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Métis Politics and Governance in Canada



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Abbreviations

MMF	Manitoba Métis Federation
MNA	Métis Nation of Alberta
MNBC	Métis Nation British Columbia
MNC	Métis National Council
MNO	Métis Nation of Ontario
MN-S	Métis Nation-Saskatchewan

Michif Vocabulary

aen ishi mamoonakatwayhtamaahk

how we think together/our collective frame of mind

aen ishi wiichayaamitooyahk

how we live together/how we were related all in one

ka ishi pimaatishiyahk

our way of life

ka niikaaniichik

those who lead us

ka tipaymishooyahk

we who own ourselves

ka tipaymishoshik

the free people

kiihtwaam ooshtaahk lii goovarnimaan di Michif

rebuilding Métis governments

ki tipemishoonaan

we are all free

la noovel Naasyoon

the new nation

la Viktwayr daan la Plenn di Goornouyayr

the Victory at Frog Plain/Seven Oaks

li shmayn ishi tipaymishoohk

the road to freedom

lii drway di Naasyoon di Michif ka paashpiiwahk
the rights of the Métis Nation will survive

lii faam di Naasyoon di Michif
mothers of the Métis Nation

lii gens libres
the free people

lii goovarnimaan di Michif
Métis governments

lii lway di Michif
Métis laws

lii valeur di goovarnimaan di Michif
principles of Métis governance

miyeu waahkootoowin
being related in a good way

nootr goovarnimaan
our government

Introduction

IN A BANQUET ROOM not far from what was once the headquarters of Louis Riel's provisional government, the newly elected representatives of the Manitoba Métis Federation gathered to take their oaths of office. One by one, as they made their way to stand in unity beside a blue flag with a white infinity symbol, each elected official solemnly pledged to be loyal and faithful to the Métis people and to bring honour to the Métis Nation. They further promised to dedicate their office to the fair and just treatment of all Métis and to serve their people to the best of their ability "in the spirit of Louis Riel."¹ Almost 150 years have passed since Riel founded his government on the banks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in 1869. Yet, on that warm July evening, as the newest representatives of Manitoba's Métis government pledged their allegiance to the legacy bestowed upon them by their forebears, it was clear that the past was very much present in the hearts and minds of all those gathered. As the president of the Manitoba Métis Federation, David Chartrand, noted, "we are walking the same path as other Métis leaders before us."²

Contemporary Métis leaders, like those that preceded them, remain committed to fulfilling Riel's vision of a self-governing Métis Nation within Canada. For the Métis, self-government involves exercising their right to live according to what they refer to as *ka ishi pimaatishiyaaahk* (our way of life).³ In their own Michif language, Métis elders speak of the achievements of *ka niikaaniichik* (those who lead us) and affirm the

enduring commitment of the Métis to *nootr goovarnimaan di Michif* (our Métis government). Through their leaders and their governments, the Métis have engaged in an ongoing struggle to protect their right to govern their lands and their people. Described in Michif as *ka tipaymishooyahk* (we who own ourselves), the Métis view themselves as a free, self-governing, and distinct Indigenous nation. Then, as now, the vision of *ka tipaymishooyahk* remains the lifeblood of the Métis. This vision stands in sharp contrast to the historic position of the Métis in the national political landscape as “Canada’s forgotten people” (Sealy and Lussier 1975; Daniels 1979).

When asked about the Métis, most Canadians would likely reference iconic figures like Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, or seminal events in Métis history such as the Red River Resistance and the Battle of Batoche. Others might point to the role of the Métis in the Northwest fur trade or to traditional symbols like the fiddle and the sash. That our knowledge of the Métis tends towards historical figures, events, and symbols is understandable given that the literature related to the Métis has traditionally focused on the past.⁴ In recent decades, a resurgence of interest has led to a growth of scholarship in the fields of Métis law, identity, culture, and history, with edited volumes touching on a number of these themes.⁵ Despite this sizeable and growing body of literature, there are few published works that examine the Métis as contemporary political actors engaged in an ongoing quest for self-determination.⁶ In the words of one Métis leader: “We need to start taking that story and changing it, so people can say, when they see the Métis Nation, ‘We know who they are, we respect who they are, we understand why they’re fighting for what they’re fighting for.’”⁷

It is surprising that little attention has been directed to Métis politics, governing practices, and institutions or to the interactions between Métis and other governments given that, at their core, the Métis have always been a political people. Indeed, it was through political organization, beginning with the buffalo hunts and continuing through such events as *la Viktwayr daan la Plenn di Goornouyayr* (the Victory at Frog Plain) in the early 1800s that a conspicuous Métis identity was fully realized.⁸ For the Métis, political action has long been essential to their survival as

a distinct Indigenous people.⁹ Committed to remaining *ka tipaymi-shooyahk* (we who own ourselves), self-determination and its more practical application, self-government, is at the heart of Métis aspirations: it represents the legacy of Louis Riel and the unique people who emerged in the Historic Northwest. The Métis' ongoing struggle to control their own destiny is captured in a study prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) by the Métis Society of Saskatchewan:

At the outset, it is important to note that our self-determination objectives, through self-government, are not new. Métis history bears witness to a lengthy legacy of struggles aimed at asserting our fundamental right to control our own destiny. In what is now the province of Saskatchewan, for example, ever escalating political, economic, social and cultural disputes between the Métis and the European settlers culminated in the well-known Métis resistance to Ottawa in 1885. Other sites in nineteenth century Western Canada were also scenes of conflict over many of the same issues. As might be expected, while the military conflicts that sometimes erupted were relatively short-lived, the political struggle to protect Métis economic, social and cultural values and goals has persisted.

This enduring theme in our Métis history – that we as a people have struggled against often overwhelming odds to reclaim our traditional Homeland and assert our sense of nationhood – lies behind much of the current drive towards self-government.
(RCAP 1996a, 101)

In the present, as in the past, the Métis have remained committed to the fulfillment of their rights to land and to self-government within Canada.

For the Métis, self-government and self-determination are inherently linked; Métis leaders view self-government as the means by which they can remain *ka tipemishoshik* (the free people) and assert their independence as a unique Indigenous nation in Canada.¹⁰ This goal has propelled the Métis forward since *la Viktwayr daan la Plenn di Goornouyayr* (the

Victory at Frog Plain); indeed, when contemporary Métis leaders speak of self-government, they often refer to historical struggles for self-determination and to Louis Riel's vision for the Métis Nation within an expanded Canadian state. In a speech at the special assembly of the Métis National Council in March 2017, Métis Nation president Clément Chartier reminded Métis leaders of the continued resonance of Riel's vision of a self-determining Métis Nation. For Chartier, like for Riel, self-determination involves the ability of the Métis to live prosperous and free lives and to determine for themselves their place within Canada. In practical terms, this involves building mutually respectful government-to-government relationships with the provinces and with Canada while also strengthening and building capacity within the Métis Nation.

As the practical application of self-determination, self-government is often used to refer to external relationships with state actors; however, as Métis leader Margaret Froh reminds us, it is a multifaceted concept that ultimately involves "taking care of our families."¹¹ For Métis elder George Fleury, self-government means "to be accepted for who I am, Métis; to be independent; to have our own government, to be able to govern our own affairs through the efforts of our ancestors."¹² Jason Madden, legal counsel to Métis governments, describes self-government as the goal that has sustained the Métis through long and difficult times. He sees the desire for self-government as grounded in nationhood: "It's in our political action, it's in our collective hearts, it's a part of who we are as a people."¹³

The Métis have made significant strides towards self-government in the past quarter century. Due to the persistence of Métis leaders who mobilized at the national level in the 1970s to push Ottawa for acknowledgment of their rights to land and to self-government, Canada recognized the Métis as a rights-bearing Aboriginal people alongside First Nations and Inuit in the Constitution Act, 1982. Despite this monumental achievement, however, it would take a decades-long court battle to clarify the constitutional position of the Métis vis-à-vis the state. This would come in the Supreme Court of Canada's 2016 ruling in *Daniels v. Canada*, which concluded that the Métis are "Indians" for the purposes of section 91(24) and therefore fall within the jurisdictional responsibility of the

federal government. By extension, it is within the federal government's jurisdictional responsibility to enact legislation that recognizes existing Métis governments and to enable a policy environment that provides the Métis with access to programs and services that meet their specific needs.

The *Daniels* case comes on the heels of other critical Supreme Court of Canada rulings. Most notably, *Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada* acknowledged the federal government's failure to uphold historical promises with respect to land for the Métis, and *R. v. Powley* recognized Métis harvesting rights. Through this and related jurisprudence, Canadian courts have sent a clear message that Métis rights can no longer be ignored. In response to these legal developments, Canada's prime minister, Justin Trudeau, has committed to complete the "unfinished work of Confederation" and respect Métis rights through the development of a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with the Métis.¹⁴

As national Métis leader Clément Chartier wrote in a message to Métis citizens, "We, as a people, are at an important time and place within our existence as a distinct rights-bearing Indigenous people in our historic homeland."¹⁵ In spite of the increasing recognition of the Métis as significant players in the Canadian federation, little is known in academic and political circles about their systems of government or their political institutions. What are the principles and practices that underlie Métis politics and governance? How has Métis governance changed since the days of the buffalo hunts and Riel's provisional governments? What kinds of structures and processes have the Métis developed to bring their inherent right to self-government to life? How do the Métis select their political leaders, make collective decisions, and engage with their communities and other levels of government? What accounts for the ongoing prominence of women in Métis politics and governance? And what challenges do the Métis face as they continue to pursue their self-government agenda?

We explore these questions through a series of thematic chapters that offer unique insights into contemporary Métis politics and governance. As the Métis become increasingly visible actors on the Canadian political scene, we offer a novel, timely, and practical guide for students, academics, and practitioners to enable them to better understand how

Métis politics and governance have evolved within the country's federal landscape. Our aim is to contribute to a better understanding of who the Métis are and what they are fighting for. We also hope that this book will serve as an opportunity for all Canadians, and in particular citizens and leaders of the Métis Nation, to reflect on the achievements that have been made as well as on the barriers that still remain in fulfilling Riel's vision of *ka tipaymishooyahk* (we who own ourselves) within the contemporary context of the Canadian state.

Riel's People

We situate the Métis as a unique Indigenous nation, whose consciousness as a distinct people emerged most fully in the Northwest through events such as the 1816 *Viktwayr daan la Plenn di Goornouyayr* (Victory at Frog Plain) and the Resistance at Red River in 1869 and at Batoche in 1885. It was these people, whom Paul Chartrand (2017) describes as “Riel's people,” who organized a civil government, defended their lands from Canada's intrusion, treated with the Crown through the Manitoba Act, 1870, forged alliances with other Indigenous peoples, and were dominant figures in the economic life of the Historic Northwest.¹⁶ As Paul Chartrand and John Giokas (2002, 287) argue, while the Métis possessed the symbols of nationhood (including a distinctive flag, a national anthem, a unique language, music, and art), it was their collective political will to resist Canada's unilateral annexation of their lands and usurpation of their rights, coupled with the power to do so, that fuelled their emergence as a distinct people.

Our emphasis on the Métis as a distinct nation that emerged through political action stands in contrast to historical accounts that situate their origin in terms of race and hybridity and, more narrowly, in relation to their role as economic actors in the fur trade. For example, historians like G.F.G Stanley and Marcel Giraud attribute the development of a national consciousness among the Métis to the North West Company and the support it provided for Métis mobilization as a means of bolstering its own power relative to that of the Hudson's Bay Company (Stanley 1960; Giraud 1984; Morton 1978; Morton 1967). Stanley (1960, 10) goes so far as to argue that it is within the context of power struggles

between trading companies that the Métis developed a distinct identity “as a separate racial and national unit, which found expression in their name, “The New Nation.”

Historical accounts that portray the Métis as a racial or economic by-product of these power struggles have been challenged by more recent scholarship on Métis ethnogenesis. Scholars like Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown (1985), Nicole St-Onge (2004), Brenda Macdougall (2010), and Carolyn Podruchny (2006) have shown how the social and political cohesion as well as the organizational capacity of the Métis grew through expanding kinship networks. Their research demonstrates that the Métis were not brought together by external forces but were instead united as a distinct Indigenous people through kinship bonds that traversed time and space. The ties that would bind what Chris Andersen (2014, 124) describes as “Métis nation-ness,” and which occurred most strongly in Red River, were embedded in social relationships that were fundamentally distinct from those of Europeans.

Following this more recent trend in Métis studies, we take Métis ethnogenesis as rooted in political action and agency (see also Andersen 2014, 24; Gaudry 2016a, 2016b), and trace the continuities between historic and contemporary Métis political organization. In so doing, we do not suggest that the various external and internal forces that have helped shape Métis political consciousness are mutually exclusive. As we note in later chapters, the Métis have regularly adapted their governance structures to changing political, social, and economic circumstances in order to more successfully pursue their objectives. We argue that, in the years that follow Canadian Confederation, the Métis have navigated their own traditions in a political context that they no longer fully control. They have maintained some structures and practices while strategically adopting others to advance their collective objectives as Riel’s people.¹⁷ This continuity and change is at the heart of Métis politics and governance.

One of the key findings of our research is the deft ability of the Métis to adjust their tactics and practices to the challenges at hand. Foremost among these challenges has been the federal government’s historic denial of Métis rights and nationhood, and Canada’s long-standing refusal to recognize the Métis in state policy and law. The evidence we have gathered

reveals the Métis as an Indigenous nation with unique governance practices and traditions. Compelled to work within the constraints imposed by the Canadian state and the accompanying processes of colonization, domination, and assimilation, the Métis Nation has remained an active agent of resistance and change.

We use the term “Métis” to refer to the people who developed a unique culture, identity, and political consciousness as a new Indigenous nation in the Historic Northwest. It also encompasses what scholars like John Foster (1985, 87) and Heather Devine (2001, 132; 2004, 107) have described as “proto-Métis,” those individuals who contributed to the emergence of a distinct community before the Métis were constituted as a people and before the adoption of the term “Métis.” Rooted in Red River, the Métis were connected to communities across the Northwest through kinship relations. Our use of the capital “M” in the term “Métis” does not imply a singular political homogeneity historically or today. The internal diversity of the Métis was historically captured by terms that emphasize their dual heritage – such as *Bois-Brûlés* in French, *wis-sakodewinmi* in Ojibwe, and *apitahwikosisan* in Cree – as well as by distinctions between Scottish Protestants (half-breeds) and French Catholics (Métis) (Dickason 1985; Pannekoek 1991; Spry 1985; Chartrand 2004; Foster 2007; Peterson and Brown 1985). While there was and continues to be diversity within this community, as indeed there is within any community, we follow Irene Spry (1985, 108) in arguing that it was through their mobilization and political struggles against colonial rule that the Métis became a united people.

We support Darren O’Toole’s (2013, 151, emphasis in original) argument that “a nation implies not only self-ascription, but a *political* consciousness that is shaped by a dialectical movement where political action is both motivated by a strong desire and capacity to maintain the objective and subjective aspects that distinguish it from other groups and shapes the very subjectivity and agency that nourishes that desire.” We use “nation” and “people” interchangeably to refer to the expressly *political* community that arose in the Historic Northwest. This language reflects that of Métis leaders who, when asked about the difference between “nation” and “people,” repeatedly told us there was no real difference (for

a nuanced academic discussion of these concepts, see Andersen 2014). For them, the Métis Nation is the political community that was constituted through the struggles of the nineteenth century and that persists to this day as Riel's people. Connected through kinship ties rooted in the Historic Northwest, the Métis form a single people – the Métis Nation.

As within all collectivities, identity within the Métis Nation is contested. In Métis politics, identity is entangled with questions of membership and boundaries, yet it remains deeply personal. As Adam Gaudry and Chris Andersen (2016) note, Indigenous communities are best placed to define themselves. Our goal is not to resolve debates about Métis identity but, instead, to consider how Métis politics and governance can contribute to our understanding of the evolution of Métis identity within the context of the colonial Canadian state.

Contemporary Métis Governments

Throughout the book, we focus on the contemporary governing bodies that have taken up Riel's vision of *ka tipaymishooyabk* (we who own ourselves) in the colonial context of the Canadian state. Specifically, we examine the five Métis governments that make up the Métis National Council, the national spokesperson of the Métis Nation. These are the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S), the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO).¹⁸ Collectively, these Métis governments form what is referred to as *nootr goovarnimaan di Michif* (our Métis government).

We have chosen to centre our analysis on these Métis governments, also referred to as the Governing Members of the Métis National Council, as they constitute the democratic governing bodies mandated by Métis citizens to serve as the elected representatives of the Métis Nation in Canada. They are recognized by the courts and the minister's special representative on reconciliation with Métis to represent section 35 Métis rights-holders, and engage with provincial and federal governments for the purposes of consultation and negotiation.¹⁹ The 2017 Canada-Métis Nation Accord, signed by the prime minister of Canada and the president of the Métis National Council, recognizes that the Governing Members

that comprise the Métis National Council are “mandated and authorized to represent the citizens who comprise the Métis Nation, including dealing with collectively held Métis rights, interests and outstanding claims against the Crown.”²⁰

Our use of the term “government” to describe these entities is intentional. It is the language used by Métis citizens and their leaders. Like other governments, Métis governments engage in program and service delivery, pass legislation, and advance the interests of their citizens. While these non-land-based governments may be “different,” as noted by the ministerial special representative on reconciliation with Métis, this does not mean that “they are illegitimate or that they can or should be ignored.”²¹

Métis interests have historically been represented by various groups, often in conjunction with non-status Indians. Many of these organizations emerged against a backdrop of exclusion, which has been largely maintained at the federal and, to a lesser degree, provincial levels. This history of exclusion, along with Canada’s colonial past, has contributed to the emergence of a complex network of organizations that purport to promote Métis interests in various forms. These include the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (formerly the Native Council of Canada), the Métis Federation of Canada, and the Canadian Métis Council-Intertribal. While these organizations may eventually come to play a role in the contemporary landscape of Indigenous governance, we focus our analysis on the Métis governments that evolved from the early forms of political organization in the Historic Northwest to form *nootr goovarnimaan di Michif* and that collectively negotiate the Métis Nation’s place within the federation. It is these Métis governments that are legally recognized to represent the interests of the Métis Nation.

Our Research Approach

Our research and analysis have been guided by our familial and community connections to the Métis Nation in Canada. Our understanding of the Métis has been enriched not only by the time we have spent with Métis citizens across the Homeland but also by our direct observation of Métis politics and practices. For more than a decade, we have participated in numerous general assemblies, conferences, and other

political events and have met with leaders, elders, and citizens from across the Métis Nation. Our objective was not only to uncover the ways in which Métis political bodies function as representative governments but also to understand how they evolved, the strategies they employ, the values they share, and the challenges they face in the pursuit of self-determination.

We have deepened our understanding of Métis governance through semi-structured interviews with elected Métis representatives at the local, provincial, and national levels, as well as with other advisors and officials who interact with the Métis. These interviews helped to clarify how Métis governments pursue their mandate as representatives of Métis citizens. In addition, informal conversations with an array of individuals at community events, celebrations, and cultural festivities allowed us to gain a broader and more contextualized understanding of how the Métis think and act politically.

We are indebted to all those who took the time to share their perspectives, stories, and insights with us and remain committed to sharing this knowledge in a spirit of humility and responsibility. This includes protecting the anonymity of those who requested it and paying respect to the Michif language, the language of the Métis Nation. Although we have a deep connection to the Métis, we are non-Indigenous scholars. We take seriously the challenge posed to us by one elder to engage with the Michif language and to “think from a Métis perspective.” Our interactions with elders, leaders, and community members have encouraged us to reconsider Eurocentric assumptions about politics and governance and to embrace Métis ways of knowing. This is consistent with principles of ethical Métis research, which include building reciprocal relations, respecting the individual and the collective, as well as knowing Métis history, values, and knowledge.²² While we have endeavoured to engage earnestly and honestly with Métis perspectives, we also acknowledge the limits we face as non-Métis academic observers. This book is our attempt to share what we have learned and to pay homage to the citizens and leaders of the Métis Nation who remain committed to what has been described to us time and time again as “the vision of Riel’s people” – *ka tipaymishooyahk*.

Overview of the Book

We begin by situating contemporary Métis governance and politics in historical context. In Chapter 1, “*La Noovel Naasyoon* | Métis Political Organization in Historical Perspective,” we argue that the Métis have long defined themselves as a sovereign people with an inherent right to self-government. Beginning with the buffalo hunts in the late 1700s and continuing through to the provisional governments that dotted the Historic Northwest, we show that the Métis developed their own rules, processes, and structures to manage their political, economic, and social affairs. We examine how, throughout the twentieth century, these practices evolved with the political organization of the Métis, from the creation in 1887 of the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba to the establishment of Métis associations in Alberta and Saskatchewan in the 1920s and 1930s and the creation of the Métis National Council in 1983. We argue that the evolution of Métis political organization occurred in response to the particularities of the context in which the Métis found themselves. These organizations were a means through which to assert themselves as *la noovel Naasyoon* (the new nation).

Chapter 2, “*Lii Valeur di Goovarnimaan di Michif* | Principles of Métis Governance,” explores the principles that underpinned political activities in the early years of Métis mobilization and that continue to resonate today. Using Michif concepts, we highlight five principles that characterize Métis governance: freedom, kinship, democracy, the rule of law, and provisionality. We trace these principles to the various governance structures created by the Métis since the days of the buffalo hunt and consider how they have evolved over time. Although some of these principles are shared by other Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, they interact with one another to give life to a distinct way of governing that continues to inform Métis politics.

In Chapter 3, “*Lii Goovarnimaan di Michif* | Métis Governments,” we examine the characteristics of contemporary Métis governments and discuss how they operate within the Canadian federal system. We focus on the Métis Nation British Columbia, the Métis Nation of Alberta, the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, the Manitoba Métis Federation, and the Métis Nation of Ontario, which, taken together, make up the Métis

National Council and are collectively seen as the Métis Nation's government in Canada. While the Métis increasingly govern themselves through community-level associations, regional councils, and provincial and national governments, their aspirations to self-government continue to be limited by the ambiguous position they occupy within Canada's political and legislative framework. Acknowledging the constraints imposed by the colonial state context, we critically assess some of the challenges the Métis face as they continue to work towards establishing their governing structures as legitimate and effective vehicles of self-government.

In Chapter 4, “*Kiihtwaam Ooshtaabk lii Goovarnimaan di Michif* | (Re)building a Métis Civil Service,” we provide an inside look at the development of a Métis public service and assess some of the challenges presented therein through a case study of the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). Created in 1967 as a not-for-profit corporation with a five-member board of directors and seven staff members, the MMF has evolved into a government of seven hundred employees representing over fifty thousand registered citizens. In order to contend with this rapid growth, the MMF has sought to develop its own approach to governance – one that reconciles Canadian-style organizational practices with Métis ways of knowing. Despite its successes to date, the MMF still faces obstacles in terms of fiscal arrangements, human resource development, and capacity building. The need to address these concerns is all the more pressing in light of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada*, which has positioned the MMF to negotiate with state governments on land rights on behalf of the Métis in Manitoba. This chapter offers an overview of the key issues at stake as the MMF and Canada work towards reconciliation and the fulfillment of Métis rights in Manitoba through a recently signed Framework Agreement.

In Chapter 5, “*Lii Faam di Naasyoon di Michif* | Mothers of the Métis Nation,” we examine how Métis women have become active decision makers within their governments. While we note this trend throughout the book, we devote a chapter to highlight the prominence of women in historical and contemporary Métis governance. While the processes of colonization and assimilation have led to the general disempowerment

of the Métis within Canada – and of women in particular – Métis women have managed to retain their voice as important political actors within the Métis Nation. To help us understand the success of Métis women in contemporary politics, we rely on the experience and perspectives of female leaders who have occupied prominent positions as political representatives, community organizers, and elders. Their stories not only reveal a continuity in the historic and contemporary prominence of Métis women but also speak to how Métis women contribute to the goals of the Métis Nation as a whole.

The Métis Nation is entering a new political era. No longer relegated to the sidelines, Métis leaders have been invited to sit at the table with their federal counterparts in a nation-to-nation relationship based on rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. This historic development was achieved with the signing of the Canada-Métis Nation Accord by the Métis Nation president and the prime minister in 2017. The accord represents the culmination of the collective efforts by the Métis over the past century and a half to bring to life their inherent right to self-government and to force Canada's hand in acknowledging and implementing this right. In Chapter 6, "*Li Shmayn ishi Tipaymishoohk* | The Road to Métis Self-Government," we discuss the significance of the Canada-Métis Nation Accord and the potential it holds for the advancement of Métis self-government in Canada. We also discuss some of the challenges that lie ahead on the road towards Métis self-government as provincial, federal, and Métis leaders are called upon to chart a path that is sensitive to Métis culture and aspirations as well as to the complex historical, legal, political, and social consequences of colonialism.

In the concluding chapter, "*Lii Drway di Michif Ka Paashpiiwahk* | The Ongoing Struggle for Métis Rights," we reflect on the Métis Nation's long-standing struggle for self-determination. This struggle, which began in the context of the fur trade and continues to live on in the actions of contemporary Métis leaders, has been key to uniting the Métis as a distinct Indigenous nation. We argue that, through political action, the Métis have become empowered in their struggle for self-determination. Using the tools available to them, they have sought to develop democratic governments to meet the needs of their people and to engage with state

and non-state actors in the advancement of their collective goals. While the Métis have made progress in their ongoing efforts to remain *ka tipaymishooyabk* (we who own ourselves), Canada has yet to implement Métis rights to land and to self-government. Meaningful progress towards this goal remains contingent on good faith negotiations between state and Métis governments. As we wait for these negotiations to take shape, the Métis are continuing their efforts to build self-government from the bottom up.

This book critically examines contemporary developments alongside historical realities to better understand Métis politics and governance. As Métis elder John Morrisseau notes, “our [the Métis Nation’s] strength comes from looking back at where we came from.”²³ We begin by looking back to the first forms of political organization through which the Métis pursued their way of life as Riel’s people.

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