

Richard Lafferty Jr. - Interview
Fort Simpson, NT
Thursday, August 16, 2001
Traditional Métis Fiddle Project

SIDE A

Leah: Richard, can you tell us a little of your family background? Where you come from?

Richard: I come from Fort Providence and the family is broad. It extends throughout the whole Northwest Territories. There's not one community, apparently now, who we're not related to North of sixty. I spent most of my early childhood working with my grandparents on both sides. Anywhere from trapping to driving gravel truck and just enjoying my life up here.

Leah: Richard, can you tell us a bit about your father? We're doing a fiddle project and I just want to get your opinion of...any information on your father and his fiddle?

Richard: Well my father is a fairly new fiddle player, but he comes from a long line of fiddle players. I mean it's only the last twenty years that he really picked it up other than dabbling with it in his youth. He's an amazing guitar player and he can play any string instrument that I've ever seen him pick up. I'll tell you a story about him one time. We were in Edmonton. I was just a boy and we went into a music shop and there was everything from Russian instruments to Chinese string instruments and there was this long Chinese instrument. I'm not sure what it's called, but it rests on the floor or they put it on a bench and you use your fingers and you play it like a steel guitar kind of, but it's really high pitched. So you know the twang, twang, twang of the Chinese music. So I was just a boy and he was having fun with us. So he gets in front of this instrument and he starts picking it and figuring out where all the chords are and then, next thing you know, he just breaks into old country music songs, like Hank Sr. and you know, the real old stuff. The next thing you know, we got a crowd around there and it's country music in the high-pitched Japanese instrument or Chinese instrument. Incredible musician.

Leah: Richard, I don't think we have down, for the record, where, when you were born.

Richard: Well, I was born in Hay River, because at the time, they had to leave the community in order to have a child. So I would say I was conceived and raised in Providence, 1966 and I lived there until I turned fourteen and then I had to go away to residential school. So I never really been back until about 1994. When I went back, the community called me back to work for them and so I went there and kind of been there since.

Leah: Could you tell people, viewers who will be watching us at the Gabriel Dumont Institute, a little of the background about the community of Fort Providence?

Richard: Well from what I understand, Fort Providence was a place where the Métis settled. You know, there was a number of Métis families that lived there and what not and the church was moving around. ? Fort Providence was on the North shore, the North arm, and then it moved to the mouth of the McKenzie on Big Island and then the Bishop came and christened this community where the Métis lived and called it Providence and what not and then the government came along with the church and established more of a municipality than just a Métis settlement and that was the first residential school North of sixty. There was all young children. Many of the people from Simpson and the river area went there like Senator ?? was there. Many of the leaders were there as just children and then it just continued to grow and then in the last twenty years, it's doubled in size. It started from a very modest beginning.

Leah: Richard, one of the things of the project is to look at fiddle players and when you think of Fort Providence, do you know any of the fiddle players from Fort Providence? Can you tell us what you know about fiddling in that community?

Richard: Well I pretty much know everybody in Providence, but the fiddling has always been part of the family. It's always been around. I can't remember when it hasn't been part, cause it always has been, long before me too. I think music is so much a part of our life. Basically we live it. It's not something that other people do. It's always in the house. It's always around. I got my first guitar when I was fourteen. A gift from my parents. Because I had learned already with borrowing other people's guitars and what not and that's usually the way it goes. It's usually the individual gets an interest in music and the family kind of a, you know, just sort of watches sideways at them till they get good enough and then you get your own instrument type of thing and it's whatever you want to do. Nobody is ever really chastised. You get a lot of ribbing from your peers, but that's about it.

Leah: Richard, the name ?? does that mean anything to you?

Richard: Oh yeah, Cap, they call him Cap. He's got many names. Métis names, but Danny as a boy, and a real young boy, because he's an old man already. He was old when I was born, actually. But, I remember his music and how incredible it was and there's something about the way music was played in stuff like that, that you were just drawn to it and there was no way of avoiding it, cause it was just there. I can remember looking out from my grandmother's house to my great grandmother's house, which is, Cap is my grandmother's brother and they just lived right across the yard from them so I could see the candle in the window and you knew there was a party going on there with Drew and what not and you could just hear that fiddle just whine, cause there was no such thing as noise and cars or background noise in the community. You heard the birds and the dogs and what

not, eh. So there was many, many days in my childhood where I could hear that fiddle going.

Leah: Is there anything you think we should know about him, personality, skills, ??

Richard: Well you know Danny was a privileged kid. I mean you look around the world today and you see all these multi-millionaires with...and their children have everything. They don't ever have to work if they don't to. Well in his day, Danny was that kind of a man, because his father Joe Bouvier, owned a trading post and Danny grew up just stocking the shelves and working the dogs and trapping and hunting and fishing and he never left home. He never had to. Now there is always work for him. It's not like he was just a listless child or anything like that and I don't know him in his childhood or anything like that, but he was always there from what I understand. Always working, you know, maintaining the stores and fixing nuts and doing what needed to be done. There was a lot of work then, because the trading goods were usually made or long distances were travelled to bring to and from where they needed to be and Danny was just the guy that stayed home and helped his parents.

Leah: ? Bouvier family. Have you heard anything about the history of the fiddle and how ?? with the Bouvier family members?

Richard: I don't really know really the exact nature of how it all came about, but I'm sure the elders will tell you of that. In my lifetime, I just know there has never been a time when it wasn't there, because as Danny quit playing, my dad started. Danny would come over and my dad would go over there and they would sit for hours and just...and you know, it was never quite right, ever, because that's the nature of the way they played. There was only one way to play a song and that was the right way. My dad continued in that line and I think he's got his grandchildren now and he's kind of lost a bit of interest so he doesn't play, cause it's not right on, but when he does play and he puts his mind to it, it's...you know.

Herb: In talking to my Uncle, Morris Lafferty, he said about Danny Bouvier's fiddle music was that Danny Bouvier was the kind of fiddler he was. He was a better fiddler than uncle Morris and my dad, Ed Lafferty, put together and I thought, wow, you know, but your dad must have had...he couldn't have asked for a better mentor, you know, when compliments about Danny's fiddle playing are coming from a man and a fiddler like Morris Lafferty was and that sure must have had a ? on your dad. You must have grown up watching that fiddling relationship blossoming?

Richard: Absolutely! Growing up and watching the music and watching the family and just how they interacted, they were a bunch of characters like you wouldn't believe. There was just...everywhere they went, it's kind of like the party followed them and it wasn't necessarily a big party all the time. It was just there was a way to live life and you can be grumpy and you can be just kind of ?? or you can be up

beat and everything's fun and the way life goes is the way it's supposed to be whether it's good or bad and that was the way they lived. I recall hearing stories about just parties, not necessarily parties, in terms of drinking or whatever, but a really good fiddle dance or really good...you know..? party would happen, just on the spot. You'd see somebody walking across the field with a fiddle and you would see somebody walking the other way. Next thing you know, a couple guitars would show up and they would have a fiddle dance in the middle of town. Those are spontaneous type of things that rarely happen anymore. I guess I kind of fall into that same line. That same attitude because my guitar is always behind the seat of my truck. There would be a spontaneous little jam session in any camp site or on the front porch or whatever, wherever it happens. That's the way life was.

Herb: It's good to see your carrying on the tradition.

Richard: It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.

Herb: Did you ever witness Richard and Danny playing the same tune together spontaneously?

Richard: You know they never...as far as I recall, they never actually sat down with two fiddles and jammed like a duo. It was always one admiring the other. Danny would take the fiddle and he would play a song and my dad would sit there and listen and boy he'd be slapping his knee and whatever, chording for him and they would switch. Then my dad would, sometimes playing the same song, trying to learn it and sometimes a different song when they would get enough, but it was never perfect. It was always just good enough. Perfection was for those other days when nobody was watching.

Herb: When your dad Richard was in Saskatoon, this week in June ? were trying a version of what most of us know of as the Red River Jig, but after he was done recording it, he called it the Reel de Job and what it meant. I guess it turns out it means the Devil's Reel, but ?? can that explain, it was not exactly note for note, the Devil's Reel, but as in most Métis fiddle music and in particularly the Red River Jig, almost every fiddler has their own version of it and Richard's fiddling is unique and I was just wondering, do you have any idea where he might have picked up this Reel de Job?

Richard: You know when it comes to where he gets his songs from, the guy's got a musical like something I've never seen. I've seen him sit by the radio and a song will come on that he's never heard before and he'll go to his fiddle case and he'll get it out and he'll figure that song out just by hearing it once and so it could have come from any places or it could be a collaboration of a couple of different versions that he's learned. I'm not really sure. I know I've seen him play the Red River Jig at least five different ways on the same night just to show different people how other people play it, but when he really gets going and he's in his own little zone

there and he's playing it himself. I mean I could know instantly that that's Richard Lafferty playing that fiddle and when you listen to fiddle players long enough like, as soon as the radio comes on and I mean, everybody knows that it's the Red River Jig, but I could tell you when it's him and when it's not. He's the type of guy who could tell you who it is. You know, whether a number of different fiddlers and he's always been correct at the end of the song when the radio announcer would say this is so and so playing the Red River Jig. I've never seen him be wrong.

Leah: Are there any other fiddle players that your father ?? in this area? Along the rivers here?

Richard: The only ones that he didn't really play with are the ones that were passed on before he picked it up. He's been up and down the river, from coast to coast. People are just attracted to him. He kind of picked up the fiddle as a distraction when he was going through transitions in life and he was just a natural like he is with any instrument and they knew him from his guitar picking days and his mandolin days. All his life he's been in it and the family has been there. They're always there.

Leah: For someone who doesn't know much about fiddling in this part of the world, are there any other fiddlers today that we should be aware of who are playing and carrying on?

Richard: Well you know the only one that really is foremost in my mind is Cole Crook and Cole is somebody that learnt from my father, but he didn't just learn from my father. He's a young man. He's still in his mid-twenties. He's been playing for probably about eight years, seven, eight years, but the guy is just unbelievable. I seen him play last winter at the Caribou Carnival. When he got up there and he started into his songs. You didn't even notice that he had a fiddle in his hand. It's like the music was coming directly from his finger tips. His arm with the bow was keeping time just watching him. My dad can't take credit for anybody's fiddle playing, but you got to give him credit for the way that he's encouraged the young man to go and learn the fiddle. He taught him, I guess you could say as much as he felt he could and then he would tell him, "You know Cole, you gotta go up the Western Arctic. You gotta go up North. Go down river and see how they play down there." So Cole packed his bags and he moved there for a year. He come back and he showed my dad what he had learned and my dad was impressed with it and he knew how to play that style too so they had a bit of a session and what not and he'd go hunting and do whatever and then Cole would get bored again with his fiddle and so my dad would tell him, "Well, you know, you gotta go down to Saskatchewan and learn the way they play there." He'd pack his bag and he'd go for six, eight months, sometimes a year, come back again. Then he'd send him out East, to the West Coast. You gotta go learn how them, the East Coasters, play the fiddle, the Newfies, people from New Brunswick and all that, the East Coast style. Packed up his bags and he went to the East Coast and he's been

doing that ever since. Now the guy is just phenomenal. He won a singing contest playing Rubber Dolly and he doesn't even know how to sing. He just put words to it at ? assembly this year. Came in third place. It's because he's that good a musician.

Herb: I remember my dad talking about him and probably not many people saw it, but my uncle Morris said that Cole Crook used to visit my dad as well so I think he got some coaching from my dad and I remember I didn't know Cole Crook that well, but Cole Crook asked if he could play at my dad's funeral and I was there. I didn't know Cole Crook's music that much so I was not real sure who Cole Crook was. This was in October of '92 and the church was very quiet until Cole Crook played Amazing Grace and that really, that made a real impression on me. Hearing Cole Crook, I said, wow, this is one kid that's playing the fiddle ??? He was the one to watch. I thought that's kind of nice that he was learning to play from my dad and your dad. That was kind of, I think I was proud of the fact that he was attracted to the fiddle playing style.

Richard: You know, from what I understand, Peter Lafferty, your dad, my dad, all these guys when they were young were, I guess sought after, by Southern musicians, probably down to the States. They were encouraged to go and play in big industry and none of them ever did and I'm not really sure why, but I've been talking with Cole for the last few years and what he needs is an agent. Somebody who knows the industry, who can open those doors for him and manage. He needs a manager and an agent is what he needs. Because I haven't heard and I've pretty much heard all of the fiddlers that are out there one way or the other, either through my dad or just being interested in music and I can't say that I've heard a better fiddler you know than Cole Crook when he's on the mark. Ashley MacIsaac has nothing on him. None of those guys do, the professional fiddlers.

Herb: I heard he ? Calvin Volrath. Calvin Volrath has been North American grand fiddling champion at least twice and when I heard, I was really not surprised when I heard that Cole Crook was ? Calvin Volrath. What do you remember hearing your dad...what does your dad think about Cole Crook and where he's taking his fiddling music?

Richard: Well my dad kind of knows Cole Crook in a different way. It's more of a traditional type of relationship, a mentor type of thing and he kind of encourages him to do all those things he likes to do, but I think he has a lot of respect for the other side of Cole which is a very traditional Métis man. He's the type of guy who can take a pack sack and go in the bush with an axe at forty below and he doesn't need a sleeping bag. He doesn't need anything. He just knows how to survive. He's been taught the other side of life by the elders too. I mean they can do all they want in terms of fiddling and being traditional Métis fiddlers and all that, but none of them lived the life like Cole does.

Leah: ? really enjoy your perspective from ? South. It's wonderful. I'm going to push this a little further. Your mother, did she ever give you commentary on your father?? What's her role in all this?

Richard: Hmm, I don't know. She's a traditional Métis woman. My mom has a life of her own. She's got her dogs and she's got her own life and work and everything like that and she's always encouraged the fiddling. She's always, she actually pushed him to get out there and do it more than he ever has which is a good thing. It's always been part of her life. In the beginning when they first met, that's probably a major part of the attraction was the music and the life that they live. She's always been there for sure.

Leah: As far as the status of the old traditional Métis style of fiddling in this area, who do you think is the future for it?

Richard: I don't think it's going anywhere. I think there's enough of us out there that it'll stay with us. It's only ever been a few. There's only really one fiddler in every town and a few other people that saw on the violin. Once in a while you get a good couple together where they're from the same town and then they just spur each other on. It's kind of like, ?? when Cap started to fade away in terms of his interest and his ability to fiddle. My dad kind of picked it up, you know and now there's a couple other young guys coming in. There's Freddy Cristy, who is, Cap is his uncle, my dad's first cousin. He's becoming a very good fiddler. Another couple of young people in the community coming up and the music is really coming back. When I was growing up there would be just me and my guitar coming into parties. It was a novelty so I'd sing four or five songs and then I would get bored with it and turn the rock and roll back on. Now when you show up at a party, there's four or five guitars. Everybody knows how to play it pretty much. They use empty beer cases or any boxes upside down for the drums. Harmonica is coming back. The little jam sessions are just phenomenal. I was just trying to get a string for my six string here in Simpson, maybe about four or five weeks ago, cause I had broke and I called up Carl Lafferty, cause he had a twelve and somebody knew he had a brand new set of strings and his words to me was, I gave them all away, independently, cause all through the community, there's young guys jamming and playing. There's a real revival going on and music is very much a part of the spirit of the community. It's coming back strong.

Leah: When you think of fiddle, when you think of music, you have to connect the dancing. Some of the elders talk about the beautiful relationship. What about the dancing, the traditional way to dance? Do you know anything about where that is and where it's going?

Richard: Dancing was coming back for a long time. Kind of when my dad was getting into the fiddle. There was a few dance groups starting up at the same time. Those dance groups have pretty much faded like the Métis Reelers were a big thing

for many years. They were at Expo '86 and they were at the Canada Summer Games on the East Coast and my dad and them went everywhere in the North West Territories, at least once and throughout southern Canada in many places, but now, there's a lot of young groups and it's... I guess it's the children of the last group of dancers that are teaching their children so it's missed a generation and I think it's rock and roll generation and I'm not down on rock and roll by any means, but it showed up in my time too, cause like my parents were just before the Elvis craze and all that and music was strong when they were young and so they all learned the music. Their own musicians, all my dad's peers and then there was this time when rock and roll was coming up in the fifties and sixties and I guess right up into the mid-eighties. Until things became high-tech, but there's a missing generation of musicians and that's when technology came around that the eight track and the cassette recorder and all that stuff was prevalent and music was coming in by the box load and you'd just buy your tapes and you'd listen instead of participate and now that's all changed. People don't want to listen anymore. They want to make that music. They want to be part of it and the dancing goes along with it. I just emceed the talent show in Providence last weekend. It was all just first long weekend. It was August fifth or sixth, I guess and usually the talents will last about three hours, so this year they scheduled it from three in the afternoon to six in the evening and we had so many performers that it actually ended at 8:30 that night and we had to cut off registration, because there was too many dancers. There was too many singers and there was only six fiddlers there, but they were all... Cole wasn't there, but Stanley Boyer was there. Lee Mandoville was there and Angus Boulieau. There was a few others. Those were the top three, anyway, but the singing and the jigging, there was just too many people. We had to cut the registration. So it's all coming back together. People don't just sit and listen to this type of stuff, you get into it and that's the way it is.

Leah: So Richard, what are you doing in Fort Simpson? What brings you here?

Richard: Well, I'm working here on behalf of the Aboriginal people from the ? Decho. I'm advisor to the Grand Chief. The Dene and the Métis here and the Decho are working on exercising and realizing our Aboriginal rights in Canada together. We see our rights and our responsibilities to our future generations and our elders as being unequivocally equal so we're working together on that and we'll see it through to the end. The only thing different, which we have a lot of respect for each other, is our cultures and it's the drumming, like we're talking about the fiddle and all that stuff and when you go to our assemblies, the evening starts off with the fiddle and guitar and playing and then it turns into a drum dance around nine, ten o'clock and they dance till it's finished. Till people wind down and so we're not mixing the cultures per se. We're mutually respecting each other's culture and pursuing our political rights together. It's an incredible thing.

Herb: Correct me if I'm wrong, but your dad, Richard, was jointly responsible for

the formation of the Métis Reelers along with Harry Lawrence?

Richard: Yah, there's some truth to that. I think it was more of a collaborative effort. It wasn't just my father and Harry Lawrence. I mean, certainly my father was a key element of it, because he was the fiddler and when he wasn't there, they fiddled to his tapes anyway, you know, like they really didn't like dancing to any other fiddler. Harry Lawrence and Liza and my aunt Lena and all the other people who were involved in the group, you know, it was something that went hand in hand. I think they really danced because they really liked my father's fiddling, but he fiddled because he loved to see them dance. It was a good time.

Herb: I heard a lot of nice things about your dad's fiddling. One thing that comes to mind was that, was the way he played was danceable. You have some fiddlers that will play fast or faster than a tune should be played ?? which makes it difficult for dancers to dance to ?? tired easily ? up their steps.

Richard: Well, I've been accused of winning jigging contests, merely because my father played the way I jigged and I mean, I guess a good jigging contest would be if every jigger got their own fiddler, but it just so happened that he was the fiddler for the jigging contest and I was his son jigging, but in the end when I would win, they would come up to me and say, "Well, you and your dad cheated, because he played to you." Maybe it was him playing to me or maybe it was me dancing to him, but probably it was a bit of both, because we knew each other. That's what happens and that's why when we go to the East, we can't necessarily do the jig or do the same steps, even though it's the same song or to the North. So it is very much a collaborative effort and making music and making fun. It's gotta click or it doesn't work.

Herb: You been at, say the Fiddle Fest that we were at just recently, John Arcand's Windy Acres farm just a few kilometres West of Saskatoon.

Richard: I been there many times. I know John very well.

Herb: We've seen where you have four fiddlers on the stage and the jiggers have their choice fiddlers. Which means it may not be fair, but I don't see any problem with a jigger being able to choose fiddlers when he has the choice. For sure you're going to pick a fiddler that plays to your style of jigging. Surely, if you saw four fiddlers on the stage and your dad was there?

Richard: Oh absolutely, no absolutely, there's no question in my mind. I mean, as much as I appreciate Cole and Lee and all these other fiddlers and I really enjoy listening to them, when it comes down to it, if I wanted somebody to play for any special event or my own wedding or whatever, it would be my father I would call on. You know and it's consistent. You know and many people call him to play for funerals or weddings or what not and they're not calling these other guys and I

don't think it's because my dad's a special guy or he looks as good as I do. It's just because he's a good fiddler.

Leah: Richard, I think one thing when you've been ?? Is there any legends and folklore left in the North here about superstitions about the fiddle. Devil stories? They've surfaced in some of our interviews. Ever heard of this folklore surrounding the Métis fiddle?

Richard: I've heard the elders tell the stories and I've heard all of those stories from time to time and in some ways when I look at my fiddle, it is a little bit of a spooky instrument. You know, it's not like I'm afraid of it or anything, but I take a little bit of extra care with it. I've always kept it in the safest spots, where my guitar rides behind the seat. There's just something about it that, I don't know, I really believe that it is much more of a spiritual instrument than most people give it credit for. Just like the drum. I mean you don't just see the Dene just flailing their drums around or using them for frisbees. It's a special instrument and they take care of it.

Herb: So it would be safe to say, then, that the fiddle is to the Métis, what the drum is to the Dene?

Richard: Very much so, unequivocally!

Leah: ? to hear you say that. I was talking to Clarence ? the Métis elder ?? close to Prince Albert, he's really into the Batoche ? He said to my students ?? he said, for me the fiddle is a sacred and spiritual instrument to you. He says it's a spiritual experience, me and my fiddle ?? in our area too.

Richard: I think at some point I'll pick it up and I'll learn to play it. I kind of feel it, you know, but I'm not ready yet. You know, there's too much competition out there and they gotta have their day. It's not a personal thing, it's just I love watching the limelight rather than being in it right now.

Leah: Can we go backward? I just ? heard stories? Some of the odd or unusual stories. Can you give us a little more information on that?

Richard: Well, one of the stories that I really like is the Hangman's Reel and I don't know if you've heard the story of the Hangman's Reel. Well anyway, the story as I heard it from my elders is it was back in the days when justice was pretty crude and justice was usually carried out in the stockade or whatever and there was this young man who got himself into some trouble that's ? with one of the prominent people's daughter and so he was going to be executed and the daughter was complaining that she didn't want her lover executed. So her father, being the merciful man that he was, offered him the opportunity to play the fiddle and if he could play a tune, he would not have to be hung, so he picked up the fiddle and just

sawed off this tune and it's called the Hangman's Reel and there's fiddle players present who picked it up and played it after that. That's one of the stories that I heard.

Leah: I wonder if there's other names for Hangman's Reel? Would you be aware for any other names?

Richard: I'm not one who really got into names of the songs. I've got them wrong so often that I don't venture to guess anymore.

Leah: The church, do you know if they encouraged ?? such a large Métis population here in the North. The church having such a strong presence. From the elders, in your experience and your travels, have you heard of their thoughts on Métis music?

Richard: The church has been a very, very major part of my family for the last two hundred years and I don't have very much respect for it. I grew up Catholic. I went through residential school and confirmed and the whole works, but my spirituality is more the Cree and the Dene and I've worked with elders on both sides and they give me gifts and they know each others culture so well. It's incredible, because an elder from the Cree will come in to do something with a Dene elder and the Dene elders will come in to do something with the Cree elders, because they know that that's a lesson they need to learn and so you have to understand, it's coming from a very biased perspective but, I haven't seen or heard the church encourage anything good to do with Métis culture or Métisism. They went so far as to change your names so that they are not names that, you know, identify anything to do with significance or stature in the community or what not. I mean, my own family name, Laffortiere, Laffortiere it means the strong or the powerful in the French language and they Anglicized it on us, because they didn't want our family to hold that prominent name in the community and they call us Laffertys which is an Irish name.

Herb: That's interesting, because I wondered myself why the name Laffortiere was changed to Lafferty ?? I heard from Morris Lafferty and was just wondering if maybe you heard that story too was because the Métis worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, which was an English company, and here we had Métis with French sounding names like Laffertiere ? relations with their English employers and it was Anglicized.

Richard: I think it's more cynical than that, because there's Dene families, for instance, their spiritual leader is an elder in the Dogrib tradition and he was such a spiritual man that his Aboriginal name translated into French or English would mean, "One foot in heaven," but he was a traditional spiritual man, not Catholic or into Anglican religion or whatever, so they changed the name and registered him as "One foot in hell," and there's a family name out there, One Foot in Hell, in the Dogrib tradition. They just recently changed that in the last few years. That's how

cynical it was and you could see these guys having a little bit of fun with it too, because ?? where does that come from. Somebody came up to the mission with a red cap on probably and them ?? Dry Bones, Dry Neck, you know those could be literal translations, but it certainly didn't mean just a literal translated scenario. There would be something more spiritual behind that or something more culturally appropriate that just naming that family after a little translation or whatever. I mean it's part of the whole, let's take that spirit away from them.

Herb: I often wondered how could the Dene in ?? names like, Football or Black Duck or Dry Wheat, they just seem like really odd names. You think it could...?

Richard: I really believe it's the cynical nature of the church and the government conspiring to destroy the pride we have in ourselves. Our ability to be free and our ability to be exactly who we are. I mean, even the stories about not being able to play the fiddle during Lent. What did they do through the whole Lent period? They sat there and they prayed and sang songs. Why couldn't we play with the fiddle and play our songs or drum with the drum and say our prayers? One of the elders told me one time, because of this concern I have with the church and that, he said, "You know you don't have to worry about that, because you could be forced to pray on the alter of a cult. As long as you're praying in your own way and your thoughts are pure, it doesn't matter where you are," and they know that those elders. So whether you have your fiddle or not during a time when you say you can't use it or can't play it, I mean you could be playing those jigs and reels in the back of your mind singing Ave Maria and how do they know?

Herb: Do you think that the ? that the Métis spirits actually made the fiddling ?? stronger because of it?

Richard: I wouldn't say it made it stronger. I think they did a lot of damage, but I'm telling you those people were stronger than they thought, than the church thought they were, because the fact is, it survived. The sash survived and we survived and we're still here. We're not going anywhere.

Herb: I was thinking, being a musician yourself and having such a wonderful talent. Your dad ?? where do you think Métis fiddling music is going?

Richard: It will take it's place amongst the rest of the music. It'll stack it up to anything. Name a different type of music that holds any precedence over it, I can't see it happen. I'm not saying it's better than any other type, but when you look on the shelves of the different types of music, it will be right up there with the rest of them.

Leah: Are there any other comments you think we should put into the Gabriel Dumont Institute's archives? Anything you want to say?

Richard: I would really like to encourage the Métis people to take ownership of the music and culture again, because that's the only thing that'll rejuvenate our communities and our people is the culture and the music and the fiddle and all that stuff is right at the core of it and more than just take ownership of it again, we have to start to market it and sell it, because that's who we are and we'll be walked over and brushed aside if we don't stand firm and take ownership and that and just express who we are and in the most beautiful way we possibly can and that's music and dance.

End of side A