

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

Tape 1

Start Time: 4:22.11.26

Nora Cummings: But, you know, and, and I mean, it was a hard struggle for us. But I became very, very concerned and I got really involved and I thank the, my family that supported me so strongly. My children, my deceased husband was very supportive because without that support at home I could have never done that. I started traveling and going to Ottawa, looking for funding and I always wondered sometimes when I sit back and I look, and I said, "God, how did I do this?" You know. But I think when you apply yourself and, and you're concerned, especially it was a need, our, our political men were out there doing their thing and surviving but there was a lot of the services that for families were not met. And that was our issues...

Ron Laliberte: So that's what the issues were, was, was mainly family issues or were their other big one's too for women?

Nora Cummings: Family issues yes.

Ron Laliberte:...for women...

Nora Cummings: Yes, the family issues and for the women that could do that there were within the community. Our political organization, which was the, the Native Women of Saskatchewan, and it was mostly Métis, but we had to team up with First Nation and non-Status in order to organize because that's the way the funding came out. But we had women that were very

political and the political women did that work. The social aspects was left to the communities and the local women's groups in the community.

Ron Laliberte: So was it, was the issues child care or...

Nora Cummings: Child care, housing....

Ron Laliberte: Housing. Education?

Nora Cummings: Correctionals.

Ron Laliberte: Correctionals.

(Video Time: 4:23.48.28) Nora Cummings: Education. They worked with the, they had a, groups that would go into the women's correctional, also the penitentiaries and, it had never been done before. The women opened the doorways to a lot of things. The women went out and they did a lot of good work. They sat on boards, they sat on community boards. I ran for city council in 1974, as, as an educational official for women so they would become involved. I was very involved in our communities and I went to this community meeting and they brought it up and I thought, yeah right. I mean this is three weeks away and what am I going to do at city council. One of our women ran for school board because we felt the importance for our children and women in general. So we ran on a slate, I ran in the Giants area which at that time was, he used to manage the...**(Inaudible)**... up in, Don Junor. And he was the Giant because it was the ward system and the other girl ran in the Taylor area on the South East Nutana. And we kind of picked those because we knew but we wanted to be aware, nobody has ever run for city council as an Aboriginal person...**(Inaudible)**...

Ron Laliberte: That was the first time that ever happened.

Nora Cummings: First time.

Ron Laliberte: Wow.

Nora Cummings: And then, Barry Singer was my campaign manager...

Ron Laliberte: The lawyer Barry Singer?

(Video Time: 4:25.11.16) Nora Cummings: Yup. He's now a judge, he was my campaign manager. We had the union supporting us and we had to go out and speak, but for the first time that me being raised in this city that I found a discrimination in this city. Never realized it was that bad. I door knocked, we had people door knocking, talking with people. But when I, I had ugly mail, hate mail left in my mail boxes and it was pretty scary stuff. I was called various names, I was called, you know, Indian women should be at home and looking after the bastards that they all belong to one man and things like this they would drop off. It was very scary. I, I, I felt like quitting because I was scared for my children, they were young then. And I would take my kids if I went and spoke in a group of people, but it scared me because I thought, wow, they have to go to school and what if they do something, 'cause all these things bothered me. And I've never, ever felt that kind of discrimination. So I went home and I talked to my husband and I said, "I think I have to quit." And he said, "If you quit now, you'll quit all your life. You'll run all your life. You have to stand up now and you have, this is where you have to show your strength and become very powerful, very strong." So I did that. And I talked to my, my Uncle Clarence and he said, "He's right. The day you start running, then you've lost everything you've worked for." So I went back in that field and I worked harder and when I

would speak I'd wonder, "What crank's in here?" But I, I felt to myself and I left it in the good hands of the good creator and said, "You know, you have to guide me now because I need that strength more than anything else." I got, I wanted 50 votes, I got 51 votes. I was pleased. It wasn't a big thing but it was the idea of having the educational out there for our people to take that and run. They wanted me to run in the provincial election, I said, "You got to be crazy." Because just before that we had one of our girls run in the provincial election. She had to sleep in the landfill in Meadow Lake, that's how badly the discrimination was, her and her mother in a truck. And she was an Aboriginal girl. So, but we did. It never scared us. We then became more, more forceful because we felt OK, we as women now have to start taking this role. And we never, ever once, we, we worked beside our men as the role of the women, we worked beside our men. If our men were having a tough time we get out and we supported them. And, I then went on to the, we, we had our national Native Women's Conference in, in Winnipeg in 1972 and I then become one of the board members on the national scene. So our women got very, very political, very organized and are continuing today, there was a lot of that. And I see a lot of our women out there now that running for positions such as in the political parties and on city council and, and in some of the RMs. And I think it's great because I think women have a role to play. We, I know there's along ways to go yet. There's a lot of women that, that are not running in the political parties. I really feel that that has to happen. There's a, I, I understand there's a young girl, Métis girl, that is going to be running in the, either party here coming up and I'm excited for

her because I know she's going to be a good, good candidate. And I encourage our women to do that. And I encourage them to, to get involved. And I think because of the times is changed, the years have changed and we have to get in with, with the times and our young women have a lot to offer.

End Time: 4:29.19.22