

The Métis in the 21st Century Conference

June 18-20, 2003

Saskatoon

Day 2 – Tape 6

Start Clip: 05:29:20:12

Lisa Weber: ...and, at the risk of, as I think he said, too, just talking about yourself, but I feel particularly qualified, I guess, to stand up here and tell you what the implications would be for the Métis settlements because I was there. I was there at the settlement level as a child. I was there as an adult working at the settlement level within the settlement organization when they were negotiating the deal. I was there at the meeting where they objected to the deal. So that's indisputable. And last week I gave several interviews to the press regarding the *Benoit* decision, and I found it really, really interesting that all of this is based very much on oral history and oral memory. So I think another thing that's really important that comes out of these sessions is it's really important for us to start recording, recording in writing our memories. So that's, I just wanted to leave that with you. (I'm gonna try to operate this from over here. There we go.)

So I'm gonna start this presentation just by setting out some context and some general, general principles, if you will. First of all, obviously, I think obviously, Métis Aboriginal rights do exist. I don't think anybody can dispute that the Crown will certainly do so, but they do exist, okay. We need to start from that presumption. We, we've heard over the last few days, and people just talking about their own experiences, that Métis people, they hunted, they fished, they trapped, they had community gatherings. And I found Mr. Dumont's comments particularly interesting yesterday as he was saying that's just what we did, that's what we do. Not only what we did, it's what we do. But now it has to be characterized as such if you're in the legal arena. It has to be proven, okay. So we, it's the living culture. I think, therefore, it's not a matter of if they exist, it's rather a matter of when—when are the Métis Aboriginal rights going to be recognized? And I guess it's

gonna be recognized, and I guess it's gonna be through the courts because the political arena is not, so far, making much headway in that area. And in most particularly, and this is again the topic of my presentation today, is that Métis land rights have not been fulfilled in Alberta, and that's why I questioned the presentation just before the break, because I thought there was reference to, maybe he didn't refer specifically to the land rights having being fulfilled, but certainly he was making a connection. And that's my very point—he's making that connection in a cursory manner, and further to that, there's, there tends to be no in-depth consideration of what the effects of the settlements and the associated legislation will have on Métis Aboriginal rights. So that's what I'm gonna try to do.

I tried to incorporate when I was listening to the sessions this morning just some statements to, to, to add to, I guess, in mine. So I've got added here to, I mean it was so significant when Jean was talking about the, the effect or the need, sometimes, to litigate in order to bring parties to the table. That, that was *Calder*. *Calder* in 1974 said it was a case by the Nisgaa, and it involved a claim for a declaration of unextinguished Aboriginal title. Now they lost that claim, but they did subsequently enter negotiations, and maybe that's where we have to go with Métis rights.

So why should we look more closely at Alberta, other than just giving a cursory description of, "Oh, Alberta has this," and that's it. Alberta has the largest self-identifying Métis population in Canada according to the last Stats Canada census, just released last month, I believe, or two months ago. There's about 66,000 self-identifying Métis in the province. It has the only quote "Métis land base" unquote in, in Canada. That's referred to everywhere—again, just cursory reference. Métis land base—what does that mean? Métis land base? There's a very particular meaning I will, I will demonstrate. Thirdly, and in Alberta, this is particular to Alberta, I believe, is there are two very distinct Métis political, political organizations in Canada who have registered members. Now this kind of is related, I suppose, somewhat to what Murray was talking about, is we really don't know. Are those members distinct members? Are they overlapping? I would suggest they are

overlapping, 'cause I'm, I'm a member of Paddle Prairie. I'm also a member of the Métis Nation. So it does happen. But the point is we do not know.

Just to give everybody a, a bird's eye view or the sense of who we're talking about or what areas we're talking about here, as we seem to be talking about it all in theory. This is a map of Alberta. The areas are divided there, put into the political organizations. The lines represent where the Métis Nation zones are situated. There's six zones. Each zone has a provincial board. They make up a, a provincial council board of sixteen members. The Métis Nation has agreements with the province, I guess, where it is recognized, or it certainly holds itself out as representing the quote "interests of Métis in Alberta" unquote. We also, however—in the little blocks, you can see, those are the settlement areas. The settlement communities, there are eight of them existing. There were twelve originally, but there are now eight. And Paddle Prairie is the one up north. The number one, which is where Larry and I are members from.

End Clip: 05:35:05:24