

Interviewed: February 3, 1976

Mr. Vince Frank,
311 Chatham Street,
Steveston, B. C.

- Began fishing when he was 10-12 years old with his father, a gill-netter, who used to fish in Rivers Inlet.
- Lived in Steveston, grew up in Steveston, went to Lord Byng Elementary School and then Richmond High.
- Originally he came from Courtenay, Vancouver Island.
- Came to Steveston in early 40's.
- His father fished before the gas boats in a skiff which was towed out by a packer, the skiff had a sail or else you used the oars.
- The packer used to run right along the river and drop off each of the skiffs to fish.
- Father fished the majority of the time with Nelson Bros. but also B. C. Packers, Canadian Fish, Millard & Co.
- Started fishing commercially when he was 10 on a seine boat using cotton web and lines, wooden (Spanish) corks, net was pulled in by hand, 6 or 7 men on the turn table.
- "Live roller" came in later. He was getting half share at the time, on this fathers boat there were 7 men on the crew.
- To preserve the web, you soaked it in tar, often the tar was "icky".
- Used "blue stone" solution to clean gillnet, in a big tank, to remove the slime, then nets were mended.
- Worked with his dad most of the time, or else he was with his brother-in-law from one company to another.
- Canadian Fish hardly hired any Indians at all.
- They did not discriminate against the Japanese however.
- Worked in canneries: J. H. Todd, Nelson Bros., ^{Great West} Phoenix, B. C. Packers, Canadian Fish. His mother and sister worked in the cannery.
- 1950 got a job working in the reduction plant for Canada Fish Co., until that time no Indians were hired, he worked for nine years for them.
- There used to be a big influx of Indian people at canning time, today there are very few, people would come from up and down the coast to work in the canneries, 40 or 50 from Sechelt, 100 or so from Alert Bay they all came in one group.

- The company had lots of bunkhouses, like army barracks.
- B. C. Packers mixed the groups but Canadian Fish segregated the racial groups.
- He stayed in a house, owned by B. C. Packers, 7 bedrooms, his whole family took it over, lived in that house for 17 years, highest rent was around \$12⁰⁰ a month. Repairs were done by themselves, unlike other families, his family stayed all year round.
- All the houses were torn down to make way for the new Imperial Cannery.
- His father worked in net loft or the cannery for the winter.
- He joined U.F.A.W.U. in 1947, afterwards he joined the Native Brotherhood, eventually he was in both.
- U.F.A.W.U. and Native Brotherhood cooperated for awhile, but because of split last year over prices, Native Brotherhood is going on its own to form co-ops up and down the coast, he predicts that the Native Brotherhood will become stronger.
- Criticizes Homer Stevens and the calling of the strike in '75.
- He prefers wooden hull boats...distrusts the others especially aluminum boats which float so high are so top heavy, fibre glass is good for gillnetters.
- He's fished from Seattle to Alaska.
- Describes "Fleeting" on the West Coast, using a big bull hook, 2 men one on corks, one on lead line, and web man, when the power block came in the crew was reduced from 8 to 6, then the hydraulic drum cut the crew down to 5 men.
- All the canneries on the coast are now gone except for Bella Bella, Butedale, Namu, many lost their livelihood and had to leave their homes.
- Indian people have suffered the loss of their jobs because of increased mechanization of canneries.
- All along Chatham to back of Hotel used to be, company houses, they are all torn down now, from #1 Road to #2 lots of houses (company's) all along the dyke, they are all torn down.
- Last three years have been very bad for salmon run because of pollution in the River.
- Also there are too many boats and not enough conservation of the species.

- The buy-back program was a big let down, it didn't help one bit, the Americans bought them and used them against us as fish boats.
- He is a first class net man: he can make any net you want. Now a days few fishermen know how to make, mend or hang a net.
- Predict~~ed~~^{ing} fishing with suction tubes, using a vacum and sonar to locate fish.
- In spite of modern equipment you still need to know the coast.
- Equipment on seine boats: bigger, heavier, nets go deeper and power skiffs have as much as 200 HP motors in them.
- In the old days in Steveston, it was like one big family.
- When he went to Lord Byng School he and his sister were the only Indian children and he got in many fights because of it.
- Buildings left behind by Japanese on Moncton and Chatham held lots of nets, corks and belongings and they were burnt down by children at Halloween.
- Japanese boats were practically given away.
- Most of the Japanese who returned were welcomed back.
- Early families were McDonalds, Maxwells, Matsons, Reids, etc.
- Comments on sand-heads, lightship, with big red-beacon and fog horn which could be seen on a clear night from Nanaimo and Gibsons.
- The river has changed where there used to be a sand bar is now part of the main channel.
- He fished at Rivers Inlet in 37-38-39 at that time canneries operating were Rivers Inlet Cannery, Kildala, Brunswick, Good Hope, Goose Bay.
- Packer used to tow all the skiffs out to fish.
- Some superstitions were never open a can up side down, nor allow a black cat on board, whistling also was not allowed on some boats.
- He recalls a dangerous storm up on the Alaska border when they were tagging fish and experimenting with different types of seine nets in 1966.
- Tells story of working in reduction plant and pulling Danny Gordon, drunk, out of a bin full of fish guts and wheeling him home in a wheelbarrow and throwing him on his bunk.