

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

Tape 3

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(Video Time: 7:05.34.27) Ron Laliberte: If I could be the devil's advocate a little bit, when you take a look at the, the recent statistics in 2001, the Census, and I pointed out that, you know, the 40 cen-, 43 percent increase in those people that, in population numbers that identify as Métis. Forty-three percent over las-, between '96 and 2001. And now the Métis make up 30 percent of the, of the Aboriginal population in Canada. Many of those people, they're not because of births, they're because of people now identifying as Métis that are saying, "I'm Métis." But what's interesting about that is that these people are in places like BC, Ontario, that are now identifying more as Métis, and the Maritimes and even Labrador. And so, you know, there's a "other" category of Métis there. And it, you know, even though we've id-, identified ourselves as coming from the homeland and so on again this opens the door, how the heck do we deal with all of those people outside of our homeland, you know?

(Video Time: 7:06.30.28) Nora Cummings: But I think when, when you're looking at the structure of the Métis, and I'm talking the Métis of Saskatchewan or Manitoba, BC, Alberta, under the national part of it, those are the, the Métis National Council, which represents these provinces, are the people that they're going to have, that are recognizing there, that definition.

Now you talked about Labrador, you know, and, and a lot of people are saying no there is... I was at a Conference in, in Ottawa and one of the First Nation fellow came up and said, "You know there's no Métis in Nova Scotia and yet you guys are letting it happen." And he goes on and on. And I said, "Well I can't answer that, but I'll tell you one thing if you feel they're not a Métis and you're telling me this, why are you telling me this? I can't go out and, and police whose a Métis. Do you know that person isn't a Métis?" "Well," he said, "They have a Métis organization but they're not Métis. "Well," I said, "I guess that's no different than me want to go and, and start whatever group I want to be and say that's who I am." But I said, "I guess the bottom line is we do have a national body now who is being recognized as our people. If you feel that then there's channels that you should go through." And I think that's the thing we have to start doing because on a national level now every province has recognizes that, that definition. And that is the defi-, and they are the people of the nation. They are the people who represent us so that is who government has to deal with. If Labrador or these other provinces are saying they're Métis then they are going to have to work within that national because in the mean time I think we have to be looked at...

Ron Laliberte: Okay.

Nora Cummings: As, as a national.

Ron Laliberte: Good.

(Video Time: 7:08.28.15) Peter Bishop: And I think what's more important right now with regards to places like the Maritimes and Labrador,

there are mixed-bloods living there. And although they've never been recognized they are Métis. They know there are certain rights being accorded to the Métis and they don't want to lose out on those rights. So in a sense they're coming out of the woodwork and saying, "Well heck I'm a mixed-blood. I'm a Métis. If the Métis in Saskatchewan have certain rights then shouldn't I be entitled to those same rights as well?" So it's, it's up to the local leadership in each province or territory to say okay let's recognize those...**(Inaudible)**... as Métis people. Let's go after the government and say we want to be recognized as Métis too, as well. Or let's go to Métis National Council headquarters and demand them to recognize us as Métis people. So that's were I see it standing right now.

(Video Time: 7:09.45.28) Nora Cummings: But Peter they would have to, they would have to bring out a genealogy of the definition...

Peter Bishop: Yeah right.

Nora Cummings: ...of who they are and I think that's the important thing. I think over the past we've had people that have applied for our programs and came out and said, "Well I'm a Métis," I mean I know that for a fact. They've had hearings in Senate on it, where there was jobs available within government and, and, and, you know, ourselves sometimes, the politics kicked in on the local level so give a card just for a vote. And unfortunately, that, that harms our people within, within in the, in, in the locals or within our own local governments. And where people have applied and become and then at the end are not. So I think the thing is being entrenched in a Constitution we for, it was fought hard for us to do that, our rights within the

Supreme Courts of Canada was another big fight. And I think the thing is there's no shame in it for me to say to people if I am, if you are Métis and you can tell, do a genealogy and, and, and fall within the criteria of our, our nation and our government then by all means you, you have every right as everybody else. And that's the way I would look at it.

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