January 2013 Issue

Feathers In The Wind

In This Issue:

Landmark Ruling

On Tuesday, January 8th, 2013 the Canadian Federal Court Trial Division released a 175 page judgment in *Daniels v. Canada.* This case was started almost 14 years ago, by Métis Leader Harry Daniels (since deceased), to force the federal government to acknowledge that Métis people fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government and should enjoy rights and recognition comparable to First Nations. Many of our members have called and asked what will this decision mean for the Metis people? We ourselves aren't legal experts but we have our lawyers looking into things at this point, we don't think anyone really knows what the ultimate results will be.

In the decision, Judge Phelan declares that Canada's 600,000 Métis and non-status Indians are "Indians" under the 1867 Constitution Act. In essence, Mr. Justice Phelan has said that the federal Government must accept the obligations of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to protect all Canadian Aboriginals.

It is not obvious what the duties of the federal government to the Métis and non-status Indians will turn out to be; after all, the Proclamation is almost 250 years old and not easy to apply to the way things are in 2013. So, the judgment does not set out any specific financial obligations, benefits or services that Ottawa must now extend. "It's huge. To me, it's a game-changer," said Ron Swain, vice-chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. "It's an absolutely joyful day for all of us."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's aboriginal affairs minister's office would say only it is reviewing the ruling: Jan O'Driscoll, spokesman for Minister John Duncan, pointed to the judge's statement that the case is not about "particular rights either under the Constitution or under specific agreements, nor is it about Aboriginal rights." He said the government will continue to "work in partnership with all aboriginals across Canada to address shared priorities such as education, economic development and jobs." Mr. Justice Phelan's decision is likely to be appealed at least once; then more specific lawsuits may follow, but this is a big step forward and all we can do is wait and see what happens next.

Read the full ruling at: http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2013/01/08/pol-cp-metis-indians-federal-court-challenge.html

Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw)

Copied from http://www.invitationproject.ca/listing.php?Listing=1170&Search=kwakiutl

Blockmaker Diane Bell has stitched her grandfather's Frog design (symbol of renewal and rebirth) in red melton cloth on black in the traditional style of a Button Blanket. These blankets were made after the Hudson's Bay Company began to trade wool blankets to the natives. Originally abalone or other shells were fashioned into buttons, but trading also brought beads and pearl buttons to work with, such as those used to highlight the design. The red colour (symbol of life) of the appliqué and the inner border represents the cedar tree dyed with salmon eggs to give it vivid colour. Each family drew its unique crests from the sky, land and sea. Button blankets decorated with the family crest are considered the *Robes of Power*.

Copper was the symbol of wealth to the Kwakwaka'wakw, and the Frog is known as Copper Maker. The legend of the Frog describes how he dared any man to look at him without blinking. If a man succeeded in not blinking, the Frog would die, and he could reach into the water to take the copper. It is a kind and gentle entity that Diane felt was appropriate to share in the quilt. She has dedicated this block to her late uncle, and mentor.

The Kwakwaka'wakw, known as Kwakiutl by anthropologists, are made up of 17 tribes. Each tribe has a different name and lives in their own area along the northwest coast of British Columbia. Today, children are taught a "universal" *Kwak'wala* language in schools. Historically each tribe spoke their own dialect containing subtleties and nuances, now known only to a few Elders. Originally an unwritten language, storytelling became a practised art that instilled cultural values in Kwakwaka'wakw youth. The first encounters with Europeans are believed to have been in 1775, with Spaniards Bodega and Maurelle. Many others followed, having an irreversibe impact on the Aboriginals' way of life. These events were recorded in coppers, masks, totem poles and other enduring art forms.

The Kwakwaka'wakw depended largely on marine life for food; while the forest provided materials to build houses, canoes and tools. They had a complex social structure based on status and wealth. Potlatch feasts, marking important life transitions, were elaborate events often taking many months to a year to plan.

Historically, the potlatch was a formal 'registration' of the event, with guests acting as witnesses. The federal government outlawed such feasts from 1884 to 1951, but the tradition moved underground and was passed on. The practice has been revived and today potlatches are openly held, much-anticipated events. The Kwakwaka'wakw are considered masters of stage craft and dramatic art, adding spectacular fantasy and sophistications to all their symbolic activities.

Did You Know?

When settlers started to arrive in, now Canada, they mainly came from Spain, England and France. It was the French who made friends with the Aboriginal people and began trading with them. They traded things like, metal tools, and technology, for traditional information, like canoe routes, trapping, and living off the land. This partnership started the inter-marriage of aboriginal people and French colonizers. As a result, Metis were born.

Cedar is high in vitamin C. When settlers first arrived in Canada they were falling ill to scurvy. The aboriginals shared their secrets and made the settlers cedar tea. This cured the settler's ailments from scurvy.

When aboriginal people hug, they hug to the left. This is done so the hearts of the people hugging connect and make a bond of trust.

Let us introduce you to Skook Casa Del Lobos

Skook's stories are the highly creative stories of a young man growing up in Northern British Columbia. His native heritage is through his mother, who was from a native group near the Chesapeake that was obliterated in time. Skook's great-grandmother was a direct descendant of this obscure tribe. He fondly remembers visiting with her.

Having lost his mother prematurely, Skook was raised in a world of men on an isolated ranch. His father shared with Skook everything he knew about the Chesapeake peoples. Most of the events in Skook's stories actually happened and many of the characters are real or at least composites of people who actually lived; sadly, most have passed on. Skook plans to publish several books that will include his many stories.

People are always asking Skook about his heritage, he says it is because "White men aren't supposed to be able to do the things I do with horses." Watching him for two minutes with a wild horse shows you the special way that he has with animals. A professional horseman for over 40 years, Skook continues to work with horses. He is in an ongoing educational program, learning life's lessons from one of the world's greatest instructors, the horse.

An excerpt from The Flint Striker

Om was a flint striker. Actually, he was considered by many to be the best flint striker in the world, the known world of North America. It was a much smaller world a thousand years ago, but his skills made him one of the richest men in the known world.

Traders, warriors, and hunters came to trade for his precious articles made of flint. He had never traveled far from the quarry he was born in; since the quarry contained the wealth of one of the richest kingdoms in the known world. If he left, a powerful man or chief might move in and be impossible to dislodge. It was true enough, he was said to be the greatest artisan in the world, but the skills needed to work flint and obsidian were not that difficult to acquire. He, his sons, and the artisans of his tribe were just the best at those skills, he was content to stay in the quarry that had belonged to his ancestors for generations and be content in the knowledge that his art traveled to every corner of the world.

He made flint knives and projectile points with blades so sharp they can't be reproduced today. It was an interesting time; the bow was a recent invention, yet the atlatl or spear thrower was still used by many hunters and warriors. The atlatl spear was a lighter version of the heavier lance. All three weapons required projectile points of different sizes and weights. The projectile points had to be light, sharp, and balanced. If the projectile point missed its' target and hit a rock or a heavy bone, it broke and had to be replaced; since the same qualities that made the projectile points so lethal, also made them vulnerable. There was another intrinsic characteristic of man that placed tremendous pressure on his rock carving industry: man has always been forgetful and careless. He was always losing knives, scrapers and awls. He dropped projectile points and he lost many arrows in the brush. Consequently, other men chipped and shaped crude tools for replacements or trade for the finest instruments of Om and his artisans. Thus the craftsmanship of Om and his workers supported his little community in an opulence that was unknown in the rest of the world.

The traders came from faraway places to trade for his flint works of art and they brought the most wondrous treasures. Most of the professional traders used the rivers for transportation. Om had a vast knowledge of the world and the wondrous places and goods the world had to offer by communicating with the traders using the universal sign language and a few common words and grunts.

Women and children were some of the most common trade goods, but Om was open to trade for anything of value. Om liked young beautiful women for his bed and older women to take care of domestic chores, tending the garden, and watching over the children. He was fairly certain he had sired over thirty children and at least twenty children were slaves brought by warriors wanting his flint pieces. The boys would be raised up to be either flint workers or warriors to guard his empire. He tested them when they were young to see if they could learn the flint working skills.

Read the conclusion of this story and find many other stories by Skook at www.AboriginalLiving.com simply search Skook

Jean Nicolet
(c. 1598-1642)
The Peace Maker and a *Coureur de Bois*

In early 17thth century, the demand for beaver pelts was creating quite a rivalry between the English, French and Dutch colonists in North America. While the English did their best to attract natives to their trading posts, the French travelled to aboriginal communities.

Born in 1598 in France, Jean Nicolet was hired by Champlain to live among the Huron, Algonquin and Nippissing people in order to learn their languages and customs and to be accepted. The plan was that by becoming friendly with the natives; he would be able to encourage them to trade furs with the French.

Arriving in 1618, Nicolet was sent to an important outpost on the Ottawa River called l'Ile des Allumettes, to become familiar with the Algonquins. It must have been difficult for him, alone in the bitter cold, to make the long journey by canoe, enduring many portages. He spent two years among them, teaching them to peacefully negotiate with the Iroquois before he returned to Quebec.

His next post sent him off to live among the Nippissings. There he comfortably spent nine years. Each year, Nicolet would spend the winter gathering pelts from various tribes of the region and in the spring he would send the fur to Québec.

While on his travels through the wilderness in search of fur, he gained important information about the geography of the interior and the people who lived there. He journeyed into the Great Lakes region, surveying the area around Georgian Bay and the north shore of Lake Huron.

By 1633, Nicolet was such a respected citizen of New France that Champlain appointed him to the powerful Companie des Cent-Associés. In 1634, under Champlain's instructions, Nicolet travelled to an Indian village west of Lake Winnebago. This was a peacemaking mission, as the Winnebagoes had been experiencing strained relations with the neighbouring Algonquins, and were threatening to ally themselves with the Dutch.

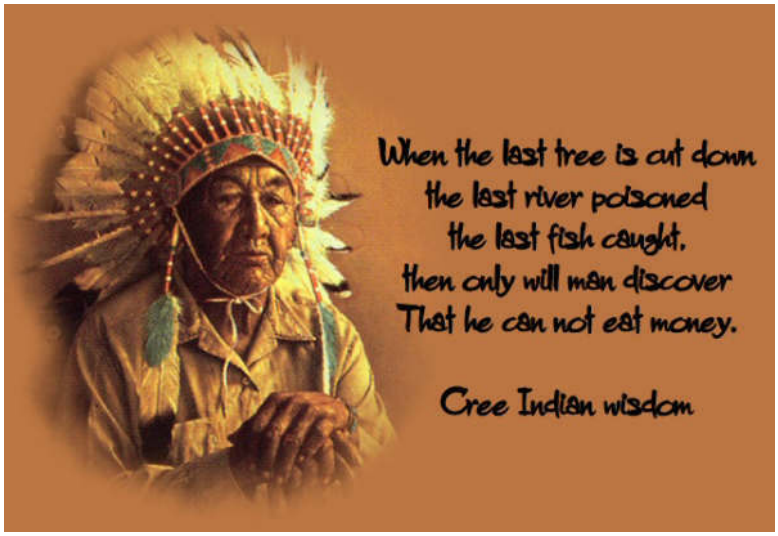
Nicolet travelled as far as Green Bay, through an enormous lake that had not yet been discovered by Europeans. (it was Lake Michigan, one of the Great Lakes) He ascended Green Bay and Fox River until he reached the village. While Nicolet had been sent as a missionary to secure the peace, he also took the opportunity to verify native accounts of this great sea, which he presumed led to China. Nicolet had always dreamed of finding the Northwest Passage to Asia, particularly China, with its precious metals and rare spices.

In preparation for being so close to China, Nicolet brought a robe of Chinese damask to wear before the Winnebagoes. It is said that they were so taken by the sight of this strange visitor that Nicolet was able to negotiate a peace treaty with them.

In October of 1642, Nicolet was named *commis general of the Company of One Hundred Associates during the absence of Le Tardif. A month later, he was drowned on his way to* Trois-Rivières hoping to prevent the death of a captive, belonging to a tribe in alliance with the Iroquois.

Nicolet was a forbearer to what is known as a *Courer des Bois*. Although the term is most usually associated with those who engaged in the fur trade (in ways that were considered to be outside the mainstream), they were also brave explorers.

(compiled from various sources)



Thank you to John Gervais for sharing this with us.

Tipi erected at Durham Forest Outdoor Environmental Education Centre

UXBRIDGE -- Learning about First Nations, Metis and Inuit people and culture will now be available to students on a whole new level after a 30-foot tipi has been erected as an outdoor learning facility at the Durham Forest Outdoor Environmental Education Centre.

http://www.durhamregion.com/community/education/article/1539924--tipi-erected-at-durham-forest-outdoor-environmental-education-centre

Thanks to Carol Mason for sharing this exciting information with us.

A Member Writes

Hi Art, as usual I really appreciate the time and work you put into drafting the monthly newsletters, they are just fantastic.

Paul Allaire

These works of art were crafted by Walter Wollison who has been carving for over 40 years. Both carvings are made of basswood and took a combined 400 hours to complete. The carving with the natural finish is called Buffalo Shaman while the one with the bear skin has been named Moonface, after his wife's ancestor. Walter's lovely wife Dian and her family have been searching for years for proof of their Native Ancestry and recently found the link through the OMFRC. We are told that Walter is now working on a third Indian with full headdress which we will look forward to seeing upon its completion.

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New Submissions!

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