



Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta

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Self Government

To: Otipemisiwak Métis Government Citizens and Communities

From: Andrea Sandmaier, President, Otipemisiwak Métis Government

Date: May 13, 2024

Re: Update on Métis Nation within Alberta Self-Government Implementation

I am pleased to provide the following update on the progress being made in relation to implementing the Métis Nation's inherent right to self-government in Alberta.

Our Métis Government in Alberta

Over generations, our ancestors built the Métis Nation of Alberta ("MNA")—now the Otipemisiwak Métis Government ("OMG")—as our Métis self-government here in Alberta.

The Métis Nation within Alberta is made up of over 68,000+ registered, rights-bearing Métis Citizens and includes the Métis communities comprised of those Citizens.

The Métis Nation within Alberta is a distinct Métis collectivity that holds the inherent right to self-determination and self-government as protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. It is one of the Métis collectivities that makes up the larger Métis Nation today.

The Métis Nation within Alberta exclusively mandates the OMG to be its government. The OMG is made up of four distinct branches: (1) Citizens' Gathering, (2) Citizens' Council, (3) District Councils, and (4) Judicial Branch.

Our Citizens willingly chose the OMG as their Métis government. We have built a Métis government based on our shared vision of self-government. Others may have different visions and can pursue their own paths; however, our choices and path—as the Métis Nation within Alberta—must be respected.

Our unique Métis self-government is based on the advancement of Métis rights and bringing all our Citizens and communities from across Alberta together. We have always known that we are stronger when we stand united.

Nothing has ever come easy to the Métis Nation within Alberta. However, even in the face of many challenges, obstacles, and adversity, we have achieved great things together. Our resolve is only strengthened when others deny or underestimate us.

Recognition of Our Métis Government by Canada

In recent years, we have made significant progress on our Métis rights and self-government agenda with the federal government (“**Canada**”). These gains came after decades of Métis fighting for our rights in the courts based on section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

In 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada, in the *Harry Daniels v. Canada* case, confirmed that the federal government has constitutional responsibility to advance nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationships with us, like it has already done with First Nations and Inuit.

In 2017, we began formal negotiations with Canada based on our Framework Agreement. In 2019, we signed our first self-government agreement with Canada that set out a clear roadmap for the recognition of our Métis government.

On February 24, 2023, our hard work paid off when we signed our Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Implementation Agreement with Canada (“**2023 Self-Government Agreement**”). This agreement was a historic turning point because:

1. Canada immediately recognized the Métis Nation within Alberta—as one of the Métis collectivities that makes up the Métis Nation—possesses the inherent right to self-government that is protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*;
2. Canada immediately recognized the MNA (now OMG) as the Métis government that represents the Métis Nation within Alberta with jurisdiction and law-making power over our citizenship, elections, and internal operations, as well as child and family services; and
3. Canada committed to negotiating a self-government treaty with us by February 2025 (“**OMG Self-Government Treaty**”).

Canada has legally bound itself to the commitments in our 2023 Self-Government Agreement. This agreement does not have any termination clause.

Even if the government in Ottawa changes, our agreement cannot simply be thrown away. Our agreement engages the honour of the Crown in its interpretation and implementation.

Update on Self-Government Negotiations

Based on the commitments in our 2023 Self-Government Agreement, we expect to have a draft version of our OMG Self-Government Treaty to bring to our Citizens’ Gathering in August 2024.

I look forward to delivering on the dream of our ancestors and to finally put in place a constitutionally protected agreement (i.e., a treaty) that sets out our nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada for generations to come.

Following the OMG Self-Government Treaty being tabled at our Citizens' Gathering, we will be undertaking extensive consultations on this historic document, leading to an eventual ratification vote on the treaty where all our Citizens will have an opportunity to cast a ballot.

We also continue to negotiate with Canada on our long-term Fiscal Financing Agreement to support our self-government for generations to come, as well as negotiate on a Tax Treatment Agreement and Implementation Plan.

Our Internal Self-Government Implementation

In November 2022, after generations of our Citizens calling for a Constitution, the OMG Constitution—as Métis law—was approved in the largest ratification vote ever undertaken by an Indigenous Nation in Canada.

All of our Citizens over 16 years of age had an opportunity to vote. Over 15,000 Citizens voted, and a resounding 97.9% voted “yes” to adopting the OMG Constitution.

Based on our ratification vote, the MNA has clear direction to implement the OMG Constitution. In order to fully implement our Constitution, the following steps are required:

- ⇒ Update the MNA bylaws to give effect to the OMG Constitution. (Completed: May 2023)
- ⇒ Conduct the first election under our OMG Constitution. (Completed: September 2023)
- ⇒ Work with willing MNA Locals to transition to District Councils under the OMG Constitution and/or establish brand new District Councils. (Ongoing)
- ⇒ Wind down Regional Councils and transfer all assets to relevant District Councils. (Ongoing)

STEP ONE: Update the MNA Bylaws - Completed

On May 27, 2023, the MNA held a Special Meeting to adopt new Bylaws to give effect to the OMG Constitution. A copy of these new Bylaws is available for review [here](#).

This Special Meeting, which was attended by over 2,000 Citizens, was called to implement the overwhelming direction of the over 15,000 Citizens who voted in the ratification vote.

STEP TWO: Elections Under Our OMG Constitution - Completed

Based on our Constitution, we held our first province-wide election in September 2023.

In these elections, the OMG Citizens' Council was elected. In addition, several District Council Captains (where the MNA had no existing Locals) were also elected.

All Citizens over 16 years old were eligible to vote in this historic election, and over 8,000 Citizens voted. This was the largest voter turnout in any Métis government election ever held in Canada.

STEP THREE: Transition of Locals to District Councils - Ongoing

As set out in the OMG Constitution, we now have 22 Districts that span the province.

In each of these Districts, a new District Council will be established. District Councils are their own branch of the OMG with their own distinct “authorities” and “responsibilities” as set out in Chapter 17 of the OMG Constitution.

I am pleased to report that as of April 2024, a total of 11 sets of draft Bylaws for District Councils have been approved in-principle by the Citizens’ Council.

For those Districts where there was no existing MNA Local, we expect District Councils to be incorporated soon, with elections being held in fall or winter of 2024.

For those Districts where there is an existing Local or multiple Locals, we expect that those Locals will be holding meetings over the next few months to formally adopt new bylaws and then hold elections in fall or winter of 2024 as well.

In other Districts where Locals may require more time to complete the Transition Process, they may hold their elections in the next batch of District Council elections that will be held in early 2025.

In Districts where we have received a petition signed by a minimum of ten percent (10%) but not more than 100 verified eligible Citizens of a District to elect a Captain, the election of a District Captain will be held in fall or winter of 2024 as well.

Our government’s Senior Executive Officer (Aaron Barner) and Senior Director for Self-Government (Garrett Tomlinson) have also recently issued a memo that provides additional details and timelines related to the Transition Process.

I am excited by the progress being made. We will continue to provide updates on our progress as we move forward on the Transition Process—together.

STEP FOUR: Wind Down of Regional Councils - Ongoing

As a part of the Transition Process, the six MNA Regional Councils will ultimately need to be wound down with the assets from those Regional Councils being transferred to relevant District Councils.

Transition plans for each of the Regional Councils will need to be developed to meet the unique need of each District. For example, the MNA Region 2 Council will be converted to the St. Paul-Cold Lake Métis District Council, since there is no active Local in that District.

In other former MNA Regions where there are little to no assets, this wind down process is well on its way. In others, where the Regional Council has assets or businesses, District Councils may need to be established first, so those assets stay at the level of the relevant District or Districts.

Each MNA Regional Council requires its own Transition Plan to address its unique needs. In all of these Transition Plans, however, the assets or businesses that have been built up must stay at the local (i.e., District) levels.

Conclusion

As you can see, much progress is happening in relation to the implementation of our Métis self-government here in Alberta. I look forward to continuing to provide you with updates on the work being undertaken and successes being achieved across the Métis Nation within Alberta.

I want to thank the Citizens' Council, Cabinet, District Council Captains, Local Presidents and all our elected leadership who are supporting this historic process. I also want to thank all of our amazing staff—across all of our Métis government—who work tirelessly every day and are supporting this important work.