THE “HISTORIC ABITIBI-INLAND MÉTIS COMMUNITY”

FINAL REPORT

Darryl Leroux

September 1, 2022

This research paper was prepared by Dr. Darryl Leroux for the Wabun Tribal Council.

About the Author

Darryl Leroux is Visiting Professor of Sociology at the University of Ottawa with a focus on the creation of social and ethnic identities in Canada. He's a sought-after public speaker on topics related to contemporary forms of settler colonialism. Currently, he's working on a book project with scholars from the U.S., Australia, Finland, the Philippines, Mexico, and Canada on the transnationalism dimensions of false claims to Indigenous identities. He has worked with a number of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis governments seeking to challenge illegitimate claims in their respective territories.

About the Wabun Tribal Council

Wabun Tribal Council serves six First Nations (Brunswick House FN, Chapleau Ojibwe FN, Flying Post FN, Matachewan FN, Mattagami FN, and Beaverhouse FN). Wabun Tribal Council is a non-profit community-driven organization that is committed to providing quality services for its member First Nations through innovative and culturally appropriate programming.

Wabun receives direction from and is accountable to its Board of Directors, made up of the Chiefs of each of the member First Nations. All senior personnel report to the Executive Director, who oversees the operation of the Tribal Council.

Wabun is headquartered at Mattagami First Nation, and its operational office is located in Timmins.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the Government of Ontario and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) formally recognized six new Métis communities in the province. The stated effect of this legal and political recognition was to assert that these communities represented section 35 Aboriginal rights-holders. This recognition paved the way for the province to set up a new harvesting program for MNO members, which granted harvesting access to members of the six new Métis communities. One of these communities is in northeastern Ontario, in the Chapleau-Timmins-Cochrane corridor. Called the Abitibi-Inland Métis Community, the MNO has since issued harvester cards to its members living primarily in the area.

This report examines MNO documentation and research about the existence of a Métis community in the upper James Bay watershed and Temiskaming regions in Ontario. The report addresses the following research question:

> According to relevant government research reports and the MNO's own documentation, did a historical Métis community with a distinctive collective identity exist in the upper James Bay/Abitibi-Temiskaming regions before effective Crown control?

After reviewing the relevant government reports and MNO documentation, I have concluded that, according to socio-historical, anthropological and ethnohistorical literature on ethnogenesis, the MNO has not demonstrated the existence of a distinctive collective identity for its Abitibi-Inland Historic Métis Community.

INDICATORS OF ETHNOGENESIS

To evaluate the existence of the Abitibi-Inland Historic Métis Community, jointly recognized by the Government of Ontario and the Métis Nation of Ontario in 2017, it is paramount to develop a working understanding of the concept of ethnogenesis in the sociohistorical, anthropological, and ethnohistorical literature.

According to Métis historian Brenda Macdougall, the concept of ethnogenesis was coined by Jacqueline Peterson in her PhD studies to describe the birth of a distinct mixed-race, post-contact culture.[1] In 1985, Peterson and fellow historian Jennifer Brown published *New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis*, which definitively launched studies of ethnogenesis in North America.[2]

In that collection, John Elgin Foster introduced some new ideas to explain ethnogenesis. Of note here, Foster argued that socialization through ascription, the process of developing feelings of

[1] Macdougall, Brenda. 2006. "Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis." *The Canadian Historical Review* 87(3), p. 436.

[2] Rousseau, Louis-Pascal. 2006. "Les études sur l'ethnogenèse au Canada: enjeux et horizons de recherche pour le Québec." *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 36(1), p. 49–57.

belonging to a given collective, was central to the development of new cultures. According to Foster, self-ascription and outsider-ascription both played integral roles in setting the boundaries of a new culture.[3] Combined with geographical concentration, identifying forms of ascription allowed researchers to point out historical ethnogenesis.

In a later work, Foster further developed his understanding of ethnogenesis, arguing that mixed-race families could only form a new culture if endogamic (in-group) marriage practices were present and widespread. Multi-generational endogamy could then lead to the attainment of a certain demographic weight, which may allow these families to isolate themselves geographically to the extent necessary to build distinct cultural practices.[4]

Gwen Reimer and Jean-Philippe Chartrand, also known as Praxis Research Associates, relied on the early works of Peterson, Brown, and Foster to develop the model they used in their research for the Attorney-General of Canada on the existence of a historic Métis community in coastal James Bay.[5] They outlined a four-pronged ethnogenesis model:

- evidence of intermarriage and descent;
- evidence of social, cultural and economic distinctiveness;
- evidence of geographic proximity; and
- evidence of "other-ascribed" and "self-ascribed" ethnic status.[6]

Starting in the 2000s, research on ethnogenesis became more prominent in Indigenous Studies. Métis historian Heather Devine's research mirrored previous work on Métis ethnogenesis. She argued that it "was the establishment of a separate geographical, economic and cultural space, rather than biological *métissage* itself, that led to the creation of a distinctive ethnic consciousness that came to be identified as Métis."[7] In that sense, Devine affirmed the need for a reliance on self-ascription (self-consciousness) as well as geographic isolation as central components to her understanding of ethnogenesis, in keeping with Foster's early work. However, perhaps Devine's most enduring contribution has been her focus on "genealogical reconstruction" in studies of ethnogenesis, whereby one traces Métis family histories with an eye on distinguishing the different social and political trajectories taken by various branches of the family tree. This type of research does not take for granted that the descendants of Métis "root

[3] Foster, John Elgin. 1984. "Some Questions and Perspectives on the Problem of Métis Roots," in Jacqueline Peterson & Jennifer S. H. Brown (eds.), *The New Peoples. Being and Becoming a Métis in North America*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, p. 77.

[4] Foster, John Elgin. 2001. "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," in Theodore Binnema, Gerhard John Ens & Rod C. MacLeod (eds.), *From Rupert's Land to Canada. Essays in Honor of John E. Foster*, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, p. 179–93.

[5] An overview of that research was published as Reimer, Gwen & Jean-Philippe Chartrand. 2004. "Documenting Métis in Ontario." *Ethnohistory* 51(3), p. 567–607.

[6] Reimer, Gwen & Jean-Philippe Chartrand [Praxis Research Associates]. 2005. "A Historical Profile of the James Bay Area's Mixed European-Indian or Mixed European-Inuit Community." Report prepared for the Attorney-General of Canada, p. iv.

[7] Devine, Heather. 2003. *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660–1990*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, p. 202, emphasis in original.

ancestors" are all Métis persons today; instead, it reads one's identity into the trajectories borrowed by each generation of one's ancestors. In the case of Devine's own Desjarlais Métis ancestors, some of their descendants continue to live as Métis in Saskatchewan and Alberta, others as Plains Cree in Saskatchewan and Alberta, others as Chippewa (Anishinaabe) in Montana and North Dakota, and others still as white Canadians.

Métis sociologist Chris Andersen has made several key contributions to scholarly understandings of Métis identities. His early effort at identifying the contributing factors to ethnogenesis focused on the following indicators:

- distinct language;
- distinct forms of land tenure;
- specific laws to regulate social, economic, and political life;
- specific forms of dress;
- specific symbols (music, flag, national anthem);
- distinctive political institutions;
- considerable demographic weight;
- relatively clear territorial boundaries; and
- sense of self-consciousness as distinct.[8]

Andersen's more recent work further honed his development of an ethnogenesis model, adding two additional elements: successful political action vis-à-vis the Crown/Government of Canada and a history of political alliances and/or treaty-making with other Indigenous collectivities. As Andersen explains,

> being Métis (at least politically) is about peoplehood, and thus it is first and foremost about historical and contemporary political self consciousness and struggles as – or, at least, as part of – the Métis in their ability to produce formal, people-to-people relationships. […] the Métis people of the northern Plains [were] able to organize a civil government, to defend itself against Canadian intrusion, to make its place in the economic niches of the West along with Indian nations, and to insist that Canada not annex the West without dealing with it.[9]

Andersen's focus on what is now commonly called the "peoplehood model" takes us away from a singular focus on the "mixedness" of the Métis towards a model of ethnogenesis that focuses on Indigenous forms of sovereignty and self-determination.

Recently, Macdougall has called for an approach that builds on Devine's work and centers the development and evolution of Métis families in time and space: "Kinship models, genealogical reconstruction, and ethnographic data all provide a means to contextualize and articulate the Metis point of view about history, politics, and economy based on a foundation of family

[8] Andersen, Chris. 2008. "From Nation to Population: The Racialisation of 'Métis' in the Canadian Census." *Nations and Nationalism* 14(2), p. 350.
[9] Andersen, Chris. 2014. *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, p. 199 & 201.

structures. Family, at root, is how people interact within a broader societal context; but if we do not understand who and what family is, then we will remain unable to hear the voices in the records."[10] Following families through time and space, with a focus on marital choice, land tenure, economic conduct, and political activity, are central to Macdougall's influential archival approach.

From a focus primarily on biological mixedness, marriage practices, and the development of distinctive cultural practices, studies of ethnogenesis have tended to focus increasingly on political action, relations with other Indigenous peoples, and self-consciousness as a distinct people, such that these indicators are now widely accepted as the litmus test for any determination of a historical (and contemporary) Métis community in academia. Simply identifying a historic mixed-race population does not meet the criteria set in studies of ethnogenesis. Historian Nicole St-Onge, who has been studying Métis communities and the fur trade for nearly three decades, explains, "Jacqueline Peterson and other Great Lakes researchers have argued that while a vibrant fur trade society existed in the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi regions from the eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century, it never developed into a self-aware societal 'imagined community.'"[11]

For their part, the MNO and Government of Ontario identified indicators of ethnogenesis used by both parties for legal and political recognition in their Joint Fact Sheet for the Historic Abitibi Inland Métis Community produced in 2017:

> Identifying a historic Metis community requires demographic evidence that the population was identified as distinctive, evidence that the community had its own collective identity, and evidence that the community had its own shared customs, practices and traditions.[12]

While it is my contention that the MNO and Government of Ontario have not demonstrated that they meet the requirements that they themselves identify as key to ethnogenesis, it is notable how their understanding seems to ignore recent scholarship on the matter. There is no explicit focus on kinship relations, especially as they pertain to recognition by the First Nation people(s) of the territory being claimed, which has become key in studies of ethnogenesis.

For the purposes of my discussion in this report, I have identified six indicators of ethnogenesis to apply to the case of the "Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community." This list focuses on indicators that may be identifiable in historical records such as census returns, vital records, (auto)biographies, journals, fur trade company records, and notarial and survey records, among others:

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[10] Macdougall, Brenda. 2014. "Speaking of Metis: Reading Family Life into Colonial Records." *Ethnohistory* 61(1), p. 50.

[11] St-Onge, Nicole. 2015. "Familial Foes? French-Sioux Families and Plains Métis Brigades in the Nineteenth Century." *American Indian Quarterly* 39(3), p. 303.

[12] Métis Nation of Ontario and Government of Ontario. 2017. "Joint Fact Sheet: Abitibi-Inland," p. 1.

1. Cultural-territorial indicators

    - endogamic marriage practices over generations;
    - considerable demographic weight; and
    - relatively clear territorial boundaries.

2. Political-social indicators

    - distinctive political institutions;
    - sense of self-consciousness as distinct; and
    - recognition as distinct by Indigenous kin.

The assessment of the Abitibi-Inland community begins with the MNO's discussion of Effective Control.

EFFECTIVE CONTROL

The 2003 *Powley* decision set the criteria of Effective Control as part of the legal process to identify a historical Métis community: "Unique [Métis] history can most appropriately be accommodated by a post-contact but pre-control test that identifies the time when Europeans effectively established political and legal control in a particular area."[13]

Since that decision, assessing whether a community existed prior to effective European control has become central to the legal identification of a historical Métis community. There is not a single definition of Effective Control, as regional differences determine its meaning.

To get a sense of a timeline for Effective Control in the region the MNO calls Abitibi-Inland, it is useful to consider the Quebec Superior Court's 2018 *Tremblay* decision. The case involved an MNO member charged with multiple wildlife, hunting, and environmental violations on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River northeast of Mattawa.

In that case, the expert for the defense argued that Effective Control in the (interprovincial) Mattawa-Temiskaming region occurred gradually between 1850 and 1892. The defence team settled on 1886 as the year marking Effective Control, while the Attorney-General of Quebec, basing its argument on its team of academic experts, argued the date was 1850. Elements of Effective Control identified by one or both parties include the following:

- Arrival of logging industry in 1840s;
- Granting of Nipissing reserve in 1850 with signing of Robinson-Huron treaty;

[13] *R. v. Powley*, 2003 SCC 43 (CanLII), [2003] 2 SCR 207, https://canlii.ca/t/51pd, at para 37.

- Granting of Temiskaming reserve in 1854;
- The arrival of missionaries in 1850s, followed by the Oblates building permanent establishments at Temiskaming in 1863;
- Starting in 1850s, surveyors plotted roads, townships, and divided up future property lots. The 1853 and 1868 land statutes allowed for concessions for several townships in the region;
- Adoption of *Free Grant and Homestead Act* in Ontario in 1868;
- Founding of mission school in Mattawa and the first judicial district in 1872;
- Construction of railways (Sturgeon Falls to North Bay in 1881 and Mattawa to Temiskaming in 1895); and
- Fishing and hunting regulations in Québec (1886) and Ontario (1892).

The judge in the *Tremblay* case opted for a compromise timeline, deciding that Effective Control occurred in the Mattawa-Temiskaming region between 1870 and 1875. He explained Effective Control as "the moment […] when control became sufficient to profoundly modify the habits and lifestyle of the individuals already living in the area."

It is worth noting that Temiskaming is in the southern portion of the MNO's Abitibi-Inland community – it is the area south of the height of land that drains into the Ottawa River watershed. While the MNO has chosen 1906 as the date of Effective Control for the entire Abitibi-Inland community, it is much more likely that Effective Control in Temiskaming occurred between 1850 and 1886. In what follows below, I have opted for 1854, which marks the creation of the Timiskaming reserve, the first in the region. As we will see, several of the families the MNO claims were "Métis" were among the first residents on the reserve and continue to live there today.

As for the Chapleau-Timmins-Cochrane portion of Abitibi-Inland that flows north into the James Bay watershed, we can apply some of the same criteria to come up with a reasonable timeline for Effective Control:

- The arrival of Anglican Rev. John Horden in Missanabi, Brunswick House, and Flying Post in 1860;
- Adoption of *Free Grant and Homestead Act* in Ontario in 1868;
- Permanent missionary establishment at Mattagami in 1876;
- First Anglican service in Chapleau (in Anishinaabemowin) in 1882. Later site of St. John's Anglican Church;
- Methodist Rev. Ralph Homer holds first service in Chapleau, winter 1885–86, church was built in 1887;
- First temporary schooling in Chapleau in 1886 and building of permanent schoolhouse in 1891;
- Founding of Anglican Church in Missanabi in 1888;
- Construction of railways (Sudbury to Chapleau in 1885 and Sioux Lookout to Cochrane, 1903 to 1908);
- Fishing and hunting regulations in Québec (1886) and Ontario (1892);

- First gold prospector arrives in Porcupine (Timmins) in 1898, Porcupine Gold Rush starts in 1909; and
- Cochrane District begins three-decade sustained growth in population in 1900 following intensive government recruitment to Great Clay Belt.

One of the obstacles in estimating a timeline for Effective Control in Abitibi-Inland is the sheer size of the territory. In addition, Chapleau, Timmins, and Cochrane each experienced European colonization in somewhat distinct ways. Notably, Effective Control occurred in Chapleau before either Cochrane or Timmins. A fair estimate of the timeline for Effective Control for the Chapleau to Cochrane corridor would be from 1876 to 1906. At the mean, 1891 also coincides with the building of the first permanent schoolhouse for settler children in the region.

Thus, the two regions encompassed in the MNO Abitibi-Inland community offer significantly different timelines for Effective Control. In the case of the more southerly Temiskaming region, I am suggesting 1854, while the judge in the *Tremblay* case suggests between 1870 and 1875. In the case of the Chapleau to Cochrane corridor north of the height of land, I am suggesting 1891. Whatever one chooses as the timeline for Effective Control, selecting one year (1906) as the MNO has done fails to recognize the significantly different histories of the Temiskaming and Chapleau-Cochrane districts, in which the period between 1854 and 1891 seems to be a more appropriate timeline for Effective Control.

MNO DOCUMENTATION

Territorial Claim

In 2004, the MNO and the Government of Ontario (Ministry of Natural Resources) signed the MNO-Ontario Harvesting Agreement, in which the two parties agreed that "the MNO has sufficient historic research and information from within the MNO Registry available to it in order to credibly assert as well as defend a claim to a historic Métis community [based on the] legal framework set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Powley*, for the identification of rights-bearing Métis communities."[14]

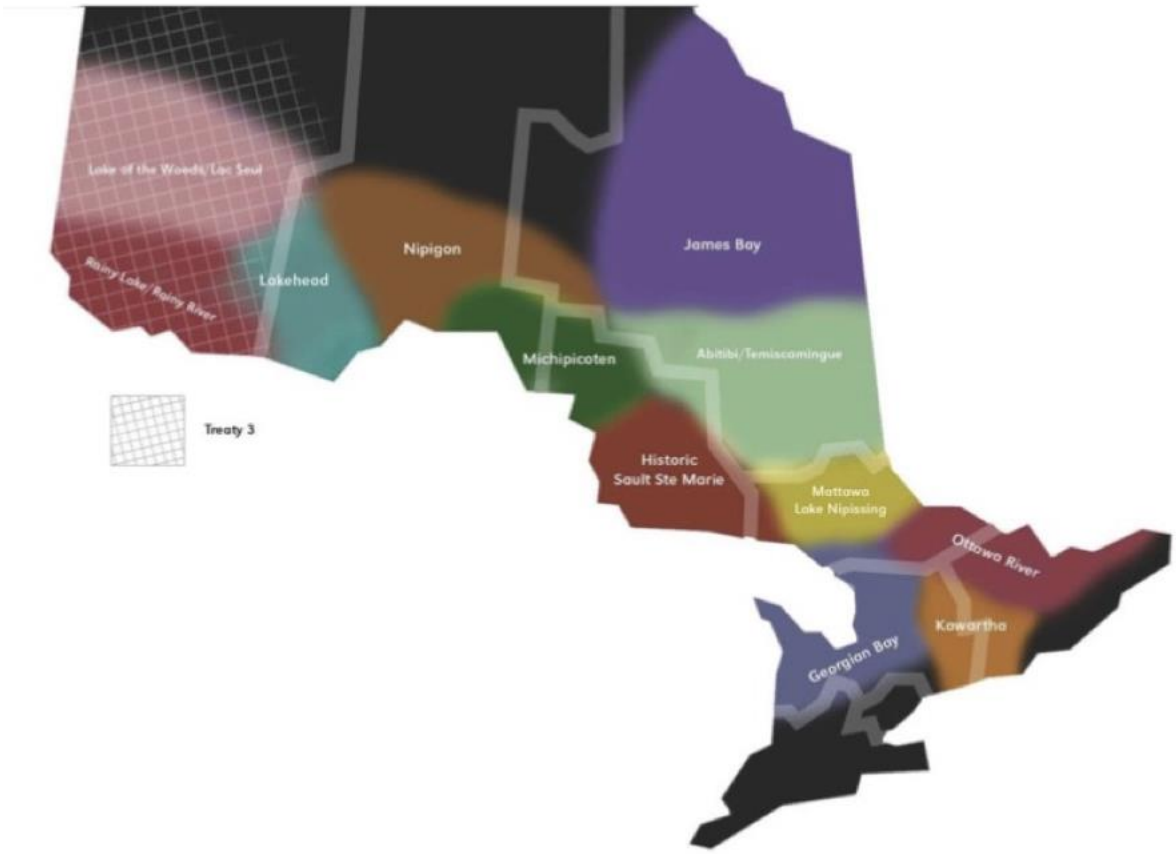
As part of the 2004 Harvesting Agreement ("Four Points Agreement"), the two parties adopted a map that identified twelve separate Harvesting Areas in the province. James Bay and Abitibi-Temiscamingue were two of these areas. This map is still used as part of the MNO's documentation for Abitibi-Inland and encompasses a wide swath of northeastern Ontario about the size of New Brunswick.

The following map identifies the James Bay and Abitibi-Temiscamingue harvesting areas, according to the MNO and recognized as such by the Government of Ontario under the terms of

[14] Metis Nation of Ontario. 2017. "Registry Policy for Identifying and Documenting Verified Métis Family Lines for the Purposes of Issuing Harvesters Certificates to Citizens," p. 9 ("2017 MNO Registry Policy").

the 2004 Points of Agreement on Métis Harvesting that was renewed until 2017, after which time the two parties signed the new Framework Agreement on Métis Harvesting in April 2018.

MAP 1 – "Traditional Métis Harvesting Areas" (2019 MNO Map)[15]



The MNO's 2017 discussion of the "Historic Métis Community of Abitibi-Inland" offers a different version of their territorial claim. Instead of encompassing the entire James Bay watershed and northern portion of the Ottawa River watersheds, its claim focuses on the southern portion of the former, while keeping the latter.

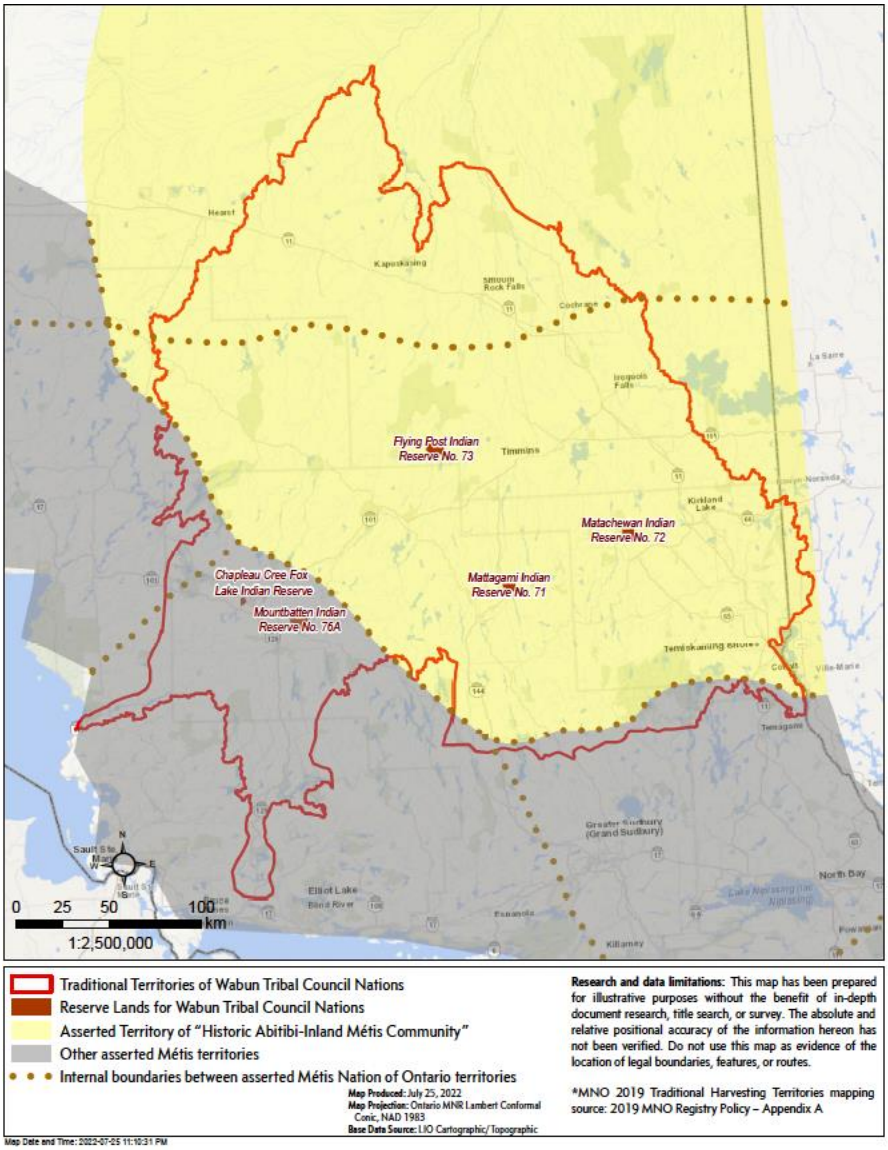
> The inter-connected Métis populations at the inland posts between New Post, Timiskaming and Flying Post (the "Abitibi Inland Community") satisfies the *Powley* criteria for a historic Métis community. This includes the posts at Frederick House, Abitibi House, Kenogamissi, Mattagami, and the areas of the present day settlements of Timmins, Cochrane and Chapleau. The James Bay area (i.e., Moose Factory post and environs) satisfies the Powley criteria for a historic Métis community, however, much of the Métis population from this community moved into the Abitibi Inland Community prior to

[15] MNO "2019 Registry Policy," Appendix A – "Metis Nation Homeland (Ontario)", online at: <https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2019-august-24-mno-registry-policy.pdf>.

effective control. Notably, the MNO does not represent MNO citizens living in an around the James Bay area today.[16]

The map below shows an overlay of the territory claimed by the MNO and recognized by the Government of Ontario as Abitibi-Inland in 2017,[17] and the territory of the Wabun Tribal Council First Nations.

MAP 2 – Wabun Traditional Territory and Asserted Territory of "Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community"



[16] MNO, "2017 Registry Policy," p. 8.
[17] See MNO & Ontario, "Joint Fact Sheet," p. 1.

From the differing territorial assertions put forward by MNO, it appears that the Abitibi-Inland community lacks clear territorial boundaries, a key criterion in academic considerations of ethnogenesis. The maps in the 2018 Framework Agreement on Métis Harvesting and the 2019 Registry Policy show two distinct territories – "James Bay" and "Abitibi-Temiscamingue" – both covering extremely large areas of land. However, the geographic descriptions of the "Historic Métis Community of Abitibi-Inland" in the 2017 Registry Policy and the joint MNO and Government of Ontario recognition fact sheet are quite different. First, the recognition documents merge the James Bay and Abitibi-Temiscamingue areas into one Historic Abitibi-Inland Community territory. Second, the "Abitibi-Inland Community" as *described* by MNO and Ontario is much smaller, as it does not include the coastal James Bay region, omitting key locations that the MNO relies on as the basis for its claim that Abitibi-Inland constituted a historic Métis Community. The very size of the territory raises questions about the probability that a Métis community could have sustained the demographic density necessary to build a distinctive collective identity, especially where intermarriage was quite limited.

Further, the MNO's description of the Abitibi-Inland territory states that "much of the Métis population from [the Moose Factory post and environs] moved into the Abitibi Inland Community prior to effective control." However, as we will see in the next sub-section, the MNO's Abitibi-Inland Verified Métis Family Lines Assessment Documents provide no evidence to that effect. In fact, according to its own documentation, none of the root ancestors it is claiming moved south into the so-called Abitibi-Inland community prior to Effective Control.

The confusion about the MNO's territorial claim, combined with the overall size of the region being claimed, ensure that two of the main cultural-territorial indicators for ethnogenesis – demographic density and clear territorial boundaries – have not been met.

The Abitibi-Inland Verified Métis Family Lines (VMFLs)

This section will examine the three cultural-territorial indicators for ethnogenesis developed previously through an analysis of the MNO Verified Métis Family Lines.

As the MNO explains in its July 2022 "What We Heard" report, 88 Métis Family Lines were introduced along with the 2017 recognition of the six new "Métis" communities.[18] The Métis Family Lines became "verified" after an independent review by Intergroup Consultants (Intergroup) that was published in 2018.[19] The MNO touts the results of the independent review:

> The 2018 report concluded that: 100% of the then 88 Métis Family Lines submitted by the MNO were "verified" as being part of the historic Métis communities, and that 100% of the randomly selected 328 MNO Harvester Card files were "verified" as meeting the criteria set out in *Powley*. These results further validate the reliability of the MNO Registry system to identify which of its members can exercise collectively-held Métis harvesting

[18] Métis Nation of Ontario. 2022. "Registry Review Citizen Consultations: What We Heard Report," p. 12.
[19] Intergroup Consultants Ltd. 2018. "An Independent Review of the Métis Nation of Ontario's Harvester Card System."

> rights in the province. It was on this basis that the MNO and Ontario negotiated to remove the 1250 cap on MNO Harvester Cards under the interim Four Points Agreement and signed the new Framework Agreement on Métis Harvesting in April 2018.[20]

The MNO's claims about the independent review require some unpacking. The review was limited to verifying the information included in the Métis Family Lines, which is based on pre-established criteria determined by the MNO and the Government of Ontario for recognizing a historical "Métis" community. In other words, Intergroup did not verify whether the recognition of these communities as Métis was valid. In fact, in its report Intergroup explains that,

> it is also understood in the scope of work that the Independent Reviewer should not provide conclusions or opinions regarding whether or not the Powley criteria have been met in the Study Areas. InterGroup Consultants Ltd. (InterGroup), as the Independent Reviewer, acknowledges that the review does not include opinions or analysis that would purport to modify information about the Historic Métis Communities or Relevant Dates that have been shared by the Ontario and MNO.[21]

Here, Intergroup explicitly states that it was forbidden from offering its own analysis of whether the six new "Métis" communities met the criteria for a Métis community set out in the *Powley* test. The MNO's July 2022 claim that the independent review "verified" that its Harvester Card files met "the criteria set out in *Powley*" is misleading. Under the terms of the contract the reviewer had to accept the MNO and Ontario's interpretation and conclusions about the six new communities. Intergroup simply confirmed that individuals identified by the MNO as "Métis" in the Métis Family Lines were living at a particular place and time.

In its own explanation of the independent review process, the MNO affirms its role in setting the foundation to favour its own conclusions:

> In order for the Independent Review to be objective, the MNO and Ontario first had to identify "where" the historic Métis communities were located in Ontario, as well as, "who" was a part of those communities. In August 2017, the MNO and Ontario came to common understandings on the identification of six historic Métis communities in Ontario, in addition to the community recognized in Powley. At the same time, the MNO publicly released Métis Family Line documents that identified some of the families who made up these historic Métis communities. This preliminary work formed the foundation for the Independent Review.[22]

As such, the underpinning of the independent review was that the six communities were "historic Métis communities" that met the *Powley* criteria as determined by the MNO and Ontario. From there, the reviewer was barred from challenging that determination. Of course, a truly objective independent review would have evaluated whether the six communities were "Métis" according

[20] MNO, "What We Heard," p. 13.
[21] Intergroup, "An Independent Review," p. 2.
[22] MNO, "What We Heard," p. 12.

to independent criteria such as the available academic literature on ethnogenesis. If such a review was ever conducted by a third party, it is currently unavailable to the research community.

In their 2017 Registry Policy, the MNO explains the inner workings of their Verified Métis Family Lines (VMFLs): for an individual to meet the requirements of the *Powley* test, they must establish that they "ancestrally connect to a Métis Root Ancestor within a Verified Métis Family Line that is a part of an Identified Historic Métis Community."[23]

The 2017 Registry Policy uses three new terms that require some explanation.

1. Identified Historic Métis Community: a group of individuals who developed their own distinct identities, lived together in interconnected settlements or locations, and shared a common way of life as a distinct Métis collective.
2. Métis Root Ancestor: a "Documented Métis" individual who lived in the "Identified Historic Métis Community" prior to Effective Control.
3. Verified Métis Family Line: includes a family group that was in the Identified Historic Métis Community prior to Effective Control; a Métis Root Ancestor who is a Documented Métis living within the Identified Historic Métis Community; and a multi-generational presence of the forebears, the root ancestors, and their descendants in the Identified Historic Métis Community.

These criteria appear to be at the centre of the Government of Ontario and MNO's 2017 recognition of the "Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community." As is explained in its 2017 Registry Policy, once the MNO identifies a Historic Métis Community, it creates Verified Métis Family Lines with Documented Métis and Métis Root Ancestors that an individual can then use to connect to the Identified Historic Métis Community prior to Effective Control.

The MNO's approach contradicts the work of Métis historians such as Brenda Macdougall and Heather Devine, in that the claimed identities of its membership take precedence over the genealogical reconstruction necessary to verify the identity of each generation of descendants. In other words, the MNO's approach appears to over rely on the self-identification of its members in the present.

In 2017, the MNO identified twelve Verified Métis Family Lines (VMFLs) for Abitibi-Inland; by 2021, it had added an additional seven VFMLs for a total of nineteen. Under its 2017 Registry Policy, the MNO explains that it still has not completed the genealogical research necessary to identify the scope and scale of its "Historic Métis Communities," again confirming that it is unclear about the boundaries of Abitibi-Inland or of its other communities.

The table below provides pertinent information on the nineteen VMFLs. The first column includes the name of the VMFL, its number, and the name(s) listed as its progenitor. The second column indicates whether anybody from the VMFL was documented in the "Abitibi-Inland Community"

[23] MNO, "2017 Registry Policy," p. 4.

prior to the date range I selected for Effective Control. And the third column identifies whether there has been any intermarriage between individuals in the VMFL according to MNO documentation. It is worth noting that the MNO defines "kinship connections" between so-called Métis families to include godparenting and witnessing life events such as births or marriages. In my analysis, I've focused on intermarriage since it is one of the main indicators of ethnogenesis in the academic literature.

TABLE 1 – MNO VMFLs for Abitibi-Inland

VMFL	Presence in Abitibi-Inland Prior to Effective Control	Intermarriage in Abitibi-Inland
1. Dallaire-Okimawininew (3002)	No. Two daughters enumerated at Lake Temiskaming in 1921 census.	None
2. Fraser-MacDonald (3003)	No. Grandchild documented in Cochrane in 1920s.	None
3. Hunter-MacDonald (3005)	No. No evidence provided of being in Abitibi-Inland.	None
4. Udgarden-Moar (3006)	No. Child recorded in Cochrane in 1920s.	None
5. Moore-Beads (3007)	Yes. Couple and child recorded at Abitibi House in 1881 census.	None
6. Polson (3008)	Yes. Couple was married at Abitibi Post in 1838.	Married into Neveu
7. Favell-Titameg (3010)	No. Great-great-grandchild recorded in Cochrane in 1907.	None
8. McLeod-Moore (3013)	No. No evidence provided of being in Abitibi-Inland.	None
9. Neveu (3018)	Yes. Root ancestor born in Matagama in 1853.	Married into Polson
10. Linklater-Potts (3019)	No. Enumerated in Temiskaming (Moose River) in 1921 census.	None
11. Vincent-Renton (3020)	No. Great-great-granddaughter married in Cochrane in 1934.	None
12. Mecowatch-Puskewiatch (3023)	No. Daughter married in Chapleau in 1897.	None
13. Thivierge-Nakaouzokwe (3024)	No. Son was baptized in Temiskaming in 1866.	None
14. Louttit-Kijekijikokwe (3029)	Yes. Couple married at Temiskaming Post in 1838. After 1881, they are all documented outside Abitibi-Inland.	Married into Favell-Titameg (2), Udgarden-Moar & Linklater-Potts/Swanson-Robinson
15. McLeod-Turner (3031)	Yes. Son born at New Post in 1879.	Married into Polson, Linklater-Potts, Neveu & Swanson-Robinson

16. Swanson-Robinson (3032)	No. Granddaughter married in Chapleau in 1907.	Married into McLeod-Moore, Favell-Titameg, Linklater-Potts, Saunders-Leblanc & McLeod-Turner
17. Saunders-Leblanc (3034)	Yes. Forebear born at Gogama in 1825.	Married into Polson (2) & Swanson-Robinson (2)
18. Jolicoeur-Bonin (3039)	No. Forebear born in Temiskaming in 1856.	Married into Polson
19. McDonell-McKay (3040)	Yes. Forebear documented in Temiskaming District in 1833.	None

In the following section I will examine the data in this table according to the relevant indicators for ethnogenesis introduced previously.

Clear Territorial Boundaries

Confirming my analysis in the previous section, the root ancestors used by the MNO to create the Abitibi-Inland community do not meet the two main territorial indicators for ethnogenesis.

First, only 7 of the 19 VMFLs documented by the MNO were present in the Abitibi-Inland community prior to Effective Control (1891/1854). This finding plainly contradicts the MNO's assertion that "much of the Métis population from [the James Bay Area] moved into the Abitibi Inland Community prior to effective control." In fact, none of the VMFLs moved south prior to even 1906, the MNO's date for Effective Control. In that sense, the MNO's own data does not support its reliance on the existence of mixed-race families in James Bay coastal communities in the 1700s as the basis of its Abitibi-Inland community. While descendants of some of the VMFLs moved south to the Chapleau-Timmins-Cochrane corridor in the twentieth century, this occurred significantly *after* Effective Control (e.g., Dallaire-Okimawininew, Mecowatch-Puskewiatch, Vincent-Renton, Linklater-Potts, Favell-Titameg, or Udgarden-Moar).

Despite these findings, the "Joint Fact Sheet" on Abitibi-Inland produced by the MNO and Government of Ontario focuses on the "inter-connectedness of the Métis populations between James Bay and the Abitibi Inland"[24] as the basis of recognition of the so-called Abitibi-Inland community. As they explain,

> Moose Factory Post employees were frequently transferred to the inland, Albany, and Lake Superior posts. Well-known Métis families—many of which are repeatedly identified as 'half-breeds' in the historic record over successive generations—stay in the inland area, and move between post locations.

[24] MNO & Ontario, "Joint Fact Sheet," p. 1.

> For example, census records document that Métis constituted 85% of the population at Moose Factory circa 1901, many of whom lived on the post grounds. The historic record also shows there were eight prominent Métis families who lived in the Moose Factory area for between two and four generations, and another eight family [sic] who lived in the inland area. […] over time the Métis populations in the James Bay area became more interconnected with the inland populations around Abitibi and Timiskiaming [*sic*], with many individuals relocating south for employment opportunities following the collapse of the fur trade.[25]

The fact that Moose Factory had a large and well documented mixed-race population in 1901, coupled with the reality that goods and people flowed between fur trade posts is used as a basis to suggest that a significant number of the forebears of the Abitibi-Inland community migrated south from the coast into the upper reaches of the watershed. The review conducted by Intergoup uses the same logic to assert that 100% of the VFMLs for Abitibi-Inland were documented in the "Historic Métis Community" prior to Effective Control. However, the evidence provided in the VMFL Assessment Documents for Abitibi-Inland simply does not bear out this conclusion. If, as the MNO and Government of Ontario claim, many individuals relocated south (from the James Bay coast) for employment opportunities, they did so sometime in the twentieth century, well after Effective Control.

Besides the 12 VFMLs that were not present in the Abitibi-Inland community prior to Effective Control, a thirteenth (Louttit-Kijekijikokwe) does not meet the requirement of "a multi-generational presence of the forebears, the root ancestors, and their descendants in the Identified Historic Métis Community," since the MNO provides no evidence that any of the couple's descendants lived in Abitibi-Inland from 1881 onwards. With that in mind, a large majority of the VMFLs (13 of 19) do not meet the minimum territorial criterion established in the *Powley* decision.

A significant proportion of the nineteen families originated in and/or lived along James Bay, primarily at Moose Factory, but also at Eastmain, Attawapiskat, and Rupert's House, and remained there prior to Effective Control. These communities are outside of the boundaries for Abitibi-Inland established by the MNO and Government of Ontario in 2017 (see Map 2). Overall, a clear majority of the MNO's VMFLs for Abitibi-Inland weren't recorded in the region prior to Effective Control.

Demographic Weight

Between 2017 and 2021, the MNO added seven new VMFLs to its Abitibi-Inland community, increasing the territorial and demographic size of the community considerably. Adding "root ancestors" is not just a matter for registration since it also significantly alters the constitution of the past and present community. In none of its documentation does the MNO provide an explanation for the increase in the number of VMFLs since 2017. The growing size of the Abitibi-Inland community raises concerns about the validity and reliability of the MNO's historical research.

[25] MNO & Ontario, "Joint Fact Sheet," p. 2 & 3.

In its 2021 Registry and Self-Government Readiness Review report, the MNO acknowledges that it has been adding to the overall number of VMFLs since their initial publication in August 2017. They explain that originally 88 VMFLs were approved and published on their website and that they added an additional 26 VMFLs by May 2021. Thus, in less than four years, the number of VMFLs for the new "historic Métis communities" jointly recognized by the Government of Ontario and the MNO increased by 29.5%. In the case of the Abitibi-Inland community, the number of VMFLs increased by 58.3% between 2017 and 2021.

The most immediate impact of the increase in the number of VMFLs is that it broadens the pool of potential MNO members. For instance, one of the VMFLs added since 2017 is the Saunders-Leblanc line (FL 3034). According to the MNO, Valentine Saunders (born 1819) and Elizabeth Leblanc (born 1825) had eighteen children by the 1870s, three of whom they consider "Documented Métis." Using historical demographic data from the period and MNO documentation, it is possible to estimate the overall number of descendants of the Saunders-Leblanc union currently living at about 500. In other words, just this one VMFL has the potential to increase the size of the MNO's Abitibi-Inland community by over 30%. Contrary to the MNO's research, the results of sound historical and demographic research normally remain consistent over long periods of time.

Overall, the increase in the number of VMFLs for Abitibi-Inland since 2017 has broadened the potential pool of MNO members eligible for Harvester Cards by over 1,650 in the region. Given that its 2021 Abitibi-Inland membership was 1,045 individuals, the addition of these seven VMFLs could more than double its membership in the region.

The creation of the VMFL Assessment Documents in 2017 as well as the addition of substantially more VMFLs since then has led to a spike in MNO membership. Table 2 outlines MNO membership at different points in the past sixteen years. Without a doubt, the organization's membership has grown substantially since 2020, a time frame that coincides with public knowledge of the VMFL system and an increase in the overall number of VMFLs.

TABLE 2 – Number of MNO Members

DATE/YEAR	REFERENCE	NUMBER
December 31, 2006	MNO Voyageur newsletter	12,339
August 2009	2012 MNO Cancer report	14,480
March 2012	Annual Report	15,875
March 2015	Annual Report	18,853
February 8, 2020	"Who is the MNO?" (website)	about 20,000
May 2021	RSGRR report	23,978[26]
January 2022	"About the MNO" (website)	over 25,000
July 2022	"What We Heard Report"	29,000+

[26] 1,061 MNO citizens were removed from the Registry due to death, suspension or withdrawal in 2021. Most of them would have been included in previous counts.

Another way to visualize this data is to consider the rate of annual increase in MNO membership. Table 3 illustrates that MNO membership grew at a rate of between 3% and 6% per year between 2006 and 2015. In fact, the period between 2009 and 2012 saw a slight drop in the proportion of new members over the previous and subsequent three-year periods. Yet, the number of new MNO members jumped substantially between 2020 and 2022, quadrupling its average annual rate of increase since 2006.

TABLE 3 – Rate of annual increase in MNO membership

PERIOD	NUMBER of MEMBERS	RATE OF INCREASE
2006 to 2009	12,339 to 14,480	5.8% per year
2009 to 2012	14,480 to 15,875	3.2% per year
2012 t0 2015	15,875 to 18,853	6.3% per year
2020 to 2021	20,000 to 24,000	20% per year
2021 to 2022	24,000 to 29,000+	20.8% per year

Overall, MNO membership has grown by over 9,000 individuals or 45% since mid-2020. Using an average of the annual rate of growth between 2020 and 2022 (20.4%), Table 4 projects the number of MNO members over the next decade. Any additional VMFLs would likely lead to a higher rate of increase in MNO membership in the future, simply because thousands more individuals would be eligible.

TABLE 4 – Projected Number of MNO Members at Current Annual Rate of Increase

YEAR	NUMBER of PROJECTED MEMBERS
2024	42,039
2026	60,940
2028	88,340
2030	128,059
2032	185,636

At the current rate of annual increase, MNO membership would reach over 60,000 by 2026 and over 125,000 by 2030. While there's no inherent issue with an increase in MNO membership, from the standpoint of sound academic research a problem arises when that increase is due to changing criteria. In this case, the increase in the number of VMFLs suggests that there is a lack of clarity about what and who constitutes the Historic Abitibi-Inland community, raising significant questions about its demographic makeup.

Lack of Intermarriage

Ten of the original twelve families identified as VMFLs by the MNO had no intermarriage with any of the other Abitibi-Inland VMFLs. In fact, the twelve original VMFLs count only one union among them, a Polson-Neveu marriage that took place in Sudbury in 1903, outside of the territory

in question and after Effective Control in that region. In other words, at the time of the Government of Ontario's recognition of the MNO's Abitibi-Inland community, the MNO had not come close to meet one of the major criteria in ethnogenesis studies: endogamic marriage practices over generations. The MNO had not identified a single mixed-race family that had practiced endogamy with another mixed-race family over nearly a century in the entire territory.

Of the seven other VMFLs added after the initial 2017 publication, three families have no specific kinship connections with other Abitibi-Inland VMFLs. That means that twelve of the nineteen VMFLs or 63.2% of them are unconnected through marriage to any other family in the so-called community. If we cross-check the VMFLs who were present in the Abitibi-Inland community prior to Effective Control with those who intermarried, then we are left with only 4 of the 19 VMFLs.

In other words, less than a quarter of the VMFLs identified by the MNO were in the region under study prior to Effective Control *and* intermarried with at least one other VFML. The table below documents those five families.

TABLE 5 – VMFLs Present Before MNO Effective Control with Intermarriage

VMFL	Presence in Abitibi-Inland Prior to Effective Control	Intermarriage in Abitibi-Inland
1. Polson (3008)	Yes. Couple was married at Abitibi Post in 1838.	Married into Neveu
2. Neveu (3018)	Yes. Root ancestor born in Matagama in 1853.	Married into Polson
3. McLeod-Turner (3031)	Yes. Son born at New Post in 1879.	Married into Polson, Linklater-Potts, Neveu & Swanson-Robinson
4. Saunders-Leblanc (3034)	Yes. Forebear born at Gogama in 1825.	Married into Polson & Swanson-Robinson

Any finding that Abitibi-Inland does not meet the main indicators of ethnogenesis must also consider that the MNO's identification of VFML individuals as "Métis" does not necessarily correspond with the individual's historical identity. I have discovered several instances where individuals identified as "Métis" by the MNO before Effective Control were in fact well-known Cree/Oji-Cree/Ojibway/Algonquin individuals.

Misidentification of First Nation Families as "Métis"

The Polson VMFL is documented in the three other VMFLs recorded in Table 4 and is mostly an Algonquin family that continues to live as Algonquin throughout Algonquin territory. William Polson (parents were Hudson's Bay Company surgeon William Paulson and an unnamed Indigenous woman) was born in Rupert's Land around 1785 and married Flora Lévesque dit Otenimakwe, an Algonquin woman born in Algonquin territory around 1795. They had six known children born between 1825 and 1841 and documented throughout their lives in Algonquin territory near the north shore of Lake Temiskaming (at today's Timiskaming First Nation) in

present-day Quebec. Their children Elizabeth Flora and John were enumerated in several different ways during their lives. For instance, Elizabeth is identified as "Indian" in the 1871 Census and "Métis écossais" (under colour) and "Occhipewa" (under race) in the 1901 Census. John was also identified as "Indian" in 1871 and as "Algonquin" in the 1911 Census. Several of the great-grandchildren of the forebears are listed as "Chippewa Other Breed" in the 1901 Census, while several great-great-grandchildren (four generations away from William and Flora), are identified as "Indian" in the 1921 Census.

After reviewing the MNO's evidence from the census, enumerators are clearly confused about how to identify the Polson family. Identifiers are frequently crossed out and written over for reasons that are unknown to contemporary readers. Without a doubt, the Polson family features a diverse group of Algonquin, Cree, Scottish, Irish, and French ancestors. Many of the specific "Métis" descendants listed in the MNO's Polson VFML Assessment Document were enumerated on the Timiskaming First Nation and were active members of that community, yet the MNO zeroes in on the fact that they were once identified with the word "breed" (used to identify mixed-race individuals), ignoring the other evidence that these individuals were in fact Algonquin community members.

I will reconstruct the lives of Elizabeth Flora Polson (see above), the forebear's daughter, and her husband Angus McBride. Angus's father was Irish and his mother was Algonquin. Elizabeth and Angus are recognized today as one of the first families to live on the Timiskaming First Nation (TFN), one of two Algonquin reserves created in 1854.[27] They had a small farm on the reserve; next to their entry in the 1881 census, the enumerator indicated that "the Indians and their mixed-race children are farming well" in a note.[28] McBride and Polson had twelve known children between 1846 and 1873. Several of the McBride children, including some listed in the VMFL Assessment Document, marry fellow Algonquin individuals, including Angus Jr. who married Françoise Kistabish at the TFN in 1902. Descendants of the original McBride-Polson couple in TFN and other Algonquin communities continue to live well into the twenty-first century, including former TFN Chief Terence McBride, current TFN Chief Arden McBride, and former Grand Chief of the Algonquin Nation Secretariat, Carol McBride.

What's clear is that hundreds of Polson descendants, including dozens who carry the McBride family name, continue to live in Algonquin First Nations today. Jacques Frénette, who was commissioned to write a genealogical report for both the Kebaowek First Nation and Long Point First Nation (Winneway) in the 1990s, concluded that Algonquin descendants of the Polson family "live in most [of the 10] Algonquin First Nations."[29] In fact, a recent Grand Chief of the Algonquin-Anishinabeg Nation (Verna Polson), which represents seven Algonquin First Nations, is a descendant. It is likely that the four other VMFLs who married into the Polson family in the nineteenth century and identified in Table 4 did so as fellow mixed-race Algonquin (or Ojibway/ Anishinaabe) individuals, not as members of a distinctive collective now known as "Métis."

[27] Mitchell, Elaine. 1977. *Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 14.
[28] Riopel, Marc. 2002. "Métissages et nouvelles familles algonquines."
[29] Frénette, Jacques. 1999. "Eagle Village and Long Point First Nations," 17.

The fact that the MNO methodology for identifying a historic Métis community involves simply identifying mixed-race individuals in the past means they ignore their descendants' trajectories into the present, as studies in ethnogenesis have been doing for nearly two decades. The reality is that the Abitibi-Inland VMFLs lack endogamic marriage practices because they did not constitute a community; instead, the individuals the MNO identifies as "Documented Métis" largely integrated into local First Nations.

From my detailed analysis of MNO documentation, it appears that it accepted as members individuals who self-identified as Métis from its inception, despite some of them being non-status (Cree, Ojibway or Algonquin) individuals and others being white Canadians. From there, once these individuals became members, the MNO sought to prove the existence of specific communities by assembling VMFLs that matched those used by its membership. Of course, this is not in keeping with trusted ethno-historical research or organizational best practices, as one would normally start with demonstrating the existence of an interconnected community in the historical record, before registering individuals based on their self-identification.

Had the MNO used the methodology developed by Métis historians such as Heather Devine and Brenda Macdougall in their creation of the VMFLs – tracing the lived experience of generation-upon-generation of descendants, instead of relying primarily on census categorization – there would be no Abitibi-Inland VMFLs. The MNO's research does not specify these trajectories, suggesting that self-identification in the present combined with the presence of mixed-race Indigenous individuals in the past is sufficient for the creation of a historic Métis community.

The next section turns to an examination of a Government of Ontario commissioned report on the existence of a "métis" community in the Timmins, Chapleau, and Abitibi regions, which overlaps with the MNO's current Abitibi-Inland community.

REVIEW OF 2001 PRAXIS REPORT

Two reports were commissioned by government on the question of whether a historic Métis community existed in the James Bay watershed. The first was by Praxis Research Associates (Gwen Reimer and Jean-Philippe Chartrand) for the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) of Ontario in 2001. This report was part of a series commissioned by the MNR in the wake of the lower court *Powley* decisions in Ontario between 1998 and 2001. On page one of their report, the authors explain that a main reason for the report is that the MNR is dealing with a "growing number of individuals and groups asserting métis rights" in the province. This first report focused specifically on Timmins, Cochrane, and the Abitibi region of Ontario, all of which are near the headwaters of the James Bay watershed.

The second report was also by Praxis, this time for the Government of Canada's Department of Justice, in 2005. This report was part of a series commissioned by the federal government in the wake of the Supreme Court of Canada's 2003 *Powley* decision; it focuses specifically on Moose Factory, the former fur trading post on the James Bay coast.

We have been unable to find any research other than the 2001 Praxis report that was commissioned by the Government of Ontario that deals explicitly with what the MNO now calls the Abitibi-Inland Métis community. For their part, the MNO lists both Praxis reports on their "Historic Research" page, which it created "to provide at least some of the research that has been done on Ontario Métis" to its members. I have limited my analysis herein to the 2001 report for two reasons: a) it was commissioned by the Government of Ontario; and b) it covers most of the region now claimed by the MNO as the Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community.

What jumps out right away is that the authors begin their report (executive summary) by stating in rather clear terms that they were unable to corroborate the existence of a historic Métis community in the Timmins, Cochrane, and Abitibi regions of Ontario. As they explain, "Overall, the historical data and analyses presented in this report indicate that a potential for the development of a metis community existed in certain time periods throughout the region under study [but] historical records present no direct evidence of such an ethnicity."[30] We are left with a 150+ page report that provides no documentary evidence for the existence of a distinctive Métis community in the region, all of which is now part of what the MNO calls Abitibi-Inland.

The authors of the 2001 Praxis report nonetheless argue that there are some indications for the potential of a métis community in the 1901 census. Overall, they identify between 450 and 500 presumably mixed-race individuals who are identified as "breed" in Ontario or "Métis" in Québec under the category of "colour." The word "breed" was used by census enumerators to indicate a person was mixed-race, with European and Indigenous ancestries. The "Joint Fact Sheet" on Abitibi-Inland produced by the MNO and Government of Ontario appears to rely heavily on the 2001 Praxis report when it uses the same figures to identify areas with some density of mixed-race individuals: "Within the inland region, there are three areas where there appear to have been clusters, including, specific neighbourhoods of Métis residents (with well-known surnames that were consistent with early time periods). For example, in the 1901 census 127 Métis individuals were identified at Flying Post, 45 Métis individuals at Matagami, and 62 Métis individuals at North Timiskaming."[31]

However, unlike the MNO who has based their VMFLs and thus their "Historic Métis Communities" on the use of the designation "breed," including importantly in the 1901 census, the Praxis report authors are more careful in their conclusions. First, they point out that there was widespread enumerator inconsistency in the use of the terms "breed" and "Métis" in 1901. For instance, they explain that members of the same family would be categorized differently depending on the province in which they were enumerated. Also, the same individual could be categorized multiple ways throughout their lives, as we explored above. While the MNO acknowledges that many of the root ancestors in its VMFLs were often enumerated as First

[30] Reimer, Gwen and Jean-Philippe Chartrand [Praxis Research Associates]. 2001. "Historic Métis in Ontario: Timmins, Cochrane and the Abitibi Region." Prepared for the Native Affairs Unit, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, p. iv.
[31] MNO & Ontario, "Joint Fact Sheet," p. 3.

Nation ("Indian," Cree, Algonquin, Ojibway), the methodology they employ only requires that an individual be identified as "breed" on one occasion for them to be considered "Documented Métis." The authors of the Praxis report, however, are much more cautious in their interpretation of census records than the MNO and outline the risks in relying too heavily on these records to identify a distinct historical community.

Second, the Praxis report authors point out that enumerator inconsistency ensures that it is impossible to know with any certainty whether census categorization is indicative of self-identification. As they explain,

> Enumeration instructions [in 1901] stated that the 'heads of families, households and institutions are required to furnish the enumerator with all particulars regarding every person in the family, household or institution.' This implies that the Census intended for persons to self identify their colour and racial origin. However, the extent to which individual enumerators' explanations of colour and racial/tribal categories influenced people's answers cannot be known.[32]

In other words, even when an individual was recorded with the word "breed" (half-breed, Cree French Breed, Ojibway Breed, Scotch Breed, French Breed, etc.), sound historical analysis demands that we avoid jumping to the conclusion that such categorization is an indication of individual self-consciousness of membership in a distinctive collective identity. In the matter of the 1901 Census, which is valuable because it is the only one with two relevant categories – "colour" and "racial/tribal origin" – it is likely that colour was used simply as a racial/biological category, in following the scholarly conventions of the period, and not as a designation referring to a distinctive collective identity. While the MNO and Government of Ontario identify individuals categorized with the word "breed" as "Métis" in their 2017 documentation, there's ample evidence – including in the MNO's own documentation, as we demonstrate below – that most of them were mixed-race members of local First Nations.

A second claim made in the "Joint Fact Sheet" is also plainly contradicted by the 2001 Praxis report. In this case, as evidence that "the Métis in these inter-connected populations [i.e., Abitibi-Inland and James Bay] shared a number of customs, traditions, and common vocations," the MNO and Government of Ontario claim that "Métis servants were employed at specialized tasks that required skills these men had as a result of their unique culture and heritage, including working as interpreters, canoe builders, and hunters."[33] They later add "canoe-men" and "guides" to the list of tasks that led these "Métis servants" to experience a social class system unique to them, and thus, a distinctive identity. Yet, the 2001 Praxis report provides plenty of evidence that First Nation men (i.e., Cree, Ojibway, or Algonquin) were specifically employed by the HBC to undertake these tasks in the Inland posts:

> in contrast to other geographic regions where metis generally occupied this niche, the inland fur trade posts generally relied on local Indian [*sic*] men (or men who identified as

[32] Praxis Research Associates, "Historic Métis in Ontario," p. 112.
[33] MNO & Ontario, "Joint Fact Sheet," p. 3.

> Indians and practised a hunter/trapper lifestyle) to paddle their canoe brigades […] Abitibi region post journal references to 'voyageurs' characterize this occupation as seasonal, journey-specific, and one filled by local Indian men who traded at these posts.[34]

Another key aspect of the VMFL Assessment Documents is how the MNO justifies its inclusion of each family through tables meant to document how forebears and their descendants were categorized in the census. They title the table "ethnicity chart," even though most of the categories are not indicative of an "ethnic" identity, per sociological standards. I've provided three of these tables below, chosen at random from the nineteen Abitibi-Inland VMFLs.

Chart 1 – Linklater-Potts "Ethnicity Chart"

7 Ethnicity Chart

Name	Ethnicity	Year / Document
James Linklater (Métis Root Ancestor)	ME	1901 Census of Canada
George Taylor Linklater (grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1911 Census of Canada
	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
	Scotch halfbreed	1925 death record
Annie Linklater (granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
	Halfbreed	1922 death record

In the case of the Linklater-Potts "ethnicity chart," we can see that the MNO has focused on three individuals. James Linklater was enumerated as "Métis écossais" ("Scotch Breed") under "Colour" (not ethnicity, as the MNO table suggests) in the 1901 Census for Moose Factory. Cree is recorded as his mother tongue and that of all the other households on the census page, except for a British family who moved from the United States. In that sense, it appears that James Linklater may have had a European father (or grandfather) but was raised as Cree in his mother's community.

By focusing so narrowly on whether the word "breed" is used to describe an individual, the MNO loses sight of the other valuable information provided by the census, engaged as it is in what academics call "confirmation bias" or seeking out information that confirms their beliefs and omitting relevant information that does not support their argument.

The second individual listed in the table is George Taylor Linklater, the son of Thomas Linklater and grandson of James. He's recorded as "Scotch" under "Racial or tribal origin" in the 1911 Census and as "Indian" under "Racial or tribal origin" in the 1921 Census, both for Moose Factory. Additionally, my research indicates "Indian" is listed under "Language most commonly spoken"

[34] Praxis Research Associates, "Historic Métis in Ontario," p. 63 & 73

in 1921, as it is for the remaining 21 individuals on that census page, including his father and mother. His trajectory from "Scotch" to "Indian" to "Scotch halfbreed" is common among individuals in MNO VMFLs, due to in part widespread enumerator inconsistency in census records, as pointed out by the authors of the 2001 Praxis report. The 1921 census, in which George is recorded as "Indian" and as speaking "Indian" (Cree) along with his parents, siblings, and immediate neighbours, strongly suggests that he was Cree.

The same inconsistency is true for Annie Linklater, George's younger sister. She was enumerated as "Indian" and as speaking "Indian" in the 1921 census and a year later was recorded as a "halfbreed" in her death record. However, Annie's biological sister Rubina's (Ruby) death record, taken by a different physician in 1929, identifies her as "Indian." It appears that inconsistencies occur in vital records as well. From the information provided in the census record, Annie was a Cree girl and member of a Cree-speaking community at Moose Factory who happened to have some European ancestors, just like her brother.

Besides these observations, perhaps the most counter-intuitive aspect of the MNO's use of both George and Annie Linklater in the VMFL Assessment Document is that neither of them had any children, which is confirmed in the death records included in the MNO documentation supporting their inclusion. George was listed as "single" when he died of an accidental drowning at the age of 20 and Annie was only 23 months old when she died on 22 August 1922. It appears that both George and Annie are included as "Documented Métis" simply because the MNO was unable to find written documentation with the word "breed" attached to any of the other Linklater children or grandchildren, as the Linklater-Potts VMFL Assessment Document confirms.

Chart 2 – Thivierge-Nakaouzokwe "Ethnicity Chart"

7 Ethnicity Chart

Name	Ethnicity	Year / Document
Pierre Thivierge (Métis Root Ancestor)	~~metis~~ French	1881 Census of Canada
	M.F.; Algonquin	1901 Census of Canada
Joseph Thivierge (Métis Root Ancestor)	French	1871 Census of Canada
	~~Half Breed~~ French	1881 Census of Canada
	Indian	1881 Census of Canada
Marie Josette Thivierge (Métis Root Ancestor)	~~metis~~ Not given	1881 Census of Canada
	Algonquin	1901 Census of Canada

In the case of the Thivierge-Nakaouzokwe "ethnicity chart," the MNO again focused on three individuals. All three are the children of the forebears Antoine Thivierge and Marie-Josette Nakaouzokwe. Joseph first appeared in the 1871 census for South Mattawa with his widowed father. Both are recorded as French. Joseph again appeared in the 1881 Census for Nipissing District in the Antoine household, where he shares the head of household's categorization as

“French ~~halfbreed~~.” Thus, the only time that the word “breed” is used to describe Joseph it was struck through, but the MNO nonetheless considers him a “Documented Métis” on that basis alone.

Pierre Thivierge was recorded as Métis français (French Breed) under “Colour” and Algonquin under “Racial or tribal origin” in the 1901 census for North Temiskaming. Pierre was recorded as a widower and was living in his sister Marie-Josette’s household. His children, François and Ellen, were both recorded as “Red” under “Colour.”

Marie-Josette Thivierge is first recorded in the 1881 Census for Lake Temiskaming along with her husband Angus Wabikijik. Under “Racial or tribal origin,” an unreadable word is struck out and “not given” is scribbled above it. In the 1901 Census for North Temiskaming, Marie-Josette is recorded as “Red” under “Colour” and as Algonquin under “Racial or tribal origin,” as are her husband and six children.

Forty-five of the forty-eight individuals immediately preceding Marie-Josette and Pierre’s household in the census returns are recorded as “Red” (3 are recorded as Métis écossais/Scotch breed) and either Algonquin or “Sauvage” (“Indian”), while the following thirty-seven individuals are mostly recorded as “Red” and Algonquin or “Ochippawa” (Ojibway). It appears that both Marie-Josette and Pierre were enumerated on the Timiskaming Algonquin reserve, which is corroborated by the fact that Angus McBride’s family appears on the same census page as them. You may remember that McBride’s family was among the first families to reside on the reserve. He later became chief. Again, the MNO appears to misread the available written documentation, which strongly suggests that Marie-Josette, Pierre, and their children were Algonquin living on the only reserve in the region.

Chart 3 – Louttit-Kijekijikokwe "Ethnicity Chart"

7 Ethnicity Chart

Name	Ethnicity	Year / Document
John Louttit (Métis Root Ancestor)	Native	1811 HBC Contract
	métif	1838 Marriage Record
James Louttit (Son of Métis Root Ancestor)	mitif	1836 Baptism Record
Pierre Henry Louttit (Son of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1881 Census of Canada
	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
Maie Hunter (Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Indian	1871 Census of Canada
	~~Métis~~ (French)	1881 Census of Canada
Isaac Hunter (Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1871 Census of Canada
	metis ecossaise	1881 Census of Canada
	Scotch	1901 Census of Canada
	Algonquin	1911 Census of Canada
	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
Flora Hunter (Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1871 Census of Canada
	metis ecossaise	1881 Census of Canada
	Scotch	1901 Census of Canada
	Ecossaise	1911 Census of Canada
	Ecossaise	1921 Census of Canada
Peter Hunter (Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1871 Census of Canada
	metis ecossaise	1881 Census of Canada
	Scotch SB	1901 Census of Canada
	Scotch	1911 Census of Canada
Margaret Louttit (Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1881 Census of Canada
	FB	1901 Census of Canada
	Scotch	1911 Census of Canada
	Scotch	1940 Death record
Peter Louttit (Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1881 Census of Canada
	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
Jane Louttit (Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1881 Census of Canada
	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
Elizabeth Louttit (Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1881 Census of Canada
	Cree	1901 Census of Canada
	halfbreed	1911 Census of Canada
	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
	Cree	1939 Death Record

William Louttit (Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch	1881 Census of Canada
	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
	Half Breed Cree Indian	1921 Census of Canada
James Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
	Cree Indian	1931 Death Record
Sophia Louttit (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
	Cree	1911 Census of Canada
	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
Maggie Louttit (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
	Scotch halfbreed	1911 Census of Canada
	Cree	1921 Census of Canada
	Irish & Indian	1943 Death Record
Annie Louttit (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
Harry Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
John Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
Louisa Laura Corston (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree SB	1901 Census of Canada
Nellie Corston (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree SB	1901 Census of Canada
Daisy Alice Wynne (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	halfbreed	1911 Census of Canada
	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
Lizzie Wynne (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree SB	1901 Census of Canada
Annie Wynne (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree SB	1901 Census of Canada
Mary Louttit (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada
Peter John Stanley Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada
William Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
Christopher Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada

Robert George Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada
	Indian	1940 Death Record
Elsie Louttit (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada
Redfern Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada
Annie Louttit (Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada
Sydney Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	quarter Breed	1921 Census of Canada
George Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
Allan William Louttit (Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Cree FB	1901 Census of Canada
Hilda Elizabeth Louttit (Great-Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Half Breed	1911 Census of Canada
	Ind	1921 Census of Canada
Louis Martineau (Great-Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch halfbreed	1911 Census of Canada
	Cree	1921 Census of Canada
Bertha Martineau (Great-Great-Granddaughter of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch halfbreed	1911 Census of Canada
	Cree	1921 Census of Canada
Edmond Peter Joseph Martineau (Great-Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch halfbreed	1911 Census of Canada
	Cree	1921 Census of Canada
Napoleon Martineau (Great-Great-Grandson of Métis Root Ancestor)	Scotch halfbreed	1911 Census of Canada

The Louttit-Kijekijikokwe "ethnicity chart" further confirms the lack of academic rigour in the MNO's historical analysis. As one can see, members of this extended family are categorized in several different ways, both on an individual level and collectively. For example, Isaac Hunter, the fifth person in the chart, is categorized five different ways between 1871 and 1921. Yet, the MNO uses the fact that he was identified on one occasion as "Métis écossais" ("Scotch breed") to affirm that he was "Documented Métis." The same Hunter family is a namesake of Hunter Lake and Hunter's Point, both territorial markers significant to Algonquin residents of Wolf Lake, Kebaowek, and Timiskaming First Nations. Without a doubt, relying solely on census categorization as the starting point to determine whether an individual was part of a distinctive collective identity is fraught with error.

Instead of reviewing the records associated with all thirty-nine individuals, however, I would like to return to an argument forwarded by the 2001 Praxis report authors. According to the chart

above, several third-generation descendants of the Louttit-Kijekijikokwe couple were enumerated as Cree or "Indian" in the 1921 Census, and a second-generation descendant was recorded as "Indian" in his 1940 death record. It is clear that several, if not most of the Louttit-Kijekijikokwe descendants married into local Cree families, confirming the Praxis conclusion that the mixed-race children of European men and Indigenous women were normally raised in their mother's communities in a manner that did not distinguish them from their First Nation peers.

Another example is Redfern Louttit who is identified as "Documented Métis" on page three of the "ethnicity chart" and is the grandfather of our research assistant Kara Louttit. In the 1921 Census he was enumerated as "quarter breed," yet there exist readily available documentary sources that confirm that Redfern self-identified and was considered by others as Cree. In a 1991 master's thesis at McMaster University, Redfern clearly identifies as Cree and ties his identity to the fact that he and his siblings were forced into residential school.[35] In a book chapter published in 2016, Redfern's son Stan discusses his father marrying into the Eeyou Itschee Gilpin family (i.e., Cree woman Agnes Gilpin).[36] In his own master's thesis at Carleton University, Stan thanked his mother (Agnes), father (Redfern) and sister (Eva) for their knowledge and understanding of Eeyou culture.[37]

Besides these clear indications that Louttit-Kijekijikokwe descendants well after the time of Effective Control lived as Cree (and in some cases, Algonquin) throughout their territory, Redfern's son Les was formerly the Deputy Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation and his nephew Stan Louttit – five generations removed from John Louttit and Charlotte Kijekijikokwe and not to be confused with the previous Stan – was formerly the Grand Chief of the Mushkegowuk Council. Researching the Louttit family demonstrates that the political, social, cultural, and geographical trajectories of the bulk of the MNO's Louttit-Kijekijikokwe descendants affirm their commitment to celebrating and protecting the Mushkegowuk way of life as Cree people.

As is the case with the two previous VMFLs, if the MNO followed the rigorous genealogical reconstruction developed by Métis historians Heather Devine and Brenda Macdougall – where one traces family histories with an eye on distinguishing the different social and political trajectories taken by various branches of the family tree – they would have certainly come to the conclusion that the majority of the individuals identified as either "Métis root ancestors" or "Documented Métis" in their VMFLs were in fact integral members of regional Cree, Ojibway, or Algonquin communities.

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[35] Logotheti, Argyro Rula. 1991. "Six Moose Factory Cree Life Histories: the Negotiation of Self and the Maintenance of Culture." Master's thesis, McMaster University, p. 150−65.

[36] Louttit, Stan L. 2016. "John Kawapit's Hunting Songs," in John Long and Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Together We Survive: Ethnographic Intuitions, Friendships, and Conversations*, Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 169−80.

[37] Louttit, Stan. 2005. "Diabetes and Glimpses of a 21st Century Eeyou (Cree) Culture: Local Perspectives on Diet, Body Weight, Physical Activity and 'Being' Eeyou among an Eeyou Youth Population of the Eeyou (Cree) Nation of Wemindji, Quebec." Master's thesis, Carleton University.

Genealogical reconstruction does not take for granted that the descendants of Métis "root ancestors" are all Métis individuals today; instead, it reads one's identity into the trajectories borrowed by each generation of one's ancestors. In Devine's case, some of her Desjarlais Métis ancestors' descendants are Métis or Plains Cree in the Prairies, others are Chippewa (Anishinaabe) in Montana and North Dakota, and others are white Canadians. In the case of the Louttit-Kijekijikokwe VMFL, we have a mixed-race Cree man and Algonquin woman married in Algonquin territory in 1838 whose descendants primarily end up settling in the Cree community of Moose Factory. The complex nature of this family's social and geographical trajectory demands a detailed genealogical reconstruction, as it does in the case of every MNO VMFL.

As it is, the MNO's use of these nineteen families hinges on the fact that the word "breed" (or "métis" in French) was used to describe a descendant in census or vital records. I have reviewed all nineteen VMFLs, and according to the MNO's own documentation, fifteen of them include descendants who are identified as being from a First Nation, often over successive generations. In the "Joint Fact Sheet" on Abitibi-Inland produced by the MNO and Government of Ontario, identifying individuals who are "repeatedly identified as 'half-breeds'—as opposed to 'Indians'—in the historic record for successive generations"[38] is used as a criterion for the Abitibi-Inland community. Still, a close examination of those same records suggests the vast majority of Abitibi-Inland VMFLs document the existence of mixed-race Cree, Ojibway, and/or Algonquin families over generations.

Using genealogical reconstruction as a method of historical inquiry involves following families through time and space, with a focus on marital choice, neighbourhood patterns, economic conduct, and political activity. Focusing narrowly on outsider ascription (i.e., in census or vital records) as the MNO does, ignores the dynamic nature of kinship relations.

[38] MNO & Ontario, "Joint Fact Sheet," p. 2.

CONCLUSION

I will now outline my conclusions about whether the MNO's "Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community" meets the minimum threshold for a distinctive community, using the indicators of ethnogenesis from the academic literature outlined previously.

1. Cultural-territorial indicators

- Endogamic marriage practices over generations.
  - The first 12 VMFLs in 2017 had only one intermarriage among them, which took place outside of the region and after Effective Control.
  - Overall, 17 marriages over 150 years among 289 "Documented Métis" does not meet the ethnogenesis threshold for endogamic marriage practices over generations.
- Considerable demographic weight.
  - Less than a third of the VMFLs were present in the region prior to the MNO's date of Effective Control.
  - The MNO's community does not meet the threshold of geographic proximity and demographic density required for ethnogenesis.
- Relatively clear territorial boundaries.
  - 58.3% increase in the number of Abitibi-Inland VMFLs between 2017 and 2021 points to lack of clarity about the size and scope of community, which is not in keeping with sound historical research.

2. Political-social indicators

- Distinctive political institutions.
  - There is no indication in the MNO documentation or in the Praxis report that any distinctive "Métis" political institutions ever existed in the region.
- Sense of self-consciousness as distinct.
  - There is no indication in the MNO documentation or in the Praxis report that a distinctive sense of self-consciousness was ever present for mixed-race individuals in the region.
- Recognition as distinct by Indigenous kin.
  - There is no indication in the MNO documentation or in the Praxis report that Indigenous peoples in the territory ever recognized their mixed-race kin as a distinctive community.
  - There is plenty of evidence from the Praxis report and my own analysis of the VMFLs that Indigenous peoples saw their mixed-race kin as part and parcel of their respective First Nation communities.