

Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins, Ron Laliberte

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

Tape 2

Start Time: 12:11:40.11

(Video Time: 12:11.40.11) Mike Mercredi: This idea of, of, of defining a Métis and so on, I've always had a hell of a time with it, in that, I don't know if you get the gist of it of my saying at the, at the start of all this, is that I know I'm Métis. And I've got my genealogy that says I'm Métis and, and I sure as hell don't need a card to say that I'm Métis. One of the things that really annoyed me, and I don't know whether it's still like that today, but when a Métis organization, a provincial Métis organization was incorporated, they were incorporated the same as a non-profit corporation. In a non-profit corporation Act, which made you the same as a golf club or a curling club, you had a similar constitution and if you had the two or three dollars you could buy a membership and, and I always spoke against that. I said, "No we need something more than that." To bring us back to what I originally started talking about, we need to negotiate with the federal government so that there is a, a *Métis Act* of Canada and, and we need to start dealing with these people as opposed to dealing with the provincial people. We in our Métis Constitution, I think, Métis Nation Constitution right now, there's a reference to our homeland. And the homeland was defined at the last meeting here as being from Northeast Ontario to British Columbia, the northern part of British Columbia into Northwest Territories and down into,

into Montana. And they said central North America is our homeland. Which I think is great. I, I think that where the Métis Nations really started was in the Selkirk, or rather the Red River Settlements and then they grew from there. However, there were still Métis in Eastern Canada and there are Métis in Manitoba in, in Montana and my question is that: how do we deal with those people? I never did get an answer. But in the United States to the best of my knowledge they don't have Métis. They have a, a certain quantum of Indian blood. You know, you're a quarter, you're a third, you're a tenth, you're a sixteenth, you're a thirty-second and stuff like that. And that's it. So they're all Indians down there, just that some of them have more Indian blood than others. I don't know how you do that, because it's all red, isn't it eh? So I asked the question how are we going to deal with that? And now again as we were talking about earlier, we are transient, people are moving around so much. I've got a daughter in Vancouver. She knows about her Aboriginal Métis ancestry, 'cause I told her. And, but it's not a big deal for her because she's in a completely non-Native environment in Vancouver. And if you were to talk to her, ask her if she was an Aboriginal she'd probably say yes. But she could also say well not really I, I don't know anything about it. That's too bad. And I think if we were able to establish that base, that foundation, I think would be quite an interesting step for a fellow to do.

(Video Time: 12:15.08.03) Ron Laliberte: You raise an interesting point. Last weekend ah Saskatchewan, the Métis Nation, Nation of Saskatchewan adopted the National, the Métis National Council's definition and a number of other provinces did too, the definition of Métis and you just mentioned it. You

got to self-identify as a Métis, you got to belong to the Historic Métis Nation, and then you got to be accepted by the Métis Nation. Now the two parts in that, of course, that are controversial is well, how do, do you become a member of this Historic Métis Nation as you pointed out?

Ron Laliberte: And, and what are the criteria then for that stipulation? And, and thirdly, you have to be accepted by the Métis Nation and what criteria does that involve?

Frank Tomkins: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: So this is very, you know, this hasn't been spelled out very clearly. And when you see that definition with hindsight now and you take a look back at your communities when you were younger, how is that different? Or was that, was that even an issue in your communities back then? I mean, or did you, did you even think about yourself as Métis? Or did you know consciously that you were Métis? Or was there no difference between First Nations and Métis? How did you see that, I mean?

(Video Time: 12:16.13.16) Mike Mercredi: Well, from my perspective I was telling you we didn't have a problem. In our village it was us and them. And like I said, there was the Mounted Police and the Hudson's Bay store manager and the fur trader. Our priest was Métis and, oh yeah, school teacher would come in for the school year and they were all white from Southern Canada. But it was us or them. And we didn't see, I reflect back on it now, I couldn't tell the difference between someone who was Indian and who was Métis.

End Time: 12:16:46.06