



MÉTIS VOICES ON ANTI-RACISM: WHAT WE HEARD REPORT



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Presented by Métis Nation British Columbia,
Ministry of Health

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Executive Summary

Métis are often considered the “Forgotten People” throughout Canadian history. Although Métis are one of the three federally recognized Indigenous groups within Canada, along with First Nations and Inuit, they are often silenced from claiming their culture, rights, and truths. Métis have, and continue to, experience systemic racism through colonialism, residential schools, discrimination, the child welfare system, and the erasure of Métis rights. As Canada and British Columbia work towards Truth through Reconciliation, Métis voices need to be heard. Métis' experiences in public services and political committees must be recognized. At the same time, the provincial government should acknowledge the harm that continues to occur to Métis.

Systemic racism negatively impacts the daily lives of Métis in British Columbia. Equitable and long-term funding to Métis Nation British Columbia and Métis Chartered Communities for cultural healing programs and meaningful cooperation are essential to addressing systemic racism at both local, regional, and provincial levels. Accountability and acknowledgment of harm caused by colonial governments is needed to promote safer public and private systems. Transformative change will empower the community, claim accountability and build trusting relationships that will create thriving Métis communities.

The following What We Heard report provides the basis for the following nine recommendations for the Government of British Columbia to action through legislation, policies, programs and funding:

1. Specific acknowledgement of Métis within political and public sector messages, policies, and programs.
2. Ministry Anti-Racism Action Plans, as made mandatory by this legislation, include Métis-specific initiatives and strong accountability measures.
3. Mandatory Métis-specific anti-racism education for all government employees and public servants.
4. Require local and municipal governments to create anti-racism action plans.
5. Create long-term funding opportunities for Métis at provincial and local/municipal levels.
6. Develop reporting mechanisms for Métis and other Indigenous people to access when systemic racism harms their community.
7. Create Métis-specific advocate positions across government agencies. The advocates would work on behalf of Métis in BC to identify and address the harms identified in communities.
8. Recognition that MNBC is best suited to support Métis healing in the province, with a commitment to provide long-term funding that supports Métis cultural healing programs as it relates to the harms Métis have experienced through systemic racism, including intergenerational trauma, etc.
9. Continued collaboration with Métis Nation British Columbia and Métis communities to create stronger partnerships to eliminate anti-Indigenous racism in British Columbia.



Introduction

In November 2022, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) of British Columbia reached out to Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) to cooperate on a newly proposed piece of legislation regarding anti-racism. The AGO is aware of the impacts of anti-racism against racialized communities, especially for Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) peoples in British Columbia, and as such, is creating this legislation to help combat racism in the public sector throughout the province.

This pending legislation results from the *Anti-Racism Data Act*, which became law in October 2022. The proposed Anti-Racism Legislation acts as a response policy to systemic racism identified through the *Anti-Racism Data Act*. As it aims to address the racism identified, hold the government of British Columbia ministries accountable, and ensure healing funds are provided to relevant communities, it was important to hear the voices of Métis in the province to ensure meaningful change is achieved.

Three engagement sessions occurred throughout September 2023 with Métis Citizens and those who self-identified as Métis. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the potential of (re)traumatization for participants, an MNBC Miyooayaan (Wellness) Worker offered their support for each engagement session. The Miyooayaan Workers provided their contact information and individual rooms (virtual or in-person) for those needing space from the conversation.

The following discussion includes prominent themes from these discussions and impactful quotes from participants.

Often, when a government partner requests a What We Heard Report, the report's structure does not always align with how Métis communicate or share their stories. As such, MNBC acknowledges that the unique stories captured in these engagements are complex and often overlap with the themes presented below. The writing of this report then attempts to follow the guidelines of a What We Heard Report structure while centring on the intricacies of Métis' stories and ways of knowing.

Report Methodology

The AGO provided MNBC with funding to conduct engagement sessions with Métis Citizens and those who self-identify as Métis. The first engagement session took place September 13, 2023, where over 40 Métis participants joined virtually in a conversation about the proposed anti-racism legislation. Participants were broken into three breakout rooms, where a facilitator and notetaker were present to record and guide the conversation. Due to time constraints, not all breakout groups could address all five questions presented (see Research Methods). Graphic illustrator Kristin Elkow from [Drawing Change](#) was able to capture the conversations. Her work is included in this report.

The second engagement session occurred in person at Métis Nation British Columbia's Annual General Meeting in Kamloops on September 22-24, 2023. There was a physical booth at the event, with a visible poster with guiding questions, post-it notes and pens for Métis community members to write down their thoughts. If a member was uncomfortable with writing, MNBC staff were present to verify and capture Métis responses. The poster also included a QR code for the Anti-Racism Questionnaire created by the AGO. To encourage participation, a BINGO card was given to participants where they would get a stamp from the table after



answering at least one of the questions on the poster. MNBC staff believe this was a successful way to encourage participation.

The third engagement session was held virtually on September 28, 2023. Those who had signed up for the first virtual engagement session were invited to join once more as a continuation of the previous virtual session. Approximately 14 Métis community members were present.

During the engagement sessions, detailed notes were taken by facilitators. Participants also gave verbal or physical consent (i.e., indicating a ‘thumbs up’ on Zoom) to recording the virtual sessions. Video evidence will be destroyed after delivering this report to the AGO, but any transcriptions will be retained and safely stored by MNBC aligned with our data governance policies. All feedback provided, including written submissions or online input, is included in the analysis.

Participant feedback has been faithfully transcribed. The feedback is qualitative, centring on Métis' voices and experiences with systemic and individual racism within British Columbia. All responses have been anonymized for protection and confidentiality purposes.

As MNBC is the Métis government in British Columbia and the voice for Métis, MNBC concludes the report with recommendations based on Métis participant feedback.

Reporting requirements included a one-pager to be submitted to the AGO by October 6, 2023, as well as the submission of a fulsome What We Heard Report by January 2024.

Discussion Questions

Five guiding questions were used in MNBC's engagement sessions and fall under three areas of focus: Systemic Racism, Healing and Reconciliation, and Accountability.

The question below refers to Systemic Racism:

1. What are the first steps you would like to see the government of British Columbia take to address systemic racism?

Questions 2 and 3 refer to Healing through Truth and Reconciliation:

2. What support can the government of B.C. create to eliminate colonial harm for the Métis community?
3. What can the Government of B.C. do when harm is done to the Métis Community?

Questions 4 and 5 refer to Accountability:

4. What tangible actions do you want to see the committees of this legislation take to hold the government accountable?
5. When, how often, and in what format would you like to be updated on this progress?



Métis Citizen Engagement ANTI-RACISM LEGISLATION



Theme 1: Recognition

Indigenous groups within Canada are unique, with diverse cultural practices, languages, traditions, experiences of colonialism, and present-day impacts of systemic racism. With that said, Indigenous people are often identified as one homogenous group. Usually, one or very few Indigenous representatives are allowed to participate in political committees or governance councils. Because of little diverse representation, those Indigenous-specific positions are responsible for decision-making that impacts diverse Indigenous communities.

“There needs to be equal and equitable representation and value of Métis voices in these spaces... We are here. We are not going away. Again, they do not know what they do not know, and they need to know what they need to know.”

The pan-Indigenous approach of considering all Indigenous people the same erases the unique history and voices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Métis must be present in the committees addressing policy and services impacting their community. The exclusion of Métis' voices in these spaces is a disservice to all.

“There needs to be a Métis voice, and then there needs to be more than one there. Simply an Indigenous position instead of one specifically for Métis is not good enough, and it is hard to advocate for anything.”

Under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, Métis are considered one of three distinct Aboriginal groups in Canada; however, how Métis have had to fight for recognition is similar and distinct from other Nations. Métis are highly aware of the legal implications this brings.

“I think that one of the things that the Métis communities in British Columbia do not have, or the Métis Nation does not have with the government, is the legal agreements that our First Nations cousins have regarding specific types of legislation around things. When we don't have these pieces of paper, which I will acknowledge if they aren't actioned are just pieces of paper, but I think the act of going through the legal system to be able to have words on paper has a lot more pull than just verbal talking.”

The impact of colonization still exists within Métis communities. Although it is thought that colonization is a historical problem, the effect of colonization persists within systems, structures, policies, programs, and communities throughout BC. This has a significant impact on Métis health and well-being. Colonization and the harms of colonization are discussed in a rhetoric of the past by bureaucrats rather than acknowledging how it persists today in policies around housing, poverty, substance use, and child and family services, among others.

“We come back to the education piece. That is such a priority to gain a lot of ground going forward to changing what is happening. But again, if the government if they refuse to accept it, then [Métis] will continue to face this and it will get increasingly hostile as we go forward.”

For Métis to feel safer to identify as Métis in the public systems they access, such as the healthcare system, as demonstrated in [In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in BC Health Care](#), policymakers must recognize the colonial harms that continue to impact the Métis community today, including the acknowledgement that there is a lack of services provided for Métis in British Columbia. The way that current public programs and services operate both minimizes and creates unsafe spaces for Métis.

“It is hard for individuals to feel confident in stepping up and saying, ‘I am Métis.’ It is such an important thing that all of us should be able to do.”

“I think one of the other things we have to really be aware of and recognize is how many of our own Citizens are now feeling much more vulnerable... because of the heightened racism at this time.”

If the Government of BC and Canada were to create safe spaces, racism that disproportionately impacts Métis, First Nations, and Inuit living in the province would be lessened.

“Acknowledging colonial harms that have occurred and how they are harmful for communities and need to be addressed (that it is not being swept under the rug) and it shouldn’t be fixed with money but work with the community to address the harm.”

Not only have Métis experienced an erasure of their history, the ongoing harms within the province and their voices within committees, Métis continue to experience an erasure of identity within documentation, programs, and services. This is also reflected in political spaces where Métis are often less likely to be represented. Representation and acknowledgment of Métis voices and perspectives should occur across all public sectors, especially in places and spaces where decision-making on health and well-being are centred. Reconciliation, partnership, and collaboration can happen by including Métis and other Indigenous people in these spaces.

“When they say Indigenous, what they mean are First Nations. Inuit and Métis get left out; we’re invisible again.”

“The biggest support can be to recognize that Métis and Indigenous people are more than just a name because it feels like that’s the way it’s been for a long time. You hear us when you quote the Constitution – we’re considered Indigenous – but other than that, we’re not [recognized]. If we’re at the tables that we need to be at, we need to be treated in a manner that’s equal with other indigenous groups, First Nations, or Inuit. That would go a long way towards paving the way forward.”

“I don’t feel that all municipalities or governments feel that we should have a voice at all tables, and I disagree. As Métis people of this country, we should have a voice at every table, and we should a voice at our Indigenous Education Council Tables, at our City Councils...So I think there’s a lot of work to be done in education.”

The diversity of the Métis community has yet to be celebrated or protected in government spaces, resulting in a significant disservice to promoting safety and reducing colonial harms. An intersectional



lens must be adopted when including Métis in policies and services, including Métis women, Métis 2-Spirited, Métis Elders, Métis youth, and Métis with diverse abilities. These Métis populations must be reflected in decision-making spaces and the services they access.

“Recognizing that the Métis who are at the table should represent the diversity of the Métis community... Reconciliation should include 2-spirit people [as] they are an equal part of the Métis community. [There is] no way in the government right now to validate a 2-spirit identification. Being able to put 2-spirit on ID instead of X... [The] colonial system of identity-binary doesn’t align with Métis identity... Representation [is] needed so 2-Spirited people [are] more seen by government... [are] in important spaces and positions, [and have] a seat at the table.”

The continuous lack of acknowledgment and recognition of Métis as a distinct Indigenous group in Canada has resulted in continued systemic racism and harm. The harm of not adequately being included in anti-racism and healing initiatives or funding conversations, with having no recognition of the truth of harm done, continues cycles of systemic racism against Métis.

“I think the government needs to acknowledge our history to move forward. An example of that is acknowledging Metis residential school experiences. They're still not included in the class action lawsuit. There needs to be more equitable distinctions based on programming and spending so that the seclusion that we have with First Nations and Inuit for programming and calls to action are addressed in all communities.”



Theme 2: History- and Truth-Seeking

Anti-racism efforts should include history- and truth-seeking processes as their foundation. Honouring Métis' knowledge and truth means actioning it. History-seeking includes (re)discovering, reviving, and revealing Métis history for all people to learn about:

“So much of our history has been stolen or suppressed by the Catholic Church and the government. Especially those of our women, our Two-Spirit people, people with disabilities – an intersection that has been looked down upon by colonial powers.”

The colonization of Métis, like other Indigenous groups, attempts to erase Métis history, trials, tribulations, joys, and accomplishments. Evidence of historical erasure of Métis can be found in current government policies and programs. A review of the harms that persist within policies, programs, and procedures needs to be identified and an awareness of how these systemic harms impact communities and individuals.

“[Current] policies and reports tend to contribute to the erasure of the Métis when we are not engaged and involved early. Disseminating the information that has been gathered. Not only in childhood education but across government, private, and social sectors, and with the broader public...And even providing education for free in demographics that are not often reached by the programs that are currently available but are often overrepresented in the demographics that perpetuate racism.”

Along with history-seeking must be truth-seeking. Truth-seeking includes continual, meaningful engagement with Métis and their communities. The information gathered from these engagements should be utilized to make change rather than disappearing “as soon as it’s given.”

Part of truth-seeking also includes keeping public services accountable. A Métis participant envisions a way in which this accountability can be strengthened in both the public and private sectors using current BC laws and policies:

We have ...the start of it anyways, some anti-bullying laws. So maybe actually put them to use and put some meaning behind it. Give it some ‘oomph.’ Include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. And of course, provide education where education is needed.”

Anti-bullying processes are also truth-seeking processes to understand the truth of the offender (their beliefs and values which led to bullying behaviour), the survivor, and the organization (values, policies, and procedures which allowed the bullying to occur). As it stands, anti-bullying policies apply only to areas such as the workplace and educational settings. However, the policies place much of the onus on the individual rather than addressing the systemic issues that allow negative behaviours to continue.

“When racism happens, you're caught between a rock and [a] hard place. If you want to make a complaint to human resources, then you have a black mark against your name because you raise it, and they don't want people to raise [it]. They want people to listen to them and follow



everything that they do and say and take care of your business kind of thing.”

By engaging in history- and truth-seeking, the provincial government can begin to work toward the “Truth” part of Truth and Reconciliation. With truth, actions must come with the creation of meaningful ministry action plans that include timelines and community collaboration.

Collaboration rather than consultation with Métis communities is desired, as consultation allows colonial harms to continue through policies and programs. Consultation implies that discussions with Métis communities are often a way to add a checkmark on a list rather than meaningful engagement AND, most importantly, implementation of Métis ideas and solutions.

“We need to have a look at their policies when it comes to culture and when it comes to Indigenous peoples. How many Indigenous peoples do they hire? Do they hire them just to make the ‘checkmark?’”

Every year, an annual report should be written to actively share the progress so the government can take responsibility for their actions, acknowledge the harm done, and address the harmful impacts on communities.

“Government needs to acknowledge [the harm]... and then start to delve into what is needed to correct it within different agencies... and be open to listening to what people have to say and how to handle what happens, how they change it and how they do it.”

“Not just across one ministry, we needed all ministries in the government of BC to acknowledge the harms that the Métis community suffered and recognize we are not included in everything, like people think.”

Métis often feel the fatigue of constantly discussing and experiencing racism, especially those citizens invited to be at political tables. To move forward from the continuous cycle of having the same conversations, Métis want to be included in anti-racism processes as this legislation comes to fruition. This includes seeing themselves reflected in the reporting structure of the legislation.

“I’ve heard we’re getting called to the table, and we’re getting the opportunities to be at those tables, and this is great, but...we’re still here. We’re still having these conversations, right?”

The external review committee of the proposed legislation should be individuals chosen by the communities this legislation impacts. In addition, Métis have expressed the desire for a Métis-specific advisory group that both brings Métis cases of systemic racism to the government to address (i.e., when harm has been committed and involves the community in restorative justice measures), as well as reports back to the community on the progress of the legislation and ministry action plans.

“Mandatory consultation panels and learning [is needed]. Recently, I participated in an Island Health panel. It was talking about correcting Indigenous data and giving support for Indigenous people within Island health. You can't



develop programming without the people that are affected. [Currently] it's not about us without us, and in an ideal world, it's done for them."

It's important to remember that history- and truth-seeking processes, as well as the burden of addressing racism within the community, is not the responsibility of Métis but of the offending group:

"Education and cultural safety are needed so the emotional labour of addressing racism does not fall on the shoulders of Métis, other Indigenous communities, or racialized individuals."



Theme 3: Learning, Unlearning, and Relearning

With such a monumental path ahead to combating racism in British Columbia, the work needs to move forward with the heart, not just with the brain. Heart work happens within – when there is time to learn, reflect, and heal. Education becomes a key component in addressing anti-Indigenous racism in British Columbia.

“Our educational systems are broken in the sense that we don’t know enough about Métis history. We don’t know about our thrivers and survivors of residential schools. We haven’t heard about our Two-Spirit residential school survivors. We don’t know all the history of Métis people in Canada or in the Province of British Columbia. I think our school systems need to work harder on that.”

Training BC public servants on Métis history, colonization, and culture is essential for the meaningful incorporation of Indigenous and Métis-specific education into public services. There also needs to be a review/revision of procedures for individuals at all levels of systems (policymakers, program coordinators, service providers, and front-line workers) as it relates to Métis cultural safety.

“One of the pan-Indigenous perspectives out there is that these harms are all the same across the three Indigenous peoples in Canada. There’s some overlap but there’s significant differences, too.”

“[A]t the provincial level, we need to be looking at all the policies and looking at all the government agencies or any agency that interacts with the government of Canada, which provides services and healthcare or anything else, like ICBC and WorkSafe and all those other agencies that provide healthcare and services to Métis people.”

Accountability is currently lacking in cultural safety training that incorporates the diversity of Métis, First Nations, Inuit, and racialized communities. For instance, if systems and individuals within those systems were held accountable to participate in current educational training (although there are shortcomings to the content of these trainings), it’s possible less harm would be happening to Métis.

“There are education programs that exist but there is nothing that really pushes government employees to comply with some of the existing courses – they do exist, they are free to access, they are available to everyone, and we are technically supposed to take them – but there is not much accountability there...there is nothing that really discourages people from being outwardly racist. There is no real legal recourse behind that, and there is no real recourse for when companies are discriminatory, or governments that are discriminatory that is acceptable, transparent, or an obvious workaround that is used often.”

The cultural safety training available to public-facing leaders and public sector employees is outdated and causes an erasure of Métis existence and identity. Programs such as San’Yas, which work as an educational tool to address systemic racism in healthcare, provide



a pan-Indigenous approach to identity and do not highlight the unique needs of Métis, First Nations, Inuit, or other racialized communities.

“I think that when harm is done...they should have to do mandatory training on the Métis Nation and our people. I think that would be very helpful. I don't know all the professions that have colleges, but doctors, lawyers, teachers have an influence on the public and vulnerable people.”

The burden of Indigenous education and perspective labour often falls on individuals' shoulders. Any future and current educational process must be transformational, not a 'checklist.' It's work that can and needs to cause systemic change. Until that is done, public systems will continue to perpetuate harm and inaction against Métis, First Nations, Inuit, and other racialized communities.

“I've been to lots of different cultural safety seminars and things like that, and people go to them, they check all the boxes, and they leave, and they haven't really internalized it. It doesn't go anywhere. I think that remediation part of it needs to be very thoughtful, and that's maybe where you know the person that's involved in whatever type of harm there is and can be involved. In that, it can be more movement towards empowerment.”

In conjunction with education, more leadership training and opportunities for Métis need to be created. Various Ministries, Health Authorities, and public services across the province are hiring for Indigenous leadership positions. However, there is a lack of adequate capacity building of Indigenous leadership positions or teams in these sectors. One participant sums up this shortfall in employment opportunities:

“I think programs like the Indigenous Youth Internship Program support Indigenous youth to enter roles in the public service, with the province, and within their own communities. I think what's working right now is programs that elevate Indigenous people into leadership positions. The Indigenous Youth Internship program is great, but most of the time it's entry-level positions. [So] there's that gap that keeps Indigenous people out of leadership.”

New initiatives, programs, and funding to increase Métis-specific education, employment, and training opportunities should be communicated to Métis communities. Evidence of unlearning and relearning needs to be documented and shared with the public in addition to progress on legislation and policy changes identified with the *Anti-Racism Data Act (ARDA)*.

“Acknowledging colonial harms that have occurred and how they are harmful for communities and need to be addressed (that it is not being swept under the rug) and it should not be fixed with money but work with the community to address the harm.”

Building trusting relationships with the community and government may help to promote cultural pride and resiliency within the Métis community. Citizens shared the importance of transparent communication of areas of growth and inclusion to reduce systemic racism within programs, services and policies.



“The government needs to recognize that trust is not the blind beginning, and they need to walk at the Speed of Trust. It’s going to be actions that are then going to facilitate further engagement and further walking alongside. Because at this point, I think a lot of people worry about how much harm has been done. We can’t just think that government’s going to walk in, and all of a sudden, we’re going to show them how to do it.”

Further, the documentation and acknowledgment of change should be done more continuously, with yearly reports on progress and action plans highlighting more continuous changes in identified areas. It’s also essential that this progress is communicated in transparent, authentic, and easily accessible ways. This includes providing updates in formats of formal reports, newsletters, and infographics.

The accountability measure of the timelines and goals created through action plans would occur through the external committee or a third party. The timelines of each public body should be clearly stated and made public through various platforms, with culpability reviewed by the committee representing the communities affected by systemic racism. Then, should any discrepancies or failure to meet goals be found, the appropriate actions are taken. This could include further educational training for those employees responsible for the failed measures or financial penalties.

Accountability measures also include transparent reporting of anti-racism funds: where they’re going, what programs have been created or strengthened, what changes have occurred, where gaps remain in funding, and how they’re being used to impact change at local levels.

There is an urgency for the Government to implement anti-racist changes in a transparent and community-involved way. Education is one of the foundational building blocks to fostering trust between the BC government and the Métis.



Theme 4: Relationship Building with the Provincial Government

The provincial government has committed to work meaningfully with Métis and other Indigenous peoples. As MNBC continues to work to address issues with their government partners, Métis participants continue to speak to experiences of racism within health, education, childcare, and other systems. The government must acknowledge its shortcomings with Métis in B.C. regarding meaningful collaboration.

“I think it’s important for our B.C. government to be able to ensure Métis people are involved in the outcomes that happen when there has been harm committed to Métis community members. And that we’re not relying on other persons to do work on our behalf. I also think that we need to be able to have increased capacity of our community and our community members to be able to show up in these spaces and to be able to provide the education that’s necessary for persons who are operating in various institutions where they’re going to be coming in contact with Métis people.”

Métis people have expressed the desire to focus on relationship building, where collaboration and heart work drive positive change in British Columbia. Métis participants recognized that acknowledging Métis rights and experiences should be a pillar in the anti-racism legislation and within ministerial action plans and claim responsibility for the harm caused under current public systems. By acknowledging present harms can healing work begin.

“[There needs to be] acknowledgement that the system is really the government at this point in time. So it’s another reason why they just need to acknowledge that they created this system, maybe not this specific government, but government did create the system.”

It’s essential to Métis participants that this legislation promotes healing within the community, acknowledges the harms done, and works collaboratively to address any harm. One participant, however, was concerned about how Métis will continue to be treated beyond this legislation:

“One of the things I’d like to ask the Canadian government and our provincial governments is that, if Métis are considered one of the rights bearing people across Canada, then why is my [MNBC Citizenship] card no good to me? It would be no different than being a status card. It is our Citizenship card. It is our right to our identity. It is our card that we hold that says who we are... We do all this legwork to even prove this stuff, to be able to claim this identity, and then once we claim it and done all that work, and we receive our card in BC, it’s no good. It’s no good as an ID. That is a broken system right there.”

While some local efforts have had positive effects on Métis communities, overt racism has unfortunately grown in recent years. When harm is identified, a Métis lens must be applied to support and healing processes, including having Métis navigators and advocates available. These navigators would help individuals who experienced harm and work towards addressing systemic harm. Navigators and other means of healing support can be actioned through the ministerial action plans as a requirement



of the anti-racism action plans. Métis-specific measures in these action plans can help reduce the racism felt by Métis through public systems.

“There was an incident one of our Knowledge Keepers, who will remain unnamed, just went through an experience with the school board, and she was treated very rudely and was taunted at the table. And she took the right actions and brought in a witness and ... was dismissed... because the powers that be talked to everyone [and] they felt like they resolved the issue.”

This example is not isolated, as Métis face racism in many spaces. As such, Métis Citizens voiced the need to be understood in the spaces where harm has been identified. By having a Métis representative, navigator, and/or advocate (i.e., someone trained, has lived experience, or a strong understanding of Métis culture and ways of knowing), Métis communities would have the culturally safe support to heal and address the harms.

“I think there would definitely have to be aboriginal people that we could go to and talk to. I wouldn't want to see a government agent... I'd like to see someone in that position, being Indigenous... somebody maybe with lived experience... trained on the Indigenous peoples.”

“I would like to see an advocate for our people that have to go into these governmental agencies where their unions they have protections in place and a lot of times as community members where knowledge keepers or elders go into these situations, and there's very little advocacy for us.”

Developing these relationships with governments at all formal and informal levels is an essential process for Métis. There needs to be a solid foundation in local communities to strengthen and influence these relationships. Each community has unique needs, as some lie within urban, rural, or remote areas:

“I think community that so quickly start to develop those relationships feed into the next level of government relationships, it starts to really enforce the actual reality us and who we are, how many of us are here, and what would really be beneficial to our communities.”

“One of the supports specifically that I really advocate for is community capacity, because I do believe that our Métis communities know how to care for our Citizens, and we also know when our Citizens are not being cared for.”

Nation-to-Nation relationship building begins with an understanding that Métis can serve and provide for the unique needs of their communities. Work must continue with the government of BC and Canada to ensure that consultation is occurring and true empowerment exists in involvement and relationship building. MNBC and Métis Chartered Communities need the funds and capacity to administer programs and services in a Métis way.

“There needs to be acknowledgment that Métis have the power to be able to take care of our own in a culturally



safe way and require the additional funding support, ownership, and autonomy to allow this.”

“I was a lucky member to go to one of the wellness and active living gatherings that MNBC had put on a couple of times and went to one, and I thought that was a really good experience to bring us together and to talk about colonial harms and to do lots of like activities physically and mentally to help relieve some of that tension. I thought it was a good way to disperse some of the funding that we receive from the government. MNBC is doing many good things to advocate for Métis rights, give more opportunity and support for this.”



Theme 5: Collaboration and Healing within Indigenous Communities

Due to limited resources, Indigenous Nations must often compete through application processes in order to access resources and funding. The anti-racism legislation provides an opportunity to foster greater trust, encourage collaboration and partnerships between Métis, the provincial government, and other Indigenous peoples in B.C. Métis participants relayed experiences where lateral violence has occurred when Indigenous Nations are put together in a conflictual situation due to a lack of resources, policy choices, and miscommunication. This impact felt by Métis is a result of colonial processes, where limited financial and material resources needed to address colonial harms and support programs often create conflict between Indigenous peoples.

“I think the government has had a role in actively pitting Métis and First Nations people against each other, and they need to take responsibility for that. And support First Nations and Métis people to bridge the gap that was forced between us.”

To promote cooperation and relationships with different Indigenous groups and organizations, application and funding processes need to be modified. Further, participants communicated the importance of having relationship-building tables where racism that exists in services, systems, and programs can be addressed. Rather than simply consulting with communities, it is crucial for the Government of British Columbia to meaningfully collaborate and build relationships with Métis, First Nations, and Inuit, too. This includes spaces where racism persists.

“I think we need to be sitting at these tables, too. Not just with our Métis people in BC, but we need to be sitting here with our First Nations cousins and our Inuit cousins in the Province of British Columbia. And [discussing], ‘where is the racism? What does it look like to everybody?’ I’m sure we’re not the only ones in this race.”

Many Métis have been left isolated, unable to explore culture and identity and find a place to celebrate their identity without experiencing discrimination, including healthcare spaces, workspaces, conferences, etc. Métis are often in spaces where sharing their identity becomes a point of contention. This is due to stereotypes of what Indigenous people ‘ought’ to look like, which does not align with the diverse reality of who Indigenous people in Canada are.

“[There is a] sense of absolute distrust, and our Métis Citizens aren’t stepping forward to identify because it becomes that uncomfortable. Personally, that is one of the saddest outcomes of it, if we are no longer willing to actually identify because that’s where we bring in the education piece in. In that sharing of who we are, how it can actually assist individuals that might say something unknowingly very racist. To think twice about saying it”

Relationship building between Indigenous communities, policymakers, Ministries, authorities, and governing bodies can help break down the stereotypes and racist ideas in these spaces. To



begin repairing broken relationships and promote healing, trust and learning between the government and Indigenous Nations need to occur.

Métis participants recognize First Nations and Inuit have distinct cultural approaches to learning and understanding, but also suggested additional training to address lateral violence and mend relationships between neighboring communities can promote understanding may decrease lateral violence experienced. Lateral kindness creates safe spaces where harm is reduced and healing can occur. As such, all government employees need education, not solely on the harm experienced in history and ongoing, but also on how to participate in and facilitate healing and reconciliation.

“There is not enough education out there that empowers non-Indigenous people to be able to react to a laterally racist situation involving a First Nations person and a Métis person... I think more education around what lateral racism is because, to me, this is a unique experience for Métis people who may not fall under a particular ideal of what they should appear [as], and something that is also felt by our light skinned First Nations cousins. So, I would like to see a lot more of a focused education program around lateral racism and lateral violence.”

Along with lateral kindness training, Métis-specific healing programs need to be created. Currently, Métis do not have predictable funding from the province for healing programs. These healing programs need to focus on repairing intergenerational trauma. This includes healing programs geared toward Métis residential school survivors, including day schools, Indian hospitals, the child welfare system (the 60s Scoop), etc. Through this legislation, Métis participants hope that various provincial ministries will provide long-term funding to aid in healing for Métis in B.C. and educational programs to address systemic harms at all levels of government. This would cause a dramatic ripple of healing throughout Métis communities and ensure all Métis and intergenerational survivors are supported.

“MNBC had some wellness or some gatherings for generational trauma of survivors and maybe some more funding for things like that. To help, you know, bring us together and help relieve some of that trauma and tension and maybe opportunities to speak about it. There are so we need some funding for gatherings... [This healing program] was a really good experience to bring us together and to talk about colonial harms and to do lots of like activities physically and mentally to help relieve some of that tension. I thought it was a good way to disperse some of the funding that we receive from the government.”

Further, programs on healing and celebrating Métis culture are sometimes provided by organizations such as Métis Nation British Columbia. However, there is a need for continual funding. Currently, if healing programs are created, not enough funding is reaching Metis communities, resulting in Métis not seeing their healing practices and knowledge reflected in these services.

“Community based funding; funding that goes directly to community, both to support chartered communities in day-to-day operations, and to support grassroot initiatives.”



“Just create more pots of resources! That is accountability in action.”

“Healing [means] bringing Métis together...connecting with nature and each other.”

Recommendations

“I don’t think most Canadians are even aware that [Métis] are keeping history and culture alive... I really feel Métis people have been the backbone of our Province and of Canada. That’s a little bit of the pride that I carry for my ancestors.”

The Métis of British Columbia expect this anti-racism legislation to impact all public service areas positively and have significant educational and restorative effects on the general Canadian population. MNBC supports the following actions, based on Métis feedback during the anti-racism legislation engagement sessions:

1. *Specific acknowledgement of Métis within political and public sector messages, policies, and programs.*

MNBC heard from Métis participants that specific acknowledgement of Métis as a distinct people would aid in the accountability and healing themes of the anti-racism legislation. Due to historical relationships and the erasure of Métis due to colonization, Métis are often “lumped in” with other Indigenous peoples. The unique needs of Métis are currently represented in little to no provincial or public programs or policies. While each sector is at different stages regarding its relationship with Métis, Métis do not see themselves reflected in these services. It is with hope that they see themselves as anti-racism action plans within the public sector are executed.

2. *Ministry Anti-Racism Action Plans, as made mandatory by this legislation, include Métis-specific initiatives and strong accountability measures.*

A component of the draft anti-racism legislation requires BC public ministries to create measurable and deliverable anti-racism action plans. Métis participants are eager to see what these action plans will look like, expecting they will be reflected in each. This includes a Métis-specific approach as a pan-Indigenous approach does not consider the distinct needs and history of Métis. Métis also expect that the ministries be held accountable for their action plans, whether that be through restorative justice/healing, educational training, and financial consequences.

3. *Mandatory Métis-specific anti-racism education for all government employees and public servants.*

It is vital for Métis to feel recognized and treated fairly when accessing public services. To combat the racism Métis face in healthcare, the justice system, the education system, etc., Métis participants and MNBC advocates for anti-racism education at all



levels of government and within the public sector. MNBC is open to collaborating with the Government of B.C. on developing culturally safe training and educational materials.

4. Require local and municipal governments to create anti-racism action plans.

For meaningful and effective change at a local level, the anti-racism legislation must mandate city and municipal governments to implement anti-racism action plans. The harm and lateral violence that occurs via local governing tables and funding opportunities can be mitigated by requiring local governments to comply with the legislation. Some municipalities across Canada are attempting to decolonize their relationships with local Indigenous communities.

5. Create long-term funding opportunities for Métis at provincial and local/municipal levels.

Some Métis participants have/had the opportunity to be involved in their local communities' health, education, and governance tables. Based on their experiences, they related the tensions that occur when funding is restricted or limited. Funding limitations do not help create impactful, systemic change in their communities. It is challenging to address the harms of systemic racism when an equitable funding mechanism is absent from the legislation.

6. Develop reporting mechanisms for Métis and other Indigenous people to access when systemic racism harms their community.

Currently, there are forms of reporting harm through complaints processes in certain systems across B.C., such as the healthcare system. But these systems of accountability are convoluted, time-consuming, and add further harm to Métis seeking healing and justice. The Anti-Racism legislation needs to enable a new approach to reporting systemic harms done to Métis and their communities. This process should be streamlined, with few barriers to access. The recommendation of such a system comes from wanting to improve the lives of Métis and others in their community. It is also a means by which ministries can be held accountable for their action plans and promises to tackle anti-racism. This reporting system will provide real-time feedback and an opportunity for the province to respond directly to harm in a restorative and meaningful way.

7. Create Métis-specific advocate positions across government agencies. The advocates would work on behalf of Métis in BC to identify and address the harms identified in communities.

The anti-racism legislation should require BC ministries to create Métis-specific advocate positions in their Action Plans. This ensures Métis are being included in conversations about systemic racism at this level of government. It is an acknowledgment from the British Columbia and Canadian governments that relationship-building and partnership with Nations, and the Government is necessary to make meaningful, trusting, and sustainable change. By doing this, the province will promote reconciliation and healing.



8. *Recognition that MNBC is best suited to support Métis healing in the province, with a commitment to provide long-term funding that supports Métis cultural healing programs as it relates to the harms Métis have experienced through systemic racism, including intergenerational trauma, etc.*

The progress of this legislation, including action plans, should be communicated in continuous, transparent, and accessible ways to Métis communities. The development of meaningful anti-racism action plans for public services must occur to reduce the frequency of performative allyship. These action plans must meaningfully address the harms the Anti-Racism Data Act identified. To continue the development of trust and reconciliation, the provincial government must:

9. *Continued collaboration with Métis Nation British Columbia and Métis communities to create stronger partnerships to eliminate anti-Indigenous racism in British Columbia.*

Based on these recommendations, the proposed Anti-Racism Legislation will significantly impact Métis in B.C. and all British Columbians.

