



Métis Nation
Saskatchewan

Dialogue Forums Summary Report

MÉTIS NATION
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
MAY 26-28, 2023 - SASKATOON SK

INTRODUCTION

On May 26, 2023, the day before the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) Spring 2023 Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA), delegates from across Saskatchewan, representing 12 Regions and over 100 Locals were invited to attend Dialogue Forums to provide input on four priority areas:

- 1. Constitutional Reform: Proposed Amendments to the
Constitution of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan / PAGE 3**
- 2. Constitutional Reform: Proposed Changes to the *Saskatchewan
Métis Elections Act 2007* and the General Assembly / PAGE 5**
- 3. Child and Family Services / PAGE 8**
- 4. Commission for the Review of Locals / PAGE 11**

PURPOSE OF THE DIALOGUE FORUMS

The Dialogue Forums were created to foster communication among MN–S leaders and Elders, providing them with an additional platform to articulate their needs, aspirations, and visions for the future. These forums are also intended to provide guidance to MN–S technicians and staff.

During the facilitated discussions, a presentation was provided, and questions were introduced to guide the dialogue. Delegates were encouraged to participate in all four sessions and share their viewpoints and concerns on important topics.

MN–S will utilize the feedback gathered during these Dialogue Forums to develop policy options based on evidence, inform future decision-making processes, and facilitate further engagement with Métis citizens.

The Summary Report captures key themes from the Dialogue Forums, reflecting participants' voices and ideas. It serves as a testament to the collective wisdom and perspectives that have shaped and will continue to guide future work.

1. Constitutional Reform: Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan

Facilitated by: Dorothy Myo, Deputy Chief, Self-Government, MN–S and Merrilee Rasmussen, Rasmussen, Rasmussen and Charowsky

FORUM OVERVIEW

MN–S is in the midst of a significant constitutional reform process. This was prompted by a resolution passed at the April 2019 MNLA, which directed the MN–S government to conduct an extensive consultation process to update and reform the *Constitution of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan* (“the Constitution”).

The *Voice of the People* Constitutional Reform process organized consultations in 2019 and 2022, with sessions held in all 12 Regions. The proposed changes resulting from the consultations were presented for feedback at the Spring 2023 MNLA Dialogue Forums. The Constitutional Reform process intends to be completed in 2024, with adoption anticipated at the Fall 2024 MNLA, followed by successful ratification at the General Assembly.

The Forum included a review of the Constitution’s existing Articles and proposed amendments. The review was guided by the *2023 Proposed Constitutional Amendments Workbook*, in which delegates were invited to submit their written comments and perspectives on the proposed amendments.

Discussions throughout the Dialogue Forum encouraged further exploration and clarification of the proposed constitutional amendments. These discussions contributed to a greater understanding of the proposed changes and their potential impacts. Delegates’ feedback and input will help shape the final version of the *Constitution*, which will have to go through the MNLA for approval followed by a ratification process at the General Assembly. This process ensures that the collective wisdom and voice of Métis citizens is reflected throughout the document, to guide the future of MN–S.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE DELEGATES – COMMON THEMES

The following themes were identified throughout the Dialogue Forum discussions on “Constitutional Reform: Proposed Amendments to the *Constitution of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan*”:

Preserve Constitutional Provisions Prior to Developing New Legislation

- Provisions in the *Constitution* should not be removed before the development of new legislation (e.g., a *Locals Act* or *Regions Act*):
 - Changes to the number of Regions could impact the boundaries
 - Legislation regarding Locals will have an impact on the overall governance of MN–S
- The *Constitution* should not be amended until there is alternative legislation in place
- The development of a *Regions Act* or *Locals Act* should be informed by the grassroots, and the *Constitution* must reflect community and Local input.

Incorporate Métis Languages

- Include Michif, Cree and Dëñë in the *Constitution*
- Ensure the language used in the *Constitution* is clear, concise and easy to understand
- Including Métis languages in the *Constitution* is a step in bringing the language back
- Using Métis languages will reflect the diverse Métis culture, history and identity in Saskatchewan.

Succession Process: Filling Vacant Positions and Composition of the Executive

- If the Second Vice President assumes the office of the First Vice President, the process for filling the vacant position of the Second Vice President must be clearly articulated
- Local Presidents could select their own Regional Director if the position becomes vacant
- The composition of the Executive should reflect a government, not a not-for-profit model
- Include Women and Youth representatives to ensure equality and inclusivity in government
- Clarify what a “serious criminal offence” refers to in proposed Article 9 and use stronger language around the removal from office.

Revisiting Quorum Requirements at the MNLA

- Lower the quorum requirement, which is currently 75 members of the MNLA
- Quorum requirements could be percentage-based (e.g., 50% plus one) to ensure decisions can be made when a smaller number of members are present.

Ensuring Coherence Between MN–S’ Constitution, Acts, Policies and Procedures

- Ensure that the *Constitution*, Acts, policies and procedures within MN–S are in alignment and work together to create an efficient and effective governance structure
- All mentions of the term “organization” in governance documents to be removed and substituted to refer to MN–S as a “government”.

Clarity, Accessibility and Transparency: Develop a Constitution that Speaks to Community

- Locals must be recognized in the *Constitution*, as they are the grassroots of MN–S
- Simplify the language, clearly delineate roles and responsibilities, and empower Locals and community members to actively engage in the MN–S government
- The Constitutional Reform process should:
 - Consult with Elders and members of the current MN–S Senate
 - Support Locals to review the Constitution with their own members.

2. Constitutional Reform: Proposed Changes to the Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act 2007 and General Assembly

Facilitated by: Chris Gall, Senior Legal Counsel, Deputy Chief, MN–S, and Susan Shacter, Policy Analyst, MN–S

FORUM OVERVIEW

Part A – General Assembly (GA)

It is anticipated that a meeting of the General Assembly (GA) will convene in the Fall of 2024 to assess the outcomes of the *Voice of the People* Constitutional Reform process. However, concerns were raised during the Spring 2022 constitutional consultation process regarding the accessibility of past GA sessions.

To address these concerns, the following options for the 2024 GA were presented for consideration at the Spring 2023 Dialogue Forums:

- **Option A** - “Status Quo”:
 - All citizens would be invited to attend the in-person GA in Saskatoon the day after the MNLA
- **Option B** - “Status Quo + Virtual”:
 - All citizens would be invited to attend the in-person GA in Saskatoon the day after the MNLA
 - Citizens could also attend virtually
 - An independent Electoral Officer would manage the voting, and would send the vote results to the Speaker at the GA
- **Option C** - “Status Quo, Virtual and Regional Meetings”:
 - All citizens would be invited to attend the in-person GA in Saskatoon, the day after the MNLA
 - Citizens could also attend virtually
 - There would also be satellite meetings in each of the 12 Regions where citizens could gather to attend virtually and vote
 - An independent Electoral Officer would manage the voting and would send the vote results to the Speaker at the GA.

The MN–S consultation process is committed to inclusivity and engagement, ensuring the voices and perspectives of the Métis in Saskatchewan are heard and integrated into the MN–S governing structure. By actively participating in this process, the Métis in Saskatchewan will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of MN–S and enhancing its governance.

Part B – Proposed Changes to the Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act 2007

In the Spring of 2022, the Métis in Saskatchewan provided feedback on proposed changes to the *Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act 2007* (“the *Elections Act*”) during consultation sessions held in all 12 Regions, as well as three virtual sessions. Additionally, at the Fall 2022 MNLA, delegates shared their feedback during a Dialogue Forum focused on proposed changes to the *Elections Act*.

During these sessions, participants expressed a preference for reviewing a model of the proposed changes to provide effective feedback. As a result, a document was created, that compared the current *Elections Act* with a version that incorporates proposed changes and explanations.

Comments on the proposed amendments to the *Elections Act* were gathered at the Spring 2023 MNLA Dialogue Forum. Additional feedback will be collected during the Constitutional Reform consultations that are scheduled to begin in June 2023. This feedback will inform further refinements and result in a final draft version of the *Elections Act* for consideration at the Fall 2023 MNLA.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE DELEGATES – COMMON THEMES

Participants considered the three options presented for voting and participation at the 2024 GA (Option A - “Status Quo”; Option B – “Status Quo and Virtual”; and Option C - “Status Quo, Virtual and Regional Meetings”), and indicated the following preferences:

- During Session 1, participants indicated a preference for [Option C](#).
- During Session 2, participants indicated a preference for [Option B or C](#).
- During Session 3, participants agreed NOT to indicate a preference.
- During Session 4, participants indicated a preference for [Option C](#) and proposed a new [Option D: “Status Quo, Virtual, Regional Meetings, and Meetings in Central Communities.”](#)

The following themes were identified throughout the Dialogue Forum discussions on the “Proposed Changes to the *Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act 2007* and General Assembly”:

Enhancing Virtual Participation: Overcoming Technical Limitations for Inclusive Engagement

- Address technical limitations for virtual participation:
 - Remote areas sometimes have technical outages and limited internet access; they must be enabled to participate
 - Invest in technology improvements and equipment (e.g., Starlink internet, iPads, etc.), and support citizens who require assistance using the technology
- Establish clear guidelines for virtual participation to ensure transparency and accountability by:
 - Balancing time for speakers who are attending virtually and in-person
 - Find a way to ensure those participating virtually are eligible to participate and vote
 - Confirm quorum by requiring virtual attendees to have their cameras on.

Clear Objectives for Constitutional Reform: Transparency and Purposeful Consultation

- The objectives of the Constitutional Reform consultation sessions should be clearly outlined to avoid misunderstanding, and include:
 - Gathering feedback from citizens on proposed constitutional changes
 - Enhancing community understanding of the amendments and their impact
 - Using the input to inform the drafting of proposed changes for the *Constitution*
- Regional protocols must be followed in the consultation process
- Consider scheduling the sessions on weekends to maximize attendance
- Open the process up to all Métis people in Saskatchewan to reflect the collective wisdom and voice of the people.

Clarify Eligibility, Attendance, and Voting Options for Meaningful Participation

- The MN–S citizenship list should be checked to ensure Métis citizens who are also listed in the Indian Registry and hold citizenship with other Métis governments cannot participate in MN–S voting
- To enable all citizens to vote, provide different voting options that accommodate various circumstances (e.g., polling stations in several communities, means for electronic voting, mail-in ballots, etc.)
- Measures need to be in place to ensure that only registered citizens are voting and that citizens do not cast multiple votes using the different methods of voting
- Virtual voting requires a citizen verification process and monitoring procedure to prevent fraud
- Encourage non-citizens to register for citizenship and promote the benefits of participating in the voting process

Empower Informed Decision-Making: Access to Information, Capacity and Transparency

- Give citizens access to information through transparent communication to support informed decision-making
- Provide support and capacity to Locals and allow them to represent their communities effectively
- Create a system where citizens feel informed, empowered, and confident in participating in the decision-making processes of their government
- Build trust in MN–S by listening to citizens’ concerns, incorporating their feedback, and providing programs and services that meet their needs.

3. Child and Family Services

Facilitated by: Shirley Bell-Morin, Child and Family Services, MN–S,
Monica Brunet, Director of Citizen Engagement, MN–S, and
Shana Cardinal, Mental Health Therapist (Owner of Cardinal Wholistic Wellness)

In 2020, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (“the Act” or “Bill C-92”) was enacted by Canada. The Act recognizes and affirms the Métis Nation’s inherent right to self-government and jurisdiction over child and family services, an integral element of Indigenous self-governance. Under the Act, the Métis Nation has the authority to independently develop and oversee a distinct approach to child, youth, and family services, including the design, planning, and delivery of these services.

Between June and October 2023, MN–S will facilitate opportunities for MN–S citizens, stakeholders, partners, and others to share their insights, perspectives and values concerning the needs and wellbeing of Métis children, youth and families. Consultations will occur across the province to inform MN–S’ vision for a future Métis-distinct child, youth and family services system.

A comprehensive report summarizing feedback from the consultation process will be prepared and will be made available to communities in the Spring of 2023.

The May 2023 MNLA Dialogue Forum marked the initial step in a series of consultations to capture Métis’ perspectives on this priority.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following discussion questions were reviewed:

1. What does a community that prioritizes child, youth and family wellbeing look like to you?
2. What community needs, values, or priorities should we be paying attention to when creating a vision for Métis children, youth and family service systems?
3. How might we best support or care for Métis children and youth who cannot be cared for by their parents or current caregivers?
 - a. What is important to you when raising children?
 - b. Who would you want to care for them?
 - c. What is the importance of Métis culture and language when raising children?
4. What services or supports would improve the wellbeing of Métis children, youth, and families in community?
 - a. What services or supports help your family thrive?
 - b. What services or supports might help Métis families overcome challenges they experience being able to provide care for their children in the community?
5. What else should we be talking or thinking about that we haven’t touched on?

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE DELEGATES – COMMON THEMES

The following themes were identified at the Dialogue Forum discussions on “Child and Family Services”:

Métis Identity and Culturally Responsive Services: Prioritize Wellbeing and Interconnection

- Métis child, youth, and family services should reflect Métis identity through:
 - Language Education: Teach Métis languages to enable children and youth to learn and appreciate their linguistic heritage
 - Intergenerational Connections: Build connections between youth and Elders for the exchange of wisdom, cultural knowledge, and traditional values
 - Sharing Traditional Values: Through storytelling, cultural events, and land-based learning to encourage Métis children and families to take pride in their cultural identity
- Do not use a colonial approach in the child and family services system; the system must uphold Métis culture, values and traditions; including Métis culture in the services framework will help build trust in the system.

Empower Métis Families: A Holistic Approach to Child and Family Services

- A holistic approach to child and family services involves addressing all Indigenous social determinants of health and wellbeing
- Offer wraparound supports and services to address physical health, mental and emotional wellbeing, cultural connection, education and employment, housing and community infrastructure, and family and community support
- Culturally appropriate support can better promote the wellbeing of Métis children and families.

Strengthen Métis Children and Family Wellbeing and Cultural Connections

- Métis children need consistency, reliability, and cultural connection
- Keep children with their families and kin whenever possible, to maintain their connections to their community and culture
- Encourage more Métis individuals to become foster parents and provide Métis-specific training to all foster parents caring for Métis children.

Embracing Métis Culture: Education and Awareness to Combat Racism and Discrimination

- Educate all Canadians about Métis culture to address racism and discrimination
- Some Métis people are afraid to identify as Métis when accessing social services, as they may face discrimination and receive lower-quality care
- Develop a Métis-focused school curriculum, provide cultural competency training to service providers, and highlight Métis success stories in the media.

Build Strong Foundations: Preventative Support for Families

- Prevent child apprehensions through a preventative approach
- Offer supports such as parenting classes, addictions treatment, financial relief, and mental health
- Provide accessible resources and assistance so families can be better equipped to overcome challenges and create nurturing environments
- Offer supports to grandparents, extended family members, and single parents.

4. Commission for the Review of Locals

Facilitated by: Michael Gatin, Commissioner for the Review of Locals, MN–S and
Ronald Nowlan, Project Coordinator for the Commission for the Review of Locals, MN–S

Locals within MN–S hold a crucial role in shaping its mission and direction. They actively contribute to decision-making, policy development, and advocacy efforts, both historically and in the present. Determining the recognition of a Local involves a detailed process, considering factors such as adherence to MN–S requirements, community support, and governance standards.

Ideally, Local membership rules should align closely with MN–S citizenship requirements, establishing standardized criteria for individuals to become members of any Local in the province. This alignment promotes a cohesive framework for Métis identity and representation.

Decisions made by the MNLA regarding the recognition of Local status have undergone regular review. These decisions impact Local representation, resource allocation, decision-making power, and opportunities within MN–S. A significant portion of MN–S citizens do not belong to a Local, and efforts are being made to ensure the inclusion and meaningful participation of those citizens, as their perspectives and contributions are valuable to the decision-making processes.

Locals are essential units of representation within MN–S, contributing to its mission and direction. The examination of Locals encompasses their structure, historical and present-day roles, recognition processes, membership rules, and the status of Métis citizens who are not affiliated with a Local.

The Dialogue Forum served as another platform for delegates to share their insights on these factors, contributing to developing a more inclusive and effective governance system for MN–S.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following discussion questions were reviewed:

1. What possible changes would continue to allow Locals to improve how they contribute to the overall mission and direction of the Métis Nation government?
2. How should the Locals be structured in order to better support the objectives and priorities of the Métis citizens and their communities?
3. What should be the criteria in determining whether a Local is recognized and in good standing?
4. What measures should be taken to ensure adequate representation and meaningful engagement of Métis citizens who do not belong to a Local, either by choice or circumstance, and ensure these Métis citizens have a voice in the decision-making processes of MN–S?

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE DELEGATES – COMMON THEMES

The following themes were identified at the Dialogue Forum discussions on the “Commission for the Review of Locals”:

Harmonize Policies, Rules and Expectations for Local, Regional, and Provincial Governance

- Create consistent policies, rules, and expectations at the Local, Regional, and Provincial levels to ensure fairness, equity, and a shared understanding of rights and responsibilities
- Guidelines would enable effective governance, clear communications, fair resource allocation, and promote accountability in the delivery of programs and services
- De-politicize service and program delivery
- Standardize Local election rules
- The role of Elders, women, and youth should be defined and respected
- Métis communities can benefit from a transparent approach that supports their wellbeing and collective goals.

Build Trust through Transparency and Accountability

- Transparency and accountability will build trust between Métis people and elected leadership
- Local Executive to provide meeting minutes, disclose financial statements, report on decision-making, and communicate about programs and services
- Information-sharing and involving citizens in decision-making processes will contribute to stronger relationships between Métis people and MN–S
- Processes must be in place to hold Local leadership accountable for misdemeanors and deviation from rules.

Enhance Clarity, Support, and Privacy Protection in the Citizenship Application Process

- Offer assistance with the application process for MN–S citizenship to encourage more people to register
- Provide guidance on the purpose of the application forms, dedicate staff and resources to assist individuals who are completing the forms, and communicate the measures in place to protect personal information
- Cross-check citizenship files to make sure individuals are not holding both Métis and Treaty cards
- Increase efforts to engage with citizens who do not belong to a Local to encourage involvement in Locals
- Build trust in the MN–S Registry by undertaking regular audits and reviews of the citizenship list.

Empower Locals: Strengthen Governance through Training, Capacity, and Information Sharing

- Provide Locals with governance training, capacity funding, and consistent information sharing from MN–S
- Local Presidents have expressed a desire to access citizenship lists to be able to reach out to Métis individuals in their communities and provide information about programs and services available
- Enhancing Local leadership will strengthen community engagement and allow for more effective support of Métis individuals and communities.

Respect Locals: Empowering Grassroots Decision-Making and Flexibility in Local Membership

- Locals need to feel respected, as they are the grassroots of the government and represent the voice of the Métis people in Saskatchewan
- Allow individuals would like the freedom to choose which Local they belong to, regardless of where they reside
- Recognize that Locals in every Region have different needs
- Respect and empower Locals, and demonstrate MN–S' commitment to ensuring decision-making in the government is guided by the grassroots wisdom.

A Final Note: Thank You, Maarsii

The Dialogue Forum discussions were instrumental in providing insight and direction to MN-S as it moves forward with its important work. As a self-determining and self-governing nation, the growth and progress of MN-S depends on the feedback and ideas shared by its citizens.

Citizens' perspectives, contributions and wisdom have been invaluable in shaping the path ahead. There will be further opportunities for discussions on these and other topics at the next MNLA, to continue dialogue and work towards achieving shared goals and objectives.

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