



# Métis Nationalist Voice

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Métis Nation Issues and Interests

## Métis Nation Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan Planned for February 20/21

by Lorna Ledoux

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**ARTICLE 2: MÉTIS NATION LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY 1.** There shall be a Métis Nation Legislative Assembly which shall be the governing authority of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S Constitution)

There is something exhilarating about attending a Métis Nation assembly. While I am not one for pomp and circumstance, I do enjoy a grand entry with our veterans carrying in the flag of the Métis Nation, and still, after more than 25 years, that anthem of ours brings a tear of pride to my eye.

Having grown up attending the assemblies from the Métis Society to AMNSIS, back then Metis Society and then Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, (MN-S) I have seen many productive and some not so productive assemblies. The common thread is the vibe of commitment and passion for our nation and people that is so thick in the air that you can feel it.

In Saskatchewan, The Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) is comprised of the Local Presidents (or designated Vice-Presidents), The Provincial Métis

Council, four representatives of the Métis Women of Saskatchewan and four representatives from the Provincial Métis Youth Council.

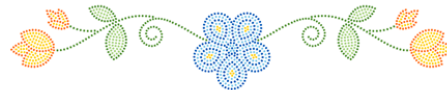
The Métis Nation Legislative has the authority to enact legislation, regulations, rules and resolutions governing the affairs and con-

A Virtual MNLA to be held February 20 and 21 of 2021 will be the first of its kind for the MN-S. While there are drawbacks to virtual connection, such as technological challenges and fluctuating wifi signals in rural areas, this could possibly mean that more people will be able to attend as they get to stay in their

home communities. It will be interesting and exciting to see. According to the MN-S Twitter account the event will be



**2021 Legislative Assembly**  
**February 20 & February 21, 2021**  
**9:00 AM**



duct of the Métis in Saskatchewan as well as to ratify portfolios, appoint/ratify committees, commissions and other subsidiary bodies necessary to effectively carry out the activities and functions of the organization. The Assembly strives to ensure equity of representation from the Youth, Women and Elders.

The Métis Nation Legislative Assembly is to meet at least twice a year. There have been years that this is simply not possible due to budgetary constraints or extenuating circumstances such as the current Covid-19 pandemic.

livestreamed for everyone to see at [About – MNLA | Métis Nation Saskatchewan](#) ([metisnationsk.com](http://metisnationsk.com)) and I personally look forward to tuning in from the comfort of my own home. It is my hope that the MNLA does get the requisite seventy-five members of the Métis Nation Legislative Assembly that constitute a quorum as this assembly has some very important agenda items, including the calling of the MN-S 2021 General Election

# Métis Nation Legislative Assembly & Potential Legislative Amendments

By Clem Chartier

The upcoming Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) will be dealing with important legislative amendments, particularly with respect to the *Elections Act*. Based on a resolution adopted by the MNLA in October 2019, the following legislative amendment is being proposed, which would see the end of the use of "Declarations" for those Métis who have not yet received or applied for their Citizenship Card prior to the proposed election.

It is proposed that s.12 of the *Saskatchewan Métis Elections Act 2007* be amended by repealing the existing s.12(2), replacing it with a new s.12(2):

s.12 (2). A person who wishes to register to vote must

- a) go to a place for registration listed in Section 11;
- b) provide documentary evidence of the voter's name, current address and signature for inspection by the election officer, which entitles him or her to vote;
- c) sign and swear, or affirm, the voter registration form in Form 1

of the Schedule;  
d) provide documentation to prove that they are, or are in the process of becoming a registered citizen of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan; and  
e) provide their current Saskatchewan Health Card.

However, there is also another legislative amendment being put forward by Jim Durocher, President of the A la Baie Métis Local of Ile a la Crosse. This proposed amendment would be complimentary to the 2019 MNLA resolution and proposed legislative amendment above, but would see Declarations used for one more election. This would provide a fair and democratic transition to the scrapping of the Declaration system and make accommodation for those citizens not able to register due to the Pandemic and closure of registry offices or having difficulty in accessing registry services.

s.12 (2.1). Notwithstanding s.12 (2), a person who wishes to vote and who does not meet the conditions in s.12 (2) for the pur-

poses of the 2021 Métis Nation-Saskatchewan election only, may

- a) go to a place for registration listed in Section 11;
- b) provide documentary evidence of the voter's name, current address and signature for inspection by the election officer, which entitles him or her to vote;
- c) sign and swear, or affirm, the voter registration form in Form 1 of the Schedule; and
- d) provide their current Saskatchewan Health Card.

By accepting President Durocher's proposed legislative amendment, the objectives of the MNLA will be met by 2025 and all qualified Métis citizens living in Saskatchewan will not be deprived of their democratic right to vote in the 2021 MNS election. It was good enough for all previous elections. It should be good enough for one more!



**2021 Legislative Assembly**

**February 20 & February 21, 2021**

**9:00 AM**



## A Turning Point: the 1988 Métis Constitutional Conference

By Clem Chartier

In February 1988 a constitutional conference was held in Prince Albert, the culmination of a process which began at Batoche in July 1987. Following the Spring 1987 First Ministers Conference on Aboriginal Rights, the then Executive of the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) travelled the province trying to convince the membership to no longer split into two separate organizations: Métis and Non-Status Indians. This split or separation had been agreed to over the past couple of years. Their rationale was that because Métis self-government was not recognized that there was no need for a Métis-only organization.

This was not agreeable to many Métis, including Rod Bishop who had a motion passed at the July 1987 AMNSIS Annual Assembly which set up a five-person Constitution Commission which was given the mandate to travel the province and consult the people on moving away from AMNSIS and establishing a Métis-only organization. I was one of the five, along with Wayne McKenzie (VP), Allan Morin (Prov. Sec), Ray Hamilton and Morley Norton. I was selected as the Chair and by Fall only Morley and I remained on the Commission, but we did not let this kill the process.

We gathered in Prince Albert, and while our meeting room at the Marlboro was cancelled by the AMNSIS Head Office and which also sent out notices saying that



Harold Lagimodiere, Jules Dumais, Edward King, Euclid Boyer, Medric McDougal, Mary St. Pierre, Louis Morin

the meeting was cancelled, we were able to rent the Army and Navy Hall and contact our people not to be fooled and to head to P.A. The meeting was quite tense as AMNSIS brought a large delegation, including staff of the affiliates and their supporters from some of the Locals.

After the opening prayer an agenda was adopted which centered on Métis issues, with Métis from the AMNSIS delegation headed up by their Executive voting in favour. This included hearing the Report of the Constitution Commission and reviewing a draft Métis-only Constitution. After tense interventions during the presentation of the Commission Report, President Sinclair went from table

to table and he and his supporters left and met at the Marlboro Hotel.

The Métis who remained finished the business of the meeting, adopting the Commission's Report, adopting a new Constitution for the Métis Society of Saskatchewan and appointing an Interim Committee to run the affairs of the new organization (MSS) with Regina Local President Cliff LaRocque as the Chairman.

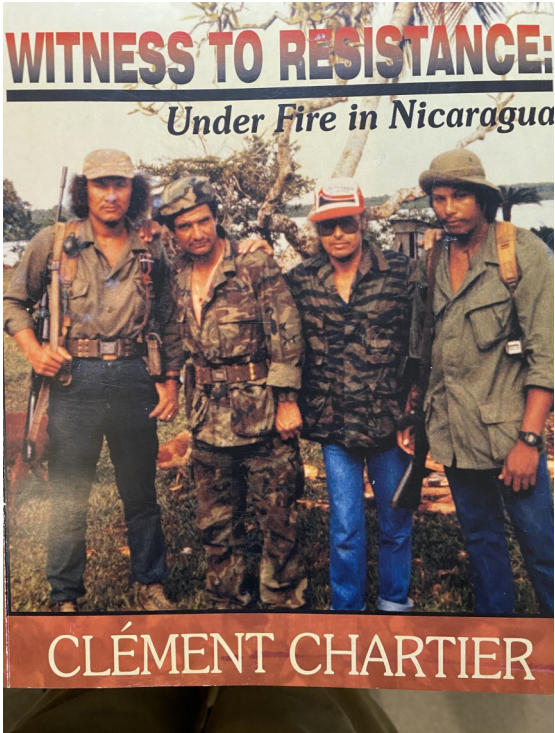
This was a Saturday and on the following Monday, Gerald Morin an articling student in Regina registered the change from AMNSIS to the MSS at the corporation's branch of the provincial government. This led to court

action by several members of the AMNSIS Executive against the new organization and committee which ended with a court-ordered referendum in August 1988 which saw a victory on the Métis side and our Métis-only organization. We were the last provincial Métis/Non-Status Indian organization in the Prairies to do so after the formation of the Métis National Council in March 1983. While this happened immediately in Manitoba and Alberta with Non-Status Indians members of the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Métis Association of Alberta forming their own organizations, it took 5 years for this to take place in Saskatchewan.



## 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Attack at Layasiksa, Nicaragua

By Clem Chartier



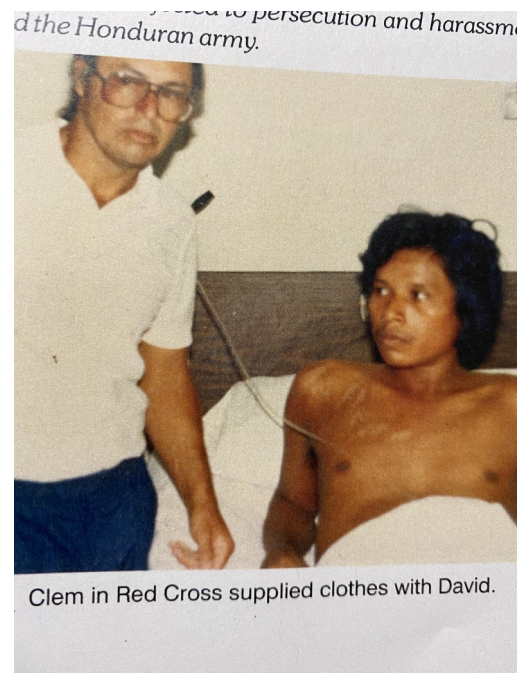
As President of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) I accompanied Indian leader Brooklyn Rivera on a fact-finding mission to determine the truth about what the Nicaraguan Sandinista government and its armed forces were doing to the Indian peoples on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. With Rivera were Russell Means of the American Indian Movement (AIM), Hank Adams an Indian activist from Washington State, Bob Martin a journalist from a TV station in New Mexico, and myself.

We arrived by large dugout canoe powered by two 55 horsepower Johnson motors from Costa Rica to the Indian village of Kuamwatla, Nicaragua on January 8, 1986. After spending time getting testimony in several villages we returned on January 19th to Layasiksa where we would be departing for our return to Costa Rica. We were short of gas for the outboard motors so we needed to wait for a day or two, however on January 21<sup>st</sup> the Sandinista air force attacked us in the village and this was the start of a lengthy escape out of the country through the jungle and river systems.

Two villagers were wounded in the village attack and 4 hours later as we were crossing a lagoon (lake) towards a river that would get us out of the area, the planes returned and caught us about 400



hundred yards from shore and opened fire with machine guns and rockets. We ended up with several Indian fighters killed or wounded while trying to swim to shore. Leader Rivera and his four guests escaped the attack unharmed.





## Attack at Layasiksa continued

After taking evasive action from the pursuing Sandinista armed forces, we finally reached an Indian village, Walpasiksa the leaders of which made our escape possible by creating activities which distracted the Sandinista soldiers who were guarding the exit/entrance to the sea.

After 22 hours at sea and nearly running out of gas, we finally hit the small Island of San Andres, Colombia and we were able to get the wounded to the hospital, including David Rodriguez who had been a delegate to our International Indigenous Youth Conference at Batoche the year before in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary (centenary) of the Battle of Batoche. He was later taken to Bogota, Columbia where his leg was amputated. Sadly, David died in December 2020, as did Hank Adams. Both Russell Means and Bob Martin died several years ago. Brooklyn Rivera is still the leader of this people, a position he has held since 1981.



Three of the wounded fighters: Norman Molina (Yull), "Pichi" (Small Pico), and David Rodriguez



Press Conference in San Jose, Costa Rica, February 1986. Left to right: Hank Adams, Russell Means, Brooklyn Rivera, and Clem Chartier. In front of Chartier is his hand-written journal, testimony cassettes, film canisters, and shrapnel collected at Layasiksa.

# Métis Governance: Winter 1870

By Lorna Ledoux

I often refer to historical writings to see what was going on during certain time periods many years ago. It is an inspirational exercise that refreshes commitment to our cause as Métis Nationalists. According to historian Lawrence Barkwell, the winter of 1869-1870 was an eventful one for the Red River Settlement. I would venture to say that the activities at the time played a strong role in solidifying the foundation of current Métis Governments. Following is a bit of that history that I hope our readers will enjoy:

On December 27, John Bruce resigned as president of the provisional government, and Riel was elected president. On the same day, Donald Smith arrived in the settlement, followed shortly by de Salaberry, joining Thibault, who had arrived on Christmas Day. They met with Riel on January 5, 1870, but reached no conclusions. The next day, Riel and Smith had another meeting. At this time Smith concluded that negotiation with the committee would be fruitless. He maneuvered to bypass them and present the Canadian position at a public meeting.

Meetings were held on January 19 and January 20. With Riel acting as translator, Smith assured the large audiences of the Canadian government's goodwill, intention to grant representation, and willingness to extend concessions with respect to land claims. With the settlement now solidly behind him, Riel proposed the formation of a new convention of forty representatives, split evenly between French- and English-speaking settlers, to consider Smith's instructions. This was accepted. A committee of six outlined a more comprehensive list of rights, which the convention ac-

cepted on February 3. Following meetings on February 7 wherein the new list of rights were presented to Thibault, de Salaberry, and Smith, Smith proposed that a delegation be sent to Ottawa to engage in direct negotiations with Canada, a suggestion eagerly accepted by Riel. At this time Riel also proposed that the provisional government should be reformed so as to be more inclusive of both language groups. A constitution enshrining these goals was accepted by the convention on February 10. An elected assembly was established, consisting of 12 representatives from anglophone parishes and 12 representatives from francophone parishes.

## **Manitoba's Provisional Government of 1870 The Convention of Forty: January 25, 1870 to February 10, 1870.**

Without consultation, the Canadian government had passed the "Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land by a Lieutenant Governor and Council" on October 1, 1869 and appointed William McDougall as Lieutenant Governor. McDougall traveled to Red River via Pembina and attempted to smuggle 250 rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition into Manitoba. The Red River Resistance lasted from November 1869, when the Métis blocked William McDougall's entrance, to August 1870 when the British military expedition, the Red River Expeditionary Force, arrived at Red River. During that period Louis Riel tried with varying levels of success to bring the English and French speaking portions of the

community together in a single government that would negotiate terms of entry with the Canadian government. The Métis had originally formed a National Committee of the Métis of Red River to turn back William McDougall and seize Upper Fort Garry. One of Riel's first acts was to call on the English speaking parishes of the community to send 12 delegates to meet with 12 French-speaking residents of the parishes to debate the community's future. This Convention of 24 was able to agree on a list of rights that they wanted to see Canada recognize, but were unable to agree on a common strategy. At a two-day open-air meeting in January 1870, HBC Governor Donald Smith promised to communicate the people's concerns to Canada. Another convention, this one with 20 English-speaking and 20 French-representatives met between January 25, 1870 and February 10, 1870 and agreed upon a list of demands to take to Ottawa. At this point the Convention of Forty proclaimed itself a provisional government with Riel as its President. It was the crowning point in the history of the resistance, bringing together the English- and French-speaking halves of the community under a single government. The Provisional Government agreed to send Father Noel Joseph Ritchot an adviser of Riel's, Alfred Scott, a Winnipeg bartender, and Judge John Black, to Ottawa to negotiate with the Canadian government.

From information compiled by Lawrence Barkwell, Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research Louis Riel Institute  
10005 ([metis-museum.ca](http://metis-museum.ca))



## Métis List of Rights

Métis Bill of Rights December 1, 1869 6.1.2 a

1. The right to elect our Legislature.
2. The Legislature to have power to pass all laws, local to the Territory, over the veto of the Executive, by a two-third vote.
3. No act of the Dominion Parliament (local to this Territory) to be binding on the people until sanctioned by their representatives.
4. All sheriffs, magistrates, constables, etc., etc., to be elected by the people—a free homestead pre-emption law.
5. A portion of the public lands to be appropriated to the benefit of schools, the building of roads, bridges and parish buildings.
6. A guarantee to connect Winnipeg by rail with the nearest line of railroad—the land grant for such road or roads to be subject to the Legislature of the Territory.
7. For 4 years the public expenses of the Territory, civil, military and municipal, to be paid out of the Dominion treasury.
8. The military to be composed of the people now existing in the Territory.
9. The French and English language to be common in the Legislature and Council, and all public documents and acts of Legislature to be published in both languages.
10. That the Judge of the Superior Court speak French and English.
11. Treaties to be concluded and ratified between the Government and several tribes of Indians of this Territory, calculated to insure peace in the future.
12. That all privileges, customs and usages existing at the time of the transfer to be respected.
13. That these rights be guaranteed by Mr. McDougall before he be admitted into this Territory.
14. If he have not the power himself to grant them, he must get an act of Parliament passed expressly securing us these rights; and until such act be obtained, he must stay outside of the Territory.
15. That we have a full and fair representation in the Dominion Parliament.

Source: The Papers of Alexander Begg, Red River Settlement historian (From the Virtual Museum of Métis History)

## Métis Nationalist Voice Editorial

The Métis Nation prides itself in its deep traditions of democracy and rule of Métis law. Historically we had the Laws of the Buffalo Hunt and the Laws of St. Laurent. In 1979 we held our first ballot box election for leadership, the first in the Métis Nation to do so, but now a condition of being part of the Métis Nation government embodied in the Métis National Council, which we formed on March 8, 1983 to represent the interests and rights of the Métis Nation.

Traditionally all of our services and democratic engagement included all Métis citizens within the province of Saskatchewan. When our ancestors went to the trenches to defend our people, lands and rights, they weren't asked if they had a "Métis card" before they were able to participate in the resistance. We were always inclusive of all Métis Nation citizens living in this province: from participating in elections to being provided services and programs through our Affiliates.

Without consultation with our citizens, our Locals, and even the PMC, an agreement was signed between the MNS and the federal government in June 2019 which set the stage for the negotiation of self-government, which if successful would be given the force of law through federal legislation. This was an abandonment of our inherent right of self-government, to one "contingent" on the goodwill of the federal government in accepting or rejecting whatever self-government the MNS will come up with. To date, the only area of self-government being discussed is internal self-government through the adoption of a new constitution which we will need to get the federal government of accept or agree

with. If this happens, it is turning our backs on our current 1993 Constitution adopted by over 900 delegates and based on our inherent right of self-government.

Strangely, and again, without any consultation, the MNS has taken the position, based on the so-called 2019 Self-Government Agreement to develop policy which now limits provision of programs and services to only those Métis in Saskatchewan who have a citizenship card of which to date there are less than 15,000. This flies in the face of past practice, and also the fact that the Métis National Council has negotiated over two (2) billion dollars for programs and services for the Métis Nation in federal budgets in 2018 and 2019. Based on the MNC's historic funding formula 25% goes to each of the Manitoba Métis Federation, the MNS and the Métis Nation of Alberta. This is on the basis that the MNS represents about 80,000 Métis Nation citizens living in Saskatchewan. 25% of two (2) billion dollars is a significant amount of money and is meant for ALL Métis Nation citizens living in Saskatchewan, not just the few who are currently registered.

Further, a resolution, again without consultation, was adopted at the October 2019 MNLA restricting voting rights to only those who are registered on the MNS registry. This breaks from our past practice of allowing all Métis Nation citizens living in Saskatchewan the right to vote (by declaration), which we have been doing since the first election in 1989 of the newly formed Métis-only organization/government in Saskatchewan. To have made such an important decision, at the very least, the MNLA delegates should

have consulted their Local Boards, if not their members.

While this is still at the resolution stage, the MNLA session this month will be entertaining legislative amendments to put this into action for the proposed May 29, 2021 MNS election. This is an opportunity for the MNLA Members to take a second-sober look and put off adopting this process until there is a chance to consult their constituents. Further complicating this citizenship requirement to be able to exercise voting rights, the MNS Registrar has posted that its registry offices are closed due to the Corona Virus Pandemic, which has prevented many Métis from even applying. To further complicate matters, in the summer of 2020 the citizenship application form became politicized, and rather than just being an administration tool to apply for citizenship, it was amended to "voluntarily" assign all rights under s.35 and the duty to consult to the MNS. There are many who have stated they will not apply because of that amendment. Rather than putting up such roadblocks and depriving Métis citizens of such basic and fundamental rights, the MNS should act in a more democratic manner and not strip thousands of Métis from the right to cast a ballot for whom they would like to form government and represent their interests.

*We are on the web at:*

[www.MetisNationalists.ca](http://www.MetisNationalists.ca)

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### Reminder

**You may need a Métis card to vote in the next Métis Nation - Saskatchewan election.**

**Declarations may not be used.**

**If you plan to participate in choosing who will represent you as a Métis, you need to get a card. To apply, go online to:**

<https://metisnationsk.com/citizenship/>