

# Metis Political Organizations

Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell

**Alberta Metis Settlements:** In 1928, a small group of Metis in the Cold Lake area began to organize. This group, led by Charles Delorme, established L'Association des Metis de l'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest. This led Joe Dion and a number of other Metis leaders incorporate the Metis Association of Alberta in 1932. They then began extensive lobbying for measures to counteract Metis poverty. At this time it had become clear that the government scrip programs had been inadequate and by the turn of the century most Metis in Alberta were squatting on Crown land. The transfer of natural resources from federal to provincial jurisdiction in 1938 opened up large areas of Crown land for homesteading and squatter's rights were no longer recognized. These events as well as the Depression impacted the Metis. Their situation was desperate. As a result, the Ewing Commission was set up in 1938 to review the situation of the Metis in Alberta. This commission recommended that land be set aside for the Metis with limited self-governing authority over hunting, fishing and trapping. The first settlements (first called "Colonies") to be established were:

- Buffalo Lake (Caslan) or Beaver River \*
- Cold Lake
- East Prairie (south of Lesser Slave Lake)\*
- Elizabeth (east of Elk Point)\*
- Fishing Lake (Packechawanis)\*
- Gift Lake (Ma-cha-cho-wi-se) or Utikuma Lake\*
- Kikino\* (Goodfish Lake)
- Marlboro
- Paddle Prairie (or Keg River)\*
- Peavine (Big Prairie, north of High Prairie)\*
- Touchwood
- Wolf Lake (north of Bonnyville)

\* The eight current Metis Settlements.

In the 1960s, a Cabinet Order-in-Council removed the settlements of Marlboro, Touchwood, Cold Lake and Wolf Lake from the Metis regime. In 1990, Accord Legislation passed giving the Metis people the 1.25 million acres of land on the remaining eight settlements via the *Metis Settlements Act*, the *Metis Accord Implementation Act*, the *Metis Land Protection Act* and the *Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act*.

Adrian Hope, Maurice L'Hirondelle, Lawrence Desjarlais, Sam Johnston and Richard Poitras – formed the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements in 1975, to create a working relationship between the Alberta government and the Metis Settlements. The relationship worked to improve legislation and promote self-government. The Federation pressed the Alberta government for funding and, more importantly, a voice for the Metis communities that were established in 1938. Finally, in 1990, after several years of intense negotiation, the Federation realized their objective when the new Metis Settlements Accord was adopted and ratified by the province. Through the Accord, which provisioned land and self-government, the Metis Settlements General Council was born. In May 20, 1975 the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements (AFMS) became a registered society under the Societies Act of Alberta

making the AFMS a legal entity. The AFMS then became the Metis Settlements General Council in 1990 after the Metis Settlements Accord was signed. Some of the Presidents of the Metis Settlement Association (to 1990) and its successor organization, the General Council, are: William Erasmus, Clifford Gladue, Maurice L'Hirondelle, Elmer Ghostkeeper, Joe Courtepatte, Gary Parenteau, Randy Hardy, Ken Noskey, Richard Blyan, Harry Supernault and Alden Armstrong.

**Alberta Metis Settlements General Council:** The Metis Settlements of Alberta are the only land-based Metis group in Canada. The umbrella organization for the Alberta Metis Settlements is their General Council. The MSGC has legislation law-making authority over membership, hunting, fishing, trapping, timber and other matters relating to land. The Metis Settlements General Council may enact laws (General Council policies) that are binding on the General Council and every Settlement. These laws (General Council policies) are equal in status to other provincial laws. The Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) is the political and administrative body for the collective interests of the eight Metis Settlements consisting of Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie and Peavine. The MSGC is a pro-active government that helps develop, implement, and distribute programs and services to the eight Alberta settlements which are the only land-based Metis in Canada. General Council has 44 members consisting of 40 elected members from the Settlements, and 4 elected Executive members. General Council advances the collective interests and rights of Settlement members by working with other stakeholders to promote good governance and working partnerships of the Metis Settlements.

**L'Association des Metis de l'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest:** In the late 1920s, a small group of Metis in the Cold Lake area of Alberta began to organize. This group, led by Charles Delorme and Deudomne Collins, established L'Association des Metis de l'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest. A provisional council had been in existence some time before the formation of the association, and at least thirty-one active locals were represented at the inaugural meeting. Later, the name was changed to the Metis Association of Alberta. The first president was Joe Dion with Malcolm Norris, Felix Callihoo, and Pete Tomkins as vice-presidents and James Brady serving as Secretary-Treasurer.

**Canadian Metis Society:** The Canadian Metis Society was the first national Metis organization. It was formed in 1968, after the split of the National Indian Council; the Indian members formed the National Indian Brotherhood. Adam Cuthand was the first president of CMS. This organization was unfunded and did not really have the support of the existing provincial associations. Without a firm base of support it ended with the formation of the Native Council of Canada in 1971.

**Louis Riel Metis Association of British Columbia:** Following the Northwest Resistance of 1885, a number of Metis from the prairies moved into the Peace River country of northeastern British Columbia to join the established Metis populations there. In the 1970s, the Metis in this part of B.C. organized themselves into the Louis Riel Metis Society. By 1983, the society had gone province-wide to incorporate as the Louis Riel Metis Association of British Columbia.

**Manitoba Metis Federation:** Prior to the incorporation of the MMF in 1967, the primary organization for social action for the Native people in Manitoba was the annual Indian and Metis Conference which was sponsored by the Community Welfare Planning Council of Winnipeg. The MMF had its start in the 1950s when these annual conferences began to apply pressure on the senior levels of government for housing programs. Whereas the federal government (DIA) had introduced housing

programs on reserves, the Metis were ineligible for housing assistance. The Metis formed several housing associations in order to pressure the Province of Manitoba for Metis housing programs. Subsequently, these housing associations amalgamated to form the Manitoba Metis Housing Association.

In 1967, at the annual meeting of the Indian and Metis Conference, a number of Metis attending the meeting realized that the distribution of delegates to this conference was designed to favour First Nation's delegates and the Metis decided they could only make their concerns heard if they had an independent voice. Because of these concerns the conference was extended for an additional day. The Metis subsequently met in private and decided to form a Federation of Metis people. When the conference reconvened the official result was to form two separate organizations, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and an organization (unnamed) to represent the Metis. A committee of two was chosen to look at the formation of a provincial Metis association. When delegates were discussing the formation of the MMF, a lawyer who happened to overhear the conversation, volunteered to draw up a constitution for them. That lawyer was Dale Gibson, who later became a law professor at the University of Manitoba and who was also the lawyer who initiated the Daniel's Case,<sup>1</sup> although he was later replaced as counsel

Three months later the Metis delegates again assembled in Winnipeg and formally incorporated. Thus the Manitoba Metis Federation was founded on October 1, 1967 and incorporated as a non-profit association under the Companies Act of Manitoba in December of 1967. Those present at the initial deliberations, who can be called the founders of MMF, were Reverend Adam Cuthand, Elizabeth Isbister, Ed Simard, Mary Guilbault, Tom Eagle and Angus Spence. The first provisional board was elected to hold office until the first annual meeting, at this time Adam Cuthand was president and the vice-presidents were Joe Keeper and Alfred Disbrowe.

In April of 1968 at the Fourteenth Annual Indian and Metis conference the Indians and Metis met separately for the first time. There were 119 delegates at this first annual meeting of the MMF. The Manitoba Metis Housing Association now became the Housing Committee of the MMF. After adoption of a Constitution the first elected board of directors were: Reverend Adam Cuthand<sup>2</sup> (President), Ferdinand Guiboche (Dauphin Region), John Fiddler (The Pas Region), Ed Simard (Southern Region<sup>3</sup>), and Tom Eagle from Winnipeg served as Honorary President. At first, MMF operations were supported by funding from various churches, businessmen's donations and a provincial contribution.

The MMF represents a federation of several organizations at the community level known as locals (local councils). Many of these were in operation for years before the MMF came into existence as local housing associations or cultural organizations. The first constitution was structured to allow any Metis organization willing to accept the constitution of the MMF to become part of the federation simply by passing a resolution and forwarding it to MMF. For example, the St. Laurent Local was originally a branch of the L'union nationale Metisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba.<sup>4</sup> The rest of this organization remained independent.

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<sup>1</sup> In this case the Federal Court on January 8, 2013 : declared those persons who are Metis and those who are non-status Indians as set forth in the Reasons for Judgment are "Indians" within the meaning of the expression "Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians" contained in s 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867.

<sup>2</sup> At that time Reverend Cuthand was the Anglican Church director of Indian-Metis services for Rupertsland

<sup>3</sup> Winnipeg and what is now Southeast were originally together as a Region.

<sup>4</sup> On July 17, 1887 a group of Metis patriots gathered at the St. Vital home of Joseph St. Germain to form a new Metis cultural and historical organization. L' Union Nationale Metisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba was incorporated on the 1st of March 1888. Its main purpose was to restore Metis pride and thus create meaning for their identity. In 1891 they erected a monument on Louis Riel's tomb in the St. Boniface Cathedral cemetery. The group provided an altar to honour St. Joseph, the patron Saint of

Locals were also free to leave the federation, for example several locals who had been part of the Northern Halfbreed Association in The Pas Region left MMF to form their own non-status Native organization.<sup>5</sup>

The first MMF office was located at 453 Notre Dame Avenue in Winnipeg. Along with President Cuthand the MMF had staff members, Joe Keeper (Executive Director), Percy Bird (Consultant) and Valerie Klyne (Secretary). There were also four field workers: Andrew Kirkness (Thomson Area), Joe Cooke (Grand Rapids), Angus Spence (Dauphin Area) and Joe Thomas Jr.<sup>6</sup> (Traverse Bay Area).

Thus the Manitoba Metis Federation was founded on October 1, 1967 and incorporated as a non-profit association under the Companies Act of Manitoba in December of 1967. The first non-elected Board of Directors was Reverend Adam Cuthand, Joe Keeper and Alfred Disbrowe. The successive presidents of the MMF have been; Dr. Adam Cuthand (1967-1970), Angus Spence (1970-1973), Connie Eyolfson (1973-1974), Ferdinand Guiboche (1974-1975), Edward Head (1975-1976), John Morrisseau (1976-1981), Don McIvor (1981-1984), W. Yvon Dumont (1984-1993), Ernie Blais (1993-1994), Billyjo DeLaRonde (1994-1997) and David Chartrand (1997 to the present).

**Metis Act (Saskatchewan):** On January 28, 2002 the Province of Saskatchewan proclaimed the Metis Act, recognizing the Metis as a unique people and the contribution they have made to that province. At the same time the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Chris Axworthy and Metis Nation—Saskatchewan, president Clem Chartier signed a companion Memorandum of Understanding which commits the government to enter into negotiations with MNS to address issues of importance to the Metis.

**Metis Constitutional Alliance:** The Alliance was formed in Winnipeg on October 7, 1982 when the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Federation of Metis Settlements (Alberta) declared their independence from the Native Council of Canada with the goal of pursuing Metis constitutional issues at the upcoming Section 37 Constitutional Conference. The MCA proclamation was signed by Elmer Ghostkeeper on behalf of FMS and Don McIvor on behalf of MMF. At an NCC meeting on January 13-14, 1982 it was clear that the NCC emphasis was on representing the needs of Non-Status Indians to the detriment on Metis concerns. The Metis wanted both NCC seats at the conference and NCC offered to split them. As a result Jim Sinclair resigned as chairman of the NCC Constitutional Committee and Sinclair along with Elmer Ghostkeeper, Don McIvor and Sam Sinclair left the NCC meeting. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1983 the MCA telexed Prime Minister Trudeau to announce their withdrawal from NCC and their demand that NCC be decertified as a Metis representative at the constitutional conference. On January 22, 1983 over 100 elected Metis representatives met in Edmonton to discuss formation of a new national Metis political group. However, they could not solve the issue of structure, but agreed to formalize an alliance called the Metis Constitutional Conference (MCC) for the purposes of constitutional talks representation. This group was composed of the three prairie provincial associations and the FMS with the understanding that the Metis from British Columbia and northwestern Ontario would join later. Jim Sinclair then negotiated with NCC for one seat their seats to be assigned to MCC at the constitutional talks. Elmer Ghostkeeper took the MCC seat for the talks in February 1983. On February

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the Metis in the Saint-Boniface Cathedral in 1909. In 1910, they created a Metis national flag. It consisted of a white background with a Union Jack in the top left-hand corner and three gold *Fleurs-de-lis* in the other corners. In the same year they also formed a history committee to correct the anti-Metis bias of most history books. This culminated in the publication of A.H. de Trémaudan's book: *La Nation Metisse dans l'Ouest Canadien* (1935).

<sup>5</sup> The Northern Halfbreed Association was formed in Manitoba in the early 1930s to represent the Metis and Non-Status Indians of the Metis settlements near The Pas, Moose Lake and Cedar Lake. The settlements were: The Thomas Settlement, Wooden Tent (Metikewap), Pine Bluff, Moose Lake, Big Eddy, Young Point, Rall's Island and Umphreville.

<sup>6</sup> Joe was the brother of Connie Eyofson who was elected as the first Vice President of Southeast Region.

28 under pressure from AFN and ICNI the federal Justice minister announced that they would only recognize NCC as the Metis representative and MCC was effectively expelled from the talks. On March 3, 1983 representatives of MMF, AMNSIS and MAA reached an accord on a national Metis representative body. The boards of the charter members then met and the Metis National Council was officially formed on March 8, 1983. Notably, FMS had been left out. The delegates also decided to establish a position for a national representative to attend the first ministers conference. Clément Chartier was elected to that post. He signed the 1983 Constitutional Accord on behalf of MNC.

### **Metis National Committee Provisional Government**

**(October 15-19, 1869):** The first provisional government at Red River consisted of a Council of Twelve with an executive consisting of John Bruce, President and, Louis Riel, Secretary and also commander of the insurgent forces. The first act of this council on November 6, 1869 was to call for a popular convention in which they would be joined by twelve representatives from the Scottish and English parishes. This became known as the Convention of Twenty-Four which met on November 16, 1869 in the Court House at Fort Garry.

The Council of Twelve members were:

- Pierre Poitras Sr. (1810-1889)
- Pierre Léveillé (St. François Xavier) (1829-1884)
- Magnus Bernard Birston (b. 1828)
- François Genthon
- Ambroise-Didyme Lépine (1840-1923)
- Jean Baptiste Tourond (St. Norbert) (b. 1838)
- Louis Lacerte (St. Norbert) (b. 1821)
- Pierre Parenteau Sr. (St. Vital) (1817-1894)
- Jean Baptiste Perreault (St. Anne des Chênes)
- Charles Nolin (St. Anne des Chênes) (1823-1907)
- Jean Baptiste Millet dit Beauchemin. (b. 1838)
- André Millet dit Beauchemin (St. Vital) (1824-1902)

**Metis Nation of Alberta:** The MNA is the successor organization to L'Association des Metis de l'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest formed in 1928. Later, in 1940, this name was changed to the Metis Association of Alberta in 1932 and then to Metis Nation of Alberta. It is an affiliate of the Metis National Council. The successive presidents of MNA and its previous associations are; Joe Dion (1928-1958), followed by Jim McDonald (1959-1961), Adrian Hope (1961-1967), Stan Daniels (1967-1971), James Ducharme (1971-1972), Stan Daniels (1972-1975), Ambroise Laboucane (1975-1976), Stan Daniels (1976-1978), Sam Sinclair (1979-1987), Larry Desmeules (1987-1993), Gerald Thom (1993), Lyle Donald (1993-1996) and Audrey Poitras (1996 to the present).

**Metis Nation of Ontario:** The MNO was formed in 1994, as the representative group for the Metis of Ontario. It is an affiliate of the Metis National Council. Tony Belcourt was the first President of MNO. He has written on the MNO history<sup>7</sup>:

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<sup>7</sup> Tony Belcourt, "For the Record: ...On Metis Identity and Citizenship Within the Metis Nation." *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, Volume 2, no. 2, 2013: 128-141.

Up until 1993, Metis in Ontario were members of the Ontario Metis & Aboriginal Association (OMAA); Metis leaders and elders, people such as George McGuire of Thunder Bay, Edith McLeod of MacDiarmid, Gilles Lefebvre of Timmins, Marion Larkman of Bewdley, Steve Powley of Sault Ste. Marie, John Burnham of River Valley, Helen Bradley of Midland, Henry Lepage of Penetanguishene, and Earl Scofield of Windsor. Nearly five hundred people were self-identified on OMAA's membership list as being Metis.

By then, because of changes to the Indian Act (Bill C-31), many former "Non-Status" Indians had regained their Indian Status.

Ironically, similar to the situation that the Prairie Metis faced a decade earlier within the NCC when their three organizations withdrew to form the Metis National Council, Metis people in Ontario who attended annual meetings and board meetings found themselves competing for time to address their issues—Metis-specific issues.

After a hard-fought and closely won vote at an OMAA General Assembly in 1991, we formed a "Metis Commission" to focus on how we could move towards our goals of implementing Metis governance and achieving full recognition of our rights. It was because of the Metis Commission that Metis OMAA representatives found themselves working in collaboration with representatives of the Metis National Council, its governing members, and the Metis Association of the NWT during the Charlottetown round of talks in 1992 that led to development of the Metis Nation Accord.

In a conference call of the members of the "Metis Commission" on the evening of 2 October 1993, we decided to form the Metis Nation of Ontario and to invite all those other members of OMAA who self-identified as Metis to join us.

We decided to form a "Provisional Council of the Metis Nation of Ontario" and name its first members, which included the members of the Metis Commission and others to ensure complete regional representation. They were:

- Alma Adams, MacDiarmid
- Tony Belcourt, Ottawa
- Olaf Bjorna, Batchawana
- Don Cadeau, Port McNicol
- Gilbert Gervais, Timmins
- Marion Larkman, Bewdley
- Agnes Lidstone, Sault Ste. Marie
- George McGuire, Thunder Bay
- Edith McLeod, MacDiarmid
- Naomi Oig, Dryden
- Brenda Prouty, Dryden
- Ron Swain, Sault Ste. Marie
- Sharon Talbot, Blind River
- Jean Teillet, Ottawa

We held our Founding Delegates Assembly in Toronto the following May of 1994.

**Metis Nation—Saskatchewan:** In the 1960s Metis political organizations existed in both the province's north and south. The Metis Society of Saskatchewan, which was founded in 1964 and led by Joe Amyotte, represented Metis living in southern and central Saskatchewan; and the Metis Association of Saskatchewan, led by Malcolm Norris and supported by James Brady, represented northern Metis and Non-Status Indians. The successor group, MNS, is the province wide political group which currently represents the Metis of Saskatchewan. This group was formerly the Metis Association of Saskatchewan

(formed in the late 1960s) and previously known as the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) formed in 1976. AMNSIS replaced the original Saskatchewan Metis Association founded in 1938. The AMNSIS name was changed to the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan in 1988 to reflect its return to a Metis only representative group. It is an affiliate of the Metis National Council. The past presidents of the MN-S include: Joe Laroque (1939), Mr. St. Denis (1943-1945), Fred DeLaronde and Joe Amyotte (1946), Howard Adams (1969-1971), Jim Sinclair (1971-1988), Clifford Laroque (1988), Jim Durocher (1989-1992), Gerald Morin (1992-1995), Jim Durocher (1995-1998), Clem Chartier (1998-2004), Dwayne “Trudeau” Roth (2004 -2006) and Robert Doucette (2007 to present).

**Metis National Council:** Since 1983, the MNC has represented the Metis Nation nationally and internationally. It receives its mandate and direction from the democratically elected leadership of the Metis Nation’s affiliate governments from Ontario westward. Specifically, the MNC reflects and moves forward on the desires and aspirations of these Metis governments at a national and international level. The MNC’s central goal is to secure a healthy space for the Metis Nation's on-going existence within the Canadian federation.

For decades, the Metis Nation struggled for recognition and justice within the Canadian federation. As a part of this history, beginning in the 1960's, the Metis Nation joined with First Nation and Inuit peoples, in pan-Aboriginal political organizations, to push forward their collective agendas.

In 1982, as a result of these united efforts, Canada’s Aboriginal peoples achieved monumental success with the protection of their existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights in s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. In particular, this was a watershed for the Metis Nation, with the explicit recognition of the Metis as one of Canada's three distinct Aboriginal peoples.

The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982: Section 35 states;

- 1. The existing treaty and aboriginal rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed;**
- 2. In this Act, the ‘aboriginal peoples of Canada’ includes Indian, Inuit, and Metis peoples;**

Prior to the holding of the constitutionally guaranteed First Minister Conference to further identify and define the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, it became apparent that the Metis Nation needed to be able to once again represent itself at a national level through its own voice - a Metis voice. The pan-Aboriginal structures of the Native Council of Canada (now known as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples) and its affiliates did not allow the Metis Nation to effectively represent itself. As a result, in March 1983, the Metis Nation separated from the Native Council of Canada to form the Metis National Council (MNC) - its own Metis-specific national representative body.

On March 3, 1983 representatives of MMF, AMNSIS and MAA reached an accord on a national Metis representative body. The boards of the charter members then met and the Metis National Council was officially formed on March 8, 1983. Notably, FMS had been left out. This completed the Metis split from the Native Council of Canada, a pan-Aboriginal coalition, to form MNC as a Metis-specific representative group. The charter members were the Metis Association of Alberta, the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan and the Manitoba Metis Federation. The delegates also decided to establish a position for a national representative to attend the first ministers conference. Clément Chartier was elected to that post. He signed the 1983 Constitutional Accord on behalf of MNC.

After the first ministers conference of 1983 the MNC dealt with requests for admission by the other Metis associations contiguous with the three Prairie Provinces and the Louis Riel Metis Association of British Columbia, and the Northwestern Ontario Metis Federation were admitted. The assembly also eliminated the position of national representative but continued with a small lobby office in Ottawa. A committee under Clem Chartier including Elmer Ghostkeeper from FMS was to steer policy development in the interim. In the constitutional conferences of 1985 the MNC decided that only the Provincial affiliate presidents would sit at the table for MNC.

At the annual MNC assembly of October 16, 1988 the boards of the member affiliates elected W. Yvon Dumont from Manitoba as MNC president. Dumont served as president until 1993; successor presidents are Gerald Morin (1993-2003, suspended, January 12, 2003), Audrey Poitras (January 12, 2003 interim President and National spokesperson), Clément Chartier (October 2003 to present). The current affiliates of MNC are the Metis Nation of Ontario, the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Metis Nation - Saskatchewan, the Metis Nation of Alberta, and the Metis Nation British Columbia.

Reference:

John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Metis Nationalism*. Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2007.

**Metis Provincial Council of British Columbia:** The MPCBC was formed as the provincial representative group for the Metis of British Columbia in 1996. It is a successor organization to the Louis Riel Metis Association of British Columbia. MPCBC is an affiliate of the Metis National Council.

**National Metis Alliance of Saskatchewan:** The National Metis Alliance of Saskatchewan was formed in 1982 as a breakaway group from the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan. The group wanted to emphasize their differences in identity and issues from Non-Status Indian issues.

**Native Council of Canada:** Up until the 1950s, Metis political interests were represented by a variety of regional and local political organizations and activists. In 1961, the National Indian Council was created, under government auspices, as an umbrella group to advocate for the concerns of Metis and Non-Status Indians; these were mainly urban or off-reserve Aboriginal people.

By 1968, it had become apparent that pursuing such a wide variety of interests through a single organization that was a creation of government and under considerable government influence was problematic. Thus the Canadian Metis Society emerged to represent Metis interests. This in turn, became the Native Council of Canada (NCC) in 1971, at the same time the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of first Nations) was formed to represent status Indians. The NCC as it was developed was composed of provincial and territorial organizations, usually called Native Councils or Metis and Non-Status Indian Associations.

The Native Council of Canada (NCC) was formed in 1971 by the leaders of the Metis Association of Alberta, the Metis Society of Saskatchewan, The Manitoba Metis Federation, and the BC Association of Non-Status Indians. The presidents of the organizations at that time were, respectively, Stan Daniels, Howard Adams, Angus Spence and Butch Smitherim. Tony Belcourt was elected as the NCC's first president. Harry Daniels served as NCC president from 1976 to 1981, it was while he was president of NCC that he convinced then Justice Minister Jean Chrétien to include the Metis as one of the three peoples who would be defined as the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada in the Constitution Act, 1982.



Shortly after that the three Metis organizations from the Provinces withdrew from the NCC<sup>8</sup> in order for the Metis to have their own seat at the Constitutional talks that took place from 1983 to 1989.

The Native Council of Canada arose out of a November 16, 1970 meeting of the Metis Associations of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta with the British Columbia Association of Non-Status Indians (BCANSI) at Victoria, British Columbia. Several subsequent meetings led to the official launch and opening of a NCC national office in Ottawa in April of 1971. In 1983 the Metis split from the Native Council of Canada, a pan-Aboriginal coalition, to form MNC as a Metis-specific representative group. The presidents of NCC up to the MNC split were; Tony Belcourt (1971-1972), Kermit Moore (1972-1973), Gloria George (1973-1975), Harry Daniels (1976-1981)<sup>9</sup> and Smokey Bruyere (1981-1983). The Native Council of Canada continued its operations until 1994, when it changed its name to the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. It is now an alliance of Non-Status Indians from across the country and Metis from areas such as Labrador and the Maritimes and other Eastern Provinces. Tony Belcourt<sup>10</sup> has documented the formation of the NCC:

The decision to create a national organization to represent our interests in Ottawa was made on 16 November 1970, the eighty-fifth anniversary of the hanging of Louis Riel. This was a momentous gathering of the leaders of the Metis and Non-Status Indian associations of the Prairies and British Columbia and I consider it a great privilege to have taken part in such a seminal event in our history.

The leaders met in a small hotel room in Victoria, British Columbia: Angus Spence, President of the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF); Jim Sinclair, Vice-President of the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS); Stan Daniels, President of the Metis Association of Alberta (MAA); myself as Vice-President of the Metis Association of Alberta; and Butch Smitheram, President of the BC Association of Non-Status Indians (BCANSI). We chose to meet in Victoria so we could also attend the First Annual General Assembly of BCANSI, which was also taking place at the time.

We met at my urging because I felt we needed to have a presence in Ottawa if we were to gain federal recognition of our rights and address the call by our people to get a land base for Metis. We agreed to form an interim steering committee to consider our options. Jim Sinclair was appointed Chair and I was appointed Secretary.

... The same representatives of Metis and Non-Status Indians present in Victoria in November 1970 met in Ottawa in April 1971. We also invited Paddy McGuire, Sr., then President of the Lake Nipigon Metis Association (of Ontario), to join us. His son, Mike McGuire, was also there.

It was at this meeting that we decided to form a national organization and to call it the Native Council of Canada (Metis & Non-Status Indians).<sup>2</sup> We made a deliberate and collective decision to build a national organization that would include both Metis and Non-Status Indians for two reasons: first, because it reflected the reality of the membership of all of our organizations at the time; and, second, because we shared the same goals and were in basically the same position—landless and without federal recognition.

We also decided to assist Metis and Non-status Indians in the NWT, Yukon, and the provinces to form organizations and join the NCC in order to strengthen our collective voice and lobbying

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<sup>8</sup> At the time they withdrew, Audreen Hourie from Manitoba Metis Federation was the Vice-President of NCC. At the time she was elected she had told MMF that even though they planned to withdraw, she would serve out her NCC term.

<sup>9</sup> Harry Daniels returned to NCC now CAP and served from 1997-1999.

<sup>10</sup> Tony Belcourt, "For the Record: ...On Metis Identity and Citizenship Within the Metis Nation." *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, Volume 2, no. 2, 2013: 128-141.

power.

Our first need, however, was to get the funding that would enable us to operate a national office and help the other organizations get off the ground.

I was elected President of the Native Council of Canada at our founding meeting in April. On the strength of a \$10,000 loan to the NCC from the Metis Association of Alberta,

We quickly organized the Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA), the Laurentian Alliance of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Quebec, the New Brunswick Metis & Non-Status Indian Association, the Non-Status Indian and Metis Association of Nova Scotia, the P.E.I Association of Metis & Non-Status Indians, Indian and Metis Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon Association of Non-Status Indians, and the Metis Association of the NWT. Together with the MMF, AMNSIS, MAA, and BCANSI, the NCC now represented Metis and Non-Status Indians from coast to coast.

**Northern Halfbreed Association:** This association was formed in Manitoba in the early 1930s to represent the Metis and Non-Status Indians of the Metis settlements near The Pas, Moose Lake and Cedar Lake. The settlements were: The Thomas Settlement, Wooden Tent (Metikewap), Pine Bluff, Moose Lake, Big Eddy, Young Point, Rall's Island<sup>11</sup> and Umphreville. The first Chief of the Association was Robert Thomas. They were active in protesting the leases the government was giving to the HBC and the Lamb family for muskrat ranching on the land they traditionally trapped. They also lobbied to have the Crown land surveyed so they could gain title to their land and homes.

**North Slave Metis Alliance:** The North Slave Metis Alliance (NSMA) represents the direct descendents of the Metis who used and occupied land in the North Slave Region of the Northwest Territories (NWT) prior to the signing of Treaty 11 in 1921. The NSMA is in the process of changing their name to the North Slave Metis Nation. The North Slave Metis are the families that descend from the Lafferty-Bouviers' of Old Fort Rae .who were situated on the North Arm of Great Slave Lake prior to the treaties. They were situated in communal setting and some worked for the trading company, but most of them lived off the land and harvested the wildlife and resources throughout the area, along with the Yellowknives and Dogribs of the area. So the North Slave Metis Alliance membership descended from those families that lived and occupied land in the North Arm of Great Slave Lake. Holding specific Aboriginal rights and Treaty rights, the membership of NSMA submitted a statement of claim on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998 to the federal government for lands in the North Slave region, including the Lac de Gras area. Exploratory discussions have been held with NSMA, but to date these discussions have not progressed to the negotiating table.

**Northwest Territory Metis Nation:** The Northwest Territory Metis Nation, formerly the South Slave Metis Tribal Council represents the Fort Smith Metis Nation (Local #50, the Hay River Metis Nation (Local #51), and the Fort Resolution Metis Nation (Local #53).

**Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association (OMAA) formerly OMNSIA:** In 1985, with the passage of Bill C-31, approximately 20% of the members of OMNSIA became registered under the Indian Act. To reflect this change the association dropped "Non-Status Indian" from its name and became the Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association or OMAA. OMAA split when a 1994 delegates

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<sup>11</sup> Laura Hyrich, a current Board Member of MMF from The Pas Region, informs us that Rall's Island was founded by her grandfather Charles who homesteaded there in 1915. He was a northern prospector (from Red River) who when passing through the area, felt it would be a good place to build a home. He later returned with his wife Elizabeth (Knight) and did just that.

meeting brought together Metis, mostly OMAA members from communities around Ontario, and they formed the Metis Nation of Ontario. This group offered identification as purely Ontario Metis and identified strongly with the Red River Metis. Whereas the MNO is affiliated with the Metis National Council, OMAA has national affiliation with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP).

**Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA):** This organization began in Northern Ontario in 1965. From the outset, it was recognized as an organization for people who were Aboriginal, but who did not have Indian status. The term Metis in their title was not chosen for either cultural or historical reasons, but rather, it was chosen as the most all-encompassing term that could be used. The term “Metis” was almost unknown in Ontario at that time, “Half-Breed” or “Breed” was much more commonly used. In 1970, the Lake Nipigon Metis Association joined with the non-status Indians to form the Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association. On March 27, 1971 OMNSIA formed a province wide association.

**Robinson-Superior Metis Association:** The Robinson-Superior Metis Association representing the Metis of northwestern Ontario was founded in 1965 as the Lake Nipigon Metis Association. The founder and first president of the R-SMA was Paddy McGuire Sr. a patriarch of the Metis community in northwestern Ontario.

**Saskatchewan Metis Society:** This group was formed in November 1937 to forward the Metis constitutional claims regarding the disposed Metis of Saskatchewan. The first provincial board were: Bill Larocque, bob LaRocque, J.Z. LaRocque, Jerry LaRocque, Martin Knudston, Ed Klyne, Joe McKenzie, Jack Blondeau and Joe Ross. In the 1940s, a number of townships of public land were set aside for the Metis by the Canadian Department of the Interior. This was a temporary relief effort, the Metis held the land under a 99-year lease.

**Saskatchewan Provisional Government:** On March 19<sup>th</sup> of 1885 under Louis Riel’s leadership the Metis on the lower Saskatchewan River elected a Provisional Government of the Saskatchewan, also known as the “Exovedate.” This was the beginning of the formal Metis Resistance at Batoche. The men elected to this council were: Pierre Parenteau (as Chairman), Charles Nolin, Gabriel Dumont, Baptiste Boyer, Moïse Ouellette, Donald Ross, Albert Monkman, Ambroise Jobin, Baptiste Parenteau, Pierre Henry, Norbert Delorme, Damase Carrière, Maxime Lépine, Baptiste Boucher, David Tourond and, as Secretary, Henry William Jackson, replaced almost immediately by Philippe Garnot. Riel was not a member of this council by was rather an *ex officio* leader calling himself *Exovede* (meaning “out of the flock”).

**St. Albert Metis Association:** This group was also known as the Alberta Half-Breed Association and the Half-Breed Association of St. Albert. It was in operation as early as 1897 until 1901. This organization was formed to express concern over the way in which the government was handling Metis land claims. It sent various petitions to Ottawa, either requesting scrip for children or recommending changes to the existing scrip programs. In 1897 the group’s president was Octave Bellerose and Dolphus Rowland was the secretary.

**Union Nationale Metisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba:** L’Union nationale Metisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba was founded on August 17, 1887, in St. Vital, Manitoba. It was founded by a dozen Metis patriots at the residence of Mr. Joseph St-Germain. However, the origins can be traced to earlier in the history of western Canada. On September 24, 1884, at Batoche, in the presence of Louis Riel and

Gabriel Dumont, the Metis founded the Association nationale Metisse. That is when Louis Riel chose St. Joseph as the patron saint. Shortly afterwards, the name was changed to L'Union nationale Metisse. In any case, our origins can be traced to Batoche.

As noted, in Saskatchewan in 1887, the Metis at Batoche organized a society named for their patron saint, St. Joseph. This society was a focal point for property damage claims arising from the 1885 Northwest Resistance. They also began an annual observance of the Resistance, the forerunner to the present day "Back to Batoche" celebrations. On July 17, 1887 a group of Metis patriots gathered at the St. Vital home of Joseph St. Germain to form a new Metis cultural and historical organization. L' Union Nationale Metisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba was incorporated on the 1st of March 1888. Its main purpose was to restore Metis pride and thus create meaning for their identity. In 1891 they erected a monument on Louis Riel's tomb in the St. Boniface Cathedral cemetery. The group provided an altar to honour St. Joseph, the patron Saint of the Metis in the Saint-Boniface Cathedral in 1909. In 1910, they created a Metis national flag. It consisted of a white background with a Union Jack in the top left-hand corner and three gold *Fleurs-de-lis* in the other corners. In the same year they also formed a history committee to correct the anti-Metis bias of most history books. This culminated in the publication of A.H. de Trémaudan's book: *La Nation Metisse dans l'Ouest Canadien* (1935).

In February of each year the organization participates in Festival du Voyageurs activities through its relay; L'Auberge du violon, in collaboration with Conseil Elzéar Goulet, which is the French local of the Winnipeg Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation.

L'Union nationale Metisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba commissioned Bernard Bocquel to write *Les Fidèles à Riel: 125 ans d'évolution de l'Union nationale Metisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba* ( St-Vital : Les éditions de La Fourche, 2012). Bocquel took four years to do the research and to write the book, which is 700 pages long. It is a true encyclopedia about the Metis in Manitoba and in western Canada.

**Union St. Alexandre:** This group was formed as a successor to the Metis National Committee of 1869 and named in honour of Monseigneur Alexandre Taché. The group was formed by Louis Riel, Ambroise Lépine and Louis Schmidt late in 1871.<sup>12</sup> The executive members of this association were:

Hon. P. Breland	President
Angus McKay	Vice-President
Maxime Lépine	Secretary-Treasurer
Louis Schmidt	Secretary
Ambroise Lépine	Secretary
Louis Riel	(chargé de la présente adresse)

The Counselors were<sup>13</sup> :

Pierre Léveillé  
Pierre Poitras  
Pierre Delorme  
Pierre Parenteau

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<sup>12</sup> R. Huel and George F. Stanley (Eds.), *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel* vol. 1, 1861-1875. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985: 159-160.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. 169.

Joseph St. Germain<sup>14</sup>  
Baptiste Tourond  
Baptiste Lépine<sup>15</sup>  
André Nault  
François Poitras  
Pierre Lavallée Jr.  
B. Beauchemin  
John Grant  
Hon. F.X. Dauphinais  
Philibert Ladéroute<sup>16</sup>

**United Nations:** The Metis National Council is officially recognized by the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The MNC (and its provincial affiliates) uses this international fora to draw attention to issues of importance to the Metis Nation. For example, the MNC participated in the Inter-Sessional Working Group on the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



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<sup>14</sup> Joseph St. Germain (b. 1829) was the son of Joseph St. Germain and Marie Cadotte. He was married to Caroline Genthon.

<sup>15</sup> Baptiste Lépine (1824-1879) was the older brother of Ambroise and Maxime and was married to Isabelle Parenteau.

<sup>16</sup> Philibert Ladéroute (1824-1895) was married to Julie Lépine.