

# Recognition of Métis Nation British Columbia as the representative government of Métis in BC.

## Métis Nation British Columbia acknowledgment of First Nations' inherent rights, title, and treaty rights

### Key Messages and FAQs

Métis Nation British Columbia has been in various levels of talks and negotiations with both the provincial and federal governments as we assert our Section 35 constitutional rights as one of Canada's three Aboriginal Peoples. There is still much work to do, but we are making progress in moving toward a reconciliation agreement with BC and a self-government agreement with Canada. Métis Nation British Columbia was recently recognized by the Province as the representative government of Métis in British Columbia, and BC has also recognized that Métis people in BC have certain Aboriginal rights under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

- Métis people in British Columbia **want and deserve to have the same living standards and access to opportunities as the general population**, something that all Indigenous people are striving for. We are also overcoming many of the same challenges, racism, barriers, and traumas experienced by other Indigenous peoples, and we are seeking ways to address these challenges for our own future generations. We are participating at many tables in good faith to address these challenges to make a better future. We are especially focused on areas that directly affect our people and especially our children in care.
- **Métis Nation British Columbia respects the rights and title of First Nations in BC**, and in seeking a better future for our next generations we seek to take nothing away from First Nations, but to work in accordance with our own distinctions-based rights as Métis people. We recognize that these rights 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. We are not pursuing natural resource revenue sharing or allocations.
- We are seeking to **work in partnership** with First Nations on key issues of common concern. The work we have done together 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 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."

- Métis people hold **Section 35 Rights** under the Canadian Constitution as one of the three identified Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. Upholding our own constitutional rights as an Aboriginal People, our Indigenous Rights under UNDRIP, including the right to self-determination, and our Indigenous Human Rights is our right and responsibility to our future generations.
- Métis Nation British Columbia is the democratically elected government of Métis in British Columbia, or the “**Otipemisiwak**”, which has been used to describe the Métis people as “those that govern themselves.” The Métis have always possessed the inherent right of self-determination and self-government. MNBC adheres strictly to the national definition of Métis citizenship, and our registry is considered one of the most rigorous in the country. Métis citizens in BC have **freely determined** that Métis Nation British Columbia is their **representative Métis Government** through our own democratically based Métis constitution, governance, and legal traditions. This is a right afforded to us under Article 3 of UNDRIP. Self-government means bringing our children in care back to the Nation, healing our communities, reversing social inequities, and revitalizing our culture and language. Métis self-governance is an inherent right that is not connected to Aboriginal title for Métis in BC, unlike First Nations. This is one of our key distinctions.
- As an Indigenous People, we claim our right to self-determination under **Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People**: “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 DRIPA action 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 DRIPA 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.”
- MNBC represents the constitutional rights of more than **24,000<sup>1</sup> Registered Citizens**, and advocates for approximately 98,000 self-identified Métis in the province. We have a democratic mandate from our citizens to both form government and pursue self-governance, which is recognized by the Province.
- We are actively working to better **articulate and clarify** our Section 35 rights to align with a **distinctions-based rights** approach in British Columbia, and to better establish and strengthen our relationship with the Province and also with First Nations on the basis of those distinctions.
- Métis Nation British Columbia recognizes that First Nations hold **Aboriginal title** to these lands now known as British Columbia and our assertion of our Section 35 rights should not be misconstrued as claiming Aboriginal title in BC. MNBC is committed to acknowledging, upholding,

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<sup>1</sup> As confirmed by our Registry as of May 15, 2023.

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 may be from other associations who do not speak for Métis citizens in BC as MNBC does.

- We are seeking more **community-based agreements** and **protocol agreements** as we restore our working relationships, allowing for more discussion and agreements on shared interests.