

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

Tape 3

**Start Clip: 2:39:25.15**

**(Video Time: 2:39.25.15) Ron Laliberte:** Okay, maybe we can just pick it up by talking about some of those people in the past that were involved in the movement that have left us now and Nora maybe you could be-, begin by commenting on Clarence Trotchie and what you think he contributed to the movement. And I understand that you can't do that without talking about your mother's involvement as well. So maybe you can comment on that.

**(Video Time: 2:39.46.14) Nora Cummings:** Well, Clarence was, was my Uncle and but we never, you'd never know that he was my Uncle. He was more like a brother to me and, 'cause we kind of, I, he lived with me with my grandma and when he came back from the war there he, we lived together. So him and I were very close in a sense and my mother is the oldest in, in of him, but we all got involved in, when we first started forming our local, which is Local 11 and I mentioned that the 11<sup>th</sup> Local in the province. And that was in the, 1969 when we started forming the local and we had to call three meetings to get enough people to form a board. And we finally after the third meeting it was November, and I remember very clearly, it was November the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1969 when we formed our local here in Saskatoon. And Clarence was very concerned about doing something for Métis people. He was actually, him

and my mother were the founding members of the NAC House in Saskatoon at 401 Avenue H South, is where they first ....

**Ron:** NAC is, what is that?

**Nora:** What is now called MACSI. The Native Alcohol...

**Ron:** Oh yes. Okay

**Nora:** ...Addiction Center. And she was one of the first woman field workers that worked with it and Clarence was also one of the first workers here. So they decided that the need was great at that time and they then opened a house and from there on it grew from with the help of Clarence and went on to the other house on Avenue E South. But he, that wasn't only his, his concern. He was concerned for an employment, housing and a lot of the issues. And, and Clarence became a very strong and forceful leader in our city. And he had a lot of respect with not only within the city of Saskatoon but throughout the province as well as within the, the government itself. And he, he would get a vision, and it kind of scared me because he'd phone and he'd say and he'd always call me kid. And he'd say, "Well you know kid, I think we should talk." And I'd think, "Oh God not another one of these visions are coming up." And, and he was a fellow that if he made a decision he followed through or if he felt the importance of it. And so one day he called me, said, "Meet me up on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. There's going to be a few of us meeting up there. We're, we're negotiating on some housing for people." "Housing," I said, "How are we going to get these?" And he said, "Ah well just meet us up there." And that's how Sask Native Housing became a reality. And he, there was six on the board, they called it the board and, and

along of course they had the con-, they had Mr. Wardell, who's Bill Wardell. He was, they brought him along for, oh he came in the picture later but they also because of the legal parts of it and, and that's how Sask Native became what it was. And it was for the benefit of renting to low income families or people that couldn't get housing, large families and they had 89 houses by the time they finished. So that was one of his projects and his pet projects. The other one was the Sask Native Low Rentals which he was part of doing and now is still going. The other thing was employment was an issue with Clarence because he knew what it was like for young people in the city not able to get employment especially if they were, education was an issue here with him and, and he always firmly believed that young people should have some kind of a trade. So he had purchased a farm out on 33<sup>rd</sup> Street which was called Touchwood Stables. That's what his name was. Because Clarence was into horses and he loved horses and, this, ever since he was a kid. And so this was something was his, his dream. So out there he had different quonsets and they had a number of programs for young people. And so he said to me, "I want you to work with this. I want you to work with these young people." And so what my job role was to, we would meet and we had eighteen young people that I would meet down at the Métis Local, which was on 111 Avenue B South and those young people were to come there and we'd drive them out. We'd had vans and we'd drive them out. It was about 12 miles out on 33<sup>rd</sup> to this farm place. And he had instruct-, he had qualified instructors. There was plumbing and they had horse grooming and, and they had gardening. It was just a number of programs and the whole idea of that

was to let these young people just get out of bed to go to work, getting them, showing them, getting that responsibility. And my job, of course, was sort of to be the police person, I guess, if they didn't get there I was to go knock on doors and make sure and drag them off to, to work.

**Ron Laliberte:** The truant officer.

**(Video Time: 2:45.16.26) Nora Cummings:** Yeah. So but it worked really well. The, these young people it went very, very well and it worked over a period of three years. And at the end of the day we had all these young people, some wanted to be horse groomers or some wanted to be plumbers but most time with the job they ended up different but it gave them that incentive. So that's what he's done a lot for, for people. Not only for our young people but people in general. The older people they all admired Clarence and, of course, he had all his dos, you know the traditional dos, the dances and, and the pot lucks and, of course, New Year's Eves were the big thing at Touchwood Stable for, and they were, they held very well. So Clarence worked very hard for the people and I, and the reason I admired him so much, I remember when we first started our local and we sent him off to Ottawa and, and I always tell this story because I think it's important for people to know how concerned these people were. And at that time Clarence was into drinking and he went to Ottawa and he got drinking and he, we felt he didn't serve us well so we brought him back. When he came in and we had a meeting and we asked for him to step down. And it was a tough thing for my mother to do because she was on that board as well. And I remember him saying to us, "Give me a chance and I will show you, I am sincere." My

Uncle had quit drinking and never touched another drop until the day he died. And his concern was his heart and was for the Métis. So I recognize that and I admire him because of his strong will power for our people as a leader and that's what made him such a strong leader I felt. And I admired him for that.

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