

Metis National Council: History

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

For decades, the Métis Nation struggled for recognition and justice within the Canadian federation. As a part of this history, beginning in the 1960's, the Métis 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 Métis Nation, with the explicit recognition of the Métis 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 Métis Nation needed to be able to once again represent itself at a national level through its own voice - a Métis 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 Métis Nation to effectively represent itself. As a result, in March 1983, the Métis Nation separated from the Native Council of Canada to form the Métis National Council (MNC) - its own Métis-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 1885 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.



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