



Métis Nation of Alberta

A strong Métis Nation embracing Métis rights

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Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement Frequently Asked Questions

On June 27, 2019, the Métis Nation of Alberta (“MNA”) and the Government of Canada (“Canada”) signed the MNA-Canada Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement (the “Self-Government Agreement”). This event marked the culmination of generations of hard work by the MNA’s leaders and citizens. Now that the Self-Government Agreement is signed, a lot remains to be done. The questions and answers below set out what has been accomplished and what lies on the road ahead.

1. Why is the Self-Government Agreement significant?

The signing of the Self-Government Agreement is a major milestone. It is the first ever self-government agreement between Canada and a Métis government. Until very recently, Canada refused to engage in any meaningful self-government negotiations with the Métis. Now, the Self-Government Agreement explicitly recognizes the Métis Nation within Alberta as having an inherent and constitutionally protected right to self-government. The days of denial are behind us.

2. Why is self-government important for the Métis Nation within Alberta?

Self-determination and self-government are inherent rights of all Indigenous people. Prior to Canada’s westward expansion into the Métis Nation Homeland, we governed ourselves in keeping with our own traditions. Collectively, we asserted ourselves as a nation—the Métis Nation. But Canada’s colonial policies and institutions denied our nationhood, uprooted us from our lands, and restricted many of the practices fundamental to our Métis culture. The MNA has struggled for decades to have our right to self-government recognized and respected. The Self-Government Agreement gives us the legal means to regain control over matters directly affecting us and ensure Métis culture flourishes for generations.

3. Does the Self-Government Agreement take away or extinguish any of my Métis rights?

No. The Self-Government Agreement provides a process for the recognition and implementation of Métis self-government in Alberta. It does not modify or extinguish any Métis rights whatsoever. On the contrary, the Self-Government Agreement explicitly recognizes the Métis Nation within Alberta as having an inherent, constitutionally protected right to self-government.

4. What does the Self-Government Agreement do? What difference will it make for the Métis Nation within Alberta?

The Self-Government Agreement provides immediate recognition by Canada that:



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- The MNA represents the Métis Nation within Alberta;
- The Métis Nation within Alberta has an inherent, constitutionally protected right to self-government over its internal governance; and
- The MNA is mandated by the Métis Nation within Alberta to implement its inherent right to self-government and self-determination.

This recognition is a major step forward for the MNA. Métis in Alberta have always known they have the inherent right to self-government, and the MNA has been advocating for that right to be implemented for over 90 years. The Self-Government Agreement, however, marks the first time Canada has extended formal recognition to the Métis Nation within Alberta's right to self-government and the MNA's role.

In addition to immediate recognition, the Self-Government Agreement establishes a formal process by which the MNA can transition into a fully recognized, modern, Métis Government with jurisdiction over core self-government matters (*i.e.* citizenship, leadership, internal management) for the Métis Nation within Alberta. Up to this point, Métis have not been able to conduct meaningful self-government negotiations with Canada. The Self-Government Agreement changes that by establishing a clear path to self-determination and self-government for the Métis Nation within Alberta.

5. I thought the MNA already was my Métis government. Does the Self-Government Agreement contradict this? Does it undermine our inherent rights?

No. The MNA has always maintained the position that it is already a Métis government mandated by the Métis Nation within Alberta based on the inherent right of self-government. Nothing in the Self-Government Agreement contradicts that. In fact, the Self-Government Agreement acknowledges the MNA is authorized to represent the Métis Nation within Alberta in implementing the inherent right to self-government.

At present, even though the MNA is a Métis government based on the inherent right to self-government, the MNA gets its legal status and capacity as a non-profit society under provincial legislation. This non-profit status has never been a good fit and has long been a frustration for MNA citizens. The Self-Government Agreement creates a clear, set-by-step process to transform the MNA from being incorporated as a non-profit society into being a Métis Government recognized by federal legislation on truly a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis.



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6. Now that the Self-Government Agreement has been signed, what are the next steps?

The Self-Government Agreement outlines the next steps to be completed for the Métis Nation within Alberta to establish a modern, fully recognized Métis Government. These steps are:

- Adoption of legislation by Canada to implement the Self-Government Agreement;
- Ratification of a constitution by the MNA's citizens;
- Ratification of the Self-Government Agreement by the MNA's citizens;
- Negotiation of a fiscal agreement, intergovernmental relations agreement, and transition plan by Canada and the MNA; and
- Adoption by the MNA of the core laws the new Métis Government will need to function.

The MNA will begin this process by conducting province-wide engagements with its citizens on the Self-Government Agreement and the development of a constitution.

7. Why does the Métis Nation of Alberta need a constitution?

A constitution is an essential tool for self-government. A constitution acts as a rule book, clearly defining how any government, Aboriginal or otherwise, will operate and what powers it has. When the constitutions of Aboriginal governments are recognized by other levels of government—federal and provincial—they provide the legitimacy and legal tools to respond to our citizens' needs and provide appropriate services. Learn more about constitutions and why it is important for the Métis Nation within Alberta to create and adopt our own at: <http://www.albertametisgov.com/metis-nation-alberta-constitution/>.

8. Why will Canada pass new legislation? Is this a new Indian Act?

The federal legislation implementing the Self-Government Agreement will not be a new Indian Act. The Indian Act is used by the federal government to control and limit self-determination by First Nations. In contrast, the legislation implementing the Self-Government Agreement will recognize the Métis Nation within Alberta's right to govern itself. It will recognize the power of a Métis Government to make laws in certain areas, including citizenship, leadership, and internal management. This legislation will also enable ongoing negotiations, so the Métis Government's jurisdiction can increase over time and can make laws about matters important to the Métis Nation within Alberta (e.g., rights, language, culture and heritage, education, housing, environment, land, social welfare, and others).



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9. Once the Métis Government is established, will the Métis Government have an opportunity to expand its jurisdiction?

Yes. Initially, Canada will recognize the Métis Government's power to make laws about matters of core self-government (*i.e.* citizenship, leadership, and internal management). The Self-Government Agreement, however, provides for further negotiations that could enable the Métis Government to assume jurisdiction over a long list of matters affecting the Métis Nation within Alberta, including rights, language, culture and heritage, education, housing, environment, land, social welfare, and others.

10. Does this make us a sovereign nation? Will we continue to vote in Canadian elections?

MNA citizens continue to have all the same rights of Canadian citizens, including the right to vote in federal elections. In addition, MNA citizens will also have recognized rights as citizens of the Métis Nation within Alberta. This will include the right to vote and participate in the democratic processes of your Métis Government, which will enable it to respond to your needs as a Métis person. The Self-Government Agreement does not take away anyone's rights, whether as Canadian citizens or Aboriginal people. Rather, it recognizes the citizens of the Métis Nation within Alberta as having additional, inherent rights as Indigenous people—including the right to self-government.

11. What does this mean for our current representative levels of government, e.g. regions and locals?

The MNA and its citizens now need to develop and adopt a constitution, which will set out all the basic elements of the government of the Métis Nation within Alberta. These will include representative levels of government to ensure the needs and interests of all Métis Nation citizens are taken into account. These representative levels of government may look like the MNA's current Provincial, Regional, and Local Councils, or they may not. The MNA's citizens will need to decide. Ultimately, the new constitution will be adopted in a referendum. The MNA's citizens will be in control of how our government will evolve.

12. Does my MNA citizenship card now become legal identification?

The Métis Nation of Alberta found, through talks with the Government of Alberta, that our current Identification card, which already includes a citizen's photo, date of birth, and legal name, would need a substantial update to be formally recognized as an acceptable form of identification. An example of some of the required changes include: raised tactile identifiers, laser engravings, and



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proof of residency. The MNA is considering updating the MNA citizenship cards, however, this process is independent from the Self-Government Agreement and related negotiations.

13. Will citizens of the MNA have an opportunity to voice their concerns? How? When? What are the next steps for the MNA and its citizens?

The MNA is planning another round of engagement across the province. We learned a lot from the self-government engagement sessions held in 2018; not only about the values and concerns of citizens but also about how we can deliver a better workshop and experience for our citizens.

The goal of these engagements will be to develop a constitution for a new Métis Government for the Métis Nation within Alberta. We need to build and develop the constitution together. The constitution will, ultimately, be in the hands for the MNA citizens to decide.

Following engagements, there will be a referendum on whether to adopt the constitution. Each MNA citizen will have a vote on whether or not to adopt the constitution. This process—engagement and voting—will give the MNA's citizens the leading role moving forward.

14. Has Canada signed similar Self-Government Agreements with other groups? Who?

Canada has signed agreements similar to the Self-Government Agreement with the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan and the Métis Nation of Ontario. The MNA is the only representative of Métis in Alberta with which Canada has signed a Self-Government Agreement.

15. What effect, if any, will the Self-Government Agreement have on the 8 Métis Settlements and their members?

The Self-Government Agreement does not affect the 8 Métis Settlements, and it does not change the provincial legislation that creates them. The Métis Settlements General Council (MSGC) is engaged in its own negotiations with Canada but, as of July 2, 2019, the MSGC and Canada have not signed a self-government agreement.

In negotiating with Canada and implementing the inherent right to self-government, the MNA represents its [registered citizens](#). Nothing prevents members of the Métis Settlements from registering as MNA citizens, provided they meet the definition of citizenship in the [MNA's current bylaws](#). The MNA will represent the needs and interests of all its citizens in negotiations with Canada, whether or not they are Settlement Members. The Self-Government Agreement is clear that the MNA is mandated to represent all citizens of the Métis Nation within Alberta in asserting their inherent right to self-government.



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16. What about other groups that claim to represent “Métis” in Alberta or who have declared “self-government”? How do they affect what the MNA is doing?

By signing the Self-Government Agreement, Canada recognizes that the MNA is mandated by the Métis Nation within Alberta to implement its inherent right to self-government. The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that Canada is the level of government with constitutional responsibility for the Métis. After a long process of negotiation, Canada and the MNA have established a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship that will lead to full recognition of our right to self-government in Canadian law. All individuals who meet the definition of citizenship in the [MNA’s current bylaws](#) are invited to [register as MNA citizens](#). The MNA is committed to representing the interests of all its citizens. Nothing any other group does will ever change that.

17. How can I help?

The MNA will be organizing outreach events and consulting with citizens across the province. Participate. Your Métis Nation needs you. To learn more, please get in touch at: <http://www.albertametisgov.com/get-in-touch/>.