

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

Tape 3

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Peter Bishop: And when I think about a lot of the negative publicity we've been getting lately, I think back to when we were both involved back in the '70s. There was some groups of people that were trying to break away from the organization and form their own little group. They'd approached the government on two different occasions, two different groups. They wanted funding, they wanted to be recognized as the voice representing the Métis, Saskatchewan. The one that reminds me, the first one was when Chris Barry was involved in that one, United Native some-, I forget the name of that group. Anyway they did get some seed money about \$5,000 from the NDP government. Another time was when we were going to have a, a general election in Prince Albert. Then again there was another fractious group wanted to take over the leadership of the Métis Society. Again, the government refused to recognize them and I think they knew better. But we were able to, whenever we ran into these obstacles we were able to rise above it all, 'cause we remained strong as an organization then. Not everybody was off on his own tangent. We stuck together whenever there was issues to deal with. Some of them were a little bit very outspoken, like my brother, Rod. He was always outspoken. But what disturbs me nowadays is the fact that these people that are trying to take over the leadership of the

organization is running to the opposition like the Saskatchewan Party and they're trying to dig as much dirt as they possibly can against the organization. You know, whether it's METSI or MACSI or any other program that's had the problems with administration, you know. These things can be worked out. No criminal charges have ever been laid, okay. It's just sometimes you don't, you just don't have enough money to operate on. And who does it impact on the most? The people it's serving, the people at MACSI, METSI. These are the ones that are affected by all this crap. So I'm sure we will continue to battle in the way that we used to. Maybe not so much walking a picket line or something like that, but I'm sure there's going to be ways that we can deal with it again, and keep our heads above water. So we can walk around with our heads held up high and say, "Yeah we're still here. Nobody's going to take that away from us." We are going to keep fighting for those rights whether they're entrenched or not, we're going to keep fighting for them. And if these other people that are trying to cause trouble for us, well hopefully maybe they'll start seeing things our way. But right now their only concern is for, as far as I'm concerned, they're only concerned about themselves as individuals. And that's what bothers me. That never happened during Nora and my time. Gee when those early poli-, politicians used to go out to organize people they didn't carry around per diem cheques, let me tell you. They had to hitch hike and they had to sleep in different people's homes in each community. Sinclair had to do that himself when he first started.

Nora Cummings: That's right.

Peter Bishop: Because the money wasn't there. But he knew that there were certain things that had to be done. So what do you do? You don't have a vehicle, you hitch hike. You don't have a place to stay, somebody in that community is going to put you up. My folks used to put up Jim Sinclair. Oh yes, whenever he was politicking up North. Yeah. And Rod did the same thing. Rod has done the same thing.

Nora Cummings: Yup. Clem.

(Video Time: 3:48.42.06) Nora Cummings: You talked about just touching, Peter mentioned the in-, institutions METSI and MACSI. If you remember the elections and I don't know if you can remember when Dumont was on the hot seat at one time? And look at it where it is today? It rised because it's true. Because it had, if, if I remember it was Gabriel Dumont that was now, then it was the, the election before this, was METSI and now it's MACSI. I'm saying I wonder what institution's going to be the next election....

Peter Bishop: Yeah.

Nora Cummings: ...if I'm in my right mind to see in that four years.

(Video Time: 3:49.20.20) Ron Laliberte: I think I would agree with both of you that the negative publicity about you know the internal running of those organizations is blown way out of proportion, I think. There's no doubt about that.

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