

‘METIS ENUMERATION’ STRATEGY PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE METIS NATION OF SASKATCHEWAN (MNS)

(INTRODUCTION)

In April of 1996 a Metis enumeration proposal was produced and tabled by the MNS. Without going into detail, the net effects of this proposal would have accomplished what Sir John A. McDonald was unable to do in 1885 - legislate the Metis Nation out of existence forever.

At the next sitting of the MNS Metis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) in 1996, this proposal was rejected and the Metis Nation Senate was empowered to provide ‘policy and direction’ in respect to any future attempt to enumerate Saskatchewan Metis. However, the federal and provincial governments chose to negotiate this same proposal with the MNS leadership (the Metis were unaware of this development).

In June of 1997, the Government of Saskatchewan announced its approval to share the costs of the Saskatchewan enumeration proposal. It was at this time that the Metis people were made aware that this same proposal was being advanced by the governments and the MNS leadership. At the MNLA in 1997, the Metis people again rejected this same proposal.

The MNS General Elections were called in January 1998. During the election when no elected leadership was available, there were several futile and illegal attempts made to force this enumeration proposal. Subsequent to the official elections’ results were declared official, the MNS leadership along with the Senate Enumeration Commissioner engaged in a process that may address the concerns raised in objection to the 1996 proposal. The attached document describes this process.

To date an agreement was reached by all parties, Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS), the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan, to change the Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration Project by readdressing problems with the April 1996 MSS Enumeration Proposal. Specifically, resolving the four weaknesses identified by the MNS Senate would allow the enumeration to proceed. They are:

- Definition
- Methodology *How?*
- Metis National Council (MNC) involvement
- Consultation

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It was further agreed that the MNS would provide a strategy paper that would be discussed at the joint MNS/Senate meeting scheduled for April 30, 1998. Mr. Bruce Flamont was contracted by the MNS Minister of Enumeration to produce a strategy paper outlining MNS concerns and proposing recommendations that would resolve these concerns. Assuming a successful joint meeting that would approve the strategy, then the strategy paper would form the basis of the MNS position at its next tripartite Enumeration Steering Committee meeting.

As was mentioned earlier, the four concerns that require resolution are definition, methodology,

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MNC involvement and consultation. The following series of recommendations will address these concerns.

DEFINITION

As a result of the discussions on a national Metis definition at the recent MNC National Workshop on Enumeration and Registry held in Toronto on March 13 and 14, 1998, it became quite clear that:

- A. The MNC current definition, established in July, 1992 for the Charlottown Accord, was unacceptable because it is tied to external government legislation in its defining criteria (that is, Manitoba Act 1875, Dominion Lands Act, Constitution Act 1982, etc.). There needs to be a national process by which the Metis Nation and its members would be consulted and then ratify a national Metis definition.
- B. The workshop participants clearly stated they want a national Metis definition that respects and acknowledges the historic and cultural Metis Nation. External legislation may be used as descriptors, not as defining criteria.

Therefore a new way of defining Metis in a ‘Metis way’ was tabled. (Please see attached recommendations and decisions from the national workshop). This discussion and new approach was supported and recommended by the entire MNS delegation.

Aside from the discussion on ‘who’ is a Metis, there was also a good discussion on where does a Metis end and on what basis. While no decisions were made on these discussions other than to refer the issue for further consultation to the MNC Board of Governors; however, there was a clear understanding that a ‘cut-off’ was necessary, especially in Saskatchewan where we may have the task of counting Metis through an enumeration.

The MNS recently made changes to its Constitution that brought its definition of Metis closer to the current MNC definition. Yet without an acceptable national definition of Metis, it is incumbent on the MNS to redefine Metis in an appropriate way for the enumeration. Since the Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration is the first of its kind within the Metis Nation, the MNS must clearly define who is a Metis and who is not a Metis for the purpose of counting Metis in a province-wide enumeration.

As a final note on the national workshop, it became clear that the MNC is further away from a definition of Metis than the MNS is in Saskatchewan. Other provinces and MNC affiliates are aware of the definition issue in their negotiations on conducting an enumeration of Metis in other provinces. They quite possibly could adopt a national definition based on a Saskatchewan Metis definition developed for its enumeration/count.

Recommendations

1. The MNS Minister of Enumeration table the MNC ‘Metis Definition’ paper to each MNS Local President for consultation with their membership on the Saskatchewan Metis

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Enumeration. This paper will be reworked to include the decisions and recommendations of from the national workshop, specifically it will include:

- A. A preamble that acknowledges and describes the historic and cultural Metis Nation;
- B. All external legislation that has impacted on past and current Metis definitions; and,
- C. A three (3) generation cut-off be proscribed to determine where a Metis ends.

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- 2. The MNS Minister of Enumeration announce in a covering letter to the Metis Definition Paper the dates, locations and agenda items for a consultation process for Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology must operationalize a Metis definition in order to bring integrity into the enumeration process. The methodology must be governed by the MNS, as well the MNS must have ownership and access to the enumeration data.

A major concern is the top-down approach from a contractor with little connection to the MNS infrastructure. The methodology currently places too much emphasis on secrecy whereby the enumerated Metis data will not benefit the MNS, or its members, or its institutions and affiliates. All parties are in agreement that the enumeration data can not be used for illegitimate purposes.

The covering letter described in recommendation 2 sends a clear signal to all MNS Local Presidents that they are being consulted on the enumeration process by the MNS Minister of Enumeration. This speaks directly to the MNS concern - that methodology become a grass roots, Local Metis-controlled process, whereby Metis understand what the enumeration entails, have input into it, and are comfortable with the process.

Recommendations

- 3. The ‘Contractor’ for the Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration attend all consultation workshops with the view of modifying the enumeration methodology and their contract with the MNS in order to complete the enumeration. *Gets Done*
- 4. The methodology will include a working partnership with the MNS Senate and the Metis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) members.

A.C.M. Dixon Soldati Ltd.

MNC INVOLVEMENT

At the national workshop on enumeration, the Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration received the support of workshop participants if the MNS can resolve the issues that are stated within this paper. No opposition was addressed in regards to the Saskatchewan enumeration. The workshop

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participants recommended that the MNC become involved by selecting Saskatchewan as its enumeration pilot site and to seriously consider sitting on the Enumeration Steering Committee, which is comprised of MNS, Government of Canada and Government of Saskatchewan representatives..

Recommendation

5. The Enumeration Steering Committee extend an open invitation to a representative from the MNC to participate as an ex-officio observer at its meetings.

CONSULTATIONS

Already within this paper, there has been a recommendation for province-wide consultations with MNS Local Presidents and their membership, Regional Directors and Senators on a Metis definition for use in the enumeration. Further practical issues need to be addressed, such as who will conduct the consultations, how the consultations will be operationalized, when will it be completed and to whom it would report its findings.

Because of timing, the process will probably need to address current membership issues as well as the ‘Metis Definition’ paper to be tabled by the Minister of Enumeration. Definition speaks to present membership, as well as to all those who are legitimately entitled to be counted in the Metis enumeration. Consultations must cover the whole of the province and be conducted in such a way as to enable any Metis who wants to address Metis Definition and/or Metis Enumeration to do so at these consultation hearings.

Working partnerships between the MNS Minister responsible for Enumeration, the PMC, the MNLA and the Senate must be developed to successfully complete the consultations. What will Local Presidents and members be asked to consider? Definition and methodology will be the centre of the consultations as well as receiving the concerns and suggestions of MNS members. The findings of the consultation will be brought to the next MNLA for ratification of the enumeration project.

Recommendations

6. That the Minister, in collaboration with the Treasurer, secure adequate resources from the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan to conduct the enumeration consultation province-wide.
7. A consultation team be established by the Minister responsible for Enumeration with its own terms of reference with a clearly defined purpose, methodology, budget, start and end date, membership, and reporting structures.
8. That consultations be held on a regional basis with the sole purpose of consulting on enumeration. To ensure as many people who want to address this issue can attend the consultation in their region, the Minister, in collaboration with the Regional Director and Local Presidents, will actively promote the consultations in Metis communities.

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9. The findings from the enumeration consultations will be presented at the next MNLA for ratification by its members.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Since the beginning of the original Metis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS), to the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS), to the second Metis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS) and now to the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS), there have been many definitions used and many methodologies utilized to admit members to the organization. Our membership includes many individuals who are not Metis. Recently the MNS at its Provincial Metis Council Meetings in Prince Albert had to suspend issuing new membership cards and review recent members because of this issue. There is talk of the need for a National Metis Registry, and in the interim the MNS needs to address its membership issues by improving its membership registration process and its membership registry. →

Recommendations

10. In the event of a new Metis definition is approved by the MNLA, non-Metis be removed from the existing MNS membership registry, while continuing to admit all Metis as members.
- X 11. That the MNS Provincial Secretary, with the support of MNS Local Presidents, become the MNS Registrar.

The Enumeration Steering Committee’s (ESC) purpose and terms of reference needs to be revisited to assure that this body is solely a coordinating body comprised of the funders, the MNS and the MNC. The relationship of the Contractor to the ESC needs to be re-examined to ensure that decision making authority rests with the MNS.

CONCLUSION

Without having had this opportunity to process the Metis enumeration, it is unlikely that a meaningful and legitimate enumeration would ever succeed in Saskatchewan. The recommendations summarized below outline a process to address definition and methodology. An enumeration in Saskatchewan based on these same recommendations, a national enumeration would be possible.

On a personal note. I want to thank and congratulate the Senate Elders of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. In their wisdom, they understood the full impact of what was being imposed upon us Metis. In so far as the vision of Louis Riel was pertinent in 1869 - 1885, this same vision is being carried today by our Metis Elders who carry on the same struggle for the Metis Nation.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The MNS Minister of Enumeration table the MNC 'Metis Definition' paper to each MNS Local President for consultation with their membership on the Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration. This paper will be reworked to include the decisions and recommendations of from the national workshop, specifically it will include:
 - A. A preamble that acknowledges and describes the historic and cultural Metis Nation;
 - B. All external legislation that has impacted on past and current Metis definitions; and,
 - C. A three (3) generation cut-off be proscribed to determine where a Metis ends.
2. The MNS Minister of Enumeration announce in a covering letter to the Metis Definition Paper the dates, locations and agenda items for a consultation process for Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration.
3. The 'Contractor' for the Saskatchewan Metis Enumeration attend all consultation workshops with the view of modifying the enumeration methodology and their contract with the MNS in order to complete the enumeration.
4. The methodology will include a working partnership with the MNS Senate and the Metis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) members.
5. The Enumeration Steering Committee extend an open invitation to a representative from the MNC to participate as an ex-officio observer at its meetings.
6. That the Minister, in collaboration with the Treasurer, secure adequate resources from the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan to conduct the enumeration consultation province-wide.
7. A consultation team be established by the Minister responsible for Enumeration with its own terms of reference with a clearly defined purpose, methodology, budget, start and end date, membership, and reporting structures.
8. That consultations be held on a regional basis with the sole purpose of consulting on enumeration. To ensure as many people who want to address this issue can attend the consultation in their region, the Minister, in collaboration with the Regional Director and Local Presidents, will actively promote the consultations in Metis communities.
9. The findings from the enumeration consultations will be presented at the next MNLA for ratification by its members.
10. In the event of a new Metis definition is approved by the MNLA, non-Metis be removed from the existing MNS membership registry based on the new definition, while continuing to admit all Metis as members.
11. That the MNS Provincial Secretary, with the support of MNS Local Presidents, become the MNS Registrar.

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APPENDICES

Metis Definition Paper

Proposed Covering Letter

MNC National Workshop Recommendations and Decisions