



**BC Métis**  
FEDERATION

# **MOVING FORWARD**

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# Introduction

BC Metis Federation (BCMF) is a non-profit association that works with Metis communities to ensure the well-being of members and is governed by a Board of Directors. Through grassroots efforts, BCMF advocates on behalf of its many members who live throughout the province. BCMF continues to build relationships with the Metis community and service delivery organizations in British Columbia that want to work together for the betterment of the Metis people. BCMF has an operational staff to oversee a variety of projects and programs for their members and utilizes contractors to fill knowledge gaps or temporarily increase the capacity needed for a specific project. However, our main objective is to build capacity within each community itself and to train and utilize Metis community-based researchers whenever and wherever possible. Preserving our heritage and sharing it with younger generations is necessary for the survival of Metis peoples. Cultural revitalization, gathering in community, and sharing stories ensures the legacy of elders and knowledge keepers will live on.

## Context: community-based research

The activities of the Moving Forward project are best understood in light of our other project work as well as our existing Indigenous Research Methodology. The Metis Terrestrial Investigations Project (MTIP) is a community-based research initiative commenced in March of 2022. In April and May, 2022 the BCMF operational team partnered with a team of prospective community researchers to learn about what it means to do community based research and then engaged in formal project work. The training and information sessions established knowledge partnerships that equipped local researchers to recover hidden or forgotten Pacific Northwest Metis history and kinship networks for the benefit of local community. We launched a research portal to bring together community-based researchers from each community and thus began a thriving knowledge community in the Pacific Northwest.

By the beginning of the MTIP project in March of 2022, the operational team, consisting of the Head of Research, an academic consultant, and a GIS technician, had already developed three seminars with a specific project focus on the Trans Mountain expansion corridor: (1) Metis History and Memory in BC/Secondary Sources; (2) Indigenous Research Methods/Primary Sources; (3) Community Research/GIS. The team released the initial BCMF Community Based research modules to our research portal, created a user-friendly training GIS web-based application, and met with the local researchers to begin to review the first modules.

From the outset our seminars centred the needs of community-based researchers and prioritized conversational and relationship building processes that privileged the voice, needs and benefits of community members and organizations. It has been great getting to know each of the local researchers from all over the province - Rosanne, Cindy, Diann, Rhaina and Karen, as they are the 'engines' that drive our work! Our broader goal is that local communities become increasingly involved in initiating, conducting, analyzing, and representing their own research so they can build capacity and chart their own self-determining futures.

# Moving Forward Project - Introductory Activities 1 & 2

In the month of March of 2022, the Project Team, which included the BCMF Director of Research, Senior Academic consultant, and GIS technician, engaged in dialogue with the Province to revise the proposal for the Moving Forward Project. We advised the BCMF President of progress, enlisted BCMF support for the project, and finalized a workplan by March 25, 2022, which outlined the objectives of the project and the timeline for the deliverables.

Between April and May 15, the Project Team engaged in our second major activity, the development of planning, researching, and creating a seminar we titled “Métis Story Telling: Self-Determination and Community Capacity/Storytelling”. The team worked internally to operationalise the first 3 seminars as we completed the final module. During this phase we researched, prepared, and developed the curricular content for the module, including instructional content, practical learning experiences, supporting documents/instructions, and recording/taping of seminar resources. By May 15 the team was pleased to upload the entire seminar content on the Research Portal for our community-based researchers.

## Literature review - best practices, deficiencies, and challenges

Our goal for Activity 3 was to build on our current research and conduct an initial review of current Metis literature on topics related to community-based research, Indigenous Research Methodology, and Geographic Information Systems. We wanted to identify ‘best practices’ and locate deficiencies in relation to other areas.

An initial literature review was conducted (**refer to APPENDIX 1 for bibliography**) and based upon the results our analysis revealed that there is a growing body of international scholarship on these topics. In Canada, however, community-based participatory research (CBR) for Metis communities lacks scholarly attention, particularly as it relates to the Pacific Northwest. There is some literature on First Nations peoples and communities, and a few discussions on their identities, cultures, and languages but there is little recognition of Metis data. In general, scholars have adopted a binary approach that obscures more nuanced Metis kinship ‘webs’ or place-based identities in what is now British Columbia. Oversimplified research on Metis/mixed ancestry communities limit Metis peoples to one racial, political, linguistic or cultural identity, that of prairie-based Metis who asserted a national identity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, argues that research is a political exercise and that there is an imbalance of power when conducted within colonial frameworks. Our initial literature review affirms her conclusion: specific literature or peer reviewed articles on Metis-specific community-based research resources by and for Metis people are almost non-existent. Much of the scholarship has been focused on rights-based mixed-ancestry peoples, which in the past has meant tracing your lineage back to the Red River. Scholars, like Jean Barman, Mike Evans, and Kerry Sloan, who do find evidence of other mixed-ancestry communities, have to negotiate around this reality for political reasons. So "Metis" peoples in BC are characterized as "Indigenous", 'Iroquois' or 'French-Canadian', or they are identified

with their First Nation's kinship network. To our knowledge, Kerry Sloan is one of the few scholars to argue for a local, community-based, lived-experience based upon Metis self-determination.

Current data collected on Metis populations in the Pacific Northwest lacks historical nuance and diversity, has been mostly short-term project based, and contains racial disparities that are embedded in the data, thus impacting the way Metis lived-experience is interpreted or applied to policy. Our work at the BCMF, because it begins with self-determining mixed-ancestry communities, avoids the identity 'conundrum' and instead opens up the possibility of many different ways of being Metis.

A lot more scholarship has been done on the United States side of the border on discreet, unique, self-identifying Metis peoples throughout the region. Because there is no advantage to make a claim for exclusive Metis rights based upon the "Metis Nation" as is the case in Canada, American authors don't seem to be preoccupied with Metis ethnogenesis in the Red River. Freed from the political limitations, Metis representation on the south side of the border is more apt to trace kinship relationships to local sources rather than genealogical ties back to a 'homeland' community.

Rectifying the problem of researching self-determining Metis communities in BC is difficult, however. There is an absence of local research capacity within Metis communities and few community-based researchers are properly trained in the indigenous research methodologies necessary to unlock local wisdom or guide current research practices. The bulk of government funding for Metis in BC goes to certain government funded national Metis organizations such as Metis Nation BC, who seek to regulate Metis identity through their registry and limit the use and interpretation of data that is collected about Metis people and their ways of knowing. While there is increased recognition that Metis history and memory in British Columbia needs to be articulated, there is no indication that community-based research will be a priority.<sup>1</sup> The MNBC foists an extractive research approach upon Metis people, with few clear pathways for local communities to participate in the research or benefit from their own knowledge. This lack of local control by Metis communities in the research process is concerning given that Indigenous communities across Canada seek to control their own knowledge/datasets as they are experiencing and responding to calls for reconciliation.

The bibliography represents an initial effort to centre research participation at the community level within the Pacific Northwest, within a properly instituted Indigenous Research Methodology. In a broader sense, we feel that a deeper understanding of CBR theory and practice is on the cutting edge of Metis repatriation efforts in Canada. It can potentially speak to challenging issues like the proper assertion of Metis self-determination and inform efforts to reconcile settler-Metis and Metis-First

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<sup>1</sup> As example, **an MNBC report on Anti-Racism makes this statement:** " Métis community members expressed a desire for **Métis people and Métis Nation British Columbia** to be in control of the data collection process. Métis people must be involved in the data collection, planning, and analysis of data collection. **Métis people and MNBC should own the data, with MNBC developing data collection and governance frameworks.**" However, MNBC reserves the right to control the process of interpreting and using the data/knowledge by developing data/knowledge and governance frameworks. How does this affirm what is right or best for interests of each of their chartered communities? In addition, there was no effort to have community meetings in or for each locale, or to conduct research in ways that reflected the uniqueness and historical and current role of diverse self-determining communities. (They had two centralized meetings, one online and one in-person.) Metis Nation British Columbia. "Anti Racism Data Legislation Community Consultations Summary Report". January 2022. <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/658/2022/04/Metis-Nation-BC-Anti-racism-Engagement-Report.pdf>

Nations relations in this Province. Increasingly, Metis scholars with research interests in Metis in British Columbia recognize the ongoing importance of pathways to reconciliation through community-based research, including with First Nations.<sup>2</sup> Our hope is that this knowledge can contribute to an inclusive ethical space where different and diverse Metis communities/organizations can recognize one another, develop appropriate ethical guidelines and guiding principles, advance informed dialogue, and partner together on research initiatives. Although just a beginning, we hope is that this selective baseline bibliography will open a new area of study on self-determining Metis communities in the Pacific Northwest. As more history and memory comes to light, we wish to develop a Pacific Northwest Metis literature repository that will support robust human resource capacity building. But this is only possible as governments provide funding, collaborate with us within the research process, and support Metis-centred scholarship in diverse fields like education, health and justice.

## ‘Best practices’ as ongoing relationality

It was encouraging to learn that some of the strongest themes from the literature review have supported our approach and current ‘best practices’ already adopted in our other project work. The basic idea was that research was really about growing existing relationships and repatriating lost kinship networks! In the outdated extractive research model, research has mostly been done “on” or “for” indigenous peoples and has benefited others. We became more aware through the review that as part of resurgence, indigenous people throughout the world, including Metis in their local communities, seek to access, control and benefit from their own knowledge. The colonial approach to research is being challenged and decolonized by a new generation of indigenous leadership.

A major challenge to our Indigenous Research Methodology was the lack of community capacity. We did not have members with the expertise, skills, and experience required to respond. Rather than contract our work out to ‘experts’, we decided instead to build community capacity based upon our relational model. We gathered a team of Community-Based Researchers (CBRs) from our communities from across the Province of BC -- Rhaina, Cindy, Rosanne, Diann, and Karen – and developed community-based research training seminars led by myself, Dr. Bruce Shelvey, and Tanner Timothy. Although the process is less efficient and requires patience and understanding, we found that as our CBRs work in the archives and conduct oral history interviews, they become self-determining in the act of research. Our capacity also continued to grow as we consolidated BCMF’s extensive bibliography and expanded it with important findings and content from the CBRs. This repository work will continue to grow as the researchers gain new opportunities to partner with others in different research fields like education or housing. Because the volume of information is so great, we anticipate the need for additional research support staff to properly format local content into the bibliography and enter the relevant data into our ArcGIS application.

We knew it was vital to control and own our knowledge. We committed to a strategy where we would assume ownership, control, and expression of all our stories, data, and traditions. We established careful protocols that made it impossible to practice the ‘grab and go’ appropriation-styled data

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<sup>2</sup> Gabrielle Legault, Making Métis Places in British Columbia: The Edge of the Métis National Homeland. BC Studies. No. 209, Spring, 2021. University of British Columbia - Okanagan <https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.vi209.193712> p. 36.

collection so often imposed on local Metis peoples. The BCMF's model is unique because it is centred on care-filled relationships and in community accountability and trust, where the outcome of any knowledge transfer is to enhance our community's wholeness.

Our BCMF research moto is: research is relationship! In this we seek to renew kinship networks, rejuvenate storytelling and protocols, and revitalize the history and memory of Metis communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. When research is a relational process, stories increasingly become important sources. We went to our members and our partner communities and began to build relationships with the understanding that any knowledge generated was owned by that Metis community. It is elders and knowledge keepers who possess and vet their stories. The knowledge must be accountable to local community and reflect what is right for them. Going forward we need to ask ourselves: How can our local researcher teams build relationships with local elders or knowledge keepers and decide on and shape the work that is needed in other areas? How do we ensure their knowledge is valued in this research process? How can we ensure ongoing trust and accountability, and ongoing feedback? How can this process of redeploying our curriculum in other fields advance local self-determination?

In our 4 module research curriculum CBRs learn about the research process for secondary and primary sources, the protocols associated with Indigenous Research Methods, and the gathering, recording, storage, and representation of Metis knowledge within a Geographic Information System (GIS). By moving through the modules, CBRs study how to conduct history with elders and knowledge keepers, to conduct library and archival research, and to manage their information in bibliographies and in ArcGIS applications. Our objective, to understand the lived experiences and kinship relations of Metis across the whole of the Pacific Northwest, seems an impossible task but it can only be accomplished through knowledge partnerships formed out of a community-based approach to research.

The Moving Forward grant specifically funded the development of Module 4, which developed curricular resources for an ArcGIS application that would enable CBRs to share their research in a narrative form. The BCMF Research Team worked with CBRs to understand how to best process, enter, manage, and represent local research data. Drawing upon best practices as outlined in the literature, we utilized GIS as a powerful collaborative tool to tell our stories, to show interconnections between people and across communities, and to support the repatriation, resurgence, and renewal of Metis lived-experience in BC. As people in the communities came to see their own history and memory reflected in the spatial representations, they are able to see its relevance for housing, harvesting, health, justice, and education, to name a few relevant areas. Module 4 illustrated that in the process of creating research relationships through storytelling, CBRs were establishing an important foundation that would allow their communities to make informed decisions that are right for them.

As part of outreach and partnerships, the BCMF Research Team educated people about the significance of the project by sharing information and knowledge. Other current activities for our local researchers include learning to generate regular content posts for their own internal research blog and for BCMF's social media. Deploying the curriculum into other applicable fields starts with training the researchers to participate in an internal Researchers/Team Education Portal where 'best practices' as found in the literature and our local praxis, can be shared in appropriate ways. CBR's build research relationships and practice trust and accountability through their interactions with each other. The pragmatic application of practices and protocols can then be extended outward as researchers engage their local

community and knowledge keepers through multiple communications channels, whether phone, email, or meetings within individuals and groups.

As the curriculum expands into other fields, there will be increased opportunity for the local researchers to contribute to posts on an outward facing blog, build local distribution lists, develop marketing materials, and build local research awareness. They may be called upon to share information about their work in diverse places like local heritage events, housing committees, school district events, economic forums, archival committees, or many other places where Metis knowledge can be shared.

The starting point in applying the curriculum across different fields is that 'best practices' would continue to be determined through the strength of relationship building. 'Best practices' emerge as CBRs recover their own unique Metis voice, repatriate their own history, renew lost kinship relationships, redefine connections to people and place, and acknowledge the strength of being connected<sup>3</sup> through a relational research process. In creating an ethical space to conduct research practices in a good way, people and teams feel safe and willing to share their knowledge, to learn from one another, and to mentor others to deploy research practices that affirm, build, and maintain relationships with others. These knowledge partnerships take time, patience, ongoing feedback, and reciprocity.

## Feasibility Assessments: The colonial context

In the final deliverable, BCMF attempted to provide initial feasibility assessment/analysis of the adaptability of four CBR educational seminars, and to determine their possible application in areas of economic development, health, justice, housing, and education. It is impossible to think about adapting the content without considering the troubling history of Metis-Crown relations in BC

Everyday, British Columbians read about or watch impacts from things like the pandemic, fires, flooding, addictions, and homelessness and lack of affordable housing. Within the context of marginalized communities in BC, the traumatic experiences Metis people face are real and ongoing. The extreme vulnerability of Metis people, families, and local communities, including the socio-economic and health gaps relative to mainstream Canadians, is not spoken about. Indeed, many Metis peoples living in BC lack some of the most basic human and societal rights in areas of health, education, justice, economic development, housing.

Although vitally important, this conversation is not only about effective information sharing and improving current service delivery for Metis individuals. The most compelling explanation for their systemic persistence is historical and intergenerational trauma as the result of discrimination, marginalization, and dispossession. In the recent Anti-racism sessions with the Province, Metis people were clear that governments have not committed to the well being of Metis in BC and that they faced systemic racism in health care, among other fields. Most often impact assessments are conducted

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<sup>3</sup> Sarah Morales, Su-taxwiye: "Keeping My Name Clean" in John Borrows and Kent McNeil, ed., *Voicing identity: Cultural Appropriation and Indigenous Issues*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022, p. 25.



without consideration of their effects on the historical knowledge, the lived-experience of Metis peoples, and the communities' family and kinship networks. To address current health or other social, economic, and cultural impacts in any given field we need to understand the historical experience of Metis peoples and communities in the province.

The ignorance of the Metis experience is reflected in the general misunderstanding of Metis peoples in the entire Pacific Northwest. For the better part of 150 years, Metis people have been rendered invisible and their stories shut out of our schools and our institutions. If mentioned at all, Metis history and memory in the Pacific Northwest was presented in fragmented ways, and mostly related to a Prairie diaspora. There is little Metis-led scholarship or writing on Metis who have lived in the Pacific Northwest since as early as 1780. Over the past 150 years in British Columbia, Metis communities have suffered devastating relational fractures. Kinship networks have been broken, our communities shoved to the margins, and individuals “blended-in” or assimilated as a strategy of survival. In short, Metis people in the Pacific Northwest were robbed of their history and memory.

Thankfully, we now know from growing BCMF research data that Metis people have a long history in the entire Pacific Northwest. Independent Metis peoples expressed their uniqueness within kinship ties that were established in one of two ways: an extension of Metis trading and social complexes from the Prairies or independent kinship networks that originated within the Pacific Northwest. We also know that both of these systems of self-determination were eroded after the 1880s because of discriminatory government policies, derogatory social attitudes, and dislocating economic pressures. Settlers and their governments used the force of law and policy to get rid of Metis. As scholar Renisa Mawani has written about Metis in BC, “the Federal government’s decision to legislate the “half-breed” as a separate legal and racial category translated into an erasure of identity, rights and territorial claims.”<sup>4</sup> This dispossessed Metis from connections to land, place, and family networks. Even though we are only just beginning to understand the connection between government policy and Metis dispossession, what we do know is that Metis peoples survived and remained connected to place and resources. “The people who own themselves” were resilient even if they were driven ‘underground’.<sup>5</sup>

Metis were forced out of the official narrative of the province. Over the years, official discourse simply excluded any mention of Metis. Métis local perspectives were conspicuously absent in ministry service-plans and across government ministry discussions, and in public debate and dialogue. Perhaps BC historian Jean Barman summed it up best when she stated that overall, the ‘public Metis did not exist’ in this Province. The Province of BC admitted some 20 years ago that little is known about Metis and mixed-ancestry population in BC people. It stated in a health report, “we know much less about non-status First Nations, Métis people.”<sup>6</sup> If the province did mention Metis, they made comments like “most Métis people live in the three Prairie provinces”. Officially, especially after 1982, the nuanced and multi-dimensional historical reality of mixed-ancestry self-determining communities in the Pacific Northwest was substituted out for a one-dimensional ‘homeland’ or ‘Red River’ Metis narrative that denied the

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<sup>4</sup> Renisa Mawani, “In Between and Out of Place” in Razack Sherene. 2002. *Race Space and the Law : Unmapping a White Settler Society*. Toronto Ont: Between the Lines. <https://www.deslibris.ca/ID/406143>. P 69.

<sup>5</sup> Heather Divine. *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> British Columbia. Provincial Health Officer. (2003). Report on the Health of British Columbians. Provincial Health Officer’s Annual Report 2002. The health and well-being of people in British Columbia. Victoria, B.C.: Ministry of Health Planning. P.128 <https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/annualrpts/pho/phoannual2002.pdf>

centuries-long reality of the Metis experience. The narrative of Metis peoples being interlopers, trespassers, or imposters in BC presumably became a pretext for successive provincial governments to deny Metis rights in British Columbia.

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Metis have been racialized by governments, divided amongst each other, and segregated from their First Nations kin. These systemic divisions and differences have created a very uneven playing field for Metis. In recent years, the systemic discrimination has continued with the Province and the Government of Canada making exclusive agreements with certain groups like Metis Nation BC, but ignored other representative bodies. When the Province signed an exclusive Métis Nation Relationship Accord in 2006 with MNBC, presumably to make progress in health and other social indicators, it effectively reinforced systemic barriers for the majority of Metis peoples in BC who are not represented by that arm of a national political organization.

The systemic disparities and oppression continued for Metis in BC, who lived in the shadows in their communities. The evidence is that the Province knew better, and even stated as such, but did nothing. Way back in 2002 the Province stated candidly, “There is a critical need for accurate, region-specific data about the health problems that Aboriginal people experience, including non-status First Nations, Métis, and Aboriginal people living in urban areas. More collaborative work is needed to create health databases.” The First Nations Health Plan was developed and released in November 2006 with specific actions in key areas to meet local needs and increase local control but there was no action for local Metis. A provincial government report in 2007 stated that despite considerable interest in the health status of all Aboriginal people (including Métis, Non-Status, and Inuit), in most cases, relevant data are only available for Status Indians.<sup>7</sup> The Provincial Health Officer admitted that “Additional attention will be required to improve the health of Métis and other Aboriginal people whose needs are not directly addressed in the First Nations Health Plan”.

Repeated reports and public statements by governments recognizing the continued marginalized status of Metis peoples in BC has not resulted in an effective action plan. Since signing the Metis Accord, MNBC has abrogated its responsibility to advocate for justice by failing to create a clear strategy to tackle the deeply entrenched problems that plague Metis peoples. And, nobody has been held accountable, all the while Metis peoples all across the province suffer in silence. When there were flashpoints or crises such as Covid-19 or the ongoing housing crisis, there have been no coherent local mechanisms or responsive action plans to consult with Metis and meet their local needs. In British Columbian society, professionals/industry groups/practitioners in various fields like education or housing or justice have mostly been informed by stereotypes about Metis people. It is easy to remain ignorant about Metis people and culture when the standard narrative is that we ‘don’t belong’.

## Feasibility Assessments: Introduction

In earlier capacity work before engaging the Moving Forward project, the BCMF Research Team gathered some preliminary feedback about adapting the curriculum to knowledge partnerships beyond

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<sup>7</sup> The Health and Well-being of the Aboriginal Population in British Columbia. Interim Update. February 2007. Office of the Provincial Health Officer [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/ministries/health/office-of-indigenous-health/interim\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/ministries/health/office-of-indigenous-health/interim_report_final.pdf) p. 1

Terrestrial Cumulative Effects Initiative (TCEI) research based on some initial responses to the curriculum. The comments, reflections and questions related to pedagogy and technology are important to consider even as we anticipate many more challenges will arise as new iterations of the curriculum are developed and local researchers begin to respond and provide feedback. Here are a few formative examples that we encountered:

- *“I like how GIS shows where the location is.”*
- *“The [module training] videos were good, clear, and concise!”*
- *“I like that the [GIS] menus were color coded.”*
- *“The writing is small on some of the [GIS attribute table] menus and struggled to see some of the drop-down items”*
- *“It may be difficult to get information from some elders as there is often poor internet connection up north”*
- *“Will there be too many ticks in a particular spot?”*
- *“Is there a place to detail things like berries?”*

At the early stages in the Moving Forward project the operational team began to gather an initial list of questions that the local researchers would need to generate, ask, and reflect on in ongoing feedback loops as the curriculum is adapted for new projects. Some example questions include:

- *What are your general thoughts on the BCMF TCEI training modules?*
- *Are the videos well produced, the handouts legible, and the instructions clear?*
- *Does the structure and flow of each training module make sense for the adaptation in consideration?*
- *Are there any inconsistencies between each of the modules?*
- *Do the modules allow for a progression of knowledge and skills?*
- *Is the material at an appropriate learning level for community researchers or is it too complex?*
- *What age levels/attainment levels do the training modules target?*
- *Can this knowledge partnership approach that seeks to build community research capacity be adapted to other contexts beyond cumulative effects research and analysis for The Trans Mountain expansion project?*
- *Do you find the ArcGIS TCEI Project application created by the BCMF Research team “user friendly”?*
- *How does our work build on prior findings from research undertaken by your community?*
- *How does capacity building support our own resurgence efforts in areas of concern to your community?*
- *How can we build on this work and use the research and training processes to mentor the next generation of Metis leaders?*

As the result of initial analysis for the Moving Forward Project, the Operational Team conducted significant revisions to BCMF Training Session Modules 1-4. We restructured the organization of each module, renamed each section to clearly signal the objectives of each, updated all of the instructional documents, and trimmed the videos to better reflect where we are at in the community-based research

process. The structural changes made to the layout and format of each module make it easier to see the connections between all 4 lessons and to apply the methodology of each to other contexts.

There are many ways that community-based research and our ArcGIS TCEI Project application can be applied, adapted, and expanded to other fields beyond our current focus on the Trans Mountain Expansion corridor. In the following sections we offer some initial suggestions based on our initial review and analysis, but we are fully aware that within each area, knowledge partners within and outside of the BCMF research team must work together to create mechanisms for our local communities and members to share their own perspectives on this curriculum in feedback loops. Cooperative approaches that come from grassroots insight support a more fulsome inclusion of Metis peoples in the Province's future reconciliation work in these different fields. We have included a simple generic budget (**refer to APPENDIX 3**) that may serve as a baseline for the types of activities and expenditures that would normally be warranted for each application including economic development, health, justice, housing, and education. This feasibility work and budget is only the beginning for the more detailed analysis, proposals, workplans and budgets that are necessary to substantiate and then operationalize.

## Health

In matters of health, Métis local voices and perspectives have been conspicuously absent in service plans and across government-led initiatives, including health-related institutions, accessibility to practitioners, and ancillary agencies, and industries that support health indicators. This, in spite of awareness of provincial officials over 20 years ago that more collaboration was needed. The exclusion, racialization, and segregation of Metis peoples in urban and rural contexts has resulted in many harms for our people.

Furthermore, health issues such as Covid-19 revealed systemic problems and exposed the other social determinants, such as chronic poverty, mental wellness, and housing insecurity, that influence health. In recent BCMF engagements, it was clear from our initial surveys that many BCMF members were struggling with a combination of issues, including drug and alcohol addictions, mental health challenges, and other systemic issues that require more complex support than we could offer as a part of BCMF's COVID-19 response strategy.

Community-based research is a collaborative approach to research which is critical for ensuring benefits for both researchers and the researched, including the ability to share in leadership, decision-making, capacity-building, and other knowledge and benefits that result from the process.<sup>8</sup> Using research gathered by the community and used for its own benefit builds capacity and local self-determination

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<sup>8</sup> Richmond, C.A.M., Cook, C. Creating conditions for Canadian aboriginal health equity: the promise of healthy public policy. *Public Health Rev* **37**, 2 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-016-0016-5> p. 9

Note: Richmond quotes Israel BA, Parker EA, Rowe Z, Salvatore A, Minkler M, López J, et al. Community-Based Participatory Research: Lessons Learned from the Centers for Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2005;10:14 63–71. As well, Richmond quotes Minkler M. Community-based research partnerships: Challenges and opportunities. *J Urban Health*. 2005;82 Suppl2:ii3–12. doi:10.1093/jurban/jti034.

because Metis communities are empowered to prioritize their wellbeing, their needs, and their visions in ways that are right/best for them.

Through community-based research, Metis people in their communities can participate in and shape health and well being research that will have direct influence on the policy that shapes their own lives. A community's knowledge and decisions can play a significant role in restructuring the health care system. Knowledge partnerships between academics, local Metis communities, and governments can inform health legislation and its application in health policy. Research can support areas such as: Culturally relevant health care; Infrastructure development and health planning; Emergency medical facility and resources planning.

Furthermore, community-based grassroots research can identify local factors that shape health outcomes. Social determinants of health include non-medical factors and social issues that influence health outcomes such as: Income and social protection; education; unemployment and job insecurity; working life conditions; food insecurity; housing, basic amenities and the environment; early childhood development; social inclusion and non-discrimination; structural conflict; and access to affordable health services of decent quality.

For module 1, it is possible to integrate the language of 'health' into the context of the Emerging Métis Narrative in British Columbia, for both lived and living experiences, and discuss social indicators and major events or government policies that may have impacted or impact 'health outcomes'. For the Practical Learning Exercise, CBR's taking the training can read current resources on health (including articles on social indicators) and contribute their own findings into the growing bibliography. The objective of Module 1 would be to gain a good understanding of how health indicators and non-medical factors may influence the wellbeing of their own local communities.

For module 2, "Indigenous Research Methodology" (IRM) would be applied to health. CBRs would come to understand the confidentiality documents, how to keep documents secure from the perspective of community-based research best practices, and how to properly apply IRM practices and principles. The objective of Module 2 would be the application of health indicators and non-medical factors to each local community and to conduct a low-level community-based analysis with an emphasis on the application of principles, protocols, and practices like relationality, accountability, kinship research.

Module 3 focuses on data collection, storage, and representation using Geographic Information systems. BCMF's Research team would develop user-friendly interfaces for all health and non-medical determinants that impact wellbeing indicators within each community. Videos and tutorials would include specific references to the medical and social determinants of health and provide guidance for the CBRs to conduct community-based research and gather the oral history using GIS.

Module 4 would train CBRs to create some preliminary models that identify the central issues and provide community-based solutions. GIS modeling includes accurately recording the data, interpreting it using various analytical tools, and then drawing evidence-based conclusions that reflect Metis perspectives, protocols, and practices. Throughout the whole of the modelling process the CBR is trained to practice data sovereignty and protect the community's ability to use and interpret their own knowledge in a way that benefits their own wellbeing. Consistent with community-based research, a local Metis advisory health committee can co-shape the process and help guide spatial analysis that reflects the diverse and complex medical and social determinants of health, thereby supporting more

robust decision-making. Metis' own historical and current information on family histories, kinship, and place-based identity can be layered with other spatial information to produce representations of the community health plan in the form of GIS Storymaps that allow all community members to participate in their own healing.

Community-Based Researchers, and others from our communities who take the curriculum training, could play a direct role in learning about and recovering their history and acquire a marketable and employable skill in health or social services fields. Building this capacity into the community is critical for the health of the next generation and to ensure long-term community self-determination and sustainability.

## Education

In matters of education, Métis local voices and perspectives have been conspicuously absent in Ministry of Education K-12 curriculum and lesson plans. The province and the school districts control what is and is not taught about Metis and, by default, determine how Metis are (mis)understood in the broadest of social contexts. In controlling Metis history and memory and structuring how it is interpreted and used, the Ministry of Education can choose not to provide access to locally developed or community-informed Metis culture, history, and language. For example, in our current context, if British Columbian students do hear news or content about Metis in our schools, it is not by or about local Metis in this place because the curriculum wrongly portrays Metis people and culture as originating exclusively from the Prairies. Metis people and communities with long histories in the Pacific Northwest are erased in education policy and curriculum content. The racialization and discrimination presented against Metis peoples has resulted in many harms for our people, including lack of recognition and funding for Metis students who deserve to see their own history reflected throughout BC's K-12 curriculum.

In British Columbia, we are only beginning to indigenize and decolonize our educational institutions. Some schools only offer indigenous add-on programming but others are moving toward integrating indigenous perspectives right throughout their educational plans in lateral partnership models. If the Ministry were to implement such a partnership with the BCMF, there are 100's of stories about Metis people, kinship networks, and communities in the Pacific Northwest with long histories that need to be told. Our local elders and knowledge keepers, who own and tell these stories and continue to shape who we are as communities, are willing to share their unique history, culture, and traditions.

Through community-based research, Metis people in their communities can participate in and shape educational policy that will have direct influence in their own learning and that of others. A community's knowledge and decisions can play a significant role in restructuring the education system as knowledge partnerships are created and implemented. A collaborative approach to research in education, which is critical for ensuring benefits for both researchers and the researched, includes the ability to share in leadership, decision-making, capacity-building, and other benefits that result from the

process.<sup>9</sup> In contributing to BC's educational system, Metis peoples repatriate their knowledge and practice their right to self determination as priority is given to our own telling of history.

Module 1 is easily transferrable into the curriculum and lesson planning at various levels. It is possible to integrate the language of 'education' into the context of the Emerging Métis Narrative in British Columbia, for both lived and living experiences, and to inform government policies that may have impacted or impact 'education outcomes'. This would mean developing curriculum materials or broader frameworks such as educational enhancement agreements that tell the story of a unique Metis presence in British Columbia. As well, communities would have a role in telling their local stories to inform this module. Practical or experiential learning exercises could include elders, knowledge keepers, and CBR's sharing their family and personal narratives within the overall context of general Metis history in the Pacific Northwest as it fits into various K-12 lesson plans. Adaptation of local Metis ways of being and knowing into curricular resources would take careful planning if it were to follow Metis protocols and practices but it could become a reality with CBRs working with school district Indigenous coordinators.

For Module 2, "Indigenous Research Methodology" (IRM) can be applied to education. Module 2 is about the lived-experience and knowledge that are grounded in relationships to people in community. Administrators, teachers, and students would come to understand Metis protocol and practices and appreciate the ethical use and representation of our stories, narratives, cultural symbols, and social mores. We would share the many beautiful ways of knowing and being Metis within a context of mutual respect that helps the educational community understand the impropriety of appropriation and the necessity of asking for permission. Some curricular possibilities are a focus on education as a social determinant of health and wellbeing and do a low-level community-based descriptive assignment that details how principles and practices like relationality, accountability, kinship research, and self-determination can be applied to land or place- based education, or to decentralized digital heritage education, or to other education related activities like commemorations, diplomacy, and ceremony.

Module 3 utilizes the power of Geographic Information systems and the user-friendly application developed by the BCMF Research Team to interface with educational practitioners. Videos, tutorials, and GIS storymaps can include specific references to activities that can be easily integrated into the BC curriculum, such as historic and contemporary land-use, language acquisition (Michif/Chinook Jargon/Nootka Wawa) and training, kinship networks and community interconnection, cultural practices and protocol with elder/knowledge keeper wisdom, individual and family narratives and stories of discrimination and marginalization, and mapping residential and day school locations attended by Metis, to name a few examples. CBRs would be trained to come alongside administrators and teachers to help guide and facilitate learning opportunities and to illustrate how BCMF's ArcGIS Educational Application can be used to write across the curriculum at all levels, in elementary school and in secondary school subjects like English, History, Geography, Natural and Applied Science, Fine Arts, Music, and Business. The opportunities to layer Metis historical knowledge and current information on family histories, kinship, and place-based identity are numerous, especially as more educators come to value spatial and experiential applications within educational setting.

Module 4 focusses on Experiential Learning opportunities through modelling Metis lived-experiences in the Pacific Northwest. The BCMF ArcGIS application serves as a pedagogical tool that communicates

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<sup>9</sup> Richmond, Ibid, 9.

Metis knowledge and agency even as it is being created, managed, and operated. Its function is to teach by doing and to educate while experiencing, a form of experiential learning that acts as a bridge for visualizing a way back to the land and a way forward to co-existence. Exploring local values through an ArcGIS model created by Metis peoples is a form of ‘countermapping’ that may lead to recovery, renewal, and belonging for Metis students, even as it educates settler and First Nations students. Finally, understanding Metis maps as metaphors can transform our narratives into works of art, thereby producing therapeutic results for Metis students (and others) who can envision themselves on the land and in conversation with each other.

Adaptation of our BCMF ArcGIS application for educational settings in Module 4 is only limited by funding and political will but here are a few examples. At lower grade levels, interactive maps or sites could be developed where people could engage and problem solve using Metis lifeways and protocols. At an advanced stage, the BCMF ArcGIS application could allow primary school students to create their own Metis worlds through ‘Minecraft’ like software, which would also serve as a basic introduction to the technology and practice of mapping. At middle school, Metis students could begin to record their own family history and kinship connections within the GIS as directed by tutorial sessions led by CBRs, while other students are encouraged to explore and interact within BCMF’s ArcGIS application to see how that individual story intersects with the many other Metis narratives that exist on the site. High school students would be able to fully engage with the spatial features of GIS to gather, store, and record their own Metis narratives and settler and First Nations students could complete historical scenarios of Metis peoples from the past. In either an in-person or online learning environment, CBRs would guide students as they manipulate their datasets to create ‘storymaps’ of their own family’s history or to roleplay within ‘geoplaces’, both of which encourage high level analytical, evaluative, and creative thought. The BCMF ArcGIS application would allow all students, but especially Metis peoples, to share their findings with others across the province and create communities of connection that reinforce cooperative and collative learning strategies.

Including Metis perspectives and protocols from K-12 would set right the long-held misconceptions of our history and memory as students learn across the curriculum, provide opportunities for students to gain critical GIS technical skills, and allow for meaningful experiential learning opportunities that make possible intersectional education that can lead to reconciliation.

## Housing and homelessness

The province does not have a community-driven strategic plan for Metis housing and homelessness in British Columbia. Housing policies and legislation, whether on the demand or supply side, have been designed to meet the goals of governments or the profits of stakeholders in the housing and construction industry, but have not considered what is right/best for Metis people in their communities.

Supporting organizations like Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, Labour Unions, and business associations like the BC Construction Association or the Industry Trade Authority have yet to create mechanisms for meaningful local partnerships that meet the needs of all Metis communities. While the Industry Training Authority has signed an MOU with Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), it excludes BCMF members who seek employment in the housing construction sector, or Metis community leaders desiring to meet the diverse housing and homelessness goals of their local communities. The industry



trade authority apparently travelled around BC recently to discuss community-based trades training, but they did not reach out to BCMF and its partners to determine goals that are right or best for their needs. Nor are our members represented through the Indigenous Advisory Council. Similarly, on the federal level, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Association supposedly creates and funds programs and targets racialized communities, but they have no mechanism to enter into right relationships with our local communities to co-shape and participate in the initiatives.

In the end, our members and community partners in urban centres like Vancouver or Surrey or rural areas like Fort Nelson have no voice nor participation in these processes. No effort has been made to establish long-term and sustainable solutions by supporting ongoing relationships that encourage community-led knowledge capacity, and by supporting the right to self-determination and community sufficiency. We know that many indigenous children in general live in deplorable conditions. A study in Vancouver found that 40% of people who were homeless were indigenous, despite indigenous people only making up 2.2% of the city's population. While we do not have accurate numbers for the percentage of Metis/mixed-ancestry/non-status indigenous peoples who fall into this category, we know from anecdotal evidence that a high percentage of home insecure and homeless people throughout the province are part of extended kinship networks connected to our membership. Many of our people have complex social, cultural, and economic challenges that are layered upon other issues such as mental illnesses, addictions, and physical disabilities. Sadly, the marginalized position of our membership reflects a continuing prejudice against Metis peoples who were historically known as "the road allowance people", a term that referenced the systemic racism that forced us to exist outside of mainstream Canadian society in order to maintain our communities.

Governments at all levels do not want to acknowledge the extreme vulnerability of our members, families and local communities impacted by this housing crisis, which is compounded by the socio-economic and health gaps Metis experience relative to mainstream Canadians. For years Metis people have watched as housing prices have increased. The latest news reflecting the housing crisis is that average rent for a two-bedroom unit in Vancouver is over \$40,000 per year in June of 2022. However, BCMF members and our local communities have yet to gather and interpret meaningful data that would enable us to tackle our housing and homelessness crisis. We need to ensure that we have the proper data to inform governments about the least understood and most neglected population in the province and to provide a solid evidence-based foundation from which to manage our own housing security strategy.

BCMF's housing and homeless curriculum is the first step to empowering self-determining Metis communities to prioritize their well-being, needs, and visions in ways that are right/best for them. Our community-based collaborative research approach would provide Community-based Researchers (CBRs) with basic research training in housing insecurity and homeless at the provincial and in local contexts, analytical tools to understand the critical issues facing Metis peoples, and modelling capability to craft strategies that produce effective and sustainable solutions by Metis peoples for their own self-determination. First, Metis housing insecurity and homelessness can only be addressed by understanding the historical experience of Metis people in the Pacific Northwest, the colonial policies that led to current Metis' isolation from families, communities, land and culture, and the systemic poverty that resulted from over a century of discriminatory practices. Secondly, once these conditions are exposed, CBRs will be given analytical tools that empower Metis people in their communities to participate in and shape evidence-based dialogue that has the possibility of directly influencing policy

decision that impact their own places and homelands. Finally, CBRs will utilize the BCMF's ArcGIS application to gather, store, and represent their community's knowledge so that modelling can be completed to determine the best outcomes for Metis communities and peoples withing a restructured housing system. The adaptation of BCMF's Community-based research curriculum can produce properly instituted knowledge partnerships between BCMF and partner communities, and between the BCMF and the province, municipalities, industry, and other related groups, to better inform housing/homelessness legislation and policy.

The Ministry of Housing in partnership with local municipalities must create mechanisms and frameworks and provide adequate funding for local Metis people to participate in shaping community-based policy that benefits them at the community level and meets their goals as they recover their unique history and memory, foster meaningful relationships, rebuild community capacity and assert self-determination. The BCMF's four module curriculum would build capacity within each community so that CBRs are well equipped to speak into housing legislation, municipal reporting mechanisms, and "provincial housing committees". The capacity, however, must take a long-term, sustainable approach that recognizes that this participation will only happen at the speed of relationship building and as trust and accountability are built within a mutually-recognized knowledge partnership. To be consistent with UNDRIP, the province needs to invite BCMF's member communities into the dialogue on housing and homelessness legislation and policy and to fund initiatives that support healing, belongingness, and well-being, and contribute to self-determination of "the people who own themselves".

Module 1 would provide a basic understanding of the province-wide history and memory of Metis housing insecurity and homelessness. Metis communities suffer from reoccurring trauma because of dislocation and marginalization produced by government policies at provincial and municipal level. Systemic barriers to full participation in British Columbian society destroyed communities and dispossessed Metis from their homes. To survive, many Metis peoples either moved to the margins or 'assimilated' into broader Canadian society. Our curriculum materials would detail the unique Metis presence and place-based identity within BC and encourage CBRs to understand how this was destroyed and diminished over time. CBRs would be provide research support to tell their local story and logistical training to understand the resurgence of Metis 'placemaking'. Practical learning exercises would include adding local research citations to a central bibliography, describing social issues that influence community-based housing outcomes, and creating a strategy to engage district Indigenous coordinators or to partner with the new provincial Indigenous Housing Committee and groups like Aboriginal Housing.

Module 2 will focus on applying Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) to housing. Local research on what constitutes housing insecurity and the factors contributing to homelessness will be conducted from a Metis perspective. Training will be provided on how research that is gathered, stored, analyzed, and represented by local Metis CBRs can be used for their own purpose in ways that benefit their own goals. Oral histories that explore the lived-experience can be grounded in relationships to people in community, which opens up opportunities for elders and knowledge keepers to share their history and memory, a past which has yet to be understood. CBRs are uniquely positioned to access this sensitive data as they are trained in Metis protocols that ensure the confidentiality of those experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness and educated on related topics such as how to keep documents safe and secure. Module 2 will focus on indigenous knowledge sovereignty within the framework of community-based research and draw upon the best-IRM practices and principles. Practical learning exercises could

include a low-level community based analysis that describes how local housing environments can be measured as a social determinant of health and wellbeing, and a description of how principles and practices like relationality, accountability, kinship research, and self-determination can be applied to Metis people's own understandings of land or place, inclusive of factors like mobility.

Module 3 trains CBRs to use a Geographic Information System to gather, store and represent Metis knowledge on housing insecurity and homelessness. Videos and tutorials will include specific references to Metis connections to place, their sense of "home" and belongingness, and the ways in which a fixed physical location is connected into broader kinship hubs and networks. The Practical Learning Exercise will be developed from the BCMF Research Team's user-friendly ArcGIS interface that enables CBRs to input housing indicators, such as mapping areas where Metis peoples live, both historically and currently. With the assistance of our GIS technician, CBRs will also overlay these datasets with government databases that show different types of housing, socio-economic indicators of its residents, and other indicators such as geographies of health, crime, and addiction.

Module 4 will encourage the CBRs to interpret and model the datasets that they have gathered and stored and to represent that data within a modeling structure supported by ArcGIS. At this point, with the support of the BCMF Research Team the CBRs are asking the question: "What can they learn from the data?" Once the analytical work has been completed and GIS mapping layers are used to interact with the data, conclusions can be drawn from the interaction of dataset that focus on Metis housing insecurity and homelessness and those from government datasets that include social, economic, cultural and political indicators. Historical and contemporary knowledge can be represented within the ArcGIS system or placed within a narrative structure by producing Storymaps or Geo-Places. In other words, any conclusions about local Metis housing insecurity and homelessness will be completed by Metis and will be used for their own purposes. In short, Module 4 trains CBRs to exercise community data sovereignty to create Metis-informed housing strategies, to inform housing and homelessness policy decisions, metrics, and outcomes, and to educate Metis peoples and others about the historic and contemporary challenges facing a vulnerable population. This technology could support community-based research to explore housing affordability, accessibility, inequality and disparity. Other mapping could identify housing demand and supply factors in their rural and urban areas, and what supply and/or demand side policies may be best to address the systemic challenges facing Metis peoples. Yet other map could explore historic evidence of Metis presence in BC, including Metis-specific architecture across time and within certain regions. Finally, Metis community groups could collaborate with indigenous and settler researchers to study housing as a socio-economic indicator of health and well-being outcomes, or to explore the connections between income, justice, and health issues such as incarceration rates, mental illness, or physical disabilities. Some possible policy recommendations may be subsidizing Metis housing developers or creating Metis community housing development partnerships as a path toward increasing housing supply. Another may be the implementation of rent controls or inclusionary zoning or land use designations (non-market housing or public Metis housing etc.) that provide Metis peoples with a pathway towards realizing our basic human rights.

Practical Learning Exercises from Module 4 could include modelling historical and contemporary Metis lived-experience with housing and homelessness, creating advanced scenarios of how a specific government policy could address housing insecurity and homelessness, and educating people through role play with the use of digital 3-D or other virtual technologies such as applying 'geo-places'. CBRs

would be encouraged to create their own ArcGIS storymap and then collaborate with other communities to share their data on home insecurity and homelessness in the province.

## Justice and Judicial Systems

Local Métis voices and perspectives have been conspicuously absent in matters related to justice and judicial systems, including their institutions, practitioners, and related agencies. Recently, the Federal government announced \$1.5 million in funding over three years to help the BC Métis Nation develop an Indigenous Justice strategy. The province has committed to work with the Métis Nation BC Justice Council to develop, endorse, and advance the Métis Justice Strategy. However, in both cases there have been no local mechanisms to bring all Metis people in British Columbia, including those not represented by the Metis Nation BC, into a proper and just relationship that is right/best for these people and communities. Because Metis people not associated with MNBC and organizations like BCMF are not represented or included in this network, these well-meaning initiatives perpetuate long-standing structural injustice. The inability of these national affiliate Metis organizations to meaningfully consult with their local communities is not new,<sup>10</sup> and the Federal government and these groups have no clear mechanisms for local community protocol. Such glaring gaps make clear the critical need for knowledge partnerships created to improve the access to justice, especially considering the Metis historical and contemporary experiences with the justice system.

Metis peoples and communities have been racialized within our current system and have lacked appropriate representation within legislation, policing, the courts, and the prison system. The resulting and ongoing harms to our people have serious implications for future reconciliation. Legal historian Timothy Stanley states that race continues to shape our everyday realities in Canada, that it is embedded into our state formation and social relations, and that there has been a pattern of denial that racism is part of the justice structure itself. Social justice is important for BCMF members and their communities as we become more aware of the inequities in the system and become more convinced of our right to live in a just society free from harm. Justice and judicial strategies must be seen in a more expansive light and include distributive justice, procedural justice, structural justice, and the recognition of our unique cultural/identity.<sup>11</sup>

The BCMF has attempted to understand the historical roots of structural racism, discrimination, and inequality in Canadian society and how this has functioned to diminish Metis people, kinship and communities. BC historian Jean Barman studied impact of a colonial society on Metis and states: “generations of (Metis) men and women were simply erased from a provincial history being constructed in line with societies’ aspirations for it.” Current attempts to right these systemic wrongs, including the

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<sup>10</sup> Troy Bannerman, ‘No meaningful consultation’: Local Métis president speaks out about constitution.” Lethbridge Herald, January 11, 2023, <https://lethbridgeherald.com/news/lethbridge-news/2023/01/11/no-meaningful-consultation-local-metis-president-speaks-out-about-constitution/>

<sup>11</sup> For examples of these terms read Devia, C., Baker, E.A., Sanchez-Youngman, S. et al. Advancing system and policy changes for social and racial justice: comparing a Rural and Urban Community-Based Participatory Research Partnership in the U.S.. *Int J Equity Health* 16, 17 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-016-0509-3>

Metis Nation Relationship Accord between the Province of BC and the Metis Nation BC, have not produced any significant reform to the existing justice or judicial system or the functioning of related ministries and agencies. More problematic is that the application of the principles of justice have not been brought into conversation with Metis local knowledge that recognizes the historical and contemporary reality of self-determining Metis communities in the British Columbia. Justice must be a cornerstone to reconciliation for local Metis communities who have been denied the opportunity to live in a just and fair society in BC for the better part of 150 years.

Canada has a long history of institutional racism and discrimination in government policy toward Metis in British Columbia. Early histories discounted Metis kinship traditions and unique self-determining community histories in BC. Settler society imaged Metis as prone to infighting and evil, and considered their ethics and governance traditions inferior. In BC history, mixed-ancestry people in the early provincial period were viewed as deficient and yet a threat to white dominance. They were regarded as lower than Indians and 'at the bottom of society'. It was dangerous to be Metis, and some government officials attempted to pass legislation to end mixed race progeny! These kinds of actions entrenched the myth that Metis communities have no place in BC, an ideology that has not yet been rejected by the federal and provincial governments, both of which continue to practice institutional racism, subjugation, historical erasure, and land dispossession because they deny the existence of self-determining Metis peoples and communities in BC.

BCMF's member communities are heavily invested in justice and judicial issues as we have been impacted by the MMIWG Inquiry, the structural racism in our police forces and prisons, the disparity of sentencing in our courts, and the experience of injustice in other areas such as health, family services and education. We live out the implications of significant gaps in legal protections at the federal, provincial, regional, and municipal levels. Our trauma and victimhood is often ignored or erased, as is the recent case in the search for unmarked burial sites and the pending searches and investigations. We experience significant barriers when requesting access to relevant records for residential schools, in spite of overwhelming evidence that Metis children were well represented in these schools throughout BC.

Structural problems of racism also flow from the highest levels of our justice and judicial systems and these have an impact on the everyday lived-experience of Metis peoples in BC. Canada's legal institutions, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have entrenched identity politics through the Powley Decision (2003) into the structure of our right to self-government as self-determining peoples. In 2008 Justice Canada did their own research projects in response to the Powley decision and uncovered new complexities and that the "Powley test" could not reconcile. Their report provided a wealth of information on the particular histories of mixed-ancestry communities across Canada and highlighted interesting questions regarding areas where more research and analysis may be required in order to address the diverse and dynamic nature of Metis self-determination:

- *Connection between geographically discrete communities;*
- *Nature of the commercial practices of mixed-ancestry individuals;*
- *Rights implications of using differing historic tests for Indian and Métis rights;*
- *Existence of "hidden communities"; and,*

- *Issue of indigeneity and a lack of “blood quanta” in the definition of Métis.*<sup>12</sup>

While the BCMF and its member communities are mindful that wrongful appropriation of Metis identity is a big problem, some recent scholarship by legal scholar Dr. John Borrows focuses on the irony of appropriating flawed Supreme Court frameworks like Powley to decide who is Indigenous. Borrows puts it this way:

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*"Appropriating Canadian frameworks for patrolling cultural boundaries reinforces the state's appropriation of Indigenous culture. The Canadian state has long attempted to define what an indigenous community is and define the membership of these communities by reference to blood, ancestry, culture or other sociologically flat kinds of references. It has done this to marginalize, diminish, assimilate and extinguish indigenous communities".*<sup>13</sup>

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Uncritical support or politically motivated applications of Powley frameworks and structures have contributed to the erasure of local Pacific Northwest Metis history and to silencing of their voices. Governments that enforce the Powley Test and organizations, like the Metis Nation of BC, that use it to restrict membership to ‘Red River Metis’, are complicit in perpetuation of direct and lateral colonial violence. Many citizens within BCMF’s member communities recognize this injustice for what it is: an unhealthy relationship that promotes cultural domination that maintains racialized structures of power based upon genealogical ties to the “Metis homeland”. While the Province and the MNBC have a mutual interest in maintaining an exclusive funding relationship, both parties are out of step with current scholarship and best-practices within justice and judicial reform. As a report from the Canadian Archives Association stated recently: "... Indigenous Peoples in Canada are not a single, unified group but include multiple governments and communities with different world views, perspectives, needs, and priorities." It seems that the Ministry of Justice, along with other Provincial ministries, has yet to engage the Four Rs of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility in building just relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis governments, communities, organizations, and institutions.

Data on justice can assist with decision-making on policy and legislation and empower communities to develop strategies that are right or best to pursue. Community-based research could help to realign with these justice strategies by gathering stories, interpreting and using data to support advocacy and collective action to change practices and policies. This may be through local self-determining

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<sup>12</sup> Lawrence, Austin. (2008). A Program of Research Related to Historical Métis Communities. Just Research. <https://www.researchgate.net/project/Justice-Canada-research-in-response-to-the-Powley-decisio>

<sup>13</sup> John Borrows, “Cultural Appropriation in the Shadow of the Courts” in John Borrows and Kent McNeil, ed., *Voicing identity: Cultural Appropriation and Indigenous Issues*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022, p. 166. When you examine the Powley case in greater depth, you see that it relies on assumptions on "what is integral to the distinctive culture" of communities after contact." Borrows discusses how this is the Supreme Court's invention and that it freezes indigenous identity at a particular point in time, and that by determining what is culturally appropriate, it allows Canada to assume governance and steal lands and resources without having to justify its claims.

communities deciding what matters to them based on their community vision and priorities, as well as influencing regulations and policies affecting Metis or by co-authoring legislation.

We need to create a road map for community-informed justice. This means that we need Metis leaders and community members who are trained to understand the geography of the justice and judicial systems, who can identify the gaps, who can dialogue about the specific issues contributing injustice, and who can create solutions that incorporate Metis voices and values.

For Module 1 the curriculum would introduce the language of justice in its broadest sense into the context of the emerging Métis Narrative in British Columbia, for both lived and living experiences, and educate CBRs on government policies that may have impacted or impact housing outcomes. Curriculum materials would identify what injustice looked like in policy and law as employed by all levels of government to marginalize, diminish, assimilate and extinguish Metis communities in the Pacific Northwest. CBRs would be encouraged to explore their own local stories and to formulate some possible action items that would address these systemic barriers in a way that is best for their local Metis community. They can describe how they understand the social issues that influence community-based justice outcomes. CBRs may work with existing justice coordinators, or seek to establish partnerships with existing committees, or initiate dialogue with mainstream academic or non-profit justice institutes or Metis- or indigenous - run justice institutes<sup>14</sup> to contextualize their research.

Module 2 will apply Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) to all areas of justice and judicial systems. Examining the lived-experience of Metis peoples requires that the knowledge is grounded in relationships to people in community. It is elders and knowledge keepers who own and vet these stories for their own benefit and in ways that suit their own needs. CBRs will be training in privacy and confidentiality protocols and practices and learn how to keep documents secure consistent with community-based research and IRM principles. While examining the local context, Module 2 would introduce CBRs to research and literature that shows how justice and judicial systems are social determinants of health and wellbeing. The training would allow CBRs to recognize how the unjust disconnection and dislocation of Metis from their peoples and places, led to identity loss, direct and lateral violence, and criminality with its associated high level of incarceration. In their grassroots analysis they will be encouraged to consider how principles and practices like relationality, accountability, kinship research, and self-determination can be applied to justice and judicial systems.

Module 3 would provide a basic introduction to data collection, storage, and analysis using BCMF's ArcGIS application. The BCMF Research Team will develop user-friendly interfaces that allow CBRs to input historical dataset and social, political, economic, and cultural indicators within the justice and judicial systems. As data is entered and analyzed, CBRs will be encouraged to make connections between Metis history and memory and spatial representations of the rates of arrests, convictions, sentencing, incarceration, and rehabilitation for Metis peoples in comparison to those for First Nations and settler populations. Videos and tutorials can include specific references to justice in its broadest meanings and applications.

Module 4 provides curricular resources that facilitate the interpretation and representation of data relating to the justice and judicial system. To inform, education, and create dialogue, CBRs will create

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<sup>14</sup> The Manitoba Metis federation apparently has a Métis Justice Institute (MJI) For more information the website is <https://www.mmf.mb.ca/metis-justice-institute>

GIS story-maps that narrate the history of Metis peoples and their interaction within the justice and judicial systems. Told from a Metis perspective, the sharing of this information privileges Metis data sovereignty and illustrates the right of each community to use and interpret their knowledge in ways that enhance their agency. Layering information on Metis interaction with justice and judicial systems over time and space as it relates to family or kinship history, would entail an intergenerational and intersectional approach. CBRs would be empowered to share their stories with other Metis communities and to collaborate with indigenous and non-indigenous researchers studying justice and the judicial system as a socio-economic indicator of health and well-being.

## Economic development

Most Metis people exist on the margins of the economic system in British Columbia. Our communities suffer from chronic cycles of poverty and too often there is little hope for a better future. BCMF members do not have access to training and the basic qualifications for further education and so many are limited to low paying, service-sector work that does not pay a living wage. Consistently high levels of unemployment mean that families are forced to make very difficult choices about survival, and many do not have the opportunity to create sustainable livelihoods. Unfortunately, Métis local voices and perspectives have been absent from government service and training plans and the institutions or agencies supporting economic development have done little to address the deep structural economic challenges experienced by Metis peoples. To its credit, the province signed an Accord with Metis Nation BC to address the marginalized position of Metis peoples but this exclusive agreement to a service-delivery organization has done little to alleviate the suffering of grassroots Metis peoples. There have been few community-based studies or initiatives even as the reports are written and shelved and the public commitments are given but not fulfilled. There is no accountability to Metis peoples themselves who are bearing the burden of poverty, unemployment, home insecurity, and family breakdown. The Covid-19 crisis revealed that the MNBC and its provincial partners had no mechanism or responsive action plans to consult with Metis and meet their local economic needs to ensure Metis wellbeing.

The current economic context is a microcosm of the long history of Metis marginalization within the province. However, this was not always the case. Throughout the colonial and early provincial period, self-determining Metis communities participated fully in BC's development. They formed the backbone of the fur trade, gathered and shared geographic knowledge, opened up transportation corridors, created settlements and established economic hubs, invested in businesses, and worked in agriculture, ranching, mining, forestry, fishing, and a host of other industries. The early prosperity of the province depended upon the business acumen, capital, and labour of Metis freemen who accessed their extensive kinship networks to create wealth. Regrettably, by the early 1880s, the racialized policies of federal, provincial and municipal governments created a hostile environment for Metis communities, which diminished their identity, damaged kinship relationships with First Nations, dispossessed them from land, restricted access to resources, and cut off their connections to place. In short, the government's actions suppressed Metis economic relationships and destroyed 'practiced affiliations' to other Metis and First Nations.



Sadly, the historic contributions of Metis to economic development of the province have been forgotten in our public memory because divisive government policy created systemic economic barriers that were difficult to navigate around. Some Metis decided to “pass for being white”, while others moved to the margins of BC society to maintain their communities. The general consequence, however, was the diminishment of thriving self-determining Metis communities and many Metis families who existed in BC over the past 150 years, both native to the region and as part of the Red River diaspora, found their economic opportunities severely limited. The BCMF and its partner communities are beginning to situate the early success of Metis in BC within the broader history of the province. The repatriation of our economic history is beginning to change the mainstream narrative that Metis peoples don’t belong in the province and that we are interlopers who put a strain on settler-indigenous relations. As our community-based research model renews lost kinship relationships and redefines our connections to people and place, the possibility is there to once again see ourselves self-determining communities that can contribute to the viability and vitality of the province.

Economic community-based research is collaborative and critical for ensuring benefits for both researchers and the researched, including the ability to share in leadership, decision-making, capacity-building, and other knowledge and benefits that result from the process.<sup>15</sup> As a tool for self-sufficiency, our research encourages the movement from rights-bearing dependency to self-determining Metis communities that prioritize our own well-being, address our own unique needs, and create our own pathways towards economic sustainability. A lot of work needs to be done to ensure that locally owned Metis knowledge plays a role in restructuring the economic system. We propose to establish knowledge partnerships between local Metis communities, academics, industry groups, and governments to inform and transform economic legislation and policies that directly impact our self-determination.

The goal of this training session is to encourage the creation of a Metis knowledge community dedicated to sustainable economic partnerships. The BCMF will facilitate the work of Community-based Researchers (CBRs), who will work to ensure Metis peoples have a voice in economic development and to foster lasting relationships through gathering and sharing Metis history, knowledge, protocols, and traditions as they relate to establishing productive self-sustaining communities. Furthermore, industrial and commercial activities that impact a community’s ability to harvest, hunt, fish and gather will also be considered. Discussions with government and other indigenous nations would include equity partnerships and revenue sharing in order to establish predictable revenue streams to fund community initiatives.

For the Federation and its members and communities, what is “right/best” means a clear community vision of what economic development will look like and accomplish as well as good governance structures to provide an accountability and transparency so all community members can be confident in decisions made on their behalf. This also means good and fair business law centred around Metis values, traditions, and protocol. Any economic plan or strategy must make sense to communities and include proper mechanisms for consultation and communication before it can engage with mainstream industries and businesses. The use of this training session will enable CBRs to create a road map for community-based economic freedom and self sufficiency. The capacity built into Metis leaders and community members who are trained to understand some basic economic principles and their application will go a long way to bridge the gaps, to see the broad issues, connect the dots, and create

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<sup>15</sup> Richmond, Ibid.

long term economic solutions that incorporate Metis voices and values. We seek to create an ethical space where Metis knowledge translates into financial sustainability for members, communities and to establish an economic narrative informed by Metis perspectives and principles.

Module 1 would integrate the language of economic development in its broadest application into the context of the lived and living experiences of Métis in British Columbia. Of significance would be the exploration of early Metis economic activity and the government policies in the early provincial period that led to economic marginalization. By necessity, curriculum materials would describe what economic injustice looked like in policy and law as governments increasingly employed their legislative and bureaucratic power to marginalize, diminish, assimilate, and extinguish Metis communities and their economic agency in the Pacific Northwest. The practical learning exercise would provide space for CBRs to explore and tell their own local stories of economic success and limitation. Any sources for their community-based history on economic development would be added into BCMF's extensive bibliography. Of importance would be to encourage CBRs to describe the associated social issues that influence community based economic outcomes.

Module 2, will introduce "Indigenous Research Methodology" (IRM) as it applies to economic development for Metis communities and peoples in BC. We will explore the lived-experience and functional knowledge of each CBR's community as it is understood by the people within their kinship networks. CBRs will receive training in low-level economic theories that allow for a good comprehension of associated social, cultural, and spiritual consequences of things like intergenerational poverty, persistent housing insecurity, high levels of addiction, substandard physical and mental health, and frequent family breakdown. Principles and practices like relationality, accountability, kinship research, and self-determination will be explored as possible outcomes to sustainable economic development. In this place-based education, local CBRs will explore Metis jurisdiction, administration, and control over land and resources that impact their well-being. For the practical learning exercise, CBRs could redraft a regulatory framework document, such as a cumulative effects impact assessment, and include a Metis voice and perspective on how to protect sensitive terrestrial and marine environments that house important species that are necessary for the community's ongoing cultural practices. Community-based research would require input from local elders and knowledge keepers, especially as it relates to the protocols and traditions that are impacted by economic development. The CBR would recommend safe and sustainable land use and development practices from the perspective of IRM, which means applying local knowledge to economic challenges in a way that meets the community's needs and leads to its wellbeing.

Module 3 introduces the power of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for the collection, storage, analysis and representation of economics-related data. Using BCMF's ArcGIS application that will be adapted to include user-friendly interfaces for financial and commercial indicators, CBRs will be able to compare the grassroots information that they have gathered with larger spatial government datasets that track the flow of capital, the activities of industry, and the movement of labour. With the help of BCMF's research team, CBRs would trace historical and contemporary Metis economic flows and explore any important correlation between business and industrial activity and Metis kinship networks within each region. Utilize sharing capabilities of BCMF's ArcGIS, the CBRs would be able to compare and contrast their own economic relationships with those from other regions of the province.

Module 4 provides training to the CBRs that empowers them to model their own community story in ways that suit their own needs. In interpreting the data, CBRs recognize and affirm the community's ownership and control over the information and their responsibility to community leaders, elders, and knowledge-keepers. CBRs would create community-based Storymaps that represent the economic narrative as told through archival data and oral history accounts. A goal would be to map the economic history and activity of their own family or kinship over space and time and across the land and water. Communities could collect their own GIS storymaps and collaborate with other communities to share their findings. The research would address the paucity of economic data and begin to address the economic inequality and income disparities between Metis peoples and other indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

In addition to the training and practical learning within the Modules, the BCMF research team would facilitate working relationships between Metis individuals, businesses or community groups and indigenous and mainstream researchers, business schools such as Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business, and/or Indigenous related businesses. With the help of this focused outside expertise, CBRs could use their own datasets to develop business plans, to create strategies to promote their business ideas to the private sector, and to solicit partnerships to secure funding/endowments that are sustainable and not dependent upon piecemeal funding. The goal of these knowledge partnerships would be to empower local communities to generate revenue so that surpluses can be invested back into community development, health, housing, addition services, and children's services, to name a few examples. At a more advanced level, CBRs could apply IRM to an emergent industry like blockchain and create a grass-roots, community-based educational platform that teaches indigenous people and local communities about the power of these new technologies with a goal to facilitate meaningful, transparent, economic partnerships. Such a strategy would create an entrepreneurial, collaborative hub for individual initiatives and/or business ventures within and between indigenous organizations and businesses, and funding agencies and organizations willing to contribute to these projects. The entrepreneurial hub could also build a community around a specific project or initiative that gives indigenous people, organizations and communities the opportunity to make a living or generate income and enable them to ground the venture in a community-approved process.

## Unanticipated challenges and “solutions”

The time spent to better understand the implementation of research curriculum in different fields has allowed the BCMF Research Team to think about challenges and information on deliverables that have not been anticipated and to consider some possible solutions. The examples we present are directly relevant to BCMF's member communities because they relate to and overlap with our current project work, mainly on the Cumulative Effects of industrial development throughout the province. The BCMF training modules are adapted from our Metis Terrestrial Investigations Project conducted for Natural Resources Canada. Because we have experience delivering the curriculum to CBRs from communities across BC, we recognize a number of challenges that arise from our commitment to Indigenous Research Methodology, where research is done by the community, for their own purposes and benefit, and for the enhancement of self-determination (**refer to APPENDIX 2**). Practical issues such as the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic and the persistence of Long Covid over the duration of all of our projects made training difficult as it was almost impossible to meet with people and to go to places like libraries and

archives. Furthermore, limited funding for community-based research made it difficult to bring people together from across the province for hands-on skill building in teams. Even though the travel and accommodation costs for CBRs to meet in a central location was formidable, it was not optional because we knew from feedback that online training had its limitations. The process of planning and holding a face-to-face research conference with CBRs on May 28, 2022 provided valuable insight. For example, we realized that best practice for our context would be to create further practical training mechanisms that would allow for progressive skill acquisition wherein CBRs could learn at their own state of readiness and as their capacity for learning grew. Time and again we were reminded that research is relationships and that research partnerships happen at the speed of relationship building. Constant reinforcement of learning across the modules created significant advances but any pedagogical approach had to prioritize the value of community based participatory research.

To establish a consistent learning environment that facilitated community interaction and feedback, we established a Community-based Research Portal to support a thriving knowledge community in the Pacific Northwest. Although still in its early stages, it is populated by local Metis CBRs and the BCMF Research Team and functions as an educational networking portal. The BCMF Research Team evaluated the curriculum during and after the process of onboarding CBRs to ensure technical proficiency and to work out pragmatic challenges like access the 4 modules and the BCMF's ArcGIS applications. With an objective of providing a space for researchers to eventually build community networks, we made number of modifications including: clarifying roles and responsibilities, simplifying the language and theory in each module, solving technical issues, producing guides and FAQ documents to support library and archival research, purchasing hardware and software to support data entry, and developing user-friendly interfaces for the BCMF's ArcGIS application.

BCMF's vision of community-based research is to rebuild and renew broken kinship relationships and to move beyond the impact of colonialism by decolonizing research assumptions and practices. We aim to develop a well-resourced Metis research community in the Pacific Northwest that has the capacity to create and analyze data to solve local problems and to generate knowledge that leads to healthy, sustainable, and cohesive self-determining local communities.

Eventually, our BCMF Research Portal will also house an outward facing resource centre where selective resources, a bibliography, and storymaps are shared and where research findings are released. The research hub will house a partnership section to facilitate collaborations where Metis peoples and communities can form knowledge partnerships with First Nations, corporations, government agencies or others. Working together to share proprietary knowledge, to explore possible business ventures or health care solutions, to leverage and ladder funding opportunities for mutual benefit are a few activities that could benefit Metis local communities. The purpose of creating a research environment around specific projects where 'stakeholders' are actively involved with each local community is to give Metis and other indigenous people, organizations and communities in the Pacific Northwest a meaningful voice throughout the entire process. In short, we want Metis self-determining communities to generate their own knowledge, to protect that knowledge from being appropriated or misused, to generate income from the knowledge they produce, and to create knowledge partnerships that directly benefit the wellbeing of their people.

BCMF hopes to contribute to the long-term interests of our communities by equipping them to become full partners in the global movement toward indigenous repatriation, renewal, and resurgence. Our priority will be to stimulate further ideas and collaboration including but not limited to the following:

- *Establishing collaborative research practices that best serve local communities and develop their financial and human resource capacity as they move towards self-determining autonomy as equal stakeholders in social, economic, political and cultural processes.*
- *Initiating mechanisms and incentives that empower Metis communities throughout BC to share local traditional knowledge in all areas, so that our diverse voices are heard and understood.*
- *Equipping Metis communities to be collaborative partners that are able to contribute to guidelines and agreements, to identify areas of research for each area like education, justice, housing, and development, and to ensure that research and data gathering meet local needs and interests*
- *Facilitating partnerships that respect the uniqueness, autonomy, and ethical guidelines of Metis communities and provide adequate funding that allows ongoing collaboration between projects.*
- *Ensuring that relational practices and mentoring are at the core of the projects*
- *Developing and funding advisory committees drawn from local members that provide oversight and speak into areas that are of strategic value to Metis communities.*
- *Encouraging the Provincial Government and its respective Ministries to enter into knowledge partnerships with Metis governments and communities, to learn of their different world views, perspectives, needs, and priorities, and to develop action plans and consistent funding pathways to overcome systemic discrimination and encourage reconciliation within broader segments of society.*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> As recent decolonizing work by the archives profession seems to indicate, reviving history and memory within meaningful local partnerships in order to ensure that all Metis people have a voice in the future of the province is more important than 'protecting' or entrenching a certain view of the past. The report states, "Equally important was the need to convey to readers that Indigenous Peoples in Canada are not a single, unified group but include multiple governments and communities with different world views, perspectives, needs, and priorities." The Steering Committee on Canada's Archives. Reconciliation Framework: The Response to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation. Commission Taskforce. February, 2022.  
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- *Creating self-sustaining funding streams for identified projects that enhance Metis repatriation and renewal and that support intergenerational healing, including tuition support for Metis youth in university, mentoring programs for members, and elder care within communities.*
- *Tailoring our BCMF research modules and community-based training to build capacity to better equip local leaders to deal with major issues facing their communities.*
- *Developing more robust feedback mechanisms with respective local community organizations, non profits, advisory boards, etc.*

## Conclusion: The language of knowledge partnerships

Self-determining Metis communities and their representative organizations have very little capacity, infrastructure, or human resources to address the major challenges that they encounter. Their deficits make it more likely that they are constantly managing from crisis to crisis rather than planning for a secure and sustainable future. While each community is at a different stage of repatriating their history and at building capacity, it is generally accurate to say that more needs to be done to ensure they have the resources necessary to provide for long-term wellbeing. The BC government can make a significant difference in the lives of Metis people in BC by entering into, funding, and supporting innovative knowledge partnerships that promote self-sustaining, community-based initiatives.

The BCMF's current project work encourages relationships that lead to capacity building. We have developed protocols and principles based upon Indigenous Research Methods to guide knowledge gathering, research ethics, and community-centred narratives. We recognize that any positive outcome happens at the speed of ongoing relationship building, where different groups commit to listen to and learn from one another. BCMF's member communities are gathering strength as they come to understand the diverse and dynamic history of Metis peoples in BC and how these "people who owned themselves" understood their agency and the values that shaped their identity. From this foundation, our members can repatriate their past, identify regulatory gaps or lack of guidelines that would impact local decisions, and participate in informed policy making.

The BCMF is asking the provincial government to partner with us and make an investment in the future of self-determining Metis communities who desire to be self-sufficient. Providing critical funding to support our grassroots plan to build capacity at the local level will help us to initiate community-led research, to advocate for policy reform, and to advance Metis community self-determination in areas like health care, education, economic development, and justice. Knowledge created by and for the community for its own health and well-being translates into direct benefits for our communities with a long-term potential impact of shaping legislation and policy. This Moving Forward project report illustrates how together we can build strength and continue the work of reconciliation beyond accommodations for cumulative effects research by adapting BCMF's community-based research training curriculum and methodology to the benefit of other areas that are critical to the health, safety, prosperity, and welfare of our people. Our proposal gives the BC Government the opportunity to live up

to their UNDRIP obligation to provide local communities and members, along with all Metis in BC, a clear pathway to renewal and an opportunity to repatriate their own unique Metis voice.

The Province has a fiduciary obligation to help all Metis people and communities in BC recover their history, repatriate their kinship networks, and to reconstitute their self-determining, self-sufficient communities. To recover what we have lost throughout the past 150 years of denial, discrimination, and dispossession we need a generous space to explore our agency. The place to start this process is in building capacity within each community so that they can determine what is best for them. It is time for the Province to act and to support the inclusion of all Metis peoples as full partners in the work of reconciliation. If colonial narratives of dominance, control, and exclusion have been used to break apart Metis kinship networks and to dispossess Metis from their lands and resources, stories of hope can be used to empower, humanize, and heal our people.

We are well on our way to identifying local Metis people who want to champion this work of affirming Metis memory and history throughout the province! These local researchers are the ‘engines’ of this work within strong relationships grounded in trust and accountability. Our community-based researches are taking ownership and control over their own knowledge/datasets, determining who has access to their information, and deciding in what way the information will be interpreted and used. The Province has an opportunity to work with the BCMF and to fund projects that will continue to empower Metis peoples to repatriate their knowledge and to put it into an accessible format, such as Geographic Information System, so that all stakeholders, including all Metis peoples, First Nations, and settler society, can learn from, interact with, and benefit from the knowledge that is shared. This critical foundation is necessary to the resurgence of Metis self-determining communities in places like Terrace, Fort Nelson, Kelowna, Clearwater and in regions like the lower mainland and Vancouver Island. In positioning our future within a geography of partnership, Metis communities and the Province together can a brighter and more hopeful future for the next generation of Metis people.

We recognize that we cannot do this work on our own. Knowledge partnerships are required to bring about reconciliation and lasting transformation. If reconciliation starts with ‘truth’ then governments, institutions, industry, churches, First Nations, other Metis groups need to stop denying our very existence as self-determining communities throughout the Pacific Northwest and come to the table to find meaningful ways to partner for the benefit of all. Relationship building through mutual recognition could be a first step to all our well-being. We need willing partners who will work with Metis communities to recover our lost history and to advance our local goals and interests. This work is an essential part of our own healing journey as self-determining Metis communities.

## Acknowledgements

The BCMF wish to recognize and acknowledge the traditional territory of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh nations, where many Metis live and work, and where this report was compiled.

The Director of Research thanks Dr. Bruce Shelvey and Tanner Timothy for their assistance in this project. The BCMF team wishes to acknowledge our Metis Community Leaders and the local researchers

who are central to this work and who will invite us into their communities to continue this important conversation. Metis people are resilient, adaptive, and proud. They have a strong, unique voice and they want to share it!

Finally, this project would not have been possible without the funding by the Government of British Columbia.



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Keywords: Metis; community engagement; education; lifelong learning

## Appendix 2 - General challenges impacting the development of a community-based research strategy

There are many reasons that became clearer why local people are disengaged from doing meaningful research work that will contribute to the wellbeing of their communities. It is worth mentioning these factors:

A number of internal factors impact the ability of BCMF do develop research capacity

- a) Personal: Lack of pride in being Metis and fear of anti-Metis racism, whether individual or systemic. An engrained lack of trust in Metis leaders and organizations, often based upon old top-down organizational stereotypes.
- b) Disconnection from identity, kinship webs, or community
- c) Lack of Metis role models
- d) Lack of community capacity to have regular meetings and foster relationships at the local level.
- e) Some people cannot execute administrative tasks or support community organizations because of age, interest or ability. As well, internally, some people may be reluctant to train others.
- f) Pandemic concerns: Because of changing health guidelines, the project team has had to switch to online meetings to meet public health orders.
- g) Technology in general is an enormous obstacle. Our members including our elders often do not use technology, are uncomfortable with its use.
- h) Our communities are all different, and some are more established, whereas others have little capacity and are just building relationships.
- i) Community or family emergencies, mental health considerations, and busyness of life play a role in attendance.
- j) Lack of resources to identify Metis people and to support knowledge partnership teams.

k) The TCEI team did not have a chance to follow up with the learning activities in community settings. The hurdles meant that there was (limited) opportunity to work alongside of teams to “test” the curriculum.

**External factors that impact the ability of BCMF to develop research capacity**

- a) Ideology, identity politics, and/or misinformation in Canadian society about Metis.
- b) A history of systemic racism and racialization by governments that excludes all legitimate Metis representative voices in shaping policy and legislation to support wellbeing for all Metis in BC. (eg. current BC public health data does not include all legitimate Metis representative voices thus it undermines the general credibility of government in all areas, including the TCEI)
- c) A lack of ability for BCMF and partner communities to control and benefit from information that is generated on, by, or about its own membership.
- d) Government scoping and spending requirements and lack of financial flexibility and sustainability in-and-between various projects do not address the unique needs, considerations, and interests of BCMF, their members, or communities as they rebuild their communities.
- e) Lack of continuity between projects and project delays.
- f) A lack of core funding dedicated to the development of sustainable BCMF Research Division that can address the diverse needs of a growing organization.
- g) Growing demands for knowledge sharing and data collection from governments and industry.

## Appendix 3 – Estimated Budget Breakdown

The estimated budget for this project is available for download [here](#).