

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

Tape 3

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Peter Bishop: Okay, getting back to Rod, yeah. It's hard to know where to begin because he was involved in so much, you know, Rod. But say he really didn't get started to get involved in politics until he ran into Malcolm Norris. See he lived in Prince Albert for a while and worked for the pulp mill. Was it Weyerhaeuser?

Nora Cummings: Weyerhaeuser.

Peter Bishop: Or before that? But that, that was quite a while ago, that was in the '60s. And he thought the Aboriginal people were being treated unfairly at that mill. And he'd get into arguments with his bosses. Consequently he got fired. That was under the Liberal government again under Thatcher. So anyway he met Malcolm Norris when he was the Executive Director of the P.A. Indian and Métis Friendship Centre. But he, he still was involved in politics, Malcolm. He never stopped. And the Liberals didn't like people that were anti-government or anti-Liberal. If you did not support the Liberals they'd get rid of you somehow. Well, they fired him from work, you know from, from Regina, he was working for the government then. And that's how come he got hired as the Executive Director of the Friendship Centre. But then they got rid of him there, too as well, or he resigned I think, 'cause of political pressure that was, that was put on him by, put on the people by

Ross Thatcher's government. They wanted to get rid of Malcolm Norris. But he remained true to his ideals and his principles. And Rod picked up on it. So that was Rod's hero. He often talked about Malcolm Norris. I didn't know Malcolm, I wish I did but I wasn't involved at that time in politics. But anyway he got involved with the Friendship Centre too, as well, Rod as a result of what happened. I think he got in as President of the Friendship Centre. And later on after that he got in as President of the Prince Albert Local, Métis Society Local. Stayed there for a while and eventually he made his way back to Green Lake. Start reorganizing the people because there was nothing there. At one time in the '40s my dad was the president of that Local but the, it wasn't very active. Again the church was responsible for it. They didn't want the Native people to get that political so they discouraged them. And as I've said before they didn't dare, you get involved with this organization because they, they were Catholics, eh. They were strong Catholics, brainwashed Catholics, let's put it that way. And this is how he was able to keep a handle on, on the Métis. But Rod found out about it and said, "Well," he said, "My dad went through the same thing with the same party, the Liberals," he says. "That's not going to stop me." So he went around trying to organize the people in Green Lake. Let's get the Local going again. You know, issues such as land tenure, 'cause you have to remember I talked about that earlier, that there was 12 townships set aside for Métis people that were forced to move to Green Lake, you know from Baljennie, Glen Mary, Cando, places like that, eh. Punnichy and Lestock as well. So anyway that's all it was. It wasn't anything really radical about it. And these are

issues that took people were concerned about. They were finding out that some of the land they were living in didn't belong to them. It belonged to the provincial government, in a sense again they became squatters without realizing it. So that's what Rod was fighting about, land rights you might say.

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