

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

Tape 1

Start Time: 5:12.02.23

(Video Time: 5:12.02.23) Ron Laliberte: You know, when you talk to, when you talk to some of the people, particularly the more, senior Métis politicians, the issue of funding. Cause you mention that, you know, like, you know, they asked the NDP for funding and so on. You talk to people like Brady and Norris and, and, you know, Howard Adams, even and some of the older politicians, they say that funding was a real problem because then it really...

Peter Bishop: Yes, definitely.

Ron Laliberte: ...it really undermined the control of the Métis.

Peter Bishop: That was there.

Nora Cummings: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: But on the other hand, you know, like you take a look at Gabriel Dumont Institute and, you know, the funding would have, if the funding wasn't there, there's a lot of things, a lot of benefits...

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: ...from it. I'm just, just interested in your take...

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: ...on that.

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: Of both of your takes on that?

(Video Time: 5:12.42.02) Peter Bishop: Well, Norris is the first guy that wanted people not to accept funding from any government at all. He suggested that...

Ron Laliberte: Malcolm Norris yeah.

Peter Bishop: ...the Métis movement should go out there and hustle, you know for funding from private corporations, if possible. From any other source but the government.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Peter Bishop: Because it's going to fall back on you. No, Adams picked up on that, Howard Adams. And he used to tell the people we shouldn't be accepting funding. But I guess, like you say, if we hadn't have done that, we wouldn't have had institutions like Gabriel Dumont...

Ron Laliberte: Yes, yeah.

Peter Bishop: ...Institute in place. 'Cause I was there that time when we're talking about creating Gabriel Dumont Institute. And one of our consultants suggested we use Métis, which stood for Métis Employment Training Institutes...

Ron Laliberte: Saskatchewan.

Peter Bishop: ...of Saskatchewan, yeah. But we decided on the name Gabriel Dumont. I was on the Board of Directors at that time. Remember Fred Story? That's when I was working on it.

Ron Laliberte: Okay.

Peter Bishop: So instead of the word Métis we used Gabriel Dumont Institute. Yeah and that's how it came about.

Ron Laliberte: So, you see the funding is kind of a double-edged sword in some ways, a means the government can use to control you. On the other hand... **(Inaudible)**...a lot of benefits...

(Video Time: 5:14.22.29) Peter Bishop: In a sense we haven't had too much problems with funding. Because Gabriel Dumont Institute is, is strictly an organization, an institute that deals with educating people. Nothing else, they're not very political. And maybe that's the best thing that could happen. And the government are saying they don't want them being involved directly with Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. Okay. Métis Nation of Saskatchewan created institutions like Gabriel Dumont Institute but they shouldn't have to be forced....

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Peter Bishop: To be political.

Ron Laliberte: Right.

Peter Bishop: At one time we were, yeah we were told, shou-, you're going to have to, you're going to have to speak out, you know. If there's going to be a demonstration, Nora, you're going to have to pick up a sign like the rest of us.

Ron Laliberte: What's your take on, on the funding situation? I mean, you know, initially those old politicians or the senior politicians of the Métis Nation said, you know, they're going to control us, they're going to...

Peter Bishop: Yup.

Ron Laliberte: ...you know, they're going to be able to manipulate us and, and, and you take a look at the benefits and it's, you know

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: ...you see today from that funding. I mean do you have any thoughts on that Nora?

(Video Time: 5:15.33.14) Nora Cummings: I, I do, because I think, I think that I have mixed feelings of it. I think in the early stages of the, of the building our Nation they had to start somewhere. And it's okay for some of our people, like Howard and them, say, "Well you know we shouldn't take funding," but how many of our people had money to go out to travel? How many of our people could take that money from their table to do that? And again, it wasn't a lot. I think, the field staff were working on \$400 a month, the local initiatives grant which was culled through Manpower. A little bit of traveling, but I think they did well for what they had to work within. And, I think, it's true you, as long as you're taking from government you going to be handicapped in some way, shape or form. But on the other hand. I think, if our, if our leaders will look at that and revisit all of that now, I think they could, they could take a percentage of that and, and still become, like I look at the Gabriel Dumont Institute and I've always respected it because I always think that, well you know, this is something that is our, helped our people. And they've done a lot of good work for people, you know, in educating them. And, but it is a handicap to a sense but I think if, if it's run in, in some areas some of the affiliates could be non-political and just let the political body run it. Then I think that's were the benefits would come from.

You know, the politicians have to be the politicians and, and run that. But I think, like the Gabriel Dumont and all these other affiliates that are running into problems because you have polit-, politicians sitting on the boards. The minute you have politics in anything it's going to, it's set for failure when it comes to funding. I'm a firm believer that if you are away from the politics something will run smoothly. But I know there is politics in everything. But I believe our politicians are the elected politicians. They should be the ones that should be out looking for that funding. I think the people that sit, sit on these affiliates boards should be non-political. And, and that's how I think they'll function. And I think that's something they have to look at in, in time to come. You look at the, the education system within the government structure. I mean sometimes you have to kind of adopt some of these issues for it to work for us. Maybe not in the same format but in our own way it could work if we maybe sit down and look at that. And, so in a sense I see what's happening here, our people sometime have to borrow from here in order to make ends meet over here and they get financially, they get themselves into problems. And the first thing is brought up, oh, you know, there's misuse of funds, or there's fraud. And when it comes down to it, wa- when it comes down it most times if they would have a good financial management system. I think that's the key thing when our people have to start looking at. Is, for all the affiliates, not just the Métis Nation but, I think, all the affiliates. They have to have a group of good financial management. And I don't think they'd run into the problems....

(Video Time: 5:19.05.16) Ron Laliberte: Does that, does that, where does that come from? Does that come from education? When you talk about good management, you know, you need...

Nora Cummings: ...that would come from education....

Ron Laliberte: Is there a lack of, of, of education in peop-, you know, people that are professional in those areas that need to be addressed?

Nora Cummings: That's right – management, our people, you know. If you look at most of our people, how many of our people are rich people? How many...

Ron Laliberte: I can't think of any really.

Nora Cummings: Yeah. So financially, material things is, means nothing to a lot of our people. A lot of our people....

Ron Laliberte: But there is a growing middle class, though....

Nora Cummings: Yes.

Ron Laliberte: I mean, there's, you know...(Inaudible)...

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte:educated now that are getting, you know, a few bucks.

(Video Time: 5:19.35.16) Nora Cummings: Well, that's true but, I think the thing we have to look at is educating our people to become management groups. So they can sit down and our affiliates then will grow. I'm, I'm, I'm always, I sit at home sometimes and I look at it because what really, I guess, bothers me is the growth of what, how we came so far within our Nation. The positive things that have happened. All these positive things that are taking place are never at the forefront. It's always the ugliness and I

think if we have good management group that would handle those affairs our positive things would come out on top.

End Time: 5:20.22.01