



RALLIEMENT NATIONAL DES  
**MÉTIS**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL

# THINK GROWTH

Building 21st Century Métis  
Economic Infrastructure:  
Internet Spectrum



## Key Takeaways

- **Spectrum is a valuable natural resource:** Canada generates billions from spectrum auctions, highlighting its economic importance. This presents a potential revenue opportunity for the Métis Nation.
- **Indigenous spectrum ownership is a proven own source revenue opportunity model:** The Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) have successfully managed spectrum for cultural and economic benefit.
- **Métis communities face a digital divide:** Limited access to broadband hinders economic opportunity, education, and essential services for many Métis people.
- **Dedicated spectrum allocation is key:** Allocating spectrum to the Métis Nation, along with capacity building and infrastructure investment, would address the digital divide, generate revenue and promote self-determination.

The purpose of this policy brief is to provide recommendations to government and corporate partners to increase Métis ownership of internet spectrum and improve telecommunications access the Métis.

## Background

Internet spectrum (also known as radio frequency or electromagnetic spectrum) needs to be recognized as a natural resource, which Government has apportioned to itself. Canada and corporate partners derive great benefit from the auction and utilization of Internet spectrum, respectively.

Canada raised \$2.158 billion from its most recent radio frequency spectrum auction, which concluded in 2023. This auction was for the 3800 MHz C-band spectrum, allocating a nationwide total of 250 MHz. The auction resulting in 22 Canadian carriers obtaining a record 4,099 licenses. The three largest carriers - Bell, Rogers and Telus - won the majority of the licenses, accounting for 76% of the total amount raised.



This auction raised significantly less than the previous 3500 MHz auction in 2021, which generated \$8.91 billion for a nationwide average of 111 MHz. This was a significant auction as the 3500 MHz band is crucial for the rollout of 5G services.

All together, this represents a nearly \$11 billion windfall for the Federal Government. It also represents an untapped own-source revenue opportunity for the Métis Nation.

### **Indigenous ownership of Spectrum: Aotearoa**

Aotearoa (New Zealand) provides a prominent example to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of Indigenous spectrum management: the allocation of spectrum to Māori through Te Whakaruruhau o Ngā Reo Irirangi Māori (Māori Spectrum Trust). The Trust manages spectrum for Māori radio and television broadcasting, ensuring Māori language and culture are represented in the media landscape. This model demonstrates how a dedicated spectrum allocation can empower Indigenous communities to control their own media and communication platforms.

Furthermore, New Zealand has explored collaborative spectrum management models involving both government and Māori entities, allowing for shared decision-making and benefit-sharing. It should be noted that it is difficult to determine a precise monetary value for the spectrum held by Māori because the spectrum allocated to them is not typically traded on the open market. This makes it difficult to establish a market price.

### **Digital divide for Métis communities**

Rural and remote Indigenous communities, including many Métis communities, face significant challenges in accessing affordable and reliable telecommunications services. A 2019 CRTC report highlighted that only 24% of rural households had access to 50/10 Mbps broadband service, compared to 97% of urban households. This disparity limits economic opportunity, access to education, and essential services like telehealth.

## Potential Outcomes

If Canada granted the Métis Nation a portion of the next Spectrum auction, it could either sell that spectrum to generate revenue or utilize the whole of the spectrum to provide telecom services. Potential economic benefits for the Métis Nation include:

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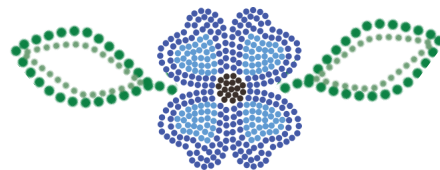
### An own-source revenue stream for Métis Governments.

This new source of revenue would allow Métis Governments to provide enhanced services for Métis Citizens across the Homeland. This aligns with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), emphasizing Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and control over their economic development.

### Improved internet connectivity.

Enhanced internet access can boost business opportunities, and expanding availability of education and healthcare services. International precedents, such as the Māori spectrum allocation in Aotearoa (New Zealand), provide a model for Indigenous spectrum management. This again, aligns with UNDRIP, supporting Métis self-determination and Economic Reconciliation.

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## Recommendations to increase Métis ownership of internet spectrum

1. Dedicated Spectrum Allocation for the Métis Nation: the Government of Canada should allocate a specific portion of the electromagnetic spectrum exclusively for the use or sale by the Métis Nation.

**Rationale:** This directly addresses the core issue of access. Similar to the Māori example in Aotearoa, dedicated spectrum provides the option for the Métis Nation to sell that spectrum to generate revenue, utilize the whole of the spectrum to provide telecoms services.



## 2. Establish a Métis Priority Window (MPW) for spectrum allocation.

**Rationale:** Creating an MPW would reduce barriers to spectrum access and support Métis applicants in accessing spectrum on a priority basis. This aligns with international precedents, such as the Māori spectrum allocation in New Zealand, and would empower Métis communities to develop their own telecommunications infrastructure and services.

## 3. Create an Indigenous Broadband Fund and centralized database

**Rationale:** Establishing a dedicated fund and database for Indigenous broadband initiatives would streamline access to funding opportunities, eligibility information, and application processes. This would address the current complexity of the application process, which acts as a barrier for Métis-led projects.

## 4. Implement a spectrum set-aside policy for Métis communities.

**Rationale:** Allocating a portion of spectrum specifically for Métis use would ensure that Métis communities have guaranteed access to this critical resource. This policy would support the development of Indigenous-owned telecommunications companies and improve connectivity in underserved areas.

## 5. Develop Indigenous capacity-building programs in telecommunications.

**Rationale:** Investing in training and education programs for Métis people in the telecommunications sector would build local capacity and create job opportunities. This aligns with the recommendation to develop an Indigenous workforce with culturally relevant network training.

## 6. Invest in Infrastructure Development and Capacity Building: Government and corporate partners should provide funding and technical assistance to support the development of telecommunications infrastructure in Métis communities. This includes training programs for Métis in network engineering, operations, and management.

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### **Conclusion: A Path to Meaningful Economic Reconciliation**

Focusing on Métis ownership of this natural resource, internet spectrum provides the Government of Canada with an opportunity to support Economic Reconciliation.

It would support the economic self-determination of Métis through providing them with a new own-source revenues and the opportunity to own and operate telecommunications infrastructure. It also holds the promise of addressing long-standing connectivity issues.

Taken together, this this initiative has the potential to significantly improve the well-being of Métis people. The expected benefits in terms of improved connectivity, economic opportunities and community empowerment make this a compelling policy direction worthy of serious consideration and support by Canada and corporate parnters.

