

METIS SOCIETY OF SASKATCHEWAN

ALL PRESIDENTS' ASSEMBLY
July 21 - 22, 1993

BATOCHÉ, SASKATCHEWAN

*John Edmond
Futcher*

CONTENTS

- 1. Metis Society of Saskatchewan Restructuring Ideas**
- 2. Common Themes From Self-Government Workshops and Meetings**
- 3. Metis Society of Saskatchewan Organizational Chart**
- 4. Metis Society of Saskatchewan Structural Map**

MSS RESTRUCTURING IDEAS

At present the Metis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS) Executive is elected by the provincial Membership, Area Directors are elected regionally (12 regions) and Local Presidents are elected by community Membership (over 100 Locals). The Executive of the Metis Women of Saskatchewan are elected by a membership consisting of Metis women only. The Executive of the Metis Youth are elected by Metis youth. Senators are appointed by Locals and Regions.

The Provincial Metis Council consists of the Executive, President, Treasurer, and Secretary and the twelve Area Directors.

A change in this structure has been requested by, us, the Metis people of Saskatchewan. Although we are all working toward the goal of self-sufficiency, we sometimes have different manners of expressing it and distinct ways to achieve it.

The most common complaint heard at the Self-Government Workshops in March of 1993 was of the lack of representation in the present structure. Most of us felt that it does not involve a satisfactory cross-section of the our people and therefore risks not addressing important concerns and ideas.

The goal of a new structure for the Metis Society of Saskatchewan is to ensure the active voices of Local members, Senators, women and youth are heard. Decentralization of the power and responsibilities from the Metis Provincial Council to a new effective and representative unit has been requested by members.

The following structural ideas have been gathered from the Self-Government Workshops held in March of 1993 and those held throughout the MSS Regions.

While you review the ideas put forth, keep in mind the following questions:

Is this a structure that could meet the demands of our communities?

Does it suit urban communities?

Does it suit rural communities?

Is this a structure that could meet the demands of a self-governing nation?

What additions or deletions do you have to make this a solid, effective and self-governing structure?

THE MEMBERSHIP and LOCALS

The Metis people of Saskatchewan

We will continue to exercise our right to vote and put Local presidents into positions of power to represent us in the Saskatchewan Metis Nation Legislative Assembly.

We could consider gender equity in the nominations of our candidates.

We could continue to vote on a regional basis for Area Directors for the Metis Nation Cabinet.

OR

Local Presidents could elect on a regional basis a Local President to represent them regionally.

We could redefine the regional boundaries for both rural and urban centres.

The three major urban centres could become Regions on their own. Urban Local Presidents could form an Urban Council in each city to discuss and cohesively present their plans and concerns to the Metis Government and other various levels of government.

Gender equity could be considered when selecting regional representatives for the Saskatchewan Metis Nation Cabinet.

Annual Membership Assemblies could be avoided.

Members will maintain responsibility for the representation of their concerns by the Presidents and or Area Directors and will be able to exercise their powers of reprimand through elections.

**THE SASKATCHEWAN METIS NATION
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**Local Presidents
Regional Representatives (may be Local
Presidents selected or Area Directors)**

**Metis Senators
Metis Women of Saskatchewan
Metis Youth**

The Assembly would be responsible for developing policy and legislation and ensuring implementation and accountability.

Every Local President will be able to participate.

There could be weighted voting based Local membership population.

OR

The one vote per Local President could be maintained.

Regional representatives would participate and vote. They would follow the same voting system as Local Presidents.

The Metis Senators, Metis Women of Saskatchewan and the Metis Youth, could also have voting powers: the extent must be determined.

If equitable representation is made at the Local and Regional Level, women would be adequately represented.

Meetings of the Assembly could be held three or four times a year.

**THE SASKATCHEWAN METIS NATION
CABINET**

**MSS Executive
Ministers with portfolios**

The Cabinet would consist of Ministers. The Ministers could include the MSS Executive and selected Regional Representatives.

The MSS Executive would give certain portfolios to Regional Representatives, ensuring gender equity and fair geographic distribution, while at the same time considering the specific qualifications and experiences necessary to carry-out the duties required by each portfolio.

Portfolios, such as education, health, justice, housing, economic development, enumeration, land and resources, could be given to Cabinet members whose duties would include implementing policy and legislation passed by the Assembly and staying current of the state of their particular portfolio.

Ministers will continue to carry-out the required duties given to them by their Local Presidents and Regional community members, over and above the jobs to be performed as a result of their portfolios.

Meetings could be held monthly to ensure effective functioning of operations.



COMMON THEMES FROM SELF-GOVERNMENT WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS

Some major topics of discussion within the provincial and regional workshops and a variety of meetings were: definitions of terms, education, Local involvement, MSS relationships, decentralization, co-management, communication, enumeration, goals, inherent rights, self-government, gender equity, availability of financial resources, youth and spiritual healing.

The following definitions are developed from the words spoken at our self-government workshops and meetings:

Inherent Rights should be defined in terms of Metis rights, not Aboriginal rights. They include but are not limited to education, natural resources, health care, forestry, culture, language and self-government. They come from our Creators and our responsibility to our land, our culture and our future generations, not from white people or white governments. These rights have been in existence for generations. They flow from myself, to my family, to my community, to my region and to the whole nation.

These rights entitle us as Metis people to have the same opportunities as Treaty Indians in terms of land, resources, language, culture, economic development, political growth, self-government and justice.

Metis Treaties are Agreements regarding Metis rights and interests between Metis people and the Federal government. Land claims are the most important part of any Treaty.

The 1993 Tripartite Framework Agreement is a partnership between the Metis Society of Saskatchewan, the Provincial and Federal governments.

The 1993 Bilateral Process Agreement is a partnership between the Metis Society of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Government.

There is a need to define a Metis person and leave the enumeration and memberships to a special MSS Members Unit that is exempt from political pressures.

Gender equity must be seriously addressed. Present leaders will have to inspire others to respect and encourage women to vie for leadership positions. It should be the present leaders' responsibility to ensure gender equity in nominations and candidacies.

Selection and, therefore, definitions of **Metis Senators and Elders** should come from the Locals making the appointments.

Youth should be included in all decision making because they are the future leaders. Present leaders must share their knowledge and power with the youth.

Self-government means taking control of your everyday life and your destiny. For some it flows from a land base for others it exists from within but merely has to be awakened.

Education

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>The education of the public and the government makes a difference.</p> <p>We must educate non-Metis what we are trying to accomplish.</p>	<p>Recognize students as early as kindergarten to make it known that we are a Nation.</p> <p>Young people have a hard time understanding how mainstream institutions fit in with our institutions and self-government.</p>	<p>Develop Metis specific curriculum not only for Metis people but also for a global education of all people in Canada.</p> <p>Develop cross-cultural awareness conferences and programs.</p> <p>Get rid of racism in the schools.</p> <p>Educate the federal and provincial governments about our Nationhood.</p> <p>Continue to educate people with regard to self-government and self-determination.</p> <p>Develop training programs for Metis self-government specialists at both national and provincial levels.</p> <p>A Metis studies class should be available at all school levels.</p>

It was understood that a major component of self-government is education and that education is not just what happens in school. It encompasses all aspects of learning.

This involves teaching non-Metis, especially those in the federal and provincial governments, as to what self-government means to us. This could be done partly through cross-cultural training programs, some of which are being developed by GDI.

Fear seems to be the single most important reason which drives non-Metis to block negotiations toward self-government.

There is also fear in the Metis community that self-government will mean loss of what little income there currently is. Greater educational consultations have to be held with our own people so that misinterpretations of the potential for developing self-governing institutions in our Metis communities is not lost.

School based programs beginning with a Metis specific curriculum to help young people understand and appreciate their nationhood is essential. This could aid in eliminating the major problem of racism in schools. The curriculum, although Metis specific, could apply in all schools. Such a curriculum would also give young people indications as to how the Metis government and the mainstream government could operate together.

Local Involvement

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>Urban Metis people feel they have little voice with regard to self-government.</p>	<p>How are hunting rights and education going to benefit?</p>	<p>The Locals should control nation building.</p>
<p>There is no official opposition in the organization.</p>	<p>Can we govern ourselves and enter into different services outside the Metis locals?</p>	<p>In the urban centres they should start with control of government agencies like Social Services to control funding that is set aside for Metis people.</p>
<p>Members need to get information from local presidents.</p>	<p>The politicians were doing too much talking at the workshop.</p>	<p>In each of the three urban centres there is a multiplicity of Locals. These Locals could maintain their autonomy but develop a super board where the Presidents can come together and plan and lobby collectively.</p>
<p>Each person wants to know where they stand.</p>	<p>Not enough youth in the political process.</p>	<p>Know who is responsible for what.</p>
<p>Local consultations necessary to ensure that process allows for community involvement, information sharing and participation.</p>	<p>Need to improve electoral process.</p>	<p>Accountability must be built in to everything.</p>
<p>Decentralization of responsibility from federal and provincial jurisdiction down to local level.</p>	<p>Need to include elders and Senators in decision making.</p>	<p>Women must be treated equitably in all facets of the Metis Nation. We can begin by ensuring gender equity in future elections and appointments.</p>
<p>We need to ensure that the institutions and legislation do not lead to a top down system of decision making.</p>	<p>The voice of the disabled must be included.</p>	

Our Senators and Elders must have a larger role in our organizations.

Youth must be recognized for their accomplishments. Youth must be encouraged to develop leadership skills. Present leaders must make room for the newer and younger leaders. We can build up the community and give them accountability and credibility. Start at the Local level and go to the Executive level.

People with physical disabilities are not visible in our organizations. It is a concern that their needs are not being met. We must include them in our decisions, at the very least by consulting them as to what they see as necessary for our Metis nation.

Executive must take their direction from the membership while at the same time provide leadership.

Restructure the MSS to reflect urban and rural differences and help in eliminating them.

Develop strategies that will encourage collectivity on issues.

A number of people suggested that a Code of Ethics is necessary before self-government can be instituted. The feeling was that this would ensure the credibility of the organization and could form a base for political accountability.

Accountability was viewed as one of the most important concerns by a majority of speakers. One speaker felt that this would let all know who is responsible for each action. Many of us felt that this would ensure the credibility of the Metis people in the eyes of non-Metis people, especially those in the mainstream governments. A number of recommendations were offered as to how to achieve a system of accountability: all decisions should come from the grass roots restructure boards to get away from internal politics, and improve the electoral process.

It was felt that Local members should be the ones to generate the major decisions, making any conclusions collective, rather than imposed. This opinion was echoed in all the discussions. The consensus was that there should be major reconstruction of the whole system to ensure that decision making would be controlled by the members at large, not the politicians.

One recommendation was that the elders should play a larger part in the decision making process, especially at the Local level.

Relationship with MSS

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>There is there a lack of communication between the Locals and the MSS.</p> <p>There is a lack of a democratic mechanism.</p> <p>We need Local control.</p> <p>MSS recognizes that we need to restructure. Get rid of waste. Build on what we've got.</p> <p>MSS as it is now is not as strong as it could be.</p>	<p>We give reports at the National Assembly but they are not taken as seriously as they should be.</p> <p>Structural change requires constitutional change.</p> <p>Need to develop a national body to address issues at an international level.</p>	<p>We must decentralize the decision making powers, including the financing.</p> <p>There has to be political accountability.</p> <p>Get away from the Old Boys' Club.</p> <p>Elect a slate for the next election.</p> <p>Negotiate at the area level and pressure the area Directors.</p> <p>Presidents should have a bigger role in decision making.</p> <p>We could have a Legislative Assembly of Local presidents.</p>

Critical discussions were held about the relationship of the Locals to the MSS. Some people felt that the MSS should be the beginning point in the democratic process because there was a solid infrastructure already in place. Others were of the opinion that the MSS had to be restructured to get rid of the Old Boys Club, making room for women, youth and new ideas for our securing our future.

There was a variety of recommendations for restructuring. Some wanted to elect slates of officers at each election. Others wanted an Assembly of Local presidents to be the decision makers.

Communications

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>We need to improve communication.</p> <p>We have to get information out to the people so that they understand how we relate international rights to people in the communities.</p> <p>Communication is critical.</p> <p>North setting up a database to share information.</p> <p>We do not have enough information in our organization.</p>	<p>We should have more people from the national level explain what is happening.</p>	<p>We must have a better system of communication while we are nation building.</p> <p>Enhance peoples abilities to come together in whatever institution.</p> <p>There needs to be follow-up to the meetings.</p>

Most members recognized the need for an effective communication system. One that builds in accountability when information is not passed on. One member from the north described in detail a database which was being set up between Locals for purposes of exchanging information pertinent to northern economic development. This kind of information system is important. We must consider that most people will not have a home computer for obtaining the information.

Enumeration

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>Legal definition of who is Metis is needed.</p> <p>Government could be planning to use enumeration to fund on a per-capita basis.</p> <p>May be used to confine us.</p>	<p>How does this affect Bill C-31?</p> <p>Do we give Bill C-31 people a time limit to decide if they are Metis or Status?</p> <p>Who will the children of children and grandchildren of Bill C-31 be?</p>	<p>Do our own kind of enumerating.</p> <p>People should call in and self-identify.</p> <p>Only we should use the information.</p> <p>Create our own definition upon which we can enumerate ourselves.</p>

Enumeration and definitions were discussed. Almost everyone recognized the need for some method of enumeration. Many of us felt that enumeration is tied to the definition of who is a Metis. Some of us feel that we should be inclusive rather than exclusive in our definition so that we can build our nation. It is up to us to decide upon our own citizenship code.

We were warned about how enumeration could be used by the mainstream governments against the Metis. Questions were raised about how the people of Bill C-31 would be treated. Discussions of being ethnically Metis while having Indian status were held.

Goals

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>Have to recognize ourselves as a government.</p> <p>Infrastructure already in place with area directors.</p> <p>A Metis Citizenship Act is important to Metis justice.</p>	<p>Be aware of conflicts of interest.</p> <p>Establish a Code of Ethics.</p> <p>We can't have nationhood unless we describe it in our own language.</p> <p>We must stop duplicating services.</p>	<p>Organize task force or committee to write our Metis history and save the knowledge of Metis elders.</p> <p>Continue to research a Metis genealogies.</p> <p>Continue to research and map the Metis homeland.</p> <p>Break the controlled dependency cycle and implement strategies for individual self-determination and a self-governing Metis nation.</p>

A consensus of all groups was that a Metis Act must be established. It must contain a citizenship code. Some of us felt that this would ensure the continuity of the Metis people. One group maintained that it should be part of the Saskatchewan Act.

A Code of Ethics for both the Metis Society of Saskatchewan members was considered necessary. We could look at what the Metis Society of Alberta has done in this area.

Duplication of services must cease.

Self-Government

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>Don't need another bureaucracy for people to deal with.</p> <p>Politics and bureaucracy should not be mixed.</p> <p><u>National Governments</u>-people recognize Indian and Inuit rights but not Metis.</p> <p>The international aspect needs to be discussed.</p> <p>Saskatchewan Government is afraid of the term.</p> <p>Establish the Metis Parliament at Batoche.</p> <p>Dangers if we do not define government in our own terms.</p>	<p>Do we get more money?</p> <p>Where does it go?</p> <p>How will governments interact with each other?</p> <p>What will Tripartite allow us to control?</p> <p>Human rights practices at home are not as good as they appear to other countries.</p> <p>It could mean devolution of services.</p> <p>Is it what the government gives us or what we take?</p> <p>Justice system is a problem to be addressed.</p> <p>Do we follow Canadian structure and European standards?</p> <p>No healing aspects to reinforce identity.</p>	<p>Organize and convene Metis Legislative Assembly to define and approve Metis Citizenship Act.</p> <p>Use the Metis constitution to include more Metis people in our nation.</p> <p>We need to bring together Local Government and Metis Nation.</p> <p>We need to assert ourselves in areas which we feel are critical.</p> <p>We need to get recognition of the Metis Nation at the international level.</p> <p>We need to have a two party system so that people can have a vehicle to voice their opposition.</p> <p>We should use terminology such as MLAs and MPs when talking about our people, our government.</p>

Other Important Thoughts on Self-Government.

When we have full control, we report only to our Metis government.

In northern Manitoba, the mayor automatically becomes the Local president. Therefore becomes a level of government. Gives the mayor and the Metis leader more authority.

We need to do it gradually in an even process.

It must be community based. We must use the political jurisdictions already within the Metis organizations.

Land should be a top priority.

We need to look at the opposition process within self-government.

We need an opposition party.

We do not need the same process of opposition as the mainstream parties. This could be a role for the Senators.

We need to develop our own laws.

It is a matter of asserting our rights.

Accountability has to be built in.

We have to accept that we have self-government now.

Self-government needs to be implemented in stages.

This particular topic, like enumeration, was tied to a definition of who is Metis. Most people realized that numbers count especially when trying to be recognized as a government at the national and international level. All groups recognized that there is a need for healthy opposition. Some were for having a formal two party system, others wished for Metis ways of discussing opposing ideas. There were some suggestions that this is a role for the senators and elders.

Other concerns dealt with the finances of self-government, and how it would affect people and programs already in place. There was a fear expressed that self-government would mean a cessation of financing.

The justice system was discussed. Most groups indicated a need to overhaul the present system. Too many of our people are imprisoned without the benefit of counselling by other Metis.

Availability of Financial Resources

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>Concern shown about segregation and loss of jobs and financing especially in the north.</p>	<p>Will this lead to double taxation?</p> <p>What about the lack of financial resources in urban centres? Where is the money to come from for self-sufficiency?</p>	<p>Need to ensure sustainable financing for existing programs.</p>
<p>We want our taxes to come back to us for education etc.</p>	<p>Provincial government will not give up mineral rights.</p>	<p>We need to put a little funding aside each month in each area.</p>
<p>We should stop being caretakers and become owners of the land.</p>	<p>No market value for housing in the north.</p>	<p>We could use Saskatchewan revenue funds from mines and other land based resources for revenue sharing.</p>
<p>We need to know about government financial systems.</p>	<p>Finances can be discussed after self-government is in place.</p>	<p>Need more control over economic development.</p>
<p>No tax base in the North.</p>	<p>How do we get money through land?</p>	<p>Take advantage of major development projects.</p>
<p>We should be looking at how we'd like to see self-government model in place. Other things can be negotiated by our leaders.</p>	<p>Are the Metis going to be self-sufficient with self-government?</p>	<p>We could make sure that we have, at the very least, co-management agreements with companies and the mainstream government. This could occur by community and by region and provincially, even nationally.</p>
<p>We cannot rely on grants.</p>	<p>Will it be any better than it is right now?</p>	
<p>We need further economic development</p>		

Financing of self-government was discussed by all groups. There was much concern on the part of northern delegates about a financial base. Everyone seemed to agree that we should not rely on grants, and that economic development was the key. At that point there was much discussion as to what economic development was.

Some people considered that there should be a form of revenue sharing with the international companies which operate in the north, such as co-management. Some were of the opinion that each Metis could put a little money aside each month for Metis financing. Some stated that our taxes should be returned to us, and that money be used as the financial basis for self-government.

Land

<u>Comments</u>	<u>Other Concerns</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
<p>Who will have the jurisdiction to settle land claims and administer them?</p> <p>We need a land base.</p> <p>Land is crucial in terms of financial institutions.</p> <p>It will generate a lot of our own money.</p> <p>Land is everything. It makes a nation.</p> <p>Need to develop a Metis homeland in respect to institutions.</p>	<p>How do we get money through land?</p>	<p>We must work collectively to make it a reality.</p> <p>Identify Metis lands and resources.</p>

Land claims became the central point of some discussions. It was acknowledged that land was crucial as a base for self-government. It was also recognized that land in the north has little market value, except for the mineral rights which now are legislated to the provincial government. People were sure that the provincial governments would not give up these rights under any circumstances.

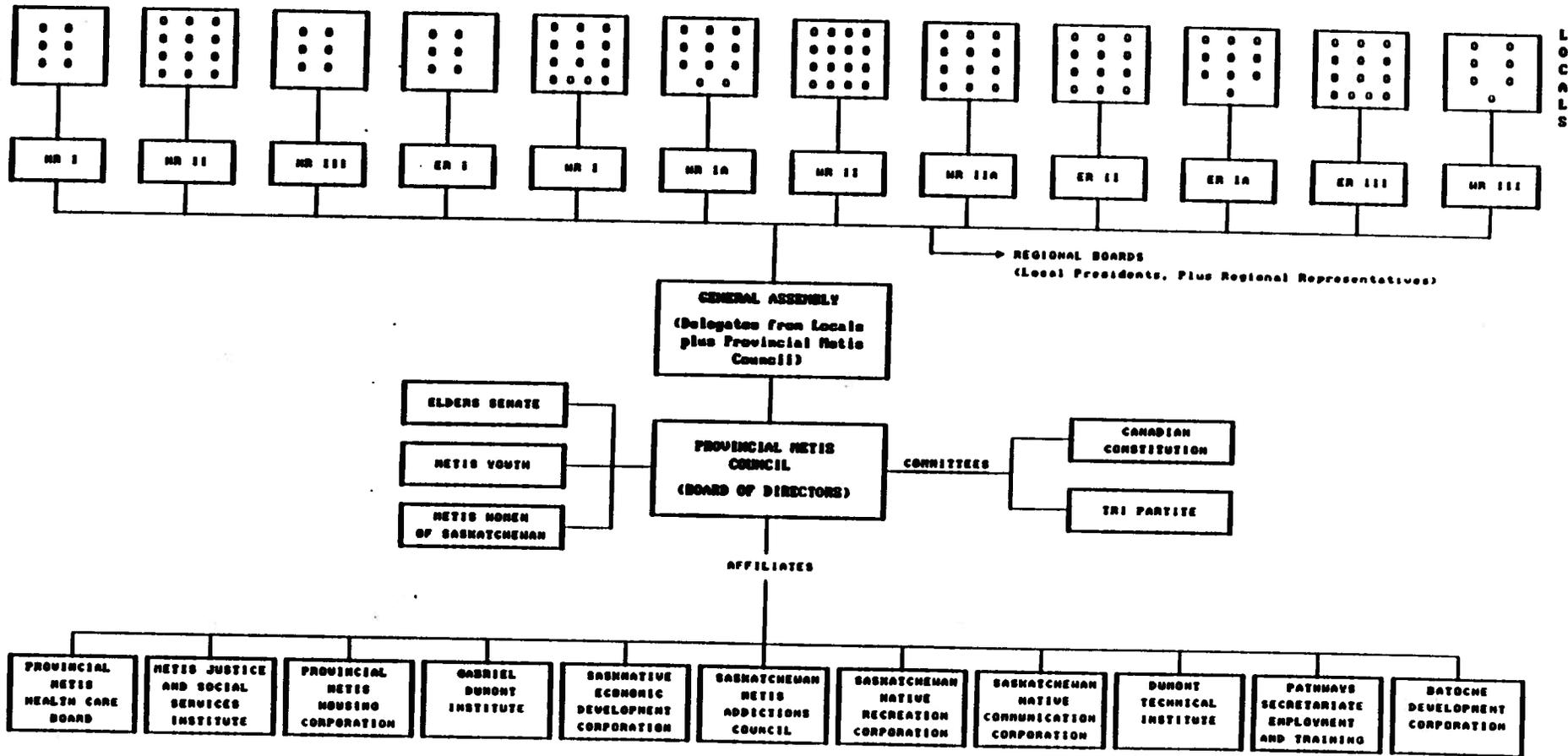
Co-management ideas surfaced whereby the provincial government does not allow public or private corporations any rights to resources unless the surrounding communities are full participants in the management of, for examples limestone mines. This would also include receiving part of the profits.

The Metis land base was considered critical by northerners and southerners and urban and rural dwellers.

Spiritual healing was seen as an important function of self-government because it reinforces a person's identity. One person asked that a spiritual guidance committee be set up as part of self-government.

EXHIBIT ONE:

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART - METIS SOCIETY OF SASKATCHEWAN





METIS SOCIETY OF SASKATCHEWAN STRUCTURE

