

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

Tape 3

**Start Time: 11:24:59.00**

**(Video Time: 11:24.59.00) Ron Laliberte:** When you think about Northern Development, you know, particularly in the 1960s how is that, have you got any thoughts about how that impacted on Aboriginal communities in the North? Remember we talked a bit about the CCF going into the North and centralizing communities and, and the impact of that? Do you see, in hindsight do you see any, you know, development in the North whether it's mining or what-, whatever in the North. Do you see a changing, a lot of changes in the North that have changed Aboriginal communities in the North at all over, over the years since that time at all?

**(Video Time: 11:25.42.28) Mike Mercredi:** I saw a hell of a lot of change. Yellowknife is, is a great city for people that just first time they go into, into the North and the see a city like that's so far North. However, for myself and an awful lot of people on my age, we don't like it. You know, because it was, it's too big, too cosmopolitan, too modern, and places where we used to, to hunt, set snares now are, well we have subdivisions in there. And it just grew so, so rapidly and understandably it has to change, the way of life and everything else up there. So political or not the development of the north and development anywhere is going to change the residents and the inhabitants and the original people in that particular area. I think when we go back in

history we go back, you know, as far as we want, but every time that there was more or newer development it had a very significant change in the way of life of the people that were there before. And if they didn't change then they got swept up in the backlash and got lost. So the, the people had to change. There'd be many people up in the Northwest Territories that will say, "No, no it was good because it's bringing in the economy, it's bringing in a lot of services we didn't have when I was a kid. Much better education, much better hospitals, much better transportation." You know, like, you couldn't get into Yellowknife by road until, I forget when it was, but you'd either fly in or go in with a boat and that was a long trip. So yeah it changed. And if you bring that down into Saskatchewan now, the development of the mine, mining companies in Northern Saskatchewan, the uranium mines of Northern Saskatchewan, again that was a very significant change in the north because there was creating an awful lot, an awful lot of wealth. I'm not sure whether we maximized the, the wealth creation for northern people. I know that we were, that, northern Sask-, Department of Northern Saskatchewan we're sure trying to. But it made a, again, a significant change. Who would think that a guy could get on an aircraft and fly into the, into the remoteness of Northern Saskatchewan, stay there for a week and then fly back out and live in a, in a city like Prince Albert or Saskat-, Saskatoon or Regina? Just a few years before that they would say, "No I'm, I'm stuck here in La Ronge or I'm stuck here in, in Weyakwin," or something like that eh? So again that opened the doors and opportunities, you would call that progress. Maybe there was some of us, like me, that don't like it but I have to admit that it's better than

it was before for many people. And, you know, because like I say, you can be in favor of progress but I don't have to like it.

**End Time: 11:28:49.17**