



## OPINION

# Modernizing the Métis National Council

The Métis National Council is at a crossroads, but not without a map, offering a clear focus on a vision of service and self-determination.

BY VICTORIA PRUDEN

On Dec. 9, I was elected president of the Métis National Council (MNC) with a clear mandate for modernization. This responsibility fills me with humility and commitment to honor our rich Métis culture, history, and traditions. With modern-day Métis treaties becoming the new norm, we must reimagine the MNC as a national Indigenous organization that serves the evolving needs of Métis governments as treaty-holders.

I am a proud Michif Iskewew (Métis woman) with deep ancestral ties to our nation, tracing back to Métis leader Pierre Falcon, brother-in-law and lieutenant to Cuthbert Grant during our Nation's 1816 Victory at Frog Plain. Born in amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton), I am the seventh generation of a



Métis National Council President Victoria Pruden, centre, writes that she is determined to foster transparency, empower Métis women and knowledge holders, and lead the MNC with compassion, service, and lateral kindness. Photograph courtesy of the Métis National Council

family rooted in Métis culture and tradition. I've dedicated my life to advocating for Métis citizens, rights, and recognition for our nation. As president, I am determined to foster transparency, empower Métis women and knowledge holders, and lead the MNC with compassion, service, and lateral kindness.

### Reaffirming MNC's national mandate

Recent commentary has questioned the MNC's legitimacy as a national body due to membership changes and disputes over identity. These criticisms misunderstand the MNC's history, mandate, structure, and principles underpinning Métis self-governance. While it is true that the MNC's board of governors composition has changed, our role as a national service body has not diminished.

Our board consists of elected leaders from two of the four recognized Métis governments

in Canada, collectively representing a majority of registered rights-bearing Métis citizens. Notably, one of those Métis governments is the largest and oldest, while another holds the only Supreme Court of Canada decision affirming the presence of a historic rights-bearing Métis community within their provincial jurisdiction.

The MNC's leadership recognizes that the Métis Nation has been and will continue to be best-served by having a national organization that can convene Métis governments and Métis citizen-experts, aggregate data and ideas, and inform policy decisions in ways that further enable Métis governments to fully serve the distinct needs of their Métis citizens.

### Legitimacy as a National Indigenous Organization

The MNC's legitimacy as an National Indigenous Organization is rooted in its ability to

serve the Métis Nation's needs through recognized Métis governments who, in turn, represent historic rights-holding Métis communities and Métis citizens who connect to them.

Over the years, the MNC has helped secure transformative investments for Métis citizens, including \$190-million for health equity, \$500-million for housing. The MNC is currently advocating for \$2.3-billion for climate leadership. These achievements are a testament to the MNC's ability to advance the priorities of Métis governments, and to achieve results.

Beyond securing funding, the MNC's work strengthens Métis pride, promotes reconciliation, and ensures Canada's promise of Sec. 35 to the Métis Nation is fulfilled. From supporting Michif language revitalization and Métis veterans to engaging in international forums, the MNC embodies the principles of wâhkôhtowin: the kinship that binds us.



Victoria Pruden is the new president of the Métis National Council. Photograph courtesy of Indigenous Geographic

Even amidst governance changes, the MNC remains the only Métis-serving group—mandated by Métis governments—with the scale and capabilities to serve the Métis Nation at the national level.

## **The federal government's role**

Some have argued that the federal government should determine the MNC's legitimacy. This would be a grave mistake. The

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms that Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine their own representative institutions and decision-making processes.

Outsiders have no authority to dictate how the Métis Nation governs itself, or advances its interests. To do so violates inherent Métis rights, and is an affront to reconciliation. Instead, the federal government must respect the autonomy of Métis governments,

including their decisions about the organizations and institutions that best support them.

## **A vision for modernization**

The MNC is admittedly at a crossroads, but not without a map. Like the Métis themselves, the MNC's history is one of resilience and continuous adaptation. Our future will be no different.

As Métis governments transition into modern-day treaty-

holders, so too will the MNC transform to meet the evolving needs of Métis governments.

The MNC has a strong path forward. With the continued support of Métis governments and their citizens, the MNC will emerge stronger, more united, and better able to serve the Métis Nation than ever.

*Victoria Pruden is president of the Métis National Council.*

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