



Métis Nationalist Voice

Volume 1, Issue 2

September 2020

Métis Nation Issues and Interests

Métis Harvesting

By Clem Chartier

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Since the early 1990s the Buffalo Narrows Local under the late Philip Chartier, has defended several Métis in Saskatchewan who were charged with hunting or fishing without a licence. This included the *Morin and Daigneault* case in northwest Saskatchewan where in 1997 the Court of Queen's Bench upheld the s.35 rights of the Métis there to hunt and fish without a licence. It further ruled that land scrip did not extinguish hunting and fishing rights which set a precedent for all of Saskatchewan.

The next major case was the *Grumbo* case out of Yorkton where the Court of Queen's Bench held that Métis fell within the hunting and fishing rights contained in paragraph 12 of the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement of 1930 as they were covered by the term "Indian" as used in 1930. The right was exercised province-wide between 1996 to 1998 when the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal sent it back to trial for further evidence but which was subsequently stayed by the Crown (dropped).

The next major s.35 rights case was the 2005 *Laviolette* provincial court case out of Meadow Lake where the judge ruled that the regional rights-bearing Métis community of northwest Saskatchewan included, not only

Green Lake, but Meadow Lake as well.

In 2007 the provincial court sitting in Fort Qu'Appelle in the *Belhumeur* fishing case ruled that the Métis in the Qu'Appelle Valley and environs, including the City of Regina have a s.35 Aboriginal right to fish for food. The Crown filed a notice of appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench and said they would try and negotiate a province-wide agreement with the MNS before proceeding on the appeal. Virtually nothing came of this except for a screening-process agreed to in November 2010 to see if charges would be laid in the circumstances of specific incidents of hunting or fishing while efforts to negotiate something more substantive were to be pursued.



Beginning in 2012 a number of hunting and fishing charges were laid in the Meadow Lake area. Based on these new charges I pressed the Crown to either proceed with the *Belhumeur* appeal or drop it. By letter of March 28, 2015 the Crown wrote to the Court of Queen's Bench withdrawing the

appeal. Unfortunately, the provincial government in the Meadow Lake trial made it clear that it is not respecting the *Belhumeur* decision, and the current MNS leadership is doing virtually nothing to have it respected and defend the rights of the Métis citizens to harvest based on that court's affirmation of their s.35 rights, except for signing on December 18, 2019 an "Affirmation of the MOU on Métis Food Harvesting Rights" signed in 2010 which has yet to see any results.

In the current cases, Mr. Myette was hunting about 1 kilometer south of the Northern Administration District (NAD) line and was found not guilty. Mr. Boyer was fishing on Chitek Lake and was found guilty, as was Mr. Poitras who was hunting 37 kilometers south of Meadow Lake. While the provincial court judge ruled that they were both part of the historic Northwest Métis community as well as the present day (contemporary) northwest rights-bearing Métis community, that hunting and fishing in the locations they were exercising their rights were not included in the areas they could legally hunt or fish. The Queen's Bench upheld that decision on appeal, and currently the Métis Legal Research and Education Foundation and Hodgson-Smith Law are preparing their appeal to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal.

"New USSU president focused on student experience

By Olivia Lenfema



Courtesy of the University of Saskatchewan.

No stranger to university politics, LaRose-Smith will be moving from her position as vice-president of student affairs to USSU president on May 1 after a close race for president ended on March 26, becoming not only the first Indigenous woman to serve as president of the USSU, but also the first female president in more than 10 years.

After narrowly defeating her opponents, Autumn LaRose-Smith has become the first Indigenous woman to be elected president of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU).

"When I found out that I was elected, I was speechless. We made history!" LaRose-Smith said after the election came down to a nine-vote difference between her and runner-up Akinwande Akingbehin. "It was a very close race and all the candidates who ran are amazing leaders on and off campus, and the results of the election prove that."

"I hope my win signifies a much-needed change. I am very honoured to have this title, although I wish that it did not have to take this long," LaRose-Smith added. "I find comfort in knowing I will not be the last (female Indigenous USSU president)."

This win comes after a modified election format, during the shift to online classes

following USask's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the decision to close the campus, the USSU had to cancel events such as election forums, and campaigning had to take place differently than in previous years.

"It was very difficult to not be able to have the face-to-face connection with voters, as that relationship changes when it is online," LaRose-Smith said, when asked how the changes affected her campaign. "I only hope that voters could see the sincerity of my goals and values, through reading them on screen instead of in person."

Another drawback of the online campaign for LaRose-Smith was the lack of connection with students.

"I would have loved to be able to hear more students' concerns and listen to the student body, but I will work harder than ever to do this in person, once we are able to do so safely."

LaRose-Smith was disappointed about not being able to communicate more with other students, particularly since her platform during the campaign was focused on student-centred learning and on improving the student experience.

"My platform was based around my slogan; 'Combining student-centred decision-making with social economic, and environmental responsibility,'" LaRose-Smith said. "I focused around four major points, using the importance of community-building and success as a support for all of them."

LaRose-Smith's plans for her upcoming term as president also reflect her desire

to focus on student experience.

"My goals for the next year are to strengthen and create meaningful, transparent and accountable methods of consultation with the student body, university and government," she said. "I also hope to strengthen and create meaningful relationships with on- and off-campus communities while working to advocate for a better, holistic student experience."

LaRose-Smith's involvement on campus is not limited to only university politics, as she works to better lives of others both on and off campus. A student of the College of Education in the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teachers Education Program (SUNTEP), she is involved in multiple student groups including 5 Days for the Homeless, Student Teachers Anti-Racism Society, SUNTEP Student Council and the International Women's Movement.

Off campus, LaRose-Smith volunteers on the Ness Creek Cultural and Recreational Society Board, is the volunteer co-ordinator for the City Centre Food Co-operative, and has participated in numerous volunteer roles for events, festivals and non-profit organizations.

LaRose-Smith thinks her experiences working with the community will help her in her role as USSU president.

"I want to use my involvement within the community to grow and create connections with the community outside of campus to better the student experience."

Métis Elder's Story - Cecile Blanke By Lorna Ledoux

I recently had the pleasure of sitting down with Elder Cecile Blanke (nee LaRocque) to interview her about her life and the book she had written entitled, "Lac Pelletier: My Métis Home". The interview quickly turned into a visit where I could not hear enough of the stories she had to offer. I decided that I could get enough of the details of her book by simply reading it, which I did. Once I started reading the book, I had to keep reading and learning. Between the book and the interview, I learned much about Cecile, her family, Métis in general and my own family. Cecile's gentle matter of fact accounts of historical events and wrongs as well as the happy times of the past really are a must-know for everyone.

"I'm still here teaching on who we are as Métis and being proud of who we are, but not proud enough that nobody else likes us."

It took Cecile 12 years to write her book which is a compilation of short pieces that includes a section on the Pritchard family from the Willowfield area. It is fascinating how the families are interrelated and from reading the book you can see exactly how Métis life was from the late 1800s to the present day.

Cecile stated to me that "I was a fan of Jim Sinclair, who was there for the people." She told me of how, in the 1930s it was a tough time for early Métis leaders to organize and then it died out until the 1970s. She remembers that there were all kinds of programs operating in Saskatchewan when she moved to Alberta in

1978.

Growing up, Cecile found that discrimination was really bad and that her family was called some derogatory names. Her brothers fought every recess. She believes that "discrimination goes deep and you wish you were somebody else". She feels that we need programs to make you feel proud to be Métis. To get it back she is working with young children and teenagers to make them proud. She believes that we have to teach young children and it (solution to discrimination) has to come from them. Cecile believes that there could be some restructuring of MN-S regions done to ensure proper representation.

When Cecile was a child there were big families who were close and supportive. Everyone shared what they had so that nobody went without. Her community of Lac Pelletier was booming with 300 people in 1900 and then virtually gone by 1950. Families who moved to the cities faced challenges with alcohol and the ghosts of past lives where church officials gathered Métis children from the area and took them to residential school at Lebret. This was interesting to me, as my uncle told me that my Grandpa had this experience and I could never figure out how it came to be. She even talked about not being allowed to be left-handed at school, a similar thing had happened to my mother. According to Cecile, the children who were taken away lost



cultural and family connections so that they had a difficult time adjusting upon their return. Many were abused and lost the ability to maintain intimacy as well, she explained.

Cecile's grandfather had a river lot close to present day Saskatchewan Landing and was a prominent community member. He ended up moving his family to Swift Current in the 1940s. She talked about how Métis lost their scrip and/or homestead lands due to inability to make improvements or pay taxes in the 1930s. This is a similar story across the prairies and her account is a valuable addition to the record.

Cecile has deservedly received many awards for her work and contributions to the Métis Nation, including being a recipient of The Order of The Métis Nation in 2014. Cecile cited the secret to a long life as having a good husband. She ended the interview with: "I'm still here teaching on who we are as Métis and being proud of who we are, but not proud enough that nobody else likes us."

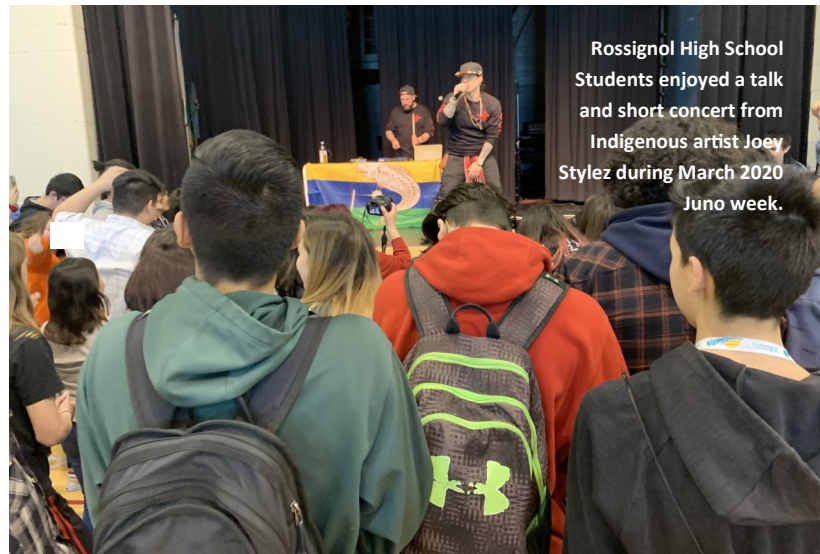
This month, the Métis Nationalist Voice profiles the northern Métis Community of Ile a la Crosse, also known as Sakitawak. The majority of residents in Ile a la Crosse are Métis, mainly descended from Cree and Dene Women along with French Canadian or Scottish ancestors from the Red River. The population of this northern village was 1,296 in the 2016 census with 985 or 77% of respondents self identified as being Métis peoples with another 18% identifying as First Nations, and 1.2% who identified as having Multiple Aboriginal responses.

Métis nationalism and pride has been the backbone of Ile a la Crosse and the community has an independent Métis political consciousness. The Métis Nation – Saskatchewan has always had a presence and been active in community governance. When in Ile a la Crosse one sees symbols of Métis Nationalism such as flags throughout the community and conversations between local residents are often carried on in the Michif language.

The primary sources of employment in Ile a la Crosse are commercial fishing, forestry, wild rice harvesting and the hospital and schools, along with resource extraction industry. The community has a fish processing plant that is quite busy for part of the year.



In 1975, after years of control of a school division that was not working for the community due to cultural irrelevance, Ile a la Crosse formed its own school board and it has worked out very well. When visiting the school, you will find that Michif language classes are offered and



if you are lucky enough, you may come across a fun Métis cultural event such as Michif Bingo. The Rossignol Elementary School serves about 200 preschool to Grade 6 students and the Rossignol High School provides Grades 7 to 12 and adult educational programming.

The Cree name for Ile-a-la-Crosse, Sakitawak means "the place where the river flows out." Ile-a-la-Crosse is the second

oldest community in Saskatchewan, after Cumberland House. It is connected to the Churchill River, Beaver River and Canoe River systems. It is at the end of a 20 km long peninsula on the western shore of Lac Île-à-la-Crosse, and is linked with Peter

Pond Lake (historically Buffalo Lake) and Churchill Lake (historically Clear Lake) through a series of interconnected lakes, rivers, and portage routes. The location created great interest from both Catholic missionaries

and fur trading companies.

The name Ile a la Crosse translated from French to English would be Island of the Cross. The name comes from the game La Crosse which was played by the First Nations. Early traders watched the First Nations people play La Crosse on Big Island and therefore named the place Ile a la Crosse.

As traders followed depleting resources moved across the plains northward and westward, it made Île-à-la-Crosse a central place to organize trading from the Northern Plains into a larger global trade of furs and goods. This caused the fur trade to shape the community of Île-à-la-Crosse through the familial and business relationships formed between Indigenous inhabitants and European traders. It created a distinct Métis settlement

Ile a la Crosse

within northern Saskatchewan.

Because of its strategic location, Ile a la Crosse became the administrative center of the English River District of the Hudson's Bay Company and an important supply depot on the fur trade route during the latter part of the 18th century and most of the 19th century. Quite a few of the French traders married and lived there with their Indian wives. Its central location allowed for social and economic relationships creating conditions to become a part of the



Métis homeland. This was due to the direct involvement of and kinship relations held by the children descending from Cree and Dene women and men of the fur trade. Over time, the offspring of these early relationships married amongst themselves and created the Métis people. The detailed administrative record keeping of officials in the area the growing Métis population was documented through a series of record-keeping instruments and identified the Métis of northwest Saskatchewan from those in the Red River Colony. However, the connections of Ile a la Crosse to the Red River are evident in the familial relationships. The sister of Métis leader Louis Riel, Sister Marguerite served at the mission and she is buried in the community. His grandparents were married at Ile a la Crosse and his father Louis Riel Sr. was born there.

A Roman Catholic mission was estab-

lished in 1846 in a cabin left abandoned by the North West Company. The original mission operated the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Mission out of the single room cabin that functioned as both a dormitory and the mission until 1848. By 1860, Saint-Jean Baptiste began to act as resource depot administering food, clothing, and other items to surrounding posts. Saint-Jean-Baptiste also became a distribution point for manufactured goods and religious items sent from the Red River Colony and a conduit for communication into the far spread missions in the North. This continued until reoccurring fires and misfortunes struck the mission in 1867, depleting the mission of necessary resources needed to fulfill its administrative duties.

The mission day school started in 1847, had poor and irregular attendance so the church encouraged the enlistment of the Grey Nuns to establish a boarding school. In 1860, The Grey Nuns, arrived at Île-à-la-Crosse. Sister Agnès (born Marie-Rose Caron), Sister Philomène Boucher, and Sister Pepin (born Marie-Anne Lachance) were sent to assist the mission. The name Saint Bruno Convent was given a few days after their arrival and the sisters established the

boarding school located within the Saint Bruno Convent to both educate and provide medical services. A fire destroyed the building in March 1867 and in 1874, a new school building was constructed and named Notre-Dame du Sacré Cœur. The sisters temporarily relocated and returned in 1917, to establish another school called the School of the Holy Family. The school operated until the mid-1970s when it closed.

Many residents of Northern Saskatchewan attended the boarding school at Ile a la Crosse. The school was left out of the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* of the federal government that was reached in 2006 due to it being run by the Catholic Church. The survivors are currently working towards resolution of a claim for compensation to victims of abuse and loss of culture.

The Métis Nation – Saskatchewan A La Baie Métis Local is currently operating some interesting projects in the community of Ile a la Crosse including the environmental project featured in this issue.



Ile a la Crosse boarding school students

Photo from Glenbow Archives

SAKITAWAK CONSERVATION PROJECT

By Project Sakitawak Project Staff

In 2019, The Government of Canada announced a call for proposals to Indigenous communities and groups to apply for funding for the purpose of establishing Indigenous Protected and Conservation Areas and to create protected areas in general.

As Canada implements its international commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity it is establishing 25% of Canada's lands as protected and conserved areas by 2025. The A La Baie Métis Local proposed to establish a protected and conserved area within the N-14 Fur Block in order to preserve key spawning and calving areas of vulnerable species and to preserve access to these traditional lands for future generations. Then Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, approved funding to move the

proposal to the next level and to build the partnerships and define the project details. The Métis Local has designed the project to ensure community-based governance, and has implemented the project under the Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 2015 between the Métis Local, the Northern Village, the Fishermen's Cooperative and the Trappers Association to advance sustainable development, respect for culture and the environment and to preserve and protect the lands and resources in N-14 fur block for future generations. The conservation project is for three years until March 2022.

The project has the following objectives:

- identification of the Sakitawak Protected and Conservation Area boundary.
- identification of protection and conservation needs within the protected and conservation area.
- identification of relevant of community and external stakeholders, design and implementation of engagement.
- establishment of an ongoing governance and management structure to address the ongoing needs within the identified conservation area; and
- secure ongoing funding to sustain the area and the governance which will include proposal development and partnerships with relevant funding agencies.

As per the MOU, the Sakitawak Conservation Area Project decisions will be made through a Management Team comprised of representatives of the MOU partners. This follows an agreement which formed the ICS4 in 2015 that outlines collaboration between the groups. Due to the conditions and restrictions created because of COVID, hiring individuals to begin the project were delayed until June 2020. A Project Director and a Project Manager have been hired and began work on July 1. Under the guidance and direction of the Sakitawak Conservation Project Management Team, Kelly Patrick has been contracted to carry out the responsibilities of the Project Director and Peter Durocher has been contracted as Project Manager. Former Chair of Co-Management Board of the N14 Fur Block, Peter Durocher has more than 20 years of experience trapping, fishing and cultural life in relation to these lands, his knowledge of the lands and water, and the historic users of these lands, will support overall project coordination by Kelly Patrick, who has worked

previously with the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan in the Tripartite Office then later as Director of Health in 2010. In 1991, Kelly Patrick worked for the Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE), that created a land use strategy which served as the precursor to the Nisga'a Land Treaty Entitlement Agreement in British Columbia. As the project begins to take shape, Peter and Kelly will engage with Elders, local researchers, knowledge holders, local conservation officers, other community stakeholders, rights holders, and aspiring conservationists to ensure the community has full ownership of the project as it moves forward. Jordyn Burnouf has been contracted to work with Peter and Kelly and will provide support in historical data collection, information sharing and engagement.

To assist with research in the project, a collaboration agreement has been signed with the School of the Environment and Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan, on March 31, 2020. The key to long term success of this project will be the interest from, knowledge and ownership by the community of Ile la Crosse and its affected neighbours. Our next steps will be to consult with community members first before engaging with other stakeholders such as industry and government, to understand fully what this area means to Sakitawak residents and to determine the priorities of conservation and protection. If you represent an interest in the area of conservation and protection, or if you want to know more about the project please email SakitawakConservation@gmail.com or call Peter Durocher at (639) 832-7117.

To protect our way of life, off the land and on the water for use now and sustained for generations.

The land will feed us and house us. If we do not protect it, we are defenseless.

Obtaining a Métis Citizenship Card in Saskatchewan

By Lorna Ledoux

As we see from the editorial on the back page of this publication, obtaining a Métis citizenship card has its advantages as well as its challenges. I can say with confidence from my days as MN-S Secretary that there have always been challenges to register citizens and issue the identification cards that prove our citizenship, whether it was lack of resources or simply resistance to the process by individuals. I often heard people say “I know that I am Métis so why should I need a card to prove it?” That worked and continues to work for many of us, however there are instances where the cards do prove useful, if not essential.

The popularity of registering and having Métis cards has crested and fell again and again over the years. Shortly following the *Grumbo* decision in 1996 referred to on the front page of this publication, I am sure that I saw a 20 percent increase in interest in Métis cards and many of the enquiries were from hunters. It was a great opportunity to expand local membership lists and at the same time, get tough with non-Métis attempting to take advantage of our Aboriginal harvesting rights. There were instances across the province following *Grumbo*, where hunters who could not produce evidence of Métis status were charged with hunting violations. The rush for Métis citizenship cards waned in the early 2000s until the 2003 *Powley* decision when once again people saw value in having them.

Whether or not we should be required to produce a card to vote in Métis elections and access services for Métis, it is our right to be registered and have the card to prove it. The MN-S does have a registry that has been working in a limited capacity

due to the Covid-19 pandemic but work should continue.

To register as a citizen of the Métis Nation, one must fit the definition adopted by the Métis National Council. For the purposes of registration ***“Métis means a person, who self identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation.”***

I come from a very large extended family and I am going to go out on a limb to say that maybe one quarter of us have registered and gotten our Métis cards. The process seems tedious to people not accustomed to doing stacks of paperwork, myself included, but once you dive in it is not so bad. Really, it is a simple process of showing that you descend from the historic Métis Nation through documentation.

So, one then needs to do a family tree and identify Métis ancestors. Once this is done, there are historical records that identify these ancestors as Métis such as Métis scrip records or the Canadian Census records from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I was able to find various records of my ancestors in these files. It is exciting and at the same time sad to see that many parents applied for children who succumbed to diseases and accidents so long ago.

After one identifies the ancestors and proven their Métisness, they must connect themselves to these per-

sons. This may be done through a chain of birth and baptism records. For instance, in my case, I had historical records for Great Grandparents and then baptism certificates for my grandparents and my Mom who was my Métis parent. She also gave me a copy of her old Métis cards dating back to the 1970s. I then got my birth certificate and I had illustrated my connection to the historic Métis Nation. If our readers choose to do the same, they must contact the MN-S Registry.

The information I have gotten from the MN-S Registry website:

<https://Métis.nationsk.com/citizenship/>

is that The Registry Offices across Saskatchewan remain closed to the public until further notice. The staff are working safely behind the scenes to keep the application process moving forward and that applications, documents, photos and all other inquiries can be directed to ***info@mnsregistry.ca***



Métis Nationalist Voice Editorial

Democracy, accountability, transparency, good governance and such-like words do indeed sound good, but remain empty shells if not put into action, or solely given lip-service.

Over the past few years we have heard these words over and over again, but have not seen much come out of them. Good leaders do lead by example. The top leadership of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) has not lived up to the potential offered by these fine words. As we have seen all too often, the current President of the MN-S does not even come close to living up to the spirit and intent of what is meant by democracy, good government, transparency and accountability.

While there are too many examples of this, known by far too many of us, the following will give some context to this editorial. First of all, our 1993 MNS Constitution declaring ourselves a government based on our inherent right do so under s.35 of the Canadian Constitution is rarely followed unless it favours the current President's personal position. A recent example is the arbitrary changes to Cabinet Ministers which was not ratified by the Provincial Métis Council (PMC). Another

example is the MN-S administration, likely the President and the CEO/COS arbitrarily amending the Citizenship Application Form without PMC approval. This new amendment without any form of discussion or consultation with our people now makes it impossible for a Métis Nation citizen in Saskatchewan to get registered unless you "voluntarily" assign all of your and your communities s.35 rights and duty to consult and accommodate to the MNS head office (President). How voluntary is that?

This is not right and is a backdoor approach to getting that s.35 and consultation mandate as they can't get it through the front door. Additionally, the funding for the Métis governmental bodies' registries was solely for the purpose of registering our citizens, not strong-arming citizens into signing away their rights.

In recent months, the MN-S position is that a Métis Nation citizen living in Saskatchewan can only get funding for programs and services negotiated by the Métis National Council for the Governing Members such as post-secondary assistance if they have an MN-S citizenship card. This denies funding to potentially hundreds of our youth who wish to attend university. This

funding was negotiated for the purpose of all 80,000 or so Métis in Saskatchewan, not solely for the few who have been able to register or re-register to date.

Further, the Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) last year passed a resolution to only allow card-carrying MN-S citizens a right to vote in the up-coming May 2021 MN-S election, taking away the right of thousands of our citizens the right to vote under our previous system which allowed declarations at the polls. With the COVID 19 pandemic and the virtual standstill of the registry, there are only about 12,000 registered Métis citizens to date after the restart of the registry system 3 years ago. In order to ensure that Métis are afforded their right to vote in a democratic election, the MNLA will need to revisit its 2019 resolution and provide for a combination of voters list for registered citizens and a declaration for all other Métis Nation citizens who wish to vote.

There is a definite need for change, and the May 2021 election offers that opportunity.

To contribute to this publication:
Editor - Métis Nationalist Voice
metisationalists@gmail.com



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www.metisnationalists.ca