Karon Shmon Interview with Billyjo DeLaRonde, November 15, 2012

Karon Shmon: Let me know when you're ready to start.

Billyjo DeLaRonde: Sure.

KS: My name is Karon Shmon, and I'm very pleased to welcome Billyjo DeLaRonde to the Gabriel Dumont Institute on November 15th, 2012. Welcome Billyjo. We appreciate that you've travelled from Manitoba to be with us today.

BJ: Thank you Ms. Shmon.

KS: Billyjo, the recent passing of Jim Sinclair is acknowledged by many as a great loss to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Would you care to comment on his legacy?

BJ: Yes. I think Jim Sinclair, his passing is sudden and all too soon. I think that Jim Sinclair was one of the founders of the Aboriginal movements, but more as an opening of Canada and in particular Saskatchewan. I believe that people like Jim Sinclair will be remembered much in the same way that we remember a person like Pierre Trudeau. I think Jim Sinclair is the equivalent of what Pierre Trudeau was for the French people and Canadians in general. I think Jim Sinclair is going to eventually be recognized for his role in the development and coming of age of the Métis and Indian people. I think Jim Sinclair will be known and admired for some of the stands he took in his lifetime.

KS: When did you meet Jim and did you have the opportunity to work with him?

BJ: I met Jim early in my public life when he was the president of the Métis in Saskatchewan, and when he was involved quite a bit in what would become the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. It was instrumental for people like Jim Sinclair, Sam Sinclair, and Stan Daniels in Alberta, and Ferdinand Guiboche in Manitoba. It was also important to Angus Spence who took very strong stands regarding the issues of Métis people in the west because the organization that became CAP or the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples was dominated mainly by the east because these provinces had so many more delegates other than Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. There was virtually no Métis to talk about anywhere else, or no organized Métis in the other provinces. So, there was very little room, very little discussions regarding the role and the positions of Métis people and their history, and how they fit into Canada. It was people like Jim Sinclair who decided to step aside from CAP and create the Métis National Council.

KS: When our leaders pass away, people form a streamlined view of their contributions which highlights the most significant contributions made. What do you think those were for Jim Sinclair?

BJ: I think those for Jim Sinclair could be put together in a statement. An Aboriginal group even put his words into music—from the presentation that he made at the last round of Aboriginal discussions for the Meech Lake Accord. Jim Sinclair spoke at that session. The president of Manitoba at the time was Yvon Dumont, and he gave his chair up to Jim Sinclair so he could speak. Jim Sinclair made a very honest and passionate speech. I

remember because I was sitting behind him. And at first, I thought that it was really the end of the Métis movement or the end of Aboriginal peoples' governance because the Meech Lake Accord was not going to go through because in the accord there was an agreement, an understanding that there would be four more constitutional tables specifically for the Indian and Métis peoples of Canada to discuss their rightful place in Canada. I saw this going on the wayside because people could not agree to the Meech Lake Accord. Jim Sinclair's words, I think, revitalized my thinking, and I remember thinking at the time, "thank you, Jim" because I can now tell my son that we will live to fight another day because of what he said here today. In an exchange, he talked to the premiers, and he talked to British Columbia's Premier Vander Zalm, and he congratulated him for becoming premier of one of the biggest provinces in Canada in the 20 short years that he had come from Holland. And yet, Vander Zalm had the audacity to deny Métis people and Indian people their rights in this country. At the same time, Indian and Métis people were buried all over Europe, and in Holland defending Vander Zalm's rights and his people's rights. Another thing that really got the point across was when Sinclair told Saskatchewan Premier Grant Devine, "You know there was a new jail built in Prince Albert. Indian and Métis people were fighting for jobs to build that jail, and the day it was finished, the day after, they were in it." He then said that the price of milk was five times higher in La Loche than it was in Regina, and yet the price of a bottle of whisky is the same as carton of milk. He then said point blank to Premier Vander Zalm, "you came here, you deny our people their rights." Then he turned on Premier Devine, "You asked the prime minister for one billion dollars to buy an election for you in Saskatchewan." I think when Jim said those kinds of things, I think he knew that he would be a marked man as far as the government was concerned because he really told it like it was. And for me, I think that that's one of the things that I admired about Jim Sinclair, he was a straight shooter.

KS: Thanks Billyjo. We're speaking this evening on the eve of Louis Riel Day, November 16th. What do you feel is the significance of this day and how it should be observed?

BJ: I think that this day is misunderstood and it's lost. I think it's really lost because it should be a celebration of probably for one of the greatest leaders that the Métis ever had. We should celebrate his life. I don't think that enough people take time to find out who Louis Riel really was or why he did what he did or what opportunities were before him if he would only look the other way. In that way, you can compare Jim Sinclair to Riel in that sense that I don't think Sinclair ever sold out. I don't think Riel ever sold out either. I think that this day should be a celebration, but maybe a renewal or a commitment so that people could go out to celebrate or come to GDI to get to know, through books, and literature and video just what this day means.

KS: Thanks. Remembrance Day has just passed. And most people are aware of the role that the Métis played in defending Canada in the two Great Wars and in the Korean War. What do you know about Métis veterans and how should these men and women be honoured?

BJ: I think that Remembrance Day should be what the name truly means, to remember somebody. If you take the Métis people and the Indian people and the contributions that they made in these wars, you'll find that they, percentage-wise, participated more than any other group in Canada. They also, it should also be remembered, had to deny their Aboriginalness. They had too deny that they were Métis or Indian in order for them to join

the army in Canada It's only recently that I found out why this was so. The government of Canada told Aboriginal people that they really shouldn't be fighting for two nations (the Métis and Indian nations) and the Canadian nation. So there was two ways to do it, either recruit these people as nations fighting under Canada or that they would have to deny that they existed as nations. And that's why a lot of them were told, "Well don't mention that you're Métis or don't mention that your Indian, just say that you're Canadian." I think that that has to be explored a little more. As should the contributions that they made. I remember Leo Pangman telling me, they used to kind of call him "Crazy Leo" when he had a couple drinks during a thunder storm. You could see Leo running down the field, hitting the dirt when the lightning would strike. Crazy Leo. One day again I had an opportunity to talk to Leo and he said that he and his brother had been recruited, or had joined voluntarily. And they couldn't talk about the fact that they were Métis. They were told say you're French or Scottish or something, don't say that you're Métis. And his brother got killed pretty quick in the war and as a result he said he didn't care. He said "I decided to kill as many of the opposition as possible. I don't care when or where," he said, "that was my job, and I did it fervently because they took my brother away." Much in the same way, I see the story of Crazy Horse. When Crazy Horse's family started getting killed he started going and killing people indiscriminately because I guess he lost something that meant a lot to him.

KS: Okay, thanks. Please tell us about other great Métis leaders who have passed on in the last century and why you admire them.

BJ: I have many of them and they are in no particular order. I think one of the ones would be Cuthbert Grant. Cuthbert Grant was a Half Breed I guess you could say before Métis became kosher. And Cuthbert Grant led the Battle of Seven Oaks which in non-Aboriginal story I think it's called the "Massacre of Seven Oaks." but the Battle of Seven Oaks was the only battle that the Métis won in western Canada. And hands down, no questions about it. I think the Métis lost two or three people and the opposition, the British under the leadership of governor Robert Semple, lost seventeen. And I think it awoke the Métis as a nation of people. That they cohesively, they acted together and they put their interests together, that they could get things done. I think Cuthbert Grant is probably one of the greatest military leaders right up there with Gabriel Dumont. And, but this is one of the things not talked about very much that it is the only conflict in Canada that the Métis won, the Battle of Seven Oaks. The second more recent person is Harry Daniels. I was talking to Murray Sinclair the other day and I told Murray that, "I think you better find a different place to be buried because Regina and Regina Beach is getting full, Jim Sinclair and Harry Daniels." So I said, "You'll have to go find your own place," and he laughed about it. But, Harry I think more than anybody else again is the one that would be acknowledged as the person who actually got the word Métis into the constitution, and he didn't work for the glory of it, he did it because he believed it, and I had many conversations with Harry. I visited him before he left the earth. I think it's too early to completely see the contribution that Harry made, like Jim Sinclair. The other person I think who represents a void in Métis history and culture specifically is Marguerite Riel, Marguerite Belhumeur. How many people, for example, know where Marguerite is Riel is buried? Where is Marguerite Riel buried? I asked them but they don't know. Well she is buried with her husband Louis in the same graveyard, but people don't know that. I believe that women are the stronger gender. Between men and women, I think that women are the stronger gender. And right from the days of Adam and Eve, they have been blamed and put down for the weaknesses of men. They say it was Eve who

tricked and fooled Adam into taking an apple but the truth is Adam did it on his own, and, I think too many times, women get blamed for the shortcomings of men. They have the strength, and I think we need to, we need to look at that. And it's people like Maria Campbell who remind us of the strength of women and their role. I would like to see more of the truth be told, and the truth is that if it wasn't for women, I don't think we would have had a Louis Riel or a Gabriel Dumont.

KS: Okay, thanks. I'm just going to go back to something you just said. In Saskatchewan, we like to think of the Métis victory at the Battle of Tourond's Coulee/Fish Creek. We did pretty good in that one, and I know the history books diminished the victory that the Métis had in that battle, but it was pretty significant, and I think it put Middleton on watch that he wasn't just trifling with anyone. Do you have any contemporary role models that are Métis or non-Métis? People that are still living and I know Maria is still living, and I admire her myself.

BJ: Okay, and just to follow that up, I totally concur with Fish Creek. My great-grandfather fought in Fish Creek, and they have the Canadians and the British, they had their insignias; their little battle flags. Our family tells the story that they were so scared and so frightened in Fish Creek that they ran away and threw their flags down. One of those flags was picked up by my great-grandfather, and the way that we understood that is, "We were told like, when you threw your gun down you don't shoot anybody any more. It, it's over." Their understanding is that they would have taken their Métis sashes off; that would have been it. It's done. So when they threw their flags down and ran away, they said, "We didn't chase them." We almost did, but our understanding was well, "They're giving up you know?" You're absolutely right, you do have a great battle at Fish Creek.

KS: Thank you. What about your contemporary role models, Métis or non-Métis?

BJ: I think there's several. Like we mentioned I think Maria. Maria is through and through Métis, and there's much that has been said about her and a lot more will be said. People like Yvonne Dumont in Manitoba became Lieutenant Governor. I think more should be explored about him. And there's people that have suffered, I think, and people don't understand, unless you're there, you don't understand the pressure and the suffering. So, for example, in Saskatchewan I think Gerald Morin, the current vice president, I understand in Saskatchewan, I think he offered a lot, and he was young, he was a lawyer. Out of school and thrown into a leadership role with very little support in an almost dog-eat-dog world Gerald had to be tough. I think, as a result, there was a clash between his Métis spirit and the spirit of the non-Métis world. I think it almost devoured him, I think it's good to hear that he's trying to heal and come back. I think another one is Murray Hamilton. I think Murray Hamilton in his own way has done so much for Métis people. He may not be the president or vice president but he's always there. He's a person who will push the envelope.

KS: Thank you. You and I have attended school at a time when little was taught about the Métis and when there was something, it was often misconstrued or was derogatory. What would you like to see today's school-aged children learn about the Métis?

BJ: The truth. The truth. That's it, just tell the truth. And there's so many aspects of it. You know they say, for example, if you look at the wider scope of the Canadian experience, you'll

find that a lot of people think that the Liberals did a lot. But the truth is that they were just around a lot, and they kind of wrote themselves into history because they were in power so long. They kind of wrote how they thought that Conservatives governed. Look again, for example, who allowed Indian people to vote—John Diefenbaker, Conservative. You know, Jean Chrétien said that he would, he would get rid of the GST and free trade that Mulroney introduced, but when he became prime minister he said, "Oh well, I made a mistake." So I think in that sense there's a truth there, but it's not acknowledged. It's not been told. Because it's told from a French perspective or from an English perspective, and nothing is really told from a Métis perspective. You know, for example, the Selkirk Settlers in Winnipeg, when the Earl of Selkirk brought them there to start a colony, if it wasn't for the Métis people those guys would have starved. The same thing happened when the Whites were coming into the west. It was always the Métis and Indian people who were the guides who knew the country. They were exploring and finding things. That's what they said, "Well we knew they were there, we just led them there." Another thing that is more contemporary was the role that the Indian and Métis people played. I think that more of the truth has to be told and it has to be. I say it has to be done through organizations and entities like GDI, which leads the way, and we need to acknowledge that.

KS: Thank you. As a former teacher, one of the things I liked to remind students is that the last five letters in history is story. And it depends on whose story is being recorded and told. And so you make a good point about the different perspectives and what's missing to ensure that the whole story, or the truth is being told.

BJ: Absolutely. We're not trying to re-write history. I think we just want to re-write in those chapters or those pages that are missing from our point of view. Give us a little space in that book and we'll tell you for sure.

KS: That's great. What do you recommend to ensure our culture, traditions and languages are preserved and passed onto future generations?

BJ: I think that that people have to understand culture. I think a lot of the time culture is the word most misunderstood. I think if you look at Métis and Indian culture today, you'll find bingo halls. Culture is what you do every day or what some people do, a group of people. And I think you have to look at your culture and say okay, "What am I doing. Am I celebrating my culture? Is celebrating my culture going to bingo?" That's fine if you want to go to bingo, but if you look at the word heritage I think it's important. When you're talking about your culture you should look at your heritage and your traditions. And go ahead and play bingo, but at least once a week do something for your heritage and your traditions so that you don't lose that. You don't lose, you don't lose these languages. I've challenged anybody that wants to speak a Native language that I know that I could teach that language to anybody in three months who wishes to know. And that would be, say two hours a week, three times a week. I think it can be done. So we can't have, can't have GDI do all the work. I think we need to do it at home as well. And I think GDI is there for guidance, as a tool we can use, and we can come together and say where we can find our heritage and our traditions and how we do cultural these things.

KS: In reviewing your previous interview, I was impressed and interested that you had a role as a chairman of a public school division in Manitoba, and I wondered if you were able to

exert your influence and advocacy on seeing that these things happen in the schools in that school division because of your own heritage and your commitment to it.

BJ: Absolutely. When I became chairman of Frontier School Division, I certainly started looking at the curriculum that was being taught, and there was a lot to be desired. I remember being told when I went to Cranberry Portage, a member of the Frontier system, that we had to learn about Greece because it was the centre of civilization, centre of the world. And I said, "Well no, no, no I think we should learn about Duck Bay first. That's where I was born. That's my centre of my world." And then from there, once I understand the centre of my world and what was going on, I can expand it. Eventually, I'll get to Greece, but don't tell me that the my centre of the world is over there, it's not. So I think in the school division, people started saying, "Okay, well what do we do?" "Well then teach, what is local here, what did the Métis people do here, what did the Indian people do, what did the first explorers, the first settlers, what did they do?" People said, "Oh I never thought about that you know?"

KS: Thank you. That sounds like it went a long way to giving them another worldview. People struggle with the question: what is Métis? How would you answer that?

BJ: I think that Métis is a state of mind, and why I say that is because I've watched it. I've seen these things, and too many times they think it has to do with blood you know? That might be, and I say that very carefully. It might be an ingredient, but it is certainly not an essential ingredient. I think that people define themselves, who they are and what they are. As an example, I ran into a fellow, I looked at him and he was speaking Inuktitut with Inuit people. After he was of done I said, "Like who's this guy? Well he's Inuit." I said, "Well he doesn't look Inuit." Well if you want to look at it from the outside, he is a white guy who came here and got adopted, and his first language was Inuktitut, and he's probably a better walrus hunter than anybody else around here. He speaks the language. So when I looked at that guy I thought, "Oh yah, they're right. He's an Inuit." So in that same way, I think Métis is a state of mind. I think there's a lot less, let's put it this way. There's a lot of Métis people who are really, I wouldn't say a lot, that's the wrong word. There is a percentage of Métis people who claim to be Métis for some unexplained reason or misperceived benefit or more than likely because the government says they're not Indians anymore and they're rejected from their own bands. So I tell those kinds of people, "Well, please don't come and jump in my Red River Cart just because some reserve threw you out." So I think that this group, which really does not realize what Métis is, and they just say they are, but if you start asking them, they're lost. And yet, there's people who you would never think that they weren't Métis by blood. Just talking to them, they're so immersed in the Métis world that you would be embarrassed to even ask them, "Do you have any Métis blood?"

KS: Your answer is resonating with me because having worked in a school division myself, I always thought that the wrong question to ask was do you have Métis ancestry because ancestry to me, is about blood. Whereas if you asked, "Do you self-identify as a Métis person?" It's a different question because that, I think, is getting to the state of mind that you feel when you are a Métis person rather than when you can claim a heritage. I have so many heritages it's actually quite astounding. That's the story of Canada. But if you ask me do I feel Scottish or do I feel Irish or Ukrainian, I don't feel those things. My state of mind is Métis.

BJ: There you go. Good example.

KS: There are better know stories about a few Métis, but I occasionally hear one about a lesser known Métis whose story should be told. I think you mentioned Marguerite Riel as a good example of that. Can you think of someone who fits this category and if so, what is their story?

BJ: That is a very good question. I'm a believer that anybody can predict the future, it's not hard. It's not difficult. You just have to watch what's going on around you, and what happened yesterday and what is happening today. And it might not be much different than what's going to happen tomorrow. So this question here, this fellow that's been in my mind quite a bit fits in this category. His name was Donald Ferland, and everybody called him "Mr. Moore." He was a Half Breed, a Métis, and he had joined the wars. He told of the hardships, the stories and the events. He would never speak in public, but growing up, every once in a while, I would take a case of beer or a little bottle of whisky and I'd go and find him and say "Mr. More, let's go sit by the lake over there" and just enjoy the day. He'd come and eventually after a while he'd kind of open up and tell these stories. And his story I would say, is nothing less than the story of Tommy Prince. He's a very unknown person. And yet, he talked about serving with Tom Prince in the war. And he talked about the war, and he said that if he was less shy, he could take the credit. But like, for example, he said, "We would fight. We would fight hard." He said we would move these Germans for about twenty miles. And he said, "the English wanted the glory so they would give us furlough. 'Go on, go and have seven days, ten days, go and enjoy yourselves.'" And they would bring the English in to take all the credit. Three, four days into our furlough he said they'd call us back, those Germans would chase those English all the way back and then an extra ten miles. "So then we'd [the Canadians] have to go back and chase them again," he said. Another story he told was how the first time, there was an English fellow who led their group to go and rescue some prisoners. And he said when they got there he started cutting the fence. He said then the Germans flashed their light, the English guy went crazy, started screaming. "And holy smokes, you could hear the dogs," he said. So he said, "We started running and I was just running as fast as I could and I could see this guy was ahead of me but I tripped. I could feel heat and I opened my eyes and I could see this guy was in flames." He said, the Germans used flame throwers on us. So he said, "If I didn't trip that would have been it for me too." He had a whole bunch of stories and yet, you know I started thinking of this fellow, he died maybe about ten years ago. And I thought there must be something, but I can't find anything on him. But yet, I know he existed and I know, my God, his stories. That's the kind of person I would like people to know.

KS: Well we're collecting biographies and people's stories and putting them on our Virtual Museum because we feel that is a place where that stuff can stay forever and be available to anyone. If you feel like capturing those thoughts sometime, or we can take it out of this interview, but I know you probably have a lot more to say about—

BJ: I would like to talk about him sometime because you would never have thought if you looked at this guy, that he left Duck Bay ever. And yet, he went all over Europe, and you know he could tell you, and it's funny the way he spoke. And I'd go and find him a map and he said, "A big river." And I'd say, "Okay what do you mean by a big river, like up to half

way down the lake?" "No, no," he'd say, "to that island there." I'd kind of look on the map so I'd know if he was talking about the Rhine River, and where he would be in Europe and what he was doing. He was also at Juno Beach. He never showed me any medals but I thought "he must have received some medals, this guy" from the things he did hey.

KS: Well thank you for sharing that with us. With regard to the Métis, what would represent a dream come true for you?

BJ: What would represent a dream come true for me? I think something that I shared with Dave [Morin] along the way here. And in a nutshell, without going too much into about what it is, I didn't do this with you by the way Karon, but non-Métis, non-Aboriginal people, I always keep my guard before I do interviews with them. I anticipate what they're going to do. And they've always, always asked the wrong question. They've never asked the right one. And the question they always ask, if you'd look at Todd Lamirande, if you'd look at Clarence Bender, and an interview that I've done if you can find a copy. They will take a microphone and they will say, "Mr. DeLaRonde, or Billyjo, do you know where the Bell of Batoche is?" Wrong question. Because a question they might ask is "Do you know how to find the Bell of Batoche?" That's quite different than knowing where it is. So my dream would be sooner than later, to be able to come to an understanding with the Métis people and others. For example, how many people know who owns the Bell of Batoche? Some people will say, "It's the community of Batoche." Well, it doesn't exist. Well it must be the local in Batoche, well okay. Maybe it's St. Louis, well okay. Maybe it's the place it was taken from originally, the church. You're getting closer. It's not the government of Canada. The truth is it's the bishop. The bishop owns all Catholic property. So at the time the bell was taken it was on Catholic property and it was a Catholic bell. So the bishop owns it, and the Bishop of St. Albert at the time was Monseigneur Grandin. Now do they want it back? I think it's too hot for them. So once you get to the question of who owns it, then one of the interviews that I've seen that was done way back in 1992 I think, the guy, Nattress, I think his name was, he said, "Possession is nine tenths of the law." So Karon maybe one tenth, I don't know, who owns the one tenth? My dream is that as many people as possible can touch that bell. There are people that are not in this world anymore, but I'm sure they're smiling from a different world, people like John Boucher.

KS: Thank you. I would like to give you the opportunity to speak about a topic of your choosing. Is there something that you would like to talk about?

BJ: Well a topic of my choosing would be, I think, when you talk about this, people think you're crazy. And that's spirituality. I think that we are as Aboriginal people, as Indian and Métis people, I think that we're very spiritual. And you don't have to look very far to find that. For example, I think in the Battle of Fish Creek I think Riel says, he's at Batoche and he said, "I heard a rumbling in my stomach and I dropped something." And to me, he said, "That tells me Gabriel Dumont and the Métis are having a great success at Fish Creek." It was a spirituality. I think that's lost in a lot of Aboriginal people. The spirits are still there, the spirits are there. And too many times I think our people, especially young people, are turning to alcohol and drugs to quieten that spirit because they don't know how to deal with their inner spirit. This spirit that wants to create, that wants to be a part of the Creator. And when they're lost and there's nobody to teach them and there's no place for them to go, I think they, more often than not, turn to alcohol and drugs. And then it becomes an

addiction and a problem. I would like our people to find a way to obtain that awareness. And I'm not preaching about any particular religion or any particular way of thinking. I just ewant people to do it, and just pray to the Creator for understanding. If you can do that, I think then you've taken the first step.

KS: Well thank you so much for sharing that. The floor is yours if you want to talk about anything else or we can move on.

BJ: No, I think we can move on from that one.

KS: Okay. Today we've discussed Métis who have gone before us such as Riel, Dumont, Sinclair, and our veterans. I hope you will be ineligible for this description for some time but when it is time, how would you like to be remembered?

BJ: What is that saying, for whom the bell tolls? That's it.

KS: Okay, good. I catch your drift here and I think that will definitely be a big piece of your legacy. As you observe various levels of leadership in action today, whether it's federal, provincial, Métis, First Nations or international, what advice can you pass on to one or more of them?

BJ: I guess in the world of martial arts and it doesn't matter what martial arts, most are the same. They'll give you belts. You start with a white belt and then a blue belt, green, yellow, brown, and black. And then there's ten degrees of blacks. At the end, you're given a white belt again. And the whole idea is to say when you started in this road of martial arts, you knew nothing. And you've gone through and you've come full circle, and you still know nothing. So I think if our leaders can take that attitude, and say "I got here and I really knew nothing and I think I know something, but I don't." I think you would have a leadership that would be more in tune with people and with the Creator. I think there's too many distractions. Too much noise.

KS: Thank you. Well I think we are getting to the end of the questions that I have for you, and I'll give you one more opportunity if there's anything you'd like to close with.

BJ: Okay. I think that this era of Métis awareness is paramount in doing something about our future. And if you look at it Karon and people should think. People should really look at themselves and think about it. I see people like, I think she might be a teacher, is there a woman named Sheila Pocha?

KS: Yes.

BJ: You see a person like that I think of as a young person, I admire her. I'm not sure exactly what she does.

KS: She's a school principal.

BJ: Yes, but seeing her speak, I've seen her speak, and I've observed her. And I don't think she looks for any, any accolades or any prizes or any plaques. She goes about doing her job

and she does it without wanting to say, "Well look at what I've done?" I think people like Sheila Pocha, there's not enough of them. There's not enough of Sheila Pochas in this world. And our leadership has to look seriously at our young people. Like I can't think off the top of my head other than Sheila. If you start looking at younger people, who are going to be our future leaders? What is our current leadership doing to prepare these young people? Not very much I don't think.. And I know President Doucette is trying to turn that around and my hats goes off to him. But it's people like President Doucette, we need a lot more leadership like that. We can't have leaders that are just there for the recognition. Been there, done that, move aside, and help these young people. I see four to twelve-year-olds, I look at them and I see leadership in them. And they're coming. But what about from twelve to twenty-four? There's not many because they're not being cultivated. They're not being encouraged. They're almost being seen as threats, and I don't think we should do that. I think we should embrace and have some sort of organized activity to bring up that leadership.

KS: Thank you, those are very kind words about Sheila, and I'll pass those along for you. Did you ever meet Clarence Trotchie?

BJ: Who?

KS: Clarence Trotchie.

BJ: I've heard of him, but I haven't met him.

KS: He was an area director here in Saskatoon and he's one of my mentors because when I first started university I think there was literally a handful of Aboriginal students on campus. And he'd phone me up and he'd say, "I want you to come to a meeting. I want to show our people that we're getting educated." So I'd go and I was nineteen-years-old, and I was very shy and I'd be sitting on the sideline trying to catch on to what's going on at this meeting. And he would say, "And these are our leaders of the future" and my eyes would get big and I'd think "We are?" And then when I started teaching every time I got asked to do something even if it was coaching volleyball or putting on a school dance I'd think, "Maybe I can do this, Mr. Trotchie thought I had it in me." I'll give it a try. That's what the cultivation is that you're talking about. When you have an established leader who is encouraging you, and is really letting you see that he has more faith in you than you even realize that you could have in yourself at that age, and you can move through life with a little more confidence knowing that somebody believes in you.

BJ: Yes, exactly, and an example of that would be Barrack Obama. You know, who in the heck would ever think that this guy would be president? He talks about when he came to Chicago and was organizing groups, organizing community groups and empowering them. And I think that's what you do Karon. That's what Gabriel Dumont Institute does. I think that's what Sheila Pocha does. She's a principal like you say, that's what she does. She empowers these young people in her own way. And who knows the amount of people that you've touched? Who knows which of them are going to be leaders? They don't all have to be politicians, you know there's other ways to lead, and that's what I'm talking about, leadership. But the political animals should not be scared.

KS: Okay well Billyjo, it's been a real pleasure speaking with you today, and we certainly appreciate that you've shared your time and your knowledge and wisdom with us. And we'll be adding this interview to the one you did in 2010. Again, maarsii, meegwetch.

BJ: Alright then.