

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 2

**Start Clip: 6:49:32.03**

**(Video Tape: 6:49.32.03) RON LALIBERTE:** So what was, how did you end up visiting him the first time then?

**(Video Tape: 6:49.31.10) JIM SINCLAIR:** Well to bring him to Canada was our first visit, to bring him to Canada, invite him, inviting him to Canada and where in Canada was the big issue. And of course we said the Northwest Territories because Steve Calfway who became the Premier of the Northwest Territories and Jim Antoine who was...

**JIM DUROCHER:** Yeah old Jim.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** A good chief, we invited, we wanted too, we went to Rome to try to get him to come to Canada. As a result, he came as far as Yellowknife once and he had to go back home, that's when Harry Daniels gave him his coat in the airport hey, he just happened to meet over there.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Jacket, beaded jacket.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** So we had to go back to bring him back again. So, you know, he wasn't, he wasn't going to come back so we got him back to Fort Simpson and at the last meeting we, we had I think, you know, I was so, I was so well known with the Pope at that time that we had, each person was allowed to bring four or five people to be blessed by the Pope and, you know, Holy Communion.

**JIM DUROCHER:** The Holy Communion yeah.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** So, the leaders, I had, I had the, the option of bringing as many as thirty people to meet with the Pope. So I had a whole line up of elders in the North and that, you know, and that changed the whole thing, that changed the whole feeling between the church and the people. And more reality came to there because the Pope was a very progressive guy himself. He's very strict on the rules, fine, but, but he was also very supportive of rights.

**(Video Tape: 6:50.59.29) RON LALIBERTE:** So that's what you used him for in a sense that, you know, like it's okay to fight for your rights and...

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Yeah, and be a Catholic, yeah.

**RON LALIBERTE:** Church will, is with you on that.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Yeah.

**RON LALIBERTE:** And that's what you got that?

**(Video Tape: 6:51.08.20) JIM SINCLAIR:** The church is the church, look after our spiritual needs and the, and the, and the political processes is up to us took away our rights. And I think that's the message we got across to the Pope and, and because we were also talking about a peaceful process. We were talking about... **(inaudible)**...

**(Video Tape: 6:51.22.29) JIM DUROCHER:** Yeah, we need, we need to take ownership of our own, you know, we know what our problems are, you know, we know what the problems are. We want to do something about it but they got to be done by Aboriginal people, but governments has the, have the responsibility to, to accommodate that, you know, to help us achieve

those things. I mean they are, they've been spending billions and billions of dollars trying to, trying to address the so-called "Aboriginal problem", the "Métis problems" and stuff. You know, we can, we can do it for, for next to nothing, you know, to be able to handle our own, our own affairs. But we need the right to, you know, we need those rights to, you know, to recognize and to be able to govern ourselves and look after our own institutions and we used people like the Pope, you know, yeah we used him, you know, and he knows that. He knows we used him but that's what he's there for, to help us bring that message to Canada, to the, to the you know, to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Premiers, and, you know, the Ambassadors and, you know, Sinclair spent a lot of time in, in places like the, you know, the European Parliament, you know, on quite a number of occasions.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** The United Nations.

**JIM DUROCHER:** The United Nations as well, trying to convince, you know, folks at that level to tell Canada to, to give us an opportunity, to, look after ourselves, you know, to address our own concerns.

**(Video Tape: 6:52.45.01) RON LALIBERTE:** How effective was that?

**JIM DUROCHER:** Those kind of things.

**RON LALIBERTE:** Was that strategy?

**JIM DUROCHER:** That, that was pretty effective, I think, I think that the Pope, you know, there's a lot of Catholics in this country.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Oh yeah, no question.

**JIM DUROCHER:** And, you know, the Pope's letter, I remember the Pope's letter being read in the Church in Ile a la Crosse for example. Here's what the church yeah.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** I've got to get a copy of that letter.

**(Video Tape: 6:53.03.27) JIM DUROCHER:** Yeah, here's what the church is saying. Here's what the Pope is saying about, about rights, about Métis rights, about Aboriginal rights. And then there was that whole con-, reconciliation process that was happening at the same time and the residential school issues were a big, big thing at the same time. And so the Pope addressed all of those things in that letter Jim talks about. And this letter was read throughout Canada in all the, in all the churches, so that, you know, that at one time or another. And that had a big impact, you know, because the Prime Minister at that time said, "Gee we better, you know, we better start making some moves here. Let's start talking about, you know, rights."

**(Video Tape: 6:53.43.10) RON LALIBERTE:** And you got the support of the international community through the United Nations?

**(Video Tape: 6:53.46.10) JIM SINCLAIR:** I think the other thing too is that the, the Pope, our first and second meeting was fine. It was fairly businesslike and, but I think we kind of became friends after the second meeting, I, you know. He more or less, always gave me a private session with him to sit down and talk with him, which he does only to some of the world leaders, rather than just a group session. And he was able to invite me back each time, otherwise I would never have been back to see him that many times. And at the last meeting in 1987 when he came to Fort Simpson, none of the national leaders had ever met him at that time, except for myself and there were three new leaders, I think one of them was George Erasmus, one of them was a lady from the Inuit and, and, of course I think Smokey

Bear was there and the Native Council of Canada. And I was a little late getting on the stage, there...

**JIM DUROCHER:** Garry Gould.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Garry Gould was, I was a little late on getting on the stage where the Pope was to address the people and they were introducing the leaders and I was coming in from the back of the stage and they were going to introduce me and they introduced me and the Pope said, "Oh I know Jim." It seemed quite a, seemed quite a, you know, a thing to have that happen by the Pope himself, you know, because, you know, people, even in Italy when you, when you remember we went to see him there and some of the Italians couldn't believe us. "You're coming here to see 'Papa', you'll never see him! You'll never see him!" and I said, and I said "Oh no we're here to visit the Pope." And, you know, so that kind of, that kind of thing I think really, really helped us in terms of, of working with , this, this present Pope in order to, to get, to get what we did in terms of our rights in the Constitution and our support from Canadians, because...

**End Clip: 6:55:45.15**