



Backgrounder: Métis Health Benefits Policy

- In the early 1990s, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) began work, in collaboration with the Métis Nation of the Northwest Territories, to develop a supplementary health benefit program for Métis in the Northwest Territories with similar benefits as was available to Indigenous residents eligible for federal government's Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program.
- Under the original Policy, eligible Métis were identified by several qualifiers including historic enumeration lists as well as 'not being registered or not eligible to be registered as Indians or Inuit'.
- The eligibility criterion has been difficult to administer as well as frustrating for many applicants as the enumeration lists have not been updated since 1995. Additionally, determining that an applicant is "not registered or not eligible to be registered as Indians or Inuit" required that the applicant apply for the NIHB program and be denied to prove they were eligible for benefits under the Policy.
- Concerns were raised about the process to determine the eligibility criteria "not registered or not eligible to be registered as Indians or Inuit" in that it goes against the right to self-identify.
- To find a suitable solution, the GNWT engaged Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations in the NWT that have members who may identify as Métis residents.
- The updated Métis Health Benefits Policy requires Métis residents to provide a letter from one of the following Indigenous governments or Indigenous organizations confirming that they are a member who holds or assert to hold Aboriginal rights in the NWT as affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*:
 - Dehcho First Nations as the regional government representing the Fort Providence Métis Council and Fort Simpson Métis Local #52
 - Gwich'in Tribal Council
 - Northwest Territory Métis Nation as the regional government representing the Fort Resolution Métis Government, Fort Smith Métis Council and Hay River Métis Government Council
 - North Slave Métis Alliance
 - Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated
 - Tłı̨chǫ Government

- The Policy still requires that the applicant is not registered under the *Indian Act* or an Inuk recognized by an Inuit Land Claim organization.
- These revisions eliminate the requirement that applicants apply to, and be denied coverage under NIHB.
- Benefits under the Métis Health Benefits Policy align with the federal government's NIHB Program.
- The updated Métis Health Benefits Policy is still the payor of last resort, meaning that if other insurance plans are available, those plans must be used first.
- These provisions more closely uphold and align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People principle of self-identification.
- The GNWT is the only jurisdiction that provides a publicly funded, supplementary health benefit program for Métis.