

Nora Cummings, Peter Bishop, and Ron Laliberte:
Métis Political Activist Interviews (Feb 28, 29, 2004)

Tape 1

Start Time: 2:16.27.29

Nora Cummings: And so I was raised more or less with my Grandmother and that's, although my mother and father had to work for a living. My mother did day work here in the city, my father worked and so we didn't know what welfare was. Like we didn't understand and so we had all them years we, we just survived on the land and, of course, my mother we'd plant community gardens. Where the Bowman Collegiate is, that was a big area and we used to plant community gardens and the kids would all work on them. And then in the fall everybody would share the harvest. And you know. And, but I remember living in tents. We lived in our tents, oh good lord, I lived in a tent right up to just before Christmas. And it was warm. Our tents were, were better than the shacks that we had to move into. Cause you just moved into a shack if there was one available well you moved into it. And I never ever heard of them paying rent because there was old shacks available and they would fix them up and you'd move into them.

Ron Laliberte: Do mind if I ask you what time of period you are talking about here? What year would that be about?

Nora Cummings: 19-, that was in, about 1942, '43.

Ron Laliberte: Oh, gee.

Nora Cummings: And 'cause I can remember I was just young then. Let's see, shall I count my age? It was around '42, '43.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

(Video Time: 2:16.56.12) Nora Cummings: And I, especially the one tent always refreshes in my memory. We lived right in the, part of a bush, my father had made it in and we had tin, for the, high, you know, the old tents had the high, and was all done and we had floor, we had a cook stove and, and it was warmer than the shack we moved into. But I guess the family felt it was important to keep or, I always said to my mother, "Goodness we should have stayed in that tent."

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Nora Cummings: It was warmer. And that was the year too if you remember the, the army in the early 40s, that's when Dundurn, you'd hear, I would see all the people that were in the army. They would travel from there. They would be sitting where we lived, they'd be out on some of the crossroads drinking or, and I remember seeing these people in uniform and I didn't realize then that was the years of the army. When my uncles and them. My uncle was very young. Actually, my uncle Clarence Trotchie he, him and the Camponi boys decided they were going to go and join the army but they lied about their age. And they were gone for about oh six months, a year when they realized he wasn't old enough. So they brought him back home but then he turned old enough that October so he left and he left for 5 years. So that was in the 40s 'cause he came home in 1945. And so these boys all, this was I guess what the career for our, for our people. And when

we talk about there were so many of our young people that joined the army in them years. Actually they didn't actually have a choice in some point. They would recruit them. And I remember my uncle the older brother, uncle of them - he didn't qualify 'cause he had, when he was chopping wood he had chopped some of his toes. And they wouldn't accept him in the army. So if there was a disability they never took them in.

Ron Laliberte: Right, right.

Nora Cummings: So he was one that never went but the other boys all had to go. And I can remember my Grandmother and them they would cry for their boys and she'd pray, you know. As our people, the Métis, they were very traditionally, my Grandmother was a very, very strong Catholic. And, and I think stemming from the residential, she lived in residential schools. And I went to St. Joseph School here, which is now the Joe Duquette High School. And at that time 90% were Métis kids. We never had First Nation kids. We didn't, if they did we didn't we weren't aware of them 'cause we were Métis.

End Time: 2:20.39.10