



The BC Métis Federation and the Province of British Columbia

Knowledge Partnership Project

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Executive Summary

This Knowledge Partnership Project was funded by the BC Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and carried out by the BC Métis Federation. The primary aims of this study were to identify place-based Métis communities that have their kinship ties in whole or in part within the Province of British Columbia, and:

- explore how Métis in British Columbia understand their own history with consideration given to their diverse and fluid ways of knowing, their self-identification and community memberships, and their culture, language and traditions.
- establish a comprehensive framework for an on-going, dynamic Métis knowledge network Work Plan.
- create pathways for members who have been disenfranchised to repatriate to communities.
- begin the process of building knowledge networks that will enable Métis communities/nations to build knowledge capacity.
- suggest ways in which the objectives of Canada's nation-wide call for reconciliation and the purposes of specific UNDRIP criteria are accomplished through knowledge partnerships as they are implemented in the future.

In total, 107 participants (members, the age of majority, randomly selected) responded to a standard data collection survey over a data collection period of 10 days. Data suggest first and foremost that clearly defined Métis communities existed, and continue to exist, in BC; That recognizing and affirming these communities requires a flexible and expansive definition of Métis to account for their many ways of representing who they are; and that contested identities, loss of culture and personhood, systemic discrimination and persistent racism, and erasure in the official historical record contribute to the difficult task of recognizing, reconstituting and repatriating Métis peoples.

Place-based Métis communities will emerge from out of the historical, political and social background of British Columbia. The existence of self-determined Métis communities is no longer in question. What is up for debate is how the Federal and Provincial governments in Canada will respond to legitimate demands for self-governing Métis communities. In the context of a contested rights-based environment, often informed by polemic academic and political discourse that is divorced from the local communities themselves, we call on the government to establish a knowledge partnership between Métis self-determined communities, various levels of government, and other Indigenous nations. Knowledge partnerships carried out in a transparent and open forum based upon mutual recognition

through careful research and data collection has the potential to save millions of dollars in court and legal costs.

Investment in a funded, ongoing Knowledge Partnership Agreement would create the context where negotiated futures produce lasting changes in BC for future generations of Métis and others, so we can move forward together in strength, security and stability. Building this capacity into existing and future Métis self-determined communities in BC will build public trust in a process that is just, fair and equitable and based on the principles of respect for historical difference.

The conclusions and recommendations in this report outline a four phase approach to implement the next steps in this ongoing research project. This is paramount in light of the report research and survey responses to this initiation of the Knowledge Partnership Project.

The conclusions of the report following from a review of select relevant literature and a preliminary community survey are as follows:

1. That clearly defined Métis communities existed, and continue to exist, in BC.
2. That recognizing and affirming these communities requires a flexible and expansive definition of Métis to account for their many ways of representing who they are
3. Contested identities, loss of culture and personhood, systemic discrimination and persistent racism, and erasure in the official historical record contribute to the difficult task of recognizing, reconstituting and repatriating Métis peoples.

We recommend a fully funded, on-going Knowledge Partnership Agreement be formed between the BC Métis Federation and the Province of British Columbia to produce knowledge networks that provide pathways for current coherent communities to move towards self-determination, for Métis diaspora to connect to their 'home' communities, and for repatriating Metis to find a sense of belonging. It is no longer tenable based upon the historical records in British Columbia to deny other forms of Métis self-determination. A new historical narrative of partnership is required that enables the unique Métis communities to build the knowledge capacity to defend their uniqueness and renew their historical connection to the Crown, First Nations, and other self-determined Métis communities.

A Partnership Agreement with the Province of British Columbia will serve as the basis for next steps – the establishment and funding of a BCMF Knowledge Partnership research division.

Institution and funding of a BC Metis Federation research division:

- To set up a 'research division' at BC Métis Federation so that it legitimizes the ask when we seek partnerships and provides a specific place where corporations and governments can contribute specific amounts of money to a Métis public research strategy.
- The BC Métis Federation knows that gathering, producing and sharing knowledge is essential to the long-term viability of Métis communities and nations, and our intellectual resources must be available as a vital part of our community engagement, repatriation and revitalization.
- A research endowment is where the capital provided by corporations and governments can be used for various projects moving forward. The endowment would be using the interest to fund research; Rather than mere 'handouts', this is the only long term sustainable way of providing the ongoing intellectual resources for Métis people, collectivities, communities and Nations in Canada as they repatriate;
- Creation of an archival database of Métis knowledge in BC.
- Inventory and repository of key resources to facilitate access.
- Networking site, workshops, information to enable and expand connectedness.
- Capacity for ongoing negotiation of expanding knowledge partnerships for self-identification and self-determination.
- Research can take the form of phases, for example, a next phase to the initial one-month Knowledge Partnership Project can now be expanded as follows:

Phase I: Research and Networking

- A. Survey of Existing Scholarship on Métis in BC
- B. Inventory of Repositories and Historical Sources
- C. Identify and contact key elders in established knowledge networks
- D. Consider Métis diasporic connections and disenfranchised Métis communities
- E. Establish knowledge partnership methodology.

Phase II: Conduct Interviews and Focussed Historical Research

- A. Connect with Métis academics and scholars and community knowledge keepers
- B. Identify and conduct initial focussed, accessible archival research
- C. Gather oral history through participatory knowledge partnership

D. Equipping community members to conduct research

Phase III: Interpretation

A. Analyze published literature, archival research and knowledge network narratives

B. Create an initial inventory of place-based communities and map possible 'locations' of current and historical Métis communities/nations.

C. Consider how Métis shape, preserve and order their own narratives

D. Understand the role of knowledge partnerships in community (re)formation

Phase IV: Final Report and Delivery

A. clearly defined Metis communities existed, and continue to exist. What are the next steps in knowledge partnerships?

B. What are key examples of how these communities represent their ways of being?

C. What further research needs to be done to support, strengthen and grow knowledge networks in ways that are consistent with UNDRIP?