

Commentary: FMC brings Natives together

by Everett Lambert

The premiers were probably flying home thinking they left a bunch of disgruntled Natives.

But little did they know they had left a room full of Natives who had been pulled tighter together as a result of a First Ministers' Conference which failed to entrench Native self-government in the constitution.

The best meeting at the whole conference took place after the FMC was over, and out of the glare of the cameras.

This was a debriefing session put on by the Assembly of First Nations

(AFN). Actually, it was more like a spiritual gathering than a debriefing session.

The feeling in that room was one of the best I have experienced as a Native person. Especially a Native person who, like other Native people, wants so very much to see unity amongst our people.

Just before the failed FMC ended you could "slice" the tension in the Ottawa Convention Center. But here, everyone was smiling and so very happy to be in a room filled with Native people of every stripe and kind.

On the stage were the leaders of

all four aboriginal groups: the AFN, the Inuit group, and the Native Council of Canada, which represents Metis and Non-status Indians. They spoke about how they admired each other for all sticking together through the intense and pressured negotiations. At any time one of them could have broken file and accepted a watered down solution put forth by the Canadian governments.

Champagne was cracked and we toasted each other for the good things about Native life.

A columnist from an eastern Native paper stepped up to the

podium and made a special toast to the gathering. He was one of the group who had walked 500 miles as a protest to the conference. He said, "Let's have a toast because, hey, we got class."

After the leaders finished giving their "debriefings" some of us ran around getting autographs on a poster distributed by the Inuit committee. You should see the autographs on these posters. Mine has x's from Gerry Potts, an Ontario AFN chief, Harry "The Dog" Daniels, Olive Dickason, a Metis Professor from the University of Alberta. Not to mention Jim Sin-

clair and Georges Erasmus.

So, I say, first ministers, or anyone who is looking forward to having to deal with Native people, you're dealing with a group of people who are increasingly proud of who they are, and who are also looking over the hill to see if those other Natives have anything in common.

The flame of self-determination has only begun to burn. We are going to improve our lives, and we're going to do it with a smile on our face.



Alberta Premier Don Getty at the table, First Ministers' Conference.

Treeplanting, bugs, rain, and fun...

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fighting grizzlies but planting in the bush involves falling down and getting whipped in the face by rose bushes.

If it isn't freezing it's blistering hot out. The temperature can rise to 110 Fahrenheit when working in northern Alberta. In B.C., however, it will rain almost every day.

Treeplanting isn't all bad, the friendships that occur are often life-long. There is adventure in travelling up north to the mountains, or riding in a helicopter. The sighting of wild life, such as bears, moose and deer is common. Of course the most exciting fact about treeplanting is the money. Some people, known as highballers, usually make over \$10 thousand in three months of planting.

Is there any problem with bugs or animals?

If you think the bugs are bad in the city, you'll be amazed by the ones in the bush. There are noose-

ums that'll crawl down your pant leg and back up your leg and then bite the living daylight out of you.

As for the mosquitoes, it goes without saying that they are terrible. At four o'clock they come buzzing out of the grass and swamps, so thick that it's like a black cloud. They get in your ears, in your nose, and mouth. If it isn't them it's the horse flies buzzing around you. These bugs however are repelled by most bug sprays. So after the first week of going crazy you'll adapt.

The rest of the wildlife such as bears are really no problem as long as you take the right precautions.

Are there days off?

In treeplanting there is about one day off for every seven, however a planter usually works for 10-14 days straight and then has two days off in town, to wash clothes, buy supplies or party.

Are there any main factors about becoming a treeplanter?

Anyone interested in planting should check out their employer as thoroughly as possible. There have been many planters who have been ripped off by disreputable contractors.

With regards to equipment, buy good equipment, for example, cheap tents won't be able to shed the amount of water that will be coming down in the B.C. interior. One other factor is be in good shape. The most important thing for anyone considering planting is that they find out as much as possible about what they are getting into in regards to treeplanting, and consider that treeplanting is not cut out for everybody.

Duncan has been planting since 1982 working for various contractors.

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