

**VOICE OF THE
PEOPLE**



Summary Report of the
Constitutional Reform Consultation Sessions
held June to October 2023 Virtually and in Regions Across Saskatchewan

*Prepared for the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan by
Peacock Ink Ltd.
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In April 2019, the Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) initiated a consultation process across Saskatchewan, focused on reforming the “Constitution of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan” (the “Constitution”). This initiative began with the 2019 Voice of the People Consultation Sessions. An interim update on the 2019 sessions was shared at the fall 2019 MNLA.

The sessions resumed in the spring of 2022. Between April and June of 2022, the Constitutional Reform Team, under the guidance of the Vice President's office, engaged with the Métis of Saskatchewan through in-person and virtual gatherings. The feedback gathered during these sessions was compiled in the 2022 Constitutional Reform Consultation Session Summary.

In the spring of 2023, the consultation sessions continued with a focus on priority topics including citizenship, land rights, language, Locals, Regions, the Executive, the MNLA, the Provincial Métis Council, the General Assembly, and the Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act.

This summary acknowledges the discussions held, the perspectives shared, and a collective vision for the future of the MN-S. It reflects the commitment to inclusivity, democracy, and the sustained development of the MN-S governance structures. The following pages reflect some of the challenges identified, and the aspirations proposed for a renewed constitutional and legislative foundation.



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*The comments included in this summary report are presented as received from participants, during and after the sessions, and have not been assessed for factual accuracy.
The report was compiled by professional note takers from Peacock Ink Ltd.*

Overview

Summary of Participants Feedback on the Discussion Topics Presented

The agenda for the 2023 Constitutional Reform Consultation Sessions began with MN-S representatives providing an overview of the proposed amendments to the *Constitution of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan* (“*Constitution*”) and the *Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act 2007* (the “*Elections Act*”). Due to time constraints, some sessions only reviewed the *Constitution* or the *Elections Act*, however additional feedback was welcomed by email.

During the sessions, participants were invited to comment on options for holding future General Assemblies, which could include in-person and virtual options. Participants were encouraged to locate information available online, on the Métis Justice Project at www.mnsjustice.ca (accessible in 2023)¹.

Below is a summary of the feedback received on the discussion topics presented during these sessions.

FEEDBACK ON THE 2023 DISCUSSION TOPICS

Citizenship

Participants acknowledged the need to inclusively welcome all Métis people, including 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and those identifying as both Métis and First Nation. They supported modifying the wording of the “MN-S Individual Citizenship Application Form”, to encourage more citizens to apply. It was suggested that the citizenship application process, be evaluated to ensure that no one had to choose between identifying as Métis or First Nation. Participants also suggested that Métis citizens maintain their citizenship during temporarily relocations, and supported rules that protected the rights of Métis people.

Land Matters

Métis people and communities need to be actively involved and informed on matters related to land. Participants acknowledged the importance of safeguarding land for traditional activities, and highlighted concerns regarding the long term impacts of industrial activities. It was suggested to review agreements with organizations such as NexGen, to consider their impacts. Comments were also offered on access to Crown land. Additionally, it was suggested that the Constitution's recognition of Métis inherent rights to land and self-governance, should be revisited.

Locals

Sessions highlighted the need for improved communications, record-keeping, and fair resource sharing between Locals and the MN-S, to support equitable service and program delivery. Constitutional updates were suggested to support a broader, adaptable membership approach, and grassroots governance. Members of Locals would like to be involved in decision making and legislative adjustments. The sessions stressed the importance of accountability, and maintaining strong links between Locals, Regions, and the Métis people, for effective governance and representation.

¹ The report “*KWAYASKASTASOWIN: A Métis Judiciary Designed with Métis People*” can be accessed at: <https://metisnation.sk.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Kwayaskastasowin-A-Metis-Judiciary-Designed-with-Metis-People.pdf>

Regions

Participants discussed the *Constitution's* definition of “Regions” and their boundaries. Clarification was suggested on the roles of Regional representatives, and their ability to appoint alternates to attend Provincial Métis Council meetings, in their absence. Discussion ensued on the feasibility of Regions pursuing their own land claims and options for improving each Regions’ accountability.

Executive

The sessions considered the proposed amendments to the structure of the MN-S Executive, which included one President and two Vice Presidents. Concerns were raised about potentially higher salaries for fewer Executives and possible challenges anticipated with a smaller Executive. Support was offered on the need for clear job descriptions in the *Constitution*, as it was assumed by many, that specific responsibilities were connected with specific roles. Improved election procedures, and enhanced funding and accountability for Youth, were also supported.

Métis Nation Legislative Assembly

Participants highlighted the need for MNLAs to be inclusive, organized and accountable. It was suggested to schedule MNLAs on consistent weekends, and that MNLAs require only a basic majority to proceed. To encourage MNLA attendance, honorariums could be introduced, agenda items could be prioritized, and translation services could be provided. Penalties could be imposed for members who departed early. Transparent evaluations of officials’ actions, were suggested. Participants supported fair representation of members, including for 2SLGBTQQIA+ and differently-abled people. It was further suggested to review the MNLA's structure and establish dispute resolution mechanisms to enhance fairness and efficiency.

Provincial Métis Council (PMC)

Sessions supported inclusivity and democratic processes on the PMC. Participants suggested shifting away from gender-designated positions; introducing conflict-of-interest disclosures with protections for whistleblowers; and setting up mechanisms to challenge false claims and remove officials. It was noted that elections for the “Métis Women of Saskatchewan” and Youth representatives could be held by their respective communities. Support was offered for a 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council, post-election auditing, diversifying representation on the PMC, re-evaluating affiliates for better autonomy, and adding a student position to the PMC to enhance inclusiveness.

Senate, Women, Youth, Elders / Knowledge Keepers

Participants suggested involving Regions in selecting Senate and Elders Council members, with each Region nominating an Elder and an alternate to manage responsibilities. Elders should be involved in decision-making, and their selection and ceremonial roles should be clarified. It was suggested to create an Elder’s Advisory Council and assign locally-selected Elders to represent Regions at events. Participants suggested increasing Elders' participation in selecting Women and Youth representatives.

General Assembly

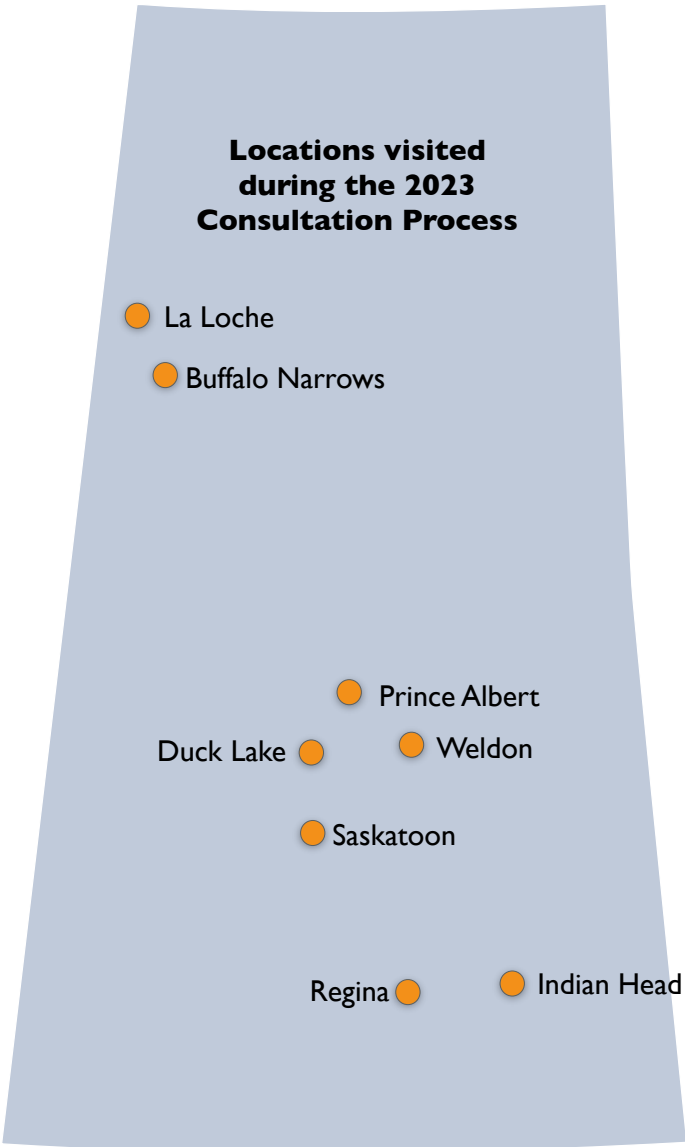
Suggestions for future General Assemblies included implementing question periods with Ministers to enhance leadership transparency. Comments were offered on engaging Youth and encouraging pre-Assembly meetings at the Local level. Participants acknowledged the importance of establishing a verification process for electronic voting. To enhance participation at the 2024 General Assembly, options were proposed including allowing citizens to join Regional meetings that are connected virtually to the main General Assembly in Saskatoon.

Elections Act

Participants supported efficient and accountable elections, and cost-efficient by-elections. Suggestions were discussed to address Executive vacancies, scrutinize Local elections, regulate campaign contributions, and audit campaign expenditures. Comments were offered on maintaining the privacy of the voter list, holding Local elections concurrently with provincial elections, the Youth and Women's representatives, and the age definition of Youth. An opportunity was suggested to review the draft *Elections Act* prior to the MNLA considering the final amendments proposed to the *Constitution*.

Métis of Saskatchewan Participation and Feedback

Map of Consultation Session Locations



18

Sessions Held

Sessions were held both virtually and in MN-S Regions. Locals and Regions had the opportunity to invite the Constitutional Reform team to host consultation sessions in their community.

300+

Participants

More than 300 participants attended the consultation sessions.

5

Virtual Sessions

Five virtual sessions were held between June and October 2023. Specific sessions were held for Les Filles des Madelaine and Youth.

6

MNLA Dialogue Forums

Dialogue Forums held prior to the MNLAs in 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023, included relevant discussions on Constitutional Reform, the Judicial Tribunal and the Commissioner’s Review of Locals.

50+

Written Submissions

More than 50 written submissions were received, providing comments on Constitutional Reform.

Northern Region 2

Feedback provided by participants, on the discussion topics presented at the following sessions:

- *La Loche – September 26, 2023*
 - *Buffalo Narrows – September 26, 2023*
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Citizenship

- Consider consequences for citizens identifying as both First Nation and Métis.

Land

- Métis people and small communities must be informed and consulted on land issues
- Clarification is needed on the historical land connections in Northern Region 2
- Implement mechanisms to protect the land and rights to harvesting, hunting, fishing, and trapping
- Consider including a reference to industry, mining, destruction of land, and health consequences
- Review the Memorandum of Understanding signed with NexGen regarding long term impacts and work opportunities.

Locals

- Improve communications, record keeping, budget allocations and MN-S' coordination with Locals
- The proposed constitutional amendments are unnecessary
- Ensure fair allocation of resources amongst all Locals
- Services and programs must remain under the control of the Locals, and resources are required for more cultural programming
- Allow Locals to retain their members, despite people relocating
- A well-structured process is essential to ensure access to voices at all levels
- Governance should encourage a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach; presently, MN-S has full control without involving dialogue in decision-making.

Elections Act

- Require Métis citizens to present their citizenship card to vote during elections and ensure voters do not have both Métis and First Nation citizenship.

Executive

- Improve transparency and frequency of communication between Local Presidents and the Executive
- The proposal for one President with two Vice Presidents is consistent with a First Nations tribal council model (i.e., First Chief, Second Chief, etc.)
- Maintain a focus on self-government
- Provide further justification and clarification for the proposed amendments and ensure that a reduction in the number of Executives would not lead to an increase in the remaining Executives' salaries.

Métis Nation Legislative Assembly

- Include Women and Youth representatives on the provincial elections ballot.

Senate, Women, and Youth / Elders / Knowledge Keepers Council

- Involve Regions in the selection of members for the Senate and Elders Council
- Select one Elder for each Region, plus an alternate, to help manage the workload
- Consider including a Dene representative on the Elders Council
- Ensure that Elders are included in all decision-making
- Consider the impact any proposed amendments could have on Women's representation
- Clarify the role of Youth representatives in the province.

General Assembly

- Ensure that the integrity of the *Constitution* remains intact
- The Annual General Assembly is crucial for good governance
- Consider creating opportunities for a question period with Ministers
- Improve accountability in leadership.

Additional Comments/Themes Identified

- Consider whether the proposed amendments to the *Constitution* will:
 - o Diminish grassroots connections and jeopardize future voting rights
 - o Weaken its capacity in legal proceedings
- Self-government agreements are not referenced in the proposed amendments
- Definitions were collectively agreed upon by the people and should remain unchanged
- Considerations for future Constitutional Reform Consultation Engagement Sessions:
 - o Clarify that attendance at sessions does not imply agreement with the amendments presented
 - o Ensure that people participating are representing their designated areas
 - o Provide understandable information; and include educational opportunities prior to sessions
 - o Consider visual aids, explanatory videos with translations, and allow "at your own pace" feedback
 - o Employ translators at sessions when presenting proposed constitutional amendments
 - o Ensure smaller communities and citizens of all ages, are represented
 - o Incentivize attendance at the sessions
 - o Schedule sessions on days that do not coincide with already scheduled events
 - o Do not rush the constitutional reform process
- Supporting inclusivity:
 - o First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people should not be divided; recognize similarities between groups and their experiences
 - o The Michif, Cree, and Dene people are distinct people with unique languages; education is required on Métis culture and identity
- The MN-S Registry needs to visit Locals, to allow people to register as citizens
- Hold a Justice Forum to provide feedback on a Métis court, and involve RCMP, Elders and others to provide feedback
- Citizens need financial assistance, including:
 - o Support for travel to necessary services
 - o Support for the elderly who currently lack basic necessities
 - o Supports for young people; ensure citizens have equal access to job opportunities
- The North West (NW) Saskatchewan Métis Council:
 - o The NW Saskatchewan Métis Council should be referenced in Section 5 (Governance Structure)
 - o The NW Saskatchewan Métis Council has not been active recently; consider creating a forum to discuss its implementation.

Eastern Region 3

Feedback provided by participants, on the discussion topics presented at the following session:

- Indian Head – September 9, 2023
-

Locals

- Review the Regional and Local boundaries and clarify how they were initially established
- Some Métis people may not want to connect with their closest Local
- Some geographically large communities are only able to meet virtually
- The *Constitution* should be based on criteria that does not change.

Regions

- Consider whether the *Constitution* should specify an exact number of regions
- Some regions have their own constitutions, and may choose to review them
- Clarification is needed on the roles and responsibilities of Regional Women
- Clarification is needed in the definition of “Youth” in the *Elections Act*.

Executive

- Consider cost-effective bi-election options for filling vacancies on the Executive
- The *Elections Act* could include provisions for addressing vacancies on the Executive
- Reducing the number of Executive members to three, could support more efficient decision-making
- Outline the general roles and responsibilities of Executive members in the *Constitution*.

Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA)

- The *Constitution* could specify a consistent weekend when MNLAs will be held
- Consider requiring basic majority of attendees (i.e., 50% plus one) for the Legislative Assembly
- Offer an honorarium to members as an incentive to stay until the end of the MNLA.

Provincial Métis Council (PMC)

- The MN-S could elect the “Métis Women of Saskatchewan” in accordance with the *Constitution*
- The Provincial Métis Youth Council invites different Youth representatives to the MNLA; a similar approach should be considered for inviting Women’s representatives to the MNLA
- All MN-S citizens should be able to participate in electing Women’s representatives to the PMC
- Only Youth should participate in the election of Youth representatives
- Consider transitioning away from gender-designated roles.

Senate, Women, and Youth / Elders / Knowledge Keepers Council

- Clarify the definition of “Elders / Knowledge Keepers” (including how they are selected)
- Consider the ceremonial roles of Elders / Knowledge Keepers at the MNLA
- Consider establishing an Elder’s Advisory Council
- Regions should be able to assign Elders / Knowledge Keepers (selected locally) to represent them at events.

General Assembly

The following options were suggested for the 2024 General Assembly, to address the issue of citizens from across the province being able to attend:

- Option A - “Status Quo”: This option maintains the traditional approach where all citizens can attend the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon, after the MNLA
- Option B - “Status Quo and Virtual”: In addition to the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon, citizens could attend virtually, enabling them to participate remotely
- Option C - “Status Quo, Virtual and Regional Meetings”: In addition to the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon and the virtual attendance option, citizens could also attend regional meetings connected virtually to the main in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon
- Option D – Holding an entirely virtual General Assembly a week after the MNLA.

Participants indicated general support for an in-person session in each Region, supported by an external facilitator, as it would provide an opportunity for citizens and communities to connect.

Additional Comments

- Consider returning to a show of hands voting system at MNLAs, rather than using electronic voting technology, to support the accountability of Regional leaders
- Develop a schedule for regularly reviewing all MN-S’ legislative documents
- Post the Oath of Office on the MN-S website.

Western Region 2

Feedback provided by participants, on the discussion topics presented at the following sessions:

- Prince Albert – June 2, June 3, and September 14, 2023
 - Weldon – September 15, 2023
 - Urban Locals, Prince Albert – October 5, 2023
 - Duck Lake – October 6, 2023
-

Citizenship

- Ensure the inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples
- Clarify the function of a Métis Court / Judiciary
- Address data sovereignty as it pertains to the Citizenship Registry and Voters List
- Ensure that recommendations made by the Commissioner on the Review of Locals, are incorporated into the *Constitution*
- Citizenship considerations:
 - o Being a citizen should not be constrained by provincial borders
 - o Shorten the citizenship application process
 - o Find a way to honour Métis identity that transcends colonial, legal and fiscal divisions
 - o Clarify whether all Métis people in Saskatchewan are required to register as MN-S citizens
 - o Address the citizenship of people who have been adopted
 - o Do not violate the principles of self-determination and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by telling Métis people who become eligible for First Nation status, that they must relinquish their Métis identity and, therefore, their inherent rights.

Land

- Land is essential to nationhood
- Reference land and the obligation to be stewards of the land; ensure the existence of Mother Earth for future generations
- Métis people should have access to Crown land because it is Indigenous land.

Language

- Include Michif, Cree and Dene languages in the *Constitution*
- Consider recognizing French, Cree and Dene as official Métis languages
- Gather feedback from Métis people who speak traditional language(s)
- Prioritize Michif language training in schools
- Use comprehensive and consistent definitions, language and naming conventions in the *Constitution*.

Locals

- Include criterion for Local membership in the *Constitution*
 - Address the issue of membership upon relocation
 - Find a way to incentivize people to join a Local, and be accountable to their Local
 - Minimize existing barriers that restrict the ability of Métis people to join specific Locals
 - Governance:
 - o Locals should convey decisions to Regional Representatives
 - o Consider the burden of reporting requirements as Locals are maintained by volunteers
 - o Consider shifting the role of the Local President to a paid position
 - o Local election dates should be selected by a third party
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- Designate a representative to support Locals
 - Consider merging Locals to increase the number of people in each Local
 - Funding:
 - Consider equalized funding among Locals; allow Locals to negotiate agreements with industries
 - Locals need funding to support opportunities for engagement, programs and services
 - Establish fair and standardized processes for all Regions, with equal supports from the MN-S
 - Implement clear and consistent rules regarding the capacity of Locals and funding
 - Create a system to automatically distribute funding to Locals, including base funding
 - Funding should be based on a Local's capacity and the work they are doing
 - Reassess the need for Locals to have at least nine members – it may be too few
 - Develop a formal process for the dissolution of Locals
 - Preserve Locals' ability to seek revenue outside of the MN-S
 - Regional Constitutions are not needed, as they would overcomplicate the governance structure
 - Deleting Article 7(10) from the *Constitution* could create issues; consider financial impacts associated with implementing self-government
 - Clarify if the MN-S must reduce the number of Regions and Locals before implementing self-government.

Regions

- Organize Regions based on population
- The *Constitution* should not define the number of Regions
- If the *Constitution* is considered the central authority for communities, the Regions could potentially be eliminated
- Ensure equal voting power for all Regions
- Implement reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency in each Region
- Establish guidelines and requirements for number and frequency of meetings
- Regions should not be able to incorporate as not-for-profit entities
- Prohibit access to the voters list, until accountability measures are in place
- Consider electronic voting to reduce the cost of by-elections
- Women and Youth representatives must be elected to join the PMC table
- Clarify the need for a designated Women's representative
- 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals must be represented
- Clarify the roles of Local Presidents, Regional Directors, and the Regional Council
- Acknowledge non-binary citizens and their right to vote for women representatives and/or have a representative at the provincial table
- The current wording in the *Constitution* marginalizes trans/non-binary/queer peoples
- The *Constitution* should address when a regionally-elected official has appointed a replacement without a proper election process
- Regarding the proposed wording, "Locals as institutions within the structure of Métis government should not be incorporated under the laws of external governments":
 - The Locals and their members should decide this
 - Members should be able to vote to determine under which legislative body to incorporate
 - Consider what will happen to existing incorporations
 - This amendment could be disruptive to essential services and programs being delivered to people
- Existing provision 8 must remain in the *Constitution* to increase self-government and autonomy.

Executive

- Structure and Roles:
 - o Consider establishing a two-person Executive
 - o Maintain the current MN-S Executive structure
 - o The reduction to three positions may make workloads unmanageable
 - o Consider establishing an Executive position to oversee the Locals
 - o Clarification is needed on the responsibilities and roles of a second Vice-President
 - o Having two Vice Presidents might make the MN-S structure “top-heavy”
 - o The elected Treasurer should remain, and continue their duties
 - o Clarify the amendments to the Treasurer role
 - o Consider changing “Treasurer” to “Financial Officer”
 - o Portfolios should be assigned to individuals with relevant qualifications
- Elections:
 - o Clarify the timeline for calling an election
 - o If there are only a few months left in a term when an elected official resigns, a by-election should not be held; consider what other governments do in these situations
 - o Clarify how vacant Executive positions will be filled
- More funding should be allocated for Youth representatives
- Implement accountability and enforcement mechanisms for future governments.

Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA)

- MNLAs:
 - o Consider organizing the MNLA agenda items by significance, to address priority matters first
 - o Provide translation headsets to citizens at MNLAs, so that people can understand when Michif, Cree, Dene, etc. is spoken.
 - o Establish consequences for Executives and Regional Directors who fail to submit reports
 - o Withhold expense payments, for representatives who leave the MNLA early
 - o Maintain the MNLA’s existing quorum requirements, as decreasing the quorum could enable some regions to dominate decisions
- Transparency:
 - o Appoint an independent committee to review inconsistencies in the actions of elected officials
 - o Establish a clear distinction between the MN-S and the Chief Executive Officer
 - o Ensure that any claims of misappropriation are thoroughly investigated
 - o Implement an accountability and enforcement mechanism, to ensure elected officials adhere to the *Constitution* and protocols
 - o Incorporate preventative measures to end block-voting at the MNLA
 - o Presidents should not be permitted to assign portfolios
 - o Clarify the role of the MNLA Clerk and the process for filling that position
 - o Consider whether the Oath of Allegiance should occur at every MNLA for all new Local Presidents
- Representation:
 - o Consider representatives from the four corners: “North, South, East, and West”
 - o All regions should be represented equally (e.g., the four representatives are not all located in Regina), and they must be elected to the position.

Provincial Métis Council (PMC)

- To address transparency and accountability:
 - Implement a conflict-of-interest reporting mechanism with whistler-blower protection
 - Individuals should be able to voice their concerns without political repercussions
 - Establish a mechanism to hold accountable anyone making false claims
 - Establish a process to remove elected officials when necessary
 - Do not allow operations staff to engage in governance activities
 - Assign portfolios based on expertise
 - Executives should not hold multiple positions
 - Continue livestreaming PMC meetings
 - Elected officials must be out of office before they begin running in elections
 - Conduct post-election audits
 - Establish an Ethics Commission
- Roles:
 - Consider establishing a 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council
 - Include a 2SLGBTQQIA+ elected representative on the PMC
 - Re-evaluate whether it's necessary to specifically designate Women representatives on the PMC, given the existing representation of women
 - Reconsider the designated age range for Youth (16-29 years)
 - Consider including a junior and senior Youth representative to share responsibilities
- Affiliates:
 - Clarification is needed on what is happening with Affiliates' governance and authority
 - Affiliates must have autonomy, and remain at an arm's length; they must not be politicized
 - Communications and updates from Affiliates are important.

Senate, Women, and Youth / Elders / Knowledge Keepers Council

- Elders:
 - Elders' appointments should be made by the MNLA instead of Regional Representatives
 - Elders should be able to nominate themselves
 - Elders should have equal representation
 - Locals should assign Elders, as the Regions are unfamiliar with Elders in each Local
 - The Elders/Knowledge Keepers Council should lead prayers and the Oath of Office
 - The term "Elder" is not a term commonly used by Métis people; considering using a Michif word in the *Constitution*
- Women and Youth:
 - More than one group should decide who represents Women and Youth at the MNLA
 - Women and Youth representatives should be elected every four years
 - Ensure fair compensation for Women and Youth representatives, commensurate with their roles and experience
- Communicate calls for nominees through the MN-S' official channels to ensure all are informed
- Include genders other than male and female.

General Assembly

The following options were suggested for the 2024 General Assembly, to address the issue of citizens from across the province being able to attend:

- Option A - “Status Quo”: This option maintains the traditional approach where all citizens can attend the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon, after the MNLA
- Option B - “Status Quo and Virtual”: In addition to the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon, citizens could attend virtually, enabling them to participate remotely
- Option C - “Status Quo, Virtual and Regional Meetings”: In addition to the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon and the virtual attendance option, citizens could also attend regional meetings connected virtually to the main in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon
- Option D – Holding an entirely virtual General Assembly a week after the MNLA.

Attendees suggested providing a breakdown of costs for each of the options and recognized the importance of establishing a verification process for electronic voting.

Western Region 2A

Feedback provided by participants, on the discussion topics presented at the following session:

- Saskatoon on June 23 and June 24, 2023
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Citizenship

- Amend the “MN-S Individual Citizenship Application Form” to exclude the section that indicates the applicant “voluntarily authorizes the MN-S to assert and advance collectively held Métis section 35 Charter rights, interests, and claims” on the applicant’s behalf; this statement may prevent people from applying for citizenship
- Individuals who self-identify as “Michif” may not self-identify as “Métis”
- “Michif” people want to be recognized in the *Constitution*
- Although Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* (Canada) recognizes Aboriginal peoples labelled as Indian, Métis and Inuit, there are Indigenous peoples who do not self-identify with these labels
- The MN-S controls the labels used to recognize citizens in the MN-S *Constitution*
- MN-S citizenship should not be denied to individuals with both First Nations and Métis ancestry based on the potential financial benefits they may receive from their First Nations ancestry; financially based guidelines should not define citizenship
- Whether someone is Métis, Michif, Half-Breed, or registered as a status Indian should not impact whether they have access to resources for educational benefits
- The *Constitution* could refer to “Otipemisiwak” (which means “I Own Myself” in Michif).

Land

- Regions should be able to pursue their own land claims
- MN-S citizens should benefit from land claims.

Language

- Recognize Michif, Cree, Dene, and English as official languages of the MN-S; this could help support language revitalization efforts.

Regions

- Regions should be able to appoint an alternate representative to attend PMC meetings when their elected Regional Representative is unable to attend.

Executive

- Clarification is needed on the advantages and disadvantages of transitioning from a four-member PMC Executive to a three-member PMC Executive
- Consider maintaining the existing four-person MN-S Executive structure (including a President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary).

Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA)

- The process for selecting Women and Youth delegates must be fair and transparent
- Change the reference to “equitable gender representation” as it excludes 2SLGBTQQIA+ and other Métis peoples

-
- Regionally elected Women and Youth should attend the MNLA and should sit with representatives from their region; they should determine who should attend the MNLA:
 - o In section 1(c), change the reference to “selected by the Métis women” to “democratically selected by the Métis women”
 - o In section 1(d), change the reference to “selected by the Métis youth” to “democratically selected by the Métis youth”
 - Only provincially elected Women and Youth should attend the MNLA
 - The age range for “Métis youth” is defined in the Elections Act as 16 to 29 years:
 - o A person, 16 years of age, may be too young to be the PMYC President, as the requirements of the role would conflict with secondary school
 - o The PMYC President should have legal capacity to make decisions (i.e., be at least 18)
 - Women and Youth representatives could be elected as part of the provincial election
 - Support Métis youth:
 - o Give Métis youth the opportunity to have a “Métis Youth Constitution”, that connects with the MN-S’ *Constitution*
 - o Elected Métis youth need to be mentored and supported in their roles.

Provincial Métis Council (PMC)

- Representation on the PMC must be fair and transparent:
 - o It is more important to have an inclusive government model than it is to avoid replicating a provincial or federal government model
 - o The PMC should include representatives of the disabled and Two-Spirit communities.

General Assembly

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- Option C - “Status Quo, Virtual and Regional Meetings”: In addition to the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon and the virtual attendance option, citizens could also attend regional meetings connected virtually to the main in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon
- Option D – Holding an entirely virtual General Assembly a week after the MNLA.

During discussion, it was suggested to maintain the in-person General Assembly in Saskatoon and provide bus transportation for a specified number of citizens from each region to attend.

Western Region 3

Feedback provided by participants, on the discussion topics presented at the following session:

- Regina on June 16 and June 17, 2023
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Citizenship

- Amend the current MN-S Individual Citizenship Application to exclude the requirement that a citizen must relinquish their MN-S Citizenship Card if they reside outside the province for more than six consecutive months; a citizen who temporarily leaves the province for work or education purposes should not lose their citizenship.

Locals

- Locals and Regions do not know who their citizens are, which may create challenges
- Consider a "Locals Act" and a "Regions Act" to address administrative details in legislation
- Clarify whether Locals can register as not-for-profit organizations and apply for grant funding
- The proposed amendments to the *Constitution* regarding Locals will be influenced by the recommendations of the Commissioner for the Review of Locals; amendments to the *Constitution* cannot be clearly considered until all legislative components mentioned in the *Constitution* are finalized
- Include in the *Constitution* that by-elections can be held electronically.

Executive

- Clarify the roles of the proposed "First Vice President" and a "Second Vice President"
- Consider structuring the Executive to include a North Vice President, South Vice President, and a Central Vice President, tasked to support their respective regions.

Métis Nation Legislative Assembly

- Clarify the definition of "serious criminal offence" and whether it corresponds to a definition in the Criminal Code of Canada.

Provincial Métis Council (PMC)

- An election must be held for a Métis women's representative (e.g., Les Filles de Madelaine)
- The *Elections Act* allows the MN-S to select an Interim Treasurer from the PMC.

Senate, Women, and Youth / Elders / Knowledge Keepers Council

- Clarify how Elders and Knowledge Keepers will be selected.

Elections Act

- Consider excluding the reference to the "Judicial Tribunal" in the *Elections Act* definitions section, as it has not been formed yet
- It is uncertain when the last Women's election was held; an election needs to be held
- Youth elect the Provincial Métis Youth Council President; consider whether all citizens should be able to vote for women and youth leaders
- Establish a limit on campaign expenses and require reporting of campaign expenses
- The proposed amendments to the *Elections Act* eliminate the roles of the impartial Adjudicator and Complaints Officer, and shifts their responsibilities to the Chief Electoral Officer, raising concerns about impartiality.

Additional Themes Identified

The following additional comment was provided in writing:

- “Thank you for the planning that went into providing this draft. It displays an immense dedication towards improving the journey of the Métis people. The presentations were extremely well done, in a positive and respectful manner. Participation was encouraged and provided with the pages open to comment. All were courteous in leading people in an active discussion. Thanks for the opportunity to be an Elder.”

Virtual and Les Filles de Madelaine (LFDM) Sessions

Feedback provided by participants, on the discussion topics presented at the following session:

- Virtual Sessions on June 8, June 9, June 29, and October 12, 2023
 - Les Filles de Madelaine Session on September 29, 2023
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Land

- The *Constitution* should acknowledge the Southern Michif people, who have connections to land in the Qu'Appelle Valley, the Souris Valley, Estevan and other areas
- Consider omitting Article 4 – Land, as the MN-S should not be asserting the right to land on behalf of its citizens:
 - o A resolution at a prior MNLA indicated that the North West Land Claim, “addresses the Métis right to land, once and for all”, although MN S’ Legal Counsel indicated that this would not restrict the MN-S to just one area
 - o The *Constitution* should not indicate that our right to self-government is through a land claim, as the inherent right to land and self-government already exists
- Before negotiating claims related to lands, it is imperative to clarify the value of the lands involved in land claims.

Locals

- Further information is needed on how MN-S citizens who are not connected to Locals will be included in the MN-S structure; a Local Act could address this
- Clarify how the amended *Constitution* will address Locals that are not connected to the MN-S
- Métis people may prefer to connect with the Local where they were raised, rather than the Local where they currently reside
- Some remote Locals will not be able to hold elections at a specified time as they meet when the weather permits
- Locals should be able to have their own *Constitution*
- The election process for Locals is not currently followed at the Local level
- Consider holding Local elections concurrently with the provincial election
- Consider the legalities of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Affairs Canada (the "Government of Canada") retaining Ernst & Young Inc. in February 2016 to act as an “Expert Advisor” for the MN-S Secretariate Inc.
- Locals must be directly connected to Regions to prevent the creation of false Locals and potential funding conflicts; the Regional Council must be involved in creating new Locals
- Encourage connections between Locals, Regions, and the Métis people
- Consider producing information brochures about each of the Locals
- Review other Governing Members’ processes related to by-elections
- Clarify how Local Presidents can be replaced
- Clarify if multiple positions can be held by one person, at the Regional and Local levels
- Electronic voting could be used for by-elections, although in-person voting is preferred.

Regions

- Consider a position specifically for a post-secondary student on the PMC
- Clarify the age range for “Métis youth”
- Regional Councils should not have authority over Local Presidents
- Clarify the process for removing elected representatives who fail to fulfill their responsibilities
- The only LFDM position that should be on the ballot should be the LFDM President.

Executive

- Clarify the proposed roles of First Vice President and Second Vice President
- Consider establishing processes for suspension and replacement
- Describe the role of the President as a spokesperson rather than "the head of government"
- Justify the need for two Vice Presidents
- Rather than adding a second Vice President, use that money for by-elections
- Consider reviewing and employing the “Convention of Forty” methodology
- Clarify the justification for the role of Treasurer
- Reflect on the Executive structures of the other Governing Members
- Consider replacing the terminology, “President/Vice President” with, “Chairperson/Vice Chairperson”
- Include representation on the Executive, specifically from the North, Central, and South.

Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA)

- Section 8 of Article 9 does not specify whether the “serious criminal offence” must have occurred before or after the member took office
- The MNLA's role is not to determine whether an offence is "serious"; that responsibility belongs to the MN-S Judiciary process
- Four elected Métis women should be members of the MNLA
- Consider replacing references to “courts” with “tribunals”
- Establish and implement a dispute resolution mechanism
- Increase accessibility and provide a variety of options for citizens to attend an AGA.

Provincial Métis Council (PMC)

- Raise the age range for a Métis youth representative to participate on the PMC
- Elect the Métis youth representative concurrently with the Regional Council and Executive
- Include a representative on the PMC who identifies as a non-binary or two-spirit person
- Gather feedback on citizen’s preference for handling the General Assembly.

Senate, Women, and Youth / Elders / Knowledge Keepers Council

- Clarification is needed on the definition of “Elders/Knowledge Keepers”
- Consider replacing the reference to “equitable gender representation” with a more inclusive, non-gender-based definition that includes two-spirit peoples.

Amending Formula

- Increase feedback opportunities for MN-S citizens (who are not connected to Locals)
- Enable Métis citizens (including those who are not connected to a Local) to call a General Assembly (i.e., set a percentage of citizens that can call a General Assembly)
- Consider using an electronic feedback process
- Clarify the ratification process.

Elections Act

- Consider holding local elections concurrently with provincial elections
- Enable Locals to have their own *Constitution*
- Add the position of LFDM on the MN-S ballot
- Inclusivity:
 - o Consider a review of what age range comprises a ‘youth’ designation
 - o Métis youth who are MN-S employees should not be excluded from participating on the PMYC at the MNLA
 - o Shorten the PMYC terms to two years, similar to other board processes to provide the opportunity for a greater number of Métis youth to participate
 - o Designate women, youth and non-binary/two-spirit representatives in each region
- Voter Registry:
 - o Consider allowing citizens to opt-in to a shared voters list or redact personal information
 - o Safeguard citizens’ information
- Contribution Limits:
 - o Lower the proposed campaign contribution limit
 - o Disallow contributions from non-Métis citizens or entities
 - o Explore the possibility of disallowing campaign contributions entirely.

Additional Comments

- Provide clear announcements when amendments to the *Constitution* will be made and implemented.

Summary of Key Themes

The following key themes were identified during the 2023 Consultation Sessions

Building Trust

- Establish measures to build and sustain trust among all Métis citizens; ensure they feel heard
- Task a neutral party to address complaints from Métis people, to avoid conflicts of interest
- Create an Ethics Commission to monitor and enforce integrity issues and remove anyone from the MNLA who is proven guilty of misappropriation
- Require elected officials to respect and adhere to the *Constitution*; impose penalties for misconduct
- Develop a system to manage individuals falsely claiming Métis identity for financial gain
- Conduct financial audits to reveal any corruption within the Métis government
- Require justifications for all eliminations from the *Constitution*, to avoid perceptions of mistrust
- Address historical mistrust, such as government-initiated land sales, after forced evacuations.

Campaign Contributions

- Consider lowering the proposed campaign contribution limit (or eliminating campaign contributions entirely) to restrict large entities from influencing election campaigns
- Prohibit campaign contributions from non-Métis individuals or organizations
- Enforce regulations for campaign expenditures, including comprehensive tracking and transparent reporting, to promote fairness and accountability in election campaigns.

Citizenship Engagement and Participation

- Access to citizenship, education or other supports should not be contingent on someone's registration status, or benefits *potentially* available to them through their First Nations' ancestry
- Citizenship should not be forfeited due to temporary absences
- Allow Métis people to police their own harvesting, with established accountability measures
- Protect citizens' privacy by requiring consent for the release of their personal information
- Gather feedback from Métis who decided not to pursue Métis citizenship
- Recognize official MN-S languages including Michif, Cree, Dene, and English:
 - o Seek feedback from Métis individuals on the traditional languages they speak
 - o Employ translators to help Elders and other participants engage in Constitutional Reform Consultation Sessions, especially in more remote areas
 - o Prioritize Michif education in schools
 - o Include Michif, Cree, Dene, and potentially French in the *Constitution*
- The Constitutional reform process requires the involvement of the Métis of Saskatchewan:
 - o Present proposed amendments to the *Constitution* in clear and understandable language to enable informed decision-making; consider offering workshops to explain the proposed amendments
 - o Provide information with visual aids and explanatory videos
 - o Provide time to review the draft *Elections Act* before constitutional amendments are considered
 - o Enable feedback at a comfortable pace
 - o Protect minority opinions during the engagement sessions
 - o Remind attendees that attending sessions will not be misconstrued as implicit agreement
 - o Encourage participation from all ages
 - o Collaborate with Local Presidents to ensure sessions do not coincide with other events
 - o Promote attendance at sessions, through diverse and local advertising channels, well in advance.

Empowering Métis Youth

- Elected Métis youth representatives require access to mentors, to support their success
- Clarify the age range for youth representatives, in *all* MN-S legislation; consider dividing responsibilities between junior and senior youth representatives
- Clarify that candidates in PMYC elections must not exceed the age of 29 by the end of their term
- Clarification is needed on the role of youth representatives
- Allocate sufficient funding for Youth representatives, to support their career transition
- Include Youth representatives on the provincial elections ballot.

Enhancing Representation and Roles in MN-S Governance

- Advocate for fair, transparent, and inclusive representation in MN-S governance structures
- Encourage a governance model that values grassroots input, and hears the voices of all members
- Monitor leadership, and implement accountability mechanisms for future governments
- Ensure that decision-making extends beyond the MN-S Executive
- Clarify the proposed amendments to the Executive structure:
 - o Consider potential effects on roles, responsibilities, and remuneration
 - o Reassess the need for “gender-based” positions
 - o Explain the Executive roles and responsibilities
 - o Synchronize the elections of Executives, Regional Representatives, and Youth
 - o Ensure candidates meet specific qualifications (e.g., educational criteria)
 - o Maintain the current Executive structure (i.e., the four-position Executive); assign portfolios based on qualifications
 - o Clarify amendments to the Treasurer role and consider renaming it “Financial Officer”
- Establish transparent election processes for Women's Representatives
 - o Consider including the Women's Representative on the provincial ballots
 - o Provide women representatives equitable compensation
- Engage Elders/Knowledge Keepers:
 - o Gain a better understanding of how Elders want to participate at MNLAs
 - o Elders should be MNLA-appointed, have self-nomination rights, and be equally represented
 - o Involve regions in selecting one Elder and an alternate to share duties
- Require PMC meetings to be more accessible (e.g., livestreamed)
- 2SLGBTQQIA+ Métis must be represented
- Consider excluding the need for a by-election, if a term is near completion when a resignation occurs; if by-elections must be referenced, consider stating that they can be held electronically.

Land Claims

- Métis people should be informed and consulted about land-related matters
- Protect the land, the people, and their rights to harvesting, hunting, fishing, and trapping
- Clarify the Article on “Land”; there is a perceived association with the Northwest land claim
- Clarify this section, as it may currently imply that the MN-S has control over the land
- Acknowledge the health impacts of industry, mining, and the destruction of land
- Review the Memorandum of Understanding with NexGen and its long-term impacts and opportunities
- Work with Elders to deepen connections to the land.

Locals

- Define what a Local is and provide a list of existing Locals
- Invite Locals to attend the 2024 Constitutional Reform Sessions, and provide them with access to resources and expert guidance on the proposed legislative amendments
- Provide an example of a *Locals Act* and further information on how the *Locals Act* would function

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- Maintain certain functions of Locals in the *Constitution*, and others in separate legislation
 - Establish enforcement mechanisms and conditions for Local Presidents
 - Prioritize equal allocations among Locals; address funding disparities between the North and South
 - Allow Locals and Regions to independently apply for and manage funding from sources external to the MN-S, to support their programs, services, and engagement initiatives; they should be required to explain and monitor how any funds, wages and related expenses were allocated
 - Set clear rules related to Locals' capacity and funding; consider an automated funding distribution
 - Prepare Locals and Regions for self-government by ensuring they know who their citizens are
 - Enable Locals to determine membership eligibility, not politicians or regions
 - The Commissioner for the Review of Locals' report may influence proposed constitutional amendments
 - Establish a process for Métis citizens when they relocate; prohibit Locals from denying membership
 - Enable Métis people to connect with the Local they grew up in, rather than the Local they reside in.

Métis Nation Legislative Assemblies (MNLAs)

- Seat regionally elected representatives together with their regions at MNLAs
- Implement accountability and enforcement mechanisms for elected representatives who fail to fulfill their responsibilities or adhere to the *Constitution* (e.g., leaving the MNLA early, etc.)
- Amend the current MNLA quorum requirement from 75, to a basic majority (i.e., 50% plus one)
- Reduce the number of MNLA quorum checks; consider priority agenda items first (e.g., budgets)
- Maintain existing quorum requirements and incorporate measures to prevent regions from dominating decisions
- Consider four representatives from the four corners (North, South, East, West).
- The MN-S President should not assign portfolios to prevent preferential treatment
- Provide Local Presidents with an opportunity to view and approve the report from the Commissioner for Review of Locals, before the next MNLA.

Voting Eligibility

- MN-S citizenship cards could suffice to confirm voter eligibility (from anywhere in the province)
- Métis citizens should be required to present their citizenship card to vote during elections
- Ensure voters do not have “dual” citizenship (i.e., Métis citizenship and First Nations status)
- Proposed constitutional amendments must not diminish the public voice or risk future voting rights
 - o Consider increasing the voting age to 18
 - o Implement electronic voting to lower by-election expenses
 - o Divide regions into proportional electoral zones to ensure equal voting power.

Other

- Consider the financial implications of removing Article 7(10), on efforts towards self-governance
- Exclude references to a “Judicial Tribunal” in MN-S legislation, as it has not been established
- Enable a broader reach for Annual General Meetings, with support from an external facilitator, to provide an opportunity for all Métis of Saskatchewan to connect virtually
- There should be a clause in the “Citizenship” section, specifically related to adopted people
- Support inclusivity rather than divisiveness; recognize similarities between Indigenous peoples and their experiences.
- Consider the *Constitution* as a central authority; eliminate the Regions
- Ensure individuals can voice concerns without political repercussions
- Prioritize the *Constitution* for some matters over legislation, as it is difficult to amend.

Frequently Asked Questions

Some of the frequently asked questions (Q) and answers (A) raised during the 2023 Consultation Sessions

Q: Who compiled all the proposed amendments to the *Constitution* and the *Elections Act*?

A: The proposed amendments to the Constitution and the Elections Act were informed by elected officials, senior staff, and feedback gathered at consultation sessions held in 2019 and 2022, and were guided by legal counsel.

Q: Can a person with a MN-S citizenship card also be a member of another Métis organization/group?

A: Currently, the MN-S does not have access to other Métis membership lists, and other Métis organizations do not have access to the MN-S citizenship list.

Q: Is the MN-S ensuring that MN-S citizens are not also registered in the Indian Registry?

A: Yes, the MN-S Registry consistently cross-checks its own registry with the Indian Registry.

Q: Many MN-S citizens are not connected to Locals. How are they included in the MN-S structure?

A: The Commissioner for the Review of Locals may make recommendations, which could provide further guidance on this. Currently, MN-S citizens are not required to be connected with a Local. Citizens are represented by the elected MN-S Executive and Regional Representatives.

Q: Will the amended *Constitution* acknowledge Locals who are not connected to the MN-S?

A: The Commissioner for the Review of Locals is gathering information on Locals. An interim report is anticipated from his office in August 2023. Contact details for the Commissioner, are posted online.

Q: Article 5 proposes that Locals cannot be incorporated under laws of “other external governments”. Will Locals need to register as non-profit organizations?

A: Article 5 refers to details that will be addressed through MN-S legislation, which will soon be introduced in parliament. First Nations do not need to incorporate, as the Indian Act provides statutory authority for dealing with banks and accessing funding. The MN-S, however, needs to establish legislation that will be recognized by external authorities. Locals currently can incorporate. No amendments are required until the MN-S has further considered this matter.

Q: Are the proposed amendments to the *Constitution*, moving towards the elimination of Locals?

A: Locals are not coming out of the Constitution. Proposed amendments related to Locals will be added to the Constitution after recommendations from the Commissioner for the Review of Locals are reviewed.

Q: What happens to the proposed amendments to the *Constitution* if the MN-S does not achieve self-government? Will the MN-S remain a not-for-profit organization?

A: Any approved amendments to the Constitution will be valid, regardless of whether (or not) the MN-S advances to being a self-government.

Q: Is Les Filles des Madelaine recognized in the *Constitution*, as the group representing the Métis Women of the MN-S?

A: The Constitution acknowledges the "Métis Women of Saskatchewan," the organization's original name when it was first included in the Constitution.

Q: Does the *Constitution* require that all vacancies on the Executive be filled immediately?

A: The Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act 2007 indicates that the MNLA shall elect from the PMC members, an interim Executive member; and may either direct the Chief Electoral Officer to issue a declaration of a by-election for the election of a candidate to fill the vacancy, or declare that the by-election of the interim Executive Member be postponed.

The Constitution indicates, that where a vacancy is created for any reason, including death or resignation, the MNLA shall elect from the PMC members, an interim Executive member, who shall serve until a by-election has been held and the vacancy filled.

Information Items

Documents provided for reference at the 2023 Constitutional Reform Consultation Sessions

The following items were reviewed at the Constitutional Reform Consultation Sessions, and may be requested by email from the MN-S (info@metisvoice.ca):

1. Voice of the People 2023 Constitutional Reform Revised *Constitution* Workbook
2. Voice of the People 2023 Constitutional Reform Revised *Elections Act* Workbook