivre to what we do – work, play, and time together – honouring our vibrant Métis traditions of music, dance, and celebration.
- **Gratitude** – We are thankful for gifts from the natural world, all that we have, and the contributions of others, recognizing our shared responsibility to care for these blessings.

- **Inclusivity** – We strive to ensure all of our citizens, including but not limited to Elders, Senators, youth, women, men, two spirit and LGBTQIA+, veterans and those citizens with disabilities, among others, are seen, heard, respected, and supported.
- **Justice and Fairness** – We will ensure our actions are fair, uphold the rights of Métis communities and citizens, and respect our customary and written laws and policies. We will stand up for justice when needed.
- **Collaboration** – We will work together and listen with an open mind and heart. We will seek to understand others and value different voices, share knowledge, and support each other to achieve common goals.
- **Harmony and Peace** – We value peace and harmony, and will strive to build connections that bring us together with others.
- **Transparency, Accountability, and Honesty** – We will be accountable and transparent, taking responsibility for our actions, being open and honest, and building trust through clear communication.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

### Principle 1

- Are there other guiding principles or Métis values that should be included in developing our Constitution?
- Are the principles and values that should guide our future Métis Government included in this list?

## The Métis Communities in Ontario

2. Prior to Canada becoming Canada, the Métis—as a distinct Indigenous people—emerged in the historic North-West.

3. Within the portion of the historic North-West now known as Ontario, distinct Métis communities emerged surrounding the Upper Great Lakes and along strategic waterways and historic fur trade routes in northern Ontario. These historic Métis communities are:

- **Northwestern Ontario**
  - ∞ the Northwestern Ontario Métis Community;
- **Upper Great Lakes**
  - ∞ the Northern Lake Superior Métis Community;
  - ∞ the Huron-Superior Métis Community, that includes the Métis at Michipicoten, Sault Ste. Marie, and Killarney;
  - ∞ the Georgian Bay Métis Community;
- **Northeastern Ontario**
  - ∞ the Abitibi Inland Métis Community; and
  - ∞ the Mattawa Métis Community.

### Principle 3

**For more information about the historic Métis Communities in Ontario, visit:**



[www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historic-metis-communities-in-ontario/](http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historic-metis-communities-in-ontario/)



[www.ontariometisfacts.com](http://www.ontariometisfacts.com)

4. Each of the Métis Communities identified in Principle 3 emerged prior to European control being effected in the area or region they historically lived or relied upon. In addition, each of these Métis Communities have:
- a. their own history, identity, collective assertions, stories, culture, and traditions as a distinct Métis community;
  - b. a special relationship to the lands from which they emerged and continue to rely on for their survival as distinct Indigenous communities; and
  - c. collectively-held Métis rights, interests, and claims, including the inherent rights of self-determination and self-government.
5. Today, the Métis Communities identified in Principle 3 continue to exist and are referred to collectively as the “**Métis Communities in Ontario**” in this Statement of Principles. Each of the Métis Communities in Ontario is comprised of:
- a. the descendants of the relevant historic Métis Communities identified in Principle 3 who are registered as citizens of the MNO; and
  - b. Métis Nation citizens who live within the traditional territory of one of the Métis Communities in Ontario and are registered as citizens of the MNO.
6. The Métis Communities in Ontario have chosen to come together to form the MNO—as their Métis government—while continuing to exercise and implement their rights to self-determination and self-government at the local and regional levels. In order to respect the self-determination and self-government rights of the Métis Communities in Ontario, the Constitution will provide for, among other things:
- a. democratic self-government structures that represent each of the Métis Communities in Ontario at the local and regional levels;
  - b. the ability of the Métis Communities in Ontario to have their own regional constitutions addressing their local and regional self-government structures, that shall be consistent with the Constitution;

- c. the jurisdiction, authorities, and responsibilities of these local and regional self-government structures; and
- d. the ability of the Métis Communities in Ontario to enter into arrangements with other Métis Nation collectivities, communities, or governments bilaterally or through the MNO in order to facilitate or advance respectful relationships.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For example, the Constitution could specify that part of advancing respectful relationships includes, among other things, that whether a Métis Community in Ontario chooses to be recognized as a part of the Métis Nation, or whether the Métis Nation accepts that community as a part of the Métis Nation, does not negate or affect the rights, interests, and claims of that community, and that such arrangements should not undermine, and cannot negate, impact, or affect the rights of any of the other Métis Communities in Ontario.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

### **Principle 6**

- Are there other ways that the MNO Constitution can better recognize and respect the distinct rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario?
- Are there important principles that all of the MNO's future governance structures, including at the local, regional, and provincial levels, should uphold? (e.g., fairness, transparency, accountability, etc.)
- What important principles should be included in the MNO Constitution to guide arrangements between the Métis Communities in Ontario and the Métis Nation or other Indigenous peoples?

7. In addition, the Constitution will provide that, consistent with recognizing and respecting the self-government and self-determination choices of the Métis Communities in Ontario, a regional constitution may include:
- a. the requirements for community acceptance of citizens who are a part of and who live within the traditional territory of that Métis Community, including as it may relate to adoption and the laws, customs, and traditions of the Métis Community, consistent with any provisions in the Constitution or a Métis Government law;
  - b. requirements for elected leadership of the local or regional self-government structures, including related to the participation of citizens who live within or who live outside of the traditional territory of the Métis Community in Ontario;
  - c. processes for how citizens who are descendants of the historic Métis community who live within or who live outside of the traditional territory of the Métis Community in Ontario will be engaged by or participate within the local and regional self-government structures that represent a Métis Community in Ontario;
  - d. how consultation and accommodation with respect to the collectively-held rights, interests, and claims of the Métis Community in Ontario shall be undertaken; and
  - e. how citizens with various distinct perspectives (e.g., Elders, Senators, youth, women, men, veterans, two spirit and LGBTQIA+, citizens with disabilities, etc.) are included in the local and regional self-government structures that represent the Métis Communities in Ontario.

## **Removal of a Community from the Constitution**

8. In order to be included in the Constitution, a community must meet the criteria and requirements set out in Principle 4 to be a Métis Community in Ontario. If it is determined through a fair and transparent process that a community does not meet these criteria and requirements, the Constitution will include a process for removing that community.



9. In addition, where a community is removed following the process contemplated in Principle 8, the Constitution will provide for, among other things:

- a. a process for citizens who ancestrally connect to the community that was removed to have their files reviewed to determine if they also ancestrally connect to a historic Métis Community in Ontario or a historic Métis community that is recognized as a part of the Métis Nation in western Canada and, where they meet the citizenship requirements and provide their consent, to be registered as citizens; and
- b. a mechanism, including transparent criteria that would need to be met, for conversion of the local or regional self-government structures of the community that was removed to be converted to self-government structures of the future Métis Government.

### Citizens Living in the Province and Outside the Traditional Territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario

10. The Métis have always been a highly mobile Indigenous people with extensive kinship, trade, and transportation networks linking the Métis Communities in Ontario to one another, as well as to other Métis communities and collectivities in the historic North-West (Figure 8).

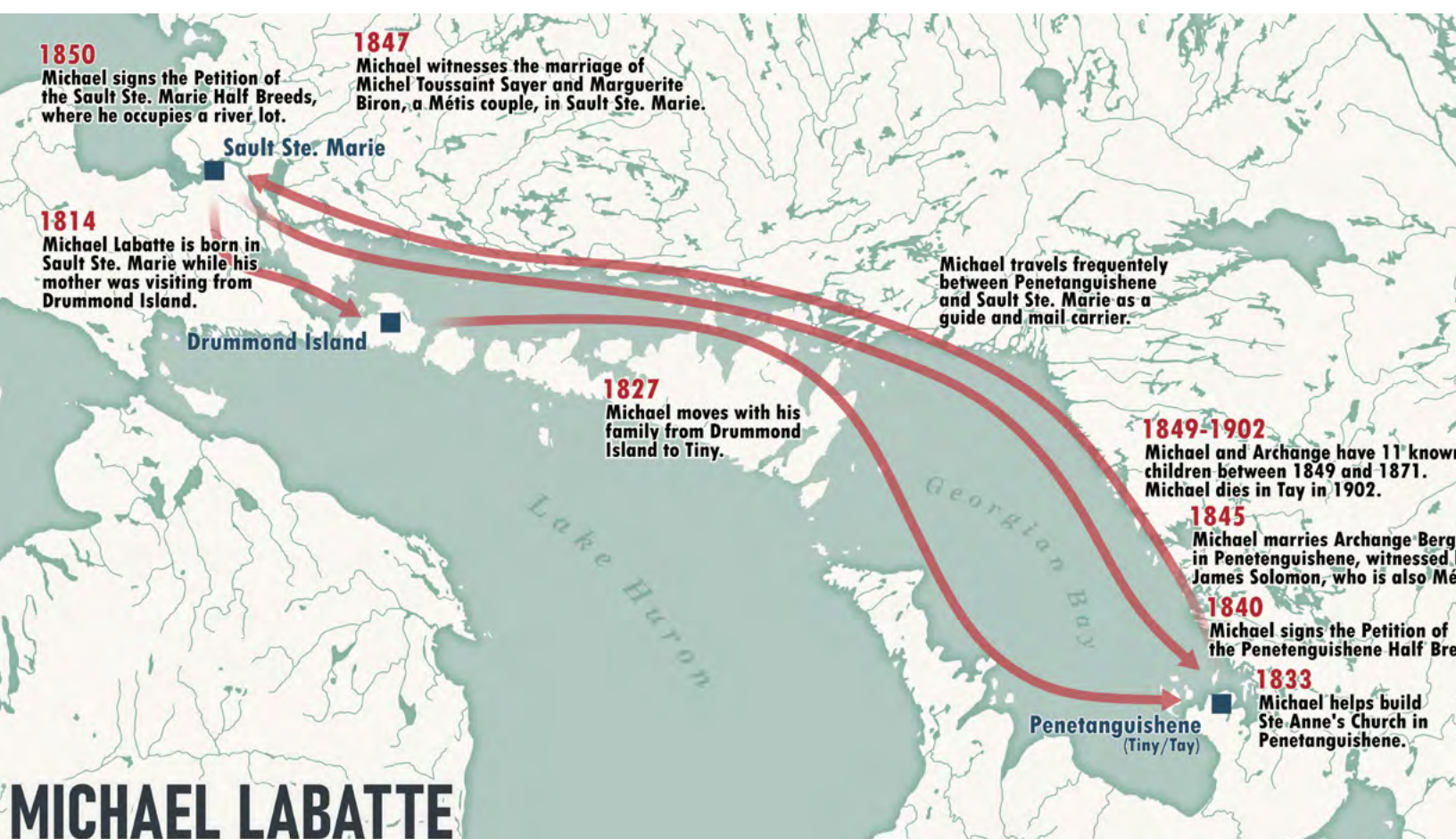


Figure 8. Labatte family movement map

11. In modern times, Métis continue to be mobile and move for socio-economic, educational, health, familial, and other purposes. Many citizens who are the descendants of the historic Métis Communities in Ontario or are the descendants of other Métis Nation communities in the historic North-West are today living in Ontario and outside of the traditional territory of their rights-holding Métis community.
12. These citizens who live outside of the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario are—and will continue to be—a vital and valued part of the Métis in Ontario. They will continue to be entitled to participate within and be represented by the MNO and future Métis Government, as citizens.
13. Consistent with the recognition in Principle 12, the Constitution will provide for, among other things, these citizens having:
  - a. effective processes to ensure their distinct perspective and concerns are heard as a part of decision-making or actions that may affect their rights as citizens;
  - b. opportunities to build, maintain, and strengthen the deep and enduring relationships with and fulfill their responsibilities to the Métis Community in Ontario to which they belong;

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

### **Principle 13**

- What important services or self-government activities do citizens need to continue to be able to access locally, near where they live? (e.g., voting, access to information, events, etc.)
- Should citizens have more opportunities to participate in and be informed about matters that are going on in the rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario that they ancestrally connect to?
- Are province-wide plebiscites or all-citizen votes a way that all citizens, no matter where they live, can continue to have a say over important self-government decisions?
- What other processes would support Métis citizens living outside of the traditional territory of the Métis Communities in Ontario being able to participate in self-government?

- c. avenues to participate in processes or decisions that affect the collectively-held rights, claims, or interests of the Métis Community in Ontario to which they belong; and
  - d. opportunities to come together with other citizens where they live, access locally-available programs or services, celebrate their distinct Métis culture and heritage, build social connections, and foster contemporary relationships.
14. In addition, the Constitution will provide that, consistent with recognizing and respecting the rights of other Indigenous peoples over their traditional territories and building harmonious relationships:
- a. citizens living outside of the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario are guests on the lands and traditional territories of other Indigenous peoples and shall respect the jurisdiction, rights, claims, and interests of these other Indigenous peoples;
  - b. it will be a breach of the Constitution for a citizen or self-government structure to assert or claim land-related rights or interests outside of the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario; and
  - c. the local, regional, or provincial self-government structures representing citizens living outside of the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario may enter into arrangements with First Nations to provide clarity and certainty as to where Métis land related rights in Ontario are not claimed, in order to facilitate respectful relationships and support respect of First Nation rights, consistent with the Constitution.

## The Métis in Ontario

15. The Métis Communities in Ontario and the citizens living outside of the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario form a distinct Métis collectivity, referred to in this Statement of Principles as the “**Métis in Ontario**” (Figure 9).

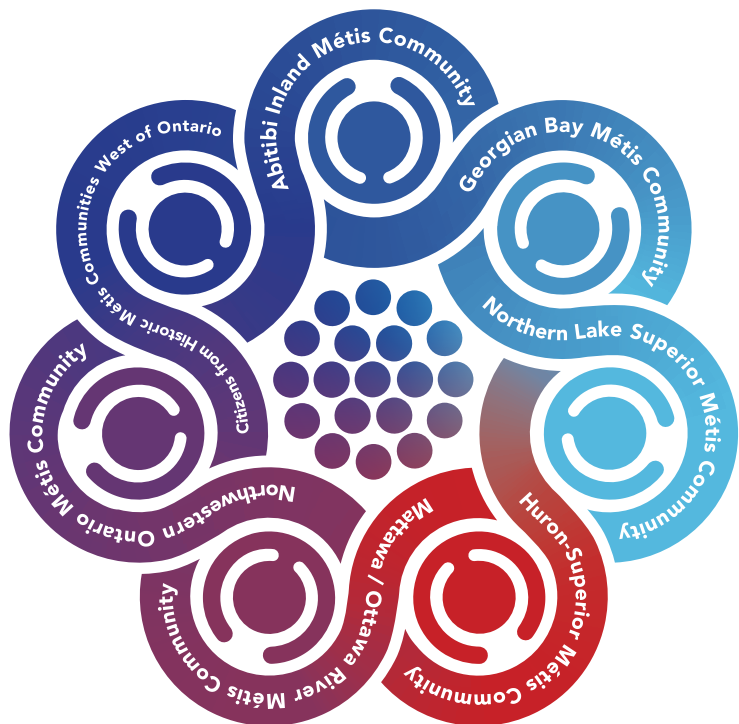


Figure 9. Métis in Ontario

16. The Métis in Ontario possesses inherent and constitutional rights to self-determination and self-government based on the mandate and authorities it receives from the Métis in Ontario, as will be further set out in the Constitution.
17. For greater certainty, the Métis in Ontario is only comprised of citizens and the Métis Communities in Ontario who have voluntarily chosen and mandated the MNO to represent them as their Métis government.

## Citizenship

18. The Constitution will provide that an individual may become a citizen based on providing documentary proof to the Registrar that demonstrates the following requirements have been met:
- they **self-identify as Métis** and as a member of one of the Métis Communities in Ontario or a Métis community that is recognized as a part of the Métis Nation located in western Canada; and
  - they **ancestrally connect** to a historic Métis community, being one of the historic Métis communities identified in Principle 3 or a historic Métis community that is recognized as a part of the Métis Nation in western Canada; and
  - they are **accepted by the Métis in Ontario** based on the processes to be set out in the Constitution, regional constitution, or a Métis Government law dealing with citizenship (as applicable).

### Principle 18

- **For Greater Certainty:** Nothing in this Statement of Principles alters the MNO's citizenship requirements, processes, policies, provisions or the outcomes of the Registry Review in any way.

19. For greater certainty, the citizenship requirements set out in Principle 18 are consistent with the national definition of Métis for citizenship within the Métis Nation that provides for the following:

- “Métis” means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of Historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation;
- “Historic Métis Nation” means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland;
- “Historic Métis Nation Homeland” means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-breeds, as they were then known;
- “Métis Nation” means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation that is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and that is one of the “aboriginal peoples of Canada” within the meaning of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*; and
- “distinct from other Aboriginal peoples” means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.

20. All current citizens of the MNO meet the criteria and requirements set out in Principle 18 and, as such, the Constitution will provide that they will be citizens of the future Métis Government.





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

- a. that the MNO will maintain an objectively verifiable and centralized Registry that identifies citizens;
- b. for the political, participatory, constitutional, and other rights of all citizens as well as internal appeal and review processes to ensure those rights are respected; and
- c. that for the purposes of exercising or benefiting from a specific land-related right, interest, or claim that may be held by one of the Métis Communities in Ontario, an individual will be required to demonstrate they are ancestrally connected to that historic Métis Community in Ontario in addition to meeting the requirements in Principle 18.

## **The Métis Nation of Ontario / Future Métis Government**

22. The Constitution will provide that the Métis in Ontario exclusively mandates the future Métis Government, as the successor to the MNO, as its Métis government based on the terms in the Constitution.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

### **Principle 21**

- Should the MNO Constitution include a section on the rights and responsibilities of all citizens?
- If so, what important rights and responsibilities should be included?
- How are these rights and responsibilities related to our Métis values, traditions, and guiding principles? (e.g., right to vote is part of the Métis tradition of democratic decision-making).



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

- a. the various self-government structures of the future Métis Government, including those at the local, regional, and provincial levels representing the Métis Communities in Ontario and citizens who live outside of the traditional territory of the Métis Communities in Ontario;
- b. the various roles and responsibilities of elected officials of the future Métis Government and its self-government structures, including those at the local, regional, and provincial levels representing the Métis Communities in Ontario, and citizens who live outside of the traditional territory of the Métis Communities in Ontario;

### **Principle 23(a) and (b)**

- How should the future Métis Government include representatives from each of the rights-holding Métis communities in Ontario on the future provincial-level government structure?
- Should there be positions at the provincial-level, like a President, Chair, Secretary-Treasurer or others, that are elected through a province-wide, all-citizen vote?
- How should the future Métis Government include citizens who live outside of the traditional territory of the Métis communities as a part of its governance structures? Including at the local, regional, and provincial levels?
- Should titles for elected leaders stay the same or change? (e.g., Presidents, Regional Councilors, Chair or Vice Chair, etc.).
- Should the names of various governance structures stay the same or change? (e.g., Chartered Community Councils, PCMNO, Regional Councilors, etc.).

- 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;
- d. processes, institutions, or self-government structures that support fair, transparent, and independent decision-making, including internal appeal and redress mechanisms such as through an integrity commissioner, judicial branch, tribunal, or Métis court, etc.;

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

### **Principle 23(c)**

- Do you believe that the Annual General Assembly should be included in the MNO Constitution, to continue direct participation of citizens in self-government matters?
- Should it continue to be called an "Annual General Assembly" or is there another name that should be used?
- What other processes would support the future Métis Government being accountable to citizens, including the future local and regional governance structures?

### **Principle 23(d)**

- Do you believe that upholding the principles of fairness, transparency, and independent decision-making should be included in the MNO Constitution? Should the future local and regional governance structures uphold these principles too?
- Should the MNO Constitution include principles around how to resolve disputes? If so, what principles relate to our Métis traditions and values?

- 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.); and
- f. processes for how the future Métis Government may establish wholly-owned corporations, as “Institutions”, to undertake specific or delegated functions of the Métis Government or its self-government structures.

- What other processes or policies would support the future Métis Government’s fair, transparent, and independent decision-making? (e.g., the Office of Ethics’ and Integrity, the MNO Code of Conflict and other policies, posting of PCMNO minutes, etc.)

### **Principle 23(e)**

- What are the important Métis traditions about the different roles that youth, women, knowledge-holders, etc. have in self-government?
- 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?
- 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.) If so, what are the responsibilities of these different positions?
- How can the MNO Constitution ensure that any structure (e.g., Council) or representative (e.g., women, youth, two-spirit, etc.) is accurately informing themselves of the views of those citizens?

## Other Matters

24. Nothing in this Statement of Principles affects, alters, limits, or extinguishes the inherent, constitutional, or legal rights, interests, and claims of any citizen, the Métis Communities in Ontario, the Métis in Ontario, or the Métis Nation.
25. Nothing in this Statement of Principles affects, alters, or changes the MNO's constituting documents, including but not limited to the Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act, MNO Bylaws, MNO Electoral Code, MNO Community Council Charter Agreements, Regional Consultation Protocols, Regional Implementation Agreements, MNO Registry processes, or any other MNO policy, procedure, or agreements including but not limited to MNO's harvesting policy or harvesting agreement, funding agreements or arrangements, or the MNO's self-government agreements with Canada.
26. Nothing in this Statement of Principles shall be interpreted as pre-determining how, or if, any of these Principles may ultimately be given effect or implemented in a future Constitution or Métis Government law.
27. The Constitution will ultimately be adopted by citizens and the Métis Communities in Ontario through a province-wide ratification vote that will be conducted consistent with requirements in the MNO self-government agreements, the Regional Implementation Agreements the MNO has signed with all MNO Regions, and in a manner that provides all citizens who are 16 years or age or older have the opportunity to vote. Nothing in this Statement of Principles alters that commitment or predetermines the process or outcome of that ratification vote in any way.









Métis Nation  
*of* Ontario ∞  
—SELF-GOVERNMENT—