

Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins, Ron Laliberte

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

Tape 3

Start Time: 11:47:38.26

Frank Tomkins: And one of my cousins that was killed, he was, both his parents were, were dead and he was the only surviving, him and his younger daughter, and he, and he was sending money to his, it was his dependent now eh, his younger sister. And he was getting a pension and in the army in those days if you were single, like me, I got the big sum of a dollar and a half a day. That was, you know, that was a lot of money. But if you were married, or if you had a dependent, you only got seventy-five cents a day. So seventy-five cents was going to his sister and he was getting the rest for his pay. Well he got killed on day six in the, in the Normandy invasion. And then she had a letter and I had, I had a copy of it and I brought it to the Senate. And I read it to the Senate hearing and it stated that when he had got killed, he didn't have a will so there was no, nothing there and he had \$24.00 in his pay so she got \$24.00 from his, from his pay after he got killed. And I said this is one hell of a way to treat an Aboriginal person who goes there in defense of his country, you know. What about, and you say he didn't have a will? How come they let a guy join the army and go fight for God's sake without a will? There's a good chance he's going to be killed. Got to have a will. And I know I signed it, I had a will, I had nothing to give away but, you know, just a young fellow. Nevertheless I had to, you know, sign a will when

I joined the armed forces. So I've, I brought all this up and what really made me mad was, was there an Indian Senator there, Len Marchand and when he met with the group in Vancouver there was one veteran there his brother had gotten killed during the war and Len Marchand says, "Don't you think it would be nice if there was a monument built in Ottawa for a..." "Oh sure. Yeah, yeah it'd be nice." And when I heard about that I figured well that's, that's what the bastards are after, you know, a damn monument for Aboriginal people so they don't have to give them any kind of a compensation. And so I wrote an article saying that, in opposition to this monument. I said, "If you built one it will be a monumental insult against the Aboriginal veterans." And now one old veteran from Alberta he says, "You know why they want to build a monument for Aboriginal people in Ottawa? So the pigeons will have something to shit on." That was his comment. So nonetheless, you know, the government pushed this, this idea of a, of a, of a monument. Although there was quite a number of recommendations made that, you know, they didn't follow over the recommendations they sort of pushed this monument thing which wasn't, which wasn't the vet-, what the veterans wanted. Because what's the matter with, what's the matter with the monument that's there? You know, that's good for everybody that was involved in the First and Second World War and in the Korean War. Why build a special one? Didn't make any sense to me. But they pushed that and unfortunately Claude Petit, who had been elected as the President of the National Aboriginal Veteran's Organization, and you can't get rid of him because any time they had an AG me-, an AGM meeting if you want to go to

a meeting in Ottawa where elections are held you got to pay your own way. And how many veterans can afford to pay their own way? But he'll pay for half a dozen guys that's going to support 'em. They get paid so he gets re-elected. And he was pushing the monument all the time. So now we have a monument in Ottawa but no Métis veterans has gotten any kind of a compensation that I know of. If they want to see what our compensation package is, they can go have a look at that monument. That's where it is.

Ron Laliberte: First Nations people though did get some... **(Inaudible)** ...compensation?

Frank Tomkins: First Nations people, yes. They went after, they went after a compensation package and those that were active members, those that was involved in the Second World War and the Korean War got up to \$20,000. And this was a, this was a result I suppose as a, and I raised a lot of hell about that too. I had no objection to members of the Merchant Navy getting any kind of a compensation package because, you know, they were as much in the war as anybody else. They didn't join the arm-, armed forces to, to carry a rifle or anything. But transporting equipment across the oceans on the, on those, there was a lot of merchant seamen that was killed. Their ships was sunk eh, by the German torpedoes. So as far as I was concerned they deserved a compensation package and, and, and, and they got up to, up to twenty thousand from five to twenty thousand based on their service. Well I thought the government could do the same thing with all Aboriginal veterans, you know, based on their service. If, you know, if they were combat, well get a little bit more. If they serviced both in Sicily and in, in, in

France, Germany and Holland they, a little bit more. And those that served just in England, just in England or Canada, well a lesser amount. That, that was how I figured that it should have been done but the, the First Nations Veterans, they all got twenty thousand dollars. But the big argument that, excuse me, the big argument I raised about this was Baker, he was the Minister of Veteran's Affairs, and as a matter of fact when I, I read the paper and that he was on the news, I taped it and I still have the taping. Where he was interviewing some people from Newfoundland that went to Scotland to log, you know. Of course the, the logs goes supposed to be used for the mining, mine props and everything. There was helped in the, in the war industry, there's no question about that. But there was quite a number of them that was in, in, in Scotland cutting logs and then there were some others that was in the England, London itself as, as fireman and, and all these got twenty thousand dollars. So I figured, well, if you're going to give a civilian twenty thousand dollars for going to Scotland to log during the war, don't you think that a veteran that was in combat deserves anything? And if you think because he was an Aboriginal he didn't deserve anything well, you know, who, what's going on here? Unfortunately you didn't have the right leadership for Veteran's Affairs for the Métis people and they's more or less leadership sold out for a monument rather than a compensation package for the, for the Métis Veterans. First Nations they went for a, they went for a compensation package and, and, and, and got it. But the First Nations, you know, they have got a political clout and the Ministers in Veteran's Affairs and Indian Affairs especially the, the Ministers that's involved with Indian

Affairs. If it wasn't for Status Indians they wouldn't have a job so, you know, just about anything they want they can get. Because, you know, some, a lot of the bureaucrats depend, depend on, on the Status Indians for their very own existence. So it was, I'd say it was quite easy for, for them to, to get a compensation package. Now a war veteran got his leg shot off, Chatterton, he was instrumental in going to bat for the comp-, for the Merchant Navy and he's the, he's the head guy for War Amps, eh, Chatterton. And he's also the head of a, I think it's four to six, he's a chairman of four to six different Aboriginal veteran groups across Canada. So he's got a lot of clout. And, you know, he went to bat for, for the Status Indians and for the Merchant Navy. And I don't think everybody ever got to him to help the, the Métis veterans. It was very unfortunate. I think that the Métis veterans got short-changed terribly. Terribly, terribly short-changed.

End Time: 11:56:52.00