A Governance Review of Métis Nation British Columbia

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Conducted by

Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy Research Chair in Métis Governance and Policy

Authors

Kurtis Boyer and Scott Auriat

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1 Executive Summary

This comprehensive report examines the governance framework within Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC). This analysis has been conducted by the Chair of Métis Governance and Policy (CMGP) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask). The CMGP is deeply committed to advancing the field of Métis governance by focusing on crucial aspects such as decision-making processes, transparency, community engagement, and the establishment of appropriate checks and balances. Our primary goal is to close the gap between scholarly governance theories and the actual experiences and needs of the Métis people.

This report is designed to equip MNBC with comprehensive insights and practical strategies to refine its governance framework. By focusing on academic insights and practical wisdom, we aim to facilitate the ongoing enhancement of governance practices within MNBC, which ultimately supports Métis self-governance and contributes to the overall welfare and empowerment of the Métis community.

1.1 Key Findings

- **Effective Governance Structure**: MNBC has successfully integrated the three branches of governance—executive, legislative, and judicial—demonstrating a balanced, accountable framework.

- **Alignment with Métis Culture and Values**: MNBC appropriately integrates Métis traditions into governance. This could be a benchmark for other Indigenous organizations seeking to harmonize their governance structures with cultural principles.

1.2 Recommendations

- **Non-Profit Status Challenges**: MNBC's non-profit status imposes governance challenges, especially in power distribution. The legal framework centralizes authority within the Board of Directors, limiting the full implementation of checks and balances. Innovative governance strategies are needed to navigate these constraints effectively.

- **Set Clear Boundaries With Provincial Government**: Establish explicit and clear boundaries to outline the relationship with the provincial government, ensuring autonomy.

- **Address Discrepancy in Voting Power**: Address the voting power discrepancies among Chartered Communities. Consider merging regions with low turnout or conditional vote counting as potential solutions. These adjustments require careful consideration of political feasibility and sensitivity to avoid controversy.

- **Enhance Judicial Function:** Establishing a judicial advisory committee is recommended to facilitate the capacity building of the Senate within MNBC.

- **Enhancing Participation and Engagement**: Low youth participation signals a need for creative strategies. We recommend MNBC adopt a 'Digital Democracy' initiative to use various digital platforms beyond standard social media to boost engagement and involvement.

- **Make Key Documents and Processes More Accessible**: Improve clarity and accessibility of essential documents, like the charter, and critical processes, including the election cycle.

- **Provide Materials in Michif:** To foster the Michif language, documents should be made available in this language.

1.3   Report Structure

The report consists of seven main sections: (1) Executive Summary, (2) Motivation, (3) Context, (4) Methodology, (5) Discussion and Analysis, (6) Recommendations, and (7) Concluding Thoughts.

The report formally begins with a 'Motivation' section, highlighting the essential role of trust in achieving self-governance and outlining the report's objectives. This is followed by the 'Context' section, which provides crucial background information laying the groundwork for the rest of the report. The 'Methodology' section then leads readers through our analytical approach, introducing our three principles of 'Good Métis Governance.' These principles form the framework we will use to assess MNBC.

In the next section, 'Discussion and Analysis,' we will conduct a detailed examination of MNBC, focusing on its alignment with the three principles highlighted in the preceding section. This analysis will cover three key areas: (1) Internal/Organizational Structure, where we dissect the organization's internal governance and operational frameworks; (2) Citizen Engagement, assessing MNBC's effectiveness in engaging with its citizens and representing their interests; and (3) External Partnerships, examining the nature and impact of its alliances with external entities. Through this structured approach, we aim to present a nuanced evaluation of MNBC's governance and operational efficacy firmly rooted in the tenets of Métis governance excellence.

The 'Recommendations' section outlines actionable steps and advice for enhancing governance in the same three areas. The report concludes with a 'Concluding Thoughts' section, reflecting on what MNBC has achieved thus far and what we have learned while conducting the review.

Although the report is designed as a unified document, its structure allows each section to stand independently. This design enables readers to jump directly to the most interesting sections. Readers are encouraged to navigate to the parts that are most relevant to them.

2 Motivation

A movement towards self-governance is fundamentally an exercise in building trust. To achieve self-governance, it's not enough to just set up the necessary structures and processes for an independent government. It also demands a reciprocal relationship between citizens and the government, marked by dedication, commitment, active involvement, and a mutual exchange of trust. In the context of the Métis, the pursuit of self-governance arises from a belief in self-determination and recognition of their history, and distinction as Indigenous peoples. It represents the desire for governance that truly reflects the unique culture, history, traditions, and values of the Métis community. However, building self-governance is not easy. Just because many wish to have it in place does not make the journey toward achieving it straightforward.

Our purpose in conducting this governance review is to assess MNBC's ability to deliver on self-governance and become the trusted representative for the Métis people of British Columbia (BC). To accomplish this, we investigate key questions: What foundational principles are vital for the Métis people of BC to attain self-governance? How effectively do MNBC's current structures, processes, and policies support the realization of these foundational principles?

By identifying and outlining a set of guiding principles, we aim to provide a roadmap that not only highlights MNBC's current position on this path to self-government but also offers clear strategies for advancing further. These principles are meant to serve as guidelines and practical tools designed to strengthen governance structures, enhance community engagement, and, most importantly, foster the trust needed to move toward achieving self-governance.

2.1 Objectives of the Report

Given the overarching goal of enhancing Métis self-governance and building trust, we outline three key objectives for this report:

1. **Develop a Model of 'Good Métis Governance':**

    - Define and outline principles of good governance.
    - Draw on these principles to build a framework for effective governance in the context of the Métis. Outline the process for constructing this model,

explaining the reasons for choosing particular governance principles and their relevance to the Métis context.

2. **Apply the Métis Governance Model to MNBC's Framework**:

   - Evaluate the effectiveness of MNBC's governance through the lens of the principles of 'Good Métis Governance.' in three areas: Internal/Organizational Structure, Citizen Engagement, and External Partnerships.

3. **Formulate Recommendations Based on the Model's Application**:

   - Develop clear, actionable recommendations for enhancing MNBC's governance practices to better align with the principles outlined.
   - Link the recommendations back to the initial development of the Métis governance model, demonstrating how the insights gained from applying the model directly inform the proposed recommendations.

By fulfilling these objectives, we aim to support MNBC in pursuing its mission. Our ultimate aspiration is that this report serves as a cornerstone for meaningful advancements in Métis self-governance.

3 Context

This section offers a summary of key background information. It's structured into three main parts: (1) A brief review of the movement towards Métis self-governance, (2) An acknowledgment of MNBC's stated mission to promote self-governance for the Métis, and (3) An introduction to the idea of political trust and its importance.

3.1 The Movement Towards Métis Self-Governance

In Canada, there has been an increasing emphasis on Indigenous self-governance, particularly following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's influential report.[1] This national trend resonates with global movements such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[2] Together, these developments underscore a growing recognition of the profound significance of Indigenous autonomy and the preservation of traditional governance practices. Indigenous self-government is rooted in the aspiration to empower Indigenous communities with control over managing their people, territories, resources, and the associated programs and policies, often achieved through formal agreements with federal and provincial governments.

The Métis community has exhibited remarkable resilience and a steadfast commitment to achieving self-governance amidst ongoing challenges and historical persecution. The

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[1]See Canada (2015)
[2]See UN General Assembly (2007)

Métis journey toward recognition as a distinct nation entitled to self-determination has notably accelerated after the pivotal 1982 constitutional amendment; Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act explicitly acknowledges the Métis as one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada."

This constitutional recognition has paved the way for critical legal victories that further solidify the Métis' position within Canada's legal and social fabric. Landmark cases, such as R. v. Powley and Daniels v. Canada, have played crucial roles in this process as these decisions affirm the Métis' legal rights and contribute to shaping the landscape of Indigenous governance and rights in Canada.

While these decisions may affirm the Métis' rights, the inherent rights held and practiced by the Métis ultimately shape the landscape of Métis governance and rights in Canada. Together, these legal milestones and the Métis' unyielding pursuit of self-governance underscore the community's ongoing efforts to secure a future that respects their autonomy and rights. The journey of the Métis people is a testament to their resilience, determination, and the critical role of legal and constitutional frameworks in advancing their aspirations for recognition and self-determination.

3.2   Acknowledging MNBC's Commitment to Métis Self-Governance

The goal of this report is ultimately to build MNBC's capacity toward self-governance. Thus, it is essential to acknowledge that the report's aim aligns with MNBC's stated mission. The MNBC Constitution begins with:

> Whereas the Métis People in British Columbia assert their inherent right of self-government and hereby establish the Government of the Métis Nation British Columbia

Followed by a foundational principle:

> Having experienced physical and political conflict and being deprived of property in the late 1800s, we are still engaged in a continuing struggle to rebuild our government and revive our cultural heritage and pride.

Consequently, the purpose of this report directly aligns with MNBC's clearly defined mission. The critical next step is to evaluate MNBC's effectiveness in achieving this mission.

3.3   (Re)Building Political Trust

In the next section, we will review what are generally considered attributes of high-quality governance and adapt them to the specific needs of the Métis. But, before we get there, it is worth asking why governance matters. What benefits does a commitment to improved

governance bring? Additionally, is there a particular focus most relevant to the Métis?

In general, good governance addresses issues like the lack of "opportunities to maintain and improve well-being " by fostering the capacity to "improve economic growth, build human capital, and strengthen social cohesion."[3] While this issue and corresponding capacity are relevant to the Métis community as well, we would like to narrow our focus and address what we see is the most pressing issue: addressing the Métis community's low trust in government. Given this issue, the key focus of our principles will be to foster the building of political trust.

Political trust is citizens' confidence and belief in their political system, including perceptions that the system represents all citizens' best interests.[4] It's well-known that Indigenous groups in Canada, including the Métis, generally have low trust in provincial and federal governments.[5]

Thus, our primary objective is establishing a governance framework to restore political trust. This emphasis is crucial for two reasons: (1) Trust is essential for any government to operate effectively, and (2) The Métis historically have low trust in Canada's provincial and federal governments due to past injustices. Therefore, for the Métis community's progress toward self-governance, laying a foundation of political trust is especially vital.

For the Métis, regaining political trust involves reclaiming authority over important aspects of their lives that were compromised by colonization. It requires their meaningful involvement in governance beyond mere symbolic participation, particularly in matters affecting their cultural and social identity. Establishing political trust is essential to close the divide between Métis citizens and their active involvement in governance.

In summary, the principles we will outline in the following section are specifically designed to enhance political trust. They provide clear guidelines for fostering this crucial aspect of governance. Therefore, the primary aim and benefit for MNBC and the Métis community in BC from adhering to these principles and improving governance is the achievement of increased political trust.

4   Methodology

The structure of this section is as follows: (1) Explanation of why our review adopts a unique approach compared to traditional governance reviews. (2) Introduction to the principles of good governance. (3) Building a model based on these principles tailored to the Métis. (4) How we moved from the broad list of principles to the three outlined in

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[3]Taken from the The Institute on Governance and Worldwide Governance Indicators respectively
[4]see Dodsworth and Cheeseman (2020)
[5]see Hwang (2017); Nikolakis and Nelson (2019)

our model (how we moved from (2) to (3)). (5) Summary of the key points discussed in this section.

Note: The findings come from a wide variety of sources, including policy documents, meeting minutes, and annual reports. Wherever possible, we will provide links to the resources that underpin our analysis. But note most of these documents are available on MNBC's official website.

4.1 Divergence from Traditional Governance Reviews

Unlike typical governance reviews that mainly check for adherence to legal frameworks, our goal is to assess MNBC's ability to grow into a fully operational government for the Métis of BC. In conducting traditional governance reviews, the benchmarks and framework used for the assessment are straightforward—the laws under which they are incorporated. In this context, that would be The BC Societies Act, which MNBC is chartered under. However, aiming for self-governance means that simply meeting the requirements of a non-profit organization under the law isn't sufficient. We need a much broader framework. Thus, we adopt principles of governance that are traditionally applied to nation-states. Considering MNBC's ambition to serve as the governing authority for the Métis of BC, mirroring the responsibilities and structure of a nation-state, it's essential to apply governance principles that match this vision. Therefore, adopting principles of good governance typically used at the nation-state level provides an appropriate framework for evaluating MNBC's efforts and progress.

4.2 Adopting Principles of Good Governance

Principles of good governance are a set of norms and practices that are generally accepted to constitute effective governance. They provide practical benchmarks for appraising and enhancing governance quality. Below is a non-exhaustive list of these principles, accompanied by the core question these principles seek to address; see "Principles of Good Governance" below. [6]

Principles of Good Governance

- **Participation** — Do citizens have a say in decision-making?

- **Free and Fair Elections** — Are elections conducted in a way that provides citizens with multiple options, ensuring they can make their choices freely without feeling pressured by external influences?

- **Accountability** — Are decision-makers answerable for their actions?

- **Responsiveness** — Do institutions serve their constituents' needs promptly?

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[6]In our review, we will use the term 'principles' of good governance, though it is important to note they are often called 'indicators.'

- **Consensus Orientation** — Is there a widespread dialogue aimed at achieving a consensus among the majority?

- **Equity and Inclusiveness** — Is there a guarantee all members of a community have opportunities to improve their well-being?

- **Effectiveness and Efficiency** — Does the government optimize resources for the best outcomes?

- **Strategic Vision** — Is there planning with foresight for sustainability?

- **Openness to Innovation** — Does the government embrace new ideas and technologies?

- **Rule of Law** — Does the government adhere to legal frameworks that are fair and enforced impartially?

- **Voice** — Does the government enable free expression and dialogue?

- **Transparency** — Does the government operate in a clear and open manner?

- **Ethical Conduct** — Are there low levels of corruption?

- **Competence and Capacity** — Do public servants possess strong professional competencies?

- **Sustainability and Long-term Orientation** — Does the government prioritize the needs of future generations, or is it primarily focused on four-year political cycles?

- **Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion** — Are there robust institutions established by the government to safeguard human rights and embrace minority perspectives?

- **Sound Financial Management** — Does the government balance its budget and control inflation?

Numerous organizations and research bodies measure and report on these principles, providing valuable data and insights into governance practices worldwide. For instance, 'Freedom in the World' offers an annual assessment of political rights and civil liberties, the 'Worldwide Governance Indicators' project provides data on governance outcomes across several dimensions, and the 'World Values Survey' explores people's beliefs and values, including their views on governance and democracy.

Using the principles of good governance gives us a solid foundation to evaluate how MNBC is performing. These principles, such as ensuring citizens have a say, holding free and fair elections, and maintaining accountability, act as benchmarks. By comparing MNBC's practices against these standards, we can identify strengths and pinpoint areas where MNBC can better fulfill its own goals of asserting its inherent right of self-government.

However, while these principles offer a thorough understanding of effective governance, they alone do not capture the kinds of considerations that are unique to Métis people as a distinct nation. Hence, we need criteria that more accurately reflect their specific circumstances. In the following section, we will expand upon these general principles to propose ones uniquely tailored to meet the specific needs of the Métis.

4.3   A Model of Good Métis Governance

How do we adapt the general principles to the specific context of the Métis? A key step is to realize these principles are really just capabilities. They allow a government to achieve something specific. If our overarching goal is to foster trust and advance toward self-governance, we can then ask what specific capabilities must be in place to achieve this. We contend that to realize this overarching goal, a government must possess the capacity to (1) broaden its jurisdictional authority, (2) increase governance participation, and (3) uphold Métis cultural and value systems.

Given these required capabilities, let's define three principles—Ownership of Self-Governance, Strengthened Voice and Participation, and Upholding Métis Traditions and Values—that encapsulate the ability to accomplish each. These principles will establish criteria for a detailed assessment of MNBC, providing the benchmarks needed to gauge progress toward the ultimate goal of effective and trusted self-governance (see detailed description below).

Principles of Good Métis Governance

1. **Ownership of Self-Governance**

   - **Key Question** — Is the government advancing towards complete self-governance, taking full control of key governance functions, and expanding its jurisdictional authority?

   - **Overview** — Highlights the necessity for Métis governments to exercise their inherent rights to self-government, which includes establishing a legislative, executive, and judicial branch that can act independently and harmoniously. Importantly, it necessitates moving beyond traditional non-profit or non-governmental-organization (NGO) Status. By establishing the above, the Métis government affirms its commitment to self-governance, irrespective of external recognition as a governing body.

   - **Importance** — Achieving self-governance for the Métis community is crucial, enabling them to manage and extend their jurisdiction in ways similar to federal and provincial governments. This requires setting up three branches of governance, complete with appropriate checks and balances.

2. **Strengthened Voice and Participation**

   - **Key Question** — Do citizens feel they can more effectively express their opinions and actively engage in governance compared to provincial and federal levels?

- **Overview** — This principle emphasizes the importance of enhancing citizens' ability to engage in governance actively, ensuring there are meaningful avenues for their participation.
- **Importance** — Given the Métis community's history of governmental exclusion, emphasizing voice is key. Enhancing Métis governance involves correcting past neglect of representation and ensuring their voices are heard.

3. **Upholding Métis Traditions and Values**

- **Key Question** — Does the governance structure fully embrace and embed Métis cultural values and traditions?
- **Overview** — This principle ensures governance respects and celebrates Métis cultural heritage.
- **Importance** — Authentic Métis representation requires a governance structure that protects and promotes their unique culture.

4.4   From General Principles to Métis-Specific Principles

To clarify our approach, let's explain how we moved from general governance principles to those tailored for the Métis context. While it may appear we've introduced new principles, it is important to stress that they were derived from and directly connected to the broader principles discussed earlier. This connection is detailed in Table 1 below, where we list the new principles, describe their scope, and link them to the initial list of good governance principles.

Table 1: Principles of Good Métis Governance: Scope and Associated Good Governance Principle

Governance Principle	Description of Scope	Associated Principles of Good Governance
Ownership of Self-Governance	Focuses internally on MNBC's organizational structure and its operational dynamics.	Accountability, Rule of Law, Effectiveness and Efficiency, Transparency, Competence and Capacity
Strengthened Voice and Participation	Emphasizes external engagement, detailing how MNBC interacts with its community and facilitates their participation in governance.	Participation, Responsiveness, Consensus Orientation, Equity and Inclusiveness, Voice

Table 1 continued from previous page

Governance Principle	Description of Scope	Associated Principles of Good Governance
Upholding Métis Traditions and Values	Centers on the preservation and promotion of historical Métis practices and values within the community.	Sustainability and Long-term Orientation, Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion, Strategic Vision, Ethical Conduct

4.5   Summary

We've simplified a broad range of governance principles into a concise list by focusing on key capacities that Métis governance must achieve to move towards the overarching goal of trusted self-government. Our method is underpinned by three fundamental principles: ensuring ownership of self-governance by establishing the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; boosting community participation to nurture a strong sense of belonging; and safeguarding cultural heritage to maintain Métis identity. These principles are crucial in forming a trusted and effective government that can expand jurisdictionally.

5   Discussion and Analysis

This section outlines our key findings, organized according to our three Principles of Good Métis Governance:

1. Ownership of Self-Governance

2. Strengthened Voice and Participation

3. Upholding Métis Traditions and Values

For each principle, we explore three areas:

1. Internal/Organizational Structure

2. Citizen Engagement

3. External Partnerships

By the end of this section, the reader will clearly understand the basis for our recommendations.
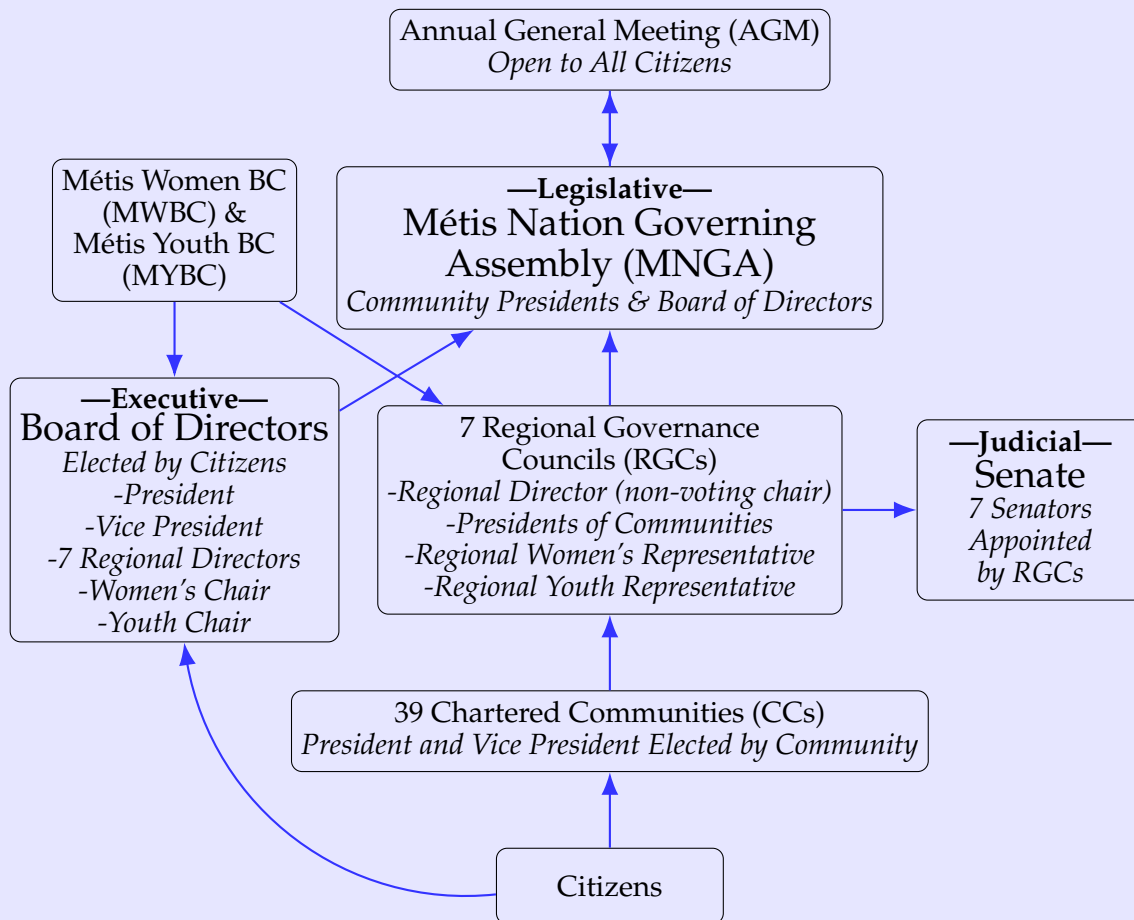
5.1   Ownership of Self-Governance

The principle of Ownership of Self-Governance focuses on the government's progression towards full autonomy by assuming responsibility for essential governance functions and expanding its jurisdiction. It underscores the importance of establishing a system with internal checks and balances, clear protocols for government-citizen interaction, and defined limits in partnerships with external entities to protect the government's independence. This principle is crucial for MNBC as it navigates towards self-governance, ensuring it has the necessary internal structures and processes to operate independently and safeguard its sovereignty.

5.1.a   Internal/Organizational Structure

When assessing the principle of Ownership of Self-Governance in relation to MNBC's organizational structure, our focus centers on the presence and functionality of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Through a comprehensive review of MNBC's governance framework, we aim to illustrate how these branches operate independently while also coordinating effectively with one another. Additionally, we will look at aspects such as legal compliance and resource management to showcase the interaction and mutual checks between branches. The overarching goal is determining whether MNBC's internal governance structure supports its evolution from a non-profit organization to a self-governing entity.

Three Branches of Government   — To assess MNBC's alignment with the principle of Ownership of Self-Governance, a detailed exploration of its organizational framework is crucial, particularly the presence and functionality of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. However, given the extensive nature of this analysis and recognizing that many readers may already be familiar with MNBC's structure, we have placed this detailed breakdown in the Appendix (see here). For those who prefer not to delve into the detailed breakdown in the Appendix, the diagram and brief summary below offers a concise overview of the basic structure sufficient for understanding the remainder of the report.

MNBC Governance Structure

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │ Annual General Meeting (AGM) │
                    │     Open to All Citizens     │
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┌──────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Métis Women BC   │   │   —Legislative—   │
│   (MWBC) &   │   │   Métis Nation Governing   │
│ Métis Youth BC   │   │   Assembly (MNGA)   │
│   (MYBC)   │   │ Community Presidents & Board of Directors │
└──────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│   —Executive—   │   │   7 Regional Governance   │   │ —Judicial— │
│ Board of Directors│ │   Councils (RGCs)   │   │   Senate   │
│ Elected by Citizens│ │ -Regional Director (non-voting chair) │ 7 Senators │
│   -President   │   │ -Presidents of Communities │   │ Appointed   │
│ -Vice President │   │ -Regional Women's Representative │ │   by RGCs   │
│ -7 Regional Directors│ │ -Regional Youth Representative │ └──────────────┘
│ -Women's Chair │   └──────────────────────────────┘
│   -Youth Chair   │
└──────────────────┘

            ┌──┐
            │   39 Chartered Communities (CCs)   │
            │ President and Vice President Elected by Community │
            └──┘

                          ┌──────────────┐
                          │   Citizens   │
                          └──────────────┘

The three core branches are:

1. **Executive Branch (Board of Directors)**: Elected by citizens, the Executive Branch oversees the daily operations and strategic direction of MNBC, managing resources and implementing policies.

2. **Legislative Branch (Métis Nation Governing Assembly - MNGA)**: This assembly, including Community Presidents and the Board of Directors, acts as the legislative body, creating policies and making decisions that reflect the community's needs and aspirations.

3. **Judicial Branch (Senate)**: The Senate, appointed by Regional Governance Councils, serves a role in adjudicating internal matters, upholding the constitution, and ensuring the governance structure's integrity.

Supporting this structure are **Regional Governance Councils (RGCs)** and **Chartered Communities (CCs)**, which facilitate local governance and community engagement. The **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** serves as a platform for broader citizen participation, where policies are discussed and leadership is held accountable. Additionally, the **Métis Women British Columbia (MWBC)** and **Métis Youth British Columbia (MYBC)** empower women and youth by fostering their active participation and representation in governance.

Balancing Legal Compliance and Governance Aspirations — Our analysis reveals a fundamental clash between MNBC's legal structure under the British Columbia Societies Act, which centralizes power within the Board of Directors, and its aspirations for a governance model that evenly distributes power across executive, legislative, and judicial branches. This situation presents a significant challenge as MNBC strives to reconcile its legal obligations with its goal of establishing a balanced governance system akin to that of a sovereign government, highlighting the tension between legal compliance and the aspiration for distributed governance.

The Senate — The Senate represents the judicial branch within MNBC's governance structure, where there's a significant opportunity to build greater capacity. For MNBC to fully align with the principle of Ownership of Self-Governance and accomplish complete self-governance, it's essential for the Senate to expand its role beyond mediation to embrace wider judicial functions. Establishing a comprehensive judicial branch capable of enforcing laws and adjudicating disputes is crucial for a sound governance system, enhancing MNBC's autonomy and reinforcing its commitment to self-determination.

Legal Framework and Compliance — MNBC is governed by a detailed legal framework intended to align its governance structures, operations, and activities with both its own internal regulations and relevant external legal requirements. It's important to clarify that the compliance mechanisms discussed here are largely external in nature, primarily concerning regulations under the BC Societies Act, and have minimal overlap with the responsibilities of the Senate, which focuses on internal matters. Below is a list of core components:

- **Constitutional Provisions**: At the heart of MNBC's legal framework is its Constitution, which outlines the organization's governance structure, membership criteria, rights and responsibilities of members, and the roles and powers of its governing bodies. The Constitution also establishes the fundamental principles for the operation of MNBC, ensuring democratic governance and respect for Métis culture and heritage.

- **Legislation and Regulations**: MNBC adheres to relevant federal and provincial legislation that affects its operations and the rights of its members. This includes laws related to indigenous peoples, education, health, and economic development.

- **Compliance Mechanisms**: MNBC has established mechanisms to monitor and ensure compliance with its legal framework and external legal requirements. This includes regular audits, compliance reviews, and the implementation of a governance committee tasked with overseeing the adherence to legal and regulatory standards.

In conclusion, MNBC effectively adheres to its legal framework and successfully minimizes legal risks. However, while this compliance is sufficient, it falls short of the broader aspirations embodied in the principle of Ownership of Self-Governance. For MNBC to

fully realize this principle, it is imperative to integrate the Senate more deeply into technical and legislative decisions.

Administrative Resource Management — A fundamental role of the executive branch in any government is managing and allocating resources. MNBC uses a traditional financial management system, where the executive branch oversees funding decisions. These decisions are then subject to public scrutiny by publishing audited financial statements for approval. The process consists of two essential steps:

1. The Board of Directors votes on budget approvals and significant financial matters.

2. An audited financial statement is prepared and disseminated. The audited financial statements are approved at the AGM.

Given that financial records and decisions are open for examination and subsequently scrutinized at the AGM, the process shows clear transparency and accountability.

From a purely accounting standpoint, MNBC demonstrates strong financial management and governance. MNBC's fiscal operations are well-organized and adhere to high standards of financial accountability.

Key Finding — MNBC skillfully manages the tension between the legal mandate to centralize power, as stipulated by the British Columbia Societies Act, and its goal of achieving a governance model with a balanced distribution of power similar to that of a sovereign government. It complies with legal standards while making notable strides toward functioning as an autonomous governing entity featuring operational executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Legal adherence, particularly through constitutional governance and resource management that includes fiscal oversight, illustrates power distribution beyond just the Board of Directors. Nevertheless, we identify areas for further enhancement in the Recommendations section.

5.1.b   Citizen Engagement

In applying the principle of Ownership of Self-Governance to the area of citizen engagement, we delve deeper into how MNBC fosters citizen engagement beyond the conventional roles expected of a non-profit. This exploration seeks to highlight mechanisms that enable Métis citizens to play an active role in shaping their governance and contributing towards the collective goal of self-governance. Note that this section will focus on internal dimensions not directed by voting and elections, which will be covered in the next section.

Annual General Meetings (AGMs) — AGMs provide the most direct opportunity for citizens to engage within MNBC's governance. They serve as a critical platform for expressing opinions, influencing decisions, and pursuing leadership roles. Specifically, these meetings facilitate direct interaction between the MNGA and the citizens, representing a key mechanism for active citizen participation.

Further Avenues for Engagement — Beyond the AGM, MNBC has developed other channels for participation, aiming to integrate Métis citizens into various aspects of governance and decision-making. These include community consultations, advisory committees, and special projects that seek input and collaboration from the broader Métis population. Such initiatives not only strengthen the community's bond but also elevate the collective pursuit of self-governance by ensuring a wide array of perspectives and expertise are considered in the governance process.

Participation Through Election — The election process provides a vital avenue for Métis citizens to engage directly in MNBC's governance. Running for a position on the Board of Directors or as a Community President embodies the democratic principles MNBC stands by, offering every Métis citizen the chance to influence the direction and decisions of the organization. This electoral mechanism reinforces the notion that MNBC is more than a conventional non-profit; it is a dynamic, self-governing entity driven by the active participation of its citizens.

The Role of the Senate — While the Senate's appointment-based structure may initially appear to restrict direct involvement, this design plays a crucial role in upholding the integrity of MNBC's judicial branch. This approach safeguards the Senate's decision-making processes, allowing it to focus on fair and impartial adjudication free from political pressure. Additionally, while the process allows for independence, the appointment process involves direct community involvement. Any community member can be nominated for a position as Senator. Importantly, to retain separation of power, any successful appointment of a senator requires said person to resign from all other positions within MNBC. The process is outlined in the Senate Act.

Key Finding — MNBC's approach to citizen engagement is multifaceted, aiming to provide Métis citizens with meaningful ways to contribute to their governance. From AGMs to community consultations, MNBC actively seeks to involve its citizens in the governance process, signifying a clear departure from the norms of non-profit organizations and towards self-governance.

5.1.c External Partnerships

Examining external relations is crucial, especially in the context of maintaining the independence of government branches. The principle of Ownership of Self-Governance underscores the importance of autonomy for true self-government. Although external inputs, partnerships, services, and collaborations with other governments are indispensable, these engagements mustn't impede the government's autonomy. In this context, we look at three key partnerships—consultation processes, provincial partnerships, and election partnerships. Our aim is to evaluate how these external relationships influence MNBC's ability to govern independently.

Consultation — From the perspective of this governance review, MNBC appears focused on establishing a practical and efficient consultation process. This intention has led to the development of specific policies and guidelines to detail transparent procedures for engaging with the Métis community (see here for details). Our assessment highlights MNBC's commitment to a consultation process that respects the traditional lifestyles of the Métis people while also striving to mitigate any negative impacts. Additionally, the process is designed to promote robust relationships, improve communication, and encourage effective issue resolution between the Métis community, industry, and government. The following provides the reader with an understanding of the process.

Whenever MNBC receives a consultation request from government or industry entities, it establishes a team. This team is tasked with thoroughly assessing the potential impacts on CCs. After the assessment is completed, MNBC communicates with the project proponent and the affected CCs to outline the consultation requirements. Additionally, MNBC ensures public awareness of the consultation process through notifications on its website.

The consultation phase culminates with the preparation of a final summary report. The project proponent, MNBC, and the impacted CCs then review this report. The approval of the proposed actions is granted by the relevant MNBC authority, which could be the MNBC Board of Directors, RGCs, CC Directors, MNGA, or discussed at the MNBC AGM, depending on the situation.

Provicial Partnerships — A final important point to consider is MNBC's partnerships with the provincial government. In 2021, MNBC and the Provincial Government of British Columbia signed a letter of intent (LOI). The LOI outlines a partnership between MNBC, the Métis of BC broadly, and the provincial government. The stated mission of the partnership is to advance Métis aspirations for self-governance and reconciliation. This agreement replaces an old agreement (The Métis Nation Relationship Accord). The agreement seems to have a particular focus on health, which makes sense as MNBC has many partnerships with BC health authorities; see list here.

While this agreement aims to foster cooperation and advance reconciliation, it can also be seen as limiting Métis aspirations for self-determination. By framing Métis governance within predefined agreements and state-led frameworks, the partnership may inadvertently constrain the Métis community's ability to define and implement self-governance on their own terms. This scenario highlights the complex balance between government support for Métis rights and Métis communities' pursuit of self-governance. With this note, we do not offer advice on whether this is a good or bad relationship. We simply want to draw attention to it. The effectiveness and impact of this relationship likely hinge on its implementation. The situation represents a difficult catch-22: help is good, but not necessarily help that undermines self-governance.

Elections Partnerships — MNBC conducts elections using two methods: online and mail-in voting. Online and mail ballots are managed by an external contractor appointed by the MNGA. This contract is up for renewal every four years; OneFeather Mobile Technologies, Ltd., is the current contractor. The contractor issues online voting credentials once Métis citizenship is confirmed, preventing fraudulent accounts from voting. Mail-in votes are checked similarly, ensuring both methods are secure and consistent. This thorough verification process addresses any worries about fraud in the election process.

However, it's important to acknowledge the potential data control issues associated with relying on a third-party service like OneFeather. While the likelihood of problems arising from this arrangement is low, ideally, MNBC would retain complete control over all election data to mitigate any risks associated with data management and privacy.

Key Finding — MNBC maintains several external partnerships, and our review hasn't flagged any pressing issues regarding autonomy. However, establishing firm guidelines to manage these relationships is vital. Although no evidence suggests MNBC's independence is compromised, clear and consistent guidelines are crucial for preserving MNBC's autonomy and integrity. Detailed recommendations on strengthening these aspects will be provided in the Recommendations section.

5.2 Strengthened Voice and Participation

The principle of Strengthened Voice and Participation focuses on overcoming historical barriers to Métis participation in governance. Thus, in the following section, we focus on MNBC's ability to strengthen citizen participation in governance in a manner that aligns with this principle through both direct citizen engagement and external partnerships.

5.2.a Internal/Organizational Structure

When applying the principles to the area of Internal/Organizational Structure we are looking for internal governance structures that are designed to foster direct engagement and participation from citizens that go beyond what is traditionally expected of a provincial or federal government. We will look at two particular structures we feel fit this criterion: (1) RGCs and (2) Métis Youth/Women British Columbia.

RCGs — These councils are the key link between the Board of Directors and the CCs. Their roles transcend mere administrative functions; they are entrusted with crucial responsibilities such as relaying CC's initiatives to MNBC for potential support, fostering political liaisons, aiding in strategically allocating MNBC's resources and looking for potential funding opportunities. RGCs assume the crucial task of disseminating information to local leadership, ensuring avenues for feedback. MNBC's leadership works in collaboration with RGCs on matters concerning agreements that directly impact the welfare of registered citizens. Through the RGCs, MNBC establishes a more responsive

and inclusive governance framework with more direct connections between leaders and communities.

Empowering Métis Women and Youth — MNBC emphasizes the importance of women and youth by dedicating specific roles to these groups, recognizing the unique barriers they face in political engagement. Unlike traditional governance systems that may have similar positions, MNBC stands out by assigning these roles expanded duties that exceed common expectations, highlighting its commitment to inclusivity and diversity. For an in-depth look at the assignment of these roles, see the Appendix.

Key Finding — MNBC's internal organization displays essential features that augment citizens' capacity to participate in governance beyond the conventional boundaries observed at provincial and federal levels.

5.2.b Citizen Engagement

When we apply the principle to the area of citizen engagement, our focus is on evaluating MNBC's processes for facilitating governance participation. This involves creating more accessible and meaningful avenues for Métis individuals to influence decision-making, engage with policy development, and have a tangible impact on the direction and priorities of MNBC. We will look at two key avenues for citizen participation: (1) Elections and Voting and (2) Public Meetings.

Elections and Voting — MNBC follows a fairly standard election process, which should be evaluated to ensure it adequately meets our standards outlined by the principle. However, given this is again fairly lengthy, we will put a detailed description in the Appendix (see here). A key takeaway from this detailed breakdown is low voter turnout, especially among youth.

Public Meetings — In the scope of this review, we were limited to examining only a small selection of the total public meetings. These included meetings for which live streams were recorded and minutes were subsequently made available online; see Annual Events and Board Meeting and Minutes. Nevertheless, reviewing available materials, including meeting minutes and recordings from key gatherings such as the AGMs and MNGAs, provides valuable insights. These documents reveal that MNBC operates with a commendable level of professionalism. The meticulousness with which meetings are conducted and documented reflects a strong organizational commitment to transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in its dealings with the Métis community. This professional conduct is a testament to MNBC's dedication to fostering an environment of open communication and meaningful engagement with its members.

Additionally, starting in 2022, in response to COVID-19, meetings were held virtually,

with plans to continue offering both virtual and in-person options moving forward. This adaptation significantly addresses participation challenges, making it easier for individuals in geographically dispersed regions to engage and contribute.

Key Finding — MNBC offers adequate traditional pathways for citizen participation. Yet, the challenges posed by historically low engagement and widespread geographic dispersion present opportunities for enhancement. To improve community involvement and the efficacy of participation, it's crucial to broaden these methods. Adopting innovative, accessible engagement platforms and actively seeking and responding to feedback from the Métis community are essential measures. The Recommendations section will outline specific strategies to expand these participation avenues.

5.2.c   External Partnerships

When applying the principle to the area of External Partnerships, our focus is on MNBC's ability to foster partnerships that uplift the Métis community and provide pathways to amplify their voice in governance.

Community Outreach and Impact — MNBC has extensive partnerships that serve thousands of Métis citizens in BC. The range and depth of these initiatives are extensive, so much so that detailing them individually goes beyond the scope of this summary. This broad spectrum of activities and programs underscores MNBC's successful community outreach. For a detailed list of programs and services, see Programs & Services.

Key finding — While MNBC's community programs undoubtedly reach and benefit a wide segment of the Métis population in BC, the direct impact of these partnerships on enhancing participation in governance is unclear. More concrete evidence is needed to show partnerships that actively encourage Métis involvement in governance processes to state that this objective has been achieved.

5.3   Upholding Métis Traditions and Values

This section delves into MNBC's initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting Métis cultural traditions and values. We examine how MNBC integrates and honors the distinct cultural heritage of the Métis within its operations and activities, highlighting efforts to maintain and celebrate this unique cultural identity.

5.3.a   Internal/Organizational Structure

In applying the principle of Upholding Métis Traditions and Values to internal/organizational structure, we focus on the alignment of MNBC's internal processes with historically recognized forms of Métis governance.

Integration of Traditional Métis Practices — The following is taken from a document outlining MNBC's governance structure:

> MNBC's Governing Assembly, with representation from each of MNBC's Chartered Communities, is reflective of Riel's Convention of Forty, composed of one representative from each of the parishes (20 English representatives and 20 French representatives). Our democratic, community-focused government – in keeping with the intentions of the original provisional government – ensures the voices and diversity of Métis in British Columbia are reflected in our policies and governance legislation.

Key Finding — MNBC's efforts to incorporate traditional Métis governance practices, such as the reflection of Riel's Convention of Forty in its Governing Assembly, underlines its commitment to integrating Métis historical traditions into its organizational structure.

5.3.b Citizen Engagement

In applying the principle of Upholding Métis Traditions and Values to citizen engagement, we concentrate on MNBC's initiatives to engage citizens in ways that reinforce Métis traditions and values.

Engaging Citizens in Métis Cultural Preservation — At the heart of MNBC's endeavors is the commitment to not only safeguard but actively celebrate and disseminate Métis heritage, language, and traditions, critical to the community's identity in British Columbia. This mission manifests through dynamic cultural engagement and educational initiatives, such as the Métis Speaker Series, aimed at fostering a deeper connection and participation among the Métis citizens. By hosting celebrations like the annual Louis Riel Day and offering programs that educate on the Michif language, Métis history, and traditional practices, MNBC empowers the Métis community to actively engage in the preservation of their unique culture. The establishment of the Ministry of Culture, Heritage & Language further underscores MNBC's dedication to engaging its citizens in cultural preservation efforts, ensuring the enduring vibrancy of Métis traditions and values for generations to come.

Key Finding — MNBC actively engages citizens to promote Métis culture and values.

5.3.c External Partnerships

In applying the principle to citizen engagement, our attention is on MNBC's capability to collaborate with other organizations in a manner that upholds and promotes Métis traditions and values.

Alliances Enhancing Métis Advocacy — Collaborating with other Métis Nations, MNBC amplifies its efforts in critical areas like education, health care, and cultural heritage preservation. These alliances allow MNBC to tap into a broader pool of resources and expertise, bolstering its advocacy for the Métis community's well-being and rights.

The British Columbia Métis Assembly of Natural Resources (BCMANR) — BCMANR, as outlined on their website, focuses on supporting conservation efforts from the perspective of intangible cultural use. Embracing Métis traditions such as the "Laws of the Hunt," BCMANR upholds First Nations' inherent and treaty rights. Functioning as a non-political committee, it supervises Métis citizens' land interactions on behalf of MNBC while respecting First Nations' rights and titles. As a separate society affiliated with MNBC, BCMANR exemplifies robust external partnerships prioritizing Métis traditions and values.

Key Finding — Though our findings were limited, evidence suggests that MNBC maintains strong external partnerships that effectively uphold and promote Métis values and traditions.

6 Recommendations

This section represents the central contribution of the report in the form of recommendations. These suggestions are aligned with our three "Principles of Good Métis Governance", which will be detailed in sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.

6.1 Ownership of Self-Governance

6.1.a Recommendation #1

Issue: Observers outside MNBC might not recognize the adherence to the division of powers within its governance structure, potentially perceiving that the Board of Directors makes all important decisions, and not necessarily democratically. This perception undermines the distribution of roles and responsibilities among the judicial, legislative, and executive branches.

Recommendation: The principle of Ownership of Self-Governance indicates that establishing political trust necessitates that MNBC's branches—legislative, executive, and judicial—hold substantial autonomy and authority. However, MNBC's nature as a nonprofit organization complicates the distribution of power. Generally, there's skepticism towards the notion that a governance body can self-regulate and adhere to its own standards effectively. Public perception tends to be guided by written law, leading to assumptions that power within MNBC is centralized and that procedures may not be faithfully executed.

In MNBC's governance, although the Board of Directors is the legal center of power, efforts are made to balance power across the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The challenge lies in making this distribution clear to those outside MNBC, as there may be a perception that the Board still controls most decisions, particularly in urgent situations. This situation underscores the need to effectively communicate the functional balance of power to ensure external stakeholders understand that all branches are empowered and active.

MNBC faces yet another catch-22: they must distribute power across their governance structure while at the same time following legal rules that concentrate power within the Board of Directors. One approach to address this is by seeking a special governing status that allows for a more balanced power distribution, essentially aiming to be recognized beyond just a non-profit organization. While achieving this status may be challenging and time-consuming, starting this process can demonstrate MNBC's commitment to distributing power away from the Board in a formal way, which signals its commitment to distributing power to those looking at MNBC from the outside.

Area of Focus: Internal/Organizational Structure.

Alignment with Principle: It's vital for MNBC to not only distribute power internally but also to be perceived externally as effectively implementing this distribution. This dual focus enhances credibility and trust.

6.1.b Recommendation #2

Issue: Ambiguous boundaries in partnership with the Provincial Government.

Recommendation: From our analysis, the partnership between MNBC and the provincial government presents a risk of infringing on MNBC's independence, which is crucial for maintaining self-governance. We recommend establishing explicit boundaries and clear divisions of authority to safeguard MNBC's autonomy.

Area of Focus: External Partnerships.

Alignment with Principle: For true independence, it's crucial to clearly define and assert jurisdictional authority over provincial government interactions.

6.1.c Recommendation #3

Issue: Discrepancy between CCs and their voting power.

Recommendation: We recommend reconsidering the alignment of voting power among CCs. However, it's important to acknowledge that finding an ideal solution may be challenging.

MNBC's current regional structure, with uniform representation on the Board of Directors despite very different population sizes in each region, presents a challenge regarding equal representation of people rather than geographic regions. As noted in the Elections and Voting section in Findings, some areas show much lower voter turnout than others. A straightforward solution would be to merge regions with low voter turnout, such as regions 6 and 7, until they collectively meet a minimum vote threshold. If carried out, this would result in a single representative being elected from the combined regions. Another way to do it would be to carry out elections as before by electing a representative from both regions 6 and 7, with the change that the elected representative's vote would not count at the Board of Directors meetings until the minimum is reached.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge that implementing these changes could be contentious. It would either reduce the number of elected representatives or, in the second situation, result in someone not being given equal rights to others at meetings. Both scenarios are not ideal. Therefore, while this suggestion merits consideration, it's important to recognize its potential political challenges and the possibility that it may not be feasible to implement.

Area of Focus: Internal/Organizational Structure and Citizen Engagement.

Alignment with Principle: Effective power distribution requires that voting mechanisms accurately and equally represent all citizens.

6.1.d Recommendation #4

Issue: Need to expand judicial capacity.

Recommendation: We recommend that MNBC actively works to broaden the scope of its judicial branch beyond its current mediation role. This expansion should include developing capabilities for adjudicating a wider array of legal disputes, enforcing community laws, and ensuring justice across the Métis populace. To support this evolution, MNBC should establish a judicial advisory committee tasked with defining the expanded judicial functions, creating a legal framework for adjudication, and outlining procedures for law enforcement within the community.

Area of Focus: Internal/Organizational Structure

Alignment with Principle: True self-government necessitates not only the creation and execution of laws but also the capacity to adjudicate on all matters stipulated in the Constitution. This comprehensive judicial authority is fundamental for the full realization of self-governance.

6.2   Strengthened Voice and Participation

6.2.a   Recommendation #1

Issue: Low participation and engagement, particularly among youth.

Recommendation: As Métis governance evolves and expands its jurisdictional reach, there's a notable risk of a disconnect between the authority of representatives and the level of community participation. Research conducted within the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) revealed that many citizens felt excluded from meaningful consultation on policy decisions.[7] Unfortunately, expansion in jurisdiction does not automatically equate to increased community engagement and participation. This trend seems to persist in BC with MNBC, as indicated by low participation rates. To mitigate this issue, adopting more proactive strategies for involving Métis communities in governance processes is essential.

By exploring and adopting digital tools designed for active participation, MNBC could significantly enhance democratic engagement, especially in geographically isolated regions. The Ministry of Digital Government in MNBC has made commendable efforts in prioritizing data protection and sovereignty, presenting an excellent opportunity to further these efforts by embracing digital platforms to deepen democratic engagement.

MNBC's use of social media platforms like Facebook for information sharing and discussion among its CCs is a step towards this goal. However, these platforms may not be enough to foster active democratic participation. The Ministry of Digital Governance could spearhead a 'Digital Democracy' initiative, focusing on technologies that enable genuine governance involvement beyond online voting or record-keeping. This initiative could leverage new technologies to make participation more accessible and inclusive, breaking down traditional barriers to engagement.

By adopting a suite of digital tools and platforms, MNBC could lead the way in creating a more inclusive, transparent, and participatory governance model. This approach would allow community members to play a more significant role in decision-making processes, thereby improving the quality and effectiveness of democratic participation across the Métis community. Implementing such technologies promises to foster consensus-driven decision-making and minimize biases in consultation processes, enhancing the overall gov-

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[7]See Blondeau (2018)

ernance model of MNBC.

For those interested in exploring this area further, the complexity and vast array of available tools can be daunting. However, resources like Nesta's report on "Digital Democracy: The Tools Transforming Political Engagement" and The GovLab's blog on "Digital tools for participatory democracy" offer excellent starting points. These resources provide insights into how digital tools are being used worldwide to enhance democratic processes, offering valuable lessons and examples that MNBC could consider adopting in its pursuit of a more engaged and participatory governance model.

Area of Focus: Citizen Engagement.

Alignment with Principle: Considering the Métis' distinctive circumstances and widespread geographic distribution, adopting unique methods is crucial for improving their participation and representation in government.

6.2.b Recommendation #2

Issue: Need to enhance understanding and accessibility of information regarding MNBC's governance processes.

Recommendation: Provide a visual representation of election timelines and policy cycles. We recommend two visual aids:

1. **Election Timeline Diagram:** This diagram will provide a visual representation of MNBC's election timeline, including historical election outcomes and the schedule for future elections across various positions. It aims to clarify the timing of elections, thereby complementing existing documentation on the voting process and results with a succinct overview of election cycles within MNBC.

2. **Decision-Making Process Diagram:** In conjunction with the election timeline, a diagram outlining the decision-making process within MNBC should be developed. This visual aid should detail the progression from the election of representatives to the subsequent policy cycle stages, including agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. The diagram should elucidate the framework within which elected officials operate to make decisions, thereby offering a clearer understanding of MNBC's governance mechanism.

These visual aids will bridge the gap in current documentation by providing a clear and comprehensive overview of the election timings and the policy cycle, facilitating a better understanding of MNBC's governance and operational processes.

Area of Focus: Internal/Organizational Structure and Citizen Engagement.

Alignment with Principle: Effective participation depends on a clear understanding of the issues and processes involved.

6.2.c   Recommendation #3

Issue: Need to make constitutions and other legal texts more accessible to the general public.

Recommendation: We propose the creation of supplementary summary documents written 'in plain English' for all documents found on the MNBC's Acts page. These documents, which are vital sources of governance and authority, often present a challenge in comprehension due to their complex legal language. A practical step would prominently introduce a 'Summary of Documents' link at the top of the MNBC's Acts page. This link would lead to concise descriptions of each document, written without legal jargon, allowing for easier and quicker comprehension.

Furthermore, providing a basic overview of how these documents function within the MNBC governance framework would be beneficial. Specifically, illustrating how the Constitution and other legal texts influence policy decisions would clarify their practical importance. For instance, detailing how references to the Constitution are made during policy formulation or decision-making processes could clarify the direct impact of these documents on governance.

Area of Focus: Internal/Organizational Structure and Citizen Engagement.

Alignment with Principle: For participation to be meaningful, it's essential that community members have a thorough grasp of MNBC's rules and regulations.

6.3   Upholding Métis Traditions and Values

6.3.a   Recommendation #1

Issue: A need to provide materials in Michif.

Recommendation: To ensure materials are available in Michif and to promote the preservation and revitalization of this integral aspect of Métis culture, it is recommended that MNBC implement a comprehensive language strategy. This strategy should include translating key governance documents, educational materials, and public communications into Michif. Additionally, MNBC should consider developing language learning resources and programs to encourage the learning and use of Michif within the Métis community. Partnering with Michif speakers, linguists, and cultural organizations can further enrich these efforts, ensuring that materials are not only translated but also culturally relevant and accurate.

Area of Focus: Citizen Engagement and External Partnerships

Alignment with Principle: Given the significance of Michif as a cornerstone of Métis culture and values, it is imperative to ensure that materials and communications are available in this language.

7   Concluding Thoughts

When studying governance, it becomes apparent that developing and establishing a governance structure can be a lengthy process. This holds true for any form of government, and achieving 'good' governance, characterized by effectiveness, inclusivity, and accountability, is even more time-consuming. Despite these challenges, MNBC has achieved remarkable success in a notably short period.

Founded in 1996 and officially becoming the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia (MPCBC), MNBC has quickly distinguished itself. By 2003, just seven years later, MNBC's leadership had ratified the Métis Nation British Columbia Constitution, laying the foundation for a new and effective governance framework. This significant milestone marked the beginning of a series of rapid developments in governance for the Métis Nation.

In the years following, MNBC efficiently established critical governance institutions, including the Senate and the Métis Nation Governing Assembly. It also introduced innovative representation mechanisms for youth and women, ensuring diverse voices were heard and integrated into decision-making processes. Furthermore, MNBC implemented an objectively verifiable citizenship process, reinforcing the transparency and integrity of its governance. Today, MNBC's achievements serve as a powerful example of what can be accomplished in a short timeframe.

Looking ahead, MNBC is poised for further development, evidenced by a range of promising initiatives and a steadfast dedication to progress and broadening its scope. Opting for a governance review highlights MNBC's forward-thinking and commitment to refining its governance structures. It is hoped this report supports MNBC in its ongoing efforts to improve governance and continue to advance Métis self-determination.

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A Appendix

A.1 Detailed Breakdown of MNBC's Organizational Structure

We will examine MNBC's organizational structure from two perspectives. Initially, we'll explore its geographic organization, from local communities to broader regions, to gauge how regional input integrates into the overarching governance framework. Subsequently, we'll assess the interaction among MNBC's three government branches, understanding their collaborative dynamics.

At the broadest level, MNBC divides all BC into regions and sub-regions that elect representatives. At the smallest geographic unit, 39 Chartered Communities (CCs) represent the sub-regions. To become a CC, a region must receive 25 signatures from Métis citizens. Interim status will be granted if 15 signatures are obtained, allowing more time to obtain the additional 10 signatures. The Métis Nation Governing Assembly (MNGA) can, with 75% approval, give the community status as a CC. At this point, borders will be drawn to fit a new CC into the existing map. The 39 current CCs are spread around the province (see map). Each community elects a president, vice president, and a board of varying size. Participation in all levels is voluntary. The communities form the basic unit of governance.

The CCs are then unified into seven Regional Governance Councils (RGCs). The RGCs are made up of the Presidents of each CC, along with representatives for youth and women, and the Regional Director, who serves as the chairperson without voting rights; the youth and women's representatives are outlined in The Métis Nation Youth Act and The Métis Nation Women's Act respectively. Additionally, the RGCs include non-voting members from different regional areas, such as the Captain of Natural Resources from the British Columbia Métis Assembly of Natural Resources (BCMANR), representatives from the Métis Veterans, and members of the MNBC Senate. The presidents form the main link between the regions and the Board of Directors as the seven elected representatives constitute 7 of the 11 members.

The Board of Directors forms the Executive branch, comprised of 11 members elected by Métis citizens. This board includes the President, Vice President, seven Regional Directors, and chairs for Women's and Youth councils. Legally, the BC Societies Act requires the existence of this Board, ensuring MNBC meets legal standards. Unlike the minimum legal requirements, MNBC chooses to elect its board, showing its dedication to a governance model that goes beyond just legal needs and reflects the community's wishes, thus moving towards a truly democratic system that enhances self-governance.

The Métis Nation Governing Assembly (MNGA) serves as the legislative arm of MNBC as laid out by The Métis Nation Governing Assembly Act. It consists of elected officials,

including the Presidents or Vice-Presidents of the CCs, MNBC's Regional Directors, the MNBC President and Vice-President, the Chairperson of the Métis Women of British Columbia, and the Youth Chairperson from Métis Youth British Columbia. The MNGA's key responsibilities involve reviewing and approving legislation, regulations, rules, resolutions, and amendments to the Constitution. These are then presented for final approval at either an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or a Special General Meeting. Additionally, the MNGA can establish Commissions, Committees, or other groups as needed to fulfill its legislative functions. The agenda for each AGM covers the Audited Financial Report for the past Fiscal Year, the President's Report for the same period, and any other matters pertaining to the Métis Nation Governing Assembly.

The AGM is a pivotal event in MNBC's legislative process, acting as the platform for approving changes proposed by the MNGA. While the MNGA sets much of the AGM's agenda, this larger gathering extends an invitation to all registered Métis citizens of BC. The AGM is conducted yearly to review and discuss significant topics, including presenting and approving the Audited Financial Report for the last fiscal year.

Finally, the Senate serves as the judicial branch of MNBC. Enacted in 2005, the Senate Act is the guiding legislation outlining the Senate's functions and responsibilities, encompassing mediation, citizenship appeals, and ceremonial roles. Key elements detailed in the Senate Act include the Senate's mandate and authority, criteria and procedures for appointing Senators, terms of office along with the procedure for removal, and guidelines covering protocol, ethics, and standards of behavior. Each of the seven RGCs within MNBC selects a representative to address their judicial concerns in the Senate. These selections are made based on non-political criteria. The duties, ethical guidelines, and powers of a Senator are laid out by The Senate Act, ensuring clear expectations and governance.

A.2   Detailed Breakdown of Elections and Voting

Enacted in 2007, The Electoral Act was designed to ensure that the MNBC General Elections are conducted in a manner that is fair, open, transparent, and democratic. This act comprehensively details the procedures and rules governing the General Election process. Key aspects covered by the Electoral Act include:

- Determination of election dates

- Definitions of the roles played by the Chief Electoral Officer, Returning Officer, Scrutineers, and Poll Clerk

- Specifications regarding electors

- Detailed procedures for nominations, acclamations, candidate withdrawals, and handling in the event of a candidate's death

- Guidelines for managing voters and voter lists

- Policies for filling vacant seats

- Voting procedures

- The maintenance and management of polling stations, including necessary materials and personnel

- Expected conduct at the polls

- The process for announcing election results

- Protocols for requesting recounts and filing appeals

MNBC conducted its general election in September 2020, followed by two by-elections in the subsequent years, 2021 and 2022. General elections are held every four years. Or, to be precise, according to the Constitution, "Elections for the MNBC shall be held once every four (4) years on any date within 6 months prior to the 4th year anniversary." The MNBC President, Vice President, and the Women and Youth Councils are voted upon during the general election. Additionally, each region elects a director along with Women and Youth Representatives. However, it seems that in some regions, the roles of Women or Youth Representatives were not filled, as no declarations for these positions are apparent in certain areas.[8]

Stepping away from the specific processes we've mentioned, MNBC elections face a significant challenge with low voter turnout, particularly among younger voters and in some regions. While it's common for young people to vote less in Canada and globally, MNBC's elections have even lower rates for this demographic. For context, Elections Canada's 2019 data shows a 67% voter turnout across all ages, with youth (ages 18-24) turnout at 54%. However, in MNBC's 2022 by-election, the overall turnout was just 9.77%, with youth participation at only 2.85%. This indicates that, nationally, youth vote at about 80% (54/67) the rate of other age groups, but in MNBC elections, their participation drops to roughly 30% (2.85/9.77) compared to other age groups.

Many reasons might explain the low youth voter turnout in MNBC elections, and comparing it directly with the wider Canadian voting patterns might not be completely fair. However, the numbers make it clear: Young people vote much less in MNBC elections, which calls for a focused effort to get more young voters involved.

Examining voter turnout across various regions shows that regional differences are not a major issue. The turnout in each region was relatively consistent, hovering around the average of 9.77%, with no significant differences that would raise concerns. However, the total number of votes cast in each region does present a noteworthy issue, primarily

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[8]For full results see Final Election Results, 2020.

attributable to the markedly different population sizes in each region.

A group needs at least 15 members to form an interim CC. Once membership increases to 25 members, the group can apply to the RGC and MNGA for full CC status. This leads to different sizes and numbers of voters in each region. For instance, in the 2022 election, Region 2 had 550 votes, while Region 6 had only 51 (see Electoral Act Committee: Past Election Stats for more). Whether these differences are problematic depends on the resolution of internal disputes. Expanding CCs to include more participants in governance is essential, but achieving fair voting representation and integrating new CCs poses challenges. An important issue is ensuring each region has equal representation on the board, which could give individuals in smaller regions more influence. We'll explore potential solutions to this in the recommendations section.