

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 1

Start Clip: 4:15:04.13

JIM SINCLAIR: We had a meeting, a gathering of five hundred people in Prince Albert just before the Constitutional talks and they came together to decide what was happening at the, whatever would happen at the Constitution also to, whether to accept Devine's offer or not. And I wanted to support it because it, I felt it was a beginning and, of course, the tone at that time there were some people who said absolutely no side deals, either all of us gets it at once or none of us. And that took the wheels off because I thought there was never a chance at all of us getting everything at once. Everything had to be done a little bit as you, as you organize. And maybe one huge parcel in the North or two huge parcel's in the North and smaller ones throughout the province. I said, my feeling was always, I have no problem if there's a large settlement in Northern Saskatchewan. I would still have a homeland. You know even though, it's like the Jews, I said they got a homeland in Israel, they live in New York, they live all over the world.

JIM DUROCHER: Yeah the majority of them live, you know they live in New York, Chicago, Detroit, you know and.

JIM SINCLAIR: And people used to try to compare us to the Mexicans in the United States, about the struggles they had. I said, "Don't talk to them about their struggles. They got a homeland, they can go back to," you know. We have no place to go but to fight our struggle here. We're unique in that sense and we had more in line with people like the Palestinians who, the delegation of the Palestinians used to always support us. You know, so we had some ties to some radical groups and some of those people wanted to, wanted to

get into violent acts but again I was not into, into the violence in terms of our people, you know, were having enough suffering without getting into, into things that they didn't have to be, even though they could happen sporadically because of the way we met and because of the problems we had with the government where some people did get hurt and some people did get killed. But at the same time I felt that I, you know, I had a responsibility to save lives and, rather than to give lives and I felt that, you know, we should be, we should use what we have, political savvy. We have to be able to negotiate and bargain. And to say what we had to say at the table, not to turn around and say it at home and not say it to the table and that was a very difficult time with some of our people in those days and I can't blame them, you know. They used to go to meetings with the premier and they made sure they had shirts and ties and suits and I got criticized for meeting with the premiers in blue jeans and I was the first guy to meet prime ministers and everyone in blue jeans. I didn't care and people said, "Well he shouldn't be doing that, that's not nice." Even radio talk shows used to talk about it, you know, because, you know, time, we were very, you know, always in the news. You know everything we did was on the news. So we had to deal with that and I thought that kind of an image was more of, of an image that I could carry on with the, with the general population of our people. You know, we were that kind of people, a blue jeans kind of a people. So it identified with the people and in those days you had to be very careful how you identified because you did have this growing radical movement and you had this other movement which again where part of the people who were educated, fairly educated, with good education, some of them we said, "Look, we can work with the system. We can work within this system." I said, "No we can't work with that system." I said, "It's not working for us. We got to get ours and then fight our way into contin-, into Canada's confederation on our terms." You know, get in there and have our rights. Protect it like, much like the Indians.

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