

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

Tape 1

**Start Time: 2:25.07.03**

**Ron Laliberte:** There is one thing I wanted to pick up on that is intriguing to me and interesting is that you both talk about the Cree part of your family in the language. I mean, you know, you speak fluent Cree Peter, and of course your kohkum spoke Cree and I mean was that part of the....

**Nora Cummings:** French, French, actually we actually we were the swampy Cree I said. (Laughter)

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah.

**Nora Cummings:** Anyone who said swampy Cree and sort of the French mixed.

**Peter Bishop:** Mixed up Cree.

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah because you know that's the way it was. Like I used to remember it when I listened, mind you I can understand all Peter. But there was some times he'd lose me on one word or two. And like my old man's the same thing, he's from Buffalo Narrows and he'll talk to me and sometimes he'll lose me.

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah.

**Nora Cummings:** And then when my Mom speaks with him sometimes he'll say, "What did she say to me? What's she say?" (Laughter) You know but they don't...

**Ron Laliberte:** But you understood it clearly because you're saying that your Grandmother used to speak to you...

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah

**Ron Laliberte:** When she didn't want to speak up and of course your family, it has a very rich tradition in speaking that.

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah.

**Ron Laliberte:** What about the Michif language, is there any??

**Nora Cummings:** Well that is our Michif language.

**Ron Laliberte:** That is your Michif language.

**(Video Time: 2:26.04.12) Nora Cummings:** But you see the difference with me and Peter is and how fortunate, I always say the Northern people don't know how rich they are.

**Ron Laliberte:** Yes, yes.

**Nora Cummings:** Because they were all so very close knit. Where our family growing up in the city, going to schools, and our people were always, always afraid. They didn't speak their language much, because they were always afraid of that discrimination with...

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah

**Nora Cummings:** There was so much discrimination. So a lot of us wouldn't have the opportunity to learn our language. It was mostly English talked, talked to me at home. My Dad talked good French but he always talked English. My mother talks good Michif but she most, it was English to us. It was just my, my kohkum that would talk. And, of course, my aunties I could hear them. But they never really talked to us since we were small. So you

have, like Peter said you have to learn the language so we have to pick up what we knew and understood. So that's the unfortunate of us as a Métis ...

**Ron Laliberte:** Yes.

**Nora Cummings:** In the urban areas. A lot of us have, haven't had the opportunity of speaking our language in, in the way that the Northern...

**Ron Laliberte:** So you say that the Northern, your Northern Community was more prevalent to speak you know your language?

**Peter Bishop:** French.

**Ron Laliberte:** French, Cree?

**Peter Bishop:** They used mostly French words for...

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah

**Peter Bishop:** Objects like nouns.

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah.

**Ron Laliberte:** Makes sense.

**Peter Bishop:** This is la table, la chaise.

**Ron Laliberte:** I know what the door is, la porte. That's about all I know.

**(Video Time: 2:27.33.25) Peter Bishop:** [speaks French] window, [speaks French] is a fork, [speaks French] is a knife, [speaks French] is a broom and all those words that we used, we very seldom used Cree words for these objects. That's how it was. But when we're conversing, you know, to each other and we didn't have to talk about these objects then we spoke Cree generally. That's how it was.

**Ron Laliberte:** Yes.

**Peter Bishop:** And that's where the Michif part came in. But let me tell you, when I used to work for the Métis Society back in the early '70s, I worked as a field worker for one particular area. I was a regional board member and I was doing field work at the same time. Visit places as far east as Moosomin and Wellwyn and the other town, oh I forget, oh Indian Head and Sintaluta. Those people had a hard time understanding me. Because they spoke about 50% French and 50% Cree. Now that's where the Michif language comes from. They spoke...about half and half.

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah I...

**Peter Bishop:** A little bit of English. Not too much but mostly...

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah.

**Peter Bishop:** Cree and French.

**(Video Time: 2:29.04.18) Ron Laliberte:** Yeah you get the sense that, you know, the southern Métis would add more French as opposed to the northern because they were closer to their Cree cousins and then that way, you know, the language was more, more Cree in some ways. That's interesting. Very interesting.

**(Video Time: 2:29.19.22) Nora Cummings:** But, you know, even in the Peter talking about the south, that's true. Like even us, when I, and again this is just because I was in this central area, I always used to think the North, you know, their language was one. Even their foods were the same as ours but it's not. Like we are, we have different foods here as you go further south again it's different. And even in, in various things in how we lived and it was very confusing until I really got involved and found out in all this time

because I was sheltered within my own area. This is, we were the, we were the Métis. Actually I didn't know what Métis was, I was a half-breed. That's the way....

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah.

**Nora Cummings:** I've always directed myself as a half- breed and um...

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah.

**Nora Cummings:** But I think it was the early '70s we became a Métis...

**Peter Bishop:** [speaks Michif]

**End Time: 2:30.11.19**