



# **METIS: PEOPLES AND NATIONS**

NCC Constitutional Review Commission Working Paper #3



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## ***A NOTE FROM THE COMMISSION***

It deeply troubles us, as we are sure it does others, that some of our societies, like our languages, may die if we do not safeguard them from further harm. There are powerful interests which want to deny our societies the human right to rebuild themselves into self-sufficient, indigenous societies.

We must all respond to the communities' outcry for strong protection for their relatively small, but rich societies in North America. The steady growth of the aboriginal population throughout the Americas is at a rate higher than for all other peoples on the continent and this is a good sign for our future security and prominence. Together, in Canada, we are more than one million people belonging to distinct nations. Together we are simply too large a force to ignore. But more than this, our reasonable demand to exist as peoples with our own laws, cultures and languages is too powerful to deny.

Aboriginal peoples have strong allies in the neighbouring societies that share our lands. We believe that they too see no harm in negotiating a new, more enlightened relationship - a working relationship rooted in co-existence and respect.

Our challenge, as a Commission, is to echo what we have long heard and we will hear over the next few months as the constitutional dialogue unfolds. We will add our perspectives for a much better relationship that our children can build on together - without the penalties and ridicule our parents faced in their generation. At the end of this round, we must be able to say that we found a good way to guarantee strong and vibrant indigenous societies in our own homelands for centuries to come.

The following is a working paper of the Constitutional Review Commission of the Native Council of Canada (NCC) which has been drafted by the Métis Commissioners and Co-Chair of the Commission as a discussion paper to encourage dialogue and increase understanding of the Métis fact in Canada.

# INTRODUCTION

The Aboriginal peoples of Canada are involved in a struggle for our cultural and political survival. Government policy concerning Aboriginal peoples wrongly assumed that we would be extinct before the end of the 20th century. The processes of Christianization, civilization, and assimilation have not absorbed the vibrant cultures of North American indigenous peoples. As we approach the 500th Anniversary of the meeting of European and North American cultures, a new agenda must be struck to address the relationship of those cultures.

As outlined in our first Working Paper, "Aboriginal Directions for Coexistence in Canada," the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples are proposing to negotiate a new set of terms for coexistence for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The responsibility lies with the Aboriginal peoples to define our place in our native land and to propose processes and mechanisms to cooperatively accomplish that goal. Both Indian and Inuit peoples are achieving a significant degree of understanding and accommodation from the Canadian government. We Métis people, however, face a greater challenge in achieving recognition by other Canadians because our cultural background includes a mix of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal origins.

Another difficulty faced by Métis people in our struggle for recognition is that our cultures are fluid. Métis cultures have developed a variety of historical and regional forms which makes it difficult to characterize them. Populations of Métis existed both before and after the 1800-1885 Red River/Batoche period. These groups include the Métis of the Atlantic Region, the communities of Hudson's Bay halfbreeds spread throughout the country and the Métis populations of the Territories and Quebec.

As Métis, we have continuously asserted our right to exist as distinct peoples with entitlements to land and self-determination. In Southern Canada, for example, where legislation attempts to regulate membership in any given Aboriginal group, Métis are often categorized as separate from other Aboriginal populations in terms of status, non-status and off-reserve. Access to rights are restricted by various pieces of federal legislation. In Western treaty areas, Métis have been treated as though they have given up

Aboriginal rights by taking script.

In the North, treaties were never fulfilled and Métis people are currently being included in comprehensive claims. Obviously, the forms of recognition of Métis as distinct Aboriginal entities vary in different communities and regions.

There is no formal national mechanism (such as the *Indian Act*) by which Métis persons can register. Other than being specified as Aboriginal in Section 35 of the *Canada Act, 1982*, there is no legal or formal definition of "Métis" which applies generally across the country. We Métis define ourselves as people of Aboriginal ancestry who self-identify as Métis and are accepted as such by a Métis community. Certainly, the NCC negotiated the term "Métis" into the constitution in 1982 with the specific intention of including all of the Métis constituencies of the NCC. These difficulties with definitions have been compounded by government policies designed before Confederation which ignore Métis claims and attempt to force many of us to identify either as Indians or as white Canadians. Under Canadian law, Métis are not clearly Indian. By blood, we are not genetically white. What makes us Métis is that, in our hearts, we identify ourselves as Métis.

The Métis peoples of Canada are the descendants of the racial intermixture of Indian and non-Indian peoples. Although we are often academically defined as French and Indian halfbreeds from western Canada, realistically, we are the products of many generations of relations between many kinds of aboriginal peoples and many kinds of non-aboriginal people. It is certain that most of the people who identify as Métis today are born of one or more Métis parents, rather than from Indian and white parents.

Métis tend to shy away from the government's legislated definition of who we are. Like most Aboriginal peoples, we insist on defining ourselves, preferably in the context of self-government. Identity is at the centre of all Aboriginal cultures and the Métis culture is no different. Whether or not we adopt the Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal customs of a specific geographic area, we remain as a people, distinct from any other.

## BACKGROUND

History tells us that Aboriginal people occupied North America prior to its "discovery" by European settlers. It was during the four hundred year period between 1492 and the dominance of European settlement in North America in the 1800's that we Métis initially developed our cultures and Aboriginal relationship to the land.

Métis peoples are united by our relationship to the land and to each other. We are often raised to use the land as a resource for the necessities of life, not as a possession to be exploited. Communal use of the land, rather than individual ownership, was the norm.

Although the concept of individual ownership of land was alien, the fact of communal right to use of the land was literally inbred. Historically, Métis resistance to external restrictions on that use was immediate and often violent. The Métis of Sault Ste. Marie fought the Iroquois, the French, the English, Canadians, and the Americans to preserve their relationship to their communities. The Métis of Red River fought the Sioux, Earl of Selkirk, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Government of Canada to assert their birthright to their land. The freedom to live our lives in the land of our birth, with or without land title, was militantly defended by the Métis. Métis had a significant influence on the historic development of modern Canada. The fur trade was the backbone of the colonial economy and fur-trading companies depended on the cooperation of Métis for their success. Explorers were led by Métis who had become familiar with the territory over generations.

Métis occupied lands in Canada for generations before we were deprived of them by the legalistic techniques of a non-Aboriginal frontier society. There can be no question that Métis are indigenous to North America in a way no immigrant or ethnic group can claim. As natives of the land who have been deprived of our birthright, we Métis present our case for constitutional accommodation of Métis Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

To understand the unique features of the Métis struggle for accommodation of our rights, it must be understood how and why Métis have been excluded from that process. The interaction between colonial and Métis populations follows a three-hundred year old pattern which began in Acadia and continued to Sault Ste. Marie, Red River, Batoche, and is still unfolding in the Territories today. Legal and political techniques were imposed which deprived halfbreed communities of fundamental human rights.

In some cases, Métis were included on Indian band lists when treaties were signed. "Halfbreed title" was recognized in the *Manitoba Act, 1870*, the year Manitoba entered Confederation. In 1875, the "Halfbreed Adhesion" to Treaty #3 resulted in the establishment of Canada's only Métis reserve at Couchiching, near Rainy River in Northwestern Ontario. Some Western Canadian Métis were offered scrip for their Aboriginal title, which could be traded for plots of land or sold for cash. This brief period of accommodation of Métis claims was largely the result of the Riel defense of Métis lands in 1869-70, and ended with his execution in 1885.

## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MÉTIS AND THE INDIAN ACT?

After passage of the first consolidated *Indian Act* in 1876, the government recognized only those people of Indian descent who lived "the Indian mode of life." Only they would be eligible to live on a reserve, collect treaty annuities, and be recognized as "treaty Indians" for the purposes of exercising treaty food harvesting rights. The policy presumed that, without the opportunity to live together on reserves, Aboriginal peoples would lose their own cultures and be absorbed by the Christian farming culture of the settlers.

The *Indian Act* of 1876 began to drive a wedge between legally defined "Indians" and Métis. The *Act* excluded any Halfbreed in Manitoba who had participated in scrip distribution and all halfbreed heads of families and their descendants. In a report by Indian Affairs Superintendent Provencher in 1876, government policy toward Métis claims was concisely stated:

"If the new claims...were entertained, the result would be the springing up of a new class of inhabitants, placed between the whites and the Indians having, in a legal and a political point of view, special and separate

rights: or at least, this is the interpretation which will certainly be given to that measure: and this acceptance of their rights, far from being considered as a final decision, will only be a starting point for them to prefer claims as issue of the first white settlers of this country."

It did not occur to those officials that Métis might make our claims as descendants of Aboriginal peoples.

The *Indian Act* was never meant to determine who is an Indian for all purposes, only who is an Indian for the purposes of the *Indian Act*. Some people who are not Indians within the meaning of the *Indian Act* may be "Indians" within the meaning of Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and are most certainly Indians within the meaning of Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The *Indian Act* was intended as a statutory framework for the establishment and administration of Indian reserves and bands.

Over the years, the *Indian Act* has been amended many times and has resulted in many of the Indian people in Canada



being excluded from the definition of "Indian." Many of the Métis who were included in the Robinson Treaties in 1850 and the Halfbreed Adhesion to Treaty #3 in 1875, were later stripped of status under the *Indian Act*. Many of these

individuals either joined, or developed their own, off-reserve Aboriginal communities, distinct from both registered Indian bands and the settler societies.

## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MÉTIS AND BILL C-31?

The *Indian Act* was amended in 1985 (Bil C-31) to remove sexual discrimination by allowing some Indian women who had been enfranchised due to marriage to a non-Aboriginal or unregistered Indian to re-register under the *Indian Act*. When Bill C-31 was passed, some Métis received recognition by the federal government as status Indians, although in their hearts they continue to be Métis. Many still live in Métis communities and have no intention of leaving.

The bonds which hold Métis communities together are being tested by Bill C-31. Some members consider being Métis and being Indian as mutually exclusive. Others have regained their Indian status in order to access rights that had

been previously denied to them. Some who have regained their status feel rejected by their Métis brothers and yet may never be fully accepted by some Indian communities. This is only one situation which shows the need to constitutionally protect Aboriginal communities from the unilateral imposition of federal legislation. The constitutional validity of the policy used by the federal government to unilaterally limit its responsibility under Section 91(24) of the *British North America Act* (now called the *Constitution Act, 1867*) for "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians" only to registered Indians has not yet been tested in the Supreme Court of Canada.

## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MÉTIS RIGHTS AND THE CONSTITUTION?

The *Constitution Act, 1867* divided governing powers between only the federal and the provincial governments. The pre-existing Aboriginal governments were ignored. According to Section 91(24) of that *Act*, the federal Parliament has the exclusive jurisdiction to legislate for "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians". The *Constitution Act, 1867* does not, however, define the word "Indian."

Most Aboriginal organizations maintain that all Aboriginal peoples (Indian, Métis and Inuit) are "Indians" within the meaning of Section 91(24) whether or not they are registered status Indians under the *Indian Act*. The Supreme Court of Canada has said (Re: Eskimos, [1939] S.C.R. 104) that the word "Indians" in Section 91(24) includes Inuit, even though Inuit are not Indians within the meaning of the *Indian Act*. Many Métis feel that they should also be included in Section 91(24).

The combined effect of Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Indian Act* definition of Indian, excluded most Métis people from access to their Aboriginal and treaty

rights. The federal government insists that Métis are a provincial responsibility. Most provincial governments maintain they are a federal responsibility. The result is that Métis have no effective way to exercise their rights within the law as it is presently described.

When the *Constitution Act, 1982* became law, Section 35(1) stated that "the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed". Section 35(2) defines Aboriginal peoples as the "Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples" of Canada. That wording would indicate that the Métis peoples of Canada have achieved recognition as Aboriginal people and affirmation of their Aboriginal and treaty rights. Canadian governments, however, continue to apply *Indian Act* definitions in their programs and policies. Métis have every right to fear that we will be blocked from access to Aboriginal and Treaty rights under Section 35 in the same way that the *Indian Act* definition of "Indian" denied thousands of individuals their rights under Section 91(24).

## WHAT ARE MÉTIS ABORIGINAL RIGHTS?

Every Aboriginal person in Canada has Aboriginal rights whether or not they have signed a treaty. From a Métis perspective, our rights may be "Aboriginal rights", "treaty rights" and/or "Indian rights". Those Métis who were not involved in treaty have their original Aboriginal rights intact.

According to the Supreme Court of Canada, Aboriginal rights cannot be regulated unless such regulation is justified and absolutely necessary for an overriding, essential purpose such as conservation. Aboriginal peoples insist that the treaty process is the only means by which these rights can be modified.

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# WHAT ARE MÉTIS TREATY RIGHTS?

Descendants of Aboriginal persons who are covered by treaty are entitled to the rights which are established by those documents. These descendants also have Aboriginal rights which have not been specifically and intentionally surrendered in those Treaties. Any Aboriginal or Treaty rights which have not been extinguished or surrendered with consent as of April 17, 1982 are now protected by Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* and cannot be extinguished without Aboriginal consent.

The Supreme Court of Canada has said, in the Simon case, that "extinguishment cannot be lightly implied" and "given

the serious and far reaching consequences of finding that a Treaty right has been extinguished, it seems appropriate to demand strict proof of the fact of extinguishment in each case where the issue arises". There is no evidence, let alone "strict proof", that the treaty rights of Métis were extinguished simply because these individuals were not registered under the *Indian Act*. In a case currently at trial in Manitoba, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Native Council of Canada are asserting that, from the Métis perspective of the day, the *Manitoba Act* was actually a treaty with the Métis of Red River.

## MÉTIS ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AS "COMMUNITY RIGHTS"

If Canadian governments under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, apply the "shrinking definition" techniques of the *Indian Act* to Métis communities, it would make that section meaningless for those communities. Most landless Aboriginal communities are composed of Métis, status Indians and non-status Indians. Although these Métis have no reserves and no recognition under any law or government policy as Aboriginal communities, they have developed and maintained distinct and unique communities. These cultures, while differing from region to region, usually combine elements of modern entrepreneurship with a strong, traditional attachment to the land.

Aboriginal rights belong to the descendants of those who originally occupied and used the lands. Both Métis communities and registered Indian bands include descendants of those people. Even if courts insist that Aboriginal

communities must be primarily composed of descendants of the original users of the territory to claim their rights, most Métis communities would qualify.

No Aboriginal community remains static. Since the Supreme Court of Canada has declared that "Aboriginal rights must be interpreted flexibly to permit their evolution over time," a broader definition of "community" or "organized society" is necessary. A broader definition would ensure that Métis do not lose access to their rights simply because they no longer match outdated and unilaterally imposed government criteria. Métis want to negotiate terms of coexistence which will guarantee that a Métis community or a mixed Indian-Métis community that practises a custom or tradition for a long time, will have an Aboriginal right to continue to do so.

## ACCOMMODATION OF MÉTIS

All Aboriginal people in Canada lack appropriate recognition by non-Aboriginal Canadians. All of these peoples insist on recognition, accommodation and protection of their Aboriginal and treaty rights. The fact is, different mechanisms and processes are necessary to accommodate the differences among and between Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples.

The patriation of the Constitution established in 1982 that Métis are an Aboriginal people in Canadian law. Some Métis see the constitutional reform process as an opportunity to confirm a relationship with the Federal government under Section 91(24). Others see the process as a chance to define a new constitutional relationship for themselves in Canada. Both groups lack a formal relationship to non-Aboriginal governments based on Aboriginal right. Each requires a different solution or combination of solutions to meet their aspirations.

In law, Métis are an Aboriginal people and are entitled to

Métis-specific accommodation on an equitable basis with other Aboriginal peoples. We are particularly concerned with those persons of Aboriginal ancestry who identify themselves as Métis and who were:

**Denied recognition as Aboriginal people:** Until the passage of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, Métis people in Canada were denied recognition as Aboriginal people. The Métis constituency of the NCC, however, are still without access to the rights we struggled to entrench. We must have equal to these rights as do other Aboriginal peoples.

**Never included in treaty:** With the exception of the Halfbreed (Métis) Adhesion to Treaty #3, most Métis were excluded from treaty. This policy continues to expand the NCC constituency today. Current land claims policy in southern Canada insists that Métis be identified with an Indian group for purposes of comprehensive claims, reinforcing our concern for equity.



**Excluded from treaty as halfbreed:** After Riel's death thousands of Halfbreeds were excluded or expelled from treaty and struck from band lists. In the West, scrip was used to entice/force Métis and Halfbreeds to "voluntarily" withdraw from treaty. Given the unilateral and arbitrary nature of these actions, the Métis constituency of the NCC is determined to achieve constitutional protection from the whims of government policy.

**Refused scrip on residency basis:** The unilateral and arbitrary application of scrip policy left most Métis with their Aboriginal rights uncompensated. Many Métis were denied scrip simply because they lived on the wrong side of the Manitoba-Ontario border. Ontario officials promised (but did not deliver) scrip to Moose Factory Métis. This underlines the arbitrary nature of government policy and the necessity for constitutional protection.

**Descendants of those who refused scrip:** Virtually all of the Métis constituency of the NCC have suffered the deprivation of their Aboriginal birthright. The initiatives for constitutional protection and for access to mechanisms for the development of self-government are concerns that the NCC Métis constituency feel must be developed.

The mechanisms that are developed to accommodate Aboriginal peoples in the Constitution, must be flexible enough to apply to the broad range of Métis circumstances. This includes individuals and communities who are:

**Band related:** Includes Métis who were omitted or expelled from Treaty or bands because they were identified as Métis or halfbreeds. Some of these individuals will be able to register as Indians under Bill C-31, but the majority of their children will not. This group is least likely to reinstate as a means of accessing their Aboriginal rights.

**In distinct communities:** In some communities, Métis are a majority, while in others they are a minority. In these situations, there is often a distinct relationship to a specific land base, on the basis of use and occupancy.

**In Wilderness & Isolated Environments:** As with non-status Indians, Métis also live in isolated or wilderness environments and have an individual or family-based use and occupancy relationship to the land.

**Urban individuals:** Large numbers of Métis live in urban areas, often in a "community of interest" context.

## MIXED COMMUNITY

Many NCC constituents live in communities with a mixture of the categories outlined above. It is this type of community which will require the "ground-up" approach since only the community itself will know its specific mix and corresponding needs. This will include communities in which the mixture is:

**Indian/Métis (enfranchised):** This community features a majority of people who identify themselves as Indian, but would include an identifiable Métis population. This type of community is more common in Central and Eastern Canada, but can appear in other areas in which individuals did not register because of enfranchisement or "marrying-out". The further back the enfranchisement occurred on the family tree, the more likely the descendants are to identify as Métis.

**Métis/Indians (treaty/status):** In the central West and Northwest of the country, the situation is likely to be reversed. The majority of the community will identify as Métis with the remainder associating with Indian identity. This would be particularly obvious in a community where people were excluded or expelled from treaty because they were identified as halfbreed or Métis. Their relationship to the Indian community would still be strong because of family ties and new marriages.

**Métis and non-status Indians (inter-married):** There are many communities and many segments within larger communities which have close to a fifty-fifty mix of Métis and Indian individuals. In these communities, "dual Aboriginal identity" is a simple fact of life.

**Urban (community of interest):** It is only in recent years that the phenomenon of the urban Aboriginal person has been recognized as significant. Permanent populations of Indian and Métis peoples are common in every Canadian city. These populations are a demographic minority who are separated in many cases from their ancestral land base. These people have, however, established a "community of interest" in their urban environments and should be able to access their Aboriginal birthright. Since these persons are a significant element in the NCC constituency, such accommodation is a matter of priority.

Any person of Aboriginal descent who finds him or herself in one or more of the above categories has experienced some form of deprivation of right and/or benefit. They have become members of the affiliated provincial and territorial organizations of the NCC with the express purpose of eliminating the discrimination they have experienced, and of establishing equity between themselves and other Aboriginal peoples.

# CONCLUSION

Like our brothers and sisters in Indian and Inuit populations, we Métis have managed to survive every attempt at assimilation of our race and culture. We still face considerable challenges in terms of achieving recognition of our rightful place in the Canadian mosaic. Like our ancestors, however, we are determined, not only to survive but to

continue our contribution to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in Canada. We are prepared to negotiate mutually agreeable terms of co-existence so that Canada's future will include full recognition and accommodation of all of Canada's Métis peoples.

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**The purpose of these definitions is to provide assistance to the readers of these working papers. They are not intended to be legal definitions.**

**ABORIGINAL:** The first peoples of an area. Canadian Aboriginal people are defined in the Constitution of Canada as being Indian, Inuit and Metis.

**ABORIGINAL RIGHT:** The rights of the first peoples of an area to use, and occupy and govern land and its resources. It includes the right to hunt, fish, gather and to govern themselves. This right is from the Creator and is not granted by any government.

**ABORIGINAL TITLE:** The right of first peoples to own and care for their land. This right is from the Creator and is not granted by any government.

**ACCORD:** An agreement between governments or nations.

**ACT:** A law of a government.

**AMENDMENT:** A change.

**AMENDING FORMULA:** An agreed process for changing something.

**ABOLISH:** To put an end to something.

**AGENDA:** A list of the things to be talked about at a meeting.

**AUTONOMOUS:** To be self-governing.

**BAND:** A community of status Indians which is recognized under the *Indian Act*.

**BAND COUNCIL:** The government of an Indian band as recognized under the *Indian Act*.

**B.N.A. ACT:** The *British North America Act, 1867*. A law of the British Crown, passed in 1867, which made Canada a country.

**CONFEDERATION:** The joining of the British Colonies to form Canada.

**CONSTITUTION:** The rules used by a country or government to govern itself. It is usually in a written form. It sets out which levels of government have the rights to make laws on what subjects.

**CABINET:** A special group of members of a government who have been chosen by the government leader to manage the government.

**CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS:** The part of the *Constitution Act, 1982* which describes the rights of citizens.

**COVENANT:** An international law, a treaty among nations.

**DELEGATE:** To give power or responsibility to another.

**DEVOLVE:** To pass power or administrative authority from one level of government to another.

**ENTITLEMENT:** A right to benefits as spelled out in a law.

**ENTRENCH:** To put words in the constitution that can only be changed through special steps that are spelled out in the constitution.

**EXTINGUISHMENT:** When Aboriginal people give up all their original rights, titles and interests in a piece of land for other rights and benefits etc., as laid out in an agreement.

**FEDERATION:** When several provinces join together to form one government for some purposes, but they continue to be self-governing over their own affairs.

**FIDUCIARY:** The relationship which exists when one trusts in or relies on another.

**IMPLEMENT:** To carry out or put into place.

**INDIGENOUS:** Something or someone which lives or occurs naturally in a region, it was not moved there.

**INHERENT RIGHT:** A right which comes from the person who has it, or from the Creator, but which does not come from another person or government.

**JURISDICTION:** The power or right to make and enforce laws in a given territory.

**LEGISLATION:** The written laws of a country.

**MANDATE:** The responsibility or right which is given to someone to do something.

**MANDATORY:** Something which must be done.

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT:** A written agreement between two or more governments on a particular subject.

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT:** The government of a village, county, town, or city.

**ORIGINAL JURISDICTION:** The power given by the Creator to the Aboriginal People to rule on the land and to live according to their laws and customs.

**PATRIATION:** To bring the constitution of a country under that country's direct control.

**SOVEREIGN:** The greatest or highest power over a land or people.

**SOVEREIGNTY:** Power that flows from the Creator, a Constitution or a monarch.

**SELF-DETERMINATION:** The right of people to decide how they will be governed.

**SELF-GOVERNMENT:** Having the right to govern oneself.

**TREATY:** An agreement between two Sovereigns.

**TREATY RIGHTS:** The rights which flow out of a treaty.

**TRUST:** A trust relationship in law is when someone holds title to land or other property for the benefit of someone else.

## **The Constitutional Review Commission**

**The Constitutional Review Commission was established by the Native Council of Canada in June, 1991 as a non-political forum for independent advice and consideration. The Commission is comprised of Aboriginal members from all regions of Canada with a wide range of Aboriginal and constitutional expertise and experience.**

**For more information contact  
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