

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 1

**Start Clip: 4:05:35.13**

**RON LALIBERTE:** So maybe you could talk a bit more about your involvement in the political institutions that led up to, you know, the whole Constitutional changes and so on. Maybe a bit about the background in the political movement, AMNSIS and so on. And talk a bit about AMNSIS maybe about, how, what was that political alliance about and what were the issues and that kind of thing. And was it a strong alliance given the fact that you had, you know, non-status and Métis involved in that political organization? What were the dynamics like in that whole thing?

**(Video Tape: 4:06.12.25) JIM SINCLAIR:** Well, for the AMNSIS organization, I think the history of it speaks for itself. You know the fact is that we're saying twenty thousand people to Batoche. Demonstrations you could call it in the day, you know, that was the result. I think, I think again, the, the, the, we understood in Saskatchewan that we could not do it alone. We had to branch out. And I think, you know, as we looked at our, our, our, our activities in Saskatchewan, we had to have, we had people like Durocher, I think Durocher was as far as I know the best at it that I've ever known in terms of going into community and could organize. Could speak the language well, get along with everybody, even if it's a Dene community but, you know, knew everybody. So we in a sense had that sense of organizing and if it wasn't for Durocher, I would never be the leader of the Métis for twenty years because he was able to move people and never looked at saying "I want to get rid of Sinclair and I want to be the leader," you know. It was sort of a team we had and that's what kept us in power. But then again we always had our opposition and even our opposition that was against us still

had the same ideas and that was the good thing about us because we could turn around and say to anyone "We want to do this" and they'd agree with us. It was the method of how we got there that people had agreed or disagreed and that's where we had our, our ideas and our, our sometimes our problems. We had academics in our organization and as we started to grow people became lawyers and people became teachers...

**JIM DUROCHER:** Social workers.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Social workers, so we developed people and some of those people would move away from us and take part in sort of being government people rather than us, with us. And I don't blame them because the government offered them money and a job hey. And they had to move and they had to then dispense with government legislations and that, so it made some of us to get along, some ill feelings. But we always had a group of us who were very strong in terms of the rights issue and never, ever put it in the back burner, never put it in the back burner. And I think that's where we had the respect of the communities that we worked with because I don't care what people said, even in the back of their minds no matter what they said, they always knew that oppression was there and that they were oppressed and their parents were oppressed and the people before them were oppressed and how do you get out of that oppression? How do you take your place? You know, so there was that kind of a movement and I think, I think again that, in those days, Durocher, Durocher will tell you again that, you know, it was that dialog amongst our communities that kept us together. Really kept us together and really kept this movement going. And in the South you had people like Nappy Lafontaine who was sort of the conscience of our organization. You know community, community, people, people, people. He would meet with ministers with thirty people, never go there by himself. And his reason were always, I want people to be involved. I want people to know. Ministers get mad and say, "How can we deal with thirty people?" Well if you can't deal with thirty people, you're not going to deal

with anybody. So that was his executive and, and his commitment again was so strong that you, you know, there was no doubt about what he meant and what he wanted to do.

**JIM DUROCHER:** And in the North we had people like Pierre Carriere, Nap Lafon-, or Nap Johnson. And, you know, those, Vital Morin and Louis, Louis Morin and old Robby Fontaine from La Loche.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Old Robby was...

**RON LALIBERTE:** What year are you talking about here exactly?

**JIM SINCLAIR:** We're talking the '70s.

**JIM DOUROCHER:** The '70s.

**(Video Tape: 4:10.03.24) RON LALIBERTE:** In the '60s when you think about, you know, I'm sure you've read Dobbin's book One-And-A-Half Men and so on, and when you think, look at...

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Never read Dobbin's book.

**RON LALIBERTE:** No never did?

**JIM SINCLAIR:** I knew Murray, Murray was never really the supporter of **(Inaudible)**...

**JIM DUROCHER:** Yeah he used to work for us.

**(Video Tape: 4:10.13.28) JIM SINCLAIR:** He never was a supporter of mine, and people who weren't supporters of mine I didn't, you know, I, I didn't really, you know, I didn't, I used to talk to like to, you know, to be

nice. But, I always felt his, his, his feelings was more on a, more on a basis of kind of a revolutionary bit or kind of maybe he was struck too much to socialism. In a sense that he, he looked maybe at that, that would solve our problems. I never looked at the problems right or left or center. I always looked at the problem, looked at the best solution. And if it was conservative government that could help us fine, NDP, no matter. You know, I never was born, I wasn't educated enough to know a philosophy really well so that was a good part of me. I think a lack of education helped me very much because I was educated by experiences, by meeting with ministers, by meeting with people. And that's the way I was, my education was community driven. So that's where I really got the benefit from and like I said when you, the North West side, we always keep talking about the North West side. That was where the heart of the movement was in North-, Northern Saskatchewan. And then the East side sort of got on track and then we had some very strong and good, powerful leaders from the, from the, from the East side there. What was his name, that got killed in a plane crash?

**JIM DUROCHER:** Lionel Deschambault.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Lionel Deschambault. One of the, those people who were there to really...

**JIM DUROCHER:** Lawrence Hugh.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Lawrence Hugh was a big supporter of us.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Was another good organizer. And his wife, his wife was a real good organizer as well, you know, at the community level.

**End Clip: 4:11:49.12**