

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

Tape 3

Start Clip: 3:16:54.28

(Video Time: 3:16.54.28) Peter Bishop: Rod was a very principled man. He fought for the better of the people, not only in Green Lake but surrounding area. In Meadow Lake when he was Regional Director, he was instrumental in getting that old hospital in Meadow Lake to be used by the Métis people as their head office. And in there they had the different programs that they were getting from the government. If there was an education program that's where it was at. Economic development, day care, there was other programs too that were running out of there. Oh, carpentry program, things like that. Things that the people wanted, he didn't make that decision by himself. He asked the people what they wanted. He even acquired land for a big community garden for those people. The same way my Dad did. And they used to get a lot of vegetables in the fall. That's what he did for the Local in Meadow Lake. Because he was Area Director. And in Green Lake he had his own farm too as well. His potato farm. And people could get potatoes from him too for nothing. But sometimes he'd sell potatoes to people that were from, from the Northern Saskatchewan. They're just passing through, they'd buy potatoes from him. But for Green Lake he didn't sell too many pota-, potatoes, he gave them away.

Ron Laliberte: What is, I know that he was involved in the, in the, the, the colony land at Green Lake.....

Ron Laliberte: ...and, and that was kind of, kind of an issue for him because even, you know, up until he passed away he was still struggling with that. Could you comment on, on...? **(Inaudible)** ...

Peter Bishop: The twelve townships.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah and, and where is that today? Do you know where ... **(Inaudible)**...?

Peter Bishop: It has never gone anywhere. He fought so long and hard for it but to obtain that land for the Métis in Green Lake because those twelve townships were set aside for the people and the new comers that were moving in.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Peter Bishop: But it was never settled by the government. And it was a CCF government that passed that.

Ron Laliberte: So is there still a land claim against that or...

Peter Bishop: I believe there is.

Ron Laliberte: ...is it on going? Okay.

(Video Time: 3:19.25.20) Peter Bishop: And he was also instrumental in getting the Green Lake, or Alec Bishop Child Care Centre, opened up in Green Lake. He bought one of them old shelters and he worked long and hard on it. And he got his funding from both levels of government too, federal and the provincial. And that stayed for a period of about ten years. They had shut it down in, I forget what year it was, but that, that's what

Devine's government came in. People were complaining that some of those children were being abused. So they shut it down. It wasn't, it was never proven to be the case.

Ron Laliberte: Yeah.

Peter Bishop: So when the NDP defeated the Conservatives, he approached the NDP and the NDP approved the reopening of that center. Yeah and a lot of kids passed through that centre. And also he was instrumental in union-, unionizing the farm before they were sold by the Devine government those people were just barely making a living. When those farms were created, the purpose of that was to provide employment for the people in Green Lake. But then they were getting very low wages. So he stepped in there, he got a hold of SGEU. He says, "I think maybe we better unionize these people." So when that came through and then the people, you know, got behind the union, their wages started going up and then finally they had a pension plan. There's two farms and there, he was involved in a lot of demonstrations too and Devine was trying to get rid of those farms. He did for a while but eventually the people got the land back, the farms back and some of them are farming that land too, as well. These are some of the things that Rod was involved in, in the community. The same thing with the Green Lake farm. Saskatchewan Forest Products was after that land, they wanted to buy it. And he was mayor of the town and says, "No, we're not giving it away." He says, "Finally we finally got that farm," not through the Liberals, not like that first time in '69 when I went with him. This Minister promised him the saw

mill. And right now it's owned by the people of Green Lake. They are the proprietors of that saw mill now. Yeah and it's still running.

Ron Laliberte: Interesting.

Peter Bishop: So these are some of the things that Rod did in the community. And as a mayor he built a real nice, a nice recreation building for bike, skating and so forth. Still standing and I think it's still in use.

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