

“The other night, I was watching a Nelson Mandela documentary on *History Television* and there was Mr. Mandela speaking about the importance of education--not only for the betterment of--but for the actual survival of his people and country in this shrinking, global world we live in. Mr. Mandela was addressing a roomful of students, not unlike the many roomsful of students that I have addressed on Friday afternoons at the Gabriel Dumont Institute here in Saskatchewan. ‘I have got a special interest in all students, in all teachers in this country,’ spoke Mr. Mandela, ‘It is absolutely imperative that you have the education and the knowledge to save your country and your people. Out of you, we are going to have Members of Parliament, Ambassadors, Presidents. You are going to command our armies. Everyone of you is a potential leader; who, if you take the challenge, will change the face of South Africa. And that is my dream.’ I have a very similar dream for our people and for the Metis Nation of Canada. As I mentioned before, I think that education for our Metis people is comparable--in the 21st century--to what the buffalo was for us in the 1820s to 1870s.”

"We sure need people like you to tell our stories and keep them alive. Your stories arouse the living with a fierce passion and a determination for justice. You understand that the power of your stories once belonged--and still belongs--to the spirits of our dead ancestors. Canada's written history neglects and distorts the role of Canada's Aboriginal peoples--particularly that of the Metis people. The history that we learn about and the stories that are told and forced down our throats are mostly stories about the recent colonial history of the last 500-or-so years. There's a significant element missing in the telling of those stories...and that missing element is of and from the Aboriginal peoples. A kind of 'unofficial war' had been declared the first moment the Spanish Conquistadors set foot on Native American soil. That same 'war' has been raging onward ever since. The 'war' for North and South America continues to this day and the current 'history' of that 'war'--our 'war'--amounts to little more than a soap opera written in the Eurocentric victors' camp."

"Historians themselves, for the most part, do not seem to understand how much the Aboriginal peoples have

contributed to the history and development of Canada and the Americas. And the only way that we Metis can regain our rightful role in the past, present and future of this great country is to ensure that our stories are told, broadcast and distributed throughout mainstream society. Just like Grandma used to say, 'If you ever think you are too small to make a big difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.'"

"Yes, my Grandmother used to cradle me in her arms, rock me in her rocking chair and whisper in my ear, 'Remember 'ti Jean, the spirit of the dead will survive in the memory of the living. We all have to die someday 'ti Jean, but if we have to die in silence, as if all our struggles were meaningless, I think that's the greatest tragedy.' She would have been so proud of me that day, in Ottawa; the day that '*Diamant*' Nelson Mandela and I combined to produce an international symbol. Together, we broke the 'silence' of oppression--if only for an instant--as we tied a bright, red, Metis sash around the equator of Mother Earth."