

ECONOMIC SECURITY OF WOMEN IN CANADA

**SUBMISSION TO THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

Submitted by:

Métis Women's Council on Economic Security

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As follow-up to the Council's presentation to the Committee on June 7th, the Council provides herein further information on the demographics of Métis people living in Alberta, Jordan's Principle, the *Daniels* decision, and Council itself.

Demographic Profile

The Métis are descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada and are a distinct nation. Métis people play an integral role in Alberta's history, society, and economy. Alberta has the largest population of Métis people, with 97,000, or 21% of all Métis in Canada, living in the province.¹ Alberta is the only province to have a recognized Métis land base protected by legislation. Approximately 5,000 people live on eight Métis settlements, which cover 1.25 million acres of land.² The Government of Alberta works closely with the Métis Settlements General Council, the political and administrative body that works for the collective interests of the settlements. However, the vast majority of Métis people in Alberta live off-settlement.

The results of the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey show that gaps between Métis men and women persist. Such gaps include the complex and sometimes profound differences in terms of employment and education experiences of Métis men and women. Like the other Aboriginal groups in Canada, Métis women are more likely than Métis men to have completed high school or to have postsecondary credentials, especially at the collegiate and university level.³ However, their employment and income prospects remain less advantageous than those of Métis men. Financial concerns are often a factor that limits one's ability to complete high school or pursue postsecondary studies. This was the case for both Métis men and women. Métis women, however, were much more likely (64% of leavers and 30% of completers) than Métis men (30% of leavers and 18% of completers) to mention personal or family responsibilities.⁴ Female leavers also cited their personal health as an obstacle much more often than any other group.⁵ Gender differences similar to all Canadians are also evident in employment income: a significant income gap exists between Métis men and women.⁶ Métis women are generally known to be more likely to work part-time and to have lower income levels than Métis men.⁷

Jordan's Principle

All Indigenous people, including Métis and Inuit women, have suffered as a result of colonization beliefs and practices in Canada. Colonialism and racism have led to injustices such as residential schools and The 60s Scoop, which continue to have a lasting impact through intergenerational trauma. Child welfare in particular is a priority for the Council. Reform of the child welfare system is crucial to improve the lives of Indigenous people in Canada.

In keeping with this, the Council fully supports and calls for implementation of Jordan's

¹ <http://indigenous.alberta.ca/Metis-in-Alberta.cfm>

² <http://indigenous.alberta.ca/Metis-Settlements.cfm>

³ Aboriginal People's Survey 2012

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

Principle, which is 'used to resolve jurisdictional disputes within, and between governments regarding payment for government services provided to First Nations children'.⁸ This means First Nations children should not be denied the services they need as a result of federal, provincial, or municipal government's arguing over which jurisdiction should pay.

In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the federal government to 'immediately stop applying a limited and discriminatory definition of Jordan's Principle, and to immediately take measures to implement the full meaning and scope of the principle.'⁹ The federal government has not yet done so; and on May 26, 2017 the Tribunal issued a third non-compliance order. .

As detailed in a recent provincial report, '*Even though only one in ten children in Alberta is of Aboriginal heritage, they make up 69% of those in the child welfare system. Métis children are about six times as likely to be in care compared to their non-Aboriginal peers, while First Nations children are over 30 times as likely*'.¹⁰ The health and well-being of Aboriginal children depends in part on the Federal Government's compliance with the Tribunal's ruling.

The Daniels Decision

On April 14, 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada released its decision in *Daniels v Canada, 2016*. Three declarations were sought in the Daniels case:

- That Métis and non-status Indians are "Indians" under s.91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*,
- That the Federal Crown owes a fiduciary duty to Métis and non-status Indians, and
- That Métis and non-status Indians have the right to be consulted and negotiated with.

The Supreme Court granted the first declaration but declined to grant the second and third ones. Council looks forward to learning the Government of Canada's response to the *Daniels*' ruling and how it will move forward in its relationship with Métis peoples.

Though the Court did not make the second and third declarations, it acknowledged past federal and provincial disputes over legislative authority concerning non-status Indians and the Métis resulted in a 'jurisdictional wasteland'.¹¹ As evidenced in the earlier case of Jordan's Principle, jurisdictional disputes can disproportionately disadvantage Indigenous populations.

Council is encouraged by the Government of Canada's adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and its reported commitment to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Council looks forward to seeing manifestation of these commitments in the near future.

About the Council

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603509/>

⁹ <https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle>

¹⁰ <http://www.ocya.alberta.ca/adult/news/special-report-voices-for-change/>

¹¹ <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/15858/index.do>

The Métis Women's Council on Economic Security was established by Ministerial Order in 2013 by the Government of Alberta. The Council provides the Government of Alberta with recommendations on policies, programs, and services to improve the lives of Indigenous women and communities in Alberta. Council members come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and a seat is designated for an Inuk woman to bring an Inuk perspective. The Council has provided two sets of recommendations to the Alberta government, and is currently working on its third report. The Council provides a unique viewpoint that benefits ministries and helps to improve socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous women and their families.