

The Métis in the 21st Century Conference

June 18-20, 2003

Saskatoon

Day 3 – Tape 2

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Tony Belcourt: So when you take a look at cold hard statistics, what do these kinds of things mean? If you look at them in isolation of the reality of talking to the Métis people themselves about what this might all mean, and taking a look at our history I was interested in this question, or where were Métis people thirty years ago or forty or fifty years ago? I think a lot of something that's completely misunderstood here, we're not taking into account is that when we look at Métis people in many places that are in urban areas, they're indigenous to the urban areas. Those urban areas grew up around them. The largest fur trade post in North America was just south of Sault Ste. Marie. Look at the fur trade rendezvous that took place in Thunder Bay. That those communities, the people came in and moved in after the Métis. Look at Red River. Look at Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta, which is just a short half hour drive from Edmonton, and all of the communities that are around there, Callalilly and St. Albert. Those are sort of looked upon now as metropolitan areas and urban areas. Well, the people didn't move into them; those are historic Métis communities right in our urban areas. And so when it comes to making policy and taking statistics of just like that and saying, "Well, now we have a, we have a policy here. We have to develop a new urban Aboriginal policy." The urban Aboriginal policy is somehow built up around an idea that people are moving into urban areas, and now we have to think about urban government for them, urban representation for the, for the people there, ignoring that we have our traditional forms of leadership in those communities and have had. And I think governments, without dealing with Aboriginal peoples in a, in a serious way and an effective way are going to be making policies that are going to be very dangerous for the, for the

future co-operative federalism if that, if that's what something we could hope for.

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