

For the Standing Committee on Indigenous & Northern Affairs, re Bill C-53, 16 Nov 2023
From Adele Loosemore, Community Historian, Shebahonaning/Killarney Ontario

Shebahonaning,¹ also known as Killarney Ontario, is on the North Channel of Georgian Bay, in the Robinson Huron Treaty area. Our ancestors have been here since time immemorial, on the path of an ancient trade network that would later also be traveled by European explorers, traders, and settlers.^{2, 3, 4} Our First Nations people are Anishinaabe – Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi.

The President of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), recently said to your Committee that in order to have Métis rights:

“You need to show distinct Métis ancestry, and you need to show that Métis ancestry within historic Métis communities. That's because Métis rights are collective rights. They're all about those historic communities.”⁵

In August 2017, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) and the Ontario government announced their creation of the *historic Métis community of Killarney & Environs*. It's meant to support MNO's claims to Métis Aboriginal rights. But Killarney & Environs is a fictional settlement, populated by a small selection of Anishinaabek that MNO transformed into Métis inhabitants. This brief provides examples of the false Métis history that underlies it.

¹ “Canoe passage”. Sounds like “jii bon an ing” with the emphasis on “bon”. Not a First Nation under the *Indian Act*.

² W.J. McQuarrie, Ed., *National Museum of Man, Through the Years*, Mid-North Printers & Publishers Ltd., 93rd Edition, Vol VIII, No. 9, July 1991, p. 7.

³ E.F. Greenman, *Chronology of Sites at Killarney, Canada*, *American Antiquity*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Apr., 1966), Cambridge University Press, pp. 540-551

⁴ Bain, James, Ed., *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories, Between the Years 1760 and 1776, by Alexander Henry, Fur Trader*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1901, p. 33.

⁵ Margaret Froh in *Evidence*, Number 079, Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, Thursday, October 26, 2023, p 6.

MNO's Documented Métis, Verified Métis Families, and historic Métis communities

The Métis Nation of Ontario says a *Documented Métis* is an ancestor who was in a historic Métis community by a certain date⁶ and who, in an old record, was called a half-breed (or any word referring to mixed Indian-European ancestry).⁷ If the relatives of a Documented Métis stayed in the historic community for at least two generations, they become a *Verified Métis Family Line*.⁸ Groups of family lines are *historic Métis communities* (HMCs).

MNO and Ontario's "historic Métis community of Killarney & Environs"

"Killarney and Environs" appears to include part of Manitoulin Island, and a large section of mainland that extends from somewhere west of the Spanish River to somewhere east of the



Wanapitei River, and stretches north almost to Mattagami.⁹ MNO claims that nine Anishinaabe families, living in several villages, were the Métis inhabitants of Killarney & Environs. But MNO provides virtually no information about their historic Métis community. Instead, their data centres on four families living in Killarney village.¹⁰

⁶ Before the date of "Effective Control" – before European governments had control over the area.

⁷ Intergroup Consultants Ltd., *An Independent Review of the Métis Nation of Ontario's Harvester Card System* (OSS_00645442) Final Report, 12 January 2018, p 6.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Killarney and Environs Historic Métis Community, in *Rivers of Resistance*, a map insert with historical summaries by the Métis Nation of Ontario, in *Canadian Geographic*, Sept-Oct 2022.

¹⁰ de Lamorandiere, Recollet, Solomon, and Tranchemontagne.

MNO and Ontario claim that fur trader Etienne Roberet de la Morandiere, his wife, and their children, are “the first identified Métis family” in Killarney, in 1820. ^{11, 12}

In 1905, Pierre-Georges Roy, then a well-known historian in Quebec,¹³ published a book about the Roberet de la Morandiere family. Etienne’s ancestors were members of the French nobility, who first came to New France in the late 1600s. Etienne was born in 1767 in Varennes, Quebec. In 1800, he married Saisaigonokwe, who is identified by Roy as an Ottawa (Odawa) Indian.¹⁴

In one of three reports that MNO and Ontario used to create “Killarney & Environs”, the author says Etienne’s 1820 arrival in Killarney “...marked the beginnning of non-fur trade, non-Aboriginal settlement in the study area.” (underlining added).¹⁵

Many of MNO’s *Verified Métis Family Line* reports are available on their web page. These files include genealogical data and the rationale that their Registrar used to claim that individuals in a family are Métis. In the de Lamorandiere report, MNO’s Registrar did not identify Etienne or his wife as a Métis ancestor. She did not identify any of their ten children as Métis, either.¹⁶

Nevertheless, MNO repeatedly refers to Etienne and his family as important “Métis” figures in Killarney.

¹¹ Joint Fact Sheet, *The Historic Killarney Métis Community*, 2017 <https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/joint-fact-sheet-killarney-18-august-2017-final.pdf>

¹² See Note 9.

¹³ Entry for Roy, Pierre-Georges, from the Encyclopedia of Quebec History, at <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/encyclopedia/Pierre-GeorgesRoy.html>

¹⁴ Roy, Pierre-Georges, *La Famille Roberet de la Morandiere*, Levis, Quebec, 1905, p. 64. <https://archive.org/details/lafamilleroberet00roypuoft>

¹⁵ Jones, Gwynneth C.D., *Historic Populations of Mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Ancestry in Ontario. Sudbury/Espanola Region. Historical Report*. Prepared for the Ministry of Natural Resources, 2001, p. 5. <https://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historic-research/> Under “Mattawa/Nipissing Reports”, click on the link “Ontario Report – Sudbury & Espanola”.

¹⁶ Métis Nation of Ontario, *FL4004 de Lamorandiere-Sheperd Verified Métis Family Line*, 2017, pg 11, at <https://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/ontario-metis-root-ancestors/> Click on the menu item called “Sault Ste. Marie and Michipicoten Harvesting Areas”, then on the de Lamorandiere-Sheperd link.

MNO says: “By the 1830’s, visitors to Killarney noted the existence of a lively Métis community, where they ‘danced away to the merry sound of the fiddle’.”¹⁷

A more detailed description of this 1836 visit to Shebahonaning (now Killarney) is in a historical report on MNO’s website.¹⁸ For MNO, the highlight is that visitors described “*half-breeds*” dancing to *fiddle* music at the *trader’s* house. Half-breeds, a fiddle, and a fur trader – that’s a scene the general public often equates with Métis culture. But there is more to the story.

The event was not described by multiple people, as MNO implies. Just one. The visitor, who arrived by steamer, said their vessel were greeted at the dock by “...*a large assembly of Indians and well dressed Canadians...Two or three volleys were fired and soon our lines were made fast...a few drams amply repaid the Indians for the expenditure of their ammunition*”.

The visitor said there were “Indians”, “half-breeds”, and “Canadians” in Shebahonaning, but MNO claims that “visitors” identified “a Métis community”. Similarly, in their YouTube video (at 2:48), the party at Lamorandiere’s house is given great significance when MNO’s narrator incorrectly states that “*Etienne’s home is noted as a Métis gathering place at this time*”.¹⁹

There is a larger problem with MNO’s description of the 1836 visit. The half-breeds dancing to the fiddle music were not MNO’s people. According to their “Verified Métis Family” reports, none of their Documented Métis ancestors lived in Shebahonaning (Killarney) in the 1830s. This circumstance is discussed in another section of this document.

¹⁷ See note 9.

¹⁸ See note 15, p. 6.

¹⁹ Métis Nation of Ontario, *The Killarney and Environs Historic Métis Community*, YouTube Video, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3JiMuvleD0>

MNO claims: “In 1838, the Killarney Métis made a collective petition requesting a treaty comparable to the 1836 Bond Head Treaty...”²⁰

A 2001 historical report on MNO’s website tells a different story:

“In 1838, a Roman Catholic cleric reported to the Lieutenant-Governor’s secretary on his tour of the ‘*North Shores of Lake Huron, and amongst the islands scattered along that coast*’.”²¹ The cleric said the “Half Breeds” want to settle on Manitoulin Island, to fish in the waters off that Island, and to have a Roman Catholic clergyman.

They did not ask for a treaty, as MNO claims. They were not identified as the Killarney Métis, as MNO claims. There is no evidence to show that the Half Breeds spoke to the cleric collectively or on behalf of a collective. The report’s author says the location of the Half-breeds is not known.

None of MNO’s Documented Métis ancestors lived in Killarney village in the 1830s. Only two Documented Métis were living in MNO’s much larger Killarney & Environs community in 1838: Henri Corbiere and Marie Roy, who later married.²² If MNO is claiming that it was they who made a collective petition to the cleric, we are being asked to believe that:

- i) in 1838, 15-year-old Henri and 12-year-old Marie, both living on Manitoulin Island²³, petitioned the government to say that they want to live on Manitoulin Island, and
- ii) in 1838, the Métis collective that MNO calls the “historic Métis community of Killarney & Environs” consisted of two youngsters on Manitoulin Island.

²⁰ See note 9.

²¹ See note 15, p. 9.

²² Métis Nation of Ontario, *Corbiere-Roy Verified Métis Family Line Package FL4019*, 2017, available at <https://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/ontario-metis-root-ancestors/> Click on the title “Mattawa/Nipissing Harvesting Area”, then on a link called “Corbiere-Roy”.

²³ *Ibid.*, p 2.

MNO says: “*The 1850 Robinson-Huron treaty negotiations between the Anishinaabeg Chiefs and the Province of Canada also excluded the Killarney “half-breeds”*”.²⁴

The families in Shebahonaning that MNO claims as its Métis people were Treaty Indians under the 1850 Robinson Huron Treaty.

1855 - In a book about his travels, a retired Indian Affairs Superintendent said “...*we coasted along the shore of the mainland, and reached the Indian village of Chebonaning, composed of wigwams, and containing about four hundred inhabitants.*”²⁵

1865 - In Killarney, “...‘*excursionists thronged the street, ...the Indian wigwams were entered*’, and conversation by means of sign language was carried on with the older women who had stayed home to mind the babies, each snug in its *tikinagan* or cradle board.”²⁶

1877 - Thirty-one “Chiefs and principal men ” gathered in Shebahonaning to sign one of the petitions sent to the Governor General for arrears of Robinson Treaty payments and interest.²⁷

1883 - Indian Affairs listed Shebahonaning as an Indian reserve.²⁸

1905 - Births in Killarney were reported by the Indian Agent, and listed under the Division of Indian Reserves.²⁹

For decades, Indian Agents came to Killarney to pay Treaty annuities³⁰, just as they visited other settlements of Robinson Treaty Indians to do the same. This continued until the late 1930s.³¹

²⁴ See Note 9.

²⁵ Laurence Oliphant, *Minnesota and the Far West*, William Blackwood and Sons, London, 1855, p 86.

²⁶ Jensen, P. *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914*, U of T Press (1995), 96.

²⁷ Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada, Volume 12, Issue 10, Paper No. 127, 1879.

²⁸ *Annual Report, Dept of Indian Affairs, Year Ended 31st Dec 1883*. Maclean, Roger & Co., Ottawa, 1884, p xxii.

²⁹ Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario; *Registrations of Births and Stillbirths, 1869-1913*; Reel: 172; Rg 80-2

³⁰ LAC, RG10 Indian Affairs, Volume 10563, Doc 627, Agent McLeod to Frank Roque, July 5th, 1912.

³¹ PAC, RG10 Indian Affairs, Volume 6895, File 488-28-3, pt. 7.

MNO does not provide any historical information about Killarney & Environs. Instead, they keep the focus on ancestors who lived in Killarney village.

MNO offers no evidence about how their families of Killarney & Environs interacted, how they governed their Métis community while they were living in First Nation settlements, or how anyone inside or outside the Métis community acknowledged its existence. MNO's Métis history centres on Killarney village, but their Killarney village ancestors became "Documented Métis" in 1881, 1899, and 1901³², years after the false Métis history they relate:³³

- *1820 – the first identified Métis family arrived in Killarney*
- *1836 – Killarney is identified as “a lively Métis community”*
- *1838 – the Killarney Métis signed a petition asking for a treaty*
- *1850 – the Killarney Métis were excluded from Robinson Treaty negotiations*
- *1870s – there were “about 95” Métis people in Killarney village*

Even if an earlier date is used – the year of each one's arrival in Killarney – none of MNO's Documented Métis ancestors³⁴ lived in Killarney in the 1820s, 1830s, 1840s, or in 1850. The first one arrived in 1851. Only five were in Killarney during the 1870s.

Family Name	DM	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s
de Lamorandiere	2	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	2
Recollet	7	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	7
Solomon	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	2	2
Tranchemontagne	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
TOTALS	14	0	0	0	2	6	5	7	11

DM = MNO's "Documented Métis" ancestors (14 in total).

³² *Verified Métis Family* reports <https://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/ontario-metis-root-ancestors/>

³³ See note 9.

³⁴ Pierre R. de Lamorandiere; Jos. Tranchemontagne Sr.; Elizabeth Proulx; Marguerite Recollet; John, Amelia, Veronic, Cecilia, Mary, and Annie Cooper; Dominic, Pierre, James, and William Alexandre Solomon.

In 2017, MNO and Ontario hired an independent reviewer to see if they reliably followed their own criteria when classifying ancestors as Métis and when issuing Harvester Cards.

MNO and Ontario’s criteria are as follows:³⁵

- 1) a Documented Métis is someone who, in a historical record, was called a “half-breed” (or any similar word), AND who arrived in a historic Métis community by a certain date³⁶
- 2) if the family of a Documented Métis stayed in the historic Métis community for at least two generations, they become a *Verified Métis Family Line*.

[Note that individuals who did not meet the criteria for “Documented Métis” in Rule 1) were collectively transformed into Métis people via Rule 2) (see example on next page).]

MNO said about the Review: “100% of the 88 Métis Family Lines submitted by the MNO were ‘verified’ as being part of Historic Métis Communities. 100% of the randomly selected 328 Harvesters Card files reviewed were ‘verified’ as meeting the criteria set out in Powley”.³⁷

The Reviewer’s Final Report said:

- a) when four of MNO’s *Métis Family Lines* failed the review, MNO and Ontario directed the Reviewer to treat those families as if they passed the review,³⁸ and
- b) the scope of work did not allow them to provide opinions or conclusions about whether or not the Powley criteria were met.³⁹

³⁵ Intergroup Consultants Ltd., *An Independent Review of the Métis Nation of Ontario’s Harvester Card System* (OSS_00645442) *Final Report*, 2018, p 6. <https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/final-report-of-inter-group-without-appendix-c.pdf>

³⁶ Before the date of “Effective Control” – before European governments had control over the area.

³⁷ Métis Nation of Ontario’s Fact Sheet: *The Independent Review of the MNO’s Harvest Card System*, p 3. https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/theindependenthc-review_fact.pdf

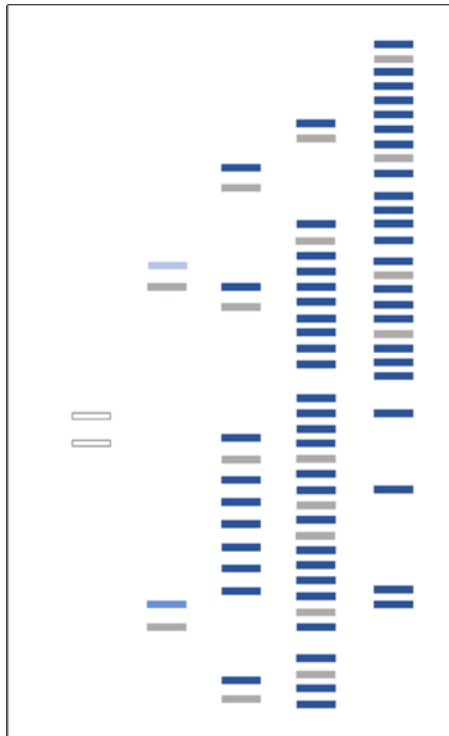
³⁸ See note 35, p 8-9. The families were Chevrette-Souliere, Coture-Jones, Linklater-Muskego, and Dallaire. As of November 13th, 2023, they were still on MNO’s “Métis Root Ancestors” web page as “Verified Métis” Families.

³⁹ See note 35, p 2.

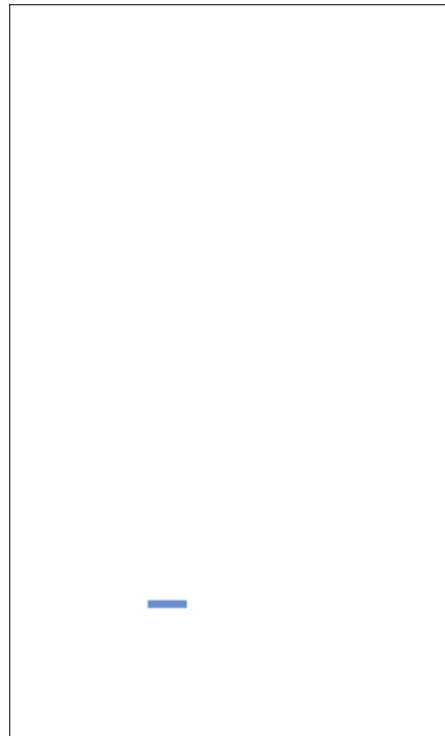
MNO notes that in an 1899 report, an Indian Affairs official stated that Joseph Tranchemontagne Sr. was “*said to have been a half-breed*”.⁴⁰ This rumour was enough evidence for MNO to classify Joseph as a Documented Métis, and to label his relatives a Verified Métis Family Line.

MNO’s Tranchemontagne-Pitawechkamod Verified Métis Family Line⁴¹

Tranchemontagne family members = 59



MNO’s Documented Métis = 1



⁴⁰ Métis Nation of Ontario, *Tranchemontagne-Pitawechkamod Verified Métis Family Line FL5027*, 2017, p. 5, <https://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/ontario-metis-root-ancestors/> Click on “Mattawa/Nipissing Harvesting Area”, then on “Tranchemontagne-Pitawechkamod”.

⁴¹ Ibid. Based on the chart in Appendix A. Light grey rectangles represent spouses (not included in the count).

Conclusion

MNO and Ontario began a joint research project in 2010.⁴² It led to their 2017 announcement of six “historic Métis communities” in Ontario.⁴³ They provide no evidence about distinctive shared practices, customs, or political activities among the families that they say were part of the HMC called “Killarney & Environs”. Instead, they focus on Killarney village. But MNO’s data show that only 14 “Documented Métis” lived in Killarney village between 1850 and 1900, out of a total of about 427 Killarney ancestors.⁴⁴ In other words, 97% of Killarney ancestors did not meet MNO’s criteria for being classified as Documented Métis. The only “Métis” experience they have in common is MNO’s discovery that someone called one of their relatives a half-breed. For MNO, that circumstance justifies the label “Verified Métis Family Line”.

There are significant problems with MNO and Ontario’s research. Evidence is presented out of context, or information is withheld. The word “half-breed” in old records is replaced with the word “Métis”, as if the word itself can both illustrate and confirm that identity. They make baseless declarations, like their false claim to Métis identity for Etienne de la Morandiere and family, or MNO’s false statement, in their YouTube video, that our ancestors spoke Michif.⁴⁵

I ask the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs to reject Bill C-53. MNO has not substantiated its claim that their members have Aboriginal rights originating from the historic Métis community of Killarney & Environs. There is no credible evidence showing that Killarney & Environs ever existed.

⁴² *Identification of Historic Métis Communities in Ontario*, Background, Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 22 August 2017, p 1.

⁴³ *Ontario and the Métis Nation of Ontario Announce Identification of Six Additional Historic Métis Communities*, Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 22 August 2017.

⁴⁴ See chart on p 7. Data is from *Verified Métis Family Line* documents on MNO’s web page (in-laws not counted).

⁴⁵ Métis Nation of Ontario, *The Killarney and Environs Historic Métis Community*, YouTube Video, 2021, at 2:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3JiMuvleD0>