

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, LL.B., DU, DCL, LL.D. (Hons).

Justice Sinclair, formerly Manitoba Associate Chief Judge, a Court of Queen's Bench Justice, and now chairperson of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a Métis from the Interlake area of Manitoba. His grandfather was an enfranchised Indian from Peguis Band. His mother died while he was an infant and he was raised by his grandparents. His Granny Simard¹ was a Saulteaux-French Métis from the Fort Alexander area. It was from Granny Simard that he learned to speak Michif-French. He has now retrieved the ability to speak his Ojibway language as well. Murray Sinclair's Ojibway name is Mi-zhana-Gheezhik - The One Who Speaks of Pictures in the Sky. He is a member of the Three Fires Society, and a Second Degree Member of the Midewiwin (Grand Medicine) Society of the Ojibway.

Justice Sinclair completed his grade 12 at age sixteen. He was class valedictorian and athlete of the year in 1968. He went right on to university but after two years there he took a job as administrator at the Selkirk Indian and Métis Friendship Centre. In 1971, he was elected as Vice President for the Interlake Region of Manitoba Métis Federation where he served for a year and one half. He left in 1973 to work as a Special Assistant for Howard Pawley the Attorney General of Manitoba for two years. At age twenty-six he entered Law School. He attended the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba and, in 1979, graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Manitoba.



He was awarded the A. J. Christie Prize in Civil Litigation in his second year of law and articulated with a law firm in his home town. He was called to the Manitoba Bar in 1980. Had his own law office in Selkirk, left to take post as counsel with Four Nations Confederacy in 1981. He was also counsel to the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Project Inc. He then joined Savino & Company where he worked with Vic Savino, City Councillor Joe Zuken Q.C., professor David Deutscher and Bill Armstrong.

¹ Catherine Simard was the daughter of Louis Simard Sr. (b. 1855) a French Canadian married to Betsy Cochrane (Metis). Catherine's older brother's scrip record is shown below.

Simard Jr., Louis; address: Dog Lake; born: August, 1883 at Moose Creek; father: Louis Simard (Whiteman); mother: Betsy Cochrane (Métis); married: 1900 to Mary Cochrane; scrip cert.: form C, no. 2248; claim no. 784.

In the course of his legal practice, Justice Sinclair practiced primarily in the fields of Civil and Criminal Litigation and Aboriginal Law. He represented a cross section of clients but by the time of his appointment, was known for his representation of Aboriginal people and his knowledge of Aboriginal legal issues.

He became Manitoba's first Aboriginal Judge in 1988. He was appointed as a Provincial Court Judge, then Associate Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Manitoba. Shortly after his appointment as Associate Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Manitoba in 1988, Justice Sinclair was appointed Co-Commissioner, along with Court of Queen's Bench Associate Chief Justice A. C. Hamilton, of Manitoba's Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. In November 2000, Justice Sinclair completed the "Report of the Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Inquest," a study into the deaths of twelve children in the pediatric cardiac surgery program of the HSC in 1994.

He was appointed as a Justice on the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba in 2001. He also served as an adjunct professor of Law and in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba. He is a recipient of a National Aboriginal Achievement Award and three Honourary Degrees for his work in Aboriginal justice. The University of Manitoba awarded him an LL.D.(Hons), on May 30, 2002.

On June 10, 2009 – The Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) appointed The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair as Chairperson of the Commission.

Murray Sinclair has given much back to his community. He and Justice Hamilton were speakers at the Manitoba Métis Federation's *Métis Elder's Conference* in 1995. He was involved in swearing in the very first Aboriginal Youth Justice Committee in Winnipeg at the Mamawiwichitata Centre and has been the guest speaker for many Aboriginal youth justice conferences in Manitoba. Judge Sinclair and his wife Katherine established the Abinochi Zhawayndakozhuwin Inc., an Ojibway Immersion Nursery School program in Winnipeg, which delivers an educational program completely in Ojibway. Justice Sinclair contributed an essay to the recent 2011 anthology *Manitowapow* (James Sinclair and Warren Carriou (Eds.)).²

In 1994, he was honoured with the National Aboriginal Achievement Award. He is the recipient of many other community service awards, as well as three Honourary Degrees for his work in the field of Aboriginal justice. He is married to Katherine "Animiki" Morrisseau, a Métis whose family is descendant from Michel Dumas a hero of the 1885 Métis Resistance. They have four children, Manon (Miskodagaginquay) Beaudrie, James (Niigonwedom) (and his partner Lorena Sekwan Fontaine), Déne (Beendighay-geezhigo-quay), Gazheek (Gazhegwenabeek), and one granddaughter Sarah (Nimijiien Niibense) Fontaine-Sinclair.

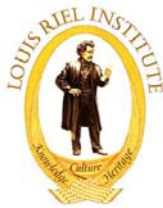
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² Murray Sinclair. "Suicide in First Nations People." In *Manitowapow*, James Sinclair and Warren Carriou (Eds.) Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2011: 235-244. This is a reprint of a speech he gave in 1992 to the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention.

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