

# ***Métis Connect***

## **Seminar**

**2012**

## **METIS CONNECT**

### **Joe Desjarlais - author and facilitator**

Joe lives in North Vancouver with his wife and family. A qualified school teacher, Joe has studied at the graduate level in the humanities at Trinity Western University and is currently the Secretary of the British Columbia Métis Federation. He volunteers his time for the betterment of Métis people and communities.

### **Tim St. Denis - facilitator**

Tim St. Denis is a Chiropractic Doctor currently practicing in Delta BC. During his 34 year career he has served on the board of his provincial and national professional associations. In 2001 he was elected to President of the Canadian Chiropractic Association then to Chairman of the Board. In pursuit of his passion for the advancement and promotion of his Metis heritage, Tim is now serves on the Executive of the BC Métis Federation.

## Introduction

**Challenge-** Canada's aboriginal population is growing many times the rate of our non-aboriginal populations, and half of these folks live in urban centers. Many Métis people struggle with a lack of belonging and identity, and this contributes to many severe social challenges they face. Unfortunately, there is very little dialogue between many mainstream Canadians and these people. Their culture and history is mostly invisible to others and they live with a legacy of misunderstanding that persists. In many ways, Métis culture in its broadest sense is in threat of dying off.

**Purpose-** We hope to inspire Canadians and their institutions to change the way they think and act about Métis people. Our history shows us that that ideas and attitudes have powerful consequences. They shape the stories we repeat to ourselves as well as our actions. *Métis Connect* will help people become more intentional with British Columbia's Métis people and their communities and institutions. *Metis Connect* is also an information source to inform and inspire both communities about *each other*.

**Outcomes-** We invite folks to redefine their ideas of intention as they foster deeper mutual understanding between both communities, leading to practical community involvement, innovative partnerships and life-changing encounters in natural settings. You will find that we share many values in common like respect, inclusion and can learn from each other.

## Lesson 1- Historical Encounters

Introduction: Objectives covered through discussions and activities in this seminar:

- Unique aspects of Métis history, traditions values and culture you and your colleagues would benefit from learning.
- General information about the Métis—who they are, where they live, and similarities and differences from the First Nations peoples of this province.
- Who are Métis? Historical ideas and contradictory forces that have formed these understandings.
- The goals and organizational objectives of the BC Métis Federation.
- Knowledge and information about the Métis people district employees should know and understand.
- Dialogue on how the City can foster inclusiveness with respect to the Métis.
- Introduction to further dialogue on how best to reach out to the Métis for inclusion in City events, employment, City services.
- An opportunity for staff to ask questions and share personal experiences on inclusiveness.

We all have certain attitudes and dominant images about aboriginal people that often hinder meaningful progress. We think, write, and teach about aboriginal people from a certain cultural, political, ideological, and institutional context.

“How we think shapes our institutions, then our institutions shape us.”

“How we see the past is an important part of this mind set.”

the Aga Khan- Baldwin and Lafontaine Symposium

1. Cultural history- DVD How the Fiddle Flows - by Métis filmmaker Greg Coyes

“We have a history”

“Métis people were a very free people.”

“The fiddle was as important in history as the guitar is today. Before recordings, it allowed people to dance”

“The kitchen culture”

Greg Coyes- filmmaker

Video Debrief: whole class feedback

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Special activity: Métis cultural dance presentation

2. Political history-a brief survey of Western Canada history

❖ A timeline of events

- Louis Riel was a Métis person who was born in the Red River Settlement (in what is now Manitoba) in 1844. He was sent to Montreal to train for the priesthood, but he never graduated.
- Métis people were offended because the government of Canada bought the land right out from under them from the Hudson's Bay Company without consulting them about how this might affect them. A confrontation between the West and the new federal government over land and resources ensued. Fundamentally, Métis resisted because they believed that their quality of life in this place called Canada was threatened.
- In 1869-1870 he headed a provisional government, which would eventually negotiate the Manitoba Act with the Canadian government.
- The Act established Manitoba as a province and provided some protection for French language rights.
- He went into exile in the US and spent time in two asylums
- In 1884, Riel was asked by a delegation from the community of Métis from the south branch of the Saskatchewan river to present their grievances to the Canadian government
- Despite Riel's assistance, the federal government ignored Métis concerns. By March of 1885, Métis patience was exhausted and a provisional government was declared.
- Riel was the undisputed spiritual and political head of the short-lived 1885 resistance. He never carried arms. On May 15, shortly after the fall of Batoche, Riel surrendered to Canadian forces and was taken to Regina to stand trial for treason.
- On 1 August 1885, a jury of six English-speaking Protestants found Riel guilty but recommended mercy. Judge Hugh Richardson sentenced him to death. He was hanged in Regina on 16 November, 1885. His execution was widely opposed in Quebec and had lasting political ramifications. Riel gave two speeches at his trial, and notably argued for a more inclusive Western Canada than the dominant Anglo- Canadian ethos.
- After 1885 Riel rebellion and the hanging of Riel, the Métis leaders were either captured or driven off into diaspora. After 1885, there was to be no more room for a distinct society for the Métis Nation within Canada or a common society between Métis and mainstream Canada.

The real story is beyond the events. Louis Riel's life had a powerful effect on the Canadian psyche to this day. The way this history has been depicted by various interests has influenced the formation of Canadian nationalism, Quebec nationalism and western populist movements. His significance has since been tugged at from many different "interests" to influence popular opinion. Louis Riel is still being misrepresented today or his significance is deflected into trivialities. A reification of his cultural or political identity to suit personal or political opinion occurs today in political or cultural circles, wherever

the name of Riel comes up.

Source: Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008.

### Three views of history.

**Villains-** the traditional interpretation. British or French history. Top down history. Some people still refer to the events around 1869 and 1885 as a rebellion.

**Victims-** “Canada’s forgotten peoples.” The Métis were hapless victims of colonial exploitation, political manipulation and racial and religious prejudice. It was inevitable that Métis would be defeated as western progress and European ideas, policies and institutions assumed dominance.

**Contributors-** Another perspective is that Métis people contributed to Canada. They achieved military and constitutional victories. They were reformers and this contributed to Manitoba entering Confederation as a province. They helped opened up Western settlement.

Let’s talk more about this idea of Métis as contributors. Métis people had vast kinship networks, a sense of land, and hard-won relationships with European settlers. A middle ground was forming in Western Canada. Métis had a historic national anthem and flag and their own unique ethno genesis. They knew the value of community and shared histories. Métis people engaged with First Nations peoples for political, social and economic reasons as they respectively defined and asserted their people-hood through armed conflict, peace agreements, and through kinship.

Métis people were co-agents in the development of a political, social and economic common society as they encountered European society, the British Crown and the development of the Canadian state. Legal academic John Borrows informs us that early treaties like the Treaty of Niagara and the principles therein set a relationship in place that at the time that were regarded as a line of policy meant to follow the flag of England to inform future settlement in relationship to Canada’s indigenous peoples. Principles like the Honor of the Crown and Canada’s fiduciary obligation were grounded in precedent.

In the continuing spirit of the foundational treaty relationship, the Métis opened up Western Canada by bringing Manitoba into provincial status and this permitted Canadians and their institutions to enjoy the benefits of Confederation. The Métis had demonstrated proficiency in trade, commerce, politics, and even agriculture, all of which were important to this new Canada. They also had a blend of western and non-western perspectives.

Métis attempted to negotiate a place for themselves as a distinct society within Canada. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the political actions of the Métis led by Louis Riel gave rise to the recognition of Métis rights in the new Constitution of the province of Manitoba in 1870. The Métis leaders of the day viewed the Manitoba Act as a treaty between nations to establish them forever in their land. They didn’t want to go under the Indian act to be like Indians. They saw themselves as a nation, and wanted recognition as a

founding people, a distinct society. This Manitoba Act was originally intended to allow the Métis to retain their land and communities.

The Métis as a society wanted to share political and economic power and land and resources for mutual benefit of everybody. As individuals and as communities, they wanted to integrate into Canadian society at all levels, not merely as passive participants in a dominant European fur trade and its accompanying political/legal/cultural apparatus.

Métis are a storied indigenous people in Western Canada. These foundational perspectives guide Métis nationalism to this day.

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**Lesson 2- The Image of the Metis**

“Many look but do not see.” Louis Lamour, Bendigo Shafter

1. Introduction: There are many stakeholders or institutional forces involved in the way aboriginal people encounter other Canadians.

Here are some of the largest groupings, in no particular order.

- Consultants
- The courts (legal system)
- All levels of government
- Educational and religious institutions
- The media
- Public history, eg. Parks Canada, Museums, corporate documents
- Aboriginal governments and institutions.

2. View the internet clip *I’m Metis* ( Source: Youtube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wk59aKFDNw>)

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3. Introductory whole class activity- Métis Identity -

**Q** What is Métis?- various perspectives.

Métis in BC are not a disorganized accident or a political afterthought! A Métis history in BC is demonstrable, and is rooted in relationships with First Nations and linked to wider connections to Métis in western Canada and even in the US.

From Kelly lake all across this province, Métis have a demonstrable history. I did research on this for Parks Canada and noted over 100 recorded individual Métis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that had contact with the fort systems West of the Divide, or Alberta. Incredibly, there are only a handful of academic histories on the Métis in BC that I know of. There are reasons for this disparity, rooted in our colonial past.

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“Métis are the mixed blood children of the Fur trade” George and Terry Goulet, *The Métis In British Columbia*

“The Métis Nation consists of a unique indigenous people of mixed Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian blood. Their roots today in Western Canada are the historical Métis, a unique mixed blood native-born people of First Nations maternal ancestry and European paternal ancestry. They lived primarily in what is now Western Canada, the Great Lakes region on both sides of the international border, North Western areas of the United State and other areas.” George and Terry Goulet, *The Metis Nation- What is it?* <http://bcmetis.com/wp-content/uploads/February-March-2012-BCMF-Newsletter.pdf>

“Métis were the first Western reformers” – John Ralston Saul.

“The Métis were a unique social entity, identifying with neither French nor Indian culture. They saw themselves as a people apart, a new nation with its own ethnic identity and its own lifestyle.” – Daniel Francis,

Prior to Canada’s crystallization as a nation, a new Aboriginal people emerged out of the relations of Indian women and European men. While the initial offspring of these Indian and European unions were individuals who simply possessed mixed ancestry, subsequent intermarriages between these mixed ancestry children resulted in the genesis of a new Aboriginal people with a distinct identity, culture and consciousness in west central North America – the Métis Nation.

This Métis people were connected through the highly mobile fur trade network, seasonal rounds, extensive kinship connections and a collective identity (i.e., common culture, language, way of life, etc.). Distinct Métis settlements emerged throughout what was then called “the Northwest”.

Source: <http://www.metisnation.org>

Whole group activity.

**Q** What is an Indigenous person?

**Q** What forces influence identity?

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**Metis Identity is a Complicated Topic!**

There are both urban and rural Métis. Some Métis only see their metis-ness in an individual sense. To some, it's just about the physical aspects of culture, as in the dress or customs they share. Identity is also impacted by race and economic status. As well, many Métis people identify in the collective sense with their association to a land base or a sense of place, as in the Métis settlements. Others identify by bureaucratic, constitutional or legislated identities. Governments have lumped Métis into organizations with fixed political definitions that ignore complexities, such as the early non-status Indian associations. Others identify with ethnic variations of being Métis, as in the “Red-river Métis”.

There is much complexity, and language provides a clue: Métis do not have one language. Some speak fluent Saulteaux, or Cree; others speak French with mixtures of these two indigenous languages, or only one of them. People also mix up French and English in what is called a ‘dirty’ French. More recently, as in urban Métis in Western cities, English is the preferred language. Often, Métis were not distinguished from French. Distortions often occurred. For instance, Early censuses ignored Métis or lumped them into native Indian or “not stated” categories.

**Q** Where have you encountered popular culture and popular history? Are all of these images positive for these people?

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Deeply held cultural norms shape what we think about Canada's history.

Source: Prof Bruce Shelvey, Canadian First Nations Relations, History 540, Fall, 2007.

4. Main activity: Métis identity in the public domain. The liberal establishment, (the media, educational and religious institutions, religious institutions, etc,) have often distorted or discounted Métis identity to suit various political, economic or racial interests and perspectives

Break into groups of 3 or 4 and ponder these primary references.

- "The sense of inferiority due to their origins, to their physical type, to the color of their skin, reappears when they come into contact with whites, and they relapse into weakness and discouragement'
- "They are heirs to a history of degeneration." p 519 ..  
The Metis in the Canadian West, by Marcel Giraud, George Woodcock
- "A superintendent of education visited a school near Langley. Writing in his diary on June 8, 1877: "Found 21 pupils, chiefly half breeds and Indians... half breed children very unpromising, dull and stupid, apparently incapable of learning." ( June 8, 1877, entry, John Jessup, Diary, In British Columbia Archives, GR-1468.)
- "No one in Canada feels disposed to deal harshly with the Métis because they took up arms against the Government. They are looked upon as misguided men whose simplicity and ignorance of the world were taken advantage of by designing and unscrupulous men to further their own ambitious projects. But if they allow themselves to be made dupes of by Dumont or any one else they will be regarded very differently by their white fellow-countrymen both in the Territories and the Provinces."  
Source: The Colonist, Tuesday, April 30, 1889. <http://www.britishcolonist.ca>
- "Indians are a messy, poverty stricken, wretched and crime prone people: incest is a common feature of their life; Indian chiefs are irresponsible, dishonest, and wastrels who squander public funds on booze; Indians are no longer the noble people history made them out to be, but are completely lacking in pride and totally dependent upon special privileges for survival; they are childlike, lack integrity, have no respect for the law, and love to poach on private property; Indians are a special class of people who have more rights and privileges than other Canadians;

they have been spoiled rotten by the government, and as such are incapable of self government because they lack self sufficiency.”

This example was aired publically on April 3, 1985 on a talk show in British Columbia.

- Consider this recent Vancouver Sun article by Sun reporter Darah Hansen about recent problems in Hazelton: “Like other First Nations communities across Canada, suicide among the younger members of Hazelton’s Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en First Nations is an all-too-common cause of death....They are stuck, mired in a community so deep in despair that to many, death seems the only way out.”

[Darah Hansen](#), Death's doorstep; 119 suicide attempts this year have left a B.C. native community reeling; [Final Edition] [The Vancouver Sun](#). Vancouver, B.C.: [Dec 29, 2007](#). pg. A.1)

- Sylvester Stallone’s “Rambo” depicted in a B.C. newspaper some years back. With a bandana wrapped around his head, Stallone intentionally chooses to portray Rambo similar to Indian Chief Sitting Bull. Stallone chooses to display an older more distinguished Rambo, influenced by the “ponderousness that comes with aging, the sense of weight, the sense of knowledge, a character who has given up, who has nothing.” (Booth, William. January 12, 2008. Violence Dressed Up as Truth. Vancouver Sun.
- In BC history, Governor Simpson believed that mixed blood people were shiftless, depraved, conceited, too close to a depraved state of nature to be useful to the company in any but the lower positions. The Battle For the West by Daniel Francis, p. 152
- “Their offspring were mere degraded savages. “ Quoted by Jean Barman from source William Burton Crickmer, “Story of the planting of the English church in Columbia, Christian Advocate & Review, sd., 780. In Vancouver Public library.

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The prevailing discourse saw mixed race relationships as dangerous, both to individuals and to colonial development. Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the making of British Columbia*, p. 78

In British Columbia’s colonial history since Confederation, A British or French notion of culture were preferred. Policymakers employed the law to separate and assimilate natives and Métis and to deny their unique shared ancestry, access to resources, experiences, customs, symbols, traditions, homeland, language, history, heritage, culture and ways of life.

Historian Jean Barman reminds us that legislation has worked to separate Métis people legally from reserve systems and integrated aboriginal ways of life. This has led to isolation, fragmentation, marginalization, mal-adaptation and other social ills. Colonial policies and their logic still linger in current BC/Métis relations to this day.

Just to acknowledge that racism exists is only a beginning. For Canada’s Métis people, these challenges are systemic, conditioned into our history, the way we view and use it, our corporate identities, even our national identity.

We are often blind to a racialized world that benefits some and oppresses others.

**Q** How would you feel if you were aboriginal and you turned on the radio that day? Or you were in a class? Or you were an aboriginal student or aboriginal student or parent in the school?

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**Q** Do we live in a fair country for Métis people?

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Rafe Mair’s perspective on a Fair Society

“How can a society be fair when the reality is that it closes doors or makes them hard to open for millions whose only sin is another skin color or birth outside the ruling classes? The Injustice is that of society as a whole and, while it seems unfair that rectifying this must often be borne by the individual, perhaps, this only says that much more must be done in other areas. Because above all, society must offer hope, real hope. Its just too easy for us who have never had a door closed in our faces to make the facile argument that all jobs and places in universities shall be granted on merit alone, when it is the White establishment that sets up all the criteria, an establishment that is already snug and warm what to others seems an impenetrable curtain. It sure as hell hasn’t been fair to those born black in the United states of American or those born Native in Canada.” Rafe Mair, A Memoir, p. 27.

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**Additional activity. Break into 2 groups. Each group will be provided with a scenario that depicts two very different historical discourses.**

Debate each version. Be prepared to discuss this information in light of prior information discussed in class. The main point is that many problems arise because people have assumed that the history they hear is correct. You will encounter such 'history' in your travels. Source: P. Seixas, *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* p. 19)

“When Europeans came to BC, the land was relatively empty, the inhabitants technologically backward. Progressive cosmopolitan British North Americans developed the undeveloped land. In so doing, they made various attempts to assimilate the native people, while setting aside reserves for those who resisted assimilation for one reason or another. The political order they created, though not perfect, was increasingly democratic, and increasingly ready to accept native people on its own terms. The treaty thus represents an unnecessary give away of land and tax revenues that belong to all the people of British Columbia and creates a race-based franchise in the native-controlled areas. Moreover, it is an attempt to redress possible wrongs that were set in motion more than a century ago, and that are best left behind.”

“There was a substantial pre-contact population in the region with complex social and political structures... Strict codes of property ownership, succession and civil order were handed down through oral tradition. This version highlights the royal Proclamation of 1763, which guaranteed that aboriginal rights to land and self government were to be respected. Any changes were to be effected through negotiations with the Crown. From the time of the gold rush, which brought BC's first major wave of white settlement, a resource-hungry white population, supported by provincial governments that were contemptuous of the first Nation' rights, steadily eroded both the land base and the legal redress available to Indians. In so doing, they not only overrode, ignored, or confused the principles that had shaped the Nisga'a legal codes but also violated the principles laid down by the British Crown for governing native-white relations in the region. The treaty represents a long-awaited return to these principles.”

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## Lesson 3- Contemporary Encounters

**Q** Where have you ever encountered Métis people today?

1. Case study- Being Kayla

Kayla is a 20 year old Métis girl who lives in the city. She always knew about her aboriginal heritage. She is beginning the journey of learning more, but being Métis is a puzzle to her. Life in the city doesn't help either. It breeds isolation from others like her.

Kayla shares family ties to a historic indigenous people group in Canada, the Métis Nation. Her great grandpa spoke two aboriginal languages. Her ancestors were hunters, guides and scouts who helped European settlers build Canada. Métis share a common culture that has its own symbols, foods and other activities.

The Métis have institutions and are developing programs for their people. More recently, the courts have agreed that they have historic rights in Canada, as in the Powley Supreme court decision in 2003. But this is far from being clarified.

Kayla wants to learn more about this exciting part of her identity. There are many labels and misunderstandings that confuse her. Some of her friends tease her about her heritage. For Kayla, she could easily blend in because she is “white”. But skin color is not the way Métis identify themselves. Her friends want to understand but they tend to think about this part of Kayla through many labels.

But Kayla is not Indian. She is Métis, an indigenous people group in Canada with a unique history and culture. This is a people who live today and want to express their lifestyle and culture. Many of her friends simply have no idea about her amazing culture and history.



2. Common images and labels. What ideas inform these stereotypes? Is this language inclusive or offensive? What assumptions guide these questions? Debrief as whole group.

- Who are Métis anyways?
- It was all in the distant past. Get over it.
- I'm not responsible for events that happened 200 years ago.
- I feel guilty because you must be poor.
- How come you guys always have problems?
- Why do you get a scholarship and I don't?
- Why do you think you have rights as a group? Why can't you just fit in?
- Why are so many of you on welfare?
- Can you buy cigarettes cheaper on the Rez?
- Do you get a status card?
- You don't look Indian. You are too white.
- Do you have a messy yard too?
- Where's your sash or fiddle? Or drum?

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### **3. A common path forward - National revitalization**

- A. Culture, values and ways of life
  
- B. Politics- The context - goals and objectives and challenges, of the BC Métis Federation.

In British Columbia, a political movement is emerging from a populist base among Métis people and communities. More and more Métis people are seeing similarities between their own challenges and that of First Nations and mainstream Canadians. The BCMF has emerged with a positive orientation and broad cross- cultural vision for reform.

#### ➤ About the BC Métis Federation

The BC Métis Federation (BCMF) is a non-profit association that works with Métis communities to ensure the well being of grassroots BCMF members. There are upwards of 60,000 Métis people in BC, according to census documents, all across this province. The Métis population in Canada is approaching 400,000, one third of the total Aboriginal population in Canada.

According to its website, the BCMF has identified values that will be honoured and respected in recognition of our grassroots Métis culture as the foundation.

- True Self Government
- Trust
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Accountable and Transparent Leadership
- Self Determination
- Métis History, Heritage, and Culture
- Support for Métis Elders and Youth
- Commitment
- Vision

- Empowerment of each Métis person
- Community Support

The BC Métis Federation continues to build relationships with Métis communities and service delivery organizations throughout British Columbia. Statements of Cooperation have been signed between the BCMF and the following communities:

- Vancouver Métis Cultural Society
- The NOVA Métis Heritage Association- Nova Heritage association a non profit local Métis community is based in Surrey, BC. Mr. Ken Fisher is the president. Mr. Fisher has a radio show on Vancouver Coop radio 102.7 FM called *Metis Matters*.
- Kelly Lake Métis Settlement Society
- Fort St. John Métis Society
- North Saanich Michif Society
- Cariboo Chilcotin Métis Association
- Dawson Creek Métis Federation
- Northern Interior Métis Cultural Society
- Métis Veterans Association of British Columbia

## **Contemporary Flashpoint - the Enbridge Gateway project exposes the underbelly of Métis/Canadian Relationships**

The BC Métis Federation has formed since June 2011 in reference to issues surrounding good governance and transparency. There are many problems that still need to be addressed to ensure adequate representation and historical grievances you can read about on the BCMF website. The BCMF seeks a more historical, inclusive view of Métis identity that reflects, history, values, people, kinship connections and place.

The Enbridge gateway project is a flashpoint that reveals the challenging nature of the dependency relationship between Canada and Métis people. Governments, institutions and corporations have not respected the voice of Métis people, their distinct status as an aboriginal people, their ways of life and desire for meaningful self government. Métis organizations across Canada struggle for meaningful representation

and accountability in these processes. Métis people and communities have been caught between minority and majority interests that undermine their unique historical standing as a constitutional people in Canada.

### **BC Métis President Keith Henry on the Enbridge Project and Métis rights:**

We know how important protecting the Métis traditional practices are, which is primarily our harvesting practices. One way we are doing this is making sure any projects that are being put forward by any industry must consult and talk with the community directly .

The current Provincial Government policy on Aboriginal consultation is a concern that we must address. The Province continues to state the Métis do not have rights in BC and this guides industry and dangerous government policies that affect these traditional practices.

**Keith Henry, President, BC Metis Federation**

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## Outstanding Issues for Métis people in BC

Successive government policy denies that Métis rights and title exist in British Columbia, despite the evidence of integrated Métis communities such as Kelly lake. They misrecognize the Métis people in Canada. This, in spite of the Supreme court's admonition that governments must act. For more on this, refer to Powley v. Canada Supreme court case. ( 2003)

Métis people have no land-base and treaty resolution in British Columbia because of lack of mainstream political will to negotiate. This has occurred since the days of Louis Riel, who specifically called for a resolution of Métis land issue in British Columbia. Back in 1885, Louis Riel knew that the resolution of the land issue for Métis in British Columbia was a key to a Métis future. Source: Desmond Morton as *The Queen v Louis Riel*. 356 .

Successive governments have ignored their constitutional and fiduciary responsibility to acknowledge Métis people. Mainstream government policies don't reflect the unique cultural, geographic, legal and economic realities that exist today within Canada's Aboriginal community. In addition, there are very few academic and public histories and critical studies of the Métis in British Columbia. There is very little public awareness and they have been largely excluded from the public domain in British Columbia as well as the liberal establishment.

- ❖ Corporate public relations disasters and highhanded politics across the political spectrum have convinced Métis people as well as everyday Canadians that a functioning democracy and quality of life are common benefits to us all. More and more mainstream Canadians realize that Métis people are an undeniable part of the outworking of our shared history in BC, and are growing in political and economic influence. We are witnessing this in the explosion of Métis cultural activities across British Columbia, including the Fusion festival in Surrey, British Columbia and a major cultural event in Kelly lake. The British Columbia Métis Federation has been represented in the local national media, where they have provided opportunities for their people to have a voice on many different issues.

**A critical perspective: Why do current mainstream governments ignore Métis challenges?**

- Classic liberalism trumps collective rights. In this viewpoint, only individual rights should be taken seriously.
- Governments have taken anti -treaty and anti aboriginal rights stances asserting that no group in Canada should receive special rights. A Métis distinct society was disintegrated by the imposition of laws based upon racism and religious intolerance. They were forced to choose a life inside or outside the Indian Act, which forced them outside of indigenous ways of life and kinship connections.
- They tend to use economic and managerial arguments and descriptions to define the relationship.
- They ignore the reality of systemic inequality and discrimination in Canadian society.
- They misrecognize the unique historical and constitutional relationship between indigenous people and the crown. Eg., the constitutionalization of group rights in law.

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When we stop accepting a history that says First Nations ( Métis) people were conquered by Europeans (either through force or disease) and faded into obscurity long before we came on the scene, we begin to take responsibility for the problems that face us today.

Will Davies, Changing perspectives, Mars Hill, Trinity Western University

It is everyone's responsibility to overcome the myths and the stereotypes that have for far too long characterized the relationship ...

National Chief Shawn Atleo

4. Canadian reconciliation discourses - a common society of shared ideas.

In a recent book entitled *A Fair Country*, political philosopher John Ralston Saul argued that we in Canada are a people of Aboriginal inspiration. This idea is not new. In fact, I mentioned earlier that it was supported back in 1885 by Louis Riel. Canadians can learn from Métis people. Their values, traditions, histories, values, are important to our future as Canadians. Canadians are starting to redefine the way they view Canada and its history, and how aboriginal people relate to Canada. It's more about shared ideas and a relationship between two societies.

Video clip: John Ralston Saul on Canada's Métis roots  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tQ4Fh7SK1U&feature=related>

## Concluding thoughts

Thank you for taking time to attend this seminar! You are on a pathway to think critically about the formative ideas that shape being Métis in British Columbia and Canada today. I believe that the structures and forms we have chosen and continue to negotiate must reflect our reality where we live. Otherwise, we misrecognize our own country, because our structures don't reflect a genuine sense of people and place. It's up to you and me to create a healthier conversation so we can fill in the blanks and make those connections.

We have learned that Métis governance, laws, culture and values have contributed to the development of Canada and continue to do so. This effort to educate our communities, including new immigrants to Canada, has only just begun. It is the responsibility of every Canadian who values this country and what it represents to ensure that this expands.

The other aspect of an expanding circle is to begin to practically work out how the Métis people and their perspectives will be important to our shared future if we are to share from a common bowl. To put it another way, our ongoing challenge going forward will be to integrate Métis perspectives back into the economic, political, legal and social structures in Canada: In our history books. Our movies. Our heritage sites. Our laws. Our institutions. Our HR policies. Our political and legal systems.

For this to occur, we must rethink how we think about and act toward these people. There are many thousands of Métis in British Columbia who need better policies that suit their needs and better representation in every sense of the word. Thank you for taking time to learn more about the Métis people.

Appendix: **Here are some open ended questions to take back to your institutions and apply to your policy as we move forward.** Be sure to think of ways to include aboriginal people in these discussions.

- ✓ What can we do within our institutions to invite each other to dialogue and engage meaningfully?
- ✓ How do we go about rebuilding a common history and values?
- ✓ What can we do to allow our settings to respect people and place?
- ✓ How can we draw out indigenous values and perspectives from these communities so they impact our institutions?
- ✓ Are aboriginal values and traditions being given room to be reclaimed? How?
- ✓ What is the nature of knowledge? Eg. what is history? is it fact or interpretation?
- ✓ What are the reasons for grievances of specific groups?
- ✓ How do we define intention in our institutions? Is it utilitarian, eg. Just to produce skills or deliverables or meet institutional quotas, or does intention evoke deeper meanings?
- ✓ Are we doing our part to ensure that Métis people are adequately and properly represented in our institutions, on our boards and committees, etc.
- ✓ Can aboriginal values and perspectives influence our institutions for the greater good?
- ✓ What role do aboriginal individuals have in mainstream structures?
- ✓ Do we permit active citizenship engagement to influence our institutions for the public good?
- ✓ How do we build practical connections between institutions to build on the foundational ideas and activities in this seminar?

Please complete the workshop evaluation form provided.

You can also send additional comments and questions to Joe Desjarlais at [j.desjarlais@bcmetis.com](mailto:j.desjarlais@bcmetis.com). We are in the process of designing interactive activities to follow up on this seminar.

For more information about the BC Métis Federation please view the website at [www.bcmetis.com](http://www.bcmetis.com).

### Recommended Websites on Metis History

1. A Brief History of the Metis People

<http://www.wolfledge.org/visibiliti/metis/history.htm>

2 Metis History

<http://www.metis.ca/index.php/metis-people/The%20history%20of%20the%20Metis%20People>

3 A Virtual Museum of Metis History and Culture

<http://www.metis.ca/index.php/metis-people/The%20history%20of%20the%20Metis%20People>

4 The Metis Nation

<http://easternwoodlandmetisnation.ca/metis-history.htm>

5 Metis History- A Personal Reflection

<http://metis.tripod.com/index2.html>

6 A Brief History of the Metis People

<http://www.wolfledge.org/visibiliti/metis/history.htm>

7 Metis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada

<http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/metiseweb.pdf>

8 Metis History – The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan

[http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/metis\\_history.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/metis_history.html)

9 Metis Culture and Resource Centre

<http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/>

10 Prince George Metis Elders Society

<http://www.pgmetiselders.com/history.html>

### Recommended Métis Literature

1. THE MÉTIS: MEMORABLE EVENTS AND MEMORABLE PERSONALITIES, Goulet, George R. D. (George Richard Donald)
2. The MÉTIS IN CANADA, Hudak, Heather C.
3. A PROFILE OF THE MÉTIS Statistics Canada. Housing, Family a Social Statistics Division
4. CHILDREN OF THE FUR TRADE: FORGOTTEN MÉTIS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST Jackson, John C.
5. JAMES MCKAY: A MÉTIS BUILDER OF CANADA Grant, Agnes
6. PRISON OF GRASS: CANADA FROM THE NATIVE POINT OF VIEW Adams, Howard
7. MÉTIS DEVELOPMENT AND THE CANADIAN WEST Racette, Calvin
8. Canada's people: the Métis Cardinal, Phyllis
9. ANNETTE'S PEOPLE: THE MÉTIS Rempel, David C.
10. CANADA AND THE MÉTIS, 1869-1885 Sprague, Douglas
11. MÉTIS: PEOPLE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS Harrison, Julia
12. THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF LOUIS RIEL = LES ECRITS COMPLETS DE LOUIS RIEL
13. RIEL'S PEOPLE: HOW THE MÉTIS LIVED ,Campbell, Maria
14. THE TRIAL OF LOUIS RIEL by George R.D. Goulet
15. The Metis in British Columbia by George and Terry Goulet
16. A Fair Country by John Ralston Saul