

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 2

**Start Clip: 6:17:25.12**

**(Video Tape: 6:17.25.12) - JIM SINCLAIR:** But, you know, and that again, I, of course, I was at the tables, the press tables because I had to be, but some of our good people were not there like our lawyer Rob Millen. I was very disappointed about not seeing him there because he made such a struggle. Durocher and some of our people who were very strong with us were not even, you know, there it was taken over by sort of a new group and that's fine, you know, that's the way it should be. We accomplished our goals and I think that was the real, the real beginning but again as I said before that, before we even got there we had to sit across the table as well from, from Ian Vinnie, who is now in the Supreme Court of Canada, who was the federal person at that time, cross-examining me about why we should have the Métis at the table and represented by Métis and who were the Métis? Why were we not just a group with, with the rest of the left over Indians? And of course Mr. Briere was sitting across the table on behalf of the government, sitting beside the government guy and he was with them and so we had to defend ourselves. And the one question I was asked very clearly is "Who are the Métis?" And of course I said, "The Métis are a phenomenon of Western Canada and that's who we are and that's who we always were, many of us are half-breeds, now we consider it as Métis, its fine." And the, the question then came about, "How do you know you are Métis? And what about people in Eastern Canada?" I said, "Well when John A. Macdonald sent the troops to crush the Métis, he didn't send them to Nova Scotia, he sent them to Batoche and that gave us a clear identity of who we were and what are struggle is about." It was a struggle about rights. It was a struggle about land. It was a struggle about self-determination.

**(Video Tape: 6:19.21.28) JIM DUROCHER:** There was no question at that time about who the Métis were and where they were when they wanted to crush them, and they wanted to, you know, they wanted to do away with Riel and, you know, and his group and, you know, Métis at that time and that's where they were. They were in Western Canada and that's what we made very, very clear.

**RON LALIBERTE:** So was that the end of that issue, or...

**(Video Tape: 6:19.44.08) JIM SINCLAIR:** No it wasn't really the end of it. I think, I think, you know, the, the, the whole question of, I mean, I think Canada was very well aware of it. Canada had kind of a shameful past with the Métis, a very shameful past. And our identity was Batoche and the Métis people that gave their lives there were so important to us and it's more than a symbol to us. It was a reality we could live with. It's the reality we can go and see their graves. It's a reality they were, had relations there and relations around the province that came from there.

**JIM DUROCHER:** The history was still there.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** The history was there. Riel's sister was buried in Ile a la Crosse.

**(Video Tape: 6:20.21.18) JIM DUROCHER:** In Ile a la Crosse and Riel's dad was born in Ile a la Crosse, you know, so we had all of that. Like and we had the history, we had the grave sight. We had the church, we had the trenches. We had, you know, people that lived around there. They were still, still from that, that era and the, you know, names were all there, you know, and, you know, the Lepines and, you know, those, those.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Howard Adams' relations.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Howard Adams' relations and, you know, the Macdougalls and, you know, all those names were there. So the history was still there, it was still kind of fresh, you know...

**JIM SINCLAIR:** A clear identity.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Clear identity, there was no question in mind.

**(Video Tape: 6:20.57.17) JIM SINCLAIR:** That could not be brought into question and that's where we focused our attention at that, it was the homeland of the Métis and that was where our whole struggle began. And I think, again, the, the things that we led up to the Constitutional discussions, which like I said, we had a vision of the 1971 with the Victoria conference, and I think the, and Jimmy eluded to it, we, we, we always knew what we had in mind for the end result but we, you know, we were not sure how to get there.

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