

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

Tape 3

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(Video Time: 7:13.30.23) Nora Cummings: They are, well Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Métis are and, and I say that with, not because I'm from Saskatchewan, but I know from having the opportunity of traveling across Canada and working on the, a lot on the national scene, our province is very, very advanced. Very advanced politically. We're very advanced. And they, they're very strong people.

Ron Laliberte: Why is that? Is that, is that because of education or the history of, of the leadership? Or what part, is it a combination?

Nora Cummings: I think, I think it's both, but more so the history of the leadership.

Peter Bishop: Oh, definitely.

Nora Cummings: We have very good leaders that come out of Saskatchewan. And if you notice in Manitoba or in Alb-, not so much, Alberta and BC, if you look at your leadership you can always tell on a national level when you hear these people speak you can pretty well tell and go and say, "Were you actually from Saskatchewan?" and they'll say, "Yeah," you know. 'Cause they'll say, "Well I'm actually from Saskatchewan" but they are

representing the province where they now live. Because our people are quite transient too.

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Nora Cummings: In a lot of ways.

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Nora Cummings: But no I, I've always watched, I've always watched that and even, even our women now I, I see them even from Saskatchewan when I see the women's groups on the Secretariat on the national, the women are so much more stronger in their political will than what some of the other women are. So...

(Video Time: 7:14.51.02) Peter Bishop: Yeah, and I have to keep going back to Malcolm Norris. Now I think Malcolm Norris was originally from Alberta. Jim Brady was from ...

Nora Cummings: Yeah.

Peter Bishop: ...Saskatchewan

Nora Cummings: Yeah, Malcolm was from Alberta. Edmonton.

Nora Cummings: Yeah.

Peter Bishop: But he spent a lot of time in Saskatchewan. Jim Brady did.

Ron Laliberte: Yes.

Peter Bishop: And whenever there was going to be an election, when they're out campaigning, you know, for, for the CCF you might say in the '40s who do they go and see? My father. Yeah a lot of times I see them even Peter Tompkins, that's Frank's Dad, he used to come and visit us. In, Green Lake and that's all they talk about is politics. Yeah right down my Dad's alley.

But they became extremely active first in Alberta for the Métis Association of Alberta. But in that case it's a little different too, Alberta politics. I don't know that much, I know a bit about Alberta politics and the creation of the Métis Colonies.

Ron Laliberte: Well it's all inter-related, I mean, it all stemmed ...

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: ...from 1869, '70, 1885 when they, when we...

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Ron Laliberte: ...we're pushed off the land and many of them went to St. Paul des Métis before it was a province...

Ron Laliberte: We're all sort, we're all related...

(Video Time: 7:16.15.17) Peter Bishop: ...**(Inaudible)**...anyway, the government decided to undermine the leadership of the famous four: Peter Tompkins, Jim Brady, Joe Dion and Malcolm Norris. Because they were all, you know, instrumental in getting the Métis Association of Alberta in place. So they came out with these Métis Colonies. I think it was six to begin with, they added another four and the bill was passed in 19-...

Ron Laliberte: '38

Peter Bishop: '38 or '39.

Ron Laliberte: *Métis Population Betterment Act.*

Peter Bishop: Yeah. And what they did was they wouldn't allow the, the middle-class Métis. I never heard of middle-class Métis myself. I heard of poor Métis but not middle-class. They just wanted to put the indigent Métis onto the colonies. They didn't want the Métis that were more intelligent and

were better off than these other Métis. They weren't allowed. But in a sense too the leaders supported the creation of those colonies. It was Peter Tompkins and Joe Dion, they supported that. But this way the government was able to undermine the authority of the Métis Association of Alberta. To this day those colonies are autonomous and the Métis Nation, I think they're called the Métis Nation of Alberta now. I don't know what name they use.

Nora Cummings: Yup.

Peter Bishop: Yeah, they, they're out of it. They're operating by themselves. Those Métis colonies...

Ron Laliberte: That, that split comes from that whole historical

Ron Laliberte: ...involvement with that yeah.

Peter Bishop: Oh yeah.

Ron Laliberte: To undermine the power of Brady and Norris ...(Inaudible)...

Peter Bishop: Yes that's right. That's the reason why they did that, yeah.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah. And that's, after that, after the Second World War is when they moved to Saskatchewan...

Ron Laliberte: ...to start organizing.

Nora Cummings: Well 1940 there was a local here.

Ron Laliberte: That's, that's interesting because, you know, you don't, you don't hear anything about, you know, during the war years of the...

(Video Time: 7:18.29.15) Nora Cummings: Yup. Well they, after when the war started kind of there were my grandpa, Charlie Landry and, and my Uncle, Charlie Ouellette and the Vandale and, I forget who the other one is. I have a picture of them and they, they were instrumental in starting the local

here for Métis. So you know it's something that went back for years it wasn't, but it kind of abandoned after when the war started and then when the people came back from the war...

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Nora Cummings: ...they were older and it just kind of didn't start, being organized again, like I said 'til in the early, early '69, '70. When our local started it was 1969. It was the 11th local in the province of Saskatchewan. And even at that when we first organized we couldn't get enough people to get a, a board. We had to call three meetings before we could get enough people. So, you know...

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Nora Cummings: ...it was tough going but it's, it's surprising that the will of our people, I think you know, when we, we look at that. In the early, oh it would be about '54 or '53, '52, I guess around there. I don't know. I remember, I can remember and I don't Peter if you can remember, I don't know if it was from the States. They used to get these cards and the people would all get them, and I don't know if you can remember that, but they got these cards somewhere and they were used as Métis cards. But I believe they got them from the States and I've always wanted, and I know I, somebody has one of those cards, I would love to get...

Ron Laliberte: I heard about that too.

Nora Cummings: Yeah and, but it didn't last. It was sort of just quick thing that went through and nobody really, so I don't know how, how effective, it wasn't very effective anyhow out here so...

Ron Laliberte: No it's a very interesting history and all of that. Spend a lot of time talking about it, but I think we're, we're asked to wind it up, I guess so...

Peter Bishop: Okay.

Ron Bishop: Until another day.

Peter Bishop: 'Nother day, yeah.

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