

Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins, Ron Laliberte  
Métis Political Activist Interviews (Jan 24, 25, 2004)

Tape 1

**Start Time: 11:51:45.28**

**(Video Time: 11:51.45.28) Ron Laliberte:** Yeah. So going back to you, Mike, any, any sort of, the question I put to you before about the, you know, the politicians that influenced you, you know. Is, is there any values or, or things that, you know, you really hold dear that you know that you learned from those politicians when you think back to them in '70s that, you know, you really admire those qualities in them?

**Mike Mercredi:** Perhaps the term admire is a little too generous. But

**Ron Laliberte:** Okay.

**Mike Mercredi:** ...I certainly respect some of the, the views of, of the leaders at that time. But just to preface all this is that one of books I read by Maria Campbell, and, "The Half-Breed" and that's sort of again started to light the fire of interest and awaken me to, to the plight of the, of the Métis in the other parts of Canada and in the North. Like I've said so many times before is that up north it was okay. We, we didn't have a whole bunch of these bad problems but when you come down south, yeah there was some very significant problems and that was one book that started me thinking about it.

**Ron Laliberte:** Maria Campbell's "Half-Breed?"... **(Inaudible)** ...

**(Video Time: 11:52.57.24) Mike Mercredi:** Yup. And, and then going to the Métis meetings, and guys like Stan Durocher and Janet Fitz, just exchanging stories, sort of again created a greater interest in, in Métis history and caused me to go back and look at my family genealogy. Like I say I was able to determine we went back to 1795. A number of my cousins have also done this, exactly the same thing, so generating an interest in, and with that a pride in our ancestry of where we come from. And as I was trying to tell my kids and other people is that we need to know where we are going and to do that we need to know where we come from. And by knowing where we come from and knowing where we are going we establish a good foundation of where we are at this time. And that is almost simple organizational development, your father and his other two colleagues had a vision of where they wanted to go and so they were able to organize. So in a round about way my interest is not based on just one person but a number of people that I spoke to over, many, many years. The three persons I mentioned they were pretty important. A fellow by the name of, of Clarence Johnson in La Ronge, you don't know him. Maybe you do Frank? Clarence Johnson?

**Frank Tomkins:** Oh yeah. Sure I do.

**Mike Mercredi:** Yeah. Anyway he and I again we were, the two of us attending a meeting. We used to have a hell of a time trying to get other people to come to a meeting, eh? And we're sitting there talking and Clarence said to me. He said, "We mustn't forget." He said, "We have two ancestries," he said, "The European and the Indian ancestry." He said, "And

we must respect both of them equally." And those are great words, is that sometimes some of my friends lean too, from my way of thinking, they lean so heavily on their Aboriginal/First Nations ancestry and ignore the, the European part. So, Clarence, kind of interesting because I was trying to get a, a meeting going in La Ronge so I thought jeez, I'll talk to Clarence, make sure he comes to the meeting. He's Indian now, he's got his treaty rights back. So in order to single out one person certainly the book that Maria wrote influenced me. We were at a number of meetings where Maria spoke. I think we were talking a little while ago in, in the coffee room about, about her bag of cultural... She spoke to us about writing at one time. And the message that I really got from her was that, sit down and write. Don't worry about taking a writing course. Don't worry about writing right or writing wrong. Just write. And then worry about it later on. So then another, a good message and, and again that leads into to writing down our memories, which is someday going to be our history. You said your Dad wrote down everything. I think that's, that's an excellent trait. Takes a lot of discipline though eh? So there was a lot of people that contributed to my political awareness and a lot of them I respected, didn't agree with all of them. I didn't agree with all of them but that's important, you can have disagreements. As far as I was concerned they were all great people to, to work beside and, well anyway, so I can't really put all my eggs, everything in one basket and say here is one person that I admire. Many people are respected.

**End Time: 11:57:01.18**