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KEITH WRIGHT

Keith Wright, a former resident of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, was employed in the penitentiary service. He was also, for a period, the president of the board of directors of the Prince Albert Indian/Metis Friendship Centre.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Native Brotherhood in the Prince Albert penitentiary.
- The Prince Albert Indian/Metis Friendship Centre.
- Malcolm Norris: his role in both of these organizations and his enforced resignation from the Friendship Centre.
- The Saskatchewan Metis Association and Metis Society and the differences between the two groups.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Keith Wright was president of the Prince Albert Indian-Metis Service Council (the parent body of the Friendship Centre) when Malcolm Norris was forced to resign by the Liberal government. He knew Malcolm well and in this tape talks about the Friendship Centre, Malcolm's role in it and the events surrounding Malcolm's resignation. He also talks about some of the programs sponsored by the council including the native brotherhood that was active in the penitentiary.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: Keith, I'm wondering, I think you should be able to tell me about this, but I'm not certain. I gathered that Malcolm was responsible for starting the Native Brotherhood in the penitentiary in Prince Albert. Do you recall that activity at all?

Keith: Oh, just briefly. That probably goes back around '64 or '65, I think. And I'm not sure if Malcolm is actually responsible for starting it, but I think Malcolm was clearly responsible, once the group was organized, if he hadn't started it, once it was organized he was responsible for maintaining it. And the Friendship Centre in Prince Albert took on the role of the outside liason organization. And if the Brotherhood wanted speakers in or wanted to have contact with some of the (inaudible) organizations, it was Malcolm, of course, who would do that kind of thing. I know that Malcolm during the years that he was executive director, which I think was two or three years...

Murray: Not much more than one, actually. He was hired in '65 and fired in '66.

Keith: Oh, okay. I thought he died in '64 but okay. In any case, I know that he attended the Brotherhood groups regularly, like every week he was out to the penitentiary and met with them and talked with them. He used to do some good things with them. I know that he did two areas of activity with them. One was to get a sort of a quasi-toastmasters kind of thing going, where the guys could learn a bit about parliamentary procedure and how to organize meetings and that kind of thing. And the other thing he did was to... I'm sorry, it's slipped my mind.

Murray: Well, I think what he did was have people come in and talk about Indian culture and that sort of thing.

Keith: Yeah, right, that was it. It was that kind of activity, getting that kind of culture emphasis going where they got their powwow group organized, the powwow (inaudible).

Murray: Right. I understood Pohorecky used to come and speak once in a while and Malcolm would get Zenon Pohorecky from the anthropology department, you know. He thought that the Native Brotherhood had been going for quite a while. Now I don't know where he got that impression. He seems to think it was going on in the late fifties as well, but I'm not sure.

Keith: The person you might be able to find out from is Dan Rooney.

Murray: What's his name again?

Keith: Dan Rooney.

Murray: Dan Rooney.

Keith: Dan Rooney's now working for the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon, the one that's being built there. He's Assistant Director of Security. But back in those days he was involved in what was called inmate training program.

Murray: So he would have been there at the same time as these things were happening?

Keith: Yeah. Another guy who might know is Ed Mardell. Now I don't know - last I heard, Ed was working for a life skills organization in Manitoba. But Dan Rooney might be able to give you some help there.

Murray: Right. Psychiatric services.

Keith: No. It's called the Regional Psychiatric Centre.

Murray: Regional Psychiatric Centre.

Keith: That's the place that caused a lot of controversy in Saskatoon three or four years ago.

Murray: That's right, I remember, the people didn't want it there.

Keith: Yeah. And of course the Queen always gets her way anyway.

Murray: Right, right. Just happened at some point I guess. I don't suppose you ever went to any of those meetings?

Keith: Well I attended a few, but partly in my capacity working for the parole service in Prince Albert, partly in my capacity when I became a member of the board of directors of the Friendship Centre.

Murray: Right, right. What was the relationship between Malcolm and the inmates? As you recall it.

Keith: The one that I was at that he was at, it was really a warm kind of relationship. They looked upon him, I don't know, I suppose in a bit of a kind of a nice uncle image. Like, he was a guy who would help us.

Murray: Father figure or something.

Keith: Yeah, right. The other meeting that I attended, Malcolm wasn't there. I think it was about the time Malcolm got his stroke actually, I'm not sure. Anyway, he was sick, and I don't know if it was before or after he resigned as executive director. And, of course, it was after that he had a stroke. But that particular meeting it was set up on a debate kind of situation. They had two teams. I can't remember what the subject of the debate was, but there was a debate going and

there was people like Frank Chester was there - he was on our board at the time - Claude Adams, who I think is a cousin or a second cousin of Howards Adams, was there, and myself. And during pauses during the debate they would throw questions out to the visitors and ask us what we thought of particular things, that kind of thing. But I remember reporting to that meeting that Malcolm was sick and there was sort of a universal groan from the members of the Native Brotherhood, and they said they would get a card and send it to him, that kind of thing.

Murray: Right, right.

Keith: So I think it was a very warm kind of relationship that they had.

Murray: Right. You don't remember anything about how the prison authority felt about the Native Brotherhood? They were supportive of that organization were they?

Keith: Well, they were supportive, I suspect, as long as they kept things fairly cool.

Murray: Right, right. As long as they didn't cause them any trouble?

Keith: Yeah, this is just before the so-called red power kind of thing really started across the country, and I guess Native Brotherhoods were seen primarily as a means to bring the native inmates together for them to talk about their culture, maybe learn a few things about parliamentary procedure, maybe do things like getting some of the guys involved in A.A., which of course, was important for some of those people.

Murray: Right.

Keith: So, you know, they were doing things that were seen as being positive by institution staff and institutional officials, so it was also supported in that way. I think later on, of course, like about ten years later, the viewpoints around Native Brotherhood have changed quite markedly, I think. And it's, I presume anyways, seen as a bit of a problem.

Murray: Right, because they're more militant now than then.

Keith: Yeah.

Murray: And the red power thing would have gotten into the prison just as much as it would have outside, I suppose. That would be in the late '60s, I guess.

Keith: I would think so, yeah. Yeah, right. Yeah. Not talking about Malcolm for an instant, but our criminology association in Saskatchewan - about the time that Howard Adams was being interviewed - we had a workshop on the native incarceration at the Regina jail, and Howard was the keynote speaker. And the kinds of things that those guys were saying - this is in 1974 or maybe '73, yeah, it was in '73, I guess -

the kinds of things those guys were saying were far different from what the guys in the Native Brotherhood were saying seven, eight, nine years earlier.

Murray: Right, right.

Keith: And you know, they're talking about up against the wall, that kind of thing.

Murray: Right, right. They were much more passive and listening in the early sixties.

Keith: Yeah, right.

Murray: And much less nationalistic, too. I would think, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, but that Malcolm wouldn't have taken a particularly nationalistic line as far as politics were concerned. He wouldn't reject white people out of hand.

Keith: Well no, you know. For example, Malcolm was the guy who phoned to me and asked me if I would like to come on the board of directors. This was when I was working at the Prince Albert jail. I was a classification officer there. And this would be in the spring of '65, I guess, yeah. And my immediate reaction was to say no, and I said no to Malcolm. And the reason I said no was it seemed to me that it was important for the native people to be on the board of directors at the Friendship Centre, and to run the Friendship Centre. And he said, "Oh no, not at all." Because for a number of reasons, one is the (inaudible) in Prince Albert. The main thrust for the Friendship Centre has come from white people and community; white people have the contacts. He pointed out that the Friendship Centre was first organized by the churches, which by the way is one of the things that Malcolm always emphasized, was that it was organized by the church groups to start with.

Murray: He emphasized that in a positive way, did he?

Keith: Yeah, right, yeah. And so he was basically saying, "What we want is good people, doesn't matter what color their skin is or what their cultural background is," that kind of thing. So after that nice compliment I decided to go on the board.

Murray: Right. It's interesting, because I know that from talking to Rowena McLellan, who was involved in it almost from the beginning, she felt that originally Malcolm viewed the Centre or the council with a bit of a jaundiced eye and

didn't have much to do with it for quite a while. And she thought precisely because it was organized, it was sort of a - the way he would put it - a colonized organization, in the sense that white people were... But maybe he (inaudible) he changed.

Keith: Yeah. Maybe that's the feeling he had initially, but at the time I come in contact with him I didn't pick up that feeling at all though, Murray.

Murray: Yeah, yeah. Well, I know he was active on the board before he became executive director, so he must have gradually realized that there were progressive people involved - and not just do-gooders, as he might have viewed them.

Keith: Yeah.

Murray: You mentioned that this was about in spring of '65 that he asked you. Was there any feeling among other native people involved in the Centre that there should be a native executive or a native board? I talked to Don Nielson one time, and the reason I say this is he spoke of the fact that at one point - I think this was before you came on, well, obviously would have been before you came on - because he said the whole executive was a native executive and he spoke of that as being a bit of a coup, in his mind anyway. I don't know. Did you get that feeling at all that there was any...?

Keith: Yeah. Don Nielson was president the year before I came on, and I wasn't aware of the executive... I don't think the executive was all native, because I think that's when Gordon McLellan, who was Rowena's brother-in-law...

Murray: He took over from Don for a while.

Keith: Yeah, well he didn't want to become president, but he was vice-president at the time, I'm pretty sure.

Murray: Maybe, yeah.

Keith: But you know, in any case, maybe what Don was talking about was that Don was, I think, the first native person to be president of the board.

Murray: Right.

Keith: And maybe that's what he was talking about. And, of course, it was during that time that, I think, Malcolm became executive director as well.

Murray: Right, right. I'm just wondering if there was any... As far as you recall there was no animosity at all between natives and white on the board?

Keith: I'm not aware of it. The year that I came on the board, I think probably two-thirds, three-quarters of the people were white people rather than native. But I came on the board the same year that Cy Standing did. You've talked to Cy I presume?

Murray: I've tried to; I haven't yet. Yeah, but I would like to talk to Cy.

Keith: Oh. Yeah, both Cy and Lorraine Standing would be good people to talk to because they would have quite a lot of input from that area, too. But yeah, Cy Standing and Lorraine Standing came on the same year as I did and I think Fred Yayakekoot came on, Joe Duquette, I think, but other than that it was all basically...

Murray: Sol Sanderson? Was Sol Sanderson ever involved in that? I don't think so, might have been.

Keith: Sol came on later on and Walter Izbister later on as well. And Cliff Star came on later on also. But yeah, I didn't pick up a feeling at that time of that kind of animosity. Now maybe that's also because of the personalities involved. You know that could be, too.

Murray: Right. What was Malcolm's feeling about the situation where the ultimatum was made by the government? Did he expect that his resignation would not be accepted, or what were his expectations at that time?

Keith: Yeah, by that time I was president and that was one of the first board of directors meetings I had to handle was when we got that to deal with. I suspect Malcolm wasn't surprised at all, because it was quite clear that he was a staunch socialist with a capital "S" and it was quite clear that the enemy was down in Regina by that time, having been elected by the good people of Saskatchewan.

Murray: Right.

Keith: He didn't make any bones about the fact that he was a dyed-in-the-wool socialist kind of thing, and anytime you want to drop in for coffee, he was quite happy to talk about politics and what he thought of the government and that kind of thing.

Murray: Right.

Keith: Which I always enjoy talking to him with, of course. So I don't think he was surprised at all, because in terms of the particular politicians who gave the ultimatum, I think Malcolm, and to a large extent the rest of us as well, were just saying, "Well, you know, what else could you expect from those guys."

Murray: Right.

Keith: In terms of the resignation, I'm not sure how familiar you are with the sequence of events.

Murray: Fairly, fairly, but you might summarize them.

Keith: Okay. Every year there was a meeting with, I guess,

initially Department of Natural Resources officials, which later became the Indian-Metis branch of the Department of Natural Resources, which then became its own department. And at this meeting there was a discussion about how the grants would be divvied up and that kind of thing. The pattern of the former government was to have a joint meeting with all the Friendship Centres. At that time I think there were four in the province; North Battleford, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina. And the four executive directors or presidents of the board would agree on how the funds should be distributed. For

some reason or other in '65, and I suspect the reason was quite political, they decided to change the pattern and although there had been a meeting with the four organizations early that spring, they decided that there would have to be separate meetings with the boards. And so we had our meeting. Now in terms of time, I'm not quite sure. I guess it's sometime around the spring of '66 to talk about '66 - '67 funding. And at that meeting Freddy Ewald was by that time director of the Indian-Metis branch, he was there, and someone else from his department was there; we made our presentation for budget. Allan Guy, who I'm sure you're familiar with, was an MLA from Athabasca at that time, and he was also, I guess, legislative secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources who was Davie Steuart. Allan Guy was there and we made our pitch for funding and gave them our budget, and how much we hoped to have from the government, that kind of thing. And Freddy Ewald was quite amenable to that sort of thing, thought there would be no difficulty approving it.

Then at the end of the meeting Allan Guy came out with his statement. And the statement, I can't recall exactly what it was, but it was to the extent that the government was clearly unhappy with Malcolm Norris as executive director. He had made a couple of statements in Moose Call which had upset the government. I gather from looking at them just again this morning that you know one of them was obviously slamming the government for cutting back on funding. Another one had to do with the Kenora march and the government was already concerned about the Indians in Saskatchewan marching like they did in Kenora and taking over things, that sort of stuff. And Allan Guy was also saying that everybody knew for a fact that everybody who came into the Friendship Centre would get a long lecture, a long dissertation from Malcolm Norris, on the evils of the Liberal government and...

Murray: Capitalism and...

Keith: Yeah, and the fruits of socialism and that kind of thing. And basically he said to us, "You're not going to get any funding until Malcolm Norris leaves."

Murray: So that wasn't open for discussion; that was at the end of the meeting.

Keith: That was at the end of the meeting and my jaw dropped

open and everybody else did the same kind of thing, and I don't know if Fred Ewald had been expecting this kind of announcement or not. But you know, he was saying, "Surely, this is a political matter. It's out of our realm."

Murray: So he officially sort of said, "I don't have anything to do with this?"

Keith: Yeah, right. I don't think Malcolm was at that meeting. I'm not sure of that but I don't think he was at that meeting, just a few members of the board. And so I called a meeting of the board for, I think, the following week and I reported on that. Malcolm in the meantime had typed up his letter of resignation. And he handed it to me at the board meeting and said, "I resign." I said, "Well, you can't resign, first of all because you didn't sign it, Malcolm." And I wouldn't let him take it back for him to sign it. (Murray laughs) I wanted to have a pretty major discussion on it because, of course, this was a fairly momentous kind of thing for us to deal with, because we were caught in a real bind, you know. The Friendship Centre was clearly a pretty bloody important institution for Prince Albert.

Murray: Right.

Keith: At the same time, none of us liked the idea of Malcolm getting shafted. We didn't like the idea of being told by the funding body who should be our executive director. We liked to think there was still some control the board had as to who would be executive director. Malcolm was quite glad to take us out of the hook by resigning rather than forcing the issue. We had a long discussion on it at the board meeting. I deliberately didn't entertain any motions for about an hour. Everybody sort of talked it round and got a general idea of where things were going. Finally I got a motion to be tabled, which was something to the effect that "we very regretfully accept the resignation of Malcolm Norris as executive director." And that was carried on by one vote. I think there were about fifteen people there.

Murray: Right. Eight to seven.

Keith: Eight to seven, right. As chairman I was not quite sure frankly which way I would go if it were a tie. It did come eight to seven in favor except with the resignation it could have easily have been seven to seven. Someone might have abstained and...

Murray: And you would have been forced to...

Keith: Yeah.

Murray: They were determined to cut off, I think. I mean they would have done it, I think.

Keith: Yeah, yeah, and that would have been the bind. I suspect, although my probably emotional reaction would have been "To hell with the sons-of-bitches and we don't accept Malcolm's resignation."

Murray: Right.

Keith: More realistically, considering the fact that it was a viable kind of organization, that sort of thing, maybe I would have voted the other way. It's difficult to know. Anyway, I wasn't put in that position. Okay, so we had the letter of resignation that was accepted. I issued a press release the following day. I don't have the press release, I don't know what the heck happened to it. I've got the newspaper clippings though.

Murray: I don't think the press release is around, but the other things are probably.

Keith: Yeah. And the Prince Albert Daily Herald gave a lot of good publicity to it. For about three days running there was headlines on the inside page about Malcolm Norris's resignation, and they were really very good because they'd phone up Allan Guy and get his statement, because I'd said in the press release there was no bones about it that Malcolm resigned because of the pressure from the governing party. And they got statements from Dave Steuart and this kind of thing as well.

Murray: They didn't try and hide it obviously. They were quite open about that.

Keith: Oh, they were very open. I'm sorry, I left out one stage. After the meeting that Allan Guy was at we had a board meeting and invited Dave Steuart to attend.

Murray: Right, I was going to mention that, because I came across...

Keith: And that was prior to Malcolm's resignation. Dave Steuart sat there. At that time we occupied this little house, I think, on River Street, and Dave Steuart sat in there with our board and, you know, set out clearly, you can't have a person who's wearing two hats, you know - this moment he's a socialist and this moment he's executive director. And I thought it wasn't contradictory myself but obviously Dave Steuart thought it was. And it was following that meeting that we had the meeting where Malcolm resigned.

Murray: Was there any exchange between Norris and Stuart or Guy?

Keith: No. I don't think that...

Murray: I thought he was at that second meeting, but maybe not. I'll have to go through the records again.

Keith: I don't think that he was there, but maybe he was.

Murray: Yeah, but I mean he didn't say much or you would have... if he had been there, you would've remembered probably.

Keith: Yeah, I would think. So if he were there, there wasn't much of an exchange there.

Murray: Right.

Keith: Okay, yeah. We got a lot of good publicity out of the Prince Albert Daily Herald and I remember one of the board members, who was the wife of the dean of the Anglican church, got really upset about it. She said that I should tell Malcolm to keep quiet, because this was obviously hurting the Friendship Centre. And I said, I'm not prepared to do that at all, because I thought it was a pretty viable kind of, or a pretty important kind of issue that should be discussed. So there were a few rumblings on the board as well. Some people were saying that it was a good thing that Malcolm left.

Murray: Because he was, sort of causing trouble and notoriety?

Keith: Yeah (inaudible) yeah, right. You know, and never can tell when he might be issuing guns to the natives, and that sort of thing.

Murray: So there was some of that among the white members of the board?

Keith: Yeah, right. You know, the rather conservative people obviously. But by and large I think the board was supportive of what we were doing. I also sent copies of the press release around to all the politicians, and I think I regret - if you want to take a look at these letters you can do that as well, but its sort of funny. Yeah, I sent copies to

people like the Union Eskimo Association, and other Friendship Centres, and politicians across the country.

Murray: Yeah, you sent to the party leaders in Ottawa, I think, as well.

Keith: Yeah, yeah. Pearson was then prime minister, Diefenbaker was leader of the opposition, Douglas was in Ottawa, Robert Thompson was leader of Social Credit. Pearson, of course, never saw the letter. An executive assistant handed it on to Minister of Northern Affairs and Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Never heard anything more, which isn't surprising.

Murray: Right.

Keith: Tommy Douglas wrote back and expressed a lot of

regret about it and said he was inquiring of Woodrow Lloyd as to funding arrangements, that kind of thing. Robert Thompson wrote back and said he was in favor of Friendship Centres, that they were a good thing. (laughs)

Murray: (laughs) That's what you'd expect from him, too.

Keith: Right. Woodrow Lloyd had written and was very concerned about it, and he wanted it to caucus on this kind of question.

Murray: Did he ever bring it up in the legislature?

Keith: I'm not sure. I think he might have, but I'm not sure, Murray. One Saturday morning I was, I guess, running around the house and at ten o'clock the phone rang, and this voice on the end said, "Hello. Mr. Wright?" I said, "Yeah."

"This is John Diefenbaker." I thought, "Good God, somebody's playing a joke on me," you know. John Diefenbaker.

Murray: That's the kind of thing he does though, yeah.

Keith: And it turns out Diefenbaker was in town that weekend and staying at the Flamingo Motel. He was visiting his daughter. And said he got my press release and called it a scandalous situation. But, you know, the old character gave me his private home telephone number in Ottawa, his private home mailing address, and said if there were any further problems, "Please let me know." And he went on to say that he thought it was absolutely terrible that a person was forced to resign because of government policy and that kind of thing. I ended up thinking, "My, what a fine person this is." And then realized after the conversation was finished that he really hadn't done anything.

Murray: Right, right.

Keith: Just to phone. And, of course, that's the secret of his success in Prince Albert.

Murray: That's right - do a lot of talking and not much action. Well I wrote to Diefenbaker and he disclaimed even knowing Norris or having heard of him. He may have just forgotten or may have found it expedient not to know him any more. (laughs)

Keith: Right. (laughs) So you know that's the kind of reaction we got there. And, of course, I wasn't expecting to have the decision changed.

Murray: Right. You wanted to publicize it, at least. That was the main thing.

Keith: Right. And I got a letter from a lady somewhere there in Ontario, I don't know where she's at now, saying - I'm

sorry, from Saskatoon - wanting to know if there was anything they could do, kind of thing, you know. Maybe you can take these and take a look at them.

Murray: Sure, right.

Keith: Anyway, the thing that I got really concerned about after that was that... Okay, I wrote to Fred Ewald and advised him Malcolm had resigned, and said that in view of Allan Guy and Dave Steuart's statements I expected that our six or seven thousand dollar grant would be released fairly soon, and didn't get much of a response. And a couple of months went by and we still didn't have any funding. And apparently there was some other problem concerned with the United Appeal and all the Friendship Centres in the same business, and in the same position, that sort of stuff. And I was wondering for a while if, you know, if we hadn't...

Murray: Got the worst of both deals.

Keith: Yeah, you know. But eventually the funding did come through.

Murray: I don't think it came through till October or something, I guess.

Keith: Yeah, somewhere in there, yeah. And by that time we had been kicked out of the accommodation because the city

wanted that property, and got lodged in the basement of the Y.W.C.A., into a little room in the basement there. But again, I think that the fact that the Y.W.C.A. let us in there, that was indicative of again the origins of the Friendship Centre.

Murray: Right. A service organization.

Keith: Right, and also I think the director of the Y.W.C.A. was on our board of directors as well, I know. So there was a lot of that kind of community support, which is good.

Murray: Right. Nonpolitical in that sense in whether they...

Keith: Yeah, right.

Murray: Not specifically political anyway.

Keith: Yeah.

Murray: What was the role of the federal government in the funding situation? I had heard a story, and I don't think it was true, but you could comment on it, that the federal government was perfectly willing to give money to the Friendship Centre with Malcolm there. Did they have any role? There was federal funding, it seems to me, as well.

Keith: I'm not sure what the split was. I think it was under a cost-shared program, you know. Under what department,

I'm not quite sure - whether it was Health and Welfare, or which one. It seems to me it was a fifty-fifty split, but the money was given to the province in such a way that it was up to the province to determine how much...

Murray: To initiate, right.

Keith: Yeah, and for every three thousand dollars the province would give, well the federal government would give three thousand dollars, but the province had to give some money first.

Murray: Right. So if the province didn't give any you were out the federal grant as well?

Keith: Yeah. I don't think we would have had separate federal funding, but I'm not sure of that.

Murray: No. I know in the financial statements it doesn't list them separately, it lists them as one grant. But it says "federal-provincial grant." So it must be something like that, that the provincial government was to take the initiative.

Keith: Yeah, right.

Murray: But there was no federal input in this whole dispute at all as far as you recall?

Keith: No. Except for John Diefenbaker. (chuckles)

Murray: Right. (chuckles) Of course, you came after Malcolm was director. Did you get a feeling from talking to people who had been there for a while that, that the Centre's sort of function, or focus, changed when Malcolm became director? Was it a more political-oriented institution after Malcolm became director?

Keith: I simply don't know, because I hadn't had any contact with the Centre. I only moved to Prince Albert a year before that and I really don't know what kind program it had or anything like that.

Murray: Right.

Keith: I think that probably the Centre was much better organized, I don't think there is any doubt of that. You know, some programs were developed for the kids in the city, which I don't think were functioning too well before. There was a pretty good recreation program developing.

Murray: There was a youth group.

Keith: Yeah, a youth club was organized, right. And I think the Centre was there to be used for native Alcoholics Anonymous group - some of those kinds of things. And socials were sponsored.

Murray: A lot of those were new, were they?

Keith: I think relatively new. I'm not sure if the Centre had activities like that before. I think part of that time it was more of a drop-in place, which is okay, but I think it has to be, it has to have...

Murray: It was much more limited in earlier days.

Keith: Yeah.

Murray: So that if it was more political, it was also more - there were more services as well?

Keith: Oh yeah, right, yeah.

Murray: Malcolm could argue that he...

Keith: Yeah. I think the politics were limited to Malcolm sitting in his office and chatting to somebody.

Murray: Talking to people, right.

Keith: You know, and that was the extent of it as far I could see.

Murray: Did the Metis Association have meetings there as well, in the Friendship Centre?

Keith: They may have done. At that time, there were two Metis Associations, one for the north and one for the south. And there was quite an ideological split between them. And they might have used the Centre but I'm not sure.

Murray: Right.

Keith: I know that Malcolm was always, you know, very proud of the fact that he was Metis and he was always assisting the organization, I'm aware of that. But whether they used the Centre, I don't know.

Murray: Right. Did he edit the Moose Call? I recall, from going through some of the records of the Centre that he wasn't actually authorized by the board to do that. That they hadn't really come to any conclusions about the Moose Call and that he had sort of taken it on, on his own initiative, because he didn't want to see it drop. Now do you remember anything like that?

Keith: No. Again, because by the time I got on the board he was editor and that was...

Murray: Officially, yeah, yeah. But I know that there was mention in some of the minutes that after this, after it was learned that the government was a little upset about those articles, that there was an editorial board appointed. But

before that there hadn't been.

Keith: Okay, but that was after Malcolm had resigned though.

Murray: Oh, I see. I see, right.

Keith: Yeah, and Al Hartley, by the way - I don't know if you'd have any contact with him.

Murray: I know the name, yeah.

Keith: Yeah, Al still lives in Prince Albert, I think. He has got a farm northeast somewhere and Al became the head of the editorial board or something.

Murray: Right, right. I do remember that, too.

Keith: But, yeah, that was after Malcolm resigned that the editorial board was there.

Murray: Did Malcolm ever come to any other meeting after he was fired? I don't remember seeing his name anywhere, but I'm wondering if he had any activity continued with the Centre.

Keith: No. Not really because it wasn't too long after that he had a stroke.

Murray: Yeah, I think he was gone in June, I think.

Keith: His stroke was that summer, I think.

Murray: Yeah, August, I think.

Keith: Yeah, and he moved into a house just about three doors away from us, where we lived. In to Shara's place, and I think that the stroke was prior to that move, and I visited him there a few times.

And the next contribution, and probably his last contribution in Prince Albert, was that a workshop was sponsored in June of 1967. It was called the Centennial Workshop, you might have seen some references to that. And they got a very nice grant from Secretary of State, didn't ask the department for anything. A nice grant from Secretary of State. Howard Adams was keynote speaker; Howard had just come back to Saskatchewan. Claude Adams, his cousin, had recommended him as a speaker at that time. Howard was working on a book on Louis Riel. We had I think it must have been around one hundred people attending, sixty or seventy of them would be native people. Part of the grant from the Secretary of State allowed for financial

assistance for people to come in from some of the outlying native communities and reserves. Just a real fantastic kind of occasion, and probably one of the first of its kind where the government actually funded this kind of gathering for native people.

Murray: Primarily an educational sort of focus was it?

Keith: It was a workshop. I've lost the pamphlet - I used to have - basically looking at where the native is now, what kinds of things should they be doing, where should they be going, you know.

(END OF SIDE A)

*Notes left over from the interview not on the tape.

One hundred years of exploitation - where do we go from here. Recalls annoyance at CBC (probably Craig Oliver) - a good coverage. Howard had made reference to the possibility of violence in the future - speculation only. The CBC story claimed that the Indians were going to march on Regina - show a shot of Cy standing with his arm in the air - like a red power salute. This was not the case - he was announcing that it was time for coffee.

(SIDE B)

Murray: Probably his last speech, almost, I would say.

Keith: Probably, yeah. It was shortly after that that I remember where Howard Adams and the Metis Society organized the first Back to Batoche, which took place in the summer of '67 in Batoche.

Murray: Right.

Keith: And Malcolm was at that meeting as well.

Murray: Oh, was at the first one, eh, at Batoche?

Keith: Well no, no. He was at the organization meeting that took place in Prince Albert. I was there as well. But again he was simply there. But I think the last kind of talk he gave publicly was at that workshop. Just a thoroughly fantastic kind of thing that really tied in well with the kinds of things that Howard Adams was saying.

Murray: Did they get along? Do you know if there was much contact between Howard and Malcolm? I mean Malcolm must have been pleased to see someone as articulate as Howard arrive.

Keith: Yeah, I got the impression that Malcolm was sort of saying, "Well, okay, I've done my work. Now here's somebody bright, and somebody who's young and be able to carry on the kinds of things that I've been doing." That's the impression that I had.

Murray: Right.

Keith: Now whether or not Malcolm actually articulated that,

I don't know.

Murray: He did in a letter once he sent to Brady, saying that he saw Howard as being his replacement, sort of. He had originally seen Don Nielson as being his protege, but I guess Don...

Keith: Don had his problems at that time.

Murray: Right, right. You mentioned there was a - and I know some of this - there was an ideological split between the south and the northern organization. What do you recall of that? What were the dynamics of that situation?

Keith: I don't really know other than... I think, it was primarily a cultural reflection, or cultural difference reflection where the people in the north were the people who had really been dispersed after the railway building. And they went back in the bush kind of thing, so the whole culture, the whole social life, was quite different than the ones in the south.

Murray: Right.

Keith: And whether that was the root of it or whether they simply hadn't got together, I don't know.

Murray: I know that Ewald mentioned that there was a conscious effort on the part of the Liberal government to sponsor and encourage a leadership that was not as militant as they thought Malcolm was. I'm wondering if you ever got any feeling that the southern organization might have had some of that about it?

Keith: Well, certainly it was less militant, there's no question of that. And the kinds of things that people were saying in the south were quite different from the kind of things that people were saying in the north; and names, the names escape me now.

Murray: Joe Amyotte was the head of the southern organization.

Keith: Okay, right, yeah.

Murray: What kinds of things? Can you think of anything in particular?

Keith: They seemed to talk more about service kinds of activities, whereas the people in the north like Malcolm and...

Murray: Rod Bishop?

Keith: Rod Bishop, right, would talk much more about political kinds of things.

Murray: They were talking more about organization, the southern group was talking about adult education, that sort of... Was that the emphasis?

Keith: Yeah, yeah, adult education, providing more social services, providing financial assistance for housing, you know. That was where their emphasis seemed to be; and also emphasized the need to work with government rather than the need to work against the government. And saying, well...

Murray: Hat in hand.

Keith: Right. Even though we don't like these guys, clearly they're the people who feed us therefore we have to be nice to them.

Murray: And that would have no doubt irritated Malcolm?

Keith: I'm sure it did. It irritated Malcolm highly.

Murray: Right. Now you mentioned that Malcolm's speech probably helped the two organizations to get together. It's interesting. From what I've been able to determine, Malcolm at first went down to Regina and tried to get people to join the Metis Association and they declined for the reasons you mentioned - that their cultural differences, they didn't want an organization that was headed in the north. And then later on when the Metis Society organized and got a grant from the government - which was basically a core grant, which Malcolm opposed having a grant from government for a political organization - that he opposed the two organizations joining up in '66. I'm wondering if you could be wrong on that, that Malcolm wanted the two organizations to join. Did he say explicitly that he hoped that the two would join up, do you recall that? Because that contradicts a bit what...

Keith: Yeah, that's the impression I have of it, Murray. And I could well be wrong on it.

Murray: He might have been talking generally that native people should get together.

Keith: Should work together and should organize together and so on. Yeah. I suspect that, you know, if you're saying we should get together it'd be get together on...

Murray: On a solid political basis?

Keith: Solid political basis on, not on my terms but on the way that I see things going, and that you guys in the south sort of have to change your orientation a bit.

Murray: Right, right. He wasn't going to compromise on something as fundamental as that?

Keith: I don't think so, no. It was interesting - just to tie in with that centennial workshop, we had a party at our place the night of it. And a lot of people were there, Cy Standing was there and Howard Adams and his wife were there, and a few other people were there. And it was just, you know, a thoroughly good party. Somebody would spill his drink on the floor and somebody would say, "Another bloody Indian!" And then somebody else would spill a drink on the floor, "What can you expect from the white man!" You know, that kind of stuff was going on.

Murray: Right. Malcolm was good at that.

Keith: Yeah, right. And you know just sort of played back and forth that sort of thing. We had a joke going round at the time that once the Indian took over there would be Friendship Centres organized for whites and off-whites.

Murray: (laughs) Off-whites. Malcolm used to introduce himself as Redskin Norris quite often, too.

Keith: Yeah, right.

Murray: And also referred to himself as an improved Scotsman.

Keith: Yeah. He was always doing good stuff. Like in some of the Moose Calls he would give a bit of history of the area. And in one of the ones I was looking at this morning he talked about the fact, which I didn't know, that the Indians around the Prince Albert area long before the Hudson's Bay Company came in, were tilling their land, and growing their crops, that kind of thing. He was able to dig up those facts of history and obviously what he was wanting to do was to stress to the Indian people that, you know, "Look, things weren't always so bad and our people were able to have a very good organization, our people were able to survive socially, our people were able to survive economically and we had a heck of a good kind of culture; and we can still do the same kind of thing and we should be proud of our heritage and we should be proud of what we're doing now. And we should be able to clearly identify the directions that we should be going in the future."

Murray: Right. That was part of his emphasis all the time, in your recollection, in talking to many people, was instilling a pride.

Keith: Yeah right. And which is far more than just politics, you know.

Murray: Right.

Keith: And I was always really annoyed at the people like Allan Guy, who just saw that very narrow kind of thing and rejected him because he simply didn't agree with his politics.

Murray: Right.

Keith: And really I think the political kind thing was only a very small part of Malcolm's whole focus.

Murray: Yeah, that's the impression I got, too. That he was a dedicated socialist, but he was a dedicated Indian first, I think. You know, I mean he really had a broad feeling for the native situation, and wasn't narrow at all.

Keith: Yeah.

(END OF SIDE B)

(END OF TAPE)

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