

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

Tape 1

Start Time: 4:07.48.09

(Video Time: 4:07.48.09) Ron Laliberte: OK, if we could talk to you a bit Nora, about, you know, some of the political background that you came from. Was your family involved in politics? How did you come involved in politics? Was, you know, like Peter talked about the CCF and the Liberals and so on, what's your take on all of that? Did you have any of the same sort of perspectives that Peter had about the political parties?

(Video Time: 4:08.12.00) Nora Cummings: Well I did, my family was, my uncles, and actually my Uncle Clarence was more or less the leader in our families of, in the political world, as well as the older people but they didn't really get into the mainstream politics like, like Peter's father did. They were so busy trying to make a living for themselves in the city it was quite hard, and it wasn't, it wasn't, like I said, it was in the early '50s when my uncle and them came back from the Army and that's when then they would go out and come out and they'd campaign for the various parties that they felt, other than the Liberals. They never did have a campaign for the Liberals. It was the, you know, the CCF. And I know there was some of the, as the years went by in the early '60s they, the, I found the Métis people would go with John Diefenbaker, you know, the Conservative, they were quite supportive of John Diefenbaker. So that's pretty well where I, I used to be concerned

because they used to talk a lot about, and they were very political our people and they understood but they just never got out into the mainstream. Then in the early '70s, '69, '70s, we started forming our own nation as a government, as the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. And my uncle was quite involved in, and of course, him and I were very close and we worked together on a lot of issues. So that's how we came about in forming our nation as the locals, and they called them locals those time for Métis society. And we were the 11th local in the province at that time. And, of course, leadership roles came and the politics came and you had to go out and vote for your provincial leadership. And, so then, we got on the campaign trail and we organized and, and traveled and, throughout the province of Saskatchewan. It was at the time in Batoche, in 1971 I believe, and Jim Sinclair become the provincial president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, well it was called the Métis Society of Saskatchewan then. And, but I, although we always found the interest, in, in feeling it was important to become a nation of our own.

(Video Time: 4:10.49.03) Ron Laliberte: If I could just take you back a little bit. When you talk about Clarence's involvement in, in, in politics, and it sounds like he was a big influence on you. What were the issues, do you remember anything about the issues back in, after the war, what the issues for the Métis people were, you know.

(Video Time: 4:11.04.16) Nora Cummings: They were, they were for, they wanted the rights of the Métis, they, they thought, felt important for our land. For the economy, housing was another issue because we never, you

know, and employment. These were issues that we, we've focused on, and especially the education. Clarence, as well, was a very good friend of Roy Romanow's, they became very good friends. And as we organized in the early '70s, and, and then later on Roy and Clarence became very good friends and a lot of our programming that came, Clarence would deal with Romanow. And I think too, that, not because of Mr. Romanow himself but I think that Clarence has proved, proven to be a person of his word and a concerned person for going out and getting things done. When he set his mind to do something for the Métis people he did that.

Ron Laliberte: So he was a big influence on your political perspective early in your life?

Nora Cummings: He was yes.

Ron Laliberte: Anybody else, were there other women involved in the movement back then?

(Video Time: 4:12.15.16) Nora Cummings: In the movement yes there was, when we first started there was a lady that's very dear to my heart, actually it was Josephine Pambrun and she was actually from the Meadow Lake area. And also there was an Alice Poitras and they were, kind of my...**(Inaudible)**...got me involved and, and they, they were very political. And I was kind of the new kid on the block and, believe it or not, I was a very shy person, very shy. I, as I mentioned earlier, my role was staying home and looking after kids and looking after the grandmas and the grandpas and so on. And, for me to say, come out into the city here and go into a restaurant by myself forget it. I would never unless my husband was

with me. I would never go and eat in front of people, I was, I was shy. When I tell that story people kind of look at me and say they can't believe it. And I got to give many thanks for the role models such as Clarence and, and Josephine Pambrun. And I bring her name because she also helped Mr. Sinclair and a lot of those politicians paved the road for them in going out. But as it grew I, I, I've become a, there was only three women field workers in the province and it was myself, Vicky, Vicky Doucette and a Mrs. Fiddler from Green Lake. I forgotten her first name.

Peter Bishop: Evelyn.

Nora Cummings: Evelyn. And we were the only three women.

End Time: 4:13.56.00