Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins, Ron Laliberte

Métis Political Activist Interviews (Jan 24, 25, 2004)

Tape 3

(Video Time: 10:00.07.07) Ron Laliberte: When you think back on the, the Constitution of 1982, and the inclusion of the Métis in the Constitution under Section 32, 31.2 sorry. What type of impact do you think that had on, on the Métis and Métis politicians? Was that, how did you feel about that when that happened? Did it have any impact, do you think politically for Métis people?

(Video Time: 10:00.36.15) Mike Mercredi: I know I was some happy about it. And it didn't change my way of, of seeing myself or my family but I was, I was pretty pleased. It was, you know, it was recognition that was long over due. The way I look at a review the, the development of Canada. The Indians were here, the Europeans came over and an association between the Europeans and the Indians created a nation, our nation, our people. While they were similar on both sides they were very distinct in their own and as they started to, to move West they started playing a very major role in the development of the, basically, the development of the economics of Western Canada. I don't think they thought of it at the time, they were just doing a job that they knew that they could do. Our history books give recognition to the French, they give recognition to the English and they gave a degree of recognition to the First Nations and almost no recognition whatsoever about

the Métis. I remember going through, far as I went into grade 8 with history, is I knew more about Magellan and Drake and LaSalle and, and Champlain. I never heard of Louis Riel. So and, and then you turn this Constitution came out at least they recognized that we were a distinct people. Now that distinction must be accepted by every Métis person. I'm a distinct person within a distinct nation and, and I'm proud of that. Now how can I be proud belonging to a distinct nation when somebody else is paying us? You know, god damn I have a hell of a time with that. That's just, I, I just, I really get annoyed at that. So I'll stop now.

(Video Time: 10:03.01.05) Ron Laliberte: Frank, Frank any thoughts about the Constitution?

Frank Tomkins: Yes.

Ron Laliberte: ...and recognition of the...

Frank Tomkins: ...I think if the, the fact that the Constitution was patriated with the Treaties entrenched in the Constitution has made a great impact on the conditions today. Without that, without the, the Treaties being entrenched in the Constitution there'd be no such a thing as, as a Status Indian any more, we'd all be like Canadians, as Mike said when he joined the army. They'd have got, they'd have gotten away with that because that was a contract made with the Queen and if that would have happened, if that would have happened, if the, if the contract had been broken the Status Indians today would not be getting the kind of funding that, that they are receiving now. And we wouldn't see the development like we are seeing now with the Status Indians. They got all kinds of things going, going now

because of monies available to them. They're talking about putting an MIR thing in a, in, in Saskatoon here which is a great, be a great thing for everybody, not only the Status Indians. Now had, had it not been, if the Constitution had been patriated without the Treaties being entrenched you wouldn't have that. We wouldn't have that at all. The Status Indians from then on would have been sad news. Another thing too like people object to the fact that, that Status Indians get funding and Métis people get funding, to some degree it's good to be funded for different projects and another it's not a very good thing because you get dependent on government. With the funding it has done some good in many instances because without government assistance and not only, and everybody benefits from this not only the Indians or the, or the Métis. We have our schools that's funded by government. All the schools across Canada are funded by government from the tax payer, coming from the tax payer. So when we get government funding for the institutions such as ITEP, SUNTEP and Gabriel Dumont Institute I think it's a hell of a great idea because, you know, it's coming to us, we deserve it and we should have it and it was a long time coming. And I'm really happy that we do have such a thing because it's a great institution. Going back again to, I always go, fall back on education, where would anybody be without an education? You know, where would, like, Prime Minister Martin be without an education? You know, they didn't get that from, you know, from getting welfare or anything like that, you know, they got that from having a good education so they could go out and do something. Well Dumont is, is educating people today. A lot of them are, are, are, are, going

out and sort of getting into the political field. We got one, we got, we got a Minister, two Ministers now in, in the government. Joan Beatty's, Joan Beatty's one of them and then we got guy from Buffalo Narrows, can't think of his name now. But you know he's the Minister of, of the North. So that's what education does and it's, it's great that, that, you know, we, a few of us have got together and say look we had to have an institution of our own. And I must, I must say that I had a little part in playing in getting Gabriel Dumont Institute together and I'm quite proud of the fact had it not been for a few of us guys harping on, on not only the government but our own organization through executive and say, "Hey let's quit talking about this. Let's get around, let's get it going. It can't be a paper college forever. Let's get it going. Let's get it started." And this being said at annual general meetings, of course, you got the people that say, "Hey, yeah, let's get going on this. Why talk about it and not do it?" So our politicians had to act and they did and here we got a, you know, a very good institution going. And I hope it gets bigger and bigger because going back again without, without such a thing people are lost. You know, you know…

End Time: 10:07:29.00