

# NAJA media guide for reporting on Métis communities in the Métis National Council

Reporting on Métis communities in the Métis National Council effectively requires understanding their respective government, people, history, art and environment. The NAJA media guide for reporting on Métis communities in the Métis National Council is a tool for journalists to learn about the complexities of Métis and their varied communities.

## Government

The Métis National Council (MNC) is organized into 5 different provincial organizations; Métis Nation of Ontario, the Manitoba Metis Federation, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta and Métis Nation British Columbia. The five provincial organizations of the MNC provide 55 delegates who in turn elect a national president who acts as a spokesperson on a national and international level.

Each provincial organization has a similar governance structure. A board of directors representing different regions of the province and a president. For example: Manitoba is divided up into 7 regions, three board of directors are elected from each region. The 21 board members, a spokeswoman for the women's secretariat and the president make up the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF). David Chartrand is the long-time president. The MMF has Métis-specific services such as a pharmacy, housing, and child and family services.

A Métis-issued membership card is required to vote for a president or board member. The voting age varies.

## Economy

The vast majority of revenue for provincial Métis organizations comes from federal and provincial governments. The federal government funds Indigenous people through a distinctions-based (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) formula. Never before have Métis been specifically targeted for funding from the federal government. For example: the MMF is funded several million dollars; money that just a decade ago was not available, except for a small amount from the province.

## Geography

Métis are still located on their traditional homelands. The Homeland of the Métis is roughly Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the northwestern part of Ontario and the northeastern part of British Columbia. A map produced by the MNC curves upward to the Northwest Territories and dips south into northern parts of Montana and North Dakota.

Métis make up a significant population of various municipalities across the prairies via private land. Major cities such as Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina and Edmonton have a significant Métis population.

Métis have a land base in Alberta. There are eight Métis settlements in the northern part of the province. They operate separately outside of the MNC. The land was granted by the province not the federal government.

Métis have an Indigenous right to hunt in certain jurisdictions in western Canada and Ontario.

Nearly 5000 people live on eight Métis settlements in northern Alberta.



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## Treaties

The Manitoba Act of 1870 is sometimes regarded as a Métis treaty. In return for not opposing a federal survey of western Canada for the coming intercontinental railway, Manitoba entered the Canadian confederation as a bi-lingual, bi-cultural province. Métis were promised 1.4 million acres in land to be given out in the form of scrip. Métis would soon be overwhelmed by an influx of settlers from Ontario, Quebec and Europe and many promises would not be kept, especially giving out the land. It all led to a showdown in Saskatchewan between Indigenous people and the federal government known as the 1885 Northwest Rebellion. The only treaty Métis are a part of is an adhesion to Treaty 3, which was signed in 1874. They requested an annual payment for the purchase of ammunition and twine for fishing nets. This only affects Métis living in and around Fort Frances, Ontario. Métis were involved in other numbered treaty negotiations but an early amendment to the Indian Act meant a community had to choose between signing a treaty or taking scrip, not both.

Except for in northern Alberta, Métis have been without a land base since the late 19th century as allocations of land were not done in accordance to the Manitoba Act of 1870. In 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the federal government mishandled allocating the promised 1.4 million acres, meaning Métis could now negotiate a settlement with the federal government. Negotiations continue to this day.

## People

The Métis National Council determines membership largely through genealogy. Members must trace back to an ancestor who received scrip in 1870 and lived in the Red River Valley prior to Confederation.

Members refer to themselves as Métis. At one time, the term Michif was used but it is now almost exclusively used to denote the French/Cree language that developed on the Prairies.

## Culture

Métis, especially in Winnipeg, have noted November 16th as a notable day. It's the anniversary of the execution of Métis leader, Louis Riel. More recently the third Monday in February has been designated Louis Riel Day in Manitoba.

Métis were part of establishing the fur trade and developing communities along fur trade routes.

The St. Boniface Museum in Winnipeg has many Métis artifacts.

Notable Métis: David Chartrand – current MMF president, Brian Bowman – current mayor of Winnipeg, Maria Campbell – writer, Dan Vandal – current Minister of Northern Affairs, Douglas Cardinal – world renowned architect, Theoren Fleury - former NHL player.

Notable deceased Métis: Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, John Norquay -first Metis Premier of Manitoba, Elzear Goulet-first Metis martyr, Howard Adams and Harry Daniels.

