

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

Tape 3

Start Time: 11:17:00.13

Ron Laliberte: That's good. Can I ask you a little bit more, Frank, about your past? You were involved with Aboriginal trappers and the fur ban in Europe?

Frank Tomkins: Yes.

Ron Laliberte: Could you tell us a bit about that background? That's, that's quite interesting as well.

Frank Tomkins: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: What happened there?

Frank Tomkins: Well the European parliament, government in, in, in, in Belgium, they had put a fur ban on all fur coming from, from Canada because of the leg trap, eh?

Ron Laliberte: This is how long ago by the way?

Frank Tomkins: I beg your pardon?

Ron Laliberte: How long ago was this about?

Frank Tomkins: Oh this was a...

Ron Laliberte: Was this in the '80s or '90s?

Frank Tomkins: Oh no, the '90s.

Ron Laliberte: The '90s.

Frank Tomkins: The '90s and they were opposed to, they didn't want to import any, any fur from Canada because of the leg hold trap.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Frank Tomkins: It was a mean thing, I guess this is a carry over from, from the seal hunt, eh?

Ron Laliberte: Green Peace and....

Frank Tomkins: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: ...stuff like that.

(Video Time: 11:17.58.29) Frank Tomkins: Some sick people, I say they, you know, figured you shouldn't be doing this and so the next meeting that was going to be held in, in, in Brussels and, funny thing the main people that was against it was people from Holland, from Holland. So I wrote a letter to all the Aboriginal organizations suggesting that look why don't we send some veterans over there and tell those people look we come over here and liberated your country now you are jeopardizing our livelihood. And I never got any kind of a response. I knew before that that, you know, certain individuals from the various Métis organizations had been over there to attend some of these meetings without any success whatsoever. So I was getting kind of frustrated so I wrote an article in the *Star-Phoenix* suggesting again that this should be done. And Alan Adam, he was one of the Vice Presidents for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, read the article and he gave me a call. And he says, "Would you be interested in, in meeting with us," and I said, "Sure." So we had a short meeting with him and it so happened that there was a trappers meeting going on in Thunder Bay and he

said, "Would you be willing to go?" And I says, "Certainly, you know, I'd be willing to go." And what I had suggested was a couple trappers from each province go over and he thought this was a very good idea. So anyway I suggested as well that, you know, we have an Aboriginal Minister in the, in the Provincial Government. I said, "It would be nice if he went along because he comes from a trapping area at Cumberland House." This was Keith Goulet.

Ron Laliberte: Yes.

Frank Tomkins: So I went to Thunder Bay and had a good meeting with them there and, and of course I put on my Legion uniform to make it look more, more impressive, I guess. And I suggested to the trappers that this is what should be done because their livelihood was at stake. And they, they thought it was a wonderful idea and they decided to have, raise a collection there and they raised over \$3000, just from the people that was attending the, the trappers meeting. So I come back and but on the way over the, we had trouble with the aircraft and we had to land at Winnipeg. And I knew Yvon Dumont from way back and he was in with the Governor-, Lieutenant Governor from Manitoba. So I figured damn it this would be a damn good idea if he, if we could invite him to come along. So I gave him a call and he said, "Sure," he says, "I'd be glad to go if I'm invited." Then when we got to, got to the trappers meeting in Thunder Bay it turned out that the brother of the Premier of the Northwest Territories was there. So I asked him if his brother would be interested in going. He says, "Absolutely, sure he would." So here we would have had an MLA from Saskatchewan, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and a Premier of Northwest Territories to go along with these

trappers. So I brought this information back and, and that's when things sort of went out of whack. The, the President, or the Grand Chief of the First Nations Veterans, didn't like me anyways, so I was out in so far as going over there. I wasn't all that interested in going anyway because I'm no trapper. But he, he was sort of, took, took over the whole thing. It ended up there was a half a dozen Status veterans that went over there, not one of them a trapper, but nonetheless they were successful. Keith Goulet went and he took along a trapper from, not a veteran, but a trapper from Cumberland House along and they met with the up, the, what the hell they call it? The European Parliament, that's what it is. And met with them and they were quite successful, you know. The idea was hey, that's right, you know, we can't be jeopardizing these people's lives when they come over and rescued us from, from you know, liberated us from, from Hitler and his gang. So I was quite happy of the result and they had another trappers meeting in P.A. a few years afterwards and he invited me down there and he presented me with a nice plaque for my little involvement in the thing. But I was quite happy that, you know, they, they can still use, they still buy fur or sell fur to Holland. You know, that, that idea that they had initially was kicked out.

End Time: 11:23:05.10