

Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins, Ron Laliberte

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

Tape 3

Start Time: 10:15:50.04

(Video Time: 10:15.50.04) Frank Tomkins: I give a great deal of, of respect and thanks to Harry because he did play a great part in the Constitution, ensuring that, the rights of Aboriginal people were entrenched in the Constitution. He didn't put them there, they were there when, when the Constitution was drafted up, but people tend to forget all about it. But people that studied it and that was politically minded and wanted to do something the people knew about it and that was the reason that they had the Royal Commission in Alberta in the '30s to bring this fact out. That Métis people have the same rights as Treaty Indians but it was through legislation that these rights were taken away. And I always say that it was both immoral to do that and illegal to do that because the government themselves were breaking the Constitution. So the Royal Commission proved that yes these people do have rights, they have rights to land, they have rights to hunting, they have rights to fishing. Okay so what are we going to do about it? So these organizers say, "Well look we're going to go out and consult with the people and see what land they would like, what resources they feel are available in their country that they can take advantage of." And that was the result of the settlements being set aside for the Métis people. Because they had the right to, to land, hunting and fishing and even today they can go out

and hunt and fish. But they don't exploit the thing, you know, they, they have sense, sense, sense enough to, to look after the resources that's, that's there. They don't want to deplete the thing because then you got nothing. When I say, when I see these like *Gumbo* or...

Ron Laliberte: *Grumbo.*

Frank Tomkins: ...going to court and this happened another time, Métis people going to court over rights. You know, it's a few years ago again there was another Royal Commission named and investigated on and again they proved that Métis people have rights. But the government will not give in any time anybody breaks the so-called law that the government has, has brought in with respect to fishing, hunting or anything else. They, they, they pinch the guy and he's got to go to court, spend a lot of money and eventually it's proven that he had the legal right to do that. But the government is a national thing for all the Métis people they will not do that and, of course, they possibly the biggest reason for that the fact that it would cost the government an awful lot of money if they were to make the same kind of settlement with Métis people as they had done to the Status Indians. They have that right but the government is not going to do, not going to give it to them and I doubt very much, this is my own personal opinion, but I doubt very much if the Métis people will ever be successful in obtaining all the rights. I doubt very much that it will ever come about them because the government is, is afraid that, that if this would come about the politicians that agreed to it probably be kicked out and you'd get some other politicians in there and it's all a political thing anyway. The, if it comes to, to that that,

that the government had to give in with the Supreme Court decision that the Métis people have these rights and it's about time they were given the rights or given some compensation for it, they'd say and it's been tried a, a number of times. It was tried by the Prime-, the former Prime Minister with the White Paper to get rid of the Treaties. You know, make everybody a, a, a Canadian citizen so to speak and everybody pays taxes and, and nobody gets any of, of the benefits. It was tried by Mulroney with the Meach Lake and very recently Manley was, of course, he went a little further, he wanted to get rid of the Queen, which is, which is, which is a way of breaking the contract. And I believe that eventually this, this will come about. It was done in Australia, you know, got rid of the Queen there so they have no Aboriginal rights over there. They haven't any. And who's more Aboriginal than Aborigines? But so like I say it's very doubtful that, my personal opinion, of course, that the Métis will never, they'll win little things, like hunting rights and maybe in Manitoba and then you got to go Saskatchewan and then you got to BC and then you got a go across every damn province in, doing that fight because wherever the court is held that's were the decision is made. So it doesn't matter that, that you win in Manitoba you still got to fight it here and any other province that, that you get nailed for hunting out of season or out of...

End Time: 10:21:01.12