

FMC Aboriginal Conference not a total failure

by Everett Lambert

In their closing remarks, many of the speakers at the First Ministers' Conference (FMC) on Aboriginal Constitutional Matters said that the conference "was not a total failure". Indeed, the conference, as well as the three that preceded, were not total failures. These talks served as 1) very educational devices, 2) a catalyst for Native solidarity, and 3) means by which Natives could plan their political futures.

The FMC of March 26 and 27 was not successful in explicitly entrenching in the constitution the inherent right to Native self-government.

Less known is the fact that these series of talks was indispensable in educating Canadians, in all walks of life: everyone from professionals to grassroots people, from non-Native to Native knows at least a

directly with the FMC's. Teachers have taught it and students have studied it. You may have watched it on T.V.

Many more people are now much more cognizant of the fact

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little bit more about aboriginal rights.

For instance since 1983, many government bureaucrats and elected representatives have worked

that native self-government involves components such as social programs, economic development, hunting and trapping and education. The latter is especially true of all Native people.

As a result, the different media are also more knowledgeable of Native political matters. Both the electronic and print media provided the most in-depth, mature and efficient recordings of any Native historical event vis-a-vis the '87 FMC. This is especially true of the Native media.

Secondly, these talks have served as a unifying and common element

of the Canadian Native environment i.e., national Native groups are now working in unison and solidarity as a result of the constitutional talks.

On February 13, 1987 the *Globe and Mail* reported that the four groups had sent the first ministers a letter stating "there is unprecedented consensus among us to pursue explicit constitutional recognition of the right of aboriginal peoples to self-government". Also, the groups collaborated on a "Joint Aboriginal Proposal for Self-Government". This type of unity is unprecedented.

Lastly, the FMC has emphasized what has to take place before

The FMC was not a complete failure. Firstly, there is now much more public understanding of what Native people are talking about; Native people want nothing more than to improve their lives.

Secondly, as a priceless by-product of the constitutional talks, Native unity has taken an upswing unprecedented in the history of Native Canada. Even the Riel Resistance did not include all the four aboriginal groups.

Thirdly, the FMC has charted the political agendas of Canada's Native peoples. Although the Sechelt, James Bay, and Alberta Metis Settlements' models of Native government are not universally accep-

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further Native self-government can be realized. Enough of the first ministers did not want to entrench self-government because "it was not defined enough".

table to Native people, these are nonetheless laid-out definitions. They are something we can put our hands on, something to go from.

Yet another conference will explore our reactions to crisis

by Lisa Hall

"Crisis equals opportunity" is an old Chinese proverb. This means that we shouldn't look upon a crisis as an impending disaster, but as an opportunity to change, to adapt, to grow.

The *Signs of the Times* is a conference which will explore this concept. The signs are the crises we face, and the time indicates an opportunity to change.

The signs of the times that will be discussed at the conference range from personal problems, such as divorce, to global problems, such as the nuclear arms race.

"We can look at the world and the way it's going as a doomsday scenario happening, with ecological problems, nuclear holocaust possibilities, AIDS, whatever," said Marjo Feagan, organizer, host, and a speaker of the conference.

"But we know that when we're

personally up against the wall, that is the time when we're most likely to change. And so, we can look at them as very destructive things or as an opportunity to change."

In dealing with a global problem there must be a change in each individual towards a common attitude before the actual problem can be dealt with. People are starting to realize, said Feagan, that it is their own personal experience that needs to change something within themselves. Thus the concept that real change is an internal matter.

The *Signs of the Times* will consist of five forums presented by different speakers, each dealing with different signs of the times.

One forum, presented by Peter Castonguay, will deal with stewardship and how people are now starting to take care of Planet Earth, while they previously were abusing it.

Another speaker, T. Elaine Gagne, will present a forum called "Stillness in an Information Glut." Stillness is an alternative to the ambitious nature which we all seem to have. She will also discuss *Wisdom vs. Knowledge*, a topic which Feagan feels university students would be particularly interested in.

"A lot of students who go to university get knowledge. The libraries are loaded with it, but very little wisdom is taught." People are starting to learn that experience and internal wisdom of knowing what they are doing is more important.

The *Signs of the Times* conference will not only be run in Edmonton, but also in 70 other locations world-wide. In Edmonton, it will be on Saturday, April 25, from 12:30 to 5:30, in Theatre 2-115 in the Education North Building. Anyone interested in the conference can call 432-1871 for more information.

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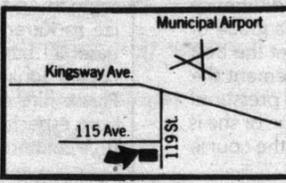
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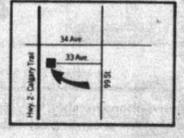
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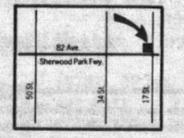
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