

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

Tape 3

Start Time: 10:10:34.27

Ron Laliberte: When you think about the inclusion of the Métis under Section 35.2 and I think I got it right this time, I think I said 31 before...

Frank Tomkins: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: ...so I stand corrected. What, you know, like okay then so we got recognized in the Constitution and that's a good thing. It's about time that we got some federal recognition of who we are and that we exist. But when you think about it, really what did that give us? Do you see anything positive coming out of that, I mean, you know, it was great that Harry Daniels and other politicians like that got us in the Constitution. I think that's a very positive thing in many ways, but what have we really got in terms of benefits from that? Do you see anything tangible?

(Video Time: 10:11.10.09) Mike Mercredi: I, I don't know if you need to see anything tangible but we certainly have to go through some, some progressive growing stages. When you were talking about AMNSIS a little while ago, that wasn't my most favourite organization. We started talking about the separation of the Métis and the Non-Status in the '80s and I was really in favour of the separation of the two. I think that whoever formed AMNSIS or the concept of AMSIS, like I said earlier, was looking at numbers.

The more numbers we can get the better funding we're going to be able to get.

Ron Laliberte: More power in numbers?

Mike Mercredi: Yeah perhaps more power, yeah more power in numbers. However, I think it, it was important we needed to progress and when I say we I say the Métis. Shortly after the Constitution and I can't be certain about this, but I think Mulroney, I think he used the term Métis Nation in one of his speeches and that was quickly taken up by the Métis organizations across the world, across the country. In Saskatchewan we were still associated Métis and Non-Status Indians. I didn't like it, however I think it was necessary to go through that to progress to where we are now and I think that we're laying the foundation to where we can be tomorrow and the day after and so on. We've got to go through these growing stages and as much as I dislike to be dependent on government funding, we couldn't have done it without them. We, we needed to pull the people together. Another thing I sort of, and I criticize our society today, is that everybody's in it for themselves. So when you say to a guy that's, that's a Métis, "Why don't you join the Local?" The first thing he's going to say is "Why? What am I going to get for it?" He wants something and yet if you talk about it for a little while you, you know he's a Métis, he knows he's a Métis, he's proud of being a Métis but why join the Local? He's going to say, "What am I going to get for it?" We have a list in La Ronge of about three hundred and some Métis people. We had an AGM a few months back there was thirty people there. We had a number of board meetings instead and we get five people at a board meeting, just enough for

a quorum. We're looking forward to doing some strategic development next month. And if we get thirty we're, we're going to be happy as hell. And I've targeted fifty people, I'm saying we need to go after fifty people to come down and everybody's saying, "Gee Mike that would really be good but it will probably be around thirty people." So, you know, there has to be a motivation some place so that people will come out. John Franklin Kennedy, the President of the United States said, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." Same bloody thing within our movement, but the first question comes up is "Why should I be a Métis? What am I going to get to be a Métis? Or what, what advantage am I going to have?"

Ron Laliberte: I imagine during the *Grumbo* case a lot of them said, "Now I'm a Métis."

Ron Laliberte: ... **(Inaudible)** ...out of the wood work after that.

(Video Time: 10:14.41.10) Mike Mercredi: And, you know, people now in La Ronge area are talking about yeah if we can get our hunting rights back and, and that's going to be good. Again what's it going to be, what's in it for me? So it was kind of interesting I was in Fort McMurray running a, an Aboriginal Employment service and there was a, a white guy and his wife wanted to start a business and he and I were talking just as friends. He never ever asked for any kind of assistance, we just met, had a beer and talked. One day he walks into my office and he said, "I found out I'm a Métis." He said, "My grandmother was, was an Indian." So now he's a Métis

and "I need some help getting my business going." So up until, up until he found out he was a Métis he didn't need any help. He was going to into...

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Mike Mercredi: ...his own business, eh. But god damn I'm a Métis now I get some help. Too bad.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Mike Mercredi: It's too bad. I think that we, we need to create a sense of awareness of our own and I think that we need to generate more enthusiasm for being on our own. And, like I say, bringing something to the Métis Nation as opposed to what can I get from the Métis Nation.

End Time: 10:15:50.17