Towards a Métis Nation of Ontario Constitution

# WHAT WE HEARD

Streams 1, 2 & 3 Citizen Engagements of the MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan

Métis Nation of Ontario
—Self-Government—

# Table of Contents


**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ..... **2**

**BACKGROUND & CONTEXT TO THIS WHAT WE HEARD REPORT** ..... **5**

About the Métis Nation of Ontario ..... 5

Advancing Métis Rights and Self-Government ..... 7

A Métis Constitution: The Next Step in MNO's Self-Government Journey ..... 10

**STREAMS 1, 2 & 3 CITIZEN ENGAGEMENTS** ..... **12**

The Streams 1, 2 & 3 Citizen Engagement Process ..... 12

Engagement Statistics ..... 14

Data Sorting and Analysis ..... 15

**WHAT WE HEARD: OVERARCHING PRIORITIES** ..... **16**

**WHAT WE HEARD: STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES** ..... **18**

Self-government is essential to protecting the rights, identity, and future of the Métis in Ontario ..... 18

Métis values must be the guiding foundation of an MNO Constitution ..... 20

Historic rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario must be at the heart of an MNO Constitution ..... 22

The removal of a Community from the MNO Constitution must only be done through fair, transparent, and rigorous processes ..... 24

All MNO citizens living in the province, including outside the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario, must be represented and have a clear and equitable voice in decision-making ..... 26

An MNO Constitution must reflect the unique culture, way of life, stories, and realities of the Métis in Ontario ..... 28

An MNO Constitution must contain transparent, evidence-based requirements for MNO citizenship, as well as the universal rights and responsibilities of all MNO citizens ..... 30

The future Métis Government must continue the MNO's proud legacy, while further strengthening the Métis Communities in Ontario and opportunities for MNO citizens to participate in their Métis Government locally ..... 32

**Next Steps** ..... **34**

# Executive Summary

## Streams 1, 2 & 3 Citizen Engagements

Between June 2024 and July 2025, over 2,100 Métis Nation of Ontario ("**MNO**") citizens generously shared their voices, hopes, and expectations for their future Métis Government as part of the MNO's ongoing engagement towards developing an MNO Constitution. Specifically, Streams 2 & 3 of the MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan are focused on identifying what our key Métis values are that should guide the MNO in developing a Constitution, as well as discussing a draft "Statement of Principles" for the future Constitution.

For more information about the engagement sessions, how to get involved and share your views, or to read the draft Statement of Principles, please visit: www.metisnation.org/governance/self-government/

This What We Heard Report ("WWHR") captures the words, insights, and priorities shared by over 2,100 MNO citizens during 22 information sessions, 30 facilitated workshop sessions, and through written engagement surveys. Through these inclusive engagements, MNO citizens shared clear feedback on our Métis values and the draft Statement of Principles that can be grouped into eight core themes:

1. Self-Government is essential to protecting the rights, identity, and future of the Métis in Ontario.
2. Métis values must be the guiding foundation of an MNO Constitution.
3. Rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario[1] must be at the heart of an MNO Constitution.
4. The removal of a community from the MNO Constitution must only be done through fair, transparent, and rigorous processes.
5. All MNO citizens living in the province, including outside the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario, must be represented and have a clear and equitable voice in decision-making.
6. An MNO Constitution must reflect the unique history, culture, stories, and realities of the Métis in Ontario.

[1] For the proposes of this What We Heard Report, the terms "Communities" and "Métis Communities" (in both singular and plural) generally refer to the historic rights-bearing Métis Communities in Ontario which are represented by the MNO, not MNO Community Councils, unless otherwise stated.

7. An MNO Constitution must contain transparent, evidence-based requirements for MNO citizenship, as well as the universal rights and responsibilities of all MNO citizens.
8. The future Métis Government must continue the MNO's proud legacy, while further strengthening the Métis Communities in Ontario and providing opportunities for MNO citizens to participate in their Métis Government locally.

In addition to the above feedback on specific topics and questions, citizens also emphasized throughout the surveys and sessions the following five overarching priorities for the future Constitution:

1. Accountability and Good Governance;
2. Inclusivity and Diversity;
3. Culture, History, and Connection to Land;
4. Communication, Engagement, and Participation; and
5. Clarity and Conciseness.

## Next Steps Toward an MNO Constitution

The input and feedback provided by MNO citizens during the Streams 1, 2 & 3 engagements will guide the MNO as it continues moving forward toward drafting a Constitution.

This will include further citizen engagement in Fall 2025 on key topics and other matters that citizens identified during the engagement sessions as needing additional dialogue, clarity, or discussion prior to formally launching Stream 4: Drafting the Constitution (anticipated to begin in 2026).

The MNO remains committed to providing meaningful opportunities for all MNO citizens to get engaged and share your views at every stage of developing our future Constitution. Be a part of the conversation and help ensure that our future Métis Government fully reflects the distinct history, realities, values, and aspirations of the Métis in Ontario—today and for future generations. Your voice matters!

# Background & Context to this What We Heard Report

## About the Métis Nation of Ontario

Beginning in the late 1700s, distinct Métis communities emerged in various regions surrounding the Upper Great Lakes and along the waterways and fur trade routes of what is now known as northern Ontario. These Métis communities developed their own shared customs, traditions, and collective identities that are rooted in their special Aboriginal relationship to the land and a distinctive culture and way of life.

In the 19th century, Métis communities in Ontario asserted their collective rights, interests, and claims through various political actions and advocacy including uprisings, petitions, and the negotiation of a collective adhesion to Treaty 3. In the 20th century (prior to the establishment of the MNO in 1993), Métis communities in Ontario created their own local and/or regional bodies and participated in various pan-Indigenous organizations to advance their Métis rights, interests, and claims.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Métis communities in Ontario participated in processes that ultimately led to the inclusion of "Metis" in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* ("**Section 35**"), which expressly includes the Métis as one of the three distinct "aboriginal peoples of Canada."

In 1993, a distinct group of Métis in Ontario established the MNO as a Métis-specific government with a mandate to advance Métis Section 35 rights, including self-determination and self-government. The *MNO Statement of Prime Purpose* sets out the mandate of the MNO, which includes the following objectives:

- to research, publish, and promote the genealogical documentation of the Métis, and to establish and maintain a registry of the Métis citizens of Ontario;
- to establish democratic institutions based on the communities' inherent right of self-government;

- to re-establish land and resource bases; and
- to ensure that Métis can exercise their Aboriginal and treaty rights and freedoms and in so doing, act in a spirit of cooperation with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.[2]

Based on the foundational mandate in the *MNO Statement of Prime Purpose* as well as on the inherent rights to self-government and self-determination held by the Métis as an Indigenous people, the MNO has built a strong province-wide government for its more than 31,000 citizens.

The MNO has established governance structures at the provincial (Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario), regional (Regional Councilors, Regional Consultation Committees, Regional Implementation / Governance Committees), and local levels (Community Councils) to serve and represent MNO citizens wherever they live in Ontario. These governance structures all consist of Métis leaders that are democratically elected by the constituency of MNO citizens they represent.[3]

Each year, the MNO holds an Annual General Assembly ("**AGA**"), to which all MNO citizens are invited, to discuss the previous year's progress and set priorities for the coming year. The AGA is the highest authority within the MNO.

The MNO also has several advisory councils or individuals with specific roles/responsibilities, reflecting the distinct interests and perspectives within the MNO, including the MNO Senators, Women's Council, Youth Council, Veterans' Council, and Two-Spirit Working Group. The MNO has also established well-run, arms-length institutions to deliver programs and services to its citizens and advance economic development, such as the Métis Voyageur Development Fund and Infinity Investments LLP, amongst others.

In total, the MNO employs over 450 staff across the province and has 30 offices located throughout Ontario.

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2 MNO Statement of Prime Purpose, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Statement-of-Prime-Purpose-Eng.pdf .

3 For more information, see: https://www.metisnation.org/about-the-mno/ .

## Advancing Métis Rights and Self-Government

The MNO has successfully advanced Métis rights and self-government on many fronts in its over 30 year history. Harvesting rights are one key example. In 1993, the MNO supported Steve and Roddy Powley, as Métis harvesters and citizens, who were charged for hunting without provincially issued licenses outside of Sault Ste. Marie. At that time, the Government of Ontario ("**Ontario**") did "not recognize any Métis right to hunt for food", or any "special access rights to natural resources" for the Métis whatsoever.[4]

The MNO advanced the landmark *Powley* case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, where the highest court in the country recognized that modern-day Métis communities may possess Aboriginal rights protected by Section 35 based on pre-effective control practices, customs, and traditions that are integral to their distinctive existence and relationship to the land that persist today.

The Court unanimously concluded that "the Métis community in and around Sault Ste. Marie have an aboriginal right to hunt for food under s. 35(1)."[5] The Court also set out the legal test (as known as the "*Powley* test") that is the framework for identifying rights-bearing Métis communities in other parts of Ontario and Canada.

The Sault Ste. Marie Métis Community (which is represented by the MNO) remains the only Métis community in Canada to have their Section 35 rights recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

For more information about the *Powley* case, please visit:
https://www.metisnation.org/about-the-mno/the-powley-case/

Using its total victory in the *Powley* case, the MNO successfully negotiated two harvesting agreements with Ontario (in 2004 and 2018). Today, the MNO regulates the Métis harvest in Ontario through the MNO Harvesting Policy and issues MNO Harvester Cards which are recognized and respected by Ontario.[6]

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4 *R v Powley,* 2003 SCC 43 at para 47 [***"Powley"***].

5 *Powley* at para 53.

6 Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Harvesting Policy, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MNO-Harvesting-Policy-2023-AGA-Amendments.pdf .

In 2017, based on the "framework for identifying Métis communities in other areas of the province and other parts of Canada" set out in *Powley*, and after over a decade of collaborative work and engagement, the MNO and Ontario jointly announced the "identification of historic Métis communities" in Ontario, which include the:

- Rainy River/Lake of the Woods/Treaty 3 Historic Métis Community (also known as the Northwestern Ontario Métis Community);
- Northern Lake Superior Historic Métis Community;
- Sault Ste. Marie and Environs Community (recognized in *Powley*);
- Killarney and Environs Historic Métis Community;
- Georgian Bay and Environs Historic Métis Community;
- Abitibi Inland Historic Métis Community; and
- Mattawa/Ottawa River and Environs Historic Métis Community.[7]

Today, the MNO is the Métis Government mandated to represent these Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities, including their citizens, as well as citizens from other parts of the Métis Nation Homeland who now live in Ontario.

Based on the above context and history, the MNO has reached a series of landmark agreements with Canada and Ontario advancing reconciliation, recognition, and respect for Métis rights and self-government, including:

- MNO-Canada *Consultation Agreement* (July 31, 2015);[8]
- MNO-Canada Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Reconciliation (February 3, 2017);[9]

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7 Government of Ontario, "Identification of Historic Métis Communities in Ontario" (August 22, 2017),available at: https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/45936/identification-of-historic-metis-communities-in-ontario .

8 MNO-Canada Consultation Agreement, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/mno-canada-consultation-agreement-july-2015.pdf .

9 MNO-Canada Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Reconciliation, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/mno-canada-mou-on-reconciliation-final-february-3-2017.pdf .

- *Canada-Métis Nation Accord* (April 13, 2017);[10]
- MNO-Canada-Ontario *Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation* (December 11, 2017);[11]
- NWOMC-Canada *Agreement on Advancing Reconciliation with the Northwestern Ontario Métis Community* (December 11, 2017);[12]
- MNO-Ontario *Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Framework Agreement on Métis Harvesting* (April 30, 2018);[13]
- MNO-Canada *Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement* (June 27, 2019);[14] and
- MNO-Canada *Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* (February 23, 2023, the "**2023 MNO Self-Government Agreement**").[15]

The 2023 MNO Self-Government Agreement includes the commitment that the MNO and Canada will continue negotiation to reach a modern-day self-government treaty that will be protected under Section 35.

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10 Canada-Métis Nation Accord, available at: https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/canada-metis-nation-accord .

11 MNO-Canada-Ontario Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/scanned-from-a-xerox-multifunction-printer.pdf .

12 MNO-Canada Agreement on Advancing Reconciliation with the Northwestern Ontario Métis Community, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/doc.pdf .

13 MNO-Ontario Framework Agreement on Métis Harvesting, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/metis-harvesting-framework-agreement.pdf .

14 MNO-Ontario Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-06-27-metis-government-recognition-and-self-government-agreement.pdf .

15 MNO-Canada Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement, available at: https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MNO-MGRSA-2.0-Feb-23-2023.pdf . ["MNO 2023 Self-Government Agreement"].

## A Métis 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 AGA's 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.

The MNO has also committed to adopting and ratifying a Constitution as a part of reaching the future self-government treaty with Canada. The 2023 Self-Government Agreement outlines this commitment and sets out that the future Constitution will, at minimum, address the following matters:

- the definition of and requirements for being a Citizen;
- the Governance Structures of the Métis Government that represents 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.[16]

In preparation for the development of its Constitution, between 2017 and 2023 the MNO undertook a Registry Review process to provide clarity as to "who" the MNO represents for the purposes of a Constitution and to ensure all of its citizens are Métis rights-holders (e.g., can ancestrally connect to Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario or in other parts of the Métis Nation Homeland).

16 MNO 2023 Self-Government Agreement, Chapter 9.

The Registry Review concluded in 2023 following a province-wide plebiscite vote and an MNO Special Assembly approving amendments to the MNO Bylaws. These amendments allow for the removal of citizens from the MNO Registry whose files do not meet the MNO's citizenship requirements (e.g., those individuals who were not able to provide evidence that they could ancestrally connect to a Section 35 rights-holding Métis Community in Ontario or in other parts of the Métis Nation Homeland). Through this process, over 6,000 persons unable to meet the MNO's citizenship requirements were removed from the MNO Registry.

The MNO has also been working for the last number of years on building its internal self-government capacity to engage with Métis Communities and MNO citizens about self-government. For example, the MNO has built additional capacity in its Self-Government Branch, worked with MNO Regions to hire Regional Managers, and signed Regional Implementation Agreements ("**RIAs**") with each MNO Region. The RIAs include commitments for how a Constitution will be developed, consulted on, and ultimately ratified through an all citizen vote.[17]

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**"), so that all citizens will be able to share their views, be informed, and ultimately be ready to vote on the final Constitution through a province-wide ratification vote.

17 For more information about the MNO Regional Implementation Agreements and how the MNO is working hand-in-hand with MNO Regions and Community Councils on advancing self-government, please see: https://www.metisnation.org/governance/self-government/ .

# Streams 1, 2 & 3 Citizen Engagements

## The Streams 1, 2 & 3 Citizen Engagement Process

The MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan supports the MNO's commitment that all MNO citizens and the Métis Communities in Ontario will be engaged throughout the development of the future Constitution.

Specifically, this plan provides avenues to empower all MNO citizens and deepen their knowledge about the MNO and Métis self-government to build a future Constitution that they support and can rely on for generations to come. The MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan includes 5 Streams:

1. Understanding Métis Self-Government;
2. Embracing Métis Values and Guiding Principles;
3. Mapping Our Future;
4. Drafting Our Constitution; and
5. Other Matters.

Stream 1 ran between July 24 and November 27, 2024, and included a total of twenty-two (22) information sessions that were offered in both English and French. Stream 1 provided MNO citizens with background information about Métis self-government, the MNO's self-government journey, the MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan, as well as guidance on how to stay informed and involved, and an opportunity to ask questions.

Building upon Stream 1, engagement during Streams 2 & 3 was guided by a draft Statement of Principles, which was developed based on the MNO's history, evolution, current governance structures, and feedback received from MNO citizens and elected leadership.

Importantly, the draft Statement of Principles does not change anything about the MNO's current governance structures, policies, or agreements in any way. It was developed to help guide the MNO, Métis Communities in Ontario, and MNO citizens as they provide their input to MNO on the drafting of their Constitution.

### Streams 2 & 3 Engagement Summary (January–July 2025)

From January to July 2025, over 2,100 MNO citizens participated and generously shared their voices, hopes, and expectations for the future of their Métis Government as a part of the Streams 2 & 3 engagements.

Citizens were able to participate in thirty (30) facilitated workshop sessions and submit their feedback through written surveys, which collectively generated 5,743 citizens' comments. The feedback and comments received through the workshop sessions and surveys has been compiled, analyzed, and forms the basis of this What We Heard Report.

### Virtual Roundtable Engagement Sessions

Twenty-three (23) virtual roundtable sessions were held to explore different sections of the Statement of Principles. These sessions were recorded, with notetakers documenting citizens' input. This WWHR highlights the recurring themes and most common feedback received during citizen engagement sessions, including direct citizen quotes where possible. Not every comment is included in this report; however, all citizen input was documented, reviewed, and will help inform next steps, including the drafting of the Constitution.

### Supplemental Engagement Sessions

Eleven (11) in-person Regional Supplemental Engagement Sessions took place across Ontario, in partnership and led by interested MNO Regions and Regional Managers. This regional engagement gave citizens the opportunity to gather locally and contribute to the discussions. In parallel, seven (7) sessions were held with MNO's advisory councils representing Métis Veterans, Women, Youth, Senators, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ citizens.

### Streams 2 & 3 Survey

A written Streams 2 & 3 Survey was launched in parallel with the engagement sessions, to enhance overall accessibility and gather broader citizen perspectives and lived experiences.

### Special Events and Local Presence

MNO Self-Government Branch Staff also engaged with citizens at twenty-six (26) locally organized MNO events, where invited by MNO Regions or Councils, creating space for informal conversations that helped extend outreach beyond scheduled sessions.

### Additional Engagement Channels

In addition to the above described engagement pathways, MNO citizens were informed about and able to participate in the Streams 2 & 3 engagements through: (1) all-citizen emails; (2) social media; (3) the Métis Voyageur newspaper; (4) direct mail-outs; (5) MNO's Self-Government webpage (6) surveys and evaluations; and (7) Digital Art Wall

# Engagement Statistics

Below is a snapshot of key engagement statistics that highlight the robust citizen participation throughout Streams 2 & 3, including session attendance and number of MNO citizens' comments gathered.

### Self-Government Roundtable Sessions

A total of 564 citizens engaged in the roundtable sessions, with cumulative attendance (accounting for repeat participants) of 1,202.

A total of 1,620 comments were received across all self-government roundtable sessions, many of which contained multiple ideas. A breakdown of comments collected by each topic / section of the Statement of Principles is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of Comments Received during Roundtables**

| Roundtable Topic | Number of Comments |
|---|---|
| Values and Guiding Principles | 254 |
| Who We Are As a People | 157 |
| The Metis Communities in Ontario | 154 |
| Citizens Living Outside Their Traditional Metis Territories | 381 |
| Citizenship | 203 |
| The Metis Government | 305 |
| Other Topics | 124 |
| Other Engagements (Self-Government Email, Supplementary Sessions, etc.) | 42 |
| **Total** | **1,620** |

### Self-Government Surveys

Several surveys were distributed to all MNO citizens through various channels, including email blasts, printed materials from the Self-Government Branch, mailouts, in-person and virtual roundtable sessions, follow-up evaluation emails from roundtable sessions, and the Self-Government LinkTree.

To date, MNO citizens have completed a total of 2,844 surveys across Streams 1, 2, and 3 of the MNO Self-Government Engagement Plan, generating 8,838 comments. A breakdown of survey participation is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Number of Comments Received through Long-Answer Questions of Surveys**

| | Survey | Surveys Completed | Comments Collected |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stream 1 | Survey 1 - Engagement Launch Survey | 1,508 | 1,900 |
| | Evaluation of SG Info Session Survey | 169 | 426 |
| Streams 2-3 | Survey 2 – Vision and Values Survey | 360 | 2,035 |
| | Survey 3 – Values, Principles and Vision Survey | 628 | 4,123 |
| | Roundtable Follow-up Evaluation Surveys | 179 | 354 |
| **Total** | | **2,844** | **8,838** |

## Data Sorting and Analysis

All feedback collected through the roundtable sessions, surveys, and other citizen participation channels was reviewed in detail by a team of nine members of the MNO's Self-Government Branch, who were part of the engagement sessions. This team carefully read and reviewed all the feedback shared by citizens in sessions, surveys, and conversations.

They collaboratively sorted, grouped by theme, and reviewed the comments several times to ensure this WWHR truly reflects the collective hopes, concerns, and diverse perspectives shared by MNO citizens. While it was unfeasible to include all 8,838 comments or individuals feedback in this report, the common themes have been grouped and summarized below. Identifying information, like citizens' names and quote attributions, have been removed to protect anonymity and eliminate potential bias.

All comments received have been reviewed and will assist in helping to shape the next steps, including further engagement sessions in fall 2025 and the drafting of our future Constitution.

# What We Heard: Overarching Priorities

In addition to providing input and feedback on specific questions related to the Statement of Principles (described in the next section), MNO citizens repeatedly emphasized five overarching priorities for developing an MNO Constitution during Streams 2 & 3.

## Culture, History, and Connection to Land

∞ *"Take care of what was left for us, to respect our heritage."*

MNO citizens emphasized that culture is a living part of the Métis way of life and governance. They called for greater support to preserve and revitalize Métis history, stories, harvesting traditions, languages, music, and other traditional practices. Community-led cultural preservation and revitalization is a priority. Feedback on spirituality included that it was seen as important but deeply personal; citizens stressed that it must remain voluntary. Connection to the land was described as both cultural and spiritual, grounding individuals in community and linking them to their ancestors.

## Accountability and Good Governance

∞ *"Democracy falls hand in hand with integrity and transparency."*

MNO citizens want decision-making processes that reflect Métis values like respect and, were possible, consensus. Leadership should be efficient, with strategically structured positions and clearly defined roles to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure accountability. Oversight must be fair, independent, and transparent, with respectful conflict resolution processes focused on learning and growth. Citizens emphasized that transparency, honesty, and regular updates on decisions from leadership are essential to maintain trust and accountability.

## Inclusivity and Diversity

∞ *"The more open and inclusive the process, the more legitimacy it holds and the easier it becomes for communities to move forward together."*

MNO citizens want leadership and decision-making to reflect the diversity of Métis citizens within Ontario, including Senators, youth, women, urban and rural citizens, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ citizens, among others. Senators and youth, specifically, called for more space to contribute. Intergenerational learning was seen as essential, along with support for passing on culture, language, and teachings. Citizens highlighted how inclusive governance requires listening with respect and creating space for all voices.

## Communication, Engagement, and Participation

∞ *"When citizens understand why change is happening, how it is happening, and how they can shape it, resistance fades and unity grows."*

MNO citizens want to be meaningfully involved in self-government, beyond engagement toward the Constitution's development. Citizens also stressed the importance of clear updates, consistent outreach, and accessible ways to participate online and in person. Engagement and governance must reflect the realities of all citizens, including those living outside their Métis Community's traditional territory. Importantly, citizens highlighted that communication should be clear, consistent, and two-way, helping citizens feel welcomed, informed, and empowered to participate in and help shape decisions that affect them.

## Clarity and Conciseness

∞ *"When wording is too complicated, it creates issues. Keep it simple!"*

MNO citizens want a clear and concise Constitution that defines core roles, rights, and responsibilities while staying true to the distinct history and realities of the Métis in Ontario. They highlighted how a Constitution should be brief and focused on foundational issues to minimize unnecessary future amendments. Detailed matters like harvesting, citizenship, and other specific processes should be addressed through separate Métis laws or policies.

# What We Heard: Statement of Principles

Throughout the Streams 2 & 3 engagement, MNO citizens shared a wealth of insights and provided clear feedback on numerous core themes that are presented in the draft Statement of Principles. Their voices, expectations, and aspirations are at the heart of this report and will be foundational in developing a future Constitution for Métis Communities and citizens.

## **We heard that** self-government is essential to protecting the rights, identity, and future of the Métis in Ontario.

> ∞ *"Métis self-government, to me, represents the ability of our people to reclaim and exercise our inherent rights to govern ourselves, define our identity, and make decisions rooted in our unique history, culture, and values…"*

MNO citizens spoke from the heart about what Métis self-government means to them, connecting it to their families, histories, and hopes for their collective future. Many said contemporary self-government reflects the strength and determination that Métis people have always carried. After generations of struggle for recognition, citizens said self-government marks a turning point for the Métis in Ontario, affirming a Métis Government built by us, for us.

Citizens also spoke passionately about reclaiming the inherent right to govern themselves, emphasizing that through self-government the Métis in Ontario will have stable, sustainable, and culturally grounded programs and services designed by and for Métis. This will ensure our Métis Government is truly self-governing and can make the best decisions for the Métis in Ontario.

> ∞ *"Metis self-government is important because, in Canada, this has been ignored for a long time."*

Citizens expressed that the future Métis Government, Constitution, and laws must be rooted in Métis values, culture, and community. This will honour those who came before and build a strong Métis Government for the generations to come.

∞ *"Metis self-government means being able to lead our children and the generations ahead in the way our ancestors intended."*

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- Métis self-government is deeply interconnected with Métis histories, families, values, and culture.
- Self-government will help ensure that the future Métis Government, Constitution, and laws remain rooted in Métis values, culture, and community voices.
- Self-government will ensure Métis in Ontario will have stable, sustainable, and culturally grounded supports, programs, and services designed by and for Métis.
- Self-government protects Métis identity, language, culture, and way of life in Ontario for future generations.



## **We heard that** Métis values must be the guiding foundation of an MNO Constitution.

∞ *"Embedding Métis values into our governance helps build trust, accountability, and cultural integrity."*

MNO citizens felt strongly that the future Constitution must be built upon the traditional Métis values that have guided our people for generations. These values shape how we live, make decisions, and care for one another.

Respect was raised as a foundational value, including for elders, youth, and our shared history. Citizens highlighted kindness and care as essential to family and community life, and want these values reflected in their Métis Government, especially in times of disagreement. Care and respect for the land and waters was also emphasized by citizens.

∞ *"All of our values lead us back to a deep level of respect."*

The importance of collectivity was raised often, with citizens highlighting the value of working together, giving and receiving help. Inclusivity was supported, with a call to honour our responsibility to protect Métis history, stories, culture, and way of life. Citizens said that this responsibility should also reflect the diversity of how Métis express themselves today.

∞ *"Inclusivity is not just about the physical presence of people. It must include their being."*

While spirituality was meaningful to many, citizens were clear that it must never be prescribed. If included in the future Constitution, it should reflect freedom of belief, diverse experience, and intersecting identities.

Stories of resilience were also shared, including of surviving and holding onto Métis pride and identity through hardships. Many said these same strengths must be recognized, honoured, and continue to inform and shape how the Métis in Ontario govern ourselves today.

∞ *"We are resilient and here. We are still fighting, and we haven't given up."*

Even if they are not ultimately named within the Constitution, citizens expressed that these Métis values and others (including equality, democracy, reasonableness, hard work, and collaboration) must be clearly evident, brought to life through clear processes, and actively practiced at every level of the Métis Government, including locally, regionally, and provincially.

∞ *"Change is necessary. But it must never be divisive. It must be driven not by institutional interests, but by community consent, open dialogue, and shared understanding."*

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- A future Constitution must be built upon shared Métis values.
- Shared Métis values, like honesty and equality, should be visible and upheld at every level of the Métis Government.
- Strong governance processes (e.g., an MNO Constitution, Métis Laws, policies) that are rooted in Métis values will preserve accountability and trust.
- A clear and accessible MNO Constitution that reflects shared Métis values demonstrates strength and unity among the Métis in Ontario.
- Centering Métis values in the Constitution is a way that we can honour our Métis ancestors and leave a legacy for future generations.

## **We heard that** historic rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario must be at the heart of an MNO Constitution.

∞ *"If you want to protect your Section 35 rights, you need to put the focus on historic Métis Communities. If you dilute that focus, you risk that Section 35 rights will not be there."*

MNO citizens expressed that the historic, Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario must be recognized in the MNO's Constitution, because Métis rights (including the right to self-government) are collective and come from the historic Métis Communities themselves.

While the Métis Communities in Ontario have chosen the MNO (including its governance structures at the regional and local levels) to be their Métis Government, it is essential that the Constitution protects these communities' abilities to exercise their rights to self-determination and self-government at the regional and local levels.

∞ *"Rights come from communities. But the responsibility to maintain communities fall on the citizens."*

Citizens shared that the history, stories, kinship, and ties to the land for MNO citizens who come from historic Métis Communities in Ontario remain a primary means through which those MNO citizens continue to connect to their Métis identity, culture, and way of life today.

At the same time, citizens acknowledged that not every MNO citizen has a direct connection to one of the historic, rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario. Many MNO citizens connect to a historic Métis community that is recognized as part of the Métis Nation on the prairies. Other citizens were born or raised outside of their ancestral Métis Community in Ontario, or have moved elsewhere in the province for work, family, military service, or other reasons.

As a result, citizens felt that these diverse realities of the Métis in Ontario today (that includes citizens who live inside and outside of the rights-holding Métis Community they ancestrally connect to) should be included in the future Constitution.

∞ *"We have to continue thinking about more ways to include people who live within and outside their community."*

An MNO Constitution must therefore protect and uplift the distinct Métis history, rights, and stories held by Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario, while also promoting inclusion, fairness, and collective strength, including support for MNO citizens who live outside of the Métis Communities in Ontario.

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- The historic, Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario hold the collective rights that ground Métis self-government and must be at the heart of an MNO Constitution.
- Every MNO citizen connects to a Section 35 rights-holding Métis Community, including the Métis Communities in Ontario or other Métis communities in other parts of the Métis Nation on the prairies.
- The language used to recognize and protect the historic, rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario must reflect their pride, resiliency, strength, and history.
- Citizens want to remain connected to their ancestral Métis Community, even if they live outside their traditional territory.
- An MNO Constitution should reflect the diversity and realities of Métis in Ontario today, while also enabling the rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario to develop their own constitutions, where desired, to respect their Section 35 rights and local needs.
- Education about Métis Section 35 rights, how Métis Section 35 rights (including self-government) are held by Métis Communities, and the responsibilities that come with exercising Métis rights is a priority to ensure they always remain protected and respected.

## **We heard that** the removal of a Community from the MNO Constitution must only be done through fair, transparent, and rigorous processes.

- *"If a community is removed, there has to be a clear, transparent rationale as to why… This should also be timely, within a timeframe."*

The concept of removing a community from the future Constitution is similar to the Registry Review process and a part of ensuring the future Métis Government continues to only represent Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities and citizens who can ancestrally connect to these historic Métis Communities (in Ontario or in other parts of the Métis Nation Homeland on the prairies).

Similar to the Registry Review process, the possibility of removing a community from the future Constitution raised serious discussion among MNO citizens, given its direct intersections with fundamental issues such as Métis rights, citizenship, and identity.

Many citizens expressed deep concern that a removal process (if ultimately included in an MNO Constitution) could be used inappropriately for political reasons or to punish Métis communities that disagree with decisions, unless rigorous and transparent guardrails are in place.

- *"If a community is going to be removed, this should go back to citizens to vote."*

Citizens were generally more supportive of the idea that this concept be framed positively, about affirming the Section 35 rights of the historic Métis Communities in Ontario, and that a removal process (if included) be used as a last resort and only in response to something like a court decision that concluded a community did not hold Section 35 Métis rights.

Citizens also expressed that decision-making about removal of a community should consider people's relationships and the interconnectivity of Métis communities, while always upholding the MNO Registry's objectively verifiable citizenship standards.

- *"Democracy means that we also remember how these decisions affect all of us: good and bad, inclusive or not."*

Ultimately, if an MNO Constitution includes a process for the removal of a community, citizens stressed that it must be fair, transparent, and rigorous. There must be clear rules and meaningful participation from the community in question out of respect for the citizens most directly impacted by the potential removal.

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- The removal of a community from the Constitution would have significant individual and collective consequences, and must therefore be treated with the highest degree of respect and consideration.
- Clear criteria and strong guardrails must be put in place to ensure that a community removal process (if included in the future Constitution) is not weaponized or used inappropriately.
- The community in question must have meaningful participation opportunities throughout a removal process, out of respect and fairness to the community and its citizens.
- Care must be given in dealing with citizens from a removed community, especially if they do not connect to another Section 35 rights-holding Métis community in Ontario or from other parts of the Métis Nation Homeland on the prairies.



**We heard that** all MNO citizens living in the province, including outside the traditional territories of the Métis Communities in Ontario, must be represented and have a clear and equitable voice in decision-making.

- *"In principle, it's important to recognize historic Métis communities, but representation based solely on those communities in government leads to complications, with distinctions based on where your ancestry is versus where you're living now."*

MNO citizens broadly recognized that, today, many MNO citizens (including those with ancestral connections to historic Métis Communities in Ontario) live outside of their historic Métis Community's traditional territory. For this reason, citizens highlighted that the MNO Constitution must ensure the future Métis Government continues to effectively represent these citizens.

Citizens living outside of these areas shared a range of experiences and viewpoints. Some feel welcome, supported, and engaged locally where they live today. Others, however, feel disconnected, lacking access to opportunities, or avenues to participate in their Métis Government.

- *"There's frustration to not be able to come to my traditional territory for supports if I live outside the area. But others who are not from the traditional territory [but live there today] can get the support."*

Some citizens expressed concern about uneven access to programs and barriers to participation in decision-making because of residency requirements or living outside of their ancestral Métis Community's traditional territory. Citizens emphasized that Métis people move for many valid reasons, such as work, family, education, or affordability, and that this should not make them any less part of their ancestral Métis Community, should they wish to remain connected.

- *"My traditional territory is far away from me. It is impossible to stay connected with them. Citizens outside should still have the right to know what's going on in the area. People may move back. It's important to understand, where voting rights are maintained."*

While citizens emphasized that an MNO Constitution must respect the rights and jurisdictions of the Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario, they also expressed that the exercise of these rights and jurisdictions should not unduly exclude citizens who are ancestrally connected to those Métis Communities or prevent them from staying informed, participating within, and having a voice within the governance of their ancestral Métis Community.

There was strong support for ensuring that all citizens have clear rights, meaningful representation, and an equitable voice in decision-making, in ways that reflect the unique realities of the Métis in Ontario today.

> ∞ *"Les droits doivent être clairs. Personne ne devrait se sentir inférieur. Des droits égaux pour tous les citoyens. Pas de citoyens de seconde zone. [Rights should be clear. No one should feel unequal. Equal rights for all citizens. No second-class citizens.]"*

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- An MNO Constitution should reflect that many MNO citizens live outside of their ancestral right-holding Métis Community or outside of traditional Métis territories altogether.
- Citizens must have clear representation and ways to participate in their Métis Government no matter where they live.
- Citizens should be able to stay informed about, participate in, and potentially access programs or services offered by their ancestral Métis Community or the MNO no matter where they live.
- Citizens should have some level of voice in their ancestral Métis Community's decision-making no matter where they live, but more engagement is needed to determine what this could look like, including through discussions with local and regional leadership about effective avenues for participation.

## **We heard that** an MNO Constitution must reflect the unique history, culture, stories, and realities of the Métis in Ontario.

∞ *"Know your story! Tell your story loud and clear!"*

MNO citizens shared that the Métis in Ontario have a unique story, with deep roots in historic, Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities, survival in the face of colonial efforts to erase us, the continued fight for rights recognition, and rebuilding our Métis governance systems. In Ontario, Métis families have adapted, resisted, and persevered for generations. Their strength and determination have always carried us forward.

Many expressed pride in Métis resilience. They spoke of how the Métis have endured hardships by staying connected to the land, to each other, and to our culture. They said our future Constitution must reflect that history, who we are today, and who we aspire to be in the future.

∞ *"When thinking about my family history and current community, I find myself advocating and defending my Métis culture now. I realize the bravery it took and will take to be out as a Métis in the future."*

Citizens said our Constitution must also reflect our evolving story. It should speak to the legacy of the historic, Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario and those who continue to live within them, while also recognizing the growing number of citizens living outside of traditional Métis territories today, including citizens who come from Métis communities west of Ontario.

Citizens called for an MNO Constitution to affirm the MNO as a Métis Government that reflects the evolving needs and realities of the Métis in Ontario and represents all its Métis citizens, whether they are from the historic Métis Communities in Ontario or other Métis communities that are also a part of the Métis Nation on the prairies.

∞ *"A living Métis Government must be rooted in principles that can evolve with our times; principles that are flexible, not rigid."*

Some citizens felt the Statement of Principles strikes an appropriately clear and practical tone, grounded in aspirational long-term vision. Others said more is needed to fully reflect the distinct identity, pride, determination, and resistance that define the story of the Métis in Ontario.

> ∞ *"Going forward, if people want to define us, then we should include where we came from and where we are going. We need to keep the historic piece in our documents to avoid it being lost."*

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- The Métis in Ontario have a unique and distinct story that must be reflected in an MNO Constitution.
- An MNO Constitution should reflect the distinct identity, pride, and determination that define the story of the Métis in Ontario.
- To reflect the distinct realities of the Métis in Ontario, the Constitution must honour the historic, Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario as well as the many citizens who live outside of these Métis Communities today.
- The future Constitution should balance clarity and practicality today with aspirational long-term vision, to guide the Métis in Ontario into the future.



**We heard that** an MNO Constitution must contain transparent, evidence-based requirements for MNO citizenship, as well as the universal rights and responsibilities of all MNO citizens.

∞ *"I think less is more… as long as Registry continues to be vigilant in how they determine citizenship."*

MNO citizens shared that the future Constitution must set out clear citizenship requirements, as well as the rights and responsibilities of all MNO citizens.

Citizens expressed that rights and responsibilities are deeply interconnected. Métis Section 35 rights (including self-government) are collective; they come from historic Métis Communities, and their shared collective history.

Citizens also recognized that many MNO citizens live outside of their ancestral Métis Community today. This diversity must be reflected in the Constitution in a way that includes all citizens, regardless of where they live today. At the same time, being part of a Métis Community includes the responsibility to contribute to its strength by showing up, staying informed, voting, engaging in discussion, and participating in community life.

∞ *"Rights go two ways: what the MNO expects of its citizens and what the citizens contribute to their government."*

Citizens called for upholding the MNO's transparent, evidence-based rules, requirements, and processes for determining eligibility for citizenship. They highlighted the importance of elders, oral history, and reliable data systems in this process.

Many emphasized that a future Constitution should only focus on fundamental and long-lasting citizenship issues, such as affirming the MNO's current citizenship criteria, while more detailed processes can be set out in future Métis laws and/or policies.

∞ *"It makes sense to include rights and responsibilities, but there's a risk in going too far and creating a Constitution that would be far too large. Bylaws and other laws are best suited for greater depth and detail."*

There was strong agreement that the Constitution must protect the universal rights of MNO citizens, including the freedom of speech and opinion. It must also protect against discrimination, provide fair ways to resolve disagreements, and to hold leadership at all levels of the Métis Government accountable.

At the same time, an MNO Constitution must also respect the collective rights and jurisdictions held by the Métis Communities in Ontario, including to develop their own Community-specific processes that reflect their distinct needs or circumstances while remaining aligned with the MNO Constitution's overall requirements.

∞ *"We have the responsibility to speak truth to power. Regardless of what happens, speaking truth to power is one of the tenets of honesty."*

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- An MNO Constitution must include transparent, objective, and evidence-based process to determine MNO citizenship eligibility.
- The Constitution should focus on essential citizenship issues, leaving more detailed processes for inclusion for Métis laws or policies.
- Citizens' rights and responsibilities to their ancestral Section 35 rights-holding Métis Community are deeply interconnected and should both be considered in an MNO Constitution.
- Universal rights of individual MNO citizens must be protected in a way that also respects the collective Section 35 rights (including self-government rights) held by the historic Métis Communities in Ontario.

**We heard that** the future Métis Government must continue the MNO's proud legacy, while further strengthening the Métis Communities in Ontario and providing opportunities for MNO citizens to participate in their Métis Government locally.

∞ *"A healthy, living government must guide change in a way that brings people together, not fractures them. This requires clear, honest, and transparent communication at every step of the process."*

MNO citizens shared that the MNO has a proud legacy of continuous evolution to address the unique realities and needs of its citizens, including by bringing the Métis in Ontario together, uplifting the historic Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario, and building a lasting foundation of Métis rights recognition in the province.

Citizens hope that the future Métis Government, as the successor to the MNO, will continue to build upon that legacy.

∞ *"The more we talk and share within our communities and the wider community, the more pride and sense of empowerment we will have."*

At the same time, citizens expressed that the Constitution should be seen as a turning point and opportunity to address existing concerns and further enshrine principles and priorities that should be at the heart of the future Métis Government.

Citizens want a Métis Government that is open, accountable, and grounded in Métis values. The future Constitution should further reinforce fairness, inclusivity, transparency, communication, and opportunities for citizens to meaningfully participate in their Métis Government locally where they live.

∞ *"The more open and inclusive the process, the more legitimacy it holds and the easier it becomes for communities to move forward together."*

Ultimately, citizens said the Métis Government's structure must be flexible enough to evolve with the changing realities of the Métis in Ontario as well as respecting the historic Section 35 rights-holding Métis Communities in Ontario, while always remaining firmly rooted in our distinct Métis identity, history, and values.

The Métis Government must strive to maintain unity, not with the expectation that everyone will agree on everything, but through the belief that a strong Métis Government can continue to bring the Métis in Ontario together, protect Métis rights, and preserve our Métis history, culture, and way of life for future generations.

> ∞ *"Consider our youth, their future, their pride, and how they continue our culture forward. I am proud of the reflection of the [history], but we have to remember to consider our future generations and how this document will stand the test of time."*

## Key Ideas that MNO Citizens Shared:

- The MNO has a proud legacy that should be honoured and built upon through the future Métis Government.
- The future Constitution can enshrine MNO's existing strengths and Métis values into the future Métis Government, while also addressing ongoing areas for improvement.
- The Constitution should prioritize opportunities for MNO citizens to have a voice and participate in their Métis Government locally.
- The future Métis Government must strive to maintain unity and be flexible enough to evolve alongside the realities of the Métis in Ontario.

# Next Steps

## Stream 4: Drafting the Constitution

The Streams 1, 2 & 3 engagements generated thousands of comments and deep reflections from MNO citizens across Ontario. That input has laid a strong foundation for Stream 4: Drafting the Constitution.

All the feedback and comments shared throughout Streams 1, 2 & 3, including on the Statement of Principles, will help to shape the future draft Constitution. The draft Constitution will be the next major document shared with citizens. It will reflect the voices and priorities captured in this report and the principles that have guided us so far.

MNO citizens can also expect further engagement sessions in Fall 2025 to more deeply explore key topics and other matters that citizens identified as needing additional dialogue, clarity, and discussion. This ongoing engagement will also be taken into account as part of developing our draft Constitution (anticipated to be ready for consultation with citizens in 2026).

Together, we—the Métis in Ontario—are building a Métis Government that will be lasting, representative, and distinctly ours. Your voice matters!



## How to Get Involved

There are many ways to get involved and share your views about Métis self-government. Whether it's through mail, the Métis Voyageur, Town-Halls, email, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, or the MNO website, we want to hear from you!

To find out more about MNO Self-Government and upcoming engagement sessions, contact your Regional Councillor, Community Council leadership, Regional Manager, or be in touch with the MNO Self-Government team at:

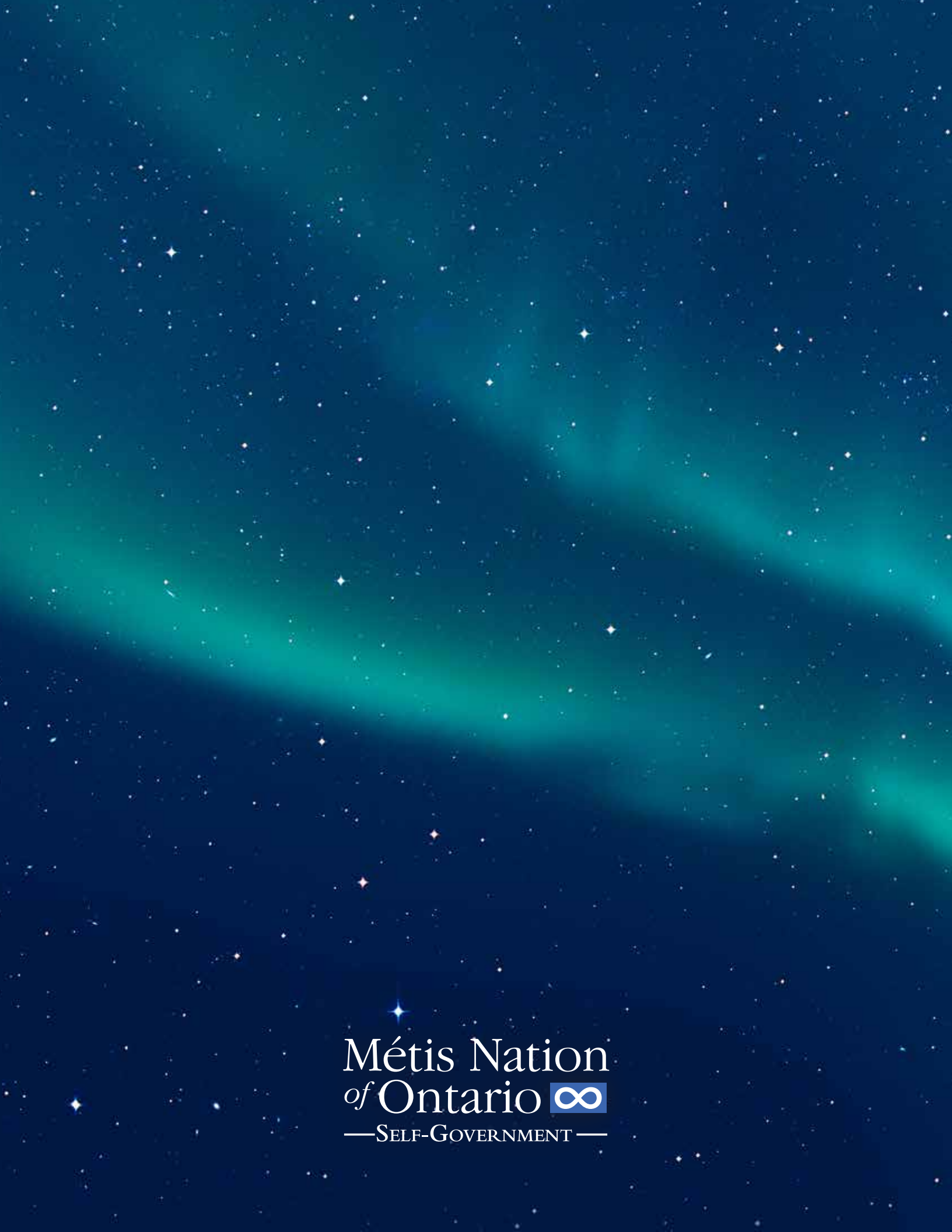
Email: **Self.Government@metisnation.org**

Web: **www.metisnation.org/Self-Government**

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

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

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