

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 2

**Start Clip: 7:18:01.24**

**(Video Tape: 7:18.01.24) RON LALIBERTE:** Do you find that's happening now when you think about, if there is, I mean when I look at the definition of who a Métis person is from say the '60s when it was quite broad because it drew in, you know, status, sorry non-status and, and, and Métis people because, you know, when AMNSIS formed they wanted to lobby the government outside of the *Indian Act* and so on. Quite a broad definition even in Alberta in, you know, in the 1930s and forward, up until recently. Now the definition is narrowing, at least it was for a while. Is this based on rights or, you know, like if there's any rights that Métis people have? Is it, you know, I see that definition narrowing a bit and I know that now the definition is something like well, you have to be a member of the historic Métis Nation but really how do you...

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Who is the historic Métis Nation?

**RON LALIBERTE:** That's right, exactly and how do you prove that person was, I mean what, what, they still have to go back to things like Scrip or something.

**(Video Tape: 7:18.50.19) JIM DUROCHER:** Well, well, well, you know, not only that but, but it's lifestyle as well, you know, Métis people have lived, you know, a certain lifestyle based on the Aboriginal way of life I guess. And it's, it's community acceptance, as well, because in the North you have no problem with that, you know who the Métis are in the North, you know.

**RON LALIBERTE:** Sure, sure.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Where you start running into that kind of a problem is in Saskatoon and Regina and, you know, the big, big cities.

**RON LALIBERTE:** They never belonged to the community. They're opportunists in some way. That's how the community looks at them.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Yeah, that's right. That's how the community looks at that.

**(Video Tape: 7:19.21.03) RON LALIBERTE:** But, you know, in our recent census, the 19-, no sorry, the, the 2001 census. Now the census tells us that 30% of the Métis population are in, are urban areas now.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** That's probably true. In fact I would say there are even more.

**JIM DUROCHER:** I'd say even more yeah.

**RON LALIBERTE:** So this is, and not only that when you talk about a definition, you know, you have people in Labrador now and the Maritimes and so on. So, you know, you talk about the homeland of Métis people in the west and you're creating another category here too.

**(Video Tape: 7:19.48.01) JIM SINCLAIR:** That goes back to Harry Daniels, the pan-Canadian and I never bought into that name, never bought into that.

**RON LALIBERTE:** Is that right?

**JIM SINCLAIR:** I don't even know what it means.

**JIM DUROCHER:** I don't know what it means either.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Talk about what is a pan-Canadian. You know, so, I've always believed in the Métis, are the Métis, are the Métis. But again when you start, when you start talking historic Métis, Red River Métis, you're talking about class again and I don't want to see class of second-class citizens in the, in the, in the Métis Nation. I think everybody should be equal. There's no such a thing as a upper class lower class, so. The definition should be broad enough to include those people who, who want to be Métis and who feel they're Métis and bring them in and, you know, they're comfortable. I think that's the main thing and you, you look after your nation.

**(Video Tape: 7:20.34.19) JIM DUROCHER:** Well, well, you know, one of the realities, another reality that no one ever talks about of course is, you know, Red River. Yeah, okay Red River Métis. That's a, that's fairly recent to the history of Métis people. That's a recent thing that happened in the Red River. We have, in Saskatchewan, you have two communities, Ile a la Crosse and Cumberland House, which are at least a hundred years older than the Red River. And there's Métis there, always has been Métis there, you know.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** So where do they belong?

**JIM DUROCHER:** Where do they belong and they're older than Red River, you know.

**(Video Tape: 7:21.04.07) RON LALIBERTE:** So you're in favour then of a, of a broader definition?

**JIM SINCLAIR:** ... (Inaudible) ...

**JIM DUROCHER:** Well yeah, it shouldn't be so restrictive.

**RON LALIBERTE:** What about a person that says that nowadays, well I found out that my great great grandfather had some Aboriginal blood, therefore I'm Métis. What do you say to a person that like if they want to be Métis?

**(Video Tape: 7:21.20.00) JIM SINCLAIR:** That's a difficult situation. I think the best definition I was ever given about who should be a Métis again was ... **(Inaudible)** ... oh okay, you're thinking I know what I mean. Wayne Mackenzie stands at one end and I stand at the other and everybody in between is a Métis.

**JIM DUROCHER:** You can't be blacker than Jim Sinclair or whiter than Wayne Mackenzie.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** And, you know, that, that's, that's been said a lot of times. But again, you know, as far as the Métis again, you know, you, you got to be careful because you get some people again who are, who are, who'd like to belong and maybe historically they want to belong because they want to identify with their history. But then you got the real, what Durocher again calls the mainstream Métis, which people that they are, you know, in the struggle. They're, they're identifiable. They can't fit into a crowd, you know. And I know that offends some people but in our days when we first started organizing that's the way people were. You walked into a meeting, all brown faces. As, as, as the programs come in, a little lighter, little lighter, a little lighter. And, you know, in that way it, it goes on Riel's concept then of helping everybody and living with everybody. Just the poor and oppressed, get 'em all together. So there's nothing wrong with that I suppose. But again, you know, I have always been in an argument that look, the people that are half-breeds, and that goes back again, even in the old days I think, they did, they did call people French Half-breeds. You might recall that. They called people English Half-breeds and Scottish Half-breeds. And today I still see people who do that but they were all Half-breeds, okay. They didn't, they

didn't take them out and said well you're somebody else. But, so I think people today have to, have to take a very close look at how they build our nation. Because again, if you get too broad, then they'll say why you need any rights when you can vote in anybody you want because you have the majority. And if you get too narrow than you're leaving other people, who should be there.

**(Video Tape: 7:23.25.16) RON LALIBERTE:** That's why, that's why I think the definitions are getting narrower and narrower because if there is any, any kind of rights that do flow to the Métis people because of Scrip or whatever then, you know. Those people will only be entitled to that if they get a lump sum.

**(Video Tape: 7:23.35.23) JIM SINCLAIR:** I've never liked people using the identity to the Métis in terms of Scrip. Scrip was not just for the Métis. Scrip was for the soldiers, the RCMP, anybody who wanted...

**RON LALIBERTE:** Settlers in Red River.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Scrip, they got Scrip and why suddenly it was for us, for our people who, got some Scrip... **(Inaudible)** ...

**JIM DUROCHER:** It should not be a means of identity, you know. Because it was, it was too broad, again very broad.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Why should people give it the rights because of a little piece of land that many people, and we have proved that through our work and through our studies over the years, that people came in and didn't even put their "X", somebody else did it for them, you know. And much the same ways the treaty was done because some people were left out of the treaties, you know. We used to use the word "hang around the Fort Indians," the only ones to sign, you know, were around, you know, people around the fort, the

people around the hunting, looking after themselves, were not coming in to, to sign some of these, were left out. So again the Métis people are in the same boat, they, people stole their Scrips. People, white people even picked out a Métis name and put an "X" on it and took the land and that's how the, is it the Canadian, which bank got a lot of it, the Imperial Bank of Commerce, one of them is, the Bank of Montreal, you know, got rich of that.

**RON LALIBERTE:** Built a fortune on that.

**(Video Tape: 7:24.52.02) JIM DUROCHER:** You can't use that, you can't use Scrip, you know, because that was such a fraudulent, you know, you can't use that as a basis for, you know, as a basis for Métis, Métis, as in being identified a Métis because it was, it was a fraudulent piece, you know, of our history, you know. It just wouldn't, you know, you can't do that.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** I won't buy into that.

**JIM DUROCHER:** I would never buy into that.

**(Video Tape: 7:25.16.13) RON LALIBERTE:** Yeah, it's, it's really is a thorny issue, identity, because when I think about it, and, you know, you point out Cumberland House and so on, that these communities were outside of Red River and I think about it historically, I spend a lot of time thinking about it. I mean I, when I think about growing up in Prince Albert I knew I didn't belong to First Nation's society and I didn't belong to mainstream society. I knew myself that I was in between, and I've always felt that way. It was like, almost like an inner-essence to some extent that, you know, I belong somewhere else but not to those two communities. And I never really was accepted in either communities, so I was in the middle. And so, you know, I think a lot of people felt like that historically and that's what drew us together too, but that's not, there's not enough said about that. But, I mean,

that is a thorny issues and how that's ever going to, if we can ever get a good identity, definition of identity, I don't think it's ever going to happen.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Go ahead.

**JIM DUROCHER:** No, go ahead, I was just....

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Realistically if you look at the whole future of this, I see down the road, if you look at the Bill C-31 issue. I see down the road fifty years, Treaties with no Treaty Indians.

**JIM DUROCHER:** That's right.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Because Bill C-31 is going to pull everybody out of Treaties...

**RON LALIBERTE:** It's a policy of termination.

**JIM DUROCHER:** That's, that's right.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** And the next largest organization that is going to be is the non-status Indians again, all over again.

**(Inaudible)**

**RON LALIBERTE:** Exactly, because of the six-two's, you have to re-marry again into status.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** They're going to find out again, you know, you're going to have, you know, so, so the Métis are not dead yet. Going to be back to life with all these large groups of people that's not going to be on...

**(Video Tape: 7:26.46.11) RON LALIBERTE:** Well Canadian identity might be Métis when you think about, you know, the population increase.

**(Video Tape: 7:26.49.25) JIM SINCLAIR:** You, you, you have to look towards the future but again I think the leadership today is my, I would be after land and partners and resources and the sharing, resource sharing agreements. That was recommended years ago by Lawrence Yew and the Bayda Commission. We said that's a good deal and today when the government asks me "What can we do. We're going to have another study". I say look go back to the Bayda commission.

**JIM DUROCHER:** You don't need another study yeah.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Go back to Lawrence, with Lawrence Yew went around in supported... **(Inaudible)** ...

**JIM DUROCHER:** Lionel Deschambeault.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Lionel Deschambeault, the Northern Municipal council that time was to, to deal with all these issues but of course the government only gave them things that government wanted to give them, you know, so they could end up endorsing government and be part of a political arm of the government. And, you know, that's the way governments have operated over the years. They, they keep lying to you and they, they, you know, there's no real effort to recognize the rights of the people. And the, and the, of all the racism that's in this country of Canada, the worst is economic racism. I can stand people calling me names. I can stand people doing things like, but when it comes to economics and I'm left out of a system because I don't have any money and I'm made sure the doors are closed on me wherever I go. That's the worst kind of racism and that's what is in this country is hurting us the most.



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