

Malcolm would always be the one to articulate the point that native people were being divided and ruled. . . that their organizations were still colonized, etc., etc. But as he said these things, perhaps because he felt alone with these perceptions, he would almost downplay the significance of his point. And people did not take up his points, so he must have started to feel like his ideas were somewhat institutionalized, as he was, and hence dismissed.<sup>3</sup>

In this light, it is not so surprising that Norris was open to the student initiative. They were prepared to actually do something and in the process native people might become involved in active political struggle.

Student interest in the native question was first expressed at a conference on "The Status of the Indian and Metis in Canada" held at the University of Saskatchewan in February 1965.<sup>4</sup> Initiated by student radicals and officially sponsored by the Canadian Union of Students, the four-day conference focussed on native history, state policies and possible social and political solutions. A half-dozen Indian and Metis leaders and a number of progressive academics led various seminars and panel discussions. But in the students' eyes Malcolm Norris stole the show. His dynamic oratory and the depth of his radical analysis was a welcome contrast to the cautious political tone of other speakers. Norris' talks showed his surprise that the students' concern was genuine and was not characterized by liberal platitudes and government solutions.

The success of the conference and Norris' support encouraged the students to plan their project immediately. Modelled loosely on the American civil rights project, the aim of the Student Neestow Partnership Project was "to learn more directly the conditions of the people of Indian ancestry and to do what is possible to enhance the self-determination of those people."<sup>5</sup> Ten students, five from Toronto and five from Saskatchewan, responded to invitations to move onto Indian reserves and into Metis settlements for the summer. In May a training session was held. Included among the advisors were Malcolm Norris, Don Nielson and Jim Brady.

Nielson became one of two co-ordinators of the project, and Norris continued as advisor and contact person between students and the native community. His most important function was to legitimize the project in the eyes of the Metis—and the students themselves.

Norris' involvement was restricted by lack of time. He was busy organizing the MAS and was tied down weekdays to his job at the friendship centre in Prince Albert. Even though he felt someone else should be managing the centre, he took the job seriously. He increased the effectiveness and efficiency of operations and in doing so began to



appreciate the need for such a centre. He wrote to Brady:

The centre continues to be a haven for many tired mothers with baby in arms, often accompanied by other small children, who come to the centre to sit and rest. Several older people... frequently use the centre for this purpose also. It is also a meeting place, awaiting friends and relatives in town.<sup>6</sup>

The scene was not always so relaxed:

The pressure at the centre is terrific. I have been subjected to more abuses from our native brethren in the last two weeks than over several years with the DNR. It is a constant give me-give me fare, lodging, etc. The centre here is not equipped or budgeted to handle these requests.

As well as expanding the centre's activities<sup>7</sup> with the Native Brotherhood at the penitentiary, the Youth Club and Alcoholics Anonymous, Norris started a resource centre, gathering material on community development, legal rights of Indians, the role of leadership, the functioning of organizations, and related topics. Some thirty native publications from across North America came to the centre. Much of this material was probably intended for distribution to MAS locals, but Norris was also dedicated to the political education of those using the centre.

Under Norris the friendship centre became a forum for discussing, in his phrase, "the issues of the day." Lectures on Indian and Metis history and opposition to racist exploitation by local businessmen were common features of Norris' centre. He also began editing the centre's bi-monthly newsletter, the *Moose Call*, informing its several hundred readers about contemporary native issues and developments, reprinting excerpts from the trial of Louis Riel, quoting Bertrand Russell on the Vietnam war and generally providing news and ideas which he hoped would stimulate native action.

While Norris struggled with the problems of the centre and with sustaining the momentum of the MAS, controversy flared up over the student project. The Canadian Union of Students accused the left-wing students of the Student Union for Peace Action of taking over the project and making it "political." Some of the sponsors and advisors, including Don Nielson, publicly attacked the project and withdrew support.

Norris, however, did not withdraw. Despite adverse publicity the project organizers received almost a dozen invitations from the reserves and settlements they contacted. Among the seven invitations accepted



were those from Prince Albert and from two northern settlements—the Metis community of Buffalo Narrows and the Indian village of Patuanak.\*

Over the summer the students discovered that their objectives were vague and contradictory. Many felt their training sessions had left them with a sort of reverse racism and an overly cautious attitude. In evaluation discussions they identified their own “romantic sentimentalism.” All in all, there was more learning about colonialism in Canada by the students than action to oppose it by the neestows. One of the students, Pat Uhl, wrote:

Discrimination and frustration are not typed statistics on a page of research paper and tucked away in a government file. They have become for me the wounded expression on the face of a young mother [when] informed that [a house for rent] is not the type “her kind want”...the expression of bitterness in the voices of the men on the reserves [forced to fight] fires at \$1.50 a day; in the voice of the “ex-con” describing the day when he was fifteen and an RCMP “searched” their house and broke everything he touched...of the desperate Indian father whose baby keeps being released by the hospital still sick...<sup>8</sup>

There were a few instances of Indians and Metis protesting their situation, and the beginnings of debate about how to solve problems facing the communities. But, in general, the students found the people immobilized by the paternalism and racism of Indian Affairs and the Department of Natural Resources. As well, the myriad of divisions within the community, clan and family made political unity next to impossible. Common to all the communities was a “conservatism and fear to act on the part of many.”

By summer’s end the students were acutely aware of the differences between the struggles of Canadian neestows and American blacks. Many began to question whether or not they had any role to play in the struggle for self-determination. Nevertheless, the organizers and student workers, still supported by Norris, decided to continue the project the next summer.

Norris not only encouraged the students to continue, he urged the MAS locals to work with them. Norris’ endorsement of the project prompted the Green Lake MAS local to invite two students to spend the fall and winter in the settlement. Green Lake’s independence and history of resistance outshone other northern communities. Green Lake had had a Metis organization since 1940, often led by Alex Bishop and his

\*The others were the reserves at Mistawasis, Peepeekesis and Cowesses, and the Metis communities of Fort Qu’Appelle and Regina.



family. By the spring of 1966 Green Lake had four Neestow Project workers. Two students, Richard Thompson and Rob Wood, had spent the winter in Green Lake and in the spring they were joined by two others.<sup>9</sup>

The first open, direct action by the Metis against the provincial Liberal government took place in Green Lake. The action could hardly be called "militant" even by 1966 standards. The first issue they addressed was land tenure. Many Metis residents were discovering that land they had received from the government in its 1940s colony scheme was not legally theirs. Together, the students and MAS successfully defended the Metis' right to the land.

The government's breaking of a verbal contract the Metis had made with the Saskatchewan Timber Board was a further issue. In this case the local MAS, with the help of the students, threatened the government with legal action if the Metis were not paid for their logs. The Metis soon received partial payment—but the Liberal government was furious and moved quickly to nip this "dangerous" militancy in the bud. It launched a vicious attack in the legislature against the students and a simultaneous campaign of intimidation and bribes in the Green Lake community.<sup>10</sup>

Allan Guy announced in the legislature that, "Until the people of Green Lake . . . kick out these communist interlopers . . . we can do little for them."<sup>11</sup> One Metis woman, who ran a fish plant in the area, was told a government grant for improvements to her operation would be withheld if she did not force the students off her land, where she had allowed them to live. One of the MAS local's most enthusiastic supporters suddenly became an advocate of co-operation with the government—and soon became one of a handful of Metis to benefit from a new government farm scheme. Local civil servants were told their jobs were on the line unless they worked to get rid of the students.

The government's machinations were exposed in the provincial press. In a four-part series by Volkmar Richter in the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix* Malcolm Norris defended the students and attacked the government. The articles reported Norris' suggestion that the Metis march on the legislature to force the government to make good its promise of a large-scale farm project for Green Lake, which the government was holding up because of the students.

The government's intimidation campaign was successful. In April the MAS local asked the students to leave. Norris publicly denounced the government, accusing it of engineering the withdrawal of the students:

The Metis people are being bamboozled and frightened. While Ross Thatcher was denying the government's involvement Rod Bishop was confirming it, telling the [Saskatoon] *Star [Phoenix]*



that it was "fear of the government . . . behind his request [that] the workers leave."<sup>12</sup>

With the departure of the students, government pressure eased, the Green Lake local of the MAS licked its wounds and the students decided, as Richard Thompson put it, "that native people must organize their own liberation." The Neestow Project continued in other settlements over the summer but faded by fall. The brief attempt at an alliance had come to an end. On the surface, at least, things were back to normal. But in the ranks of the Liberal cabinet there was a renewed determination to neutralize the influence of the real political threat in the native community: Malcolm Norris.

The Liberals knew that terminating his government employment had not stopped Norris' activities and they remained extremely wary of him.<sup>13</sup> They were well aware that Norris' administration of the friendship centre was colored by his politics and that the MAS office was located there. For the better part of 1965 Norris had done nothing alarming, yet the Liberals believed there was cause for concern. It had been widely reported in the press that the native population, if unified, could reverse the results in sixteen of the province's 59 constituencies. Thatcher and the Liberals evidently feared that Norris might have the power to organize native people into a coherent electoral influence.

Norris' writing in the *Moose Call* made the Liberals nervous, and two articles in late 1965 particularly irritated them. The first was a three-sentence report that in funding of the Prince Albert friendship centre for 1965 the government had ignored its own committee's recommendation for a \$9,000 grant and "slashed" this to \$6,600.<sup>14</sup>

The second, entitled "Militant Action," reported the mass resistance by Indians in Kenora, Ontario. Norris' article was cautious yet left no doubt about his support of the 400 Indians who had marched on city hall demanding redress of grievances:

What is the role of militant action in human progress? What relevance has it to the Indian? Can progress be gained without action by those seeking it? . . . One thing is certain—the Kenora march has done more to dramatize . . . the Indians' plight than all the conferences held . . . in the past three years . . . Not a major paper in the country ignored the incident. Generally they have been sympathetic to the Indians' cause . . . It is to be hoped that many do hear of it and that they see in it the value of direct action, by Indians . . . As the old Indian chief said, "You will get nothing from the white man until you already have it firmly grasped in your hand."<sup>15</sup>



Besides affirming militant action, Norris exposed a form of colonialism peculiar to Canada. In a section subtitled "What is the enemy?" he wrote:

In the southern states the Negro fights over acts of discrimination. The Negro is forced into an inferior position by the laws and acts of his white masters. He is the victim of actual oppression. This is also true of the dark skinned people of South Africa. It is a physical thing, and has elicited a physical reaction from the oppressed.

The white Canadian's attitude to the Indian is different but is it more defensible? To be ignored is more vicious perhaps than to be oppressed. And this is apparently the form discrimination takes here against the Indian—"we don't give a damn."

This kind of discrimination is hard to fight; but perhaps the Kenora affair shows that it can, and must, be fought in the same way. Let us hope the Indians learn this lesson.

In Liberal circles reaction to Norris' article was close to hysterical. One employee of the Indian-Metis Branch recalled that in late 1965, for reasons unknown to him, "The shit hit the fan all of a sudden and all efforts were made to 'get' Malcolm Norris."<sup>16</sup> F. Ewald, the Branch's Director, recalled vividly the directions given him regarding Norris. Native people seeking grants or other considerations from the government were informed that any connection with Norris would preclude consideration of their requests. Norris was to be portrayed as someone not representing native interests. "I became aware that the provincial cabinet, the Premier, and MLAs were actively and overtly or covertly spreading this news to the natives. I suspected that native leadership was constantly sought to serve as... neutralizing agents to counter the activities of Norris."<sup>17</sup> Norris' support for the Neestow Project in the spring served to confirm the government's fear of his influence. Something would have to be done.

In May 1966 the president of the Prince Albert Indian-Metis Service Council reported to his board that the government, through Allan Guy, was pressing for Norris' resignation. "The [government-appointed, funding advisory] Committee felt there was an implication made by Mr. Guy that we should seek to remove Mr. Norris by his resignation before a grant was forthcoming."<sup>18</sup>

Norris was at the board meeting and immediately offered his resignation. The offer was turned down, pending an invitation to Allan Guy and Davie Steuart, the minister in charge, to attend the next board meeting. At the June 9 meeting, Steuart and Guy stated their case:



“[Norris] had made verbal attacks against the Liberal government concerning free enterprise, etc., and was taking a militant stand... They did not intend to subsidize Mr. Norris to go around making statements against them.”<sup>19</sup> Norris defended his work at the centre and stated that he had been fighting for native people for 40 years and would continue to “stand for the rights of the Indian and Metis people... regardless of my job.”<sup>20</sup>

The board—no longer all-native as it had been in mid-1965—defended Norris but weakened later. Some supported Norris’ political views and approach at the centre; others recognized his good work at the centre but were uncomfortable with his high political profile. In an eight to seven vote the board accepted Norris’ resignation, and then decided to expose the issue. The press gave the story prominent coverage. Guy claimed that the Prince Albert centre was doing a poor job—but offered no evidence and showed no desire to defuse the issue. Letters from the board to provincial and federal political leaders had even less impact than the media coverage.

Norris expected to lose his job, yet he felt disillusioned and bitter at being sacrificed so readily to such blatant persecution. In his defence in the press Norris said, ‘The only reason Indian and Metis are receiving attention is because of agitation by people like myself.’<sup>21</sup> He insisted that his criticisms of the government were not based on malice but on hope for the betterment of the native people. Norris left the director’s post at the end of June, after which he seems to have had nothing more to do with the friendship centre.

Brady’s reaction to the forced resignation, recorded in a letter to his sister Eleanor, was a typically detached, hard-headed appraisal:

Of course it was a crass demonstration of political shoddiness and pure revenge. They have always feared his influence among the native people... However, I think the Liberals acted correctly in ridding themselves of his presence in the Centre, even if their methods bordered on political persecution... The CCF continually harbored the worst oppositionists in vital and sensitive administrative posts and they consistently sabotaged every progressive program.<sup>22</sup>

No doubt Brady sympathized with Norris, but he understood the rules of expediency which dictate political decisions and he did not fight them.

Brady’s efforts in late 1964 and late 1965 to establish a Metis association local in LaRonge had come to naught. Even though Brady had signed up 32 members the local did not get off the ground. In May



1966, Brady called a meeting at which an ad-hoc organizational committee was formed to contact potential members. This effort also failed. According to Brady: "Due to local conditions and organizational difficulties this committee lapsed into inactivity."<sup>23</sup>

Local conditions, loosely translated, meant chronic alcohol abuse. Brady once remarked that to have a successful association meeting he had to call it before 11:00 a.m., when the bar opened. Organizational difficulties consisted primarily of Brady's and other members' extended absences from LaRonge.

Brady's efforts were half-hearted, because he could not see much likelihood of change as long as native people acquiesced in their state of dependence on government, whether the DNR or the Indian Affairs Branch. He also knew that the situation in northern Saskatchewan had not produced the strong, racially conscious leadership which had been central to the success of the Metis Association of Alberta. Brady told a student leftist a couple of years later that in the anti-colonial struggle in northern Saskatchewan, "There was only me and Norris; always only me and Norris."<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps as a result of this pessimism Brady seemed more concerned about what happened electorally in the north than he did about the MAS. Brady had come to some firm conclusions. His brief return to the CCF in the early sixties had alienated him permanently from that political party. In a letter to Norris, Brady expressed his bitterness:

After twenty years of monumental blundering the CCF in the north are no longer a political force. The Indians and Metis detest them. It is a rather bitter admission. You know the CCF administration...has always had a class induced fear of the natives. They could never see beyond the standard administrative approach and the methods of the classical colonialist. I feel like the late Bill Irvine did after the founding convention of the NDP. On the train back from Winnipeg he told an old friend, "Forty-five years of my life was wasted."<sup>25</sup>

Brady went on to explain that he was going to support the Conservatives in the next election because they were the only party that could defeat the incumbent Liberal—Allan Guy:

Political labels mean nothing but personalities are paramount. I have no desire to fasten the grip of a pro-fascist like Allan Guy and his friends on the body politic...It is our democratic duty and a responsibility to our own people to see that he is defeated...[We need a coalition of forces if] this fascist trend in the



north is to be nipped in the bud.

Brady's somewhat half-hearted efforts in organizing the Metis association local and his electoral strategy demonstrated his political disposition. For Brady, political action had to be based on theory and an objective assessment of possibilities. Without a strategy based on such an analysis action was pointless and ultimately doomed to fail. In the mid-sixties Brady's pessimism immobilized him, and he was hard-pressed to fashion a strategy for the native struggle.

He spent much of his time searching for a model of liberation relevant to the native struggle. He viewed armed struggles in Africa as having little to offer the colonized of Canada. Brady turned to the other "colonized" people of North America—the blacks of the United States. He studied the Black Panthers organization and the writings and leadership of its founder, Stokely Carmichael. While he was impressed with the Panthers and the potential of the black power movement, Brady saw little in that struggle which was applicable to native people in Saskatchewan. The black power movement relied on coherent, urban black communities. Native people in Canadian cities were spread out, had no urban roots, and were still trying to integrate into the mainstream economy. Differences between the Indian and Metis created further divisions.<sup>26</sup>

In the absence of a viable model or strategy, Brady worked independently, personally, to nurture leaders among the LaRonge native population. Even here Brady felt handicapped because he did not have roots in the community. In fact, however, Brady underestimated his influence and stature in the community, for in many ways the local native people trusted him more than any of their own.

Liora Proctor was a student working for the Company of Young Canadians, a federally funded community development agency not unlike the independent Neestow Project. She visited LaRonge in the summer of 1966 and contacted Brady to find out about the political situation among the native people. Brady at first refused to speak with her but relented when Proctor identified herself as the daughter of one of Brady's CP acquaintances. Proctor found Brady:

...living in a tent near his house which he had given up to a family which needed housing. I was amazed to find the complete works of Lenin on the bookshelf.<sup>27</sup>

Proctor listened to Brady's views on Africa, Stokely Carmichael, the "colony within" and the colonial administration of the CCF. When she asked about the future of native politics in LaRonge and the north, Brady refused to comment. He gave the impression of a man



completely defeated by the dilemma facing native people. He told her to go to the reserve adjacent to LaRonge and talk to Abbie Halkett. "If I wanted to understand what was possible politically I was to talk to Abbie Halkett, no one else."

A few years younger than Brady, Halkett was a university graduate who had trained to become an Anglican priest and then returned to work in the bush. Like Brady, he was now a mining exploration worker. Proctor's trek to Halkett's house gives an insight into the colonialism in Saskatchewan and Brady's place in the community:

As I walked very slowly down the dirt road of the reserve people in the doorways of their cabins went inside and slammed the door. I got to the right house and asked for Abbie Halkett. There were about twelve people in the house but no one answered. I told them Jim Brady sent me and I was immediately invited into the house and given total freedom to talk and everyone came back out of their houses. There wasn't an explicit politics but an undercurrent of political sentiment and Brady's name was an instant trust factor.

Halkett gave Proctor the impression that he and Brady were allies in some long-term political vision, which he was not about to spell out. A long-term vision was certainly consistent with Brady's view of political struggle, for he did not expect immediate victories. It looked as if Brady's patient political education among the local people had finally resulted in the development of a political protege, in Abbie Halkett.

Brady's patient political work contrasted sharply, as usual, with Norris' frenetic activity. After his resignation from the friendship centre Malcolm and Mary holidayed briefly in British Columbia. On his way home Norris could not resist attending a meeting of Indians and government officials in Calgary. It was a further frustration. On his return to Prince Albert, Norris suffered a major stroke. (He'd had a mild one in February.) It paralyzed one side of his body and confined him to a wheelchair. Immobilized, Norris could not hope to effectively manage MAS affairs. The association began to decline even further.

The MAS central organization—which was no more and no less than Malcolm Norris—was barely operative that summer. The Prince Albert local was inactive and most of the locals on the west side which had shown such promise were in the doldrums as well. Without the constant prodding of Malcolm Norris, the Metis association did not function.

In the spring of 1966 Norris thought he had found two Metis leaders who could replace him. One was Rod Bishop of Green Lake. Rod was the son of Alex Bishop, who had been active in Metis political struggles for two decades. Growing up in Green Lake, Rod had seen his father



dedicate himself to the Metis cause and often get repaid with suspicion, abuse and ridicule by the Metis themselves. He had nonetheless come to admire his father and one of his father's regular visitors, Malcolm Norris. Rod had been prominent in the Green Lake fight with the Thatcher government over the presence of the student organizers. He knew the frustrations of leadership and was a determined fighter.

Rod Bishop had rejuvenated the Green Lake Metis Society local in 1962. They had regular meetings and elected an executive. As Bishop recalled the period, "The objectives were not clear except that the people had to get together and fight on the economic issues."<sup>28</sup> Bishop had attended the September 1964 founding conference of the MAS but had left the province soon after that to seek work in British Columbia. On his return to Saskatchewan in the spring of 1966 he discovered confusion in the north regarding the MAS. Besides being involved in the events at Green Lake, Bishop reorganized the Prince Albert local and spent long hours with Norris discussing strategy for the organization.

Norris was relieved to find a Metis with roots in the north prepared to dedicate himself to the long struggle ahead. Bishop had an instinctive grasp of what was possible politically; he understood the many divisions in communities and had a special appreciation of the reactionary role of the Church and the necessity to respect its power.

Norris was even more pleased at the discovery of another Metis leader. Howard Adams was an English Metis who had grown up in St. Louis, an old Metis community south of Prince Albert. As a young man Adams had decided to deny the Indian ancestry which brought nothing but abuse and he was remarkably successful. While Norris was initiating the MAS in 1964, Adams was completing his doctorate in history at the radical Berkeley campus of the University of California. Seeking work in 1965, he read of Saskatchewan's new Indian Metis Branch (IMB) and wrote to the government seeking assistance in gaining employment.\* The IMB was instrumental in having Adams hired at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.<sup>29</sup>

One of Adams' first projects was the preparation of a report on social conditions in the west side communities of the north. He found that:

The state of [political] consciousness was surprisingly high among the people. I had no trouble talking to people about their problems even though I was white in most respects. They were

\*The Indian Metis Branch's main policy initiative was an ill-conceived form of affirmative action which arrived at a 10 per cent quota of natives in the civil service. Natives were hired as supernumeraries—outside the normal civil service process—and were little more than cheap labor, often serving as "trainees" for up to five years.



open in talking about problems and confrontations—police brutality, housing, the need to organize with political muscle. I hadn't expected this at all but it was obvious they had been involved in real political struggle.<sup>30</sup>

Adams had not yet met Norris but it became clear to him that Norris was responsible for inspiring the frank political expressions of the Metis. "Malcolm was the brains and motive force behind the political struggle."

The encounter with Metis political consciousness in the north prompted Adams to take yet a further step in his own racial consciousness. He sought out Norris and met him at a meeting of the MAS in Prince Albert. Norris was heartened by Adams' willingness to take a major role in Metis affairs. In part because Adams was a socialist, radicalized by the direct action politics of the Berkeley students, and also because he was educated, Norris saw in Adams the future president of the Metis association.<sup>31</sup>

With the discovery of two strong leaders Norris breathed a small sigh of relief. Yet he was not content to curtail his own activity. Despite his failing health and his dependence on others to get him around, Norris continued to be influential in the MAS central organization and attended local meetings. He used his same old methods—challenging the Metis to get "off their fat fannies" and organize. But at these meetings, in the latter half of 1966, Norris could not conceal his frustration, his affection for his people or his fears for their future. Rod Bishop recalled the situation vividly:

These last meetings were very emotional events. When you can see the future of your people, that the only way to help people you need radical social change. . . He put this message across so many times and had been knocked down so many times—it was easy for him to be emotional. When Malcolm broke down it affected everyone else—when he cried I cried too. . . People could understand [Malcolm's fears]. Even before this there were demagogues developing.

Howard Adams recalled those meetings as well. "After he started crying he totally disrupted every meeting. The meeting always broke up—the sadness was overwhelming. He commanded respect from everyone—at his greatest and at his weakest."

Norris was becoming such a disruptive force that some of the local leaders even tried to prevent his attendance by not informing him of meetings. But they seldom succeeded. His power left bitterness as well as respect among many of the Metis he influenced. The students with



the Neestow Project in Green Lake found that few people spoke of Malcolm as a leader—some resented him because, like so many others, he had come and then left again. Some of their resentment may have been caused by the disruption to their communities—especially Green Lake—as a result of native resistance to government policy. Some of the resentment was caused by Norris' personality. He left the image of a demagogue. Howard Adams recalled: "Unconsciously Malcolm played the role of a messiah and this was a mistake. He created an image that 'uncle Malcolm' would pick [the battle] up and carry it for them."

Rod Bishop assessed Norris' impact similarly. Because Norris was so forceful, so positive, and encouraged in people the belief that things could change, they relied on him too much and were discouraged when change came slowly, if at all. The image of positive change was tied up in the image of Norris the man—the way he carried himself, his gestures, his aggressiveness. Bishop explained:

People were prepared to talk about local issues but not to deal with government...they had been so inferiorized...they expected too much from leaders. If the leader didn't do it for them, like Malcolm, then he was a son of a bitch and the Association was no good...They always had a dependency on those who could speak the white man's language—dependent on people like Malcolm. [This was why] the organization's activity level rose and fell with Malcolm's activity.

As late as Christmas 1966, Norris held out hope that he might gain his mobility and effectiveness. He wrote to Brady:

Still unable to walk, confined to wheelchair. Doctor contemplating sending me to University Hospital [in Saskatoon] after Xmas for intensive physiotherapy. I feel most despondent with physical handicap and relying on others physically. May be able to walk by spring...When I get back on my feet I will liven things up a bit. I need the services of a steno badly—neglecting my major correspondence in connection with rocking Dominion and Provincial boats.<sup>32</sup>

But Norris was never to walk again and his political influence began to wane as his replacements established their credentials and popularity. Norris, so accustomed to directing Metis politics, now had to use all his energy just to maintain some influence. Norris was pleased with the commitment of Adams and Bishop, and he might have chosen to simply withdraw gracefully from Metis politics. But circumstances did not permit him the luxury. Though unrecognized by the new leadership, a



new enemy faced the movement. The enemy was government intervention. It would threaten the Metis movement like no other issue.

The Liberal government's efforts to undermine Norris' leadership were having little effect. While Norris was immobile and less effective than before, he still had moral authority among many Metis, and he now had two co-leaders who showed signs of being every bit as unmanageable. The Liberals were still determined to counter Norris. The Metis Society of Saskatchewan, intended by the Liberals to counter Norris, was so far a weak and ineffective organization. Government efforts to isolate the MAS\* were no more rewarding. According to officials of the Indian-Metis Branch Norris' continuing political threat prompted the government to approve an organizing grant to the MSS.<sup>33</sup>

While Joe Amyotte, president of the MSS, may have sought money on his own initiative, he may also have had some encouragement. Before Amyotte formally applied for the grant, he received advice from Walter Deiter. Deiter was president of the FSI and was considered by Norris to be a captive of the Liberal government. Deiter suggested to Amyotte that the Liberals were prepared to give the MSS \$10,000—the same amount they granted the FSI—and advised him to ask for that amount.<sup>34</sup> But Amyotte was a cautious man with a limited perception of what was involved in organizing a province-wide Metis society. He asked for \$500 and received it in November 1966.<sup>35</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that Norris had direct knowledge of Liberal government manipulation. But his vigorous attack on government grants—and descriptions of his warnings as prophetic years later—suggests that he was wise to Liberal machinations and even anticipated the massive government intervention which would characterize the native movement in the 1970s.

Only during 1939-41, when the Alberta Social Credit government was undermining the MAA, did a single issue preoccupy Norris to the same extent as the government grant issue. Indeed the principle was the same. Norris and Brady witnessed the destruction of the MAA through the government's policy of setting up parallel associations on the Metis colonies, associations which drew their power and authority from the government. The issue in 1966 was virtually the same, and Norris pursued it with all the energy he could muster.

He tried desperately to persuade his fellow leaders of the dangers: not only would government money be an invitation to opportunists and a corrupting influence on inexperienced leaders, it would control the direction of the organization by providing funds for some objectives

\*In a meeting in late 1966 the government proposed establishing a native advisory committee to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians and the MSS. No mention of the MAS was made—by government or native leaders.



and denying them for others. Norris had trouble convincing Adams and Bishop of the dangers of government money. They argued that without adequate finances, organizing was a long and painful task. Certain of their own integrity, they saw no danger in using government money to organize against the government.

Norris might have held sway in the MAS, but by late 1966 his battle against government intervention grew more complex. Joe Amyotte, his first grant already in hand, was lobbying for the amalgamation of the two Metis organizations. Norris' fight against grants would now take the form of opposing amalgamation and the provincial unity he once fought hard to attain.<sup>36</sup>

Norris' position on amalgamation remained as it had for months: it could take place if the MSS agreed to be absorbed by the MAS. Norris was confident he could guard the MAS against government intervention. But he was deeply suspicious of the MSS and contemptuous of its politics. He recognized Amyotte's sincerity but saw him as an unwitting tool of the Liberals. The southern organization, like its predecessor in the 1940s, was politically cautious and dominated by Liberal Party supporters. The MAS refused to align itself with any party. The MAS demanded Metis rights; the MSS asked for assistance so they could become "useful citizens."<sup>37</sup> Norris and the northern leaders saw the state as an adversary; Amyotte and the southern Metis saw it as a partner. MAS objectives were Metis access to natural resources\* as a basis for self-determination; MSS goals were for more services, vocational training and job opportunities. MSS meetings were often chaired and recorded by officials of the Indian-Metis Branch, invited for that purpose. "Only by working together," wrote Amyotte in an MSS newsletter, "can we get the services we so badly need."<sup>38</sup> Any action by the government—whether their exploitive affirmative action program, the \$500 grant or 45 houses promised for the north—was accepted with almost servile gratitude.

The first annual convention of the MSS, held October 22-23, 1966, indicated the organization's priorities and the effect of earmarked government funds. The MSS had been given \$250 to plan for Canadian Centennial celebrations and more convention time was devoted to this topic than to all the substantive issues of housing, education, discrimination and jobs put together.<sup>39</sup>

The assimilation of southern Metis had weakened Metis consciousness and obscured the reason for a Metis organization. It took Amyotte two years to achieve the same organizational strength that

\*Norris and Brady considered land claims as such to be a political dead end: Only a few Metis would benefit and economic and social struggles would be delayed by years of negotiations and legal haggling.



Norris and Nielson accomplished in six months. And this was not due entirely to different organizational skills, as Amyotte pointed out:

There were regular meetings but we had trouble explaining our organization to people. We had small turnouts. . . There was a lot of frustration. We had to have four or five meetings just to explain the reason for the organization. . . The people were afraid to fight, afraid they would be laughed at."<sup>40</sup>

In his final months as MAS president, Norris was obsessed with the issue of government grants. His communication with Amyotte was blunt and often arrogant and it left the southern leader genuinely confused about Norris' uncompromising position on grants and amalgamation. Norris had no more luck with the MAS leaders. Independence, Norris repeated incessantly, was the foundation for everything else. But the message was lost, as so many of Norris' messages had been lost.

Joe Amyotte recalled the situation, "If Malcolm Norris had not been sick there would have been no amalgamation."<sup>41</sup> But Norris was sick, and his voice was growing weaker. In addition, Amyotte was growing bolder about government money, and the government was eager to please. The Liberals promised Amyotte \$16,000 for 1968, and the southern leader used the promise to finally cement the amalgamation.

The first joint meeting of the MAS and MSS executives was held on February 25, 1967.<sup>42</sup> Although no longer active as president, Norris was at the meeting, and Amyotte was careful not to force a confrontation with him. Three weeks later a second executive meeting was held, from which Norris was absent. The minutes of that meeting read, "After much discussion it was agreed that the two organizations would unite under one society." On May 13, a general convention of the two organizations approved the amalgamation. Norris' condition for unity—absorption of the MSS by the MAS— was reversed. The new organization kept the name Metis Society of Saskatchewan, designated Regina as its headquarters and retained Joe Amyotte as president, without election.\* There is no record of Norris' reaction. After the February meeting he must have anticipated amalgamation—his last defeat and the end of his long political struggle.

Just as Norris' defeat seemed total, Jim Brady surfaced, bringing some new-found optimism. In January Brady wrote to Norris:

After many months of inactivity I feel gratified to inform you that I have made an initial effort at organizational work for the

\*Other executive members were elected.



Saskatchewan Metis. An organizational meeting was held on January 11th and considering the weather and local conditions the meeting was attended by 26 individuals which was much beyond my expectations.<sup>43</sup>

In February Brady wrote again, asking Norris to forward immediately the membership cards for which he had sent money three weeks earlier. Norris' delay had put Brady in a difficult position. "There was considerable unfavorable comment at my inability to distribute the cards." Brady was going to conduct a housing survey in the village as the basis for pushing the housing question "in a vigorous manner." For the first time in fifteen years, the Metis of LaRonge seemed eager to take action, and Jim Brady regained some of his lost hope.

The winter had been hard on Brady, personally. A combination of old injuries and new had contributed to six full months of unemployment, from freeze up until March. He wrote to Kathleen about an old ankle injury which had flared up as arthritis and immobilized him for six weeks. "In addition," he wrote:

I had a bad fall on an icy road and sustained a back injury which required "incarceration" in the local hospital. I was knocked out and laid out in the sub zero weather for almost half an hour . . . with the resultant complication of pleurisy. . . I still feel minor twinges from it, as well as from the back injury. I sometimes feel there may be some impairment of mobility. . . I intend to go back to Prince Albert as soon as I can afford what may possibly be a prolonged [hospital] session.<sup>44</sup>

In the spring of 1967 Brady could not afford a long session. The long months without work made it necessary for him to follow the same pattern he had followed for years. Spring brought mining exploration work, and in March he was on his first job.



## 15

### *Final Entries*

BY LATE SPRING mining exploration was in full swing and work was plentiful. In the first week of June, Brady returned from one job and the next day secured another for himself and Abbie Halkett. On June 7 the two men were flown into the Foster Lakes area of northern Saskatchewan to do some initial exploration work on an old uranium showing.<sup>1</sup> That was the last anyone saw of Jim Brady and Abbie Halkett.

The disappearance of the two men was not discovered until nine days later when their employer, Brady's friend Berry Richards, flew in to check work reports and replenish their supplies. The search for the two men was one of the most thorough in the history of the area. The RCMP, the DNR, and four private air charter companies put aircraft into the search. RCMP ground search teams combed a wide area for 23 days. They were joined by several teams formed by local Indian and Metis trappers and guides. Well into the summer, RCMP and other planes did periodic searches of the area. All efforts proved fruitless. Only a handful of clues was found, and they did not help unravel the mystery.<sup>2</sup>

The Foster Lakes lie about 110 miles northwest of LaRonge in the Churchill River basin. The system consists of three long, narrow lakes: Lower, Middle and Upper Foster. Typical of the shield topography, the lakes lie at a northeast to southwest angle, stretching for an average of almost twenty miles. Lower Foster lies furthest east.

On the morning of June 7, Berry Richards drove Jim Brady and Abbie Halkett from LaRonge to Otter Lake, a distance of about fifty miles. It was cheaper to have the chartered NorCanAir aircraft depart from Otter than from LaRonge.<sup>3</sup> It was pilot Gerry Mitchinson's fourth day on the job. A young theology student, Mitchinson had worked for six weeks as a bush pilot in Manitoba the previous summer. He had never flown in the area before.<sup>4</sup>



The men were headed for the northern tip of Middle Foster Lake. At Otter Lake they picked up Alex Sarabin, an employee of Rottenstone Mine. Sarabin wanted to hitch a ride to the mine site, 30 miles southeast of the plane's destination, a request which required only a short diversion from the original flight path.<sup>5</sup> The men loaded their gear on the plane, and Brady and Halkett strapped their canoe to the pontoons. The plane lifted off Otter Lake at 11:20 a.m. The flight to Rottenstone Mine was uneventful and the plane put down at noon, taking off again at 13:50.

If the plane had followed its original, straight-line flight path from Otter Lake to Middle Foster's northern tip, it would have passed over Lower Foster about a quarter of the way down that lake. But the diversion to Rottenstone brought them over the northern tip of Lower Foster Lake. As the plane approached Lower Foster, Mitchinson was unsure of the identity of the lake and asked one of the men (he thought later it was Brady) if he recognized it as Middle Foster. Brady, who had worked in the area before,<sup>6</sup> apparently assured the green pilot that they were in the right spot. Mitchinson circled the area to ensure a safe landing spot and put the plane down.

Brady and Halkett unloaded their supplies: a large, rectangular canvas tent, a radio transceiver, and battery, a canoe with a small motor, a ten-day supply of food, bedding and the necessary exploration equipment including picks, geiger counters and maps of the area.<sup>7</sup> It was five o'clock when the plane roared off the lake, sunset still five hours away. The men proceeded to set up their camp. The temperature dropped close to freezing that night and before the men went to bed it began to snow.<sup>8</sup>

The next morning, June 8, in the radio room at Rottenstone Mine, thirty miles from Brady and Halkett's camp, Alex Sarabin picked up the voice of Brady, trying to make contact with his base in LaRonge. He was having no success and Sarabin intercepted the call and talked briefly with Brady. Brady jokingly asked Sarabin to send in some snow shoes so they could get to work.

It was standard practice for men in the bush to check out their radio once camp was set up. As Brady was having trouble reaching LaRonge, Sarabin offered to pass on any messages. According to Sarabin, they agreed on a schedule of calls whereby Brady would call Sarabin every morning at the same time.

The heavy snowfall forced Brady and Halkett to remain in camp June 8. Brady's diary read:

At Middle Foster—In camp. General tent, erected radio, camp bed, tables, etc. Very cold wind in evening. Had to eat in tent.<sup>9</sup>



It was Brady's final entry.

On the morning of June 9 Alex Sarabin waited in the radio room for the call from Jim Brady, then tried to radio Brady. There was no reply. He tried for several mornings to contact Brady and got no reply. He did not consider it cause for alarm and let the matter pass.

On June 9 pilot Gerry Mitchinson was in the air, at high altitude, heading north for Wapata Lake and passing to the east of the Foster Lakes. He was still concerned about the identity of the spot where he had dropped Brady and Halkett. Making a slight diversion, he flew over the Foster Lakes. From the greater height, Mitchinson could see that he had mistakenly dropped the men off at the northern tip of Lower Foster Lake. It only occurred to him later that he might have set down and informed the men of the error.

Mitchinson did, however, inform his superior, Jim Barber, when he returned to LaRonge on June 12. Barber was an experienced, highly respected bush pilot. Mitchinson recalls:

I remember [Barber] took a map from the file and he or I marked the spot. He made it clear that it was important to know this as they would have to know it in order to pick them up later. . . There was a faint trace of thoughtfulness or concern of "what should we do" when I made my report at that time. However, nothing was said and as far as I know nothing was done.<sup>10</sup>

Barber was used to prospectors giving false information and even changing flight plans in mid-flight to guard against possible intrusion. This could explain his failure to report the change. It was just as likely carelessness, the "devil-may-care" attitude which pervades the business. A correction in the flight log book was legally required. No such correction was made.<sup>11</sup> Berry Richards, who had hired the plane to go to Middle Foster, was not informed of the error.

The weather was clear and warm on June 16 as Berry Richards and his pilot, Danny Gudmunson, approached the northern end of Middle Foster Lake. Richards, as arranged, was flying in to check the results of Brady and Halkett's work and to replenish their food supplies. There was no sign of the camp from the air and after putting down, Richards followed a small creek which led to the spot the men were to explore. Still no sign of the camp.<sup>12</sup>

Bewilderment turned to panic. Richards had the pilot fly ever larger circles from the spot where the camp should have been. Seven miles to the southwest, on Lower Foster, he spotted the large white tent. Moments after they landed, Richards was on the camp radio to the RCMP ordering a search plane. Most of the food was in camp, the



makeshift toilet was barely used, maps on the bed had been darkly yellowed by the sun. Two axes, two geiger counters, one or two compasses and a geology map of the northern end of Middle Foster Lake were missing. By examining the contents of the camp, Richards concluded that the men had been missing at least six days. Before Richards and Gudmunson left the scene, they discovered the missing men's canoe, pulled up on shore and tied to a tree at the northern tip of the lake about a half-mile from the camp. A prospector's pick lay beside it, one paddle lay on the shore, one in the canoe.

The search rapidly intensified. Three ground parties, RCMP and commercial aircraft, and an RCMP search dog combed the area. An RCMP team dragged the north end of the lake, between the canoe and the campsite. The first five days of searching turned up nothing. It was not until June 21 that Berry Richards and a prospector colleague, Art Sjolander, who was familiar with the area, discovered the first tentative clues.<sup>13</sup>

Proceeding on the assumption that Brady and Halkett thought they were on Middle Foster Lake, Richards and Sjolander attempted to retrace the men's likely path into the bush. Starting from the beached canoe and using a map of Middle Foster Lake, they followed a creek and the natural contour of the land in the direction the men would have gone to reach the old uranium showing, about a half-mile north and slightly east. Tacking back and forth in a low-lying area they discovered two sets of footprints in a stretch of soft, thick moss. The footprints were about 400 yards from the canoe and continued for about seventy-five to a hundred feet. No other search crews had followed this search pattern. The footprints, the men concluded, were almost certainly made by Brady and Halkett.

The uranium showing the men were supposed to work was along the west side of a narrow bay, actually part of Upper Foster Lake, to the northeast of Middle Foster. Ironically, there was a small lake to the northeast of Lower Foster, in almost the same relative position. Richards and Sjolander followed a natural trail, starting on the west side, moving north around the lake. On this trail, on the eastern side of the lake, a few hundred feet from shore, they came across a single, white, wooden matchstick, a couple of cigarette butts and ax marks in an adjacent tree. The whiteness of the matchstick suggested recent use. There was little doubt in their minds that the two missing men had been there. But the site offered no more clues. Searching in several directions and finding nothing, the two men completed their circuit of the small lake and returned to camp.

Two days later, on June 23, Richards and pilot Bill McNeill sighted a small raft on the edge of LaPointe Lake, about twenty air miles southeast of the missing men's camp. Having found nothing in the



area immediately around the northern tip of Lower Foster, the searchers deduced that the men must have tried to reach either Rottenstone Mine or the Churchill River. The location of the raft was consistent with either objective.

There was a general consensus among those examining the raft that it was probably made by the missing men.<sup>14</sup> Corporal Ken Conrad, the RCMP officer in charge of the search, recalled:

The raft was cut from trees in the immediate area. Examination of the cut marks on the logs used for the raft and also stumps indicated that the axes that were used were dull. The native guides we had with us on examining the [wood] chips were of the opinion they were fresh... There was no sign of any fire... There was an indication that boughs had been laid on the ground [in the manner of two beds]. Also, two logs were cut more or less in the same manner as a paddle.<sup>15</sup>

One of the searchers tested the raft; it sank immediately under his weight. There were doubts. Such rafts have been made by trappers. While the sap in the logs was running, this could have been so even if they had been cut the previous fall. Yet trappers in the area knew nothing of the raft, and the two rough-hewn paddles and spruce bow beds suggested that Brady and Halkett had been there. The searchers were confident that they had found the first sign that the men might still be alive.

Searches were conducted "in every conceivable direction that a person could go on foot." The RCMP dog was used, but nothing more was found. Nevertheless, the search effort was immediately focussed on the area to the south and east of the raft. To the south was the Churchill River and to the east was Rottenstone Mine. At the south end of LaPointe Lake there was a series of small, connected lakes called Taylor Creek, which led east directly to Rottenstone Lake, the site of the mine. The RCMP moved their camp to a point three miles east of the raft, on Taylor Creek.

About June 25, RCMP questioned men at a mining exploration camp at Kenyon Lake, adjacent to Rottenstone. They told of hearing "shouting and funny noises coming from a westerly direction" several days earlier. The sounds, said one man, could have been human, but they were not sure. This new clue, if it was a clue, prompted the searchers to concentrate on the Taylor Creek area. Berry Richards had workers at the mine detonate dynamite every few hours in hopes of guiding the missing men to the mine.

The ground and air search concentrated on Taylor Creek until June 29. Searchers noted a large number of black bears with cubs in the area.



One searcher counted seven in one day—an exceptionally high number.<sup>16</sup> On June 27 Lloyd Mattson, a school teacher and political associate of Brady's, joined the search with four Indian trappers from LaRonge. The Indians' expenses were paid by the LaRonge band and the Branch. In LaRonge a \$1,000 reward was posted.<sup>17</sup>

After six days of intensive searching, the Taylor Creek area was abandoned, and the searchers turned their attention south to the route the men would have followed to the Churchill River. The Indian trappers, with three canoes, spent a week searching virtually every waterway leading into and away from Nagle Lake, the main body of water in the area, assuming that the men would be walking along the animal trails which follow the shores of lakes and streams in the north. On July 7 the Indian trappers returned to LaRonge and the ground search was called off. The RCMP continued the air search along the north side of the Churchill River. But again nothing was found. The RCMP then called off its full-time search.

Lloyd Mattson, with Indian companions and sometimes alone, continued to search the whole area for six to seven weeks.<sup>18</sup> The RCMP followed up numerous leads and did occasional air searches. Shortly after the end of the official search, Indian trappers discovered an additional set of clues. An old campfire and signs that moss and lichen had been consumed were discovered at the northern end of LaPointe Lake. These tentative signs seemed to confirm that the men had travelled south along LaPointe Lake. It was a clue, however, that led nowhere. Through July and August all efforts proved fruitless.

On November 14 a final clue added a bizarre note to an already strange mystery. James Tough, a prospector working in the Lower Foster Lake area, discovered a claim post about a half mile northeast of the lake's northern tip. The claim post, a tree cut off at chest height and squared off at the top, bore the inscription: "J.B., A.H., 9-7-67." It was located at one end of a cut line\* which extended into the bush for 600-800 feet, where it ended at a high rock outcropping. Tough and his partner examined the cut line, but poor weather prevented them from searching beyond it.<sup>19</sup> The RCMP did not investigate this final clue.

There were widespread rumors among the Indian and Metis that the missing men were murdered by an Indian guide, X, who worked at a tourist camp fifteen miles south on Lower Foster. Some claim X bragged about the murder while drinking and subsequently denied responsibility. An Indian medicine man from LaRonge told of a vision he had of X shooting the men while they walked on a high ridge overlooking the lake and then slitting open their bellies, filling them

\*Cut lines are narrow paths cut through the bush in a grid pattern as part of the mineral exploration process.



with rocks, and dumping them in the 300-foot deep waters of Lower Foster.<sup>20</sup>

The motive for the alleged murder was, supposedly, oedipal jealousy. Brady, the story goes, was romantically involved with X's mother and X resented it. X had previously killed his father\* in a dispute involving his mother and was known as a loner. Many residents of his community claimed to fear him. By other accounts he was an intelligent, quiet man, not unappreciative of the native political struggle.

The RCMP did not investigate the murder story. As far as the police were concerned, the clues found by searchers, particularly the raft and paddles, put the two men well out of range of any would-be murderer. For the first few days of the search the RCMP stayed at the tourist camp where X, his wife and a young cook were living for the summer and they noticed nothing to rouse their suspicion. The RCMP treated the murder story as typical of the rumors which arose when a northerner died under unusual circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

No evidence was ever produced to support the murder story, but as the months and years passed, it gained credence among natives and whites, perhaps because people found it hard to believe that Brady and Halkett could simply vanish in the bush. To this day X is an outcast because of the story and continues to deny the deed.

No inquest was held until almost two years later when associates of Brady expressed concern and suspicion to the Attorney General's department. The department carried out an inquest even though an inquest was not normally held unless a body was discovered.<sup>22</sup> The one-day inquest, on March 27, 1969, added no new evidence. In the opinion of the coroner the evidence warranted a verdict of presumption of death. The jury, however, recommended that "the verdict be left open."<sup>23</sup>

The disappearance and death of Jim Brady and Abbie Halkett remain a mystery. Speculation about the disappearance produced many hypotheses, some pure fantasy—such as the claims that the men travelled surreptitiously to Cuba, were plucked from the earth by a flying saucer, or that they were murdered by the CIA. Another, that Brady deliberately landed on the wrong lake as part of conspiracy involving mining property, also seems most unlikely. Neither is there any evidence to substantiate the sensational theory that the men were murdered for political motives. The most frequently suggested villain in this conspiracy theory is the RCMP. The RCMP have a history of harrassment, brutality and even murder of communists and native people, but have not been cited for political assassinations. In any case Brady, operating in the depressed circumstances of LaRonge, would

\*This is unconfirmed by RCMP—the crime was allegedly passed off as accidental death.



have been an unlikely candidate. None of Brady's close political associates give any credence to the political murder theory.

Only two hypotheses seem plausible—either the men were murdered for a personal reason or they were lost and died in the bush. The murder hypothesis rests on X's supposed grudge against Brady, his substantiated, unpredictable violence, his alleged previous murder and his proximity to the men's camp. His widely reported admission to the crime must be cautiously evaluated since it was said to have been made when he was in a drunken state. The only other circumstantial evidence is the cut line and prospector's claim post bearing Brady and Halkett's initials and the July (a mistake?) date. The post could have been a diversionary tactic by X. Such a post and cut line had no relationship to the work planned by Brady and Halkett and it is almost certain that they were not made by the two men.

The murder hypothesis is supported by its adherent's extreme skepticism about the accidental death hypothesis. They ask, rhetorically, "How could two experienced bushmen die in the bush and leave no trace of their bodies?" The strength of this support rests on the knowledge of what experienced bushmen do when they become lost. Only rarely, it is argued, would lost men attempt to walk out of the bush. Normally, they would stay put and attract attention either by lighting a forest fire or by felling a number of spruce trees into the lake—both accepted methods of attracting attention.

The accidental death theory also rests on circumstantial evidence. Men using a map to guide them to a spot a short distance into the bush do not normally blaze a trail or use a compass. The condition of the camp and Brady's diary indicate that the men went into the bush on the morning of the ninth. Using a map for a different area and having failed to blaze a trail or take compass readings, they could easily have become completely disoriented. The footprints, match and cigarette butts; the old campfire and consumed lichen; the raft, paddles and spruce bow beds cut with dulled axes suggest that the men tried to walk out of the bush.

Supporting arguments beyond this circumstantial evidence fall into three categories: the men's expertise in the bush; weather conditions; and the health of the two men. Adherents to the accidental death hypothesis argue that Brady and Halkett were not highly expert bushmen. The most competent bushmen are trappers and independent prospectors, who have to orient themselves in unfamiliar areas, make shelters and provide for themselves by using the resources around them. Neither Brady nor Halkett were expert to this extent. Brady had never trapped and seldom did any prospecting. He was normally set down a short distance from an ore showing, well supplied with food, a radio, shelter and motorized canoe.<sup>24</sup> Halkett had not trapped much, if at all,