

UNITED NATIVE NATIONS
CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS 1984/85
WORKPLAN

Introduction

In order to be prepared for the 1985 First Ministers Conference, the United Native Nations must undertake a number of activities specific to the non-status Indians of British Columbia. To this point, the United Native Nations has carried on extensive consultation with its membership throughout the province on the various issues which have evolved in the Constitutional Process. The Constitutional First Ministers meeting of 1984 clarified the agenda, and pointed to the tasks to be carried out for 1985.

Many of the issues put forward by aboriginal groups, including the Native Council of Canada and the FMC 1983 and 1984 reflected concerns of the United Native Nations and particularly of the non-status Indian population of British Columbia. There are however, a number of items which are unique to the non-status Indian population in British Columbia. During 1984/85 the United Native Nations has set for itself the task of clarifying the positions that are of unique interest to non-status Indians of British Columbia, and discussing those issues with other native organizations to seek the best method of putting those positions forward so that they do not conflict with or detract from the positions being put forward by other native organizations, while at the same time are not submerged by the interests of other people.

Central to the specific interests of British Columbia is the strong multinational character of the British Columbia native population. There are 27 nations of Indian people in British Columbia. All of these nations continue to have a strong attachment to their aboriginal cultures, and those cultures and cultural values dictate a specific view of the world. The strongest of all these cultural values is the specific attachment of the people to the land. Our very existence has been defined in relationship to specific bodies of water, rivers, mountains, valleys, etc. Our

names, places and even our identity is not something which can be disconnected from specific land.

As a result from the strong underlying importance between the relationship of the land to our culture, and therefore to our aboriginal rights, the question of the denial of status to Indian people indigenous to British Columbia is of overwhelming importance. The denial of status is not only a denial of our existence as Indians, but is also a denial of our very existence. As a result of the denial of our status, and subsequently the physical removal of our people from specific areas of land, the whole question of aboriginal title, and the resolution of aboriginal land bases takes on meanings which are different than those of aboriginal nations on the eastern side of the mountains.

Similarly, the fact that our cultures are matrilineal plays an important role in the resolution of our aboriginal rights. The denial of status, while affecting native people of both sexes, has been particularly aimed at native women through Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act. Denying status to a large segment of native women has totally disrupted the matrilineal organization of our nations, and therefore, the resolution of our aboriginal right to self-government has a specific meaning with respect to the denial of status.

Finally, unique to British Columbia is the question of aboriginal fishing rights. Fish, unlike in other parts of the country, is not just a source of food, but intrical to our culture. The movement and activity of fish dictated where we lived, where we established our communities, our patterns of migration, and as a result became intermingled in our whole spiritual and cultural being. The question of aboriginal fishing rights on the west coast therefore is more than a question of our right to gather food, but is a question which underlies the resolution of land claims and the formation of Indian self-government.

As a result, in the 1984/85 fiscal year, the United Native Nations will devote its energies to incorporating these specific

facets of the aboriginal rights question into the positions to be put forward at the FMC 1985. In order to do this we have put together the following workplan:

1. Preparation of Agenda Item
Position Papers

All of the agenda items are important, however all of them overlap with the specific concerns of non-status Indians of British Columbia. We must therefore put together position papers which reflect our specific viewpoint on those items. Considerable work has been done on compiling those positions, however it is necessary to reorganize that work in such a manner that it addresses the specific agenda items from our perspective. In order to accomplish this fact, we are budgetting for salaries and professional fees to undertake the work of putting these positions forward.

In the course of our discussions it has become obvious that our positions on many issues much more closely follow the issues of other non-status Indians in western Canada. We will therefore, be carrying on extensive consultation with those organizations representative of non-status Indians in western Canada to ensure that the strongest possible position representing the interests of non-status Indians of western Canada will be reflected at the 1985 FMC.

2. Inter-organizational
Discussions and Negotiations

Central to our strategy for 1985 FMC is to ensure that our positions are not put forward antagonistically or in a manner which will negate the other interests of other aboriginal people at the conference table. We believe that a central theme of our approach to 1985 must be one of unity. At the same time we are not prepared to see the interests of the non-status Indians of British Columbia submerged and subordinated to the interests of other aboriginal people of Canada. In order therefore to resolve these potential problems we will be carrying on extensive discussions with other non-status Indian organizations

in western Canada, other non-status Indian organizations from across Canada, the status representatives along with the national body of Assembly of First Nations, we will also be carrying on discussions with the Louis Riel Metis Association of B.C. and the Metis National Council. It is essential that we all understand each others positions, each others uniqueness, and each others aspirations. It is only through this understanding that we can put forward a position or positions in unity with each other. In order to carry out this aspect of our activity we are budgetting for the travel costs to meet with these other organizations.

3. Development of an Aboriginal Fishing Rights Paper

It has already been mentioned that the interests and the question of aboriginal fishing rights takes on a different perspective for native people on the coast. It is therefore necessary for us to approach the whole question the entrenchment of our fishing rights in relationship to the entire fishing industry in a manner quite different than has been dealt with by other aboriginal organizations. To this end we are specifically developing a paper which will represent the interests of the native people of British Columbia, and particularly those people who have been denied their fishing rights and their ability to participate in the fishing industry. We have therefore budgetted a temporary salary and benefits to take on one staff person for several months to develop such a paper.

4. Delegation to FMC 1985

We intend to take a delegation to the 1985 FMC and have therefore budgetted for their travel costs of attending that conference.

5. Native Women

Because of the matrilineal nature of our cultures and societies, and of the effects of the denial of status to Indian women, the question of native women's rights has always been foremost in the overall view of United Native Nations. This overriding fact

can be seen in the composition of the membership of the United Native Nations which is predominantly female and in the makeup of most of our local structures in which the executives and the boards of directors are overwhelmingly represented by native women. In spite of the fact however, that native women play a major role in directing the activities of United Native Nations, we see a necessity of dealing with all of the agenda items specifically from a viewpoint of native women. Therefore, we have asked for the specific input of native women in the development of all our position papers. This input, and the associated costs can be readily identifiable expenditures and as necessary, we will account for these expenditures. With respect to our activities under item 2 of our workplan, Inter-organizational Discussions and Negotiations we will be carrying on extensive discussions with native women's organizations throughout British Columbia. The aim of these discussions is to discuss the position papers which we have or will develop and ensure that those papers incorporate the wishes and aspirations of our native women.

BUDGET

	Budget	Actual to Nov/84	Undisbursed Balance
Preparation of Agenda Item Position Papers:			
Salaries & Professional Fees	\$ 30,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 24,000
Inter-organizational Discus- sion & Negotiations:			
Travel	\$ 18,000	\$ 13,059	\$ 4,141
Development of Aboriginal Fishing Rights Paper:			
Salaries	\$ 6,400	\$ 6,838	(438)
Benefits	\$ 2,600	\$ 2,613	(13)
Delegation to FMC 1985			
Travel	\$ 6,000	-	\$ 6,000
Administration & Library Services	\$ 7,000	\$ 4,500	\$ 2,500
T O T A L S	\$ 70,000	\$ 33,810	\$ 36,190