

A Vision of the Nation

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Inclusion of Seven Communities into the Métis Nation of Ontario and Its Implications for Métis Legitimacy, Governance and Identity

A Report by the Chair in Métis Governance and Policy

Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Saskatchewan

Prepared for the
Métis National Council (MNC)

Submitted on behalf of the
Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S)

Research Team

Dr. Kurtis Boyer
Dr. Daniel Voth
Darrelyne Bickel

Participants

Dr. Jennifer Adese
Dr. Chris Andersen
Dr. Adam Gaudry
Dr. Darryl Leroux
Dr. Brenda Macdougall
Louise Simard
Dr. Allyson Stevenson
Jean Teillet
Sasha Thomas (Pseudonym)
Dr. Cheryl Troupe
Sandra Quills (Pseudonym)

Date: August 23, 2024

Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	9
1.2 Approach	9
1.2.1 Interviews	9
1.2.2 Document Review	11
1.3 Ethics	11
1.4 Research Team	12
2. Critical Document Review and Case Study: Testing Claims Against Evidence	14
2.1 Overview	14
2.2 Case Components	14
2.3 Method	15
2.4 Framework for Engagement	15
2.5 What Do A.C. Osborne’s Interviewees Say	17
2.6 Analysis	19
2.7 Conclusion	20
3. Interviews	22
3.1 Question Results and Analysis - How Much Do You Know About the Seven Communities?	22
3.1.1 “There Might be Something There”	22
3.1.2 “I Don’t Know Who You Are”	24
A Vision of the Nation	25
3.2 Legitimacy	25
3.2.1 Overview	25
3.2.2 Core Argument	25
3.2.3 Sources of Legitimacy	26
3.2.4 Relational Legitimacy	29
3.2.5 Historical Legitimacy	31
3.2.6 Territorial Legitimacy	35
3.2.7 Analysis	37
3.3 Institutions and Governance	39
3.3.1 Overview	39
3.3.2 Core Argument	39

3.3.3 Governance Structures: Aiding Fragmentation	40
3.3.4 Consequences of Fragmented Governance	43
3.3.5 Analysis	45
3.4 Identity	46
3.4.1 Overview	46
3.4.2 Core Argument	47
3.4.3 Collective Identity vs. Individual Lineage	47
3.4.4 Red River and Beyond	51
3.4.5 Analysis	52
4. Documents Reviewed	54

Executive Summary

The inclusion of seven new historic Métis communities in Ontario by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) in 2017 has sparked significant political debate and division within the Métis Nation. In response, the Métis National Council (MNC) has established an Expert Panel to review the history and legitimacy of these communities through the lens of the National Definition of Métis and contemporary Métis governance.

Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) has proactively engaged in this process by partnering with the JSGS Chair in Métis Governance and Policy at the University of Saskatchewan. This collaboration allows the review process to be conducted with academic rigor and impartiality. To ensure this, MN-S has not been involved in any of the project's operations.

The research team is made up of Dr. Kurtis Boyer, Dr. Daniel Voth and Darrelyne Bickel. The project explores the foundational aspects of Métis nationhood, focusing on legitimacy, governance, and identity. Rather than solely concentrating on the specifics of the seven communities, this project also aims to delineate the broader contours of the Métis Nation, identifying the essential elements necessary for its vitality and accurate representation. To do this, the project team interviewed scholars whose expertise provided insight on topics relevant both to Métis life in the West, and for understanding the nature and implications of MNO including the seven communities.

Section 2: Critical Document Review and Case Study

Purpose: The work of the panel and the decisions which follow will have tremendous impact on Métis identity, governance, and nationhood. It is therefore imperative that these discussions and decisions, regarding the inclusion of communities, be evidence driven, accurate, thorough, and reflect the historical and contemporary realities of the communities in question. Good research not only ensures that decisions are just and informed, but also upholds the integrity of the Métis Nation by fostering trust among its members and between the Nation and the broader public.

The purpose of this section is to examine the quality and use of historical documentation and scholarly work related to the inclusion of the seven communities in the Métis Nation. Specifically, the project's methodology involved a review of documents produced by scholars, consultants, and Métis governments to understand the context in which claims about these communities were made.

Findings: The review raised concerns about the scope, quality, and representation of research, particularly in how it has been deployed by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) in public-facing documents. Using the article "Rivers of Resistance", written by Dr. Dylan Miner, as a case study -- our examination revealed significant misalignment between the claims made by Miner and the evidence he cited. Miner's article was chosen because it was showcased by MNO at the 2024,

Back to Batoche Days. Miner's claim that a self-ascribed Métis identity has historically existed in the seven communities, depends on his use of a 1901 publication by A.C. Osborne. In our examination of this publication, we found his use of it to be selective and potentially misleading to readers. In fact, we argue that our analysis shows that Osborne's work does not substantiate the existence of a self-aware political Métis community in the region, as suggested by Miner.

Implications: The findings suggest that the scholarly work and public documents used to justify the inclusion of the seven communities may not be as robust or reliable as presented by the MNO. This raises broader concerns about the accuracy and integrity of the research informing such significant discussions. For the panel, this underscores the importance of critically evaluating the sources and claims used to support the inclusion of these communities. The panel should consider these findings as a cautionary tale, advocating for more rigorous and transparent research practices when making decisions that affect the Métis Nation's identity and governance.

Section 3: Interviews

This section, which makes up the majority of the substantive content of the project, uses data collected via an interview process to explore aspects of Métis legitimacy, governance, and identity. These discussions are then analysed and grouped into themes that the research team thought relevant for supporting a discussion on the inclusion of the seven communities, and the impact that that might have on the Métis nation.

Question Results and Analysis - How Much Do You Know About the Seven Communities?

Purpose: This subsection was undertaken to assess the range of levels of familiarity among scholars regarding the seven communities being evaluated for inclusion in the Métis Nation. Given that these scholars are not only Métis but have dedicated their lives to understanding the nuances of Métis identity, governance, culture, and history, their level of caution or awareness regarding these communities serves as a contextual benchmark to measure how these communities may or may not be present in the collective memory and understanding of the nation.

Findings: The findings were categorized into two broad themes:

1. **There Might Be Something There:** Some interviewees indicated they had encountered indications there might be some Indigenous significance or peoplehood in the seven communities, though they lacked concrete evidence. For example, some interviewees reported that their professional experience had led them to consider that might be a distinct group in the northern Great Lakes area, although lacking in key markers of Métis identity. Another recalled instances from historical documents indicating political organizing among half-breeds, but she lacked detailed knowledge of the communities' origins or collectivity.

2. **I Don't Know Who You Are:** Even with their extensive knowledge of Métis life across a broad geographic range, the majority (8 out of 11) respondents expressed a complete void knowledge regarding the seven communities, including not recalling encountering records or evidence from these places.

Implications: Findings from the first theme suggests that while there may be some historical or cultural significance to these communities, the evidence is speculative and requires further investigation. While caution should be exercised when attempting to draw conclusions from the second theme, we felt that asking scholars about their knowledge of these communities provides a benchmark for assessing their historical and cultural recognition within the Métis Nation, revealing gaps in collective memory and understanding.

Legitimacy

Purpose: Legitimacy refers to the rightful and accepted authority of an entity often grounded in historical, legal, political, and social foundations. The objective here was to explore how scholars thought about legitimacy in their work, and how we might think about it both in the West, and if applicable, in the seven communities.

Findings: The analysis revealed a significant mismatch in how legitimacy is being deployed both within the Métis Nation and in the discussions surrounding the seven communities. Our assessment of the interviews is that scholars pointed out that there are limits to relying on settler legal legitimacy (such as *Powley* or federal/provincial law-making power) as this neglects and diminishes sources of authority that have emerged from the Métis nation. These would include drawing from relational contexts, such as the ties between communities and their connections to the land, as well as historical and cultural practices unique to the Métis.

Implications: The findings suggest that the panel should critically evaluate the legitimacy claims of the seven communities, considering the reliance on settler legal frameworks. MNO's over-reliance on these frameworks undermines the distinctiveness of Métis identity and governance, and this could lead to decisions that weaken efforts to sustain Métis-specific systems of legitimacy.

Institutions and Governance

Purpose: This subsection examines how MNO's unilateral inclusion of the seven communities is made possible by gaps in the governance structures of the Métis Nation. This subsection also examined the potential impacts that the *manner in which* the communities were included, might represent for our future ability to maintain a cohesive nation-wide governance structure that supports collective action and not fragmentation.

Findings: The analysis revealed that the governance structure of the Métis Nation blends traditional principles of confederations with modern political frameworks which creates significant weaknesses. Specifically, the lack of centralized enforcement mechanisms (common in federalist states) has allowed provincial Métis governments like the MNO to act independently, without broader consultation or agreement with a national collective vision. The MNO's actions— the unilateral inclusion of the seven communities, while other governing members protested, exploits a fragmented governance system. This as well as leveraging support from a Canadian provincial government was found to deepened divisions within the Métis Nation.

Implications: Even if the seven communities are ultimately found to align with the National Definition of Métis, the process by which they were included should raise concerns. This sets a troubling precedent for how Métis governments might exercise conceptualize and exercise their political autonomy in the future. The panel should carefully consider how such actions could either reinforce the unity and integrity of the Métis Nation or lead to further internal fragmentation and destabilization.

Identity

Purpose: This subsection explores the concept of Métis identity as it is taken up in the West and how the MNO has operationalized identity in relation to the National Definition. The objective is to assess whether the identity claims of the seven communities align with the broader collective identity of the Métis Nation.

Findings: The analysis found that the MNO's conception of identity, which focuses on individual lineage and connections to individuals in the past, is weakly aligned with the National Definition. There is a strong focus on individual genealogy tied to ancestors, but not enough emphasis on the enduring interdependent relationships between communities and individuals. Interviewees pointed out that simply living in a place does not make it a Métis community, emphasizing that there is a critical difference between being *in* a place and being Indigenous *from* a place.

We found that the MNO approach can tend to create a racialized view of identity through a dependency on the use of “root ancestors” and “verified Métis family lines”, which is a fundamental departure from how Métis Nation in the West understands identity to be tied to a person's relations to a community with shared histories, political struggles, and cultural practices. Given that our communities have always had relationships with other Indigenous communities, MNO's use of Métis identity to claim territory, without strong historical and communal foundations, challenges the integrity of Métis identity and its relational context with other Indigenous peoples.

We also find there is room for improving the robustness of community acceptance systems in the West.

Implications: The findings suggest that the panel should consider whether the way identity claims are made to justify the inclusion of the seven communities align with the broader, collective identity of the Métis Nation. Specifically, the panel should consider how the MNO's emphasis on individual lineage over community-based identity risks fragmenting our conception of Métis, that has long been rooted in shared relationships, culture, and history rather than just ancestry.

This genealogically driven approach is inconsistent with the sense of collective identity central to Métis nationhood. Suppose these seven communities are recognized based on this narrower definition of identity. In that case, it might create a precedent that undermines the inclusive, community-based approach to Métis identity across Canada.

Additionally, the panel should consider how this focus on lineage may inadvertently lead to tensions with other Indigenous peoples. The MNO's approach may be seen as encroaching on the identities and territories of others, which could create conflicts that disrupt Indigenous solidarity and mutual recognition. Ensuring that identity claims are firmly anchored in a broader community context, rather than just individual genealogy, is crucial to maintaining the integrity and unity of the Métis Nation.

1. Introduction

The inclusion of seven new historic Métis communities in Ontario by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) in 2017, has ignited considerable political contention and division within the Métis Nation. Consequently, the Métis National Council (MNC) established an Expert Panel following a resolution passed at its 2021 General Assembly. The panel's mandate is to review the history and legitimacy of these communities through “the lens of the National Definition of Métis and contemporary Métis governance”.

In response to the Expert Panel's mandate, and in recognition of the critical importance of addressing complex and divisive issues through independent and evidence-based processes, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) has partnered with the JSGS Chair in Métis Governance and Policy, based at the University of Saskatchewan, to create an arms-length process to support the mandate of the Expert Panel. The chair is completely autonomous from MN-S and any governmental influence, adhering strictly to the principles of academic freedom and the responsibilities that accompany independent academic inquiry. MN-S has not been involved in any operations of this research and was not party to the formation of research findings.

Instead of only delving into the internal specifics of these communities, this project will aim to delineate the broader contours of the Nation and identify the essential elements necessary for its vitality and accurate representation of our collective identity. It aims to then apply this framework to examine the inclusion of the seven communities. The overarching question animating this project is what are the systems of legitimacy, governance, and identity that operate to support the Métis Nation? How might these systems both respond to, and be impacted by, the inclusion of the seven Ontario communities? More specifically, the project will involve inquiry into what constitutes legitimacy in the context of a nation, the essential components of effective and ethical governance structures, and the challenge of defining membership inclusively while preserving the unique character and autonomy of the nation.

1.2 Approach

1.2.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews of approximately 60 minutes in length were used to explore the complexities of Métis governance, legitimacy, and identity. We originally envisioned two sets of interviews for this study, one with academics and a second with Métis organizers and activists with emphasis on Saskatchewan. However, after our initial effort to hold both sets of interviews, it became clear that completing the second set was not possible within the time constraints.

Participants were invited to make comments on the seven communities directly if they wished, however because the project is interested in broader contours of the nation across our three areas of interest, doing so was not required.

The criteria for inclusion emerged out of our initial literature and document review.¹ Invitations were made on the basis of an active research program in one of the three areas of expertise (legitimacy, governance, identity), or expertise on the seven communities. An effort was made to build in diversity to these interviews with attention to factors like membership in an MNC affiliate, including MNO, as well as scholars without membership in any provincial Métis organization. We also sought to balance gender diversity and diversity of disciplinary training. With this report being for Métis Nation Saskatchewan, some effort was made to identify scholars with research contributions, or ties, to Saskatchewan but not necessarily the MN-S. Effort was also made to remain attentive to diversity of thought and perspectives among the interviewees.

In particular, the team built in an aspect of perceived diversity. By this we mean we attempted to invite scholars who we thought from their writings, public talks, and biographies would bring a range of views not only about the seven communities, but about our three areas of interest. While we did achieve diversity on the three areas of interest, as the interviews unfolded we found there was less diversity of view on the seven communities than we had tried to engender – the individuals we identified as likely to have more supportive views of including the seven communities turned out to have a similar set of views as other interviewees. The team met to discuss this and decided that with the time constraints of the study we were not able to pivot our interviewee list.

The interviews were organized around a set of questions that the team generated from the document review and publications associated with each scholar, with each interviewee receiving the questions in advance. While each scholar was given questions on the three areas of interest, and if applicable to their research program, the seven communities, the questions themselves were not standardized, with the exception of one question. This led to some advantages and disadvantages.

The advantage was that the interviewee was able to engage deeply with the connection between one or more of our areas of interest and their scholarly and other research activity. This meant the time spent with the scholars was uniformly helpful and informative. Interviewees were prepared to speak from their expertise from the moment the interviews started. The disadvantage was that at the conclusion of the interviews there was another level of analysis that was needed to draw the contributions of interviewees into conversation in service of writing the report.

We achieved this by building a jointly defined, colour coded guide of sub-themes that emerged from each of the three areas of interest. We used this guide to identify common conversations across interviewees on a number of sub-themes within each of the three areas of interest. The team

¹ For a list of documents that were reviewed throughout the project see “Documents Reviewed”

then placed these overlapping areas of comment in conversation with one another, followed by an analysis of the significance of the conversation. We also made an effort to be clear about the context out of which each interviewee is speaking by using larger block quotes, contextual framing or paraphrasing, or a combination of these approaches. We have also made clear when an interviewee was speaking specifically about the seven communities. We have noted where the research team is thinking through the implications of the interviewee's intervention to larger questions in this report. Those moments are exclusively the analysis of the research team.

All contributions that appear in text have been seen in context by the interviewees. This is taken up in slightly more detail in the ethics section below.

One standard question was asked to all interviewees. Each interviewee was asked if, in their work, they had encountered evidence or activity of Métis life from the seven communities or Ontario generally that might be pertinent to this study. The rationale behind this question is that the material scholars publish is often “the tip of the iceberg” in terms of what they might collect and analyze. It is not unusual if most of what academics collect is never put into a publication or final research output. In that light, we were keen to know if research material had come across an interviewee's desk that might have been from these communities. Some interviewees offered answers to this as they answered other questions, and others were asked this question for clarity. The other part of the rationale for this question is that the publication records of our interviewees demonstrated both depth of knowledge, but also breadth of knowledge. We were interested in seeing if these experts – who demonstrate knowledge about a range of places, ideas, processes adjacent and relevant to the seven communities – had seen material from the seven communities in passing. Analysis on this can be found in the section: “Question Results and Analysis - How Much Do You Know About the Seven Communities?”

1.2.2 Document Review

This review was not designed to necessarily comment on the seven communities specifically, but rather to ensure we had a familiarity with the documentary record and the context from which our interviewees were commenting. However, this review raised concerns for us about the way research has been conducted and deployed. While the timeline, resources, and scope of this project did not allow for a full critique of the body of documents related to these seven communities, we have attempted to illustrate our concerns with the way evidence is being deployed to make claims about the seven communities using a small document case study, further details of which can be found below.

1.3 Ethics

The project applied for and received an ethics certificate from the University of Saskatchewan. Interviewees were given access to their transcripts, and also have been shown their quotes in context within the final report. This was done to provide an opportunity for interviewees to comment

on the way they have been engaged in this report. Several individuals requested that their contributions be attributed to a pseudonym. With their permission we have created one, noted in the text where this is the case, and taken care to remove identifying comments in their contributions below. With the Métis academic space being quite small the team has been keen to ensure that those who wish not to be named should be afforded careful protection towards that goal.

The interviews below have been lightly edited for clarity and readability. Words common in oral communication have been removed to improve clarity of the contributor's thought. These words include "um, so, right?, you know."

1.4 Research Team

Dr. Kurtis Boyer

Dr. Kurtis Boyer is a citizen of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan and a political scientist specializing in Indigenous governance and political psychology. Originally from southern Saskatchewan, Dr. Boyer earned his PhD in Political Science from Lund University in Sweden in 2018 and currently holds the position of Research Chair in Métis Governance and Policy at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Saskatchewan, where he also serves as an assistant professor. His research focuses on Métis governance, with particular attention to distinction-based planning—a framework that emphasizes the unique identity, culture, and needs of the Métis Nation in governance structures.

Dr. Boyer has experience working with multiple Métis governments on governance, constitutional reform, and legal and political analysis, and has contributed to discussions on Indigenous governance before the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples. In 2024, he was appointed as the first recipient of the Alphonsine Lafond – Tom Molloy Memorial Fellowship on Leadership and Innovation in Indigenous Governance, awarded by the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Dr. Daniel Voth

Dr. Daniel Voth is Métis from the Métis Nation of the Red River Valley. He is a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and the Métis Nation of British Columbia. Raised in Winnipeg's inner city and Manitoba's Interlake region, his research focuses on the political relationships between Métis and First Nations people with particular attention to the way settler-imposed power structures and land dispossession undermine important gender orientations to governance. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary and served as the Director of the International Indigenous Studies Program from 2019 - 2022. He is also a co-Director of the Social Sciences and Humanities Council funded partnership grant Critical Approaches to Indigenous Relationality with Drs. Shalene Jobin, Matthew Wildcat, Gina Starblanket, Jessie Loyer and PhD student Ryan Crosschild. Together they

also run the Prairie Indigenous Relationality Network with a research focus on prairie Indigenous philosophers, the study and practice of relationality, and Indigenous political action.

Daniel earned his Honours BA from the University of Winnipeg in 2007. With experience both inside and outside the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, Daniel returned to higher education and earned his PhD from UBC in 2015. In his time as the Director of the International Indigenous Studies Program he designed and implemented a new governance protocol for the program, was part of a research team that compared Indigenous Studies programs in North America and the Pacific rim and served as an expert external reviewer for another Indigenous Studies program in Canada. From 2022-2023 Daniel held the Fulbright Research Chair in Indigenous Issues at San Diego State University. His research has been published in the Canadian Journal of Political Science, the University of Toronto Law Journal, twice in Native American and Indigenous Studies, Canadian Journal of Urban Research, Wicazo Sa and several book chapters.

Darrellyne Bickel

Darrellyne is Métis from northern/central Manitoba with ancestral roots in Red River. She is a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation and a citizen of the Metis Nation-Saskatchewan. She recently completed a Master of Arts in Political Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Prior to graduate studies, she completed a Bachelor of Arts, with Great Distinction, majoring in Political Studies and minoring in Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan. Her previous work experience includes research for various Métis-specific projects, including the co-development of a learning module on gender for an upcoming undergraduate Métis governance course with Dr. Kathy Walker, and over six years as a Legal Assistant. Her research interests include Indigenous governance, politics, and policy, critical political theory, Indigenous feminism, and gender law and policy. Darrellyne will begin a PhD in Public Policy with the JSGS Research Chair in Métis Governance and Policy in September 2024.

2. Critical Document Review and Case Study: Testing Claims Against Evidence

2.1 Overview

This project's methodology includes a review of documents produced by scholars and consultants including historians and social scientists, as well as documents produced by and for Métis governments in service of making claims about the seven communities. The intention of this review was to ensure the research team understood the context our interviewees were commenting within. However, after engagement with the historical documentation, and in particular documents that which have been used to justify the inclusion of the seven communities, the team began to have concerns about the scope and quality of research conducted on these communities, and to a greater extent, the way this research has been represented and deployed by MNO in public facing documents.

The aim of this section is to provide a detailed illustration of our concern through a small case study. The study involves a claim made by a scholar in a public facing article distributed by MNO; an assessment of the evidence used to support that claim; and an analysis of whether evidence supports the claim. Conducting research with integrity is crucial not only for maintaining academic rigor and public trust but also for ensuring that our approach to these complex questions is grounded in a truthful and comprehensive understanding of the evidence. This is particularly important when addressing issues that have significant implications for the identity and governance of the Métis Nation.

Our core argument is that the claim made by the scholar and distributed by MNO is not supported by the scholar's chosen evidence. Arriving at the claim made by the scholar requires one to selectively engage with the evidence in unconvincing ways. This phenomenon was found several times over the course of the document review; however, we are limited to illustrating our concern in this case study due to the time and resource limits of the Vision of the Nation project. The following section of the report concludes with both guidance and advice about the treatment of historical, scholarly, and other sources, and a comment on the damage done to both Métis peoplehood arguments and the public trust in research when sources and evidence are decontextualized and re-configured seemingly to advance contemporary political aims.

2.2 Case Components

Our MNO public facing document is Dr. Dylan Miner's *Rivers of Resistance: "We Were Tired of Hiding Behind Trees" The Ebb and Flow of Métis History as it Unfolded on Ontario's Shores*

(2022). Miner's article was chosen for several reasons. First, it offers a distilled argument about the history, law, politics, and context out of which key MNO claims emerge. Second, visitors to the MNO pavilion at Back to Batoche 2024 were invited to take a copy of this work on the premise that it provided high quality information supporting the claims made by the organization. Third, the work captures what MNO would like its own citizens and Indigenous and non-Indigenous interlocutors to know about MNO claims.

None of the researchers were familiar with this work prior to the study.

2.3 Method

Overview: We created a simplified fact check on a claim made within the article. We started by having a single member of the team read the article in full. This team member then identified a key claim made in the work. The team member then read (in full) the original piece of evidence used to inform that claim. This team member answered a set of questions about the evidence and analyzed the interaction between the claim and evidence used to support it.

Finally, the team member read a secondary critique of the source from the work of Adese, Leroux, O'Toole (2020). This team member then wrote up their analysis. All of this was done without telling the other team members anything about what the original team member had found at any stage of the review.

We then had a second team member read exactly the same documents, in exactly the same order, and assess the claims in exactly the same way. This second team member had no prior knowledge of the work, original concerns, or why they were being asked to read these documents and answer questions and provide an analysis. This "blind analysis" allowed us to better ensure that that the conclusions reached in the critical review of the Miner text, were reproducible and without prior influence of that might have occurred in group discussion.

The two analyses were identical in their answers to the questions, and arrived at the same analytical conclusions about how well the claim is supported by the evidence.

2.4 Framework for Engagement

Miner's article has an insert on p. 61 titled "'Halfbreeds' and Other Names." In the insert Miner claims:

The racialized term "halfbreeds" is found extensively in historical records in Ontario, referring to both individuals and communities. In 1846, Lt-Col. Richard Henry Bonnycastle wrote that in Penetanguishene, "you first see the half-breed, the offspring of the white and red, who had all the bad qualities of both with very few of the good either, except in rare instances." The term "halfbreed" is now considered outdated and offensive, especially

when used by non-Métis individuals. Today, however, there are Métis citizens who have chosen to reclaim the term "halfbreed." A.C. Osbourne's [sic] "The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828," published by the Ontario Historical Society in 1901, includes extensive oral histories of community members speaking in their own voices -and no fewer than 20 uses of the term "halfbreed." [Emphasis added]

This assertion is important for a number of reasons. As pointed out in a number of the historical reports used to support the inclusion of the seven communities, self-ascription, or the act of naming oneself, in one's own voice, is rare to uncommon in frequency within the primary and secondary records. This makes both the assertion made by Miner and the deployment of Osborne (1901) as supporting evidence of self-ascription important to the overarching claim that there is a self-ascribed politically aware and coherent Métis collectivity in Penetanguishene specifically and the seven communities more broadly. Also, in our wider document and literature review we found a recurring use of Osborne's research and interviews.

The following questions were asked of Osborne's work:

1. How many people are interviewed by A.C. Osborne for this publication?
2. How many times do the interviewees use "Halfbreed" to describe themselves, in their own words.
3. How many times do interviewees use Halfbreed about other people?
4. What other terms do interviewees use to describe either themselves or others?
5. Does A.C. Osborne's work support Miner's claim that Osborne captures a self-ascribed Halfbreed or Métis community in the study region?
6. Any other reflections on the use of the source?

In addition to the basic questions above, this case study asks *does Osborne's work demonstrate a self-ascribed half-breed community which moved from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in and after 1828 as claimed by Miner?*

We found that Miner's claim relies on a mischaracterization of what appears in Osborne's work. Miner over selects supporting information while significantly under selecting information that weakens the claim. Actually, if read carefully, we argue Osborne undermines Miner's claim.

By way of context, A.C. Osborne tended to describe the people living at Drummond Island and Penetanguishene as voyageurs. Not only in the title of the work, but also in the body of the work, he relies on the term voyageur. In the introductory pages of his piece, he frames the discussion by using the term half-breed three times, and the term voyageur 12 times. In one of the three uses of half-breed, Osborne states that "These hardy voyageurs or half-breeds are the descendants of

French-Canadians, born principally in Quebec, many of whom married Indian women, their progeny also becoming British soldiers or attaches of the fur company in various capacities” (4). At first glance this may not be relevant as Miner’s claim is that the people living in the area were instead using the term half-breed themselves. However, there is some ambiguity about whom Osborne thinks he is engaging. His use of “or” here could indicate that these terms are interchangeable in his mind, or that some belong to a category of voyageurs and others to half-breeds. Obviously, voyageur should not automatically be considered the same thing as being an Indigenous person, nor should voyageur be used as a stand-in for an Indigenous community.

Osborne also frames these interviewees as settlers in the same paragraph (p.5). He states “They were in the front of battle during the stirring scenes at Mackinaw, St. Joseph Island, Sault Ste. Marie and other sanguinary points during the war of 1812-15. This is a testimony more eloquent than words to the loyalty and worth of the ancestors of the settlers around Penetanguishene” (p.5 emphasis added). Here again, Miner’s claim is that this document offers self-ascriptions, and in contrast “settlers” is Osborne’s term. We raise it here in part because it helps contextualize for the core evidence Miner uses from sections of the work where Osborne’s interviewees speak for themselves.

2.5 What Do A.C. Osborne’s Interviewees Say

Miner’s argument could reasonably lead one to believe Osborne’s work is full of many tens of people from the region all declaring themselves to be half-breeds. Rather, Osborne’s publication is made up of the voices of six individuals. While counting the number of times a word is used is a bit of a clunky measurement tool, Miner invites us to do so by arguing half-breed was used no fewer than 20 times (p.61). After a basic count, when only these six interviewees are taken into consideration, it’s 11 times, not 20.

Importantly, only one of those six individuals expresses their own identity using anything resembling “half-breed.” Angelique Langlade calls herself a “Chippewa half-breed” and that her mother was a Chippewa woman, and her father was a French half-breed. Miner does not ever explore the possibility that this self-ascription undermines his argument. Why is Langlade a half-breed and not a Chippewa woman of mixed ancestry? This likely possibility is never entertained by Miner. Indeed, of the 11 uses of the term by interviewees, three are from Langlade, and none of the others use it in a manner to describe themselves.

Miner infers Langlade's identity as 'half-breed,' yet it is unclear how Langlade herself understands or intends this label. When she refers to herself as a 'Chippewa half-breed' Miner may be advancing his argument without fully considering the nuances of her self-identification. Further, one person out of six saying they are a Chippewa half-breed is not a robust record of half-breed self-ascription.

More detail on how the term is being used can be gleaned by moving carefully through the six interviews. Lewis Solomon, born 1821 to William Solomon, whom we believe to be on the Solomon root ancestor list, has by far the longest interview of the six, and only uses half-breed to describe other people, never himself. He uses half-breed to talk about a nameless woman who married George Gordon (p.10), again about William Cowan, and then about his assistants (p.13).

Solomon does say a number of other interesting things that might provide a sense of his positionality. The first is encased in a story about finding gold with an unnamed “Indian.” He states:

An Indian and myself once found a rock rich with gold near Moon River. We marked the spot, but I never could find it on going back. My chum would never go back with me, for he said, “Indian dies if he shows white man treasure” (p.12).

This story is important for the purposes of this case study. While a clear self-ascription is not present in this story, there is an interesting opportunity to see who Solomon is through the eyes of an Indigenous person. The story begs the question, who does the “Indian” think Solomon is? The way Solomon tells the story positions himself as a white man, and/or a man who would bring white interests with him should he be given location of the gold. Either way, Solomon is not framed by this native man as part of the world of Indigenous political interests or survival.

This story seems to complement another story told by Solomon. Describing work, he had engaged in for several British aristocrats, Solomon states that “Lord Lennox sailed from New York ahead of the others and was never heard of after. The vessel was supposed to have been lost, with all on board. I left them at Buffalo and went back to Malden, *where I met my fellow voyageurs*, and we came down Lake Erie, making a portage at Long Point” (p.15, emphasis added). This is probably the clearest self-ascription he uses, and it has nothing to do with being half-breed and more about being a voyageur. As noted above being a voyageur and Indigenous were not automatically the same thing.

Solomon would again pick this up in his discussion of being asked to sing by a wealthy woman traveling with Colonel Jarvis. Solomon states “I was a pretty fair singer in those days, and she often asked me to sing those beautiful songs of the French voyageurs, which she seemed to think so nice, and I often sang them for her” (p.16). Here again, he talks about himself as a practitioner of voyageur songs and culture.

Michael Labatte says nothing of half-breeds at all. The word is not uttered in the whole of the interview about himself, nor about anyone he mentions.

Mrs. Boucher, another interviewee, refers to herself as “a native of Drummond Island” along with her husband (p.20). It’s not immediately clear what this means for her. Other people from the

region are referred to as settlers (p.8) and Indians with little in the way of clarifying what these identity categories mean to these people. While she lists off other people she thinks are half-breeds, she does not use that term to describe herself.

Jean Baptiste Sylvestre and Antoine Labatte also do not use the term half-breed to describe themselves. They use the term for their mothers and a few of the other people they knew.

2.6 Analysis

The ascription of an identity to another, even a close family member, is not the same as expressing an identity about oneself to others. These six interviews do not support Miner's claim. If read carefully, an argument can be made that Osborne undermines Miner's claim, particularly with respect to Solomon who tells a story positioning himself as a non-Indigenous person. To our eyes the best takeaway from Osborne's work is that he found a grouping of individuals doing a range of work in the fur trade. Some had more and others less interaction with the outside world and more and others less interaction with Indigenous and European peoples. We also can say that, while only one individual has anything resembling a self-ascription of half-breed, the interviewees know other people with both European and Indigenous heritage, but we cannot say what that meant for or to them. It is not clear from this document they thought of themselves as possessing something shared and collective. To be clear, Osborne's work does not support the notion that these interviewees thought of themselves as half-breeds.

By our assessment this source does not support self-ascription. There is also no clear evidence a self-aware political community exists in the pages of Osborne's work. While not every document, study, or source might speak cogently to all elements of interest to establishing peoplehood in the past, it is worth noting that six (often lengthy) interviews from people living in the region in the early to late 19th century had nothing to say about their own social, institutional or political cohesion.

After conducting our analysis we reviewed the engagement with this source by Adese, Leroux, and O'Toole (2020) and concur with their findings that "Where a distinct identity might be identified, it lies in their continual reference to half-breedness, however, as discussed by Leroux and O'Toole, initial petitions for land on behalf of the voyageurs made no appeal on the basis of half-breedness but only on the basis of being loyal British subjects. It remains that no clear articulation of a distinctive Métis identity is presented in Osborne's original work" (p.23). We would add that all but one uses of half-breed by interviewees were in reference to other people, not about themselves "in their own voices" as a reasonable reader might expect to find after reading Miner's work (2022, p. 61). Adese, Leroux and O'Toole's analysis is probably more generous than it needed to be.

2.7 Conclusion

Selecting this source to show self-ascriptions of half-breed identities is misleading. There is evidence in Osborne's work to support some of these people might have thought of themselves as white, or, Canadian or, Chippewa, or French, or voyageur, yet Miner presents Osborne's work to the public as though it offers a clear case of half-breed self-ascription in numbers large enough that a coherent community might be present. However, it does not do this, even on a balancing of evidence.

In the insert Miner tries to guard against the range of different identity markers people might use. He argues:

By the time of the 1901 census, many Métis community members were recorded as "FB", short for "French Breeds. In these same records, other community members - often cousins, aunts and uncles of those identified as FBs- were identified in the same census as French. This malleability of Métis identity in the historical record was recognized by the Supreme Court in the *Powley* decision: "We recognize that different groups of Métis have often lacked political structures and have experienced shifts in their members' self-identification." (p.61).

Locating justification for "malleability" in Canadian judicial reasoning hurts rather than helps claims to Indigenous peoplehood. The rights and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples exist not because a Canadian court grants them to us, but because they emerge from our own political collectivities, Indigenous laws, Indigenous political institutions, and for the purposes of this case study, collective and self-ascribed identities. If one were to attempt to boil down Miner's defence, one might re-frame it to state "the *Powley* decision says a lack of coherent identity self-ascriptions is ok". Removing this defence, Miner would have been forced to confront the challenges his argument faces from an unsupportive evidentiary record.

We hope that several things are made clear with this case study. First, the effort needed to engage historical sources at this level of detail and attention is significant, and requires time, care, and open, critical minds. Replicating this type of analysis throughout the historical and scholarly record attached to the seven communities is not possible in the time given to research and write this report. We offer this case study of Miner's deployment of A.C. Osborne's work to show that researchers and politicians appear to be over selecting on evidence that supports their claims, and significantly under selecting on evidence that complicates, nuances, or even refutes their claims.

Second, the deployment of this type of research undermines public trust in researchers. We see this as a two-part issue. The first part requires researchers to design and author works that live up to the letters at the end of our names. Research designs need to advance transparent, accurate, and

careful engagement with sources and evidence. Second, care also needs to be taken when mobilizing research for public consumption on the controversial topic of the inclusion of the seven communities. One imperfect way to engage both parts would be for researchers and those mobilizing research to rely more on the slower process of blind, double-blind peer review and critical comment from the growing number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics working in this field. While there are drawbacks to this approach, it has a reasonable chance of improving the quality of information and conversation relating to the seven communities. Perhaps a specific circle of reviewers related to these communities could be a pathway forward.

Finally, there needs to be much greater restraint in arriving at affirming conclusions about the seven communities.

3. Interviews

The interview section is structured into two main parts, beginning with an analysis of how much the interviewees know about the seven communities, categorized into two themes: those who sensed there might be something historically significant and those who expressed unfamiliarity with the communities. The second part, titled "A Vision of the Nation," focuses presenting responses and the scholars' insights into broader issues of Métis legitimacy, governance, and identity, using these interviews to explore the rationale used to incorporate the seven communities and the impacts that this might have on the Métis nation.

3.1 Question Results and Analysis - How Much Do You Know About the Seven Communities?

As mentioned in the methodology section, the team asked interviewees who did not speak directly to the issue of the seven communities if they had come across information about those places in the pursuit of other work. The rationale for this question is that published work often leaves large amounts of information out of the final product or research deliverable. Not everything a scholar finds, collects, or encounters in their work is relevant to the project they are advancing. Given that these scholars are not only Métis but have dedicated their lives to understanding the nuances of Métis identity, governance, culture, and history, their level of caution or awareness regarding these communities serves as a contextual benchmark to measure how these communities may or may not be present in the collective memory and understanding of the nation.

Some interviewees volunteered this information in the course of answering other questions, and others were asked explicitly. Those with direct knowledge of the seven communities shared their expertise directly and have been quoted as such in the report. They were not asked this standardized question.

The remaining individuals fell into two broad thematic categories. First were those who had seen evidence come across their desks suggesting something may have been there (in the seven communities) in the past. These contributors were not sure what that "something" might be, or if it continued through to today.

The second were individuals who expressed some version of the statement "I don't know who these people are." We take up each in turn.

3.1.1 "There Might be Something There"

Three interviewees expressed a sense that there might be something of importance to Indigenous peoplehood (in addition to the continuous presence of First Nations peoples) coming out of the seven communities.

Brenda Macdougall framed this conversation by saying she had gone back through some of the work of Jaqueline Peterson and argued “we don't really have a seamless way to account for the difference between a fur trading community and a Métis community.” This intervention captures the challenges of assessing claims made about the seven communities. Also, as will be noted in our “Critical Document Review” – in regard to the use of A.C. Osborne, there are voyageur communities that have people in them with mixed ancestry, but that does not necessarily make them Métis communities.

In light of this, Jean Teillet shared some reflections from her time litigating the Powley case. She states:

What the evidence showed during the Powley trial in Sault Ste. Marie, is that there was a community of half-breeds that was not First Nations there. Now, whether you call that Métis or not, that's a whole other question. But there was something there in the northern Great Lakes area. It's missing big parts of what I [think constitutes a nation]. They never named themselves. They don't have an origin story. They didn't have their own language. But the evidence showed a persistent group of people who identified as something different from the First Nations and something different from the settlers. That's interesting to me.

I think we need more history, more of their stories, if they exist. I didn't delve into the history of Penetanguishene, or these other communities MNO is claiming now. I used some of the historical data from the Royal Commission when I was doing the Powley case. Since then, I've done a lot more thinking about the issue of how to identify a Métis community. I think if I went in there my current analysis, and tried to apply it to those places, I'd be interested to see where that goes. I haven't done that. But as far as I can figure out, nobody else has done it either. They're just relying on Powley. And Powley only reflects our earliest, almost skeletal thinking on how to identify as a Métis community.

Allyson Stevenson notes that in two instances stemming from previous research from the early 2000s, she recalls there were some indications of political organizing associated with these communities. She states:

I do remember, in those documents [Alexander Morris and the literature on the Robinson Huron Treaties], they're mentioning half breeds that are engaging in kind-of guerrilla tactics on some of the mining that was starting up in that region, which then led to the signing of the treaties. So, in that sense there was mention of half-breed agitators involved in some way with influencing First Nations who then signed treaties for Robinson Huron treaties in Ontario. So, they're mentioned there, but beyond that what communities they came from, or, what the collectivity looked like, or what their origins were, or anything around that [I cannot say]. . . . The other was in the negotiation of treaty three, which is Rainy River area

. . . There were mentions of half-breeds and a half-breed treaty that was signed eventually with the leader Nicolas Chatelaine. . . .

These three statements lay out important qualifications to the research record that need further research. In addition, the speakers couple a curiosity that is the hallmark of good scholarly inquiry with a high degree of intellectual integrity and care in dealing with these important questions.

3.1.2 “I Don’t Know Who You Are”

We grouped most of the responses around the theme of “I don’t know who you are.” Most of our respondents were open to talking about how their work might inform the debate about the seven communities, however most argued that they don’t know who the people are that lived in the region historically, or who populate these places now. Eight out of eleven had not heard of them as they pursued their varied work on Métis and other Indigenous peoples.

Some caution needs to be taken when trying to draw conclusions out of this second theme. On one hand, these statements cannot be used to confirm or deny the existence of a Métis or other people in the seven communities.

On the other hand, the research team thought it important to point out that these interviewees could speak authoritatively about a large number of different places. It was striking that for those who fit into the “I don’t know who you are” theme they were able to talk about Métis pasts, presents, and futures across a large number of different places stretching from the north-west angle to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. We thought it important to note this group, with quite expansive disciplinary and geographic expertise, had not encountered evidence they could recall which pertained to these seven communities, or linked these communities to the scholar’s primary research interests in Métis studies, nationhood, culture, politics, or history.

As such we provide this for context and transparency of methods rather than to definitively answer the overarching research questions or aims.

A Vision of the Nation

3.2 Legitimacy

3.2.1 Overview

Legitimacy refers to the rightful and accepted authority of an entity, often grounded in historical, legal, political, and social foundations. In the context of the inclusion of the seven communities into the MNO, examining legitimacy is crucial to understanding whether these communities have the historical, legal, political and social foundations that align with established Métis conceptions, sources, and thinking about legitimacy.

3.2.2 Core Argument

After carefully reviewing the breadth and depth of interviews with scholars possessing a range of expertise, training, and experiences, our assessment is that there appears to be a mismatch in the way legitimacy is being deployed both within the Métis Nation, and in the discussion of the seven communities. Our assessment of the interviews is that scholars are pointing out that there are the limits to relying on settler legal legitimacy. A mismatch is being created when we deploy settler legal sources of legitimacy to express, design, or buttress expressions of Métis peoplehood that would be much better supported by drawing on legitimacy resources that emerge from our own sources, relational contexts, histories, and relationships with land and territory. We do not interpret these interviews to call for a wholesale rejection of settler legal legitimacy. Further elaboration on this point can be found below in our analysis section.

Each interviewee was asked about the interaction between legitimacy and their work. Following the conclusion of all the interviews, we moved through the conversations and identified several sub-themes that captured important insights into the overarching theme of legitimacy offered across authors and their research. While the questions within the theme of legitimacy asked of our interviewees were tailored to their research expertise, we found in our post-interview thematic analysis that individual conversations took up sub-themes of legitimacy in ways that created important interventions that overlapped between interviewees. In what follows we have narrativized those sub-theme conversations to illustrate overlapping interventions within and across sub-themes.

The sub-themes that emerged are sources of legitimacy, relational legitimacy, historical legitimacy, and territorial legitimacy.

This section unfolds by laying our use and meaning of each sub-theme in relation to the project, and then narrativizes how numerous interviewees engage and discuss issues within the sub-theme.

3.2.3 Sources of Legitimacy

This sub-theme refers to historical, legal, political, social and cultural wells drawn on by Métis people in the West and proponents of the seven communities to inform why decisions are made, and to build authority among Métis and other publics for both the decision makers and the decisions they make. This sub-theme engages important lessons about Métis decision-making by thinking through how different sources are constructed, deployed and interact.

Several scholars made note that there are a range of sources of legitimacy that Métis people draw on. Interviewees chose to engage with sources both with an eye to what happens in the real and everyday world, but also with an eye to what we should be drawing on. These engagements made clear that some of the sources of legitimacy that we deploy in our decision-making undermine other aspects of our politics, lead to decisions that hurt rather than help broader nationhood and peoplehood building projects, or are missed opportunities for us to engage, build, and sustain our own systems of legitimacy. The sources that emerged in conversation as most weighty to the project are legal sources, gender and decentralized family sources of legitimacy.

Thinking about legal sources of legitimacy, Chris Andersen summarized well the challenges and frameworks of dealing with settler legal legitimacy by saying:

So maybe to kind of summarize a little bit: 1) we look to the courts, and we look to the law for legitimacy rather than where we should also be looking to our extended family and our kinscapes for; and 2) even if we did start doing that now, in some ways the horse has already left the barn, because (to misquote Quebecois sociologist Claude Denis from his book “We are not you”, a book that’s nearly 30 years old at this point, but has always “stuck” with me) the but the power of law isn't that we live in it. It's that it lives in us. And it shapes the ways in which we think about our relationship to ourselves and to each other.

Here, Andersen captures well the power of relying on legal forms of legitimacy, and the challenges of trying to think beyond them. This intervention was also picked up by a number of other interviewees about the importance of finding sources of legitimacy that better represent us.

Brenda Macdougall pointed out that if we think about the role of women and families in organizing, she argues that these sources of legitimacy look different now than they did in our past:

...if I look at the petitions from the historical record, everything was about local communities and families and how they were trying to position themselves within broader contexts. Even if we want to go all the way back to Red River, or the Battle of Seven Oaks or 1885, these were family units that were operating with each other. And, and so to me, because of this past mode of organizing, I feel like the Métis Nation has become something that resembles a parliamentary democracy, or a version of a Westphalian democratic state.

What Macdougall is saying here is that we have moved in a direction of drawing on sources of legitimacy that make us look much more like the settler colonial entities that surround and pervade us, and are missing an opportunity to draw on the sources of legitimacy that animated how we made decisions and engaged the Indigenous and non-Indigenous world in our past. True, Andersen is warning us that one cannot just pivot to another source, however several other scholars were keen to think about what it would take to centre non-legal sources of legitimacy.

Both Macdougall and Andersen are pointing to a pivot away from women, living family and kinship structures as sources of legitimacy and towards an entrenchment of both settler law as an animating source of legitimacy, as well as embracing the nation being made up of rights bearing individuals with political organizations that look a lot more like settler political structures than Métis structures. Family, kinship and women emerged as points of deep meditation on sources of legitimacy for many of our interviewees.

Cheryl Troupe framed much of this as an engagement with injecting life and energy into more local forms of kinship making. While on one hand locals could help frame new forms of kin or family-based sources of legitimacy, there are also unique challenges that did not exist in the past. She states:

So, the MN-S, does not necessarily consult with the community through the local structure in the way that they could. In some instances, the local does equal the family. And I think there's a whole other layer of complexity there, which, historically, the unit of organization for Métis governance was the family. But now, it's not that now it's a local, which could be a family, but it's more complicated and has additional people that are family. And I don't think necessarily having just a family is, you know, the best structure at this point in our governance. Because there'd be so many competing interests. And because although family structure is still significant, the community itself is not structured in the same way. People are disconnected from their families in ways that they never were.

Sandra Quills (Pseudonym) also pointed out that there have been uses to these family structures that are drawn on as sources of legitimacy, not only for decision making authority, but also for building a sense of who a person is. More to the point, she points out it was the role of women to connect individuals to the larger collective. Quills goes on to say:

... as long as I can remember, in Saskatchewan, it was self-identification plus community recognition. Even if you came in off the street, you would say I'm so and so. And the response would be "who's your mom? Who's your dad? Who is your grandma?" And it all would end with an Oh, yeah, right. [Some Métis nonprofits and organizations were given]

human rights clearance to discriminate in favor of Métis. And so, elders from the community, both men and women could come and ask those questions like in real good-old style of, “who are you? Who's your mom? Who's your dad?” . . . So, it was really a way of identifying people figuring out where they fit into the spider web of kinship and encouraging people to identify. But if people didn't, or couldn't do it, the conversation got pretty blunt. There was always compassion for people that were adopted. You know, that's a different thing. But we had someone turn up and say, “Well, I'm a descendant of a Selkirk, settler.” What? What name? But that was the bluntness.

For Quills, you can see a clear source of legitimacy coming from a notion of community acceptance, but also with a sophisticated appreciation for difference and nuance. Here decisions are being made by drawing on the legitimacy of family networks, mothers, dads and grandmothers, and the Elders in the community. Recall also that Quills is talking about this in a community that is part of a network of living people. In addition, two important threads to the conversations emerge from Quill's offering here, first sources of legitimacy can be “pretty blunt” but also accommodate nuance for the different life paths people are on. We take up this within the sub-theme of relational legitimacy, however it's important to point out here that Quills is noting the ability of sources of legitimacy to be flexible, but also direct. The second thread is that there has been an ongoing confrontation with whiteness in thinking through our sources of legitimacy.

We were offered many words of caution about the use of kinship and family as a source of legitimacy, either as a direct concern with racialized identities, but also more directly as a concern with a resistance to confront notions of whiteness. Several interviewees pointed out that within the framework of nationhood and peoplehood, kinship is only one part of a people's reason for existing. Jean Teillet set out a robust framework of thinking of national stories of becoming a collective as a source of legitimacy. She identified a number of key elements of legitimacy all working together to form and sustain a collectivity of people over time including:

- an origin story
- a critical mass of people
- separation from originating peoples
- rules to govern large numbers of people in complex societies
- collective and individual self-ascription
- inter-marriage
- cultural creation
- territory and a sense of where you're from and where you're not from
- collective action and a sense of solidarity
- language
- continuity over time
- kinship

On this final point Teillet argues:

The last thing in my list is a kinship network. And that's about having a critical mass of people, people who have bought in over a long period of time [with the broader project of the collective]. Remember I talked about that sense of solidarity and the imagined community? These people must buy into that imagined community. And be tied by kinship connections to the group. You will notice that I put kinship ties as the very last in the list of critical items. And that's because individuals come into these imagined communities or these nations in multiple ways over time. Individual membership tells us very little about the structure or existence of the community or nation.

Teillet argues that there needs to be more than just people who are genealogically connected to each other, saying these systems of relatedness are not compelling if “all they're looking at is the genealogical connection to somebody who's named a half-breed in a historical document.” As Brenda Macdougall stated in response to the deployment of her work and approach in Ontario, “I do know that they used the kind of research I do to legitimize the seven communities. Well, lots of people have genealogy. Genealogy is not special. Finding other people are related in a small town is not mind blowing.” If we put Teillet and Macdougall in conversation, we begin to see that there are limits to the way sources of legitimacy can or ought to be used in making political claims or claims of peoplehood. Said differently, using a source of legitimacy may not actually confer legitimacy outside the context in which the source emerges, or without a host of other interconnected sources of legitimacy.

Finally, several scholars raised concerns about the use of whiteness as a source of legitimacy. We have bracketed these conversations for our section on identity.

3.2.4 Relational Legitimacy

We also were struck by the number of scholars who wanted to talk about how legitimacy is something that emerges from interaction, or possibly mutual recognition, between Indigenous peoples. Our interviewees emphasized the importance of thinking about sources not just as the ones Métis people cultivate and draw on, but also the ones we share with other Indigenous peoples and emerge from networks of relations.

Allyson Stevenson offers helpful advice to this study about thinking about legitimacy in relation to inter-tribal adoptions. She points out that adoptions among different Indigenous peoples served several different purposes. There were adoptions for military and diplomatic or alliance reasons, or for reasons of strategy, but also reasons that were far more prosaic in which Métis folks adopted across tribal lines because those lines were less firm than we think about them now. Part of what Stevenson is helping us to see is that when peoples have close familial relations there is a mutual acknowledgement that undergirds these forms of relationality. We see this both as a relational form

of legitimacy, but also an appreciation of complexity that Indigenous families have to think through today.

Here Chris Andersen raises an important point about not only the source of our legitimacy, but the way legitimacy is also contextualized by other Indigenous peoples. Here he takes up the Ontario case by trying to think about how the inclusion of the seven communities might be contextualized by relations with surrounding First Nations. He states:

...how do you think the various provincial Métis Nations - especially but not only in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta - how might they react to someone telling them that if they really want to cement their legitimacy, they should think about the relationships to adjacent First Nations communities? Because that's what I think folks in Ontario should be thinking about. If we want to think about a historical Métis community, I'm less interested in how many historical claims they made to the state, I'm becoming far more interested in what kinds of relationships they had with adjacent First Nations communities.

Here Andersen is getting us to think more about how the claims we made in the past, and in the present are positioned in an Indigenous context, not ones rooted in social/political/legal structures of the state or of whiteness.

Andersen is also drawing our attention to the way living family, kinship and also relations with adjacent First Nations are also intertwined. In addition, the research team heard from interviewees that much more care needs to be taken when talking about the use of genealogy as a stand in for existing living family relationships. While it is true that if you go back far enough every Métis person will have First Nation's ancestors, the point that we think Andersen is trying to make is that that relational legitimacy is more than racialized descent from a distant First Nations person. It's about how past and current relations and relationships are being engaged. Where this comes up are the public concerns articulated by First Nations in Ontario that there are instances of the MNO stealing ancestors in order to advance claims that the seven communities are legitimate. For example, Darryl Leroux argues that the challenge with MNO claims is that the people being used as a foundation for a Métis community in Ontario are in fact well known to First Nations as members of their (First Nations) community. He states:

... And so with the genealogical part, what comes out is that, not surprisingly, the MNO in its response to the various critiques that have come out [to the seven communities], ... are not wrong in saying that, well, if you go back far enough, all Métis people have First Nations ancestors. And so, the problem is that you hear a lot of First Nations leaders will say that they're stealing our ancestors. But the issue is that these [ancestors] are people who are known to the [First Nation] community as community members.

Here, Leroux is saying it's not legitimate to take people who are members of a First Nation in service of building political claims for Métis people. Here, legitimacy is being reversed in which in order to support the existence of Métis communities in Ontario, Leroux is telling us that MNO is reaching into First Nation communities in order to find legitimacy for the existence of their own communities. This is the opposite of what Andersen is trying to get us to think about in terms of how Métis especially, but not only, in the West are co-constituted as political entities with recognizable but distinct First Nation communities. This is why Andersen finishes his thought with:

...which is why I have far more sympathy for non-status individuals, and in certain cases, communities, because they very often were founders of Métis [political] organizations and saw their freedom or their liberation bound up in that. We talk all the time about evidence of these historical folks making claims to the state as evidence of the fact that they were "always there", and they "know who they are", and all that kind of stuff. Okay, cool. What kinds of relationships did they have with First Nations, because this is how symbolic power works. And this is how the Canadian state has worked. [The Canadian State] has basically created itself as the dealer in a poker game, where everybody has to go to them in order to get the cards, and in order to get their chips. And so how do we think about how to push back against that?

If we place Andersen and Leroux in conversation, we argue the point is that the MNO strategy has in fact not pushed back against the state as a dealer. Instead, it has emphasized the state as a source of legitimacy and in the process appropriated the familial and relational sources of legitimacy in First Nations communities for MNO purposes in anti-relational ways.

In both the sources of legitimacy and notions of relational legitimacy, there is a certain relationship to the past which many of the interviewees were keen to speak to. We grouped many of these comments under the sub-theme of historical legitimacy, which we see as needing distinct analysis from sources and relational legitimacy.

3.2.5 Historical Legitimacy

For the purposes of this study, we are using this concept to organize interviewee interventions that are thinking through questions of one or both of individual or collective histories. It also was a helpful sub-theme that captured the cross engagements on the uses of symbols, stories, material culture that narrate who you are in your past and deploying those in the present.

In service of weaving sources of legitimacy, relational legitimacy, and historical legitimacy together, Leroux points out that in the case of Abitibi-inland, while MNO often reaches for settler legal legitimacy from *Powley* and the Supreme Court's *Powley* test, the test's requirement that the Indigenous community exist prior to effective control has tended to frustrate MNO claims.

Leroux finds that a number of their root ancestors do not appear in the region until after (sometimes well after) their *Powley* legal legitimacy window has closed. He states:

. . . the problem that the MNO has is they can't demonstrate the existence of a community prior to effective control... you can see pretty clearly that there are root ancestors who they've chosen, who either are not present in the territory prior to effective control - some are not present until much later in the 20th century - or that those in many cases who are present are First Nations people. So, it's a well-known Cree person who married a white man or white women, and their children are born *after* effective control [and are automatically claimed by MNO on the Verified Métis Family Line]. But because these forbearers are born before, somehow the MNO uses them as the basis of their community. In that sense, I think that the argument that you're stealing our ancestors to form your community is justified.

There is an awkward relationship between MNO's use of the *Powley* decision to defend some elements of their claim (see the section: "Critical Document Review and Case Study: Testing Claims Against Evidence"), and the uncomfortable reality that the Abitibi-inland claim is missing a key element of the *Powley* test. Here there is dissonance between the use of settler legal legitimacy and a relationship with the past that frustrates rather than bolsters peoplehood claims. Attempting to use other Indigenous people from the past to build a contemporary claim creates a particularly unconvincing and anti-relational argument. So much so that when all three forms of legitimacy are placed in conversation, one can easily see a justifiable concern that as some interviewees voiced "ancestors are being stolen" in service of MNO legitimacy.

As noted above, Teillet provides a compelling framework, complete with examples and events, that captures the use of history in Métis Nation building narratives on the prairies. Her intervention makes fresh a framework that many interviewees were keen to fill with supporting stories, data points, and other offerings about Métis life on the prairies. We struggled in the interviews and document review to identify similar stories, data points and other offerings that would help us get a sense of a peoplehood argument in these seven communities. In a conversation about the way historical narratives and evidence were being used in the case of the seven communities, Brenda Macdougall offers a particularly helpful intervention. She states:

... I'm just putting it out there - we don't really have a seamless way to account for the difference between a fur trading community and a Métis community. . . . there's a name that pops up [in this historical record] Fisher, Henry Fisher. . . . The [Métis] Fishers in Lebrét are descended from him. So those Fishers are going to be related to the people that are a part of the first family in Ontario. Now is the first family in Ontario a Métis family? Are they non-status Indians? Are they white people? I don't know the answer to that. But they have a kinship connection to the Fisher family that's in the valley [in Saskatchewan].

Because they are descended from the same man, who is mixed ancestry. I'm not saying he's Métis, I don't know what he thought of himself. I don't know what other people thought he was. He was a fur trader. So, he's got two families, maybe he has more.

Macdougall's statement that we do not have a clear way to distinguish between a fur trade community and a Métis community sits at the center of historical legitimacy. It is our assessment that this gap has been stepped into by proponents of the seven communities in the interest of making claims about who lived in a place, and who those people were. Because it is a gap in our understanding of the differences between a fur trading community and a Métis community rather than a test, or consensus among experts, or methodological markers, or a working theory, or any other developed and peer reviewed/critically commented scholarly tool, it means those claims cannot be easily tested.

We believe this has led to unconvincing historical claims being made in service of building up the historical legitimacy of these communities. We take this up again in response to territorial legitimacy.

At the heart of this question of historical legitimacy has been questions of continuity over time. Allyson Stevenson helps us think through this issue in her work focusing on the history of Métis families in Saskatchewan. She frames the issue well when she states:

So why didn't people just fade into the towns? Some did, let's be honest. Those are the folks who said, "what this is, this is too much headache for us. We're just going to be white. Don't tell anyone." You just go in, maybe some people strategically continue to practice their cultures in different places, too. What I'm trying to say is that there's a strategic engagement, but there's a retention of that collective to maintain a specific history, a specific identity that is the core of what I like to think of as Métis historical consciousness.

Stevenson does an excellent job helping to frame the stakes, the decision, and the evidence that she looks for in response. The stakes are survival in a world that could be hostile to these Saskatchewan Métis people, the decision is what to do about it, and the evidence to look for is a retention of a collective sense of self into the future. Importantly, as Teillet points out, the continuity in naming, actions, and sense of self are key.

Stevenson is knocking on another door that several interviewees pointed out to us has not yet been opened by scholars. We do not have an answer to the question: how do we distinguish a community that never existed, from one that doesn't exist anymore, from one that existed but went into hiding? Several interviewees phrased this as "what does Indigenous community non-existence or death look like?" This gap also allows for, as Andersen put it "popular narratives about how people hid but kept this tiny kernel of whoever they were alive. And now they've been able to flourish through

this new and more permissive system for what recognition of our Indigeneity looks like.” To be clear, multiple interviewees raised exactly this point. However, because we do not have anything resembling a compelling theory or empirical model to assess Indigenous community non-existence, death, and hiding, our concern is that this gap is being used to shield claims about the seven communities in unearned/unexperienced or potentially appropriated historical legitimacy. Proving a community was hiding when it might never have existed, or ceased to exist is an incredibly difficult, if not impossible, task from an evidentiary perspective.

The other way to frame this question is to focus historical legitimacy on the density of positive markers of rich pasts, presents, and futures. Adam Gaudry points out that Métis are not a historical process. He argues that the evidence used to point to Métis nationhood in the West is robust, diverse, and plentiful. He states:

A lot of First Nations will see Métis as a fully Indigenous nation, which history [in the West] bears out. That's always the understanding I've had and the one that I think most Métis have as well. However, we need to be careful in the claims we make about territory. We have to maintain those relationships with other Indigenous people, including people that we're not historically aligned with, and I think having a clear sense of our history is important here. And if we're going to have a debate around identity by people who don't think we're fully Indigenous, let's do it in the places that we have the history to prove we are native and not in areas where a claim may not have solid historical background.

What's helpful about Gaudry's intervention here is that it is about a positive affirmation of historical legitimacy. He is saying that trying to have debates with folks about Métis Indigeneity in places where the historical, and we would add continuous, record is robust is a better deployment of Métis intellectual and political capital than spending time and energy trying to parse out the state of things in light of the two gaps identified in this section.

Historical legitimacy also doesn't need to be coded as static, or without change. What Stevenson was pointing us toward is that there are examples of people in Saskatchewan carrying on traditions and culture. Cheryl Troupe also draws on this to point out that the past we draw on and think about does not have to be practiced the same way in the present. She states:

Well, historically, women didn't wear sashes. But now people do. . . . we need to understand that culture isn't stagnant, it changes. How we understand something historically may not necessarily be how we understand it contemporarily, and that's okay. We don't need to be locked into this “it existed in the past, therefore, it has to stay exactly like that in the past.” Women wearing sashes today is a marker of Métis identity, and they should be proud to do that. But that they didn't wear them in the past shouldn't matter. It's that culture changes and culture should be changing. 25 years from now, or 50 years from now, things may look

different. But that doesn't mean that [culture is] any less authentic Métis culture. Because traditions carry on in values. All of these things are embedded in Métis values and Métis worldview, and those things carry on, but it's the expression of how we do that which might change. We don't use Red River cards to travel anymore, but that doesn't make us any less authentic.

Troupe was speaking specifically about pushing back against static culture in Saskatchewan, however her views here are helpful to framing historical legitimacy more generally. She offers us an opportunity to think of the past as a source of memory rooted to a place and a set of continuous values. In this framing historical legitimacy's relationship with continuity is anchored to continuous values, not just to collective re-discovery. It is the expression of those values that reflect new and different ways of practicing culture. We would add that these values have to be actually lived in some form of continuous fashion, rather than picked up in a different place, in a different time, by a different people.

3.2.6 Territorial Legitimacy

The final sub-theme that emerged across our interviews concerns questions of place. Being Indigenous has been thought of by many scholars as tied to place. Systems of knowledge, laws, politics, culture are all tied to a place. This is intimately connected with notions of territoriality, which we framed for the purpose of our thematic analysis as where are you from, both as an individual but also as a member of an Indigenous collective? And where do you have rights and responsibilities?

Adam Gaudry offers significant insight into these questions of territoriality. He states:

...Calgary is Blackfoot territory. It's not Métis territory. There's Métis there now. They deserve a region in the MNA [now the OMG] and to participate in Métis governance. But claiming territorial or hunting rights is a different matter. We don't want to engage in bad relationality and exacerbate historical tensions with Blackfoot. I think there's an opportunity for nuancing here. But it does rely on a clear understanding of where the limits of our historical reach is. And trying to do so in a way that's not going to penalize Métis citizens who are living outside of the homeland.

In the interests of context, Gaudry is drawing on Voth and Loyer's (2020) work on Métis territoriality in Treaty #7. His insights here are helpful for a number of reasons. First, he is trying to align traditional territory, or homeland, along both a contemporary and historical register. He is saying that Métis people live in the present in places where we have not had deep, enduring, easily identifiable place-based histories. That doesn't mean these folks are not part of our wider community in the present, rather it means that we cannot make the same types of claims to rights, and expectations of consultation, as we would if we were in or around places like Edmonton, Île-à-la-Crosse,

Saskatoon, or Winnipeg. Gaudry is distinguishing between being a citizen of an Indigenous nation, and having Indigenous rights and responsibilities from, to, with, and of the land.

Gaudry goes on to say:

There are parts of Ontario and parts of BC that could properly be conceived of as Métis homeland. That again requires a fairly robust historical discussion. I'm not fundamentally opposed to the existence of an MNO or MNBC by any means. There just needs to be a more nuanced discussion about what is a historical community and an expat community. Northeastern BC is still the prairies. It's not like the line that is now the provincial boundary meant anything in the 19th century. That was an arbitrary thing that wasn't even really enforceable until the 1880s. There have always been Métis there.

Here again Gaudry is trying to make clear that there may be places that one might call border regions of Métis territory that have both histories and presents that make both the land and the people part of our collectivity. However, he also makes clear that the historical evidence, and we would add evidence of continuity, in those places must be compelling. We think Gaudry's interventions here make it important to set high expectations for the type of historical and contemporary evidence needed to assess who people are and where they are from. The reason is that, as Gaudry points out, scant historical and contemporary evidence creates risks that one may have undermined other Indigenous peoples in those places in ways that are anti-relational and harm both Métis and First Nations territorial legitimacy.

Sandra Quills also takes up this link between territory and the interconnectedness of history linking people and place. She has extensive research in the region along with family ties. She argues:

[I had heard people were trying to make claims that the fort at Abitibi was the anchor of a Métis community] Like, the Métis were supplying the post. First of all, the post at Abitibi was really little, it was a shack in the bush and it never had more than five employees. We're not talking York factory here. We're not talking Lower Fort Gary or Fort Edmonton. It's a teeny little outpost that was Northwest Company then became Hudson Bay Company. And the people who are provisioning the post [were a small family]. That's five people, the head of the family was an employee. Being an employee doesn't always equal having native rights to the land in the place where you work.

Quills is pointing out that there needs to be more care taken to guard against territorial overreach stemming from a sparse and opportunistically picked historical record.

Interviewees emphasized the importance of considering future generations in discussions of legitimacy and governance. Below are quotes from Troupe and Thomas. They both highlighted the

role that children play in sustaining Métis identity, and that children's understanding of relationships within the community is crucial. This focus on children aligns with both territorial and relational legitimacy because it stresses the need to consider how decisions impact future generations and how Métis identity is nurtured both within traditional territories and in diaspora communities.

Troupe captures well the role of children in thinking about all of these questions of legitimacy. She states:

One thing that I do want to add is I talked about women, but I also think we need to recognize that children should have a voice in all of this, and they are a lot smarter and a lot more astute than they're often given credit for. And so, I think that, you know, they may not understand all of the concepts and the language, but they certainly understand the relationships. So, something to consider is, how whatever is put forward as a vision, what does that mean for kids in terms of the relationships that they have with all the people in their lives?

Similarly, another contributor, given a pseudonym Sasha Thomas, opened the discussion with an attention to children. Thinking about women and family's role in legitimacy, she argues:

I think it's about being forward and future thinking in terms of all our relations for all genders and ages. So in what I've done, not just for Métis, but general work that I've done on Indigenous women and governance, there's these principles about thinking seven generations ahead and putting the children at the center of the circle. That's kind of the teachings that I've had from [my Elder]. But also like in the work that I've been doing over the years about what would happen if we put kids first and future generations first. How would that impact the kind of decisions we make?

While these offerings could certainly be sources of legitimacy, or relational legitimacy, Thomas in particular talks about what it was like growing up in southern Ontario as a Métis person, but then also raising children away from her prairie community. Thomas shared with the team that a lot of whiteness gets centred in MNO gatherings, in part because of a lack of connection to place and community in the West. Attention to how children, place, and territorial legitimacy interact is important to visioning what a future Métis national community looks like both inside and outside our territories. What Métis children come to know about themselves and their people, and how they come to know it, needs concerted attention both in the West and when children are raised away from their territories.

3.2.7 Analysis

The research team's core argument is that after carefully reviewing the breadth and depth of interviews with scholars possessing a range of expertise, training, and experiences, our assessment is

there appears to be a mismatch in the way legitimacy is being deployed both in the Métis Nation, and in the discussion of the seven communities. The historical arguments made by the seven communities have an uncomfortable relationship, in that they exploit two gaps in the literature noted in this section. The first gap that is exploited is that one cannot tell if or when a fur trade community becomes a Métis community, or some other type of Indigenous community. The second gap that is exploited comes from the fact that currently, we don't have a strong ability to assess if or when an Indigenous community ceases to exist. Scholars cannot tell the difference between an individual or community hiding (in plain sight or otherwise) or if the asserted identity never existed or does not exist anymore. The research team found these interventions to be very helpful in contextualizing some of the mismatch in uses of legitimacy.

Our assessment of the interviews is that scholars are pointing out there are limits to relying on settler legal legitimacy. A mismatch is being created when we deploy settler legal sources of legitimacy to express, design, or buttress expressions of Métis peoplehood that would be much better supported by drawing on legitimacy resources that emerge from our own sources, relational contexts, histories, and relationships with land and territory. We do not interpret these interviews to call for a wholesale rejection of settler legal legitimacy.

Many interviewees commented that building arguments about community cohesiveness, rights, and governing structures using Section 35, acts of parliament or the legislatures, and the *Powley* and *Daniels* decisions misses an opportunity to deploy our own rich trove of legitimacy resources stemming from being an Indigenous people. Doing so further entrenches settler legitimacy when we could be entrenching Métis legitimacy resources. The research team sees this happening in both western and Ontario contexts; however, our assessment is that this mismatch appears to be more pronounced in the debate about the seven communities. The interview process has led us to conclude that an important part of the reason for this more pronounced mismatch is because there are fewer sources of legitimacy being convincingly deployed in support of the debate about the seven communities than in the West. As our document case study makes clear, when confronted with what many interviewees noted is a sparse evidentiary record of collective community and individual self-ascription and continuity, there seems to be a desire among proponents of the seven communities to reach for a *Powley* defence, or some other settler rights-based defence.

In contrast, while there is clearly a concern about the use of settler legal sources of legitimacy by Métis contexts in the West, interviewees were quick to point out the deep well of legitimacy resources to draw on from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. Political conflicts, organizing, gender affirmed systems of belonging and decision making, political/legal/social structures forming and reforming in every century, ongoing community associations, revitalization of locals, material culture traditions forming and reforming, ongoing self-ascription in all centuries, new media and social media expressions of self and community, deep connections to places, spiritual lodges, new

practices of old traditions, opportunities to collaborate with other Indigenous peoples – our interviewees have drawn on all of these to demonstrate the range of legitimacy resources available to Métis people in the West. In doing so our expert interlocutors have outlined the multitude of ways legitimacy has been used, could be used, and should be used to answer difficult questions, and inform Métis life.

This is not to say that the Métis political organizations in the West do not face challenges with respect to applying the robust legitimacy resources to systems of governing or identity. They do, particularly with respect to gender and decentralized familial organization. Rather, what we found through these interviews is that there is a well-stocked shed of Métis tools that are available to deal with these and other challenges in the West. To illustrate our point by carrying this metaphor further, several interviewees remarked on the shed in Ontario, pointing out the absence of tools, or that the tools there are settler tools, or tools that the interviewees don't recognize.

Legitimacy matters for several reasons. First, as was pointed out by multiple interviewees, there seems to be an attempt to draw on Métis legitimacy resources in Ontario that are not from Ontario, this seems to be exacerbating the mismatch. Second, there is work to be done to carefully study and then action different engagements with Métis legitimacy resources in the West. Finally, this discussion matters because there are new generations of Métis people who need contextually grounded, community informed opportunities to engage and connect in service knowing who they are, and where their people come from. This is important because it informs their contribution to where they think their community should go.

3.3 Institutions and Governance

3.3.1 Overview

Institutions and governance refer to the structures and processes through which a community or a nation organizes itself, makes decisions, and exercises authority. In the context of the inclusion of the seven communities by MNO, examining institutions and governance is essential to understand how *the manner of their incorporation highlights specific* features and vulnerabilities in our current governance structure, and what the long-term impacts to this might have on the nation and how we govern ourselves.

3.3.2 Core Argument

The governance structures of the Métis Nation, shaped by historical circumstances and political necessities, aim to unify the Nation in negotiations with the federal government while respecting the autonomy of provincial Métis governments. This dual approach has led to a governance system that mirrors a federalist structure but operates more like a confederation, lacking the compliance

mechanisms typical of federal states. The tension between centralized authority and regional autonomy has created vulnerabilities, making the Nation susceptible to actions like those of the MNO, which are able to unilaterally include new communities that might not align with the National Definition without consulting the broader Nation. This exploitation of fragmented governance—further complicated by provincial boundaries—has not only deepened divisions but also threatened the unity and self-determination of the Métis Nation. The MNO's actions highlight the critical challenges of maintaining a cohesive Métis Nation when provincial governments act independently, setting a troubling precedent for division between provincial Métis governments, the disintegration of collective governance, and the disruption of Métis self-determination on Métis terms.

3.3.3 Governance Structures: Aiding Fragmentation

The governance structure of the Métis Nation is characterized by a blend of traditional principles of confederations (i.e., the absence of a strong centralized authority) and modern political frameworks required to engage with Canada. It is influenced by the provincial boundaries imposed by Canada, which have been adopted within the Nation's own organizational structure. Each provincial Métis government is defined by the boundaries of specific Canadian provinces and represents the Métis within them. Under this provincial structure, there are various other bodies that contribute to governance, such as regions and locals, which operate similarly to provincial municipalities. This has resulted in a Métis governance model that replicates many features of the Canadian federation, but without formal mechanisms of compliance or accountability (such as a supreme court). Taking up one of Brenda Macdougall's quotes noted earlier, she reflects on the evolution of this structure:

I feel like the Métis Nation has become something that represents a parliamentary democracy, Westphalian democracy...It mimics parliament. And I don't think that's who we are. And I feel like we're playing a government and not constructing our nationhood according to the principles of who we are.

The decision to structure the Métis Nation's governance in this way was influenced significantly by the political realities of Canada. The adoption of provincial boundaries within the Métis Nation reflects a pragmatic response to the political and administrative divisions of the Canadian state, allowing the Métis Nation to navigate the complexities of federal and provincial relations. However, this has not been without adverse consequences. Regarding these consequences, Jean Teillet posits:

I think the seeds for the current problems with MNO were sown when the MNC picked provincial boundaries for its governing members. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta all abide by their provincial boundaries, but they don't want the Métis Nation of Ontario and British Columbia to abide by their provincial boundaries. I think we need to look at whether the Métis Nation traditional territory really does go into the entirety of the prairie provinces.

For example, did it historically go into the southwestern corner of Alberta, where the Blackfoot are so firmly ensconced? Is the motherland or homeland consistent with the whole boundaries of the provinces. Also, I think provincial boundaries are problematic because they are a creation of the Canadian state long after the Métis Nation came into existence. For the Métis Nation to use state boundaries is maybe politically expedient, but it rests on a shaky historical theory. So that's why I think these boundaries were always inappropriate and why they may be at the root of today's problems. They can't be justified as Indigenous boundaries. I think the seeds...were set firmly in the creation of the MNC. And now we're living with the consequences.

The MNC perhaps never had an appropriate national governance structure to begin with. The [Alberta] settlements were a big driver in creating the Métis National Council and they got ousted, because at the time the decision was made to go with provincial boundaries. Again, state boundaries, make no sense because they are not consistent with the historic Métis Nation. To my mind, it would be worth exploring a modern Métis Nation based on regional bodies. For example, Red River, southern Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan, the Alberta Settlements and central Alberta. There may be other configurations based on our history. Provincial boundaries are arbitrary because they are not based on our traditions, laws or history. In my opinion, that is part of the problem with current governance on the national level. The governing bodies that support the MNC should reflect our historic regions.

Chris Andersen also weighed in on the implications of this structure:

The way that Canada has encouraged, and I use that word advisedly, but it has encouraged particular kinds of governance structures, both through legal frameworks, policy frameworks, funding frameworks, etc., is that it has unnecessarily exacerbated differences between adjacent First Nations and Métis communities. And to me, that is the big loss for Métis people over the last 40 or 50 years: the way that governance structures have played themselves out has forced a turn for us toward whiteness, rather than toward First Nations relatives.

The Métis National Council (MNC) was born out of the need to unify diverse Métis communities under a single national identity and to create a cohesive voice to advocate for Métis issues; it was never meant to be a central authority equivalent to the Canadian federal government. We heard how leaders like Gerald Morin played a crucial role in establishing the MNC as a unifying body, but the reliance on provincial boundaries and provincial autonomy has created a delicate balance for maintaining unity. The MNC was meant to provide a forum for collective decision-making between the provincial Métis governments. The MNC originally consisted of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), the MN-S (MN-S), and the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). The MNO and Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) were added after the fact to mitigate stalemates between

the prairie provinces. Identifying the political expediency of these additions, Jean Teillet, who was involved with the Métis Nation at the time, recalls:

So, when Ontario, BC, and at the time, the Northwest Territories, were brought into the Métis National Council, their inclusion allowed the breaking of the stalemate that was problematic for the three originating provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba). MNC bylaws stated that decisions had to have the agreement of two governing members. And that caused stalemates all the time. It was always the same, Alberta would want to do something and Saskatchewan and Manitoba would join forces to stop it. Or Manitoba wanted to do something and Saskatchewan and Alberta would join forces to stop it. It was difficult to get anything done at the national level. It was a perpetual log jam.

So, when Ron Swain, who was then the president of the Métis Nation of Ontario, went to the Métis National Council, and asked that the MNO be allowed to join in the MNC, it was politically expedient for the original members of the MNC to admit them (along with BC and NWT). I checked whether the whole of Ontario was joining the MNC with Ron when I wrote my book. I phoned Ron because I wanted to accurately reflect what he did. Ron told me that when he went to the MNC to ask if the Métis Nation of Ontario could join, he was asking on behalf of the northwestern part of Ontario – at best as far east as Sault Ste Marie. Ron didn't ask for the rest of Ontario to join the MNC and the MNC certainly didn't have it in their mind that they were admitting all of Ontario. The common understanding was that the MNC was admitting only northwestern Ontario. No one knew how far the Métis Nation went into northwestern Ontario. This was pre-*Powley*.

It was my understanding that the same thing happened with BC. The MNC only thought it was that northeastern corner of BC. The MNC didn't think it was bringing in all of BC. They were considering the Kelly Lake area and the expats who lived in Ontario and BC. The expats are the people who lived off Métis Nation traditional territory. For example, Tony Belcourt and me. At the time, we were living in Ontario, but we're all Métis from the prairies. That was what the idea was for bringing in these other provinces, an acknowledgement that there were many expats living in Ontario and that perhaps the Métis Nation homeland went some way into northwestern Ontario. And in BC, the expats and that chunk in northeastern BC.

It is clear that the inclusion of the *whole of Ontario*, into the MNC is at least partially explained by specific structure or system of governance that the Métis use to pursue collective self-determination in Canada. This same structure – while mimicking the federal system, is without strict enforcement mechanisms, which, as we heard, was intended to respect the autonomy of its Governing Members. This potential mismatch sets the stage for understanding how these governance structures, while necessary and functional in some respects, have also contributed to the current challenges of fragmentation within the Métis Nation.

3.3.4 Consequences of Fragmented Governance

As a result of the contemporary Métis governance model, as described in the previous section, Métis provincial governments exercise significant autonomy. This autonomy, while initially intended to respect the diverse realities of Métis communities across Canada, has created difficulties in achieving national cohesion. The lack of centralized enforcement mechanisms has further complicated efforts to maintain a unified governance approach. This means that each provincial Métis government can essentially do what is most politically beneficial to it. Chris Andersen spoke about his thoughts on the disruption this has caused to Métis relationality and collectivity:

I don't like the idea of us legitimating the different provincial Métis Nations in and of themselves, because I think it unnecessarily cuts off Métis kinscapes. And I think it unnecessarily forecloses on broader forms of collective Métis solidarity.

In response to the unilateral inclusion of the seven communities by MNO, among other reasons, the withdrew from the MNC. In relation to historic Métis governance practices around conflict, Sandra Quills says:

How we handled dissent was we left. Like jump on your horse and away you go. That's how people handled dissent. You know, if conflict affected a group, then the group would separate, and they might go in different directions. If you were on the outs, then you just left. So, the fact that we're trapped in these models of government that aren't provisional, they're not set up to meet an immediate need, like a buffalo hunt or crisis or something like that. That we want to have them maintained. And then we actually do want them to be a parallel of the Canadian government, because they started to deliver certain services because we don't trust the government. So then that presents some challenges because that's unprecedented stuff for us.

MN-S' withdraw of its support for Bill C-53, can be seen as an illustration of a right to exit that is fundamental to Métis collective action. MMF leaving the MNC could also be interpreted as being in alignment with historical Métis governance practices. That said, the politics that have resulted subsequent to the inclusion of the seven communities, was regarded by most participants as concerning. The following quote from a participant illustrates the general consensus of multiple interviewees:

My discussions with many Métis Nation citizens across the homeland have shown me that many people disagree with what MNO is doing - bringing in communities that are not part of the Métis Nation. But they are uncomfortable with how the issue was handled by the MNC, particularly the MMF. The people I have spoken to think the MMF is right on substance, but that the issue was not handled well in process or politically. And now we're all living with the consequences of that.

The way the MNO unilaterally forced the inclusion of the seven communities onto the Nation mirrors the concerns expressed by participants regarding the political rhetoric of MMF. Just as MMF was criticized for pushing being politically heavy-handed, the MNO's approach has similarly been viewed as overstepping traditional governance practices, disregarding broader consultation, and creating lasting consequences for the unity and governance of the Métis Nation.

In 2004, the MNO formally adopted the definition established by the Métis National Council (MNC), which represents Métis people: "a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation."

Many participants we interviewed were not only vocal in their support for the National Definition but spoke specifically on how its origins were rooted in a collective vision, arising from consensus. Jennifer Adese explains:

I always defer to the National Definition, and the reason being is that it was a definition that the MNC General Assembly came to by consensus and through wide scale consultation. This was not a fly by night definition that appeared out of nowhere.... I understood the genealogy of where the definition came from and how it was achieved through consensus.

For the most part the definition – born and operationalised out of a consensus around its meaning led to a fairly consistent pattern of application over time. At times, some governing members were confronted with the fact that their citizenship registry practices were misaligned with the National Definition. This led to difficult decisions to either protect the National Definition, and the consensus from which it arose, or to give into to short term and the often politically expedite considerations. In reflecting on why MN-S decided to maintain coherency with the National Definition, Louise Simard, who was in the role of the Chief Operations Officer at the time said:

You got to stick to the national definition. There is no room for movement here... the nation as a whole had said that this is very important. This is our identity, and we don't want to water that down, you know, or bring in groups that aren't part of the culture, the identity, the communities that formed. There's a lot of people in Canada who are mixed Indigenous and European ancestry, but don't fall into the definition because the definition is about community acceptance within the community and descent from Metis ancestors from the Historic Metis Nation...and so that's why I wasn't about to support any change in the registry policy. So, I understand the national definition was followed strictly. Because at the end of the day, that national definition speaks to being accepted by the Métis community, and being part of, you know, the cultural and ethnic Métis group. And having Indigenous and European ancestry doesn't necessarily cause you to fall into that group.

While the question of whether MNO's use and understanding of the National Definition is discussed in the following section, it is clear that the *manner* in which MNO deployed its own unique understanding of the definition, in including the seven communities, is not aligned with the participatory and consensus based approach which gave rise to the definition, or by extension, MNO's political existence.

In establishing these communities, MNO did not engage in a collaborative process with other Métis governments but instead partnered primarily with the provincial government of Ontario. During the interviews we heard how this approach was rooted in historical research aimed at identifying historic Métis communities within the province, yet it failed to consider or deliberate on the broader consequences for the Métis Nation as a whole.

The MNO, which was originally created out of political necessity to address Métis issues within Ontario, has now evolved into a powerful entity with a life of its own, one that many participants worried poses a threat to the cohesion of the entire Métis Nation. As Jean Teillet aptly observed, "Ontario had built by that point, such a machine, that they were churning all by themselves". This statement highlights the self-sustaining nature of Ontario's approach, which operated independently and without the collaborative input of other Métis governments, raising significant concerns about its alignment with the national Métis identity.

Regarding the connection of the seven communities to the broader Métis Nation, Adam Gaudry provides some important considerations:

I can't speak to the rationale of what's happening in MNO claiming those seven communities. It seems it's a *Powley* based argument. If they can demonstrate pre-effective control land uses, then they can demonstrate contemporary Aboriginal harvesting rights via *Powley*. I mean, fair enough, but that doesn't make them part of the Métis Nation because they may have *Powley* rights. Certainly not with the National Definition we've been using. If we are a nation, it's not based on pre-effective control land use using the *Powley* test. Nationhood is historical and cultural and political connections that bind people together, not a historical process. Which is, again, not to say that there isn't an argument to be made about *Powley* rights. But I think that is a different question than "are these communities' part of the Métis Nation?" Are these communities Indigenous and have some *Powley* rights? Are these communities a part of the Métis Nation? These are actually two distinct questions that need to be considered separately.

3.3.5 Analysis

Gaudry raises a series of questions that could have guided a collaborative and productive discussion, questions that should have been addressed through a deliberative process grounded in consensus building among Métis political organizations. One often used structure that could hold us

to a consistent use of the National Definition is a compliance mechanism—commonly used in federalist systems. However, this approach seems out of alignment with the methods we use to govern ourselves and outlined above. On the other hand, a collective commitment to co-manage the definition seems more aligned with our governing structures, however it risks leading to difficult conversations, and some of the same problems of overcoming seemingly intractable disagreements Teillet notes above. Ultimately, the manner in which the MNO sought to incorporate the seven communities foreclosed the possibility of collectively maintaining authority over these sorts of questions. While the governance structure of the MNC empowers provincial Métis organizations to act in alignment with certain Métis governance principles, decentralization has also enabled the MNO to chart its own politically expedient path outside the bounds of the National Definition.

Regardless of the findings of the MNC Expert Panel, the manner in which decisions were made advancing the inclusion of the seven communities seems to have exploited features and vulnerabilities of the decentralized nature of Métis governance. Our assessment from the interviews and critical document review and case study is that this was also aided by leveraging support from the Canadian and Ontario governments. The inclusion process seems to have occurred without collaborative discussion or decision making with other nodes of decision making in the Métis Nation, and without analysis or visioning to understand, anticipate, and respond to the consequences of inclusion for the wider Métis community and other impacted Indigenous peoples. These actions should prompt serious questions about the long-term implications of this precedent. Specifically, the research team is recommending ongoing analysis of the way Métis governments exercise their respective, overlapping, and contiguous spheres of decision-making authority. The challenge is that wielding political autonomy, a clear value and tradition in Métis governance, has the capacity to reinforce unity and integrity of the Métis Nation, or undermine it, depending on the way it is deployed. This creates high risks for internal fragmentation and destabilization.

3.4 Identity

3.4.1 Overview

Identity is an integral part of nationhood. It fosters belonging, cultural continuity, and cohesion amongst a nation, enabling the people belonging to it to come together as a collective. For the Métis Nation, identity is particularly significant as it embodies its unique culture, traditions, and governance practices. Métis identity is rooted in the collective and interdependent relationships amongst communities, and individuals to those communities through kinship relations. Having a cohesive definition of who is Métis, like the National Definition, helps to affirm the distinct place of Métis within an Indigenous world while also ensuring Métis rights, history, and contributions are known and respected.

Governance structures are important for maintaining identity, as they provide formal mechanisms for asserting autonomy and ensuring the continuation of a nation's values and governance traditions. For the Métis Nation, having a governance structure like the MNC and the National Definition, is crucial for its cohesion. These structures empower the Métis Nation to solidify a united identity across the diverse Métis communities within it. However, the current lack of formal compliance mechanisms within this governance structure makes it incredibly difficult to hold Governing Members and/or provincial Métis governments accountable when they stray from the collective.

3.4.2 Core Argument

MNO has operationalized Métis identity in ways that diverge from the consensually established National Definition of the Métis Nation. The Nation in the West is diverse, with interdependencies between various settlements, communities, and regions, each contributing to the collective identity of the Nation. In contrast, MNO's conception of identity reverses this communal foundation by focusing on the descendants of individuals living in specific historical communities, which MNO uses to claim these places and the surrounding territory as Métis territory. Here we continue to build out a distinction between being *in* a place, and being Indigenous *from* a place developed in earlier sections. Consequently, MNO uses a system of lineal descent which relies on the identification of historical individuals with mixed Indigenous and European heritage rather than Indigenous collectivities to justify a set of "verified Métis family lines" as the foundation of historic Métis communities in Ontario. This racialized view of identity is inconsistent with the way the Métis Nation understands itself, where identity is rooted in interdependent relationships between communities and individuals anchored to specific places with shared historical and contemporary familial relations, political struggles, social relations, artistic expression, and the like.

To organize the range of information we collected on the theme of identity we have organized the following into two sub-themes. The first is collective identity vs individual lineage. The second is Red River and Beyond. One of the challenges that emerged in this area is that interviewees commented on identity within their discussions of other themes. As such we have attempted to minimize the number of duplicate interventions, however in some cases this was unavoidable because the intervention made by an interviewee has implications for more than one of our three areas of interest.

3.4.3 Collective Identity vs. Individual Lineage

The Métis Nation's identity is rooted in the collective and interdependent relationships amongst communities, where both inter- and intra-community connections through kinship create a networked state of belonging within the Nation. Direct lineal ancestry/genealogy is used both in the West's operationalization of the National Definition and in the seven communities. For example, in the West the use of scrip certificates allows present day people to demonstrate a genealogical

connection to those who took scrip after 1870. The seven communities use “root ancestors” and “verified Métis family lines” to allow present day individuals to trace their ancestry to people in the past. The research team’s concern is that while both are processes rooted in stories of past people, the differences between scrip and root ancestor stories are significant.

To help frame this engagement, we offer Sasha Thomas’s advice about the care we need to take when telling stories about ourselves with respect to gender and identity. She states:

I think storytelling is a way of defining ourselves. So what stories are we telling? What stories are we retelling? What stories do people expect to be told and which ones challenge the stories folks expect to be told? And it's really important just in terms of envisioning where the story is going to go, you can story yourself into things. And you can write this, you can write the story, you can story yourself into a future. So it's important that we pay attention to the types of narratives we are building on and the types of narratives we're creating, right? Because then we live out those narratives.

Thomas here is trying to alert us to the ways stories can centre and decentre particular perspectives and experiences - specifically those of men - which are then reproduced as male dominated stories are repeated and expected to be repeated. However, this intervention is helpful for thinking through the different orientations to lineal ancestry at play.

The stories told about scrip are unique to a particular set of geographic, social, historical, political, and economic circumstances. On the other hand, it is not clear to the research team what stories the root ancestors are attached to. These forms of lineal ancestry, while sharing a similar activity or method, appear to be animated by significantly different underlying assumptions and experiences. Scrip seems to create an imperfect matrix that links people, land, politics, history, economy, and society together. In essence, scrip commissions and the certificates they left behind provide a dynamic evidentiary record of community and communities who share the markers noted by Jean Teillet in the Legitimacy section of this report. It is not clear that the use of root ancestors or verified family lines are part of the same matrix, or even a matrix unique to the seven communities. To redeploy Thomas, are the stories emerging about people and place stories of a collective people within Teillet’s framework? Or are these stories about individuals who had kids, who went on to have kids, who then also had kids? The stories in each case would be quite different.

This is not to say that lineal ancestry does not need critical attention in the West - it does. As Sandra Quills shares with us about how Métis folks pick partners:

I mean, that's the thing I'm actually talking about - you need somebody who works [and understands the way of life]. You know that increasingly the number of Métis people that come in, or people with cards or whatever - they weren’t actually raised like that. Because [the people who had that experience], it's further back [in their

family history]. There's a couple of people - I don't know how they got cards, but they've a distant great, great grandparent or whatever. So how is that different from what we're critiquing Ontario for? This is something I think we all have to look at.

Quills is offering the important point that the contemporary structures of membership, citizenship, and belonging in the West are also in need of examination to ensure the “community acceptance” portion of our systems of belonging are robust. To be sure, Quills also makes clear that “I know we claim all our grandchildren - absolutely”, meaning her intervention here should not be overstated. However, if we restated her point into a question, it might look like “what would a robust system of community acceptance look like?” This connects well with other interviews in which women, community, and family were emphasized in discussions not only of identity, but also of legitimacy and governance.

The approach set by these interlocutors also provides additional analytical heft to thinking through the logic of lineal ancestry in historic communities. Consider the issue of Métis people with family and roots in the West living for multiple generations in Ontario. Hypothetically, they may gather there for long periods of time in such numbers that one might be inclined to call it a Métis community. However, doing so largely because Métis people live in a place does not mean that it is a Métis community, or Métis territory. What starts to emerge is a nuanced connection between identity, and land/territory.

Adam Gaudry engages this extensively in his comments to us, and we have returned to it here again. Having grown up in Ontario, and now living in the West, he says:

I wish we could differentiate, and do a better job of differentiating, where Métis are now versus where they are from. There can be a Métis community *in* Victoria and Vancouver, because there is not a Métis community *from* Victoria and *from* Vancouver. But there's a critical mass of Métis living there now, who might be entitled to resources and support from a Métis organization, not one that's claiming rights to territory there, or anything like that. But because of economic factors, people moved. And a lot of places that our people are from were not the most economically prosperous in the mid 20th century. In the post war period, there was a lot of economic decline in rural Métis communities and people did the best that they could and sometimes moved elsewhere. But to then claim those places as Métis territory, I think would be problematic. Other Indigenous governments will set up support systems for those living outside their territory. The Nisga'a have an office in Vancouver, right? They don't claim to be from Vancouver, but they offer services because a critical mass of their people live in Vancouver. And so I think we can think of Métis government services like that.

Gaudry is making a helpful distinction between someone being *in* a place and being *from* a place. As we discuss in the Legitimacy section of this report, relationships to land are a key component

of what makes us native people. Gaudry is saying there needs to be sharper attention to how we build out support for Métis people living outside Métis territories. In this formulation Métis folks living *in* another place would be supported without needing to make claims to being Indigenous *from* those places. Several other interviewees also discuss how we might improve connection and support for these folks, who were often referred to as expatriates or expats in our conversations. They are expatriates in the sense that they are Métis from the West but, for whatever reason, are now living outside Métis territories.

The implications of getting this distinction right are not small. Brenda Macdougall makes an important observation regarding the consequences of MNO claiming the seven communities:

"the [national] definition on its face is not terrible. You need to be from a historic community. You need to self-ascribed that you're Métis. And you need to be accepted by the communities as being Métis. But what we've done is fetishize genealogy as the only way to get to the answer. We didn't have to. And so then the Metis Nation centralized that process. And then genealogy became like a fetish industry in order to prove identity. And so, acceptance fell by the wayside and self-declaration became prominent. And self-declaration was proved via a genealogy. But it's actually community acceptance that should matter more. That's the important piece. And when tied to a sense of place, we can see that in the west Metis communities already existed (and the historical record bears that out), and they already exist within the framework of traditional territory. We're not claiming other people's space in order to make that happen."

Two points emerge from this intervention. First is that lineal ancestry needs to be coupled to something. Above we framed this as an imperfect matrix linking people, land, politics, history, economy, and society together. As discussed earlier, the interviews reveal how as a political organization MNO is mandated to represent Métis within the provincial borders. Taking this into account we can understand that when genealogy or "root ancestry" is the only logic of inclusion (as opposed to a broader Métis community acceptance) that this results in driving MNO to claim space. This has led to exactly the complications that Gaudry is illuminating about mistaking being *in* and *from* a place.

Our view is that there are fundamentally different uses of defining stories, histories, land relationships and personal presence at play in this conflict that are frustrating not only these identity questions within the Métis Nation, but outside of it as well. What we believe our interlocutors are telling us is that these claims to Indigenous identity *from* a place advanced by the seven communities do not resemble the identity claims to being *from* a place in the West. Even in cases where some of the methods are the same, for example in the use of lineal ancestry, the substance and foundations of those methods appear to be quite different. Indeed, many of our interviewees pointed out that these acts of taking up space are creating justifiable frustration among other Indigenous peoples who possess Indigenous relationships to the land claimed by the seven communities.

3.4.4 Red River and Beyond

None of what appears in the previous section should be construed to mean that interviewees do not see diversity within the Métis Nation of the West. Rather, several interviewees provided insightful comments about the diversity that emerges from different geographies in the West.

Macdougall sets this out directly in her comments. She argues:

I really wish Manitoba would stop doing the Red River thing. I actually wish people in the West would stop the Red River thing in general...Because we are diverse, we have different histories. We should be accountable to each other, we should be upholding and uplifting each other in those distinctions at the same time that we recognize that our common threads are that I'm related to people from Edmonton to Manitoba. And I should be accountable to all of those relations, even if I don't know who those people are. And that's hard because the politics as it exists is divisive and encourages divisiveness, it actually doesn't promote unity...I understand why people started forcing the Red River discourse in really profound ways. And that was to counter the narrative that Métis people are everywhere, and Métis people are a racialized category. I understand it from that perspective, but it has become an unhelpful discourse for the West, and for the North.

These systems of accountability are important for thinking about the fabric of identity in the West. Gaudry also takes this up as he thinks about Métis identity continuity over time. While his scholarship is rooted in the politics and history of the 19th century, he points out there is a level of consistency in how Métis have thought about and acted upon their politics in the West. He states:

... how Métis recount history as an emerging self-awareness and self-possession to assert political authority over territory that their ancestors were from, I think, is really consistent with today. It doesn't happen the same way everywhere. But the people are interrelated enough to find commonality. . . . You have these poles at Red River and Fort Edmonton. And then those are the two big places that people show up in the archive, for a bunch of reasons, one of them being they're the big fur trade posts, and that's where the documentation was made. But it also shows this flow all the way through Saskatchewan. So there's basically the two poles of the Métis Nation - that strip between those two places is where you have the greatest density of Métis communities.

Gaudry is doing several important things. First, he is thinking through the way history is in conversation with the present. He sees in his research a continuity in values, similar in form to those pointed out by Cheryl Troupe, in which people take up ways of seeing the world to act in the present. Second, he is laying out the way he sees diversity in this strip between Fort Edmonton and Red River that accounts for connectedness, but also uniqueness of geographical context. Here we

think this fits well with Macdougall's comment that the north is often left out of conversations that centre Red River.

Care needs to be taken when framing diversity for purposes of unity. The research team is concerned that these expressions of diversity are being deployed in the same gaps in understanding noted in the Legitimacy section of this report. In this case, diversity of geographical context may be repurposed to frame places without a shared and diverse past, present and future as being part of the larger Métis Nation. We argue our interviewees are pointing out to us that the challenge of knowing if a voyageur village in Ontario becomes something else is not the same issue as detailing the history, present, and future of actual Métis communities between the poles of Red River (potentially including north-west Ontario) and Fort Edmonton. Researchers are not struggling with trying to find out if this process of identity formation happened in the West because there is a continuous and dynamic record that shows it did, and that it persists to today.

The research team also reviewed documents from other Métis governments that position the Manitoba Métis Federation as the primary, or national government of the Red River Métis. In light of our expert interviews, our concern is that such framings undermine the strength of the type of diversity Macdougall, Gaudry, Troupe and others are articulating. While Red River holds significant historical importance within the Métis Nation, it is regarded by many of the interviewees as one of several symbolic centers, or perhaps a capital city, rather than the sole defining source of Métis identity.

3.4.5 Analysis

Drawing together the totality of interviews, critical document review and case study, and wider document review, the research team is positioned to offer several comments about identity and the National Definition.

First, there is work to be done in the West to engage questions of community acceptance more robustly than has heretofore been done. This came up in most of the interviews in one form or another. There is an opportunity to build enduring identity and belonging frameworks that are grounded in Métis modes of being and relating articulated in this and other sections of this report. Some interviewees called for this to be done with attention to the way proximity to whiteness shapes identity, for others it was more about empowering existing nodes of collectivity like locals, women, and family, for others it was about connections to values and local community practices of identifying and being claimed. As noted above the use of lineal ancestry is part of this conversation and would be better served by deepening connections with systems of community acceptance.

Second, our research indicates there is weak alignment between the seven communities and the National Definition. In particular, those with expertise in the seven communities or methods used to justify their inclusion have expressed significant reservations about the way identity is being

constructed in and for these seven communities. There also seems to be an over reliance on lineal descent without a firm anchoring to a historical and continuing community of Métis people (within the broader network of diverse Métis communities in the West).

It is important to note that the weak alignment does not foreclose the possibility that there may have been an Indigenous people in these places. Our research was not attuned to detecting a definitive sense of identity beyond claims to be part of the Métis Nation. As is detailed across this report, there could be a community of non-status Indians, or white settler people with Indigenous ancestry, or something else entirely. What this research has found in interviews, the critical document case study, and wider document review is that there is a weak alignment with being *Métis* as set out in the National Definition.

4. Documents Reviewed

Below is a list of documents used to inform the interview process, the analysis and the report.

MNO Related Documents

1. **MNO Registry Review Final Report**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2021). MNO registry review final report. Métis Nation of Ontario.
2. **An Open Letter to Métis Nation Leaders & Citizens: Telling Truths about the MNC and the MNO**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2021). An open letter to Métis nation leaders & citizens: Telling truths about the MNC and the MNO. Métis Nation of Ontario.
3. **MNO Chief Electoral Officer Plebiscite Results**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2023). MNO chief electoral officer plebiscite results 3-March-2023. Métis Nation of Ontario.
4. **MNO's Response to MNC Probation Resolution**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2018). MNO's response to MNC probation resolution. Métis Nation of Ontario.
5. **MNO - Identification of Historic Métis Communities in Ontario**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2017). Identification of historic Métis communities in Ontario. Métis Nation of Ontario.
6. **Ontario Métis Root Ancestors - Métis Nation of Ontario**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2022). Ontario Métis root ancestors. Métis Nation of Ontario.
7. **MNO Registry Consultations - What We Heard Phase 1 FINAL**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2011). MNO registry consultations - what we heard phase 1 final. Métis Nation of Ontario.
8. **MNO Registry Review Supplemental Report**
 - Know History Inc. (2021). MNO registry and self-government readiness review supplemental report. Métis Nation of Ontario.
9. **MNO-MGRSIA 2.0 Feb-23-2023**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2023). MNO-MGRSIA 2.0 Feb-23-2023. Métis Nation of Ontario.
10. **MNO Registry Policy Amendment June-17-2023**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2023). MNO registry policy amendment June-17-2023. Métis Nation of Ontario.

11. Rivers of Resistance

- Miner, D. (September/October 2022). Rivers of resistance: “We were tired of hiding behind the trees.” The ebb and flow of Métis history as it unfolded on Ontario’s shores. Canadian Geographic.

MNC Related Documents

1. 2021 Joint News Release regarding Removal of Chartier

- Métis Nation British Columbia, Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation–Saskatchewan, & Métis Nation of Ontario. (2021, June 7). Joint news release: Call for Clément Chartier to remove himself from all involvement with Métis National Council.

2. 2022 News Article - MNC Files Lawsuit Against Chartier & MMF

- APTN National News. (2022, January 27). Chartrand, Chartier, MMF named in multi-million dollar lawsuit by Métis National Council for ‘scorched earth policy scheme’. APTN News. Retrieved from <https://www.aptnnews.ca>

3. 2018 MNC General Assembly Resolution on MNO Probation & Homeland Map

- Métis National Council. (2018). 2018 MNC General Assembly resolution on Métis Nation of Ontario probation and homeland map.

4. 2022 MNC General Assembly Resolution on Review of Ontario Métis Communities

- Métis National Council. (2022). 2022 General Assembly resolution on prioritization of review of Ontario Métis communities.

5. 2023 Terms of Reference - MNC Expert Panel

- Métis National Council. (2023, September 28). Terms of Reference for the Métis National Council Expert Panel on Ontario Métis communities.

6. R v. Powley Case Summary & FAQ

- Métis National Council. (No publication year provided). R v. Powley case summary and frequently asked questions.

MMF Commissioned and Related Documents

1. 2019 News Article re Chartrand to Lead MNC

- CBC News. (2019, November 6). David Chartrand to lead Métis National Council until election after president steps down. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba>

2. 2021 News Article re MMF Leaves MNC

- Lilley, R. (2021, September 29). Manitoba Métis Federation leaves Métis National Council. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous>

3. 2023 News Article re MNC Ordered to Make a Decision re ON Métis Communities

- Narine, S. (2023, October 24). Make a decision on the MNO’s historic communities, judge tells Métis National Council. Windspeaker.com. Retrieved from <https://www.indigenouwatchdog.org>

4. **2023 News Article re MMF Legal Victory Over MNC**
 - APTN National News. (2023, October 21). MMF celebrates legal victory over Métis National Council in recent court decision. APTN News. Retrieved from <https://www.aptnnews.ca>
5. **2023 News Release re Cost Award in MNC v. MMF**
 - Manitoba Métis Federation. (2023, October 19). Court awards costs of more than \$250K to MMF in clear and overwhelming success over MNC. Retrieved from <https://www.mmf.mb.ca>
6. **2023 News Release re MNC Hypocrisy**
 - Manitoba Métis Federation. (2023, November 9). MMF slams MNC hypocrisy. News provided by Manitoba Métis Federation. Retrieved from <https://www.news-wire.ca/news/manitoba-métis-federation>
7. **2024 MMF Webpage - Beyond Borders Task Force**
 - Manitoba Métis Federation. (2024, May 5). MMF aims to bring Citizens home with Beyond Borders Task Force. Retrieved from <https://www.mmf.mb.ca>
8. **2022 MMF Beyond Borders Interim Report**
 - Manitoba Métis Federation. (2022, October 13). "What We Heard" Report on the Red River Métis Beyond Borders Consultation. Manitoba Métis Federation.

Documents Related to the Seven Communities

1. **Mattawa Nipissing Métis Historical Research**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2011). Mattawa Nipissing Métis historical research. Métis Nation of Ontario.
2. **Ontario Report - Sudbury and Espanola Region**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2017). Report on the Sudbury and Espanola region Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario.
3. **Joint Fact Sheet - Mattawa 18-August-2017**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Historic Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario. Available at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historicresources/>
4. **Joint Fact Sheet - Northern Lake Superior 18-August-2017**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Historic Northern Lake Superior Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario. Available at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historicresources/>
5. **MNO Report - Lake Superior Region**
 - Ray, A. J., & Matsui, K. (2011). Fur trade and Métis settlements in the Lake Superior region, 1820-1850. Report for the Métis Nation of Ontario.
6. **INAC Report - Robinson Treaty**
 - Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. (2017). Report on the Robinson Treaty and its implications for Métis communities. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.
7. **Ontario Report - Michipicoten Community**

- Métis Nation of Ontario. (2017). Report on the Michipicoten community: Historical and contemporary perspectives. Métis Nation of Ontario.
- 8. **MNO Report on Historic Métis North of Lake Superior March 2015**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2015). Historic Métis in the North of Lake Superior: An ethnographic report. Métis Nation of Ontario.
- 9. **DOG - Lake Superior Report**
 - Department of Geography, University of Toronto. (2017). Lake Superior: Environmental and demographic analysis. University of Toronto.
- 10. **Joint Fact Sheet - Northern Lake Superior 18-August-2017**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Northern Lake Superior Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario.
- 11. **Sault Ste. Marie Names**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (No date). Sault Ste. Marie names. Métis Nation of Ontario.
- 12. **Powley Case Report by Joan Holmes**
 - Holmes, J. (No date). Report on the Powley case. Location unknown.
- 13. **Joint Fact Sheet - Sault Ste Marie 18-August-2017**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario. Available at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historicresources/>
- 14. **DOJ Report - Lake of the Woods Region**
 - Department of Justice Canada. (No date). Lake of the Woods region report. Department of Justice Canada.
- 15. **MNO Report - Rainy Lake Rainy River**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (No date). Report on the Rainy Lake and Rainy River region. Métis Nation of Ontario.
- 16. **Historic Metis in the Rainy River & Kenora**
 - Praxis Research Associates. (2002). Historic Métis in the Rainy River and Kenora districts: Fishing practices and off-reserve residence. Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Native Affairs Unit. Praxis Research Associates.
- 17. **Joint Fact Sheet - Rainy River, Lake of the Woods-18-August-2017**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Rainy River and Lake of the Woods historic Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario. Available at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historicresources/>
- 18. **Ontario Report - Timmins Cochrane and the Abitibi Region**
 - Praxis Research Associates. (2001). Historic Métis in Ontario: Timmins, Cochrane, and the Abitibi region. Praxis Research Associates.
- 19. **DOJ Report - James Bay Appendix B**
 - Department of Justice Canada. (Date Unknown). James Bay region historical Métis database. Department of Justice Canada.
- 20. **Joint Fact Sheet - Abitibi-Inland 18-August-2017**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Historic Abitibi Inland Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario. Available at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historicresources/>
- 21. **Joint Fact Sheet - Georgian Bay 18-August-2017**

- Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Historic Georgian Bay Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario. Available at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historicresources/>
22. **Joint Fact Sheet - Killarney-18-August-2017**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario & Ontario Government. (2017). Joint fact sheet: Historic Killarney Métis community. Métis Nation of Ontario. Available at: <http://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historicresources/>
 23. **Ontario Report - Burleigh Falls**
 - Public History Inc. (2000, February). Métis of Burleigh Falls. Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

Reports on Seven Communities, not commissioned by MNO

1. **2016 Barkwell Report regarding Métis Homeland, its Settlements and Communities**
 - Barkwell, L. (2016). Métis homeland: Its settlements and communities. Métis National Council.
2. **2018 Chartier Report regarding Métis Nation of Ontario & Recommendations**
 - Chartier, C. (2018, November). Addressing the integrity of the historic Métis Nation homeland. Report in response to the Métis Nation General Assembly December 2017 resolution on the Métis Nation of Ontario.
3. **2020 Report by Leroux & O’Toole for Manitoba Métis Federation regarding Ontario Métis Communities**
 - Leroux, D., & O’Toole, D. (2020, March 7). An analysis of the MNO’s recognition of six new historic Métis communities: A final report.
4. **2020 Report by Adese, Leroux, & O’Toole for Manitoba Métis Federation regarding Ontario Métis Communities**
 - Adese, J., Leroux, D., & O’Toole, E. (2020, October 9). Report for the Manitoba Métis Federation regarding Métis communities in Ontario.
5. **2023 Report by Pedri-Spade & Leroux for Robinson-Huron Waawiindemaagewin regarding Sault Ste. Marie Métis Community and Halfbreed Petition**
 - Pedri-Spade, C., & Leroux, D. (2023, October). Report for Robinson-Huron Waawiindemaagewin on the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community and halfbreed petition.

Court Decisions

1. **2021 Case Summary - Green v. MNO**
 - Métis Nation of Ontario. (2021). Summary of the decision in Green v. Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat. Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Case No. 2021 ONSC 5808. Retrieved from <https://www.metisnation.org>
2. **2023 Judgment in MMF v. MNBC**
 - Manitoba Métis Federation et al. v. Métis Nation British Columbia et al., 2023 MBKB 174. Court of King's Bench of Manitoba. Retrieved from <https://www.canlii.org>

3. 2001 ON Court of Appeal Decision - R v. Powley

- R v. Powley, 2001 ONCA 34065. Court of Appeal for Ontario. Retrieved from <https://www.canlii.org>

4. 2003 SCC Decision - R v. Powley

- R v. Powley, 2003 SCC 43. Supreme Court of Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.scc-csc.ca>

Other

1. 2023 News Article about MNA and MMF Challenge

- Forester, B. (2023, February 24). Métis Nation of Alberta mounts court challenge to Manitoba Métis self-government deal. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous>

2. The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828

- Osbourne, A. C., (1901). Reprinted from “Papers and ‘Records of the Ontario Historical Society,” Vol. III.