MÉTIS NATION REGISTRIES

It is now possible to be registered as Métis, in much the same way that First Nations are registered as Indians in the Indian Registry.

Métis are included as one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada under section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982, which reads:

35 (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

(2) In this Act, the aboriginal peoples of Canada includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

The Métis emerged as a distinct people or nation in the historic Northwest during the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. This area is known as the “historic Métis Nation Homeland,” which includes the 3 Prairie Provinces and extends into Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States. This historic Métis Nation had recognized Aboriginal title, which the Government of Canada attempted to extinguish through the issuance of “scrip” and land grants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Métis National Council consequently adopted the following definition of “Métis” in 2002:

“Métis” means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.”

In 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that Métis are a rights-bearing Aboriginal people. Its judgment in R. v. Powley set out the components of a Métis definition for the purpose of claiming Aboriginal rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. These are:

- Self-identification as a member of a Métis community
- Ancestral connection to the historic Métis community whose practices ground the right in question
- Acceptance by the modern community with continuity to the historic Métis community

For many decades, Métis were lost and forgotten within a general population without status under the Indian Act, and little effort was made to identify who we were. This is no longer tenable. Métis have rights under the Canadian Constitution, not because we are of mixed Indian and European ancestry, but because we are descendant from distinct Métis communities that emerged and thrived in various parts of Canada before the Canadian State took control, notably the historic Métis Nation community that emerged in the historic Northwest. The Supreme Court
“Métis” means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.”

urged that this rights-bearing Métis population be identified through an “objectively verifiable” process, even as we move forward with clarifying the scope and nature of Métis Aboriginal rights.

This is precisely what the Governing Members of the Métis National Council (MNC) are now in the process of doing. The MNC’s Governing Members are the Métis Nation governments that have been established in the Métis Nation Homeland: Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MNS), Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). Since 2004, each has established a Métis Nation Registry where persons who identify as Métis and who can prove descent from the “historic Métis Nation” can be registered as Métis for the purposes of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

All MNC Governing Members have adopted the MNC’s Métis definition, which is now the citizenship definition specified in their respective Constitutions and By-Laws; and all have put into place a process to implement that definition; however each Métis Registry has its own specific requirements. Basically, you must apply to be included in the Registry; you must provide proof that you are who you say you are, such as government issued photo identification; you must provide your Long-Form Birth Certificate or Baptismal Record; and you must show that you are a descendant of the historic Métis Nation. You will also be required to provide passport quality photos to place on your new citizenship card.

To prove descent from the historic Métis Nation, applicants are required to furnish a genealogy showing their link to an historic Métis ancestor. Unlike the Indian Registry, which has been in operation for well over a hundred and twenty-five years, there exists no database listing all persons who were Métis in the past, so it is now necessary to reconstruct Métis ancestry through genealogical research. While this no doubt makes registration a more onerous process, it is important to note that production of a genealogy is a one-time event, since once you are recognized as Métis you should never be required to do it again. Moreover, your genealogy can, with your written consent, be used to help your children, siblings and close relatives obtain registration as Métis. In time, as more and more people register as Métis, the greater will be the chance that Métis Registries will already have your family tree information in their databases.

It is also important to understand that, to meet the requirements of the MNC’s Métis definition, you have to trace your ancestry back to the “historic Métis Nation”. For Métis residing in the Prairie Provinces or whose family comes from the Prairie Provinces, this means tracing your ancestry to a person who received Métis scrip or Manitoba land grants or who is listed as Métis or Half-Breed in the 1901 Canadian Census, which was particularly thorough in identifying half-breeds. This can usually be accomplished by tracing your ancestry back about a hundred years, that is, four, five and perhaps six generations, depending on your age. For Métis whose ancestors did not receive scrip or who come from areas of the Métis Homeland where scrip was never issued, other documentation, such as census and trading records, often exist to identify a historic Métis ancestor.

The Supreme Court in Powley stressed the importance of providing “objectively verifiable” proof of descent from an historic Métis community. Métis Registries, as a consequence, do require applicants to furnish documentation, such as Long-Form Birth Certificates, marriage certificates or baptismal records, providing official proof of inter-generational links for each generation to your historic Métis ancestor, that is, of your parent, grandparent and sometimes great-grandparent on the Métis line. This is often the most difficult part of the genealogy, but most Métis Registries can assist you in obtaining these documents.
To prove descent from the historic Métis Nation, applicants are required to furnish a genealogy showing their link to an historic Métis ancestor.
HOW TO APPLY

To be registered as Métis, you must apply to the Métis Registry operated by the MNC Governing Member in the province in which you reside. Each Registry has its own application forms and application process. Application forms can usually be downloaded from the Registry’s website, or can be obtained in person at the Provincial Office or Regional Offices of the Governing Member in question or can be mailed to you if you phone for the information. The following lists contact information for Métis Registries within the Métis Homeland:

**Métis Nation of Ontario**

MNO REGISTRY
500 Old St. Patrick Street – Unit D
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 9G4
Phone: 1-855-798-1006 (toll free in Ontario)
or (613) 798-1006
www.metisnation.org

**Métis Nation of Alberta**

METIS NATION REGISTRY
100 Delia Gray Building
11738 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5G 0X5
Phone: 1-866-678-7888 (toll free in Alberta)
or (780) 455-2200
registry@metis.org
www.albertametis.com

**Manitoba Metis Federation**

CENTRAL REGISTRY OFFICE
300 – 150 Henry Avenue
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 0J7
Phone: (204) 586-8474
www.mmf.mb.ca

**Métis Nation - Saskatchewan**

REGISTRY DEPARTMENT
406 Jessop Avenue
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 2S5
Phone: 1-888-203-6959 (toll free in Saskatchewan) or (306) 343-8285
www.mn-s.ca

**Métis Nation British Columbia**

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL REGISTRAR
30691 Simpson Road
Abbotsford, B.C.
V2T 6C7
Phone: (604) 557-5851
www.mnbc.ca
Application forms can usually be downloaded from the Registry’s website, or can be obtained in person at the Provincial Office or Regional Offices of the Governing Member in question or can be mailed to you if you phone for the information.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I register my children as Métis?

Yes. In Alberta and Ontario, you can be registered and obtain a Métis citizenship card at any age, though only members 16 years and over are allowed to vote. British Columbia and Manitoba Métis Registries issue Children’s Cards and the Metis Nation – Saskatchewan issues a Youth Certificate to persons under voting age. Applications for children are in most cases very much the same as applications for adults, but require the signature of a parent or guardian. Voting age limits vary from Governing Member to Governing Member. Children’s Cards or cards with non-voting privileges are issued to persons under 18 years of age in Manitoba, under 16 years in most other provinces and under 15 years of age in British Columbia.

Can I have both a Registered Indian Card and a Métis Card?

No. The MNC Métis definition explicitly states that Métis are distinct from other Aboriginal people for nationhood and cultural purposes. You cannot belong to both the Métis Nation and a First Nation at the same time. Métis Registries will normally require you to consent to a search of the Indian Registry to ensure that you are not an Indian for purposes of the Indian Act or a Band Member at the time you make application. If you decide to accept reinstatement after you obtain your Métis card, you will be asked to return the card.

The MNC Métis definition explicitly states that Métis are distinct from other Aboriginal people for nationhood and cultural purposes.
If I am already a member of a Governing Member, do I have to apply all over again to be registered as Métis?

Yes. Citizenship cards issued by MNC Governing Members in the past did not require verification of ancestry in the historic Métis Nation. All existing members of Governing Members with the exception of Ontario are being asked to apply for new membership/citizenship cards. The Métis Nation British Columbia moved in 2007 to invalidate all old membership cards and only Registry issued cards are now recognized in that province. In Manitoba, the MMF will require all existing members to confirm their membership by submitting an objectively verifiable genealogy by September 1, 2012. Though policies vary from Governing Member to Governing Member all, except Ontario, are encouraging the existing citizenship to apply for registration.

How much will registration costs?

Most Métis Registries do not impose any processing fees; and where they do, such as in Manitoba, the processing fee is nominal ($10). Ontario charges $30 but does not charge for replacement cards. There can however be other costs involved: the costs of obtaining Long-Form Birth Certificates from provincial Vital Statistics (normally about $25 for each certificate); costs of obtaining baptismal and other church records (normally about $35 per record); and sometimes the costs of obtaining passport quality photos. If you chose to have your genealogy produced by certified genealogists or recognized genealogical institutes, you may also have to assume costs associated with producing a genealogy. It is important to note that many Governing Members subsidize these costs or else have made arrangements to reduce costs to applicants.

You cannot belong to both the Métis Nation and a First Nation at the same time. Métis Registries will normally require you to consent to a search of the Indian Registry ...
Does registration as Métis mean that I can exercise hunting, fishing and harvesting rights?

Not necessarily. The scope and nature of Métis harvesting rights are rapidly evolving; the legal situation remains fluid and has not been precisely defined everywhere. Conservation Officers in many provinces will accept a Métis Citizenship card as proof that you are Métis (although this will not necessarily prevent them from charging you where Métis hunting and fishing rights have not been established). In Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, harvesters are required to obtain a separate Harvester Card, which are issued by the MNC’s Governing Members in those provinces. You are encouraged to contact the President’s Office of the MNC’s Governing Member in your province or in Ontario’s case, the Captain Hunt in your Region, to obtain information on the status of Métis harvesting rights in your province.

Do I need a Métis card to access programs and services?

Programs and services provided by MNC’s Governing Members are available to all people who identify as Métis and are not restricted to card-carrying citizens. Proof of Métis citizenship in the province that you are a permanent resident of will normally be required to vote in elections or at assemblies held by that Governing Member. Métis cards are also very useful to access certain government and third party programs, such as Aboriginal procurement policies and post-secondary Aboriginal scholarships and bursaries, since they serve as proof that you are an Aboriginal person who qualifies for the program.

Will the information I provide be kept confidential?

All Métis Registries are conscious of the need to protect the privacy of personal information supplied by applicants. Applications normally ask you to consent to use of your personal information for specific purposes and outline the privacy policy of the Registry. Every effort is made to keep paper and electronic files secure and inaccessible to members of the public. As matters currently stand, files from one Registry are not shared with other Registries, although we hope to move to greater inter-operability of Métis Nation Registries in the future, provided it can be done without compromising the privacy of personal information.

What if I am denied registration as Métis? Can I appeal?

Yes. All Métis Registries have put into place an appeal process and procedures. You will normally be able to appeal decisions of the Registrar within 60 days of receiving a denial notification. In all provinces appeals are without charge. In Saskatchewan, applicants who are denied citizenship are entitled to have their file reviewed by an independent third party.
Programs and services provided by MNC’s Governing Members are available to all people who identify as Métis and are not restricted to card-carrying citizens.
2011 TO 2020 HAS BEEN DECLARED
BY THE MÉTIS NATION AS THE
"DECADE OF THE MÉTIS NATION"

MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
350 Sparks St., Suite 201, Ottawa, ON K1 R 758
Tel: (613) 232 - 3216, Fax: (613) 232 - 4262
Toll Free: (800) 928 - 6330
Email: info@metisnation.ca
www.metisnation.ca

Produced Summer 2011