

Letter to the Editor, July 4th 2018

RE: Article: **Federal officials met with controversial N.S. Métis group 'to advance reconciliation'**, by Elizabeth Chiu · CBC News · Posted: Jun 29, 2018 3:16 PM AT

Without prejudice

As a professional genealogist, historian, historical novelist, a western/eastern Metis, and chief of the CFMPC, it is with deep concern for truth that I write this letter. As a former reporter, I fully embrace freedom of speech, but I do frown upon biased articles that use positive news for Nova Scotia Metis groups as a negative *piggy back* opportunity for: 1) allegations of fraud currently being investigated, and 2) discriminatory and misleading propaganda against the eastern Metis. It is poor journalism to throw impartiality out the window for sensationalism and partisanship. A conscientious reporter collects statements from both “sides” to present an impartial and balanced article, which was not the case in Ms. Chius’ article, where some of the people consulted clearly displayed anti-eastern Metis views, while none of the leaders of the eight groups who met with government officials was contacted.

Note: Because the subject matter holds such an important place in understanding the history of the eastern Metis, I submit a short version of our response as a letter to the Editor, but the full version is available upon request to: council@firstmetispeople.ca

1) Fraudulent use of Metis cards.

- 1) Targeting one group then lumping it with six other groups (some of who are our treaty partners) and seek one-sided opinions to paint every Metis group in Nova Scotia with the same brush stroke is deliberately leaving out the fact that the leaders of many Metis groups have publicly spoken out against that practice, especially during the 2017 Daniels Symposium in Ottawa and online.
- 2) CRA’s responsibility is to inform all merchants in the country about the legal use of the Status Indian card. Leaders and merchants are responsible for educating their people.

2) Eastern Metis Identity and history.

- 1) Mr. Chartier stated: *“those who claim to be Nova Scotia Métis aren’t Métis at all. While they fit the "dictionary definition" of someone of Indigenous and European ancestry, they do not meet the political, cultural, historic and geographic standard of the Métis Nation.”* Since when does anyone need to meet the “standard of the Métis Nation” (ie MNC) to be recognized as eastern Metis? What do politics and geography have to do with genes and race? Is it for Mr. Chartier or the MNC to decide who is Metis or what the government should do? It’s insulting for him and others like him to appropriate the right to decide what another Indigenous person is or is not, and how to identify.
- 2) Indeed, the MNC does not decide who is Metis. It is the Metis people’s responsibility to ensure that those claiming Metis are truly Metis, through a strong registry process. Nowhere in s.35 does it state that the Red River Metis form Canada’s **only** Metis Nation. It is wrong of the MNC to claim that those who cannot identify as Red River Metis are not Metis at all. Yes, they have Riel as he stated, and we have Harry Daniels, who fought for justice for ALL Metis.
- 3) Everyone with a modicum of historical knowledge knows that the Metis Nation was born shortly after first contact in early 1600s, of two Peoples that lived in close relationship and partnership. Mr. Chartier would have us believe that after two months at sea, the frisky young French men who landed on the eastern shores remained chaste and pure for 175 years and waited to go to Red River to take Indigenous wives and create a Metis *nation* and *exclusive identity!* It is false to claim that the Metis *Nation* in Canada was born in the west in the early 1800s, almost 200 years after first contact. It is also wrong to hire scholars to re-write history to suit one’s political agenda.
- 4) The first Metis were born in the east in the early 1600s, of French men and Indigenous women, mostly Mi’kmaq and Algonquin. The Red River children born of Scottish traders and their

Ojibway and Cree country wives were called half-breed (still in use today). The word Metis was introduced in the west by the French Voyageurs. In 1941, the word Metis was so rarely used that it was removed from the census forms – and was added again many decades later.

- 5) In the east, the use of the term Metis is traced back to the mid 1700, before white men went west. (*The French Relationship with the Native Peoples of New France and Acadia*, by Cornelius J. Jaenen, for the Research Branch of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1984.)
- 6) Fortunately, our eastern history was recorded, thanks mostly to explorers, invaders, and missionaries who either supported or condemned the ‘métissage.’ Historians also know of the systematic genocide of the Indigenous people across eastern Canada. Researchers, historians, and genealogists are currently unearthing the hidden research and sharing it with the public.
- 7) Unfortunately, two centuries of invasion, wars, conflicts (14 in Nova Scotia alone from 1690 to 1857) colonisation, evangelisation, and deportation forced the eastern Metis underground for decades. The 1755-1763 deportation of the Acadians by the British sent men to England prisons where 60% of them died, while women and children were dispatched to other countries. Babies were ripped from their mothers’ arms to be raised as British subjects. Thousands of Acadians were Metis. Those lucky enough to escape, lived with their Mi’kmaq relatives, marrying into the tribes. Some who escaped to Quebec died of smallpox in 1757-1760. Some returned to Acadia, some never saw their loved ones again. Those who *looked white* assimilated in non-Indigenous communities. It was a matter of survival. The taking of Quebec and subsequent wars worsened the situation even more, and to stand up in a crowd to proclaim being Metis was unthinkable.
- 8) It is disheartening to see that some of the indigenous people who lived racism and discrimination are now inflicting it on fellow indigenous people in the name of elitism. Why are taxes collected from 200,000 eastern Metis contribute to western Metis programs & services, with none or next-to-none allocated to the eastern Metis? In 2015, the MNC received \$12,000 from the Nova Scotia government for undisclosed purpose. (MNC Secretariat, Financial Statement 2015)

Chris Boudreau, a methodical and conscientious researcher is currently compiling highly relevant historical documents proving the early existence of Metis people and Metis communities in Nova Scotia. As he states: “A wide variety of terms were historically used to refer to the mixed-bloods of Acadia, as were used to refer to those out West: Half-Breed French-Indian. Métis, Bois-Brûlé, Part Indian, Semi-Indian, Demi-Sauvage, Half-Breed, Mungrel, Mongrel Breed, Sang-Mêlé, Métif, Métisse, Tinted Acadian, Half-Cast, Half-Indian, Acadian Métis, Half-Savage, Breed.”

For an in-depth report of Nova Scotia Metis history, one MUST read Mr. Boudreau’s report: An Ethnographic Report on the Acadian-Métis 2018: (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/638267539716352/>) See also Jeri Malone’s extensive collection of newspaper clips relating to the Metis on feu Martin Dunn’s FB page: *The Other Metis*, <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=the%20other%20m%C3%A9tis>

3) Métis “Nation” president’s statement to the government: “Meeting with self-identified eastern Métis ‘opening a can of worms’.”

- 1) I wager that what might come out of that can of worms will not be detrimental to the eastern Metis once every “worm” is inspected with a fine-tooth comb. After decades of untruths and re-writing history to create a misleading identity, it is understandable that the MNC will fight for its “empire”. Of course, they wish for the truth about the real Metis Nation to remain hidden, and we can expect desperate measures to achieve that.... but we – the eastern Metis from the Maritimes to the Great Lakes, will no longer stand for it. We can no longer stand for bullying, racism, and discrimination.
- 2) We know our history, we know our people, and contrary to the allegations, few eastern Metis are identifying solely for hunting rights, tax exemption, or First Nation land grab. The vast majority is identifying to end decades and even centuries of forced dissimilation and assimilation.

- 3) The federal government is finally starting to understand the true & tragic history of the eastern Metis. It was always known that the eastern Metis are Canada's first Metis, but legal victories like Powley resulted in misunderstanding and misinterpretation of our rights.
- 4) The MNC does NOT represent all Metis peoples of Canada. It is NOT the Metis *Nation*, despite calling itself the Metis *National Council*. The MNC represent the people of their Homeland i.e. Red River and area. Mixing political agendas with identity issues is a mistake that may indeed open a can of nasty worms, similar to those discussed in *Rotten to the Core*, by S.J. Morrison.
- 5) The eastern Metis is different from the western Metis with some similarities, just like the Prairies Cree are different from Northern Quebec's Cree. They're still both Cree. We are part of the Eastern Metis Nation, and as such, like them, we are part of Canada's Metis Nation. We do not expect to be part of the Red River Metis Nation or take anything away from them. They should not expect for us to roll over and agree that they are Canada's **only** Metis Nation – because they're not.
- 6) The Infinity flag and its infinity sign (a Masonic Lodge symbol) he spoke of originated with the Seven Oaks conflict. It was adopted by the Red River Metis later, and belongs to ALL Metis, compliments of the Grant and MacDonell clans. Many Metis symbols Mr. Chartier refers to came from the east with the fur trade and were adopted by the western Metis as cultural markers.
- 7) That Metis National Council plays on words by using the term *national* and *nation* when it represents only the Red River Metis, a small portion of Canada's Metis Nation. Yet, it claims the right to sign agreements with the government on behalf of the Metis *Nation*, leaving out hundreds of thousands of Metis from coast to coast to coast. The signed agreements worth hundreds of millions of \$\$ for skills training and other education programs benefits members of the Red River Metis Nation ONLY, yet all eastern Metis contributed through taxes.
- 8) The MNC and MMF's intervention with Statistics Canada to modify the questions on the census to meet the MNC's "standard of the Métis *Nation*" is unfair and unethical as it aims to have only their own members recognized as Metis. (*Metis Nation disputes Census data CBC article by K. Martens, 2017*)

4) Allegations of attempts to 'grab' Mi'kmaq land and rights.

- 1) Mrs. Patti Doyle-Bedwell, (assoc. professor of Indig. Studies at Dalhousie U), stated "this is not their territory, this is our territory. It's always been Mi'kmaqi." The fact is that Mi'kmaq blood flows in eastern Metis veins. Denying it or attempting to segregate us promotes conflicts.
- 2) The allegations of a systematic attempt by the eastern Metis to claim First Nations land and Status Indians rights are misleading and detrimental to positive Indigenous relationships.

In conclusion, I wish for Canadians to understand that the eastern Metis (from the Maritimes to the Great Lakes) are not asking charity, not looking to take First Nations land, not looking to get tax free, not looking to live on reserves. We exist, we live alongside First Nations relatives, and like any other nation, we have good people, and bad apples. Do we punish an entire community for the wrongdoings of a few? Do we paint an entire province with the same brush stroke? Do we segregate one group because it is different?

We extend an invitation to the Nova Scotia chiefs to meet the chiefs of the Nova Scotia Metis groups and the Council of the first Metis people of Canada. We share a deep love and respect for our ancestors and welcome a dialogue for the well-being of our people. We respect our ancestors, not to claim what the Mi'kmaq have... but because they are the reason we exist. We were here through them; first contact changed our genetic markup but we are still here, and will always be here, honouring our Metis roots.

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