



MÉTIS NATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

Métis Nation British Columbia

Anti-Racism Data Legislation

Community Consultations

Summary Report

January 2022

Introduction

Métis Nation BC (MNBC), in partnership with the BC provincial government, has conducted several community consultations on upcoming anti-racism data legislation. The legislation is in response to calls to address systemic racism, the process through which institutions or systems create and maintain racial inequity. The data used by governments and organizations is affected by systemic racism but can also be used to address systemic racism. Disaggregated data, data that is broken down into sub-categories, can be used to address areas of need for communities affected by systemic racism.

Métis people have long been invisible to data collection. Often, Métis people are lumped under the category “Indigenous”, resulting in their unique identity being ignored. This has resulted in Métis communities not getting the services they require, and funding for “Indigenous” people sent to organizations that provide First Nations-focused services.

Any solution to address systemic racism must be community led. MNBC, as the provincially and federally recognized government for Métis people in BC, looks to our Métis Chartered Communities in BC to guide us through this process. In partnership with the Government of BC, MNBC hosted two community consultations to get community input on what the future of Métis data should look like.

How It Was Done

MNBC prepared two community consultations with approximately 100 Métis community members. The first was online on October 28th, 2021, and the second was in-person in Richmond, BC on November 20th, 2021. For the online session, Métis community members joined from across the province to share their stories and discuss what they thought Métis data should look like. For the in-person session, Métis community members were brought in by plane, ferry, and local travel to Richmond to share their experiences. Thank you to all those that attended and made these days special and informative.

Participants were guided by a series of questions. These consisted of individual questions meant to get participants to share their individual stories, and general questions asking group members to share their thoughts on the future of Métis data. A primer with information on the event and questions was sent out to participants prior to the events. The in-person event primer and has been attached to this document in Appendix A and contains all questions asked during the consultation.

A collection of photos from the in-person event is available in Appendix B.

Discussions between Métis community members were diverse and extensive. MNBC was joined by a graphic artist who captured the essence of the discussions in visual format. Figure 1 was the discussion captured for the in-person dialogue, and Figure 2 was discussion captured for the online dialogue.

A notetaker was hired to capture discussions centering around the questions asked. These notes were categorized based on what was being discussed. Following categorization, a theme analysis was conducted to look for patterns throughout community discussions.

To best capture the essence of the conversation, the discussion points were categorized into four categories:

- 1) Identity Data
- 2) Data collection
- 3) Data use
- 4) Other discussion

Responses were sorted into the categories and a theme analysis was conducted to summarize the voice of Métis community members. A complete list of themes is available in Table 1.

Table 1: All Categories and Themes

Category	Themes
Identity Data	Pride in Métis identity Métis people are diverse Culture and Heritage Distinctions-based
Data Collection	Collect data with respect and dignity Data needs driven by communities Protect data Trust and Accountability <i>Major Theme: Self-identification</i>
Data Use	Invisibility of the Métis Strengths-based use Use in all areas Data comes back to communities <i>Major Theme: Métis data governance</i>

Additional Issues	Key areas of society where data could be useful Increase awareness of the Métis Nation Métis concerns Métis citizenship <i>Major Theme: Education and Health</i>
Cross-cutting Themes	Invisibility of Métis Respect communities and follow community needs Métis data governance

Category 1: Identity Data

Métis community members discussed what parts of their identity was important to share. Discussions included what identity categories should be collected, what works and does not work in current identity categories, and what parts of their identity are important to Métis people.

Métis Chartered Community members want to show *pride in their Métis identity*. Wearing the Métis sash, a distinctive article of clothing considered by many Métis to be a visible symbol of their identity, was a point of emphasis as it can show Métis pride and inform others of one’s Métis identity. The Métis community members looked for Métis acceptance and an understanding of the unique identity of the Métis.

Participant: “Instruct children to not be afraid of being Métis; wear your sash proudly and instill that pride in them.”

Métis people are diverse, and intersecting identities are a part of Métis life. Sexual orientation and age were among the factors indicated by Métis peoples to be important to their identity. The Métis exist between two worlds (First Nations and colonial), so identifying intersections is vital to the Métis identity.

Participant: “Métis are all colours of the rainbow”.

Métis community members want to see Métis *culture and heritage* represented in data. Many Métis people have been taught not to speak of their identity or culture due to persecution and colonization, and future data collection must consider historical trauma and allow the Métis to express their culture and heritage.

Many Métis individuals are lumped into the umbrella term “Indigenous” and want to this shifted to the use of *distinctions-based* identity data. Using “Indigenous” as the only term when collecting identity information results in Métis can becoming invisible. Often, funding from “Indigenous” data collection is used solely for First Nations-focused data collection. Métis community members expressed disappointment in this current system and want to see distinctions-based data collection to meet the unique needs and identity of Métis peoples.

Category 2: Data Collection

Discussions from Métis community members about the data collection process were brought up in all discussions. Community members discussed what methods of data collection are the safest and most trustworthy. The discussion included what needs to be in place for safe data collection, and who should collect data, and who should steward (or possess) it.

Métis community members expressed ways in which to collect data with respect and dignity towards the Métis community. Data collectors need to watch the language they use and ensure materials are in accessible, plain language. Researchers must be educated about the Métis, and citizens must be empowered to ask about their data. Supports should be available post data collection. Métis community members want answers to important questions to ensure that data collection feels safe. This includes the context of the data collection, the purpose, how it will be used, who it will be shared with, who owns the information, and how will this be used to tell the Métis story?

Participant: Engage communities respectfully on their terms; support the work the “right way”.

Data collectors should take the time to understand and to become familiar with communities. The creation of data safety takes time, and engaging communities respectfully will allow for better results without doing harm. The needs of the community should drive what data is being collected. Métis community members felt the safest at events that were Métis hosted and/or with visible Métis representation

Métis community members want to ensure their data is protected. This includes physical protection such as locks, encryption for digital files, proper storage, and the adequacy of data laws. The data collector must prove that the data will be safe and that it will not be sold. Ethics committees and the upcoming Métis Data Governance Committee¹ can help here.

To safely collect data, Métis community members require trust. However, as it stands, members feel they have more reason to keep information to themselves instead of share data with government. Community members will have to see reasons why they can trust governments in data collection, and that includes accountability. Data collectors must have clear safety information, contact information, transparency, and the ability for members to access their data after the fact.

Participant: “Safety takes time, trust, and education”.

Major Theme: Self-identification

A major point of discussion during the dialogue sessions was around self-identification, the process through which Indigenous people can identify as Indigenous in services or data sets. For Métis people, this can be difficult

¹ The Métis Data Governance Committee (MDGC) serves as the central Métis data governance body. The Committee ensures that Métis health and wellness data is created, interpreted, and disseminated in ways that respect, recognize and uphold Métis Citizens’ inherent rights. The MDGC also reviews internal and external data access requests for the Métis Nation cohort; ensuring all data uses and analyses benefit and are in the best interest of Métis peoples.

as many organizations do not understand Métis history and can lump Métis people under the umbrella term “Indigenous”.

Métis community members felt like they were placed under the “Indigenous” umbrella and that their unique identity was lost in the self-identification process. This is worsened by the trend for data collected on “Indigenous” people being used for First Nations programming.

Métis community members must feel safe when self-identifying. Many have avoided self-identifying due to concerns for their safety and suspicions regarding why certain data is being collected. Language must be carefully crafted in self-identification and, at minimum, include the word “Métis” as opposed to “Indigenous”. Resources should be available, and it should be clear why someone is asking a Métis person to self-identify.

Participant: “People get suspicious when asked to self-identify; a preamble is needed to assist in understanding why the information is needed”.

The settings Métis community members were asked to self-identify played a role in their feeling of safety. Being asked in institution spaces made participants feel less safe to self-identify in other, safer spaces.

Participants reported safety at MNBC events where they felt their identify was celebrated. Community members require a strong support system to encourage self-identification, and the organizations or individuals asking for self-identification need to understand Métis history.

Category 3: Data Use

The third category centres around the use of data. Métis community members discussed how to use Métis data, how to work with partners in using data, and how to identify areas where data is needed to address systemic racism.

Métis community members expressed disappointment at how they have been represented in data so far. Métis can be invisible if data is not collected with knowledge of their unique history. Métis are often grouped as “Indigenous”, and funding is often given to organizations that provide First Nations-focused services.

Participants expressed how their Métis children were provided First Nations-focused programming in schools or left out of these services despite identifying as “Indigenous”. Community members wanted to see data used to increase the visibility of Métis and for the advancement of Métis people.

Métis community members want to ensure data is used in a strengths-based manner to elevate the community. This means the data is used to build capacity, increase funding, enrich the lives of Métis people, and advance the Métis Nation. Participants saw data as a path to form connections within communities, and to advocate for change. Data could be used to identify what is working well and the areas of issues to allocate resources and inform priorities. One point brought up was to not disallow services based off data, ensuring the data is used to improve lives instead of creating new barriers.

Métis community members wanted to see data used in almost all categories, ranging from criminal justice to senior’s care to stopping the spread of misinformation. As discussed in identity, Métis people are “all colours

of the rainbow”, and Métis community members want to have the data to support improvements in all areas of their lives.

Participant: Data collected needs to be helpful and relevant to geographical areas; Métis do not fit into boxes.

Data needs to come back to the community. Community members want to know that it will benefit the community and that it was planned based off the needs of the community, not off the needs of what other people think Métis communities need. Communities want to have access to their data so they can use it and to get the most benefit for their communities.

Participant: Data should not be reactionary but driven by Métis communities who can respond to the data rather than react to it.

Major Theme: Métis Data Governance

A major theme throughout the discussion on data collection and data use was Métis data governance, the ownership of data relevant to Métis people by Métis people and Métis Nation British Columbia. Throughout the discussion, community members made clear the need for Métis people to control Métis data collection, lead, and control Métis data use, and break through colonial concepts of what Métis people need.

Métis community members expressed a desire for Métis people and Métis Nation British Columbia to be in control of the data collection process. Métis people must be involved in the data collection, planning, and analysis of data collection. Métis people and MNBC should own the data, with MNBC developing data collection and governance frameworks. If governments want to use Métis data, they need Métis permission.

Métis community members want more Métis data governance in data use. This means that Métis own the data so it can be used to benefit community. Through data governance, Métis data can be used to benefit Métis people in a way that best helps the Métis. Listening requires reciprocity, and sometimes what governments want is different than what the Métis want.

Participant: This includes data governance and data sovereignty; it is important for Métis to have sovereignty over their data and its connection to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Category 4: Additional issues

In addition to the above-mentioned categories, participants identified other types of racism and discrimination that must be examined, and how to move the Métis Nation forward.

Métis community members identified several key areas of society where data could be useful. These included

- Homelessness
- Income inequality
- Urban/rural split
- Diversity in hiring

- Ageism
- Policing
- Courts/Justice System

Métis community members are looking for more paths to increase awareness of the Métis Nation. Métis members were looking to show their pride in their culture, including wearing the Métis sash proudly, speaking Michif - the language of the Métis – and a way to increase unity among the Métis. The history of Métis, their role in Canadian history, acknowledgment of Métis children in residential schools, and acknowledgement of Métis veterans were all identified as areas to improve collective understanding.

Participant: Métis are a combination of two distinct cultures to make one; take the best of both worlds and teach people how to treat each other and how you want to be treated.

Métis community members identified several Métis concerns brought up during the discussion. Many discussed the lateral violence and Métis-specific racism inherent in many systems, including the invisibility of Métis and the negative stereotypes associated with being Métis. Members indicated general concerns with navigating a system that places the burden on the individual and want to feel safe that if there are concerns with their data there are appropriate feedback systems.

Points about Métis community members Métis citizenships were brought up throughout the conversations. Many of these included expanding Métis citizenship, making people feel welcome, and getting Métis Nation British Columbia citizenship cards accepted as government identification.

Participant: Identity cards provide legitimacy to outsiders – Métis are federally recognized, and citizenship cards need to be accepted as a primary identification.

Major Theme: Education and Health

Education and health were the primary topics of conversation in relation to anti-racism data collection. Métis community members wanted increased education and awareness about Métis in schools, more diverse funding for Métis school programs in both K-12 and university schooling, and more discussion on ensuring appropriate knowledge of distinctions-based Métis, First Nations, and Inuit history. Healthcare was brought up with concerns about improving Métis health, responding to the “In Plain Sight” report², and how to connect the dots to create a strong health system for the Nation.

Participant: University professors teach Indigenous courses without having the correct facts about Métis people.

Participant: Métis representation is needed across all Health Authorities; there is a lack of Métis funding in health.

² For the full report see: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-Summary-Report.pdf>

Cross-cutting Themes

Certain themes appeared across all categories and in all discussions. This section highlights some of those themes.

In every category the *invisibility of Métis* was brought forward. Métis community members are tired of seeing the umbrella term “Indigenous” used in data collection that discredits the unique identity of Métis. When funds for “Indigenous” programming are given only to First Nations-focused services, this further alienates Métis community members. Community members want to see change and to see the distinct Métis identity respected in data.

Métis community members reiterated the need to *respect communities and follow community needs*. Data collectors should understand and acknowledge the communities they are collecting data from. The data should be guided by the community, accessible to the community, and be of use to the community.

Control of data and *Métis data governance* were discussed in all areas. Métis community members want to see Métis representation at all levels of the data process. Métis governing bodies should be given access to Métis data, and permission needs to be granted by the Métis for use of data.

Conclusion

This report makes a best attempt to summarize the voice of MNBC Métis Chartered Community members who joined Métis Nation British Columbia’s (MNBC) Anti-Racism dialogue sessions. These members took the time to join the dialogue to share their thoughts and inform legislators how to move forward. We look forward to seeing the voice of the Métis in BC in this legislation and to continue the work towards addressing systemic racism.

Thank you

Thank you to all the Métis Chartered Community members for coming out to share your experiences and vision for the future. MNBC hopes that we were best able to capture the essence of the discussion. It was an honour to have you join the discussion and we look forward to continuing this work.

Thank you to Dr. Kate Elliot, Métis Women BC Chair, Minister of Women and Gender Equity, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions for providing a keynote address at the in-person dialogue session

Thank you to Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives Rachna Singh for your powerful words during the in-person dialogue session and your support for the project.

Thank you to Lisa Shepherd for providing a Métis cultural performance at the in-person dialogue session.

Thank you to Louis De Jaeger, Region 2 Regional Director, Acting Vice-President, Minister of Economic Development and Natural Resources, for your opening words of welcome to the in-person dialogue session.

Thank you to Elder Marie Bercier for providing us with good words and Elder guidance in both the in-person and online dialogue sessions.

Thank you to our government partners for taking the time to include the Métis voice in this legislation and providing engagement funding. MNBC appreciates what you are doing and for elevating the voice of Métis community members.

Thank you to the Hilton Vancouver Airport for providing us a wonderful venue for the in-person community dialogue.

Appendix A: Primer

Anti-Racism Data Legislation Community Consultation

November 2021, Richmond BC

Primer

Goal of Consultation

Métis Nation BC wishes to hear from the Métis community their stories and insight into the collection, safety, use, and access of community data in BC.

How will it work?

Participants will be separated into tables of up to 6 people. At each table there will be an MNBC staff member. The event hosts will provide a question. Participants will have 20 minutes to discuss the question among their groups with the MNBC staff member taking notes of the key points of the discussion. After 20 minutes the MNBC staff member will report out to the group at large.

Individual Questions

The first set of questions are “individual” questions. These ones are more personal questions that are intended to get participants talking about their own experiences with data systems in BC.

Question 1: What parts of your identity (ex. Race, faith/beliefs, culture/heritage, sexual orientation) do you feel would be valuable to share to improve visibility of gaps, barriers, and inequities experienced by some communities.

Question 2: Think about a time you were asked to “self-identify” as Métis. What made you feel safe identifying? What made you feel unsafe? Do you have any ideas how to make self-identification better?

Question 3: Share an experience where having data was helpful to you or your community. If you can’t recall such an experience, please share your thoughts on how data could be valuable to your community.

General Questions

The next set of questions are “general” questions. These are intended to be general questions about the future of data. These questions will allow participants to share their thoughts about the data system in BC at large and what can be done to improve it moving forward.

Question 4: How can we ensure data is collected in a safe way?

Question 5: How would you like to see data that is collected about yourself, and your community, used?

Question 6: Who should have access to Métis data? What type of protections should be placed on Métis data?

Question 7: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix B: Photos from In-Person Event



Métis Artist Lisa Shepherd performs the Red River Jig, a traditional Métis dance.



Parliamentary Secretary Rachna Singh receives a copy of “Kaa-wiichihitoyaahk: We take care of each other”, a Métis guide to cultural wellness, from Rajmeet Virk and Christopher Brabant, Health Policy Analysts at MNBC.



Senior Director of MNBC's Ministries of Health, Mental Health and Addictions, and Elders Tanya Davoren provides opening remarks to the Métis Chartered Community Members.



The community dialogue is in full force as participants discuss the first question and MNBC staff members record and report what was talked about.