



BC Métis
FEDERATION

Feedback on Proposed Changes to the Designated Representative for Métis Peoples



May 15, 2025

Introduction

The BC Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) has requested feedback on proposed changes to the designated representative for Métis Peoples in the province. The designated representative is a long-standing role within the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) and the Adoption Act. It is part of the legal framework supporting community involvement in the lives of Indigenous children in care.

The current designated representative for the Métis “community” is the Métis Commission for Children and Families of BC (MCCFBC). The proposed change would see the Métis Nation of BC (MNBC) assume the role in place of the MCCFBC.

The BC Métis Federation (BCMF) and its Partner Communities have been invited to provide feedback on the proposed change on behalf of their 6,000+ members from across the province. Feedback was provided directly to MCFD staff at an in-person engagement session in Vancouver in April of 2025. Additional feedback was collected after that session and the full scope of the input has been compiled here in this report.

“The designated representative must lead us in a good way. To stay true to who we are and to ensure the next generation knows our culture and that we have the capacity to nourish this today and for many, many tomorrows.”

- Métis Community Leader

Summary

BCMF, its Partner Communities, and its members, are extremely concerned by the proposed change to the designated representative. Overwhelmingly, they believe that elevating MNBC to the role of designated representative would lead to reduced support for Métis families and children and would instead further promote systemic discrimination against BCMF members.

The MCFD proposal states that as the designated representative, MNBC would represent “MNBC citizens and self-identified Métis peoples” in BC. This suggests that MCFD only sees those two options and fails to recognize the robust, genealogically-based membership process at BCMF. BCMF members are not self-declared Métis. They are Métis who have proven their identity by providing five generations worth of Métis ancestry documentation. It is inconceivable that they would be ignored by MCFD or would be somehow miscategorized as “self-identified”.

While MNBC may say that they will fairly represent all Métis in the province, their actions speak differently. There already exists a clear precedent for how we can expect MNBC to behave if they become the designated representative—MNBC’s role as the designated agency for the ISETS education funding program.

“MNBC has consistently and repeatedly proven that they do not have the best interests of all Métis in BC at heart.”

- Métis Community Leader

Originally, MNBC provided ISETS funding to both MNBC citizens as well as to BCMF members, correctly fulfilling their role as the service provider for the program. In 2022 however, MNBC changed their policy and began refusing to provide ISETS funding to BCMF members.

In their explanation to MCFD defending this behaviour, MNBC stated that with limited resources they simply “prioritized their citizens”. The result was that BCMF members received zero ISETS education funding. What they received instead was bullying and intimidation from MNBC staff who attempted to have BCMF members renounce their affiliation with BCMF—their Indigenous Governing Body— and instead become MNBC citizens. To be clear, MNBC used the financial need of BCMF members seeking education funding as a lever to coerce them into changing their political affiliation.

It is irrefutable that MNBC cannot be trusted to manage a program or funds that are designed for the benefit of all Métis in the province when they openly state that they prioritize their citizens while discriminating against other Métis. The BC Government's continued acceptance of this system of behaviour makes it complicit in systemic discrimination against BCMF members within regards to education assistance. If MCFD selects MNBC as the designated representative, then the BC Government will be complicit in discrimination against Métis families and children in need who are BCMF members. This is unacceptable.

"MNBC is not inclusive of all Métis. If they become the designated representative it will have a terrible impact on our community members."

- Métis Community Leader

It must be noted that BCMF has tried many times to open a dialogue with MNBC with the goal of establishing protocol to allow for a positive working relationship—to the betterment of all Métis in the province. In all cases, BCMF meeting requests were either rejected or ignored. MNBC has continuously refused to work with BCMF or to consider the well-being of BCMF members. Quite the opposite, MNBC leadership have openly mocked BCMF members and championed reprisals against them. Effectively trying to excommunicate BCMF members from the Métis "community" in BC.

This unfortunate attitude has directly impacted the lives of Métis children and families in BC. A high profile example of this would be the adoption of "Baby S", the child of a BCMF member who was in the care of a Métis foster family that were also BCMF members. In this case, BCMF attempted to intervene to support the child and family but was blocked by MCFD who chose instead to take the advice of MNBC. MNBC failed to properly advocate for the family and "Baby S" was subsequently adopted out of province to a non-Métis family. This action was devastating for the Métis family and went against the recommendations of both BCMF and MCCFBC. .

This is only one example where the spiteful actions of MNBC have negatively affected the lives of Métis across the province. BCMF regularly receives feedback from its members that MNBC has discriminated against them. This behavior and the open hostility against BCMF from some MNBC leadership has resulted in the current reality where there is no trust from BCMF and its members that MNBC could ever be trusted to represent them as the designated representative.

MCFD Questions

MCFD is seeking responses to four questions related to the selection of the Métis community designated representative. The following responses reflect the feedback of BCMF and its Partner communities and their combined membership.

How do you define your community?

At BCMF, we say “From our past. For our future.” This saying captures our respect for our ancestors and our concern for the generations yet to come.

Our community is connected by Métis culture, and our community is welcoming and inclusive. Whether a Métis family traces its roots to the Red River, or to the Northwest Territories, or to the Pacific Northwest, or to another area, it is our shared history and our longstanding kinship networks that hold us together.

As a Métis person, what do you expect from your designated representative?

We expect that the designated representative will advocate for, and support, all Métis families, regardless of their political affiliations. **The safety of all Métis children must be the top priority.** The designated representative must also work to keep families together, ensuring their voices are heard and their choices are acknowledged. The designated representative must be committed to maintaining a child's connection to its community and culture. This work is so important to the future of the Métis community and must not be jeopardized by the self-serving actions of political entities seeking to reinforce their own positions. The children and families must come first.

Who do you want to be the designated representative for you and your community?

BCMF must be engaged, consulted and involved whenever a BCMF member family or child is impacted by MCFD actions. **BCMF must be the designated representative in these cases.** BCMF is the Indigenous Governing Body that these families have chosen to represent them and as such BCMF is both entitled and obligated to be their designated representative. No other organisation can or will represent the voices and choices of our families more effectively and earnestly than BCMF.

How would the designation of MNBC impact you and your community?

If MNBC becomes the designated representative, our children and families will be excluded from receiving support when they need it most. MNBC's track record of unfairly prioritizing their Citizens at the expense of BCMF members will continue. MNBC's open hostility towards and vilification of BCMF members will continue. **Designating MNBC for this role would only further reinforce systemic discrimination against BCMF members.** Our Métis children and their families will suffer if MNBC becomes the designated representative.

To be clear, legitimate Métis children will go without the support of the designated representative if MNBC assumes that role.

"If this mandate is given to MNBC, our local BCMF membership will be excluded from receiving support and representation. This is not inclusion and this is not acceptable."

- Métis Community Leader

Recommendations

BCMF and its Partner Communities recommend that both BCMF and MNBC are designated to represent their children and families. By doing so, MCFD would be acknowledging Métis families' right to freedom of association and to choose their representative Indigenous Governing Body. Having both organisations able to sincerely and effectively represent the interests of their families will ultimately lead to the best outcomes for the children.

A precedent for this approach already exists. MCFD does not force all First Nations to use the same designated representative. Instead, the appropriate First Nation is engaged to provide support when MCFD is involved with one of that Nation's members. MCFD already has a mechanism in place to allow for different designated representatives to support their respective families and children. The only thing preventing this same mechanism from being applied to the Métis community is a commitment from MCFD to fairly and equitably support all Métis families and children, regardless of their political affiliation.

An independent body at arm's length from BCMF and MNBC, such as the MCCFBC, could still play a role as the first point of contact for MCFD. Acting for the benefit of all Métis in the province, this independent body would need to be mandated to work with both BCMF and MNBC. Currently, MCCFBC has been pressured by MNBC to only work with MNBC Citizens, and to exclude BCMF members from receiving its support and services. This is unacceptable. BCMF expects that MCFD will ensure all Métis in the province receive the same level of service and support, regardless of their political affiliation.

"We expect all designated representatives to advocate for families as a whole. To send our people in the right direction and to help them find the resources needed to keep their families together."

- Métis Community Leader