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"A Program of Pacification"?: Federal Funding and Indigenous Political Organizing in Canada, 1968-1971.

Abstract: *This article explores the founding and financing of national Indigenous organizations during the late 1960s and early 1970s Canadian political shifts towards the ideal of participatory democracy. It investigates the emergence of two separate organizations, the National Indian Brotherhood for "status Indians" (NIB) and the Native Council of Canada (NCC) for "non-status Indians" and Métis, following the collapse of the pan-Indigenous National Indian Council in 1968. It highlights the key role that funding played in the structuring of national-level Indigenous politics, but argues that accepting federal funding did not simply equate to government complicity. Instead, both the NIB and NCC successfully resisted and – in limited ways – shaped federal policies towards Indigenous peoples. The issue of federal funding forced open questions regarding Indigenous rights and self-determination, ideas which were conceptualized and employed in differing ways by the leaders of these organizations and federal officials. While marking a stark shift away from the earlier suppression of Indigenous political movements, federal funding was aimed as a tool to integrate different Indigenous groups as citizens into the Canadian settler-state. Nevertheless, federal funding served not only to limit, but also expand the practical possibilities of Indigenous organizing, with political leaders recasting government money as the right of Indigenous peoples and a tool for self-determination.*

Keywords: Indigenous peoples; political organizations; Indian status; First Nations; Métis; federal funding; state policy

The summer of 2021 marked a period of change and renewal in Indigenous politics in Canada, as national representative organizations selected new leadership. Both the

Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Métis National Council (MNC) elected their first ever female leaders, RoseAnne Archibald and Cassidy Caron, respectively. During her campaign, Archibald addressed criticisms of the AFN as "out of touch" with the grassroots.[1] Similarly, new chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) Elmer St. Pierre, elected in 2020, claimed he would put the "forgotten" organization back on track.[2] These comments reflect broader debates regarding Indigenous rights and self-determination, which emerged and escalated in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of the founding of national Indigenous organizations and their acceptance of federal funding.

By the early 1970s, Canada had entered into a "new phase" of democracy, in which citizens, consisting of varied interest groups, expected to be heard by the state and participate in decision-making.[3] This period also proved a critical juncture in shaping Indigenous politics, fuelled by the question of funding for national organizations. A study of this period reveals that the prospect of federal money sparked critical questions surrounding *self-determination, representation,* and *identity*, which Indigenous leaders, community members, and government officials alike discussed. Why were national Indigenous organizations established in this period and how did they become federally funded? How did the issue of finances shape the conceptualization of Indigenous rights? This article traces the founding of the National Indian Brotherhood in 1968 (NIB, today known as the Assembly of First Nations), as an organization for First Nations with status according to the Indian Act, and the Native Council of Canada in 1970 (NCC, today known as

[1] RoseAnne Archibald, "Vision, Values & Goals," http://roseannearchibald.ca/ (accessed: 12.08.2021).
[2] "CAP National Chief Vows to Put Forgotten Organization 'Back on Track,'" *APTN News*, last modified February 18, 2021, https://www.aptnnews.ca/nation-to-nation/cap-national-chief-vows-to-put-forgotten-organization-back-on-track/.
[3] Shirley Tillotson, *Give and Take: The Citizen-Taxpayer and the Rise of Canadian Democracy* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017), 276.

the Congress of Aboriginal People) for non-status First Nations and Métis. Both followed the breakdown of the National Indian Council (NIC, 1961-1968), an organization that aimed to represent all people with Indigenous ancestry. Examining the breakdown of the NIC and founding of the NIB and NCC reveals the significant role that money played in shaping Indigenous organizing and state-Indigenous relations. As the Canadian government shifted from restricting Indigenous political organizing to subsuming it through targeted federal funding programs during this period, Indigenous political leaders strategically navigated these changes in order to secure crucial services and programming, while lobbying for land and treaty rights. However, this strategy did not allow for broad-based Indigenous solidarity beyond status according to the Indian Act.

National organizations could be characterized as participating in what Dene political scientist Glen Coulthard terms the "politics of recognition," adapting "Indigenous assertions of nationhood with settler-state sovereignty" in creating relationships with the Canadian government.[4] Yet framing these organizations only in terms of settler-state co-optation serves to downplay the agency of national Indigenous political leaders.[5] Moreover, criticisms of federal funding risk overlooking the practical realities faced by Indigenous political organizers, and the important functions this money fulfilled within these communities.[6] By the late 1960s, provincial and national commissions had extensively

[4] Glenn Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 3.

[5] For instance, Siomonn Pulla's assertion that the "alliance" between Métis and Non-Status Indians was a direct result of the federal government's "core-funding" policy overlooks the shared elements of political struggle for non-status First Nations and Métis in the mid-twentieth century, see: Siomonn Pulla, "Regional Nationalism or National Mobilization? A Brief Social History of the Development of Métis Political Organization in Canada, 1815-2011," in Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law, and Politics, ed. Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl, and Ian Peach (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013), 414.

[6] As historian Sarah Nickel has demonstrated, the Union of British Columbia Chief's rejection of federal funding in 1975 meant cutting important programs relating to social assistance and cultural heritage. Local Indigenous women's groups opposed this move. Sarah Nickel, *Assembling Unity: Indigenous Politics, Gender, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019), 98–99.

documented the appalling living conditions faced by Indigenous people across Canada. Most notably, the federally commissioned Hawthorn Report showed status Indians earned roughly $300 per capita compared to a Canadian average of $1,400 per annum.[7] Non-status and Métis groups, largely lacking a land base, were in an even more precarious economic position.[8] In seeking to present a political voice, organizations like the NIB and NCC lobbied for crucial programs to address issues such as housing, health care, and educational provisions.

As this article will demonstrate, funding *both limited and expanded* the practical possibilities of political organizing on the level of the settler-colonial nation state. As such, this study illuminates the tensions inherent in Indigenous political engagement with settler-state systems, particularly at a point in time where Canadian public and government opinion was shifting towards the integration of the Indigenous populations through active citizen participation, in contrast with earlier coercively assimilationist policy.[9] Historian Karine Duhamel has asserted that federal funding "structured the way these organizations were able to address the government and legitimize their quest for justice." [10] This article builds on this argument, demonstrating further that financial questions not only structured

[7] Harry B. Hawthorn, *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: a Report on Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, 1967).
[8] This was outlined in the 1934 Ewing Commission report on Métis conditions in Alberta, see: Fred V. Martin, "Federal and Provincial Responsibility in the Metis Settlements of Alberta," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Government Responsibility*, ed. David Hawkes (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 258–63.
[9] Sally Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda, 1968-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 9-10.
[10] Karine Duhamel, *"'Rise up - Make Haste - Our People Need Us!': Pan-Indigenous Activism in Canada and the United States, 1950 to 1975"* (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2013), 141.

Indigenous organizing, but fostered changes in the ways that Indigenous rights and politics were discussed.[11]

Following decades of direct federal interference and suppression of Indigenous politics, the early 1970s approach of including Indigenous associations within funding programs for community development presented a significant shift in the government approach to Indigenous peoples.[12] Unsurprisingly, then, funding was contentious for both provincial and national organizations from the outset. In 1974, George Manuel, respected Secwépemc political leader and later key figure in the international Indigenous movement, accepted federal funding as President of the NIB, but questioned the future impacts it would have: "Will we achieve a substantial control of our destiny for future generations? Or will we allow the funding that has made possible some of the real growth of Indian organizations to become a program of pacification for the younger generations of leaders?"[13] In her memoir *Halfbreed*, community organizer and writer Maria Campbell described government funding as pacifying leadership: "Government … gave us money. Not very much, just enough to divide us again. The blanket that our leaders almost threw away suddenly started to feel warm again, and they wrapped it tightly around them."[14] In Campbell's view, federal funding quickly extinguished the promise of a burgeoning Indigenous movement.

As these quotes show, Indigenous community members and leaders were well aware of the potential for funding to function as a form of settler-state control. This article digs

[11] Shirley Tillotson has effectively demonstrated the significant social and cultural role that financial debates can play in her study of how taxation shaped the evolution of Canadian democracy, see: Tillotson, *Give and Take*, 10-11.
[12] Nickel, *Assembling Unity*, 71.
[13] George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (Don Mills: Collier-Macmillan 1974), 211.
[14] Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973), 156. Campbell is often described as Métis, but has stated she herself does not favor the term.

deeper into the debates surrounding Indigenous rights and self-determination sparked by the issue of funding specifically, and its role in the formation of today's long-standing national Indigenous organizations. In doing so, it draws on extensive archival research related to the NIC, NIB, and NCC.[15] Oral histories, contemporary interviews, and the writings of central figures involved are key in providing a perspective on the motivations and ideologies informing political organizing. As will be demonstrated here, funding was often conceptualized as the *right* of Indigenous communities by these political organizations. In this early period, bidding for and accepting funding could, in fact, amount to *a rejection of federal control*. While Indigenous national organizations today undergo a period of reflection and reinvention, examining the social and political impact of federal funding on their founding provides an illuminating look at the minefield of federal recognition.

The contours of twentieth-century Indigenous political organizing were shaped by state-imposed categorizations and definitions of who is "Indian."[16] Today, with the inclusion of Section 35 in the 1982 Constitution Act, Canada recognizes three distinct "aboriginal peoples" – "the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples."[17] This article focuses on two of those three categories, the "Indian" – both status and non-status – and the "Métis," due to the complex

[15] The archival collections consulted included the Fred Gladstone Fonds (FGF) and Métis Association of Alberta Fonds (MAAF) at the Glenbow Museum & Archives, Calgary, both consisting of the internal papers of these organizations, and federal documents and correspondence held at the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa. LAC collections included the Canadian Citizenship Branch (RG6-F-4), Department of Citizenship and Immigration (RG10 8480), the Indian Affairs Branch (RG10), Health Administration (RG29), and the Administrative Files of the Office of Native Claims (RG22).

[16] I use the term "Indian" in reference to legal or constitutional issues relating to "Indian status" or when quoting a historical source. Otherwise I use First Nations, Métis or Inuit, and as an umbrella term, Indigenous, though I acknowledge all terms have their limitations.

[17] Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 80, 116. Such constitutional distinctions do not reflect the real-world complex and often overlapping ways in which Indigenous individuals and communities identify themselves. For discussion of this and the use of taxonomy as a form of control, see the discussion between Christie Belcourt and Molly Swain, "Métis Identity 2: Collectivity, Provisionality, and Being Our Own Bosses," 10 November 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XjhgHdBbV4.

connections in political lobbying between these in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[18] While a full analysis of these categories and the varied ways in which they reflect both state impositions and collective self-identification is beyond the scope of this article, a brief exploration of their origins is necessary to foreground their significance in this period.

This categorization of Indigenous peoples is rooted in historical legislation, including the 1870 Manitoba Act and 1876 Indian Act. With the 1876 *Act to amend and consolidate the laws respecting Indians*, Parliament combined prior laws designed to undermine Indigenous self-government, and claimed the right to determine which First Nations were recognized as having "Indian status." The Indian Act is significant in that it maintains the historical and constitutional relationship of status First Nations with the Canadian federal government, but it simultaneously consolidated colonial policies, eradicating Indigenous forms of governance, creating band councils and reserves, and imposing regulations and bans on cultural practices.[19] Moreover, the Act created a system of status by which some First Nations were recognized and others were not, becoming by default "non-status Indians." In some cases, entire communities were – often arbitrarily – denied status, but individuals could also lose status over time through later amendments to the Act, becoming "enfranchised" either voluntarily or, for instance, on obtaining a university degree or joining the armed forces.[20] For women, marrying a non-status man – First Nations or not – resulted

[18] The Inuit Tapirisat (now the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) was also founded in 1971, but its activities were not as closely tied to the other political organizations rising out of the period. For an account of its founding by its first president, Tagak Curley, see: William Tagoona, "Inuit Tapirisat of Canada has important aims," *Inuktitut* 111 (2011), 63-7.
[19] J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 221; Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 10.
[20] Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 206-7.

in the loss of status.[21] In the federal view, these "non-status" peoples were the responsibility of provincial governments.

In the mid-twentieth century, Métis people were not categorized by the Canadian government as having "status" as Indigenous, despite their land rights having been historically recognized.[22] Notably, the Manitoba Act set aside 1.4 million acres of land for "half-breeds" at Red River in exchange for their share of "Indian Title" and established the system known as scrip, through which land grants were promised to individuals.[23] Nevertheless, the categories of "Indian" and "half-breed" were porous, with some families moving between inclusion in treaties and acceptance of scrip, until the Indian Act drew explicit legal distinctions between the two. This marked the beginning of a long process through which the Canadian government imposed increasingly rigid categories, which both reflected and worked to further consolidate conceptions of the Indigenous populations held by the Canadian public.[24]

This is not to say that these identifications are simply state impositions – indeed, as Métis scholar Chris Andersen points out, the term Métis reflects the "historical and contemporary political self-consciousness" of a distinct "people."[25] Moreover, the political organizations emerging in the early 1970s organized strategically around these categorizations to fulfil distinct needs resulting from the differing relationships to the Canadian government. Indeed, in the early 1970s, the non-status First Nations and Métis experience of being

[21] Joanne Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women's Activism," *Meridians* 7, no. 1 (2006): 127–61; Kathleen Jamieson, "Multiple Jeopardy: The Evolution of a Native Women's Movement," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice* 4, no. 2 (1979): 157–78.
[22] I use the term "people" here in line with Andersen's call for a focus on Métis *peoplehood* over discussions of admixture or even nationhood, see: Andersen, *Métis*, 5
[23] Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 159-60.
[24] Andersen, *Métis*, 43.
[25] Ibid., 30, 199.

denied land rights and services available to "status Indians" presented a basis for collaboration on political issues.[26] Indigenous political lobbying played a key role in shaping Section 35 of the Constitution Act, with the NCC fighting to ensure Métis inclusion alongside the "Indian" and "Inuit."[27] As this article will demonstrate, a decade earlier, the issue of finances fuelled the adoption of these categorizations by Indigenous political groups, both scuppering attempts at creating broad-based solidarity and bringing to the fore fundamental questions surrounding Indigenous rights and who they should be applied to.

The 1960s and early 1970s Indigenous organizations here considered were by no means the first attempts at national political organizing. Indigenous groups had established provincial organizations since the early 1900s, most often organized to represent either status or non-status groups, like the Métis Association of Alberta (founded in 1928) and the Indian Association of Alberta (founded in 1939).[28] By the early 1940s, however, varied figures like Squamish leader Andy Paull from British Columbia, John Tootoosis from the Poundmaker Reserve in Saskatchewan, and Malcolm Norris, a Métis leader from the Northwest Territories, sought to found organizations representing Indigenous peoples across provincial lines, some even aiming at national lobbying.[29] However, these efforts were hindered not only by a lack of resources, but by the federal government's aggressive policy of suppressing Indigenous political activism. From 1927 to 1951, amendments to the Indian Act limited the

[26] Tony Belcourt, "For the Record... On Métis Identity and Citizenship Within the Métis Nation," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 2, no. 2 (2013), 129.
[27] Ibid., 131-3.
[28] Laurie Meijer Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 9–10.
[29] Yale Belanger, *"Seeking a Seat at the Table: A Brief History of Indian Political Organizing in Canada, 1870-1951"* (PhD diss., Trent University, 2006), 351-2.

ability to hire lawyers, and intimidation and surveillance of organizers and their advisors was common.[30] Some – most notably Paull's North American Indian Brotherhood – persisted throughout the period, though its activities remained largely regional rather than national.[31]

The tide began to turn in the 1950s, both as a result of postwar shifts in the Canadian political landscape and the active lobbying of Indigenous leaders to revise the Indian Act and end these restrictions.[32] As part of the early 1960s move towards citizen participation, the government instead began to seek ways to integrate Indigenous peoples into the Canadian democratic system, for instance having provincial leaders meet regularly at consultations organized by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA).[33] In the same period, Indigenous individuals from different backgrounds came together to establish Indian-Métis Friendship Centres in cities including Winnipeg, Toronto, and Vancouver.[34] These varied meeting places provided critical ground for the re-emergence of discussions surrounding national representation for Indigenous people and led directly to the founding of the NIC in August 1961. At the founding meeting, Guy Williams (Haisla), president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia declared that "we cannot afford to have a split among ourselves: and we

[30] Belanger, Seeking a Seat at the Table, 227-8 and 270; Robin Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 79, 173; Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics*, 74; Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 59.
[31] Peter McFarlane, *From Brotherhood to Nationhood: George Manuel and the Making of the Modern Indian Movement* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993), 43.
[32] Belanger, Seeking a Seat at the Table, 360.
[33] Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy*, 8-9.
[34] McFarlane, *From Brotherhood to Nationhood*, 60; These centres were the result of collaboration between federal and provincial officials, community workers, and urban Indigenous activists and community members to provide services and support to urban-based Indigenous individuals, see: Will Langford, "Friendship Centres in Canada, 1959-1977," *American Indian Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2016): 4–5; Interview of Edward Lavallee by Murray Dobbin, November 1976, Saskatchewan Sound Archives, held: University of Regina Canadian Plains Research Centre, https://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/1334 (accessed: 20.05.2021).

cannot go without a National Organization any longer."[35] Williams' message resonated among attendees, who shared in the sentiment that divisions between provincial organizations, as well as between status and non-status peoples, were precluding effective lobbying in Ottawa for common concerns, including land rights, living conditions, and discrimination by mainstream society.

The most central early aim of the NIC was representation for *all*, with the constitution declaring membership was open to "any person who is an Indian, Metis, Eskimo or of aboriginal background…"[36] This was a key issue particularly for the organization's first president, William Wuttunee (1928-2015). In 1954 Wuttunee, Cree from the Red Pheasant reserve in Saskatchewan, became one of the first Indigenous lawyers in Western Canada, later working in Edmonton and Calgary. Despite becoming enfranchised on receiving his university degree, he remained involved in Indigenous political organizing, playing a role in the founding the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians in 1958. Wuttunee later became infamous for his support of the 1969 White Paper's attempt to abolish the Indian Act, describing integration as necessary for making Indigenous people "independent, contributing members of Canadian society."[37] As Wuttunee's early work with NIC demonstrates, he viewed Indigenous identity as an issue of heritage rather than of separate status. During the organization's third annual meeting he emphasized that the NIC should *not stress differences*, stating: "tribalism is out for us. Our concern is with people of Indian

[35] *Prairie Call* newsletter, 23 September 1961, File 1/24-2-22 pt. 1, RG10 8480, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).
[36] Constitution of the National Indian Council, undated, File 1/24-2-22 pt. 1, RG10, LAC. This document lists the NIC's co-chairman as A.H. Brass and William Wuttunee, meaning it is from either 1961 or 1962.
[37] "Integration doesn't have to mean forced integration, rather it can be a gradual process which will develop Indian men and women into independent, contributing members of Canadian society." See: William Wuttunee, *Ruffled Feathers: Indians in Canadian Society* (Calgary: Bell Books, 1971), 12.

descent."[38] Indeed, the NIC largely focused on promoting "Indian" arts and crafts, creating a Princess Canada pageant, hosting young adult meetings, and lobbying for fair representation during the 1967 Canadian Centennial. The organization only regularly took a stand on one controversial political issue during these early years – the inclusion of enfranchised individuals in the Indian Claims Commission bill, an act aiming to settle grievances arising from unfulfilled treaty agreements or other land claims. As NIC president, Wuttunee continued to back the Claims Commission bill as late as 1963, putting the organization at odds with provincial organizations which rejected the proposal as potentially further eroding reserve lands.[39]

Wuttunee's clashes with provincial organizations made fostering NIC membership and obtaining legitimacy difficult for the organization, which aimed for financial independence and initially rejected external funding from either the federal government or white support organizations.[40] Instead, the NIC fundraised predominantly through membership fees, set as twenty-five dollars for organizations and five dollars for individuals in 1962.[41] Some provincial organizations, including the Indian Association of Alberta, explicitly refused membership due to these fees and diverging political aims.[42] A member of the NIC later recalled that most members joined on an individual basis, specifically invited by

[38] Emphasis added. Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference of the National Indian Council of Canada, 14-16 August 1963, File 1/24-2-22 pt 1, RG10 8480, LAC;
[39] The Claims Commission bill was not passed in the form planned in the 1960s, but 1973's "Statement on Claims of Indian and Inuit People: A Federal Native Claims Policy" served the same purpose, see: Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 5; McFarlane, *From Brotherhood to Nationhood*, 86.
[40] William Wuttunee, Registration Form: All Indian Conference, undated, and Marion Meadmore & William Wuttunee, All Indian Conference, undated agenda, File 1/24-2-22 pt. 1, RG10 8480, LAC.
[41] National Indian Council of Canada, 1963, File 1/24-2-22 pt. 1, RG10 8480, LAC.
[42] Ibid; Meijer Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta*, 165.

leadership.[43] As a result, the NIC's most active members were urban-based professionals who could afford fee payments.

Refusing non-Indigenous financial support was untenable in the long term. From 1964 onwards, the NIC applied for and received small grants from varying departments, most notably the Canadian Centennial Commission. The Commission's grant was intended for the NIC to aid in planning the Indian Pavilion at the 1967 Montreal World Expo.[44] However, the NIC instead spent the initial $9,000 on expanding its operations, setting up headquarters in Toronto and hiring an Executive Director. This coincided with a 1964 media scandal, during which Kanien'kehá:ka model and activist Kahn-Tineta Horn publicly criticized the NIC's leadership, and was dismissed as the organization's "Princess Canada."[45] A brief federal investigation into the council's finances followed, resulting in all further funding being pulled.[46]

Though these issues were smoothed over with the Centennial Commission, the scandal brought to light both the organization's inability to secure a financial base or to respond to policy issues which concerned First Nations reserves. Behind-the-scenes, the NIC also struggled to effectively represent the needs of its Métis members. The organization's December 1965 news bulletin admitted that the NIC had largely overlooked the needs of the Métis: "… there is a large segment of our society known as the half breed [sic] or the

[43] Lavallee interview.
[44] History of the National Indian Council and Address by Wilfred Pelletier for the Annual Conference of the National Indian Council of Canada, June 1964, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[45] Duhamel, "Rise up - Make Haste," 123; The 4th Annual NIC Conference, Jean Lagassé, August 1964, File 1/24-2-22 pt. 1, RG10 8480, LAC.
[46] Memorandum to Indian Affairs Branch by W.J. Brennan, 11 December 1964, File 1/24-2-22 pt. 2, RG10 8480, LAC. NIC executive committee member Edward Lavallee later described financial discrepancies as minor and caused by the NIC leadership's inexperience in handling large budgets, see: Lavallee interview.

Métis which have been completely ignored... The NIC, which welcomes these people into its membership, should put greater effort on their behalf."[47]

The brief history of the NIC's attempt at building unity between all people of "Indian descent" was fraught with both financial instability and an inability to gain legitimacy, struggling to establish contact with diverse Indigenous communities across Canada. Just seven years after its founding, the NIC announced it would split into two groups, one representing "status Indians" and the other non-status and Métis. Historian Sarah Nickel has questioned how well unity works as a "political concept and practice" for the organization of marginalized groups.[48] In the NIC's case, unity was a problematic concept, based on minimizing cultural, social, and political plurality amongst Indigenous communities in order to represent *all* people of "Indian descent." Without clear and widespread support from grassroots communities, provincial organizations, or the federal government, the NIC lacked political clout.

The NIC's final demise was sparked by the wishes of provincial and territorial organizations to make a stronger political impact in dealing with the federal government. Such discussion arose particularly during late 1960s meetings of the National Indian Advisory Board, a consultative body organized by the DIA.[49] In the view of leaders of Prairie Province status organizations, the NIC hindered the establishment of a more effective national lobby. To this end, the Union of Ontario Indians called upon the NIC to host a meeting with the heads of as many provincial Indigenous organizations as possible. The

[47] News Bulletin, National Indian Council, December 1965, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[48] Nickel's study of the UBCIC challenges the idea that political unity is inevitably elite and male-dominated, bringing out the power and impact of multiple interest groups at work within the movement. Nickel, *Assembling Unity*, 6–7.
[49] McFarlane, *From Brotherhood to Nationhood*, 86.

meeting was held at the Toronto Indian Centre in early February 1968 and included ten NIC delegates, and twenty-four representatives of provincial and territorial organizations, as well as associations like the Canadian Indian Youth Council.[50]

Three main concerns were aired by non-NIC delegates: 1) that the government's paternalistic attitude should change and grassroots communities have proper representation at the policy-making level; 2) that a national organization was needed as provincial organizations did not represent everyone; and 3) the Métis had been forgotten within the NIC. Provincial leaders moreover viewed the NIC's structure as largely ineffective, as it consisted mostly of individual members and had little connection to the already well-established provincial and territorial organizations. Instead, they suggested that a national organization should co-ordinate those provincial bodies.[51] Throughout the meeting, it became clear that provincial organizations representing status Indians, led by Walter Dieter of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI), not only favored this model, but saw the NIC's attempt to represent all Indigenous people regardless of status under the Indian Act as a failure. Dieter later described this as a "real emotional meeting," where the majority supported splitting into two organizations – one for status Indians and another for non-status and Métis.[52]

It was resolved that the two new organizations be established "to assist each other but not answer to each other." The split was intended to allow for greater focus on the specific

[50] Ken Goodwill to Lagassé, 9 February 1968, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC. The NIC's split was briefly recounted by McFarlane, but this includes errors regarding the timing of the meeting and the number of people in attendance, see: McFarlane, *Brotherhood to Nationhood*, 98.
[51] Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of Provincial Native Organizations and Executive of the National Indian Council, 3-4 February 1968, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[52] Interview of Walter Dieter by Murray Dobbin, November 1977, Saskatchewan Sound Archives, held: University of Regina Archives, https://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/1317 (accessed: 20.05.2021).

concerns of each group, while maintaining collaboration on common issues. A motion was later made by Eugene Steinhauer of the Indian Association of Alberta to have the two new organizations meet to coordinate their activities and provide a "unified voice" on Indigenous issues, working together to lobby for change in Ottawa. Finally, a press release was prepared stating that in making two organizations, the "registered" and "non-registered" groups had "formed a bond of brotherhood," and were united to end government paternalism and "ready to vie with Indian Affairs in the making of meaningful policies for Indians across the nation."[53] Delegates at this 1968 meeting appeared, then, to argue that splitting into two groups would, in fact, *advance unity* and secure better representation for all. As the rest of this article will demonstrate, as different government agencies began to offer funding to Indigenous groups as part of the early 1970s push for "participatory democracy," led by the new Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the ideal of unity was no longer sustained. Instead, funding led to discussions surrounding Indigenous rights being consistently structured around the issue of status.

While status delegates publicly emphasized the differing needs of "registered Indians," behind-the-scenes, money played a decisive role.[54] Dieter later even described funding as the main motivation: "It was only government funds. The regulations was [sic] different for Indians than it was for the Metis." Indian Affairs officials did not officially make any promises regarding funding, "but they sure used that as a wedge." Dieter also recalled meeting with Stan Daniels, a founder of the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA), and openly

[53] The term "brotherhood" reflects the fact that provincial delegates were predominantly male. Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of Provincial Native Organizations and Executive of the National Indian Council, 3-4 February 1968, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[54] Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of Provincial Native Organizations and Executive of the National Indian Council, 3-4 February 1968, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.

discussing these issues before the 1968 NIC meeting: "I said the government made it plain that they weren't going to give us money as long as we were with the Métis…"[55] In his interactions with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND), Dieter had gained a clear sense that collaboration with non-status and Métis groups was a sticking point in granting further funding to a national status organization. Formal separation from non-status and Métis groups was, in his view, a practical necessity.

Indian Affairs officials responded well to the split. Ken Goodwill (Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation), NIC executive member and Indian Affairs employee, reported on the meeting to Department of Citizenship head Jean Lagassé and noted that the status Indian group had "broad-based support" and asked if support could be granted now the organization was "exclusively a registered Indians' organization."[56] Evidently, though the NIC had gained limited funding from other departments, Indian Affairs refused to fund the organizations due to its open membership policy. For Indian Affairs, providing funding or operational support to non-status or Métis groups carried the potential implication of acknowledging responsibility towards them alongside status Indians. At a time when federal Indian policy was geared towards integration, presenting any further recognition to non-status groups was viewed as risking tacit constitutional responsibility.

On the second day of the NIC's 1968 meeting, the "registered" and "unregistered" groups split up to plan the founding of new organizations. Leaders of the status group had a clear

[55] Dieter interview.

[56] Ken Goodwill to Jean Lagassé, Memorandum on meeting of representatives of provincial native organizations and Executive Committee of the National Indian Council, 9 February 1968, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC; As Tennant notes, the DSS's later 1971 core funding policy established the rule of only funding one status and one non-status organization per province, see: Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 168.

plan from the outset. By the late 1960s, local Indigenous associations, like Friendship Centres, had begun to receive small grants from various federal departments, providing regional leaders experience in writing funding proposals.[57] Through this process, provincial leaders like Dieter established relations with federal officials and agencies, including the DIA. The status delegates, many of whom had met at National Indian Advisory Board consultations, came to the 1968 meeting with established plans: they would create a new provisional board consisting of the eight provincial organizations present and help to consolidate a provincial organization for status Indians in British Columbia.[58] The delegates believed this was enacting the wishes of provincial communities. The previous year, in collaboration with the NIC, the FSI canvassed its membership to gauge support for a new status-only organization. Out of nearly 100 responses, only one objected.[59] Despite the small sample size, provincial leaders took this as a sign that their communities were in favor of founding a separate national organization for status Indians.

At this meeting, Dieter was elected the leader of the new status organization, and he committed to building a financial base for developing the NIB.[60] Dieter (1916-1988), from the Peepeekisis reserve in southeastern Saskatchewan, had worked off reserve for most of his adult life, and was inspired to get involved in community organization by radio news programmes about decolonization efforts overseas.[61] Under his leadership the FSI secured

[57] Cyrus Standing, interview with author, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, 3 November 2018.
[58] Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of Provincial Native Organizations and Executive of the National Indian Council, 3-4 February 1968, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[59] Brian Marshall to R. Paul Lumsden, Memorandum on Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 4 August 1967, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[60] McFarlane claims Dieter even remortgaged his home to generate funds, but neither the 1970s interview of Dieter nor the archival collections I researched corroborate this. McFarlane, *From Brotherhood to Nationhood*, 99.
[61] Interview of Delia Opekokew by Allison Kirk-Montgomery, 14 November 2012, Law Society of Upper Canada, Diversifying the Bar: Lawyers Make History Project, https://archive.org/details/interview-with-delia-opekokew (accessed: 6.4.2023).

grants from various government departments including the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in the mid-1960s. He also maintained a close relationship with Ernest R. McEwen of the white-led Indian-Eskimo Association, who had been a supervisor at the residential school Dieter attended.[62] According to Dieter, McEwen "worked harder… than anybody did" on getting the NIB up and running. Another critical juncture, as Dieter recalled it, was receiving an undisclosed sum from a Calgary-based private organization called the Harvey Foundation.[63] Dieter had no qualms about accepting such help and no evident doubts about his own ability to resist buckling to pressure from external funders, and in the late 1960s travelled extensively across Western Canada to advise other First Nations communities on how to establish organizations and apply for funds.[64] In this respect, Dieter's view differed from the NIC's initial view of external funding as a threat. This demonstrates how financial issues were conceptualized in diverging ways by Indigenous leaders – for Dieter federal funding and self-determination were not mutually exclusive.

The Trudeau administration instigated immediate changes which increased opportunities for building new relationships, ousting old guard staff and instating a new Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chrétien.[65] Indeed, the NIB's separation from non-status and Métis groups appeared immediately financially advantageous, with provincial affiliates also receiving federal funds directly. Within their internal correspondence, Indian Affairs officials referred

[62] Dieter interview; Opekokew interview; Provincial organizations in general secured funds from a variety of government departments including the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, Department of National Health and Welfare, and the Secretary of State, before funding was finally coordinated under the Interdepartmental Committee on Indian Affairs from 1970 onwards, see: Meijer Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta*, 164.
[63] There may not have been an officially registered foundation by that name. Dieter described this agreement as "kind of confidential" and the benefactor as an oil millionaire he had some personal connections with, see: Dieter interview.
[64] Opekokew interview.
[65] Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy*, 59.

openly to “legal limitations which confine us to supporting people of Indian status” and recognition of the NIB as “representative of the majority of Indian people in Canada.”[66] There was a clear willingness within the Indian Affairs Branch to recognize an organization limited to only status Indians, in order to have a single representative body to consult. Officials also recognized that funding was required for such an organization to survive, or as Deputy Minister J.A. McDonald put it, “if the Department has responsibility to consult with Indians, it has an equal responsibility to provide the practical means for doing so. Supporting the formation of a national Indian organization with Departmental funds would achieve both these objectives.”[67] Within a matter of months, the NIB had signed agreements with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) to finance its operations.[68] By May 1969, this was set as per capita grants of twenty-five cents per registered Indian for 1968/69, increasing to fifty cents for the fiscal years 1969/70 , 1970/71 and 1971/72, after which a review of activities would be undertaken. In addition, grants for the preliminary organizational work and founding convention of the Brotherhood had been made at a value of $35,000.[69]

While the government agreed to finance the NIB, Indian Affairs was not transparent with Indigenous leaders about policy plans. Despite hosting eighteen hearings on the Indian Act with Indigenous groups, DIAND had simultaneously quietly prepared their Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, known popularly as the White Paper. The explicit

[66] Report by J.W. Churchman, 12 September 1969 and Letter from W.A. Gryba to L.E. Couillard Deputy Minister of Manpower and Immigration, 21 October 1969, File Number 1/24-2-38, RG10, LAC.
[67] J.A. MacDonald, Memorandum to Minister, 5 November 1968, File 1/24-2-38, RG10, LAC.
[68] Following a restructure, Indian Affairs moved from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration’s portfolio to become the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy*, 20.
[69] Letter from Deputy Minister J.A. McDonald to DIAND Minister, 22 May 1969, File 1/24-2-38, RG10, LAC.

aim of the White Paper was to eradicate the Indian Act and end Indian status. [70] Why did DIAND agree to fund a national status Indian organization while simultaneously planning to remove the Indian Act altogether? DIAND correspondence on the formation of the NIB reveals that funding the national organization was contested. L.L. Brown, Chief of Federal-Provincial Relations, strongly advised DIAND not to allow the NIB too much power and to only fund the organization if their long-term goals aligned with the aim of ending federal responsibility.[71] Others saw the NIB as potentially convenient to Indian Affairs. Chief of the Indian-Eskimo Bureau E.E. Boyd pushed for granting funding immediately, but in the form of a service contract, offering the NIB $5,000 in exchange for assessing "the effectiveness of all Indian associations who act on behalf of Indian people."[72] Funding the NIB and the White Paper, then, went hand-in-hand – financial support aimed to secure NIB cooperation and help officials gain information on provincial bodies, aiding in planning the final eradication of the Indian Act. While the Canadian government's approach to Indigenous politics had drastically shifted in twenty years from aggressive suppression to actively supporting organizations, this new funding policy nevertheless sought to advanced the settler-colonial control of the Indigenous population through total integration into the Canadian state.

Before the White Paper announcement, Dieter strategically played up to DIAND's hopes. In his initial funding proposal, Dieter presented the NIB as forum for communities to air their grievances with the Government, building trust and repairing relations. Early federal funding would allow the organization to work towards eventual financial independence.

[70] For a detailed account of the planning and announcement of the White Paper, see: Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy*, 61.
[71] Letter from L.L. Brown to Director of Indian Affairs, 19 September 1968, File 1/24-2-38, RG10, LAC.
[72] Letter from E.E. Boyd to Director of Community Affairs & Social Affairs, 25 April 1969, File 1/24-2-38, RG10, LAC.

Only by having a secure existence independent of DIAND would communities trust a national representative body and so, Dieter argued, per capita funding was critical to allow leadership power over decision-making and planning the organization's future. Listing ten provincial and regional associations already involved with the NIB, Dieter claimed communities across Canada agreed that the national organization could "help to overcome many of the difficulties of the Indian people and government." Funding, Dieter argued, should be considered the *right* of Indian peoples in Canada, considering the mass of lands taken and harm caused by the federal government.[73] Framing federal funding in these terms, Dieter shifted focus away from the ability of Indigenous leaders to maintain independence and instead placed onus on the federal government to provide what was fair.[74]

From the June 1969 release of the White Paper onwards, however, early NIB leaders resisted co-optation. The contents of the ten page paper included a vision for the role of provincial and national associations, like the NIB – to participate in the implementation of the White Paper policy and represent the interests of band councils at consultation meetings on land transference.[75] A notice labelled "SECRET" circulated to DIAND officials and heads of other departments on the same day, emphasized that "Indian associations will be asked to define and develop the role they will play and the financial resources they will require."[76] The role of the NIB and provincial organizations were clearly laid out, they would continue as "permanent" liaisons between provinces and former status Indian communities.

[73] Walter Dieter, Proposal: Canadian Indian Brotherhood, 30 August 1968, File 1/24-2-38, RG10, LAC.
[74] The idea of funding as something owed to Indigenous communities was also common among provincial organizations, see Nickel on UBCIC conceptions of funding: Nickel, *Assembling Unity*, 77.
[75] Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy*, 168.
[76] Preliminary Outline of the Implementation Process and Organization, sent to H.A. Procter by David A. Munro, 25 June 1969, Volume 2953, File 851-3-13, RG29, LAC.

According to the document, Chrétien would meet with the presidents of Indian organizations about a week after the policy announcement to discuss their role. In actual fact, provincial leaders and the NIB were so appalled, they held an immediate emergency meeting. The promising relations developed with DIAND officials over the course of the NIB's first few months were suddenly reversed. At the NIB's next full convention a few weeks later, DIAND officials were shut out of meetings and even asked to check out and move to a different hotel.[77]

Nevertheless, NIB leaders continued to work with federal officials in addressing timely practical matters, whilst consistently making clear that they rejected the White Paper. For instance, in February 1970 NIB delegates met with National Health and Welfare staff to discuss a program of Indian Health Liaison Officers, aimed at ensuring the proper delivery of health services to reserve-based and treaty Indians. Before making any agreements on funding for this program, Dieter announced that their views had not changed on the new federal Indian Policy, which was "ridiculous in many ways." [78] The chance of securing funds for important programs to improve living conditions for Indigenous communities across Canada kept the NIB leadership negotiating and collaborating with government departments throughout the White Paper crisis.[79]

[77] Report by W.A. Gryba, 22 July 1969, File 1/24-2-38, RG10, LAC.
[78] Summary Notes on the Second Meeting of the National Indian Health Committee Joint Session with Representatives of National Health and Welfare, 23-24 February 1970, Volume 2953, File 851-3-13, RG29, LAC.
[79] Leaders of provincial organizations similarly refused to discuss the White Paper, but maintained working relationships on other important issues, e.g. the Indian Association of Alberta Board and Executive visited Ottawa to discuss a proposal for an Indian Education Centre in the midst of the White Paper crisis, see: Speech of Harold Cardinal, Alberta All Chiefs Conference, 2-4 April 1970, Box 4, File 56, Fred Gladstone Fonds (FGF), Glenbow Archives (GA).

Following months of protest, in June 1970 the NIB presented Trudeau and Chrétien with the Indian Association of Alberta's rebuttal, *Citizens Plus*.[80] At this meeting, Trudeau expressed his belief that the main aims of the White Paper were sound, but announced the government's intention to take a step back and not implement it immediately.[81] In letting the White Paper go, the Trudeau government opened the door to sustained negotiations on Indian policy with the NIB leadership, agreeing on future Joint NIB-Cabinet meetings. The NIB, alongside provincial status organizations, succeeded in having the White Paper revoked, gaining legitimacy for the organization amongst grassroots communities. Crucially, the NIB succeeded in *maintaining* working relations with different government departments *and* even increasing federal funding during this process.[82]

Funding did not, however, amount to financial security. After being elected president of the NIB in 1970, George Manuel (Secwépemc, 1921-1989) soon discovered the organization was $38,000 in debt and on moving to Ottawa, initially "slept on the floor in a broken down apartment."[83] In addition to a portion of federal funding being channelled directly to provincial organizations, significant amounts of funds for status groups went to the National Committee on Indian Rights and Treaties (NCIRT), an ad hoc committee of the NIB established in liaison with DIAND in 1969 to conduct broad-based research on the rights and treaties of status Indians across Canada. In fact, the government granted the NCIRT *more*

[80] This is popularly known as the Red Paper, see: Indian Chiefs of Alberta, "The Red Paper: Citizens Plus," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 1, no. 2 (originally 1970, 2011): 188–281.
[81] Verbatim Report of a Meeting Between the Prime Minister of Canada and Several of his Ministers and Representatives of the Alberta Indian Association and Members of the National Indian Brotherhood, 4 June 1970, File B1070/A3, RG22, LAC.
[82] While historiography has characterized the White Paper as the predominant catalyst of the modern Indigenous rights movement in Canada, Nickel convincingly argues that it was one factor amongst many, see: Sarah Nickel, "Reconsidering 1969: The White Paper and the Making of the Modern Indigenous Rights Movement," *The Canadian Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (2019): 227.
[83] Indian Association of Alberta and National Indian Brotherhood Meeting, 11-12 March 1971, Calgary, Box 5, File 77, FGF, GA.

funding than the NIB itself, and this money could not be used for establishing the permanent activities of the national organization.[84]

The situation improved in the summer of 1971, with the Department of the Secretary of State (DSS) deciding to provide core and communications funding for ethnic minorities, including Indigenous organizations, as part of a push towards "participatory democracy."[85] Interestingly, while strict adherence to representing only status Indians was critical to forming the NIB and arguing for receiving federal funding, behind-the-scenes leaders paid less attention to such issues. Notably, Verna Kirkness, non-status from Fisher River reserve in Manitoba, played a key role in the NIB throughout the early 1970s, first in developing the 1972 policy paper *Indian Control of Indian Education* and later as education director for the organization. Kirkness describes her experience working at the NIB under Manuel as a positive one, though staff were underpaid: "Probably any one of us could have commanded more pay in any other job. The people in the NIB were dedicated to the cause and we all worked very hard."[86] Significantly, her role within the NIB did not directly involve dealing with issues related to status and being non-status does not appear to have had any impact on her position within the organization.

As evident in discussions surrounding the NIC's split in 1968, the issue of federal funding appeared to enforce rigid divides between status and non-status First Nations and Métis communities, forcing open discussions related to Indigenous politics, identity and rights. Yet

[84] In the fiscal year of 1970-1 alone, the NCIRT received $550,000. It is likely funding was granted in the hope that research into rights and treaties would aid in eventually distinguishing the Indian Act. McFarlane, *From Brotherhood to Nationhood*, 106–6, 124.
[85] Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 168. A common view is that this funding was an attempt of the federal government to buy good will with Indigenous communities following the White Paper, Tony Belcourt, telephone interview with author, 24 September 2018.
[86] Verna Kirkness, *Creating Space: My Life and Work in Indigenous Education* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 78-9.

Kirkness's experience demonstrates that the seemingly simplistic divisions between status and non-status were not clear-cut in practice. The White Paper controversy, revolving specifically around the Indian Act, provided further legitimacy to the already burgeoning organization of the NIB as a status organization. This legitimacy came both from provincial communities that largely supported the NIB's pushback against the White Paper, and from varying government offices, which continued to develop a model for funding the NIB as a consultative body throughout the White Paper crisis. Funding was thus an integral and essential part of the founding and consolidation of the NIB, but it also caused tensions and frustration from the very beginning, and masked deeper complexities around identity which remained unresolved by public attempts to distance the NIB from non-status and Métis groups. The issue of government funding had become uneasily entwined with the NIB's vision of "status Indian" rights and the organization's plans for developing further self-determination.

While securing sufficient funding was a primary goal of the NIB, for non-status and Métis groups gaining any financial base at all initially appeared an insurmountable challenge. Following the 1968 NIC split, the "Non-Registered Indians" formed the Canadian Métis Society led by two executive NIC members. Reverend Adam Cuthand, president of the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), was selected to serve as Chairman and Marion Meadmore, an active community organizer and liaison worker for Winnipeg's Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, as Secretary of an interim committee. The society planned to meet

at the first annual MMF conference in April of that year.[87] However, while the NIB secured federal funds to support its founding meetings from early on, Cuthand and Meadmore's organization was denied equivalent support. Within a matter of months, the fledgling organization dwindled out due to a lack of resources.[88]

Stan Daniels (1924-1983), MAA President, was present at the 1968 NIC meeting and though not evidently involved in the short-lived Canadian Métis Society, he maintained an interest in national-level lobbying. As a leader, Daniels was closely connected with his family and the surrounding community in Alberta, serving three terms as MAA president.[89] In 1970, when the newly-elected MAA Vice-President Anthony (Tony) Belcourt pushed for organizing a meeting between leaders of established provincial bodies for non-status and Métis, Daniels agreed. Belcourt (b. 1943) was in his early twenties and became a key figure in the movement for non-status and Métis rights. Born and raised in Lac St. Anne, he had recently returned to Alberta and become involved in political organizing after having worked with a collective of Indigenous artists and craftspeople. Belcourt was motivated to seek national representation, believing it was the only effective way to address the key issue of land rights.[90] A meeting was held in Victoria in the following November, coinciding with the first annual meeting of the BC Association of Non-Status Indians.[91] In addition to Daniels and Belcourt, BC's representatives H.A. Smitheram and Harry Lavallee, Jim Sinclair and Howard

[87] Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of Provincial Native Organizations and Executive of the National Indian Council, 3-4 February 1968, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[88] Memo by E.R. McEwen, Special Program Advisor, 25 November 1970, Box 92, File CB 9-390-10, RG6-F-4, LAC; The Canadian Métis Society participated in a meeting of the Indian-Eskimo Association and the NIB in 1968, as mentioned by Joanne Sangster, "Confronting Our Colonial Past: Reassessing Political Alliances over Canada's Twentieth Century," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 21, no. 1 (2017), 23.
[89] Maria Campbell described Daniels as having motivated others to get involved in aiding the community, but having later become jaded by federal funding and "the system." See: Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 144-5.
[90] Belcourt interview.
[91] Belcourt, "For the Record," 129.

Adams of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, and Angus Spence of the Manitoba Métis Federation. A sense of urgency in organizing nationally accompanied the meeting. While Indian Affairs had refused to fund the Canadian Métis Society, delegates at this meeting had heard from a representative of the DSS that "funds for development were available but they would like to have a national body to deal with for the accounting of funds." Sinclair, however, expressed concern that those present could not establish a national organization without grassroots support, "just because the Federal government wanted it."[92] Delegates emphasized that any national organization must be democratic, and created in consultation with those it sought to represent.

Following this discussion, Belcourt suggested forming a provisional body to explore possibilities and plan the set up of a national organization, allowing time for consultation with their respective communities. Belcourt was unanimously selected as its co-ordinator.[93] The push to found a national organization at this specific point in time came from the promise of funds from DSS, but coincided with the delegates' recognition that Métis and non-status people needed national representation. Those present set out to undertake the delicate balance of working with the federal government while also remaining responsive to the needs and wishes of the communities provincial organizations represented. The promise of federal funding prompted careful considerations of authentic representation for their constituents, which led over the coming months to the founding of the Native Council of Canada.

[92] Meeting of Provincial Presidents and Representatives – Metis and Non Status Indians, Victoria B.C., 7 November 1970, M4755, Box 71, File 851, Métis Association of Alberta Fonds (MAAF), GA.
[93] Ibid.

From the outset, discussions surrounding the founding of the NCC assessed the risks of accepting funding. Delegates were steadfast in their resolution that a new national organization needed to represent *the people* and not the interests of the federal government, regardless of the source of funding. Rather than a pay out, early delegates of the NCC – like those of the NIB – conceptualized government money as a *right* of Native individuals and communities. Jim Sinclair, NCC Vice-President and President of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, attended a Poor People's Conference in February 1971 to participate in a discussion about "Métis Issues." As a result of the discussion, a resolution was drawn up outlining this view in terms of welfare payments: "Because of the rejection of the Native People by the Canadian Government which has put us into the lowest socio-economic level in Canada, we feel that social assistance is a necessity and a right."[94]

This reasoning was apparent in the NCC's early grant proposals to different government departments. Ernest McEwen, now working as a Special Program Advisor for the Citizenship Department, assisted Belcourt in seeking funds for the NCC in 1970. Writing to the State Department, McEwen highlighted that while non-status and Métis groups were often perceived as the responsibility of provinces, provincial governments had failed them: "While there are few statistics on their standard of livelihood, the few studies that have been done have revealed that they are clearly at the very bottom of the totem pole, socially, economically and culturally."[95] Daniels also wrote in support of the application, stating funding was needed to establish the national organization to represent "common interests in Ottawa."[96] Daniels' justifications for seeking funding were, as such, similar to those of

[94] Untitled Resolution, received 2 February 1971, M4755, Box 71, File 851, MAAF, GA.
[95] Memo by E.R. McEwen, 25 November 1970, Box 96, File CB 9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[96] Stan Daniels to Bernard Ostry, Secretary of State Department, 27 November 1970, Box 96, File CB-9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.

Dieter – funds were necessary for smooth interaction with the government. These efforts were successful, with Minister Robert Stanbury writing to both Sinclair and Daniels and – in the spirit of fostering participatory democracy – confirmed that $3,000 would be paid in support of the "important organization," while also adding a note that help would be available as much as the "limited resources" of the department allowed.[97]

The small grant was a start, but obviously insufficient, and DSS appeared reluctant to provide more. In early 1971, Belcourt attended a national consultation hearing led by Minister of Health and Welfare John Munro, which he soon understood to be a publicity stunt. Determined to make use of the opportunity, Belcourt talked himself and Sinclair onto Munro's private plane for the return to Ottawa and spent the journey pressuring the minister into funding his organization's founding meeting. According to Belcourt, Munro finally promised ten thousand dollars for the development of the organization, just to "get these guys off my back."[98] The NCC's official grant application to the Department of Health and Welfare outlined plans for holding meetings to develop a framework and structure for the national organization, including an operational plan, budget, and constitution and by-laws. This would be completed in consultation with representatives of six different provincial organizations for Métis and/or non-status Indians. The proposal highlighted concerns common to both Métis and non-status groups, namely health and welfare, social security, and economic expansion.[99]

[97] Letter from Robert Stanbury to S. Daniels, 27 January 1971 and Letter by Robert Stanbury to J. Sinclair, 27 January 1971, Box 96, File CB-9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[98] Letter from John Munro to Jim Sinclair, 19 February 1971, M4755, Box 71, File 851, MAAF, GA; Belcourt interview.
[99] Letter from Minister of Health and Welfare John Munro to James Sinclair, 19 February 1971, M4755, Box 71, File 851, MAAF, GA.

Belcourt's action in getting on Munro's plane is a clear example of the astute maneuvering and navigating between different federal departments that Indigenous leaders engaged in throughout the process of building national representation. Such negotiation between departments sometimes caused disruption behind-the-scenes. Following the Minister of Health and Welfare's grant, McEwen again wrote to DSS, advising them to communicate with Munro and discuss the details of the ten thousand dollar grant, which evidently came as a surprise to the Secretary of State.[100] Writing to Stanbury in February 1971, Belcourt requested an operating grant of $118,461.[101] Throughout the spring, DSS indeed increased its financial support of both the NCC and new and existing provincial Métis and non-status Indian organizations, allocating some funds directly to these organizations.[102] These funds were paid out in small grants, never reaching the full amount requested.

With the combined funds from DSS and the Department of Health and Welfare, the interim committee hosted the organization's first annual conference in Ottawa in April 1971, where Belcourt was elected the NCC's first President. The MAA, arguably the most established of the provincial organizations, provided the NCC with a loan of ten thousand dollars to support Belcourt's move to Ottawa to set up the national headquarters.[103] At this stage, the NCC presented a clear vision of who it represented and what its aims were, issuing a document titled: "The Metis and Non-Status Indians of Canada – Who Are We?" Outlining the origins of terms like "metis" and "half-breeds," as well as reasons why some

[100] Ernest McEwen to Bernard Ostry, 8 February 1971, Box 96, File CB-9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[101] Budget Submission of the Native Council of Canada (Métis and Non-Status Indians) For The 1971-72 Fiscal Year, Box 96, File CB-9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[102] Briefing Notes, Honourable Robert Stanbury's Meeting with the Native Council of Canada, undated, Box 96, File CB-9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[103] Belcourt interview; Belcourt was surprised to be chosen, for details see: Belcourt, "For the Record," 130.

Indigenous people were denied status according to the Indian Act, the document determined: "We, the non-persons, have never been given either legal recognition or legal status. Though, culturally, we possess and lay claim to an Indian tradition through mother tongue or way of life, we have no way of obtaining the rights of our brothers, sisters, and cousins…."[104] Essentially, the NCC defined the communities and individuals they represented in comparison to status Indians as people who were related and had equal claims, but had been denied equivalent rights.

Within weeks of arriving in Ottawa, Belcourt discovered that those represented by the NCC had been "forgotten" yet again. Through a leaked document, Belcourt was informed that the planned core and communications funding program would be limited to "Status Indians," excluding non-status, Métis and Inuit peoples.[105] The NCC quickly prepared a brief addressing the harm such a decision would cause on both the national and provincial level, underlining the importance of relations built with DSS over the preceding months: "To us this was a heartening breakthrough and we saw it as the starting point of a new era in our organizational lives. It is imperative that this process not be stopped now or strangled for lack of funds because of *artificial and inequitable distinctions* between our needs on the one hand and those of the Registered Indians on the other."[106] Funding was crucial to the NCC not only in terms of surviving as an organization, intensifying debates surrounding the recognition of the rights of non-status and Métis people in Canada.

[104] The Metis and Non-Status Indians of Canada – Who Are We?, undated document, M4755, Box 71, File 851, MAAF, GA.
[105] The document was slipped under Belcourt's office door. Belcourt interview with author; Belcourt, "For the Record," 130.
[106] Emphasis added. Brief to the Honourable Robert Stanbury, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Citizenship from the Native Council of Canada, 26 July 1971, Box 96, File CB-9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.

The matter of being left out of an official funding program for Indigenous peoples was so urgent, that the NCC successfully demanded a meeting with Stanbury at the Beacon Arms Hotel and – as Belcourt put it – "didn't let him out of the room until he agreed to go back to cabinet to get the policy amended."[107] Stanbury himself had been briefed by his advisors to reassure the NCC that a decision had not been made to *not fund* Métis organizations, but that negotiations with the provinces were needed before the Treasury Board could commit to further funding.[108] Such lukewarm promises did not placate the NCC. With press lining the halls outside the meeting room, Stanbury agreed to push for an amendment to the cabinet decision. Belcourt followed the meeting up by forwarding their submission to change the provisions to the Ministers of the House of Commons directly.[109] As a result, led by Belcourt, the NCC successfully had non-status, Métis *and* Inuit groups covered in the new federal core funding program for ethnic minorities.

While the NCC was successful, this incident highlights the fact that the promises of "brotherhood" and "unity" made during the NIC split did not hold. Though Belcourt had not been involved with the NIC, he nevertheless sought to build solidarity with the NIB. After multiple attempts, Belcourt eventually met with Manuel. Belcourt recalls Manuel's response as scuppering hopes of formal alliance, stating, "Nobody wants me to be meeting with you. My chiefs don't want me to meet with you and the government doesn't want me to meet with you either."[110] Manuel's reason for this was that provincial status leaders feared that if Métis and non-status Indians through the NCC, the NIB would have to *share any funding*

[107] Belcourt interview.
[108] Briefing Notes, Honourable Robert Stanbury's Meeting with the Native Council of Canada, undated, , Box 96, File CB-9-390-34, RG6-F-4, LAC.
[109] Telegram to Ministers of House of Commons, by A.E. Belcourt, 26 July 1971, M4755, Box 71, File 851, MAAF, GA.
[110] Belcourt interview.

granted to them. Though the two maintained contact behind-the-scenes, official cooperation between the two organizations remained limited to, for instance, Belcourt attending the July 1971 NIB General Assembly as a guest speaker.[111]

Any further collaboration was hindered by resistance from the NIB's provincial affiliates, most notably the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA), which invited Belcourt to discuss claims that "Indian Affairs thinks the Native Council is in with the Indian Association." There was clear concern that the existence of *another* national Indigenous organization would cause confusion and potentially limit funds available to the NIB and its provincial affiliates. Belcourt assured the IAA both that the NCC had no intention of interfering with funds from the DSS to the IAA, nor would Métis people "push their way on reserves" instead "trying to get their own land" and "doing their own methods of funding without interference to native organizations." Rumors to the contrary, he stated, were started with the intention of making "the Indian people fight among themselves and therefore take the heat off Indian Affairs."[112] It was no secret to anyone involved that Indian Affairs had a vested interest in preventing collaboration between the NCC and status Indian organizations, nor that they used money to preclude any effective alliance between the two.

As the split of the National Indian Council and founding of the National Indian Brotherhood and Native Council of Canada demonstrate, federal funding was offered in attempt to integrate Indigenous people into broader Canadian society. The shifts in the political landscape of the early 1970s, then, for Indigenous peoples meant a converging of the ideals

[111] Tony Belcourt, Memorandum to Members of the Executive Council, 12 July 1971, M4755, Box 71, File 851, MAAF, GA.
[112] Meeting with the Native Council of Canada, Edmonton, 31 August 1971, M6049, Box 5, File 78, FGF, GA.

of "participatory democracy" with what Coulthard terms the "politics of recognition."[113] Though the federal approach to Indigenous peoples had seemingly shifted away from the direct oppression of the early 1900s, the provision of funds was nevertheless aimed at subsuming Indigenous political organizations in different ways. Indian Affairs funding for the NIB aimed to relegate the organization to a merely consultative role. Similarly, providing DSS funds to non-status and Métis groups aimed to integrate them as citizen-participants in Canadian politics alongside other interest groups like ethnic minorities. Funding undeniably functioned to maintain a divide between status groups and non-status and Métis groups, precluding effective coalition or formal collaboration. The promise and potential of gaining funding to secure their operations shaped the landscape of Indigenous national organizing, shaping the founding of both the NIB and NCC.

However, while federal funding may have been intended as a "program of pacification," in practice Indigenous leaders within these organizations often subverted its intentions, adeptly navigating the federal system in order to support land rights, housing, and health and welfare for their communities. The successes for the NIB in opposing the White Paper and refusing any plans to end the Indian Act while continuing to draw financial support from the federal government, demonstrate the ability of the young organization to accept funding without committing to support government policy. In the case of the NCC, being included in the new core federal funding program in 1971 was an important victory in being recognized alongside status groups, and demonstrated their ability to *reshape* government plans. Inclusion in the core funding program not only allowed the NCC critical funds to build

[113] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 3.

its organization and supports its political lobbying, this recognition through funding was an important step towards the inclusion of the Métis in the 1982 Constitution Act.[114]

The prospect of federal funding brought to the fore debates surrounding Indigenous self-determination, leading to a conceptualization of funding as the *right* of Indigenous peoples due to their long-standing exploitation and colonization by the Canadian government. While concerns and criticisms regarding federal funding as selling out and causing divisions were present from their very founding, this idea shifted the focus away from Indigenous organizations being *indebted to* federal departments and instead on what the government *owed to* Indigenous peoples. While government understandings of funding largely did not align with this view, for the leaders of these organizations this approach allowed flexibility despite working with federal officials and accepting funds. This case demonstrates the significant social and political impacts that seemingly mundane funding concerns can have on broader understandings of Indigenous rights.

The national representative organizations that continue to run on government funding contend with the same debates today. The call for a move towards financial independence from new leaders again brings to the fore discussions surrounding the rights of Indigenous groups and their relationship to the federal government which were at core of the founding of these organizations. RoseAnne Archibald's June 2023 ousting as National Chief by the AFN indicates that these are not easy discussions to have, as she was removed before her calls for a forensic audit and investigation of corruption in the organization were realized.[115]

[114] For more on constitutional recognition and the Métis National Council's split from the NCC, see: Andersen, *Métis*, 127.
[115] Brett Forester, "Fate of Assembly of First Nations financial probe uncertain after former national chief's ousting," last modified 7 July 2023, *CBC News*, https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/afn-financial-probe-funding-archibald-1.6899180.

Yet for Indigenous political leaders in Canada and beyond navigating the minefield of federal funding today, important lessons should be drawn from the experiences of national Indigenous political organizers in the early 1970s.

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