

Metis and Non-Status Indian Constitutional Review, 1981.

In the early 1980s, the Canadian government sought to repatriate the Canadian Constitution. In order to gain Aboriginal support, the government began discussions with the four national representative Aboriginal organizations (National Indian Brotherhood – now the Assembly of First Nations; Native Council of Canada – now the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Métis National Council; the Inuit; the Native Women's Association of Canada). As part of the discussions, government agreed to include “Métis” as one of Canada's Aboriginal peoples as part of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

In preparation for Constitutional change the Native Council of Canada established the Metis and Non-Status Indian Constitutional Review Commission in July of 1980. They had the following consultation meetings:

- October 14, 1980, preliminary hearing to hear presentations from Native organizations and parliamentarians.
- October 18, 1980; a regional conference and consultation at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.
- December 13 and 14, 1980; a regional conference and consultation at Moncton New Brunswick.
- February 18, 1981; a regional conference and consultation at the Kikino Metis Settlement in Alberta.
- March 3 and 4, 1981; public hearings were held in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- March 7, 1981, the final hearing was held in Quebec City, P.Q.

Commissioner Harry Daniels presented the final report to the Board of Directors of the Native Council of Canada on April 10, 1981.

- Daniels, H., *Metis and Non-Status Indian Constitutional Review Commission, Native People and the Constitution of Canada: The Report of the Metis and Non-Status Indian Constitutional Review Commission*, (Ottawa: Mutual Press, 1981).

Part II (Sec. 33, [1], [2]) of the report recommends the following recognition wording for the Canadian Constitution:

1. The aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized, affirmed and guaranteed.
2. In this Act “aboriginal peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit and Metis peoples of Canada.

The commission consisted of:

Commissioner: Harry W. Daniels¹

Deputy Commissioners:

Margaret Joe²

Rheal Boudrias³

Duke Redbird⁴

Viola Robinson⁵

Elmer Ghostkeeper⁶

See photos on next page.



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¹ From 1976-1981 he was President and Chief Executive Officer of the Native Council of Canada. He also completed a term as President of the Congress of Aboriginal People in 1997 to 2000. One of his most important contributions to the Metis community was ensuring that the Metis were legally recognized and named as an Aboriginal people in the Constitution Act of 1982. Harry's first elective office was that of Vice President of the Metis Association of Alberta. During 1974-75, he held the elected office of Secretary Treasurer of the Native Council of Canada and as noted above became President of that organization in 1976.

² Margaret subsequently reverted her name to Margaret Commodore. She was a member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly from 1982-1992 for Whitehorse North Centre and from 1992-1996 for Whitehorse Centre.

³ Leader of the Native Council of Quebec.

⁴ Vice-president of the Native Council of Canada, President of the Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association.

⁵ Viola Robinson, a Mi'kmaq woman, served as the president for both the Native Council of Nova Scotia and the Native Council of Canada. She was also one of seven commissions with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. She earned a law degree from Dalhousie University in 1998. She received the Order of Canada in 2011.

⁶ President of the Federation of Métis Settlement Associations.

APPENDIX 3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE METIS AND NON-STATUS INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMISSION



Harry W. Daniels
Commissioner



Margaret Joe
Deputy Commissioner



Rheel Boudrias
Deputy Commissioner



Duke Redbird
Deputy Commissioner



Viola Robinson
Deputy Commissioner



Elmer Ghostkeeper
Deputy Commissioner

