

39. McDiarmid Lumber, Winnipeg, Manitoba

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The GM called me one day and asked if I would come to Winnipeg and discuss an opportunity. Brothers were the principals in Territorial Steel that erected all the prefabricated steel frames, wall and roof panels on the Expo '86 International Pavilions in Vancouver.

The opportunity was to form a construction company and to tender projects on First Nations located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Territories where McDiarmid tendered lumber packages, especially over Ice Roads. The deal would be that Gene and I would be equal partners with McDiarmid supplying all the financing and sharing in the profits.

The deal would be that I would hold a 50% ownership shared with Gene with the balance financed and owned by McDiarmid.

I did a trial run on a Health Clinic on a First Nations site in Saskatchewan from start to finish as a Project Manager. There were a few interesting events on this job:

1. I knew the Contractor that subcontracted from McDiarmid and so that part was great.
2. The Comptroller from McDiarmid asked me to keep an eye on the money flow so that McDiarmid was sure to get paid as the Government cheques went directly to the Band Office.
3. I directed the Band to set up a 10% Hold Back separate account so that the Statutory Holdback legislation was met.
4. At the end of the project, I found no such account was set up and all the money was spent. I met with the Comptroller, and we discussed this. His position was "Don't worry about it as next year the Band will get another allocation and they will pay McDiarmid the outstanding about plus 12% interest, so no problem."
5. Well, that took me aback.

I attended meetings where a Band from Northern Saskatchewan were planning on some housing:

1. We had a dinner at the Saskatchewan Inn (the best in Saskatoon at that time)
2. An individual was present that apparently was a "Spotter" or someone who found out about what was going on and reported this to McDiarmid was in attendance.
3. There were two representatives of the Band that had six (6) different First Nations locations.
4. The Comptroller and me.
5. Of course, there was Lobster Tail and Steak and lots of wine.
6. I was being "trained" how all events like this take place.
7. After a few hours it was all over and, on the way, out the Comptroller tucked two (2) crisp 100-dollar bills into the "Spotter's" vest pocket with "there will be more later."

I also attended a meeting in Prince Albert where a large group met with GM in charge. I was there with the CEO of McDiarmid as "Observers".

1. GM was promoting a possible project on their First Nations site.
2. There was a feast that had been just consumed and many empty wine bottles.
3. One band member was absolutely insulting the GM for being unfaithful to his origins (He was a Metis).
4. The GM just took all that and just wiped the 'rotten tomatoes' off his nose.
5. I drove back to Saskatoon with the CEO, and he was making idle talk as to how I felt about managing the construction wing.
6. I said that I needed more information.

I went to the Head Offices in Winnipeg and was told that I needed to show up in a suit and that was the dress code.

1. The entire empire was seven (7) separate building supply stores including one in Saskatoon and Prince Albert.
2. They were prominent on bidding material supply packages to isolated communities and generating a great markup.
3. I witnessed a Chief coming in from Western Manitoba and looking at a Washer and Dryer on the store floor. The GM told him that he would get them installed as well as a set for his daughter once McDiarmid got their contract.
4. I sat in the GM's office when he was arranging a Pizza delivery to a band elder's birthday, somewhere in the NWT. He smiled and advised me that he kept track of the birthdays of all band elders and did the same thing periodically.
5. He also encouraged me to accept the position offered. He was able to generate enough income to pay outright for a large ranch and 200 head of beef cattle just west of Swan River. That I could end up getting rich like him.
6. McDiarmid had a fancy plane and Pilot that flew the executives around. I would get picked up in Castlegar twice a month and returned to Castlegar as required.
7. My base pay was to be \$100 per hour plus expenses.
8. I would get a 25% share in all the profits with no capital investment.
9. I was in Winnipeg two (2) times.

I returned home to Genelle to think all about this and received a call a week later to say that plane was coming to pick me up.

I declined and said that I could not operate within the environment of their operations. Elmer is not a good businessman!

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