

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

Tape 1

**Start Time: 2:08.06.00**

**(Video Time: 2:08.06.00) Nora Cummings:** Well, my name is Nora Ouellette, Cummings. I was born and raised here in Saskatoon. I was one of the road allowance people. We, we talk about road allowance and I, I know Maria Campbell used to talk about road allowance people.

**Ron Laliberte:** When you say road allowance are you saying road allowance here in, in Sas-, Saskatoon?

**Nora Cummings:** Saskatoon.

**Ron Laliberte:** Where those original groups that were up in which part of the city was that?

**Nora Cummings:** I was in the Nutana area.

**Ron Laliberte:** Oh yes. That's interesting.

**Nora Cummings:** And it was actually where the Bowman Collegiate is in that area.

**Ron Laliberte:** Oh yeah.

**Nora Cummings:** And there was approximately 40 families living there, relatives.

**Ron Laliberte:** Boy that's an interesting part of history that we...

**Nora Cummings:** And it was at that time and then on the west side which is where, off 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue K in that area my, my "mooshum" lived

there with the other side of the family so we would visit coming over the Broadway Bridge with horse and the, the wagons. And then Exhibition week they would come to, as you know that Aboriginal people, Métis people exhibitions were a great thing for them. I mean that was their outing, and, and they would come and put all their tents up and so we'd have a visit for a week with our relatives from the west side of town.

**Ron Laliberte:** Where would they put up their tents, sorry?

**(Video Time: 2:09.22.24) Nora Cummings:** Right, you know where the Mac's store is in that area now on Ruth Street, just around Ruth Street. Now we call it, I can pretty well visual around Ruth Street and that's where everybody would pitch their tents for the exhibition. And we, we'd go and we weren't too far so we would visit them

**Ron Laliberte:** Oh yeah I know where you are talking about.

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah. Yes. And, you know, when I think about growing up in this city in that area we were such a close connected family and my father worked as a laborer. He used to, well he was actually a farmer, I guess in, in a sense because we had our horses and we would he would cut grass and work, you know, and do things like that farmers and I worked with my father. There was myself and my older sister and my younger brother. There was just three of us in the family and I had a step-brother but if my Dad got up at 4 o'clock in the morning, I was there I had my own team. I was, I had, I was a teamswoman I guess they'd call it now but it was a teamsman. I had my own horses and I worked with him and, and that's where I still live to this day and my family lives there. But actually my mother was a Trotchie and

actually it is Trottier but they all knew their name as Trotchie. My grand, my father and my Grandfather came from Lewistown, Montana. That's where we originated from. On my Grandfather on my mother's side they were, my Grandfather was from Havre, Montana and my "kohkum" my Grandma was from Great Falls, Montana. So they, when they immigrated into Canada, I guess in the early 1900s, they then settled in Round Prairie, which is called Round Prairie today. Actually it was not Round Prairie it was called, I'll have to go back to that I think it was it was, it's a it was a lake...

**Ron Laliberte:** That's, that's south of Saskatoon?

**Nora Cummings:** That yeah.

**Ron Laliberte:** There around, towards Whitecap?

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah it's right by White-, Whitecap

**Ron Laliberte:** Yes

**Nora Cummings:** About two miles from there.

**Ron Laliberte:** Yeah.

**Nora Cummings:** And there was 40 families there and that's where they lived until 19-, 1930-32 somewhere around there. My mother was 14 when she moved into the city. And that's where all the families lived?

**Ron Laliberte:** Do you mind if I interrupt? They were refugees from 1885, some of those people that came here?

**Nora Cummings:** Right. They were. They were.

**Ron Laliberte:** Because they were people that were dispersed after 1885, went to places in the States and then they migrated back after that

**Nora Cummings:** Right.

**Ron Laliberte:** And they had they established a settlement at

**Nora Cummings:** Right.

**Ron Laliberte:** What's called Round Prairie now.

**Nora Cummings:** Yes. My Grandfather, Moise Ouellette, was in the rebellion and my Grandmother, Isa-, Elizabeth Ouellette, was one of the ladies that worked and helped with the guns and feed the men and stuff.

**Ron Laliberte:** Wow

**Nora Cummings:** They worked within that and so, those were, and then when they left they went back to the States and then came back to and settled in Round Prairie.

**Ron Laliberte:** Gee, you got royal blood but the sounds of it. Right, descendants right from 1885.

**(Video Time: 2:12.32.21) Nora Cummings:** And, and they, they lived there and then they used to all work for farmers. They had umm to do work, pick rock, or whatever, however to survive and they more or less lived off the land. And umm but I always get a great kick out of my mother she says, "I don't know why these poor breeds ever decided to go and live there, it was all sand hills." And, and of course they would actually have to leave from there to go and, and work eh? And my mother was born in, in, right in Round Prairie. That's where she was born. My aunts, one of them was born in some little town they couldn't even remember the town and you know them time kids weren't registered like they are now. So when it came time to get old age pension and stuff they were having a tough time because sometimes it would take a year before they would go and register these kids. So by this

time, a year had gone by so they would date them from that day they were registered. So there's where a lot of our people have lost their saying, well my birth date is here, or the old people, someone would say, "Oh no you were born over there" and they weren't sure. So that's why I think a lot of the confusion is with a lot of our people today. Their ages. And I remember my Grandmother when she first drew her, to get old age pension they had to have three people sign a document with a JP saying they knew her for that many years before she could get her document for her old age pension. So that was a struggle for us as Métis people in those days as well as it is now. But I think more so our, our people, because of the education, the lack of speaking English. Like my Grandmother was, very broken English and she was shy like to speak. If somebody came in the house she'd talk to me in Cree so I would explain to them. She'd say they laugh at me. I don't want to, don't talk, don't let them talk to me. And the other thing I found when I was growing up our people were very afraid of police, especially the RCMP. Very afraid for whatever reasons. I think the only time they ever seen them I think was stemming back from the rebellion as well. And as they grew up in some of them the RCMP. They were very frightful of police. Anybody in a uniform.

**(Video Time: 2:15.11.07) Ron Laliberte:** Well that's understandable, I think, when you, you I mean you take a look at the legacy after 1885 what were the Northwest P-, the Northwest Mounted Police all about. They were the ones that came there to put down the Métis...

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah

**Ron Laliberte:** ...and oppress them so they were the oppressors so...

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah

**Ron Laliberte:** I mean you take a look at some, some of the literature on that period and they say that, you know, that Métis still police themselves. And you are right. You know that they didn't want anything to do with the police because they were the people who were going to put them in jail and, and you know criminalize them...

**Nora Cummings:** Yeah.

**Ron Laliberte:** So that's kind of understandable, I think, in some respects.

**End Time: 2:15.40.10**