

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

Tape 3

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**Nora Cummings:** And a lot of that too, he used to tell us a lot of stories when he came back from the army when his days he was a very young man in the army and, of course, he's went through a lot in the army and he used to tell us a lot of stories. So we used to look forward to that. And, of course, we would have our political meetings and, of course, Clarence and I would get into the, the heated discussion of our politics and I said to him one day, "Gosh" I thought to myself, "This isn't good," you know the politics are taking away...we're family for goodness sakes. So I kind of stayed away a bit and he came over to my house and he said, "What's wrong with you? Were you sick or something's happening?" And I said, "Well you know, I'm just kind of trying to stay out of it." And he, then he, "Like heck. You come on back. You're coming back, somebody's got to keep me on my toes." And when he was, he had cancer and, and I was that time that was when I had a back surgery and I was in a cast, body cast and I got a call from the hospital and they said, "Clarence would like you to come up and see him if you could." So I went up to the hospital and visit with him and he said, "You know, we come a long ways and, and our local now we need some, you have to go back and you have to take that local back to the people." And I thought, wow this is a big order for me, you know. This man has done a lot of work and a lot of

issues. So I said, "You know," I used to call him CJ, I said, "You know CJ you're asking me something that's quite big." And he said, "But I know you can do it." So that's when I became the Local President in 1987 of the Local. We called a meeting and there was over 300 and some people at the, at the meeting and we had Clarence come in. And the people were so shocked because he had by this time was deteriorating with cancer, eh. But he, he was happy to see that happen. And it was, it was quite an honour for me that my Uncle would then bestow that kind of responsibility on me. And I stayed on as the President until I became a Senator and then I resigned my position. But our Local is still going and it's, it's never been as active as what it was when Clarence was, was. And I think too because there's a lot of change, there's various locals within the community, the politics that played, you know there was, there was the student local and it became a political thing and, and so all of those things have changed and I think though, all in all, regardless how they all unfolded it was because of this man's determination to make sure that Métis were recognized and heard within our city.

**(Video Time: 2:50.24.18) Ron Laliberte:** There's two things I would like you to comment on. First of all you talked about his leadership and how respected he was. Did that, could you comment on the significance of him being in, in the war? You know like his involvement there and what that did for his leadership? Do you think that was a factor? And secondly, maybe you could comment on when you think about his legacy, what do you think he would like to be remembered about or for rather?

**(Video Time: 2:50.51.25) Nora Cummings:** Well, he was very young when he went off, went off to war. Actually he, he went to war and he wasn't old enough. When he was gone. My, my, my, I don't want to say my kokum, that's the best I knew how to, I never really called her a grandma. It was my kokum. She was quite worried about him because him and his couple of his buddies went to war and then they found out just before they were shipping them off that he wasn't old enough. So they shipped him back home. But that following October he became old enough and then he, he went back over. And he spent a lot of time away in the army. And I remember the morning when he came home. It was in winter and we lived where the Exhibition is now. There used to be little cabins between the golf course in that area and I just forget, but I remember the cabins and we were getting ready for school and, and a taxi pulled up and it was my Uncle. And he had just come back from war and it was 1945. So it, it was, it was quite a thing because he was like a hero to us, I mean, there was a man that's traveled the world and to us this was great because, and then, he was, and Clarence was, I think, 'cause the way he would present himself and how he could speak and stuff and we, we we're excited about it. And, of course, he would talk and tell us the stories of the war. And some of them were pretty sad because I remember him sometimes would, would break down because of, he would say, you know he trusted because he would think of my grandmother and, and, and when they'd have to go into these places and, and especially where there were older people or kids and 'cause he was a good-hearted man. But he had to learn to become strong and stuff. And I

think that's what made him become such a strong, and not only that, but a concerned person for people. And it wasn't only Aboriginal or Métis people, it was all people, I found Clarence, he, Clarence was a real people person. He could get along with any race no matter who they were. And then when he came back he, I remember him, they used to do a lot of work with horses and stuff and then he went into hockey. He played hockey in Melville and all that area for, oh for, for a few years and that's where he met his wife and then they got married and then he moved back to Saskatoon. But he was a well-liked person. I, you know, I, I don't know of any people that could honestly come and tell you that Clarence, other than maybe some of the people that didn't like his politics, but, I mean, I think he was pretty fair in them all. And he was a very open person, if he wanted to say something he said that and it was, that's how I felt and I, I admired him for all the work that he's done and I was proud to see that he served our country. And, and he never really got, you know he was one of the vets that never got anything out of it as well. So, and I think all his family, he sort of took the leading role for his brothers. They always looked up to Clarence although he was the youngest in the family. But even the older brothers would always rely on Clarence because they always felt he was the one that could help them or, or anything that they needed he would speak on their behalf. So that's how I, I perceived him as, as a person.

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