

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

Tape 3

Start Time: 9:51:35.19

(Video Time: 9:51.35.19) Ron Laliberte: Interesting. Do you, do you have any recollection of, if we could go ahead a little bit and talk about the 1960s and '70s? When you think about the Métis political organizations of the 1960s and then the development of AMNSIS and Jim Sinclair and that whole period, are you, are you familiar with much of that background in terms, did you know Jim? Have you got any comments about that alliance between the Métis and the Non-Status because they were both excluded from the *Indian Act* and then they formed a political alliance in order to lobby the government for their rights. How did that work? Was that, was that a good relationship in, of course, that when you look forward, you know, the *Constitution Act* and so on and when the Non-Status were excluded and the Métis started breaking off into their own organizations, but what was that like during that period? Do you have any thoughts on AMNSIS and how it worked and how it functioned and any sort of recollections that of that period that you want to comment on?

(Video Time: 9:52.34.10) Frank Tomkins: Well, at that particular time I was working for the government and it didn't really affect me at all and I wasn't involved because my job was, like I said earlier, it was 24 hours a day, you might say 7 days a week. My hours were undefined and I had to be

there. So it didn't give me any time to get involved politically in any way. That very time though is the time when I used to see Brady and Malcolm and my father talk about, in the evenings talk about the political part. And I know Malcolm tried to revive the Métis movement in the early '60s and late '50s, but there was so much opposition then by government and, and by the people themselves because, you know, times were relatively good in comparison to the '30s when they started up and it was very difficult to, to really organize politically. There was some effort made by, by others but it never really got off the ground, like I say. The government had already went through. Had an experience with, with political leaders and political movement in Alberta and were able to attain all that land for the Métis people in Alberta and certainly they, I'm sure, that the government afterwards didn't want to go through that experience again. So they did everything they possibly could to hold it down. And when it got to the point where the, where they couldn't hold it down anymore, then they figured well let's start funding them. And once they start funding them well then you got them in your pocket, so to speak. And that's what really happened to the Métis movement in the '50s, '60s and '60s was they started get funding from the government and, and that sort of, it didn't kill the organization by any means, but they gave the control over to the government, you might say.

(Video Time: 9:54.48.07) Ron Laliberte: Would Brady and Norris have been in favour of AMNSIS because you have a joining of Non-Status and Métis in that political organization. Would've they been in favor of that because, well you know, we lost them in the 1960s, late 1960s Brady and

Norris, and, and of course AMNSIS developed around that period, and I think it's in, oh no it was in 1975 that AMNSIS was established. Would've they been in favour of that alliance? Would they have gone a long with that from your particular point of view?

(Video Time: 9:55.19.09) Frank Tomkins: I'm sure it would be a, a, Brady not Malcolm, he used to harp on me all the time that I should get involved, you know, if you get involved, get involved. God I had seven kids I had to look after. I had a job. I had to feed them and I couldn't, you know. And I always, and I never said nothing to Malcolm about it but I figured well, heck Malcolm, your kids are grown up, you got a job, why the hell don't you go after it? But he did... **(Inaudible)** ...He did and, and he had more off time than I did, of course. But it all goes back I think to the fact that the, the funding – they were in favour, I'm sure of, of AMNSIS getting together, you know, Métis and Non-Status Indians together. What they were opposed of against, of course, was the funding part.

End Time: 9:56:15.27