

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 1

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RON LALIBERTE: You, you raise another interesting point, when you talk about identity. When you talk about Métis people and non-status and, you know, there in AMNSIS and so on, was that an issue that was debated hotly? I mean about who a Métis person was and what, who should get membership and so on?

JIM DUROCHER: That continues to this day.

RON LALIBERTE: Yeah, oh yeah it's always been an issue.

JIM DUROCHER: Always been an issue.

RON LALIBERTE: I mean, but was it a hotly debated one during this period. Was there, was there...

JIM SINCLAIR: 1987 it really came out.

JIM DUROCHER: Yeah...

(Video Tape: 4:19.16.01) JIM SINCLAIR: See, the separation of the Métis in 1987 and the Métis Society and us, I was in a real predicament because I'd led, led the Métis for twenty years. I'd fought for them in the Constitution. I spoke all I could for them and then it came to the point where I said what I did at the Constitutional conferences and I came back and there was a large meeting of even my strongest supporters in the Métis

movement, said to me, "Look it's your time Sinc, you got to go." And I said "Okay, we'll go. But let's, let's not use the courts," because I said, "We have been an organization and the people where we've stayed away and don't trust the courts for anything with us." We wanted to stay away from police and the courts. So I said, "Let's sit down and let's work out a, a, an agreement where we separate in terms and conditions of, of, you go with all the institutions and everything that belongs to the Métis." We'll just go outside but recognize our organization for the people who still don't have their status and who are Indians, and because we have a place in the Constitution too as well. I don't believe in such a thing as non-status. You're either Indian, Métis, or Inuit." And so we wanted to struggle on that basis and somebody said, "No we can't wait. We're going to go to court." So they went to court and, and it made it look bad because it made it look like I was trying to keep these people together even though a lot of people wanted to stay together. So look it's too soon to separate. We still have a lot of work here yet. And, and of course, but people were still after the money, which we were finished. We were not, AMNSIS wasn't going to get any more money because what I'd said to the premiers in Saskatchewan. And so then and I, when it come time to look at the money I said, "Look I'm not going to take one cent from the Métis, nothing." It's theirs, we built it up, it's theirs. They've had nothing for all this time. It would be ludicrous for me to fight for their money. So if we're going to get money, we'll get it on the basis of being from somebody else. Our government should look after our needs in terms of, address our needs. And that was one of the disappointments I had because I felt we could separate without having to use the courts because I never was a court person. I spent, of the twenty years I was leader with the Métis, I spent seventeen of those years in the courts. Because of the fact that you're elected by the people, you were, you were subject to government regulations, so you had to walk a fine line, you know. Because we were also the first peoples in Canada I think to actually have a democratic one-person, one-vote organization.

JIM DUROCHER: Yep first ones.

JIM SINCLAIR: First ones.

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