

HEARD IN FRONT OF THE MÉTIS NATION BRITISH COLUMBIA'S SENATE

Appeal Name: Froehlich vs. MNBC Central Registry
2-28-03-41-2-00111

Date: May 25, 2013 and
October 20, 2013
Senate Clerk: Thibeault
Location: Richmond

Between:

Marion Norma Froehlich

Applicant

And

**Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC)
Central Registry**

Respondent

Reasons for Decision

Residing Senators:

Senator Gerald Pope

Senator Philip Gladue

Senator Margaret Penner

Senator Alan Edkins

Senator Al Desmarais

Senator Betty Hoogendoorn



Introduction

[1] On February 08, 2012 the applicant, Ms. Marion Norma Froehlich received a letter from the respondent, the MNBC Central Registry, indicating that her citizenship could not be validated or verified based on the qualifiers for MNBC Citizenship. Specifically, the respondent's letter highlighted:

"Thank you for your application for Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) citizenship. Please be advised, that the Central Registry has been unable to verify your genealogical connection to a Métis ancestor. The genealogical information you have provided with your application therefore, does not meet the required criteria for Métis citizenship within the province of British Columbia.

However, the applicant has requested the Senate to review the applicant's citizenship application package and all related materials and decide if the process and interpretations of the registrar was consistent with the intent of the "national definition" and the **MNBC Citizenship Act**.

Summary of the Case Law and MNBC Legislation

a) Canadian Law

[2] Subsections 35(1) and (2) of the **Constitution Act, 1982**, being Schedule B to the **Canada Act 1982** (U.K.), 1982, c. 11 state:

35(1) the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

35(2) in this act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

[3] The definitive Supreme Court of Canada case setting out the requirements for establishing a Métis constitutional right is **R. v. Powley**, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207, 230 D.L.R. (4th) 1, 177 C.C.C. (3d) 193, 2003 SCC 43. At paragraph 10, the Court defined the term "Métis" as it is used in s. 35, finding that while the term does not include all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage, it does refer to:

...distinctive people who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life, and a recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears. Métis communities evolved and flourished prior to the entrenchment of European control, when the influence of European settlers and political institutions became pre-eminent."

Later in paragraph 10, the Court provided further wording in regard to clarification of the understanding of the term "Métis" specifying that:

"The Métis developed separate and distinct identities, not reducible to the mere fact of their mixed ancestry: "What distinguishes Métis people from everyone else is that they associate themselves with a culture that is distinctly Métis." (RCAP Report, vol.4 at p202)."

b) MNBC Legislation, Policies and Procedures

[4] Section 61 of the **MNBC Constitution** states that a Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation. The MNBC Constitution further states the following;

a) 61.1. "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-Breeds who resided in Historic Métis Nation Homeland.

b) 61.2. "Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known.

c) 61.3. "Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within Section 35 of the **Constitution Act of 1982**.

d) 61.4. "Distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.

[5] Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the **MNBC Citizenship Act** further define the **MNBC Constitution** definition of Métis as stated above and, more specifically, the process in identifying citizens.

[6] Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the **MNBC Citizenship Act** highlight the roles and responsibilities of the Central Registry, Registry Office and the Registrar. It further states in 8.0 that the registrar must adhere to all policies and procedures developed by the MNBC. This includes the MNBC Guidebook, Central Registry Policy and Procedures and the Senate Policy and Procedures version 3.2.

[7] Section 6.2 of the **Senate Policies and Procedures ver. 3.2** highlights the process utilized when conducting a citizenship and/or central registry appeal.

Privacy Consent to Release

[8] On February 24, 2012 Ms. Froehlich supplied a signed and witnessed "Consent to Release Confidential Information" form. This form provided the Senate with the following consents:

i. utilization of the documentation supplied to the MNBC Central Registry for the purpose of the applied for

appeal.

ii. to send the contents of Ms. Froehlich's citizenship application file to a third party for a second professional genealogical opinion

iii. to utilize all the information supplied or demanded for the purpose of writing this MNBC Senate decision.

Second Genealogical Opinion

a) Société historique de Saint-Boniface

[9] Mrs. Janet La France from the genealogical department of the Société historique de Saint-Boniface supplied a second professional genealogical opinion by letter on May 05, 2013. Mrs. La France indicated the following;

"The information submitted by your client, Ms. Marion Norma Donnelly, has been carefully reviewed. We were able to trace back the lines in question into the Williams Lake district of British Columbia.

That being said, while we do not often see Metis self-identification occurring in families originating on the West Coast; this family clearly does ethnically identify themselves as French Breeds (the children of Joseph Dussault and Hélene Drymouth) down the one line on the 1901 Canadian Census.

While the delineation of the Historic Métis Homeland and whether or not this family falls into it is unclear; the fact that they identify with both sides of their heritage and are not counted among the "Indians" of the region on the census in question, does suggest that they may have indeed been considered Métis...or more likely they were mixed-blood people, either in Treaty, or recently disallowed from Treaty, whose designation as French Breeds on the census is a literal expression of their

mixed heritage rather than an indication of cultural belonging to the Historic Métis Nation encountering any evidence of Métis ancestry.

This strikes me as more probably, because in this case, the identification as French Breed occurs only the once, and for only the one ancestor; whereas there are several other consistent indicators that point to possible Treaty ancestry. There seems to have been a more consistent inclination to identify as "Indian" or more specifically as "Shuswap" throughout the variety of documents examined. Evidence of this can be found in many of the documents submitted by the client herself, and could be further explored, and possibly confirmed, by contacting AANDC.

Of course, the final decision must be made by you. However, at this time, we are unable to prove that there is any cultural similarity or shared history between this family and the Historic Métis Nation."

The Standard of Review

[10] The Senate's role is to ensure that all legislation, policies and procedures were adhered to and that the applicant has received a fair decision during the application review period. Since this appeal involves a question around the genealogical interpretation of the respondent, the Senate has ordered a second professional opinion to assist in their review. Furthermore, the Senate will adhere to the citizenship and/or central registry appeal process highlighted in Section 6.2 of the **Senate Policies and Procedures ver. 3.2**. The Senate further understands that the onus to prove citizenship is the responsibility of the applicant, Ms. Froehlich, not the respondent, the MNBC Central Registry.

[11] The Senate has based this decision on the evidence

supplied by the applicant and respondent and weighed this to the summary of case law at the time of the hearing.

Analysis

a) MNBC Policy and Procedure Adherence

[12] The applicant did request that a review of the policies and procedures be conducted. However, the Senate, upon review, found that the MNBC Central Registry did not violate or over-look any policies or procedures.

b) Genealogical Interpretation

[13] Both the MNBC Central Registry and the historique de Saint-Boniface indicated that they could not determine a link and/or ancestor that identified as Métis and resided within the Métis Nation Homeland.

[14] Furthermore the ancestral ancestry was identified by genealogical research as Shuswap from British Columbia. Although the ancestry does identify an aboriginal and French Canadian background none of these ancestors were found to identify as Métis or half-breed or had network (via family or community) connections within the Métis Homeland.

[15] During the first hearing on May 25, 2013, during the testimony, Ms. Froehlich and her relatives mentioned that they had access to other documentation that mentioned ancestors as being Metis, and enquired as to if such documentation would or could be of importance to the overall decision process. The hearing was adjourned to provide time for the Applicant to provide the new evidence to the Senate Clerk so that the appeal could be re-evaluated based on the new evidence.

[16] The Respondent and the Société historique de Saint-Boniface opinions did not change based on the new evidence at the second hearing on October 20, 2013.

[17] Based on the information supplied, testimony and the genealogical opinions (MNBC Central Registry and the historique de Saint-Boniface) the Senate could not identify a direct bloodline connection to the Métis Homeland or the presence of a Métis ancestor in Ms. Froehlich's genealogy.

c) MNBC Legislative Adherence

[18] Ms. Froehlich fails to comply with three parts of the National Definition as specified in the **MNBC Citizenship Act**. Those being;

- i) *Ms. Froehlich failed to supply the appropriate documentation that proves her historic Métis Nation Ancestry.*
- ii) *Ms. Froehlich failed to supply the appropriate documentation that proves any Métis ancestry that connects to the Historic Métis Nation Homeland.*
- iii) *Ms. Froehlich failed to supply the evidence which would identify a historic Métis "distinctiveness."*

Decision

[19] The MNBC Senate finds in favour of the Métis Nation British Columbia's Central Registry.

[20] It ought to be noted that should the parameters for MNBC citizenship change, or if the applicant discovers new information or documentation, that this decision does not limit or negate the applicant from reapplying for MNBC citizenship.

P.S. In the opinion from the genealogical department of the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, it is stated, in part:

"...There seems to have been a more consistent inclination to identify as "Indian" or more specifically as "Shuswap" throughout the variety of documents examined. Evidence of this can be found in many of the documents submitted by the client herself, and could be further explored, and possibly confirmed, by contacting AANDC."

If there is interest in exploring this further, the acronym "AANDC" refers to *Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada*. AANDC is one of the federal government departments responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and for fulfilling the federal government's constitutional responsibilities in the North.

AANDC has offices in Ottawa and regional offices in various locations including British Columbia. Information on how to contact the offices is available on the AANDC web-site at:

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/>.