

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 2

Start Clip: 8:01:54.02

(Video Tape: 8:01.54.02) RON LALIBERTE: Ahh, there's a couple of other things that I just wanted to get your thoughts on. First of all, when you think back on your political careers, what do you think your, you know, what are you most proud of when you think back on what you have done for the people?

(Video Tape: 8:02.11.25) JIM DUROCHER: Well, if I can start I guess, one of the things I'm very proud of is the fact that, that, you know, Métis people were, finally woke up from, from whatever they were in, you know, and they, and they finally had an understanding that they had rights. They have an understanding that, that, that they can do things, if they do it collectively and, you know. I'm very proud of the fact that they were able to see, you know, with, you know, people helping them see where the problems are, you know, for example the churches. Churches not always, have not always been our friends. And the RCMP, and, you know, the social workers and those kind of things. I'm very proud of those, those things that they were finally able to wake up and try to do something for themselves and help themselves, that, that, that's precisely what they did. And I'm very proud of the fact as well that, you know, with leaders like Jim Sinclair who made sure that the Constitution, that the Métis were involved in the Constitution, included in the Constitution. I'm very proud of the fact that we tried to simplify the Constitution. That it should not be a document that only lawyers can read. It should be a people's document. It's a living document and it's a working document that anybody can look at and say, "Okay what are my rights?" Well here they are, bang, section 35, very clear, identifies me as a

Métis and these are my rights. That's the kind of document it should be. Otherwise, if it starts getting too complicated then we start getting into a lot of problems where only the lawyers are going to be dealing with the Constitutional matters, you know, and these are our rights, as, as people at the community level. So I'm very proud of that fact, I'm very proud of the fact that, you know, that, that, you know, people have finally woke up and that, you know, the power's that be have, you know, now know that they can't just trample all over Aboriginal people and without, you know, without Aboriginal people. People no longer have to sign on the dotted line with an "X" you know. People like yourself Ron, you know, you're educated. You're an academic and you're, you know, you know about Constitutional matters. You know about those kind of things. And there are a lot of our young people now that are going to Universities and going to school, you know, they got a lot, a lot of chances. Things that Sinclair and I could only dream of, you know. And I'm so proud of that, I'm just so happy that Métis people are able to at least get out and try to do something and identify and recognize and do it.

RON LALIBERTE: Uh huh, good.

(Video Tape: 8:04.52.09) JIM SINCLAIR: See and I think, I think just to add to what Jimmy said, I think the, the, that there's where, you people have responsibility because again, you know, even if, in the courts or in your position about your rights and how you exercise your rights. Oral history is now accepted, you know, so you get a history from people who, like us and others, you can use that when you're, in your, in your arguments for land and for rights, because it's accepted in, in, in Canada. That's part of our, oral history is, is, you know, is, is testimony and you can use it. That's important. But I think if you go back and you ask me the same question about, I think the greatest achievement in, in my day, you know, when I look back, is, is, is the, the people I worked with, you know, again the community I worked with and the communities I was involved with, is to me so important to get to

know the people I did and to work with the people I did. And that to me is gratifying because I have never been accepted by either federal or provincial governments as, as something as, as, they would look that they didn't want to bring on the inside. They still want to keep me outside. And to me that's a badge of honour, you know. I look at it that way because I think it's more important for me to be looked at in that manner than it would be to honoured all the time by the white man. If any honours comes to me, it, it usually comes from my own people for what I did and I think that, the, the, the people that, that we worked with, again, you know, has, has made, has made my life, a whole, a whole difference in my life because of what these people did. And I, I seen how hard they worked, how hard they struggled and some people died for our cause, and went to prison for our cause, and, you know, and died with alcoholism, even that were drinking from, from working with us, but nevertheless, still had the goals in mind. And like I said, they never wavered from our rights. And those people I have a lot of respect for and I think that again, you know, it led us into, into things in our life that we can all take credit for. And the Constitutional process is one of them, you know. We all can take credit for that. There's no one that has to say, "I didn't participate." The, the Batoche, the twenty thousand people that came to Batoche. And if you look at those twenty thousand people that came, some of them brought their families, some of their families stayed at home. Just supposing those people were related to ten others, that makes 200,000, you know. So, we've had, we've had people, where people have showed us the fact that they are not going to lay down and die because someone said at one time they didn't exist, or at sometime they had to find their identity with another race of people. And I think that to me is something that, that I'll never forget and it, it sort of justified the day that I walked into the employment office and I said I was an Indian and they said no. And I said I was a half-breed and they said no. And I was proclaimed a Scotchman. And I think that to me is, is, is, is, it, it fixes all of that. It just changed that. It's, it's, it's, I'm a person now. And I don't have to be, I can go where I belong. I can be part of the, the, the Half-breed world. I can be part of the Indian

world and that's, that's a good part of that. I can have dual citizenship, if you want to call it that. You know. So that's, that's good for me and I think, I think again that those people that struggled, I have so much respect for them. My only wish is that I would see more, more of a build up with the people who provided that leadership in their communities. More, I would like to see, to be honest with you, a statue or a stone to people like, like Robbie Fontaine, you know, people like Napoleon Fontaine. And I go and visit his grave all the time back in Lestock and I just say to myself, "Nap, you know, you didn't die for nothing." You know, and I think that these people again, you know, have, have done so, have given so much and given their whole life for that. And, you know, and some of them felt they failed. They didn't fail, they didn't fail. We didn't fail. I think that, that our work is more and more, as we move on into history. I think, and, and the more I look that we didn't fail, and it's, maybe it's a bad way to look at it, but I'm blaming our own leadership today more than I blame government or anybody else for things not happening because they're not moving on these issues. They're, they're falling into service programs and I blame the Indians for the same thing. They've got themselves, in a sense, where they got themselves into a position where they, they forgot about their Treaties and they're now, they're now program oriented or going and signing agreements, that it doesn't derogate or abrogate our Aboriginal rights. You've heard that so many times, you know, it just kills me when I hear that kind of words. And I think the Métis are into the same thing. The Métis have to have their political arm, and the arm for the services. And the service arm should be in the communities, handled by boards. The political arm should be people that come from the communities that move ahead the political agenda, which will provide the services to the people.

(Video Tape: 8:10.40.03) RON LALIBERTE: So is that, is that what you would like to see in the future then?

JIM SINCLAIR: That's what I would like to see in the future. I'd like to see those, those communities begin to be involved. I want to see them be involved in the land claims. I want to see them be involved in terms of, of, of, of defining the rights and exercising the rights and implementation of the rights.

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