

Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins, Ron Laliberte

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

Tape 2

Start Time: 14:21:37.00

Ron Laliberte: So when you think about, you know, that style of Malcolm, Norris, and, you know, that, that period then you get into the 1960s, did either of you see any changes there in terms of the political objectives or the style of the politicians or anything like that? When, you know, because you're talking about the 1960s, you know, this was the period of, of anti-establishment, you know, the civil rights movement in the United States and all of these different things, Vietnam war protests and so on and did you experience any changes in the political climate, if you will during that period?

(Video Time: 14:22.15.22) Frank Tomkins: Well, like I said that I was working with the government at the time until 1967 and then after that I, I was all over the country working. I had to work and no I, I wasn't involved in politics or, or anything at the time. I didn't think it was a very good idea the, the way they were doing it. As a matter of fact even in later years there was, I was at a meeting in Batoche and they were talking about taking up arms and stuff like that. Nothing but a bunch of damn fools if you're thinking that, you know, because, you know, the government's in control of everything, you know. Why talk like that, you're not going to get anywhere with that kind of talk.

Ron Laliberte: You're talking about violence?

Frank Tomkins: Oh yeah.

Ron Laliberte: Was, was...

Frank Tomkins: There was some....

Ron Laliberte: Did, did you know about Dr. Howard Adams during this period?

Frank Tomkins: Yeah, Howard Adams....

Ron Laliberte: Was he involved at all?

Frank Tomkins: Howard Adams wasn't the kind of guy that was going to take up arms as far as I'm concerned. Howard Adams was a, you know, when I first got involved in politics, I guess this would be 1970, '72 I guess, when I got involved with the Métis Society then, Métis Association. Jim, of course, Sinclair was the president, and I didn't know Howard's involvement very much, I really, I must admit I didn't know how he was really involved in anything. And because Howard had been a policeman, Jim used to say, "Once a policeman, always a policeman." You know.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Frank Tomkins: And of course, that turned me against Howard, eh. It was many years after before I realized that he was on the right track. He was really on the right track.

Ron Laliberte: But he had that radical sort of style because... **(Inaudible)** ...you probably didn't know him very well, either of you, during that period because he came from St. Louis.

Frank Tomkins: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: He was educated in, he became an RCMP officer for a while and then he went and did his Sociology degree at, at UBC and then from there he went to the University of California in...

Frank Tomkins: Berkley.

Ron Laliberte: Berkley. And then he got, he saw people like, speak like Malcolm X and, you know all about that, you know the civil rights of blacks and then, you know, he saw, you know, that nationalism was, was something that was really helping blacks out there. And then he, armed with those types of ideas he came back to Canada and then he started, you know, this was during the period of protests and sit-ins and so on so that's, that's kind of how he, he approached, you know, fighting for the rights through nationalism and, and, you know, confrontation with, with the state and I don't know, any thoughts on, on what he did there? Did he... **(Inaudible)** ...

(Video Time: 14:24.56.08) Mike Mercredi: I'll tell you that, in the '70s or '80s I was working for Department of Northern Saskatchewan and somehow we got wind of the, the Métis Nation and the Métis, AMNSIS at that time under Sinclair, were going to come up and put on some kind of a protest in La Ronge. I don't know how this, this came about, like how we found out about it. But anyway they, they knew the date that he was going to come up there with all the Métis from the South. And I heard Jim say this. He said to a number of people, just outside my office, as they were coming through **(Unknown Word) (Unknown Word)** building there? And there was a whole slough of Métis people from the South came in and I heard Jim say to them, "Look this is our building." and he said, "If you ever find out

something, you go in the offices, you look at their files." And he said again, "This is our building. It, they built it for us so we should have access to all this information." Well we heard before he got there that this is what they were going to do. I, but anyway we, we all knew. My god you should have seen all of the, the paper shredding that was going on for about two days before that. The Deputy Minister was frightened to say the least because they thought that they were going to come in there and, and muscle the people and, and all that kind of stuff, eh. And it was, as far as I was concerned, it was a nice, quiet, gentle demonstration. We had a couple of guys come into our office and they come into my office and said, "Okay what are you doing?" At that time I was either just finished negotiating the, the Key Lake Agreement or near the end. And they said, "What's going on in here?" So I told them. So there was no need to be frightened. But I'll tell you the Department of Northern Saskatchewan, the bureaucrats, the senior bureaucrats were very frightened. So that was the closest that we come, I think, in Northern Saskatchewan to any kind of, of protest movement. I'm being very generous using that term because it wasn't much of a protest.

End Time: 14:27:11.22