

**Métis Nation British Columbia acknowledges, upholds, and respects First Nations' inherent rights, title, and treaty rights**

May 30, 2023 (Surrey, British Columbia) – Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) recognizes that First Nations hold Aboriginal title to these lands now known as British Columbia. MNBC's assertion of our constitutional section 35 rights should not be misconstrued as claiming Aboriginal title in British Columbia. MNBC is committed to acknowledging, upholding, and respecting First Nations' inherent rights that have existed since time immemorial, and to their constitutionally protected treaty rights. The assertion of our right to self-government is not intended to claim any Aboriginal title in British Columbia. Any assertions that we are claiming Aboriginal title are inaccurate and are from unaffiliated groups who do not speak for or represent objectively verified Métis citizens in British Columbia that make up our membership.

MNBC recognizes that Métis rights in BC are different from the rights of First Nations title holders. We acknowledge and respect the stewardship of this land since time immemorial and the work of generations of First Nations leadership to gain recognition of their inherent rights and title. A report released by previous MNBC leadership, "A Tale of Two Nations", was disrespectful and inconsistent with our commitment to work in partnership with First Nations on key issues and priorities of mutual concern. Métis Nation British Columbia has therefore formally retracted this report and apologizes humbly and unreservedly for the offense this report has caused.

MNBC is the democratically elected government of Métis in British Columbia. Métis citizens in British Columbia have freely determined that Métis Nation British Columbia is their representative Métis Government through our own democratically based Métis constitution, governance, and legal traditions.

We are the "Otipemisiwak", which is a Cree-Michif word that has been used to describe the Métis people as "those who govern themselves." The Métis have always possessed the inherent right of self-determination and self-government as an Indigenous people. MNBC represents the constitutional rights of more than 24,000 Registered Citizens in British Columbia. MNBC adheres strictly to the national definition of Métis citizenship, and our registry is considered one of the most rigorous in the country.

As an Indigenous People, we have a right to self-determination under Article 3 of UNDRIP: "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." This is further supported and reflected in the Province's commitment, under the

*Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)* action plan item 4.20, to “Advance a collaborative, whole-of-government approach in the partnership between the Métis Nation of British Columbia and the Province of B.C., respecting Métis self-determination and working to establish more flexibility and sustainability in funding.” Article 18 in UNDRIP also states “indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.”

Métis people in British Columbia are overcoming many similar challenges, racism, barriers, and traumas experienced by other Indigenous peoples. MNBC is seeking ways to address these ongoing challenges and injustices for our current and future generations. Our children in care have lower life expectancy, increased interactions with the justice system, and lower education outcomes. We are therefore seeking jurisdiction over our children and their education as their needs are currently not being adequately provided for in a culturally safe way, nor are they being provided with appropriate learning opportunities or supports. We are participating at many tables in good faith to address our priorities for a better future for Métis people. We are particularly focused on areas that directly affect our people and, specifically, our children in care.

We are seeking to work in partnership with First Nations on key issues and priorities of common concern. The work we have done in partnership with First Nations on the “In Plain Sight” Task Team, regarding Indigenous racism in healthcare, is a good example of this. We believe that we are stronger together when we can work in alignment, each according to their respective needs, interests, and rights.

We accept the distinctions-based rights approach as defined in the DRIPA Action Plan: “that First Nations, Métis and Inuit are distinct peoples with unique cultures, histories, rights and legal traditions in what is now B.C., and the Province’s relationship with each will reflect their respective rights, interests, priorities and circumstances.” We are actively working to articulate and clarify our section 35 rights to align with a distinctions-based rights approach in British Columbia, and to better establish our relationship with the Province and First Nations on the basis of those distinctions.

We recognize the need to strengthen our relationship with First Nations. We, therefore, welcome opportunities for working together on shared priorities. We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss consideration of establishing community-based agreements and protocol agreements with First Nations to help promote shared understanding and respect for First Nations’ inherent and treaty rights.



## **The Métis Nation Government in British Columbia**

About Métis Nation BC:

Métis Nation BC represents the section 35 rights of over 24,000 Métis citizens who are registered with MNBC and advocates for the over 98,000 self-identified Métis in British Columbia.

Métis Nation BC represents thirty-nine 39 Métis Chartered Communities in British Columbia.

MNBC's mandate is to develop and enhance opportunities for Métis communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services.

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