

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

Tape 3

**Start Time: 9:28:39.06**

**(Video Time: 9:28.39.06) Ron Laliberte:** Okay, Frank you have something to tell us about code talkers and some of the background of that. And I understand that you had a brother, was it, that was involved in, in becoming a code talker? Maybe you could say a few words about that 'cause that's certainly an interesting part of history at...

**(Video Time: 9:28.54.04) Frank Tomkins:** Yes, I, I did have a brother involved in it and we were never even aware of it for a long, long time because I guess they, you know, they were told to keep everything quiet, you know, oath of silence ... **(Inaudible)** ...those secret thing eh. And I never even found out about it until way, way after. Anyway he was called into, by one of the British officers one day and he asked if he knew other people that could speak Cree and English fluently. And he say, "Well yes," he says, "Right from my hometown." He says, "I could name quite a few." So, he got one of my brothers and a few other guys that, right from our home town, and they were attached to the American 8<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command, and they would send messages back and forth in Cree and then translate at the other end. And this was quite effective because even though the Germans could probably, you know, hear 'em they didn't understand what was going on. And they had all kinds of code names for the different type of aircraft and

how many would be in formation from the various fields and where they would get together to, to go on the bombing raid. And they did that for quite some time. And of course when the, when the actual invasion part of the, of the war started, like in, in Sicily for example, one of my brothers, one of the code talkers went over there and then, of course, my brother he went to Normandy. At that time they were out of the, they were out of the American army, they were, they weren't with the American Air Force any more and that was the end of their part of the code talking. Now whether there was any others that was involved during the actual fighting, I'm, I'm not aware of again, you know, that's all secret stuff. But when my brother started talking about it, he named a few guys from, that I was familiar with, back in my hometown in Alberta and he said there was a couple guys from Poundmaker's Reserve. I guess this is probably a result of our relationship with, with people in Poundmaker, that probably through my grandmother through my father, he probably named a few that was in the armed forces that could be part of the code talking team. But when they started they, they started there was, wasn't too many of them involved and they weren't involved for, together for, for any great length of time. So he never really got to know the other code talkers other than the ones that he knew, you know, for, for years. And when they were dispersed all over the place, well then he never saw them again. And as a result over the years he's forgotten the names and, and so I think probably, he just passed away here a couple months ago, and he thought that he was probably the last of the code talkers. We don't know, of course, but my brother in-law was quite interested

in this and there was quite a, a, quite a write up about the American code talkers. The Americans used them a lot there against the Japanese and they were quite effective. They used mostly Navajo code talkers and they were really effective in the, in the war. Now whether this continued on with, with on the Amer-, on the Canadian side in the war I'm not aware of. Maybe even my brother wasn't aware of it because he was in the Tank Corp went over, over, over to Normandy in the Tank Corp and, of course, there was no code talking with the tanks for sure. This was done primarily by people behind the lines so to speak so they could direct what goes on at the front.

**End Time: 9:32:49.20**