



*Paul L.A.H. Chartrand*

**Niw\_Hk\_M\_Kanak (“All My Relations”):  
Metis-First Nations Relations**

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("All My Relations")  
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Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, I.P.C.  
College of Law  
University of Saskatchewan  
Email> [paul.chartrand@usask.ca](mailto:paul.chartrand@usask.ca)

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## **Niw\_hk\_m\_kanak** **“All My relations”**

### **1. About this paper**

This paper was written specially for the National Centre for First Nations Governance, (the Centre or NCFNG) at its request.

There are a few things about this paper that should be explained right away. I have tried to write it in popular language, which means I have tried to avoid the special language or jargon of the university or professional people. I have included a couple of references as endnotes and a short selected bibliography for those who may be interested in reading more about some of the things I mention.

This paper deals in ideas. The ideas are those of the First Nations and Metis people, and can only be properly captured in their original language. But several languages are spoken by the people. It would not be practical to write the paper in one language that is understood by few speakers and readers. Because of that, I have written the paper in English so that everybody can read it, but I have used a few expressions in *N\_hiyaw\_win* (the Cree language). This is mostly to symbolize the importance of language as the language of ideas. Languages have other uses, too. They can be the language of the home, the school, or the business place. Where these uses are dying, as they are for many Aboriginal languages, they can still perform as the language of ceremony and the language of ideas.

In writing this paper, I have tried to be faithful to the ideas, values, and ways of the communities that I write about. I have started, as you can see, with an ancient protocol that is still observed today by the Michif and First Nations people in ceremonies: “*Niw\_hk\_m\_kanak*.” It is invoked at the beginning and the end and acknowledges ‘all our relations.’ When used this way, the expression means not only the living ones, humans, animals, plants, but also the non-living and those who live in the world not bound by time, the Other-Than-Human-Beings, as well as our ancestors and also the future generations. We call on all our relations to assist us in making our world a better place for the future generations. This goal is also what this paper must be about. It is also a primary goal of the NCFNG.

This paper is about Metis and First Nations people, and the relations or relationships between them. I shall call these relations *Miyo-W\_hk\_htowin*. The paper tries to assist the Centre’s goal of looking for ideas that may be useful in thinking about political leadership and how ‘self-government’ might be brought about, particularly by cooperative political action. Who will argue against the idea that there is more strength in political unity than in disunity?

The paper discusses relations between Metis (or as said in the old way: ‘Michif’) and First Nations people. It looks at relations as they were *kay\_s ohci*, (a long time ago) and as they are *anohc* (now). This discussion looks for ideas and ways of encouraging

cooperative relations so that everyone can benefit as we strive to realize self-government. That is what this paper is about.

## **2. About the author's family and people**

To begin, I must introduce myself. I was born in 1943, the son of Joseph Aime Chartrand and Antoinette Bouvier of Saint-Laurent, Manitoba. That is a Michif community located on the south-east shore of Lake Manitoba. It is the only community outside the Red River area that was divided into those long 'river lots' that were part of the Metis lands deal in the *Manitoba Act 1870*. My father's parents were Baptiste (Ah-chish) Chartrand and Clarisse Larence. Her parents were Norbert Larence and Josephthe Parenteau. My *mosh\_m*'s parents were Pierre Chartrand and Marie Pangman, the daughter of 'Bostonnais' Pangman and Wewejikabawik of the Saulteaux people. Pierre's parents were Baptiste Chartrand and Jenwah'bik'ahbik, also a Saulteaux woman. These lives take us into the 1700s.

'Bostonnais' Pangman got his nickname because his father, Peter Pangman, was a fur trader from New England, and apparently the city of Boston was then understood as symbolizing that area. Bostonnais was known as one of the leaders of the Metis around the time when the Selkirk settlers were first brought to the Red River region. Sheryl Farrell-Racette, a Metis historian who has done a lot of digging around archives, told me that Bostonnais was at the Battle of Seven Oaks on June 19, 1816, where our people successfully repelled an armed attack by Governor Semple and his men. The Canadian history books call the fight at Seven Oaks ('la gournouillere') a 'massacre.' Well, my Michif translation of 'massacre' for this event is: 'decisive victory for our side'. That battle is an important part of the Michif history, culture and spirit. On the night of the battle, 'Pierrich' Falcon composed a song to celebrate the victory. In it he delights in recounting how our men chased down 'the English who came to steal our country.' (English translation) The song became known as the 'Metis National Anthem' and it was sung by the men to boost their spirits at the battle of Fish Creek in the spring of 1885, prior to the fall of Batoche. That anthem is far older than the anthem of Canada.

My mother's nickname was 'La Canayenne' because she was French-Canadian. Her family traces its roots to Quebec and a boatload of people from France in the mid-seventeenth century. Her parents were Pierre Bouvier and Rose-Alma Belanger.

My father, like many Michif of his generation, had a number of trades or occupations during his life, including trapping and fishing, and then carpentry from the mid-1950s when trapping was no longer a good way to support a family with twelve children. The Chartrand family has been in the Lake Manitoba area for a long time. The Chartrands were one of the first families to build their homes near the lake when people first began to live in houses, probably in the late 1820s or early 1830s.

My ancestors were part of the old Michif community that did not stay in one place, but that moved over a very wide territory. This required making alliances with other peoples in the territory, and at times fighting over territory. A few years ago I was appointed by

the government of Manitoba to a commission to advise it on Aboriginal policy. My co-commissioner was Wendy Whitecloud. She is a Dakota and has an appointment at the law school at the University of Manitoba. I told her one of the old stories I heard from my father when I was little about an incident involving the Dakota and a group of our people that was camped at night while hunting buffalo in Dakota territory. A man named Lambert was patrolling the perimeter of the circle of Red River carts when he happened to bump into a Dakota man. They grabbed each other and hung on for a while, staring intently at each other, until each let go and went off without anything else happening. I bet a Hollywood version of that story would have a different ending. That story happened *kay\_s* ago. Our peoples, the Michif and the Dakota, have had very good and close relations now for a long time, including some treaty agreements.

Some of my ancestors would have traveled very far to the south and west, because in the buffalo days our people would go as far as the Rocky Mountains to hunt. My Elders at home told me this. One of my grandmother's grandfathers, Jean-Baptiste Larence, is buried near Pembina, North Dakota. Time has changed little about our traveling ways. I have heard my parents talk about trapping as far up as Cumberland House during the 1930s and at least one of my older brothers was born in northern Manitoba. I have not traveled to hunt buffalo as did my ancestors. I have not traveled to trap muskrats as my father did. But I have gone as far south as Australia where I studied and taught law from 1974 to 1982. To the west, I have gone as far as Japan, which is regarded as part of the Far East. Eastward, my travels working at the United Nations for indigenous people, or as a law professor, have taken me as far as Germany and Switzerland. As a commissioner on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples I traveled north to Nuuk and Sissimiut in Kallallit Nunaat (Greenland) and to Pangnirtung on Baffin Island.

### **3. Acknowledgements<sup>1</sup>**

In thinking about *Miyo-W\_hk\_htowin* I have had to rely on knowledge gained from many people over many years, some of them family and friends. I owe much to my family and the people in St. Laurent, among them my cousins Albert (Chi'Abeh) Chartrand and W. Yvon Dumont, the former Metis National Council leader and Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.

I want especially to acknowledge Maria Campbell who has been my friend for many years, and with whom I have had many long discussions about the languages, history and ideas of our peoples in the Saskatchewan River and Prairie regions. Maria is an Elder, an internationally acclaimed author, playwright, philosopher and teacher, a distinguished Canadian who has received numerous awards for her work and community service. She is fluent in most of the indigenous languages of the Prairie and parklands region of the West, including Cree and Michif. I also recall countless hours of discussions with my friend the late Harry W. Daniels, the irrepressible Metis leader who headed the Native Council of Canada (NCC) that represented both Metis and Indian people. Later the NCC became the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

There are others who taught me lessons in many ways. Stan Cuthand is a Cree Elder, an expert linguist and historian from Little Pine whom I first met in Manitoba *kay\_s* ago, and whose brother Adam was the first President of the Manitoba Metis Federation in the 1960s. The brothers are grandsons of war chief Cut Knife. Judge Gerald (Gerry) Morin from Peter Ballantyne and Cumberland House is now the Cree speaking judge of the Cree Court in Saskatchewan; Elijah Harper from Red Sucker Lake in Oji-Cree territory needs little introduction. Others who have helped me include the late Elder Art Solomon; Tony Belcourt, the Metis leader from Lac St. Anne; the legendary Ken Young from Opaskwiak; Phil and Jerry Fontaine from Sagkeeng, both chiefs, and *anohc* Phil is the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations; the late Norman Gunn and Oliver Monkman, both from Norway House; Ovide Mercredi and Billy-Jo Delaronde, two men who have held elected office with both the Manitoba Metis Federation and as chiefs of First Nations; Metis Elder Edward Head from Sherridan; Ron Nadeau, a transplanted Algonquin living in Manitoba, and Bill Wilson (Hemas Kla-Lee-Lee-Kla) from Vancouver Island.

My eyes were really opened to Michif-First Nation relations when I visited the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation in North Dakota many years ago. I was fascinated to find Michif and Indian people making up a federally recognized tribe in the United States. What fascinated me most was the similarity in language and ways that we shared. When I first went there I had met the late Elder and linguist Ida Rose Allard and ‘Badger’ DeMontigny. In recent years I met there not only my friend and colleague Nicolas Vrooman, but one of the most influential Elders I have known, Francis (Eagleheart) Cree, the internationally acclaimed Elder and his son-in-law Richard Laframboise (Miskomin). They have taught me not only a philosophy of peace and unity, but also a fascinating history about our respective peoples, which includes the ancient prophecies of the birch bark scrolls that predicted the unity of our peoples. At ceremonies in Turtle Mountain I met Elder Gordon Waindebence, Anishinabe from Ontario, who taught me more in his drum songs than he is likely ever to know.

In recent years I have met Danny Musqua from Keeseekoose, a Saulteaux-speaking Elder who opened up for me entirely new insights into the world of the Plains Anishinabeg; Franklin Carriere the King Trapper; John Beaucage the Anishinabe leader; Neal McLeod the young Cree scholar and humorist. In the last year, in association with Adelard Blackman, I have had the privilege of meeting many people from Buffalo River Dene Nation, including several Elders, Chief Louis Chinalquay, the Sylvestre, Catarat and Benjamin families, and others, new relatives who are taking their fight for survival as Dene to the international arena.

To all these, and to the great many students I have been privileged to teach and learn from for more than four decades, I say *gitchee meegwetch, merci cho*, for your gifts of knowledge, and especially for the great humour with which it has so often been delivered.

### **3. About Metis and First Nations people and *Miyou/Wah'koh'tohwin***

In this paper I write about the Metis or Michif people that are part of the stories that I have heard, either when I was growing up or more recently.<sup>2</sup> There are other people from other places who also call themselves ‘Metis’ people. I do not know their stories and I do not write about them here. The territory shared by the First Nations and Metis that I write about covers in a rough way what is today the Prairie Provinces, but it also includes part of the northern States south of the border. I will return to that later.

When I was growing up I did not hear the word ‘Metis’ being said the way you hear it said now in English. We called ourselves ‘Michif’, or a variation of it, ‘Michiss’. You have to be careful how you pronounce that last word. If you are off a little bit, it means something altogether different in Cree and it will make people laugh! Although today practically all our people speak English, English was not the language of the home for many of us. Many of us come from communities where one or more of the indigenous languages, or perhaps a mixture of these languages, was the language of everyday. Michif is what we spoke. When we are asked what language we are speaking, we answer like everyone else by saying we are speaking ‘our’ language. So Michif people say we are speaking Michif, just as English people say they are speaking English; the French say they are speaking French, and so on. We do not have one language. Some of us speak fluent Saulteaux, or Cree; others speak French with mixtures of these two indigenous languages, or only one of them. People also mix up French and English. There is a good story about the fiddler who identified himself by saying; “You know me... I play violin **a** gauche.’

This paper is also about ‘First Nations’ people. The expression ‘First Nations’ is used by different people to mean different things. Sometimes it means ‘Indian Bands’ under the *Indian Act*. That is the meaning in some new laws. Others use it to refer to the ancient peoples like the *\_nin\_wak* or *N\_hiyawak* (Cree); *Anishinabeg* or *Saulteaux* (Ojibwe), *Nakoda* (Stoney or Assiniboine), and others. Many ordinary people on reserves and in other communities prefer the term ‘Indian’ and many say they are ‘Treaty Indians’. In this paper ‘First Nations’ means ‘Indians’ but not in the sense of the *Indian Act*. When referring to one or a few ‘Indian’ or ‘First Nation’ peoples, I will use the people’s own names for themselves, such as *N\_hiyawak* or Cree. Respect asks us to use the same words as the people themselves use when referring to them.

The Michif and the First Nations shared our territory. The land gives you your culture, so as we shared the land, so we also shared some of our ways of life. We had, *kay\_s* ago, a shared economy based on hunting the bison with the horse, supplemented by hunting, fishing and trapping over wide regions. We shared language. We had to, in order to develop our cooperative economic and political actions. Where the land is flat people meet easily and deal with one another and they develop a common way of communicating. In bumpy or mountainous areas, where it is not as easy for distinct peoples to meet one another, you will find many distinct languages. Travelers in our flat lands in the 1800s wrote about the ‘polyglot jabber’ of the Michif, a people with a regional identity that required fluency in several languages. The land gives you your culture.

The First Nations and Michif shared aspects of culture. In our own times, if you talk to Michif and First Nation people in this region, you will find that there are many everyday things that everyone does, or knows about. Everyone likes bannock and we all laugh at our memories of using lard with it. If you are from here you will have stories about that boiled ‘pudding in a bag’. Knowing the fine points of digging ‘snake root’ and skinning a rabbit allows everyone to detect the humour in a good story about those activities. Everyone has a story about healing with medicines from the land. I have heard both First Nations and Metis people recount the stories of W\_sahk\_c\_hk, the Trickster, as he is known in Cree.

The close relations between Metis and First Nations people in the past were evident in many ways. Some people would live with one community and then with another. The Metis leader Gabriel Dumont spent time living with the Turtle Mountain Chippewa not long before the famous battles on the Saskatchewan River in 1885. Those who belonged were not only those who were born into the people or nation. There was always intermarriage<sup>3</sup> and the ancient adoption ceremonies of ‘making relatives’ is still practised *anohc* amongst Plains peoples.

The emergence of the Metis as an indigenous people distinct from the ancient First Nations peoples is not a well-known story, even though the Metis have featured prominently in the general histories of western Canada. It is not possible to fully explain the emergence of a people in a short space or time, and the whole story is more complicated than I can deal with here, but I must say something about it.<sup>4</sup>

We often read or hear about how the Metis are all the descendants of Indian women and European men who joined together to form distinct communities. But that does not by itself explain how a new indigenous people came into existence. A family is not a people. A village or a small community of families is not a people. And many descendants of First Nations women and European men joined their mothers’ people and their descendants today are First Nations people. Some British fathers took their children to Europe and they grew up there and today their descendants are Scottish or Welsh people. If we look elsewhere around the world, there is not much to support the idea that “mixed-ancestry” people automatically become, and are recognized as, a new people.

The Metis people acquired a sense of group or collective identity because of political, social and economic reasons that were unique to the time of the fur trade, roughly late in the 1700s to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. More and more family groups, practically all of which included First Nation women as wives and mothers, grouped together because they shared a new way of life. These new ways of life included the trading ventures along the rivers and lakes of the northwest during the high point of the fur-trading era, and the buffalo-hunting economy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Metis, who had long viewed themselves as a group of people distinct from both the First Nations and the newly arriving European or Canadian people, were a dominant military and political force in the West. It is absolutely essential to point out that the identity of a new people depends upon its own political actions. A new people does not emerge simply because of ‘mixed-marriages’. The Metis about whom I write



cemented their own distinct identity in various ways. These included fighting against the early Scottish settlers that came to the Red River region in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as exemplified by the story of Seven Oaks; fighting against the Dakota and making treaties with the Nakoda, Cree and Saulteaux; fighting against the Canadian government in 1869 and negotiating the ‘bargain of confederation’, the Manitoba Treaty of Riel, in 1870; and the fighting along the South Saskatchewan River in the spring of 1885. Political action gains political recognition, which can come in different forms, whether in the form of an army or a new law that is passed to recognize the rights of the people. A new people emerges when a large community of people has come to regard itself, and is regarded by others, as a distinct people, and it has stories to share about the ups and downs of its history. Every people has its own myths and stories that make up an idealized origin story.

Some commentators like to point out that there were two distinguishable groups within this Metis identity: the ones who descended from early English-Protestant families from the northern Hudson’s Bay fur trade system, and the ones descended from the early French-Canadian families from the St-Lawrence fur trade system. The English ones were then usually called ‘Half-Breeds’. This term is still happily used by many people in our territory. For others, especially those who did not grow up in an English speaking environment, this is a fighting word. Today it seems to be more ‘politically correct’ with outsiders to use the term ‘Metis’ for both groups. For better or for worse, the two groups have merged at the individual and family level at all times of our histories, and today the main political representative organizations do not distinguish between the two communities.

A lot of people talk about ‘mixed-blood’ when they talk about Metis people, so it is useful to say a bit more about it. The blood of Metis people is no more ‘mixed’ than that of any others. If ‘blood’ means ancestry, then it refers to who are your parents and grandparents and other forebears. The identity of your parents has never, by itself, determined to what community you belong, even though ancestry ties you to a community naturally and many people will belong to that community forever. Among some indigenous peoples, as I understand anyway, one can only have certain rights or status if one is born into the group, and that status can not be abandoned. More familiar, perhaps, is the recognition that people also move away, renounce their identity, marry ‘outside’, and adopt children and other new family members. People do not always belong to the community into which they are born.

But having ‘mixed ancestry’ is nothing like being a descendant of a storied nation or people. The Metis people consists of communities united by a shared heritage and the people who belong to these communities. It is today’s communities that descend from the historic communities that make up the Metis people: Metis identity is based on belonging to a nation, not on individual ancestry. If one looked only at individual ancestry, one would find many First Nations people and many non-Aboriginal Canadians with the same sort of ‘mixed-ancestry’.

When we look at the history of the treaties, we see that identity was recognized largely as a matter of political choice rather than a necessary consequence of one's birth. Some First Nation groups that signed on to treaties were described by outsiders as "mixed-blood" communities. Several prominent chiefs who signed treaties were said to be of 'mixed-blood' by outside commentators. The First Nations people obviously viewed them as one of theirs and as chiefs.

Being Metis is not so much about who you are as an individual as it is about having kin or family relationships within a Metis community. It is not so much about your individual ancestry as it is about sharing in the common heritage of the people to which you belong. I simply want to point out that the story of how my people came to be is not merely a story about individual ancestry. It is a unique story of one people, but all peoples come into being the same way: by common political action and, in time, a common remembering of a shared history. Shared stories.

One of the reasons Metis and First Nations identity is sometimes obscured or confused has to do with the way that the government dealt with the people when it first started to deal with us. In the time of the takeover of our territories in the West in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the government accepted that all indigenous people, regardless of whether they were known as First Nations or Metis, had rights to the land. These rights were called 'Indian title' or, as now, 'Aboriginal title'.

The government sent representatives to sign treaties with the First Nations. In the west these were signed from 1871 until the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The government decided to enter into treaties with those First Nations people who lived together in communities that were represented by First Nation leaders or 'chiefs'. As treaties were signed, the government would put that community on a reserve and made sure it stayed put. It used force, starvation and other means to control the people on the reserves. To be 'put in your place' is a little expression that can recall a great injustice.

Generally the government did not enter into treaties with the Metis people. If you put up a fight you might just end up getting something that you were fighting for. That is what happened in Manitoba where the Metis did enter into the 'Manitoba Treaty' as Louis Riel called it. A bargain was made to join Canada as a new province in 1870. This was after the Metis forcibly removed all the Canadians and British people from government positions and took over the government of the Red River region. It is the only province that was created by the political action of an indigenous people, and today the government of Manitoba owes to the political action of our Metis ancestors whatever constitutional authority it has to govern the province. Some of the promises in the Manitoba Treaty made their way into the Constitution of the province of Manitoba, such as the recognition of the Indian title of the Metis, and the promise to set up a Metis settlement scheme.<sup>5</sup> Other promises did not find their way into the Constitution of the province, such as the promise of an amnesty. Today the Manitoba Metis Federation is fighting in the courts over the failures of governments to abide by the treaty. The legal action was started in 1981 and is still at the first level of trial in the courts. For Aboriginal people, it can be very hard to get justice in the courts of Canada.

In the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, the Metis families were promised individual lots of land to live on within a larger community land reserve. Land was distributed to many families, but when the land set aside for the reserve ran out and there were still applicants left, the government gave them 'scrip', or pieces of paper that certified they were entitled to a lot of land within the public lands of the province. This is where much fraud was committed by land speculators who cheated the people out of their land. The Metis settlement scheme in Manitoba followed the model for Indian 'enfranchisement' that had previously been introduced in Ontario. It never worked in Ontario and it never worked in Manitoba either. The idea of 'enfranchisement' was to buy off the Indian title and then leave the individuals who got land allotments, along with their families, outside 'Indian policy'. In other words, the way this worked was that the government would enter into treaties with 'Indians' that it thought needed time to be persuaded or forced to break up their communal or 'tribal' societies, and live like non-Aboriginal Canadians on their own private property and not on communal reserved lands.

With this thinking in mind, the government set up the Manitoba Metis settlement scheme. It did this under the political pressure of the Metis political resistance, backed by armed force, which is often called the 'Riel rebellion' by strangers to ourselves and our cause. Later on, once the Canadians had gained enough political and military power to ignore the demands for justice in relation to land rights by other Metis further west, the government designed a new scheme to buy out the Indian title of the Metis people. This was the scrip system set up under the *Dominion Lands Act* of 1879.

The scrip system was a well known system of allocating lands in those days. It had been used in the United States, and it was also used to give lands to war veterans and others. Those entitled to land were given scrip paper, or certificates. The scrip was a simple document that contained information about the amount of land that could be exchanged for the scrip, and the name of the person entitled to the land, usually the 'bearer' or holder of the scrip certificate. The scrip system was not designed to make it easy to use by Metis people. It was also open to exploitation by unscrupulous land speculators. Most of the Metis people were non-literate, and their signature, usually an 'X', could be forged. The land that the bearer could get with his scrip was located in the surveyed areas of the territory, so it was not all that practical or valuable for the numerous Metis people who lived outside those surveyed areas. In the result, many Metis were cheated out of their lands. Fraudulent schemes sometimes involved high officials and even the family of the Chief Justice of the province of Manitoba. A commission of inquiry in 1881 in Manitoba made recommendations to ease the frauds, but the government responded by ignoring the recommendations and passing a law to legalize the dispossession of the Metis. As late as the 1930s, the federal Criminal Code was amended to excuse the frauds committed by speculators who cheated Metis people in Alberta.

In the late 1800s senior federal government bureaucrats saw scrip as a way of saving money for the government and they encouraged 'Treaty Indians' to opt out of their treaty group and take scrip. Thousands did take scrip and many of their descendants on the prairies, including some descendants of chiefs who signed the treaties, are not recognized

as Indians in the government's *Indian Act*. This is because the *Indian Act* provided that those who took scrip could not be recognized as 'Indians' by the government. I will again discuss the Act and its effects a bit later.

In the 1940s federal bureaucrats tried to pry a large number of Indian band members in Alberta away from the bands and Indian status on the false reason that they were of 'mixed-blood'. People complained, and a commission was set up to make recommendations and the government finally agreed to the view of the Macdonald Commission, which explained that 'mixed-blood' had never decided who belonged to a treaty Indian group. Many got their status back but some did not.

Many of the First Nations people who were 'enfranchised' by taking scrip have joined Metis political organizations. Some believe that they have no other way of being officially recognized as "Indian". This is not the law: it is only government policy, but many people seem to believe it is the law. Today the federal government refuses to recognize First Nations people on their own terms, as Cree or Ojibwe, and so on.

Membership in First Nation communities on reserves came to be regulated by the federal *Indian Act*. This Act was passed in 1876 without consulting First Nations. The government decided what was good for Indians and did not negotiate or consult with the people it was signing treaties with. The treaty groups that had been recognized in signing the treaties were not involved in deciding who belonged to their communities and who could live on the reserves. This Act defined those who could legally reside on the Indian reserves and receive treaty benefits. At one point amendments to the Act also took Indian status away from some of those who entered professions or served in the armed forces, or for other reasons decided by the government. As a result, their descendants, even though they are Indian or First Nation people, do not have Indian status and, as mentioned before, many of them now belong to Metis organizations. For a long time many of these people were called 'non-status Indians', but I don't hear that said often anymore. As can be seen, the question of Metis identity and First Nations identity is not simple.

In recent times, 'Bill C-31', a 1985 amendment to the *Indian Act*, has returned many Aboriginal people to Indian status. That has added further confusion about official identity. In a recent census over 25, 000 'status Indians' identified themselves as 'Metis'. I have been told many times that some people opted for Indian status because they were poor and wanted the small benefits available to Indians in education and health. Many have also said they want to go back to Metis identity, but the government will not allow it. It is my opinion that the government disobeys the law of the constitution by refusing to do that.

The confusion about Aboriginal identity generally shows how poverty and political weakness work to make people vulnerable to whatever a government decides. The federal government, which has no Aboriginal peoples' representatives involved in making its policy decisions, is deciding what is good for First Nations and Metis people. What I mean by this is that no Aboriginal people are part of the federal Cabinet that in effect makes policy decisions. We have very few Aboriginal members of Parliament, and even

they are not likely to influence policy decisions that involve real costs, largely because the Prime Minister and a very small group of other people are behind all important policy decisions. The ‘consultations’ with Aboriginal political groups are not a substitute for actual decision-making power.

I have written quite a bit so far about what Metis and First Nations people have in common. There are also things that differentiate us from one another. If I tried to make a list of ‘cultural items’ or practices unique to one group or the other I would fail. Someone would always be able to show that it is also shared and not unique. Comparisons between different peoples raise interesting challenges. For one thing, it is too easy to make your own side look better than the other side, which is not a good way to hold up *Miyow\_ hk\_ htownin*. It is not easy to show exactly how a people is different from another people in any great detail without causing an argument.

In the end I like to rely on stories. Someone has written that a people exists by virtue of a common remembering of a common suffering. The identity of a people is revealed in the stories that tell who is honoured from the past, and that in turn tells what kind of virtues or values will be honoured *anohc* and into the future. Of course all of us honour heroes that belong to other peoples. I have always admired Mistahi Musqua, who is a hero amongst the Cree people. When I say we are identified by our stories of our heroes I am referring to the ones we know are ours. I remember the way my father looked when he was telling the story about Batoche and Gabriel Dumont. Having retired at age 75 and bought a new car, he went to Batoche and had a look around. ‘You can still see the bullet holes in the church’ he said. He glowed when repeating what Gabriel said as he was leaving Batoche and heading for Montana. To a Metis man staying behind Gabriel said, “Tell Middleton that I am still in the woods. Tell him that I still have 90 cartridges to use on his men.” I regard that story and the story of Bostonnais Pangman that I mentioned earlier as revealing much about what I view as a reflection of my people’s identity and our values.

I do not believe it is possible to separate Indians and Metis individuals for official recognition unless it is done in close cooperation between the government and the representatives of the people, and is done through the communities. There are at least three good reasons for this belief. First, the kinship bonds between the two groups are very close in many places. These bonds are very strong and it is not just or practical to rupture them. Second, people move from one community to the other, as they ought to be free to do. The third reason why separating First Nation and Metis individuals is not just or practical is that the maladministration of the *Indian Act* has made it impossible to adopt any sensible standard to decide identity between the two. There is no room to explain that here but I have explained it in a book.<sup>6</sup>

This paper is about relations geared towards developing cooperative relations between Metis and First Nations people in order to develop effective self-government. So here we presume there is a right of self-government. If this is true, then our first right is the right to decide our own identity. The right to decide who belongs to our First Nation and Metis communities is part of the right of self-determination and of the Aboriginal right of self-

government. The best way for the government to proceed if it is serious about recognizing First Nation and Metis people for purposes of dealing with the rights and interests of the community is to focus on communities, not individuals. This is especially so if the government is going to recognize 'nations' in order to start negotiating new self-government agreements or treaties.

How can the government move ahead if it wants to enter into self-government negotiations with distinct Metis and First Nation communities? What it does now is it deals with the 'Indian bands' or 'First Nations' that it has chosen to recognize in the *Indian Act*. But we have seen that there are many people who are Indian or First Nations people who do not belong to these bands. Furthermore, except for the eight Metis Settlements in the province of Alberta, there are no officially recognized Metis communities. But in the territories about which I write, there are very distinct Metis communities where most people are Metis, just as there are very distinct Indian or First Nation communities, and not all of them are official reserves. A practical way to start is for the government to deal with the representatives of communities that are no doubt Indians or Metis, and then cooperatively work out rules of recognition as you go along. This is where you start. If we are to have a system of self-government that works, then the identification of those communities who are to be governed by those governments must be decided in community consultations, and in negotiations and agreement with the government of Canada.

What the people want to call themselves, whether First Nation, Indian, Inuit or Metis, is up to them. The only important thing, as far as it concerns the government, is to know that it is dealing with Aboriginal communities or 'nations', and that is not difficult to do in fact. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, in its 1996 final report, contains a very detailed description of how Metis or First Nation 'nations' could be officially recognized for the purpose of entering into self-government negotiations. The recommendations include setting up regional tribunals that would advise the government on the identification of First Nation or Metis communities.

I have not written about the identification of First Nation and Metis individuals for legal and policy reasons other than for the purposes of recognition for negotiations on self-government. That is another very complex topic that can not be tackled in a short paper. There is good reason to believe that there may well continue to be official reasons for identifying Metis and First Nation individuals, for example, to single out those entitled to funds for educational or other public services under affirmative action programmes.

There are many very close personal and community relations between First Nations and Metis people, but the relations between the political representative organizations are not close. There is not one national political voice for all Aboriginal peoples. The national organizations are split along the lines recognized by the government in the *Indian Act*, and so represent 'status' and 'non-status' Indians, and they are funded by the government.

There are reasons for the lack of unity and the acceptance of government policies. The people are poor materially, poorer by far on average, than other Canadians. With poverty comes lack of education, lack of economic opportunity and lack of political influence. People are vulnerable to having their personal decisions influenced by what the government does, because the government is the hand that feeds them. This can be seen in the way many individuals self-identity as Metis or Indian, which, in many cases, follows the government policy and what people may see as a way to gain some benefit or advantage. It is not right that people's identity should be influenced by government benefits, or what is sometimes sarcastically called 'handouts' by opponents of government policy. I remember a story told to me by a Dene elder in Manitoba that captures the idea that Aboriginal people see the government as being the hand that feeds them. 'Do you know', he said, 'the way a dog looks at you when you hold out something for him to eat? That is what we are like with the government'. The political weakness of First Nations and Metis people can be described as putting Metis and First Nation people in a situation where we recognize that it is the government that decides not only who eats, but what is eaten and when it is eaten. I believe that some non-Aboriginal people will not like this image and some may wish to reject it. That is understandable in the case of readers who have not had the experience that would allow them to understand this image.

Why should Metis and First Nations political organizations consider working together? There is strength in unity, and the federal government, which has the political power we do not have, must be dealt with. There is not much cooperation because there is little direct incentive for political representatives to work for the general good of others when they are elected by their own small community. Communities with pressing local concerns are not likely to put a priority on dealing with issues that do not seem to affect them as directly as local economic, health and education issues, for example. Local representatives are also not immune from the tendency to focus on issues that are most likely to keep them in their political positions. Local representatives who believe they can advance their local agenda are not likely to favour broad political alliances where their role and influence is likely to be diluted within the different agenda of a large political coalition. Political unity would provide a measure of strength in dealings with governments, but there are significant challenges in the way.

What are some of the things that representatives might focus on when thinking about cooperative political action? The next story illustrates the value of kinship bonds and shared political interests. It also identifies the source of the status of the Metis as an Aboriginal people in our territory.

#### **4. A story about our relations "Kav s ago"**

This story that I will tell happened in the early 1820s when our people had *miyo-w\_hk\_htowin* with the Cree, Saulteaux and Nakoda. There was a lot of intermarriage between our peoples then. I have heard this story from Francis Cree, Richard Laframboise and Nicolas Vrooman. It was a difficult time. The Nakoda, the Ojibwe, who are called 'Chippewa' in the United States, the Cree, and the Michif, were all being squeezed between the Dakota, Cheyenne, Arapahoe and American fur companies in the

south, and by the Nor'Westers, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Selkirk settlers who arrived in 1812, to the north. The pressure on the Michif and their First Nation allies grew with the alliance of the two fur trade companies into the HBC in 1821 and with increased Dakota activity to extend their territory.

The event that precipitated an alliance between the four indigenous groups was the killing by the Dakota of Chippewa Elders and women, and the taking of quite a number of children. After a winter of starvation when the Dakota lost their children, they were looking to replace them for the survival of their group. A glove painted red and filled with tobacco went around inviting the people from these four groups to congregate at Buffalo Lodge Lake, which is in North Dakota in the region of the Turtle Mountains. A political alliance would cement their unity for a common defence. Kinship ties and common political interest can create strong bonds.

There was a need also to bring the Chippewa and the Michif, who were relative newcomers to the territory, into the workings of the 'Great Mystery' in that part of the world. A Thirsty Dance was called by the Cree leader 'Many Eagle Set'. It is said to have been the largest Sun Dance ever held on the northern plains. There were over fifteen hundred dancers from the four groups, and fourteen centre poles. I will return to this story later.

One thing I want to stress is that the Michif about whom I write have been full-fledged Plains indigenous people since *kay\_s* ago. The Michif had solidified their indigenous identity through kinship relations and a series of communal events including the well-known skirmish at Seven Oaks in June 1816 on the present site of Winnipeg. This is when the Michif 'national anthem' was composed to celebrate that victory that I wrote about earlier. This anthem is much older than Canada or its anthem.

Political alliances among Michif and First Nations people were established long ago: what we might do is remember them and learn from them. Kinship bonds and common political interests compel unity. I will come back later to discuss how this can help us today and in the future to develop good relations for self-government. But first I want to discuss what came between us when the Canadians took over our territories later in the 1800s.

#### **4. K k -m yahkamikahk: 'When Things Went Wrong'**

Neal McLeod is a young Cree philosopher, humorist and university professor. His family is from the Treaty Six people, and he is following a distinguished tradition of service in education in his family. I owe to him the Cree expressions and philosophical insights about *aspin k\_k -m yahkamikahk*: the time when things went wrong'. What happened *k\_k -m yahkamikahk* must be understood so that we can understand the situation in which the First Nations and Metis people find themselves today, and what they are facing as they try to move forward with cooperative action.



*K\_k\_-m\_yahkamikahk* was one of the great watershed periods in our collective history that changed our circumstances forever. The period runs through the decline of the bison herds, which supported the Plains horse culture and to the complete takeover of the West by Canada. It marked the end of the days of freedom for our peoples. The mid 1880s were a time of starvation on the Prairies and northern regions. The buffalo were just about gone. The intruders, the British and the Canadians, were starting to squeeze our people as more and more of them came and began to make themselves at home in our territories. Treaties with the government of Canada had been entered into in some places, but First Nation and Michif leaders feared the future they saw and wondered how they could keep on surviving and looking after their children.

Leaders of the various First Nations and Michif people contemplated alliances and many discussions were held, not only with old allies but also with those with whom relations had been difficult. At least one treaty had been agreed between the Michif and the Dakota. In 1868 there had already been a huge gathering of Cree, Michif, Saulteaux, and Nakoda in the area of Regina today. Nicolas has told me that they had a Sun Dance and developed a cooperative strategy as they advanced into enemy territory, looking for the declining buffalo herds. The stories of great patriots and chiefs like *Mistahi Musqua*, *Pia Pot*, and the Metis leader Gabriel Dumont have found their way into the written histories, as have the stories of earlier leaders like *M\_ski- Piton*. Other stories about these leaders are not published but they are known and shared today among the people. In these stories one comes to know about the close relationships our peoples had. The complete stories about the past and *K\_k\_-m\_yahkamikahk* are the heritage of their peoples and they are not widely known.

The events that marked the end of the days of freedom have been written about many times, and I will not spend much time on them here.<sup>7</sup> In the spring of 1885, a small group of Metis under the leadership of the legendary Gabriel Dumont, who died one hundred years ago this year, experienced some success against a British-Canadian army, notably at Fish Creek where the Metis troops sang our national anthem, Falcon's Song, to boost their spirits. But in the end the Canadians prevailed with their larger army and the Gatling Gun, a new repeating rifle brought up from the United States to experiment with on indigenous people. That is the kind of rifle that has become the scourge of the earth today as it fuels the arms trade, civil and military conflicts, wars and revolutions. After the troubles of 1885, eight Cree and one Metis man were hanged by the government. With them died the freedom of the Plains people

Since *K\_k\_-m\_yahkamikahk* Canada has had its boot on the neck of the Metis and First Nations peoples in the Western lands. Those people who have run the governments of Canada have been firmly in charge. Louis Riel had been elected three times yet he was prevented from sitting in Parliament, and the very few Aboriginal people who have been elected to the federal government in recent years have not held influential positions of authority or power. There is no system for Aboriginal representation as such in federal or provincial governments. Government decisions are forced upon people who have no say in what kind of society they wish to live in *anohc*. A free people can decide its own

vision of ‘the good society’ and how it will be governed. That is what self-determination means: that is what self-government must mean. But we are not free.

First Nations and Metis people have not been able to conduct free political relations between them since *K\_k\_-m\_yahkamikahk*. The government has passed a law that says who is an ‘Indian’ and who is not. The eyes of the government do not see *N\_hiyawak* or *\_nin\_wak*, *Anishinabeg* or *Nakoda*. These eyes see only the individual ‘Indians’ their laws have created, and the ‘bands’ made by the *Indian Act*. The eyes of the government do not recognize the old *Michif*. They see only individuals whose ancestors they think they bought off with pieces of paper marked with an ‘X’: the ‘scrip’ that was given out for the Indian title and that was sold to speculators who got rich on our inheritance.

But in their private lives, in ceremonies here and there, many First Nation and Metis people have kept alive the old memories and the world that made sense before *K\_k\_-m\_yahkamikahk*. The spirit of the people has been dimmed, but it has not died.

The Canadian story about 1885 is the symbolic ‘driving of the last spike’ or the completion of the trans-Canadian railway. Our stories are different and sinister. If we are to develop better relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, it might be a good idea to start by talking about our stories and see if we can create better stories for a common future: a common story of Canada.

This applies to First Nations and Metis relations as well: there is no common vision about what is to be done to move towards self-government. There are not many discussions about it. Our stories are not the same. Our peoples have accepted and adopted some of the divisions between our peoples that were created by the government. It is easy to see all the problems that can block the way forward in relations between Metis and First Nations who want to cooperate on the way to self-government. But there are also good stories that we can learn from.

### **7. Anohc omis si it tamwak kiw hk m kanak:** **“Right now, this is what our relatives are doing”**

Tony Belcourt is a Cree speaking Michif from Lac St. Anne in northern Alberta. He has been involved in political leadership among First Nation and Metis people since the 1960s, notably with the Native Council of Canada and then the Metis National Council since it was formed in 1983. *Anohc* he heads an organization in Ontario, the ‘Metis Nation of Ontario’, and is active in international projects with indigenous peoples and organizations such as the UN, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Organization of American States. John Beaucage is a Anishinabek leader with the Union of Ontario Indians. From Nipissing First Nation, he holds the office of Grand Council Chief of the Anishinabek Nation. Within their organizations, these two men are working together for common purposes *anohc*.

About five or six years ago, Tony started consulting about setting up a relationship with the Anishinabek Nation. At that time Vernon Roote was the leader of the Anishinabek

Nation. They had discussions on who each organization represents. They consulted each other on issues, and began to work together. For example, the federal government wanted the Anishinabek Nation to oppose Tony's organization in court in some litigation, but the Anishinabek Nation refused. About four years ago it was decided they should formalize their alliance. Elder Gordon Waindebence recommended that a relationship be established and developed in a traditional way: through song, smoke, feast and dance. Each party had to bring a song. It took Tony three years to find the song.

The song comes from the Thirsty Dance held *kay\_s* ago at Buffalo Lodge Lake, the song of Many Eagle Set that I wrote about above. Many Eagle Set received a song from Kichi-Manitou through the Thunder Beings, with which he had a medicine relationship. The Song was given to the people at Buffalo Lodge Lake to symbolize the Unity of the people and the alliance. The Song lives on through Francis Eagleheart Cree, the great grandson of M\_ski-Piton (Broken Arm) the Peacemaker, brother of Many Eagle Set. Francis received the right to make Many Eagle Set's Thirsty Dance and sing his Song from Standing Chief, his uncle, who is the grandson of Broken Arm. On Wednesday morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2004, a number of us, Michif and First Nation people, participated in ceremonies on the Chippewa Indian reservation in Belcourt, North Dakota, whereby the Song was transferred by Francis to Tony.

Since then, the alliance has been strengthened with ceremonies in the way that Gordon recommended, and Tony, like the Anishinabek, has had a song to contribute. It is in these ceremonies that oral commitments are made. The two sides are discovering the original alliances made between Metis and First Nations. They are discovering their kinship relations and the values that are shared between them, and the idea that kinship and common interest make strong bonds, just like it was *kay\_s* ago. Tony believes that the government, with the assistance of the Churches, has created divisions among Aboriginal people, and the older alliances have largely been forgotten or overlooked. Certainly, these stories are not studied in schools or universities.

On the website of Tony's organization is a 'Statement of Prime Purpose.' It includes a number of organizational goals. Among them is to "establish good relations with all Aboriginal peoples for the pursuit of our common interests and goals." There it is: good relations. *Miyo-W\_hk\_htowin*.

Tony's organization and the Anishinabek Nation have an active commitment to political cooperation. They are in the first phase where strategies are being developed, but it is not all talk: a number of activities are taking place. They invite each other to their annual assemblies. They attend as special guests and speakers. And they are trying to reflect the old ways and values. For example, the annual general meetings are held outdoors, not in hotels, along with family-oriented activities that take place over several days.

Together the two organizations have opposed government policies, including government approaches to the recognition of inherent rights of self-government. Recently they have been working on developing a joint business venture with multinational corporations in the information and technology field. This will create jobs in the communities. They are

also developing housing ventures for Metis and off-reserve Indians living in towns and cities in Ontario.

The idea and the process of consensus reflects one of the shared political values that is being discovered and applied. In Tony's organization, all decisions by the executive body, the Provisional Council of the MNO, are reached by consensus. If at a meeting a consensus cannot be reached, the matter is put over for another time. This reminds me of what an indigenous representative said about consensus at a meeting of the world's indigenous peoples at the United Nations centre in Geneva last year. Louis was this man's name, and he spoke when the chairman of the meeting, which had lasted one hour, asked if there was a consensus on the issue being talked about. Louis said it was not possible to ask if there was a consensus. Seeking agreement by consensus is a process that takes time. An essential part of a process of consensus is taking time for consultation, discussion and persuasion. We had been in a large meeting of many people, and although people had expressed views in the meeting, there had been no time in the one hour to consult with one another and to seek consensus.

John and Tony have taken their approach of cooperative action in the spirit of unity that Francis speaks about beyond their two organizations. In August 2006, they met with the entire council of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa and opened discussions, with the pipe, on creating further political alliances.

John Beaucage believes there will be a process of constitutional change within ten years. The process will come from Quebec politics. Aboriginal leaders have to be involved in the process, and we must work together. We have to entrench the right of self-government in the Constitution. We cannot leave that job to the judges to decide. This shows the need for cooperative political action. We freely developed relations between our peoples long ago, but *anohc* the government interferes in our relations by funding opposition and exploiting or creating divisions among our people.

John tells a story about political leadership. The story is about people who live in a place located between mountains. These people have parochial or even xenophobic views. This means they dislike strangers. Every few generations a leader goes up the mountain and sees that there is a wider world, and wants his people to open up their horizons and participate in that wider world. But it is difficult to bring the people up to the mountain to see the wider world and to participate in it. There is comfort down in the valley. A lot of people want to pull the leader back. It takes special power for a leader to resist and withstand this pressure from his own people. A leader like that needs the support of his people: he must be held up by his people. When that happens, that is when we can give meaning to our right of self-government.

Of the many stories Maria Campbell has shared with me over the years there is one that belongs here. It is about her *k\_hkom* (grandmother) telling her that when you look around in nature, in creation, you will see many different plants and flowers. All are different, but have a role in making the land a healthy place. They do not say that one of them does

not belong. They all make room for each other. They depend on each other and make creation beautiful for us.

Another story comes from Danny Musqua. He says that all things were created by Our Maker before the creation of humans. We were last. We can learn much from “all our relations”, about unity and getting along. In this story you can see the relationship between *Niw\_hk\_m\_kanak* and *Miyo-w\_hk\_htowin*.

In all these stories we can see lessons for First Nations and Metis people who wish to work together towards the achievement of self-government. Kinship and common political interests can create strong bonds. These bonds can be cemented by the values that we share between First Nations and Metis people. We can identify these values in the stories that show us the way our relations were conducted when we had good relations.

### **8. Niw\_hk\_m\_kanak: All my relations**

This paper has been written to discuss the relations between Metis and First Nations people. The paper has tried to help the NCFNG’s goal of looking for ideas that may be useful in thinking about political leadership and how ‘self-government’ might be brought about, particularly by cooperative political action. This has not been the place to write about a large political strategy, or about what the government of Canada should do. There is plenty to read and think about regarding those issues in the many studies and the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

In writing the paper I have looked back in our history to see how relations were between Metis and First Nations before the Canadians came out west and took over. I looked at the changes that took place during the period of that takeover. I used stories to try to identify ideas, values, and practical approaches that might inspire others as they search for ways to develop good relations between our peoples as we think about how to move towards self-government.

I also wrote about some of the difficult issues that we must face in trying to work together. These included difficulties in sorting out identities for our own purposes and for the official purposes of governments. I have written only about the people and places that I know, avoiding the stories of others elsewhere who have also come to identify themselves as Metis people.

I want to finish with a word for the young people. The younger people *anohc* have advantages that can help them to become effective leaders. Practically all the ones I hear now speak excellent English and more and more every year gain a higher education. It was different for many of my generation. I had to work hard for many long years to try to speak English in the way English speakers do. I still stumble on a word once in a while or I notice that I am not pronouncing a word the way English speakers do. I am still fine tuning my spoken language after decades of practice.

To become a true visionary leader a young person has to overcome the comfort in the valley and climb the mountain that will reveal the wider world. It was difficult for the earlier generations to do that. The people were busy trying to keep our nations and ourselves alive. There are also new dangers or challenges for the young people. They have to beware of the narrow-mindedness of university ideologies. They have to resist the values of narrow-minded gangster sub-cultures.

To become true visionary leaders our young people have to look inside for inspiration: inside our own histories, our own stories. In the stories told in this paper, we have found some of those important values, and we have seen how they are guiding some of our people who are creating strong bonds for political action. I know that our young people will find other values and practical inspiration from the stories that they discover in their own journeys. They can take that inspiration with them as they embark on a common journey with Elders, families and communities. *Miyo-W\_hk\_htowin* will guide them.

kosi.  
C'toute..

**Niw\_hk\_m\_kanak**

## List of Cree words and expressions

<i>anohc</i>	=	now
<i>Anohc omis_si it_tamwak</i>	=	right now, this is what our relatives are doing
<i>aspin k_k_-m_yahkamikahk</i>	=	the time when things went wrong
<i>_nin_wak or N_hiyawak</i>	=	Cree people
<i>kay_s ohci'</i>	=	a long time ago
<i>k_hkom</i>	=	grandmother
<i>Miyo-W_hk_htowin</i>	=	philosophy of good relations
<i>Mosh_m</i>	=	grandfather
<i>N_hiyaw_win</i>	=	the Cree language
<i>Niw_hk_m_kanak</i>	=	All My Relations
<i>W_sahk_c_hk,</i> time	=	the Trickster (so called in the winter only)

### Selected references

The following websites contain information about Francis Eagleheart Cree:

<http://www.lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndirs/collections/manuscripts/lit&music/Vrooman/scope&content.html>

<http://www.nea.gov/honors/heritage/Heritage02/Cree.html>

[http://www.state.nd.us/arts/publications\\_recordings/elders\\_cd/elders.htm#artists](http://www.state.nd.us/arts/publications_recordings/elders_cd/elders.htm#artists)

This is the website of the ‘Metis Nation of Ontario’ which contains the ‘Statement of Prime Purpose’ mentioned in the paper:

<http://www.metisnation.org/insideMNO/PDF/Statement%20of%20Prime%20Purpose.pdf>

The Anishinabek Nation incorporated the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949. The UOI is a political advocate for 42 member First Nations across Ontario. The UOI is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact. Its website is at:

<http://www.anishinabek.ca/uoi/>

If someone wanted to read only one book each about the Metis and First Nations peoples written about in this paper, they might be:

Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree* ( Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1973)

Joseph Kinsey Howard, *The Strange Empire of Louis Riel* (Minnesota Historical Society, 1994; first published N.Y. William Morrow and Co. 1952)

**Further selected publications.**

Binnema, Ted, Gerhard Ens, R. C. Macleod, ed. *From Rupert's Land to Canada: Essays in Honour of John E. Foster* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001).

Brown, Jennifer S. and Jacqueline Petersen, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, date?)

Campbell, Maria, *Halfbreed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973)

Cardinal, Harold, and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan* (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2000)

Carter, Sarah A. *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal and Toronto: McGill-Queen's U. Press, 1993)

McLeod, Neal. "Rethinking Treaty Six in the Spirit of Mistahimaskwa (Big Bear)", *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 19, no. 1 (1999): 69-89.

Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Metis Identities, 1850-1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004)

Vrooman, Nicolas C.P. "*Infinity Nation: The Metis of the Northern Plains*", Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Montana, May 2006. Unpublished.

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<sup>1</sup> The acknowledgments are placed early in the paper, following the personal introduction. Both practices are intended to reflect the oral practice of our peoples.

<sup>2</sup> One fascinating 'origin' story of the Michif was recounted by Francis Eagleheart Cree to Nicolas, which he has put into writing: Nicolas Vrooman, "This Fiddle I Give- a Metis Story", unpublished manuscript in the author's possession, given to me by the author.

<sup>3</sup> For an outsider's perspective on the 'multiethnic' character of our peoples' societies see, Susan R. Sharrock, "Crees, Cree-Assiniboines, and Assiniboines: Interethnic Social Organization on the Far Northern Plains" (1974) 21:2 *Ethnohistory* 95-122.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion of this topic see Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family 1660-1900*, (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2003)

<sup>5</sup> See the complete analysis in Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, *Manitoba's Metis Settlement Scheme of 1870* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Native Law Centre, 1991) It is often overlooked that the Metis were constitutionally recognized as an indigenous people with Indian title in 1870. The express inclusion of the Metis within the 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' in the Aboriginal clause of the *Constitution Act 1982* was the second express Constitutional recognition of the Metis people. Riel was responsible for the first recognition; Harry Daniels secured the second recognition of 1982.

<sup>6</sup> Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, ed. *Who Are Canada's Aboriginal Peoples? Recognition, Definition and Jurisdiction* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2002).



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<sup>7</sup> Two of the best publications are: Joseph Kinsey Howard, *The Strange Empire of Louis Riel* (Minnesota Historical Society, 1994; first published N.Y. William Morrow and Co. 1952); Neal McLeod, “Rethinking Treaty Six in the Spirit of Mistahimaskwa (Big Bear)”, *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 19, no. 1 (1999): 69-89.