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(DAVID) JAMES HARDING

Jim Harding is a sociologist, now with the University of Regina School of Human Justice and formerly of the Centre for Community Studies in Saskatoon. He was a left wing activist and was one of the organizers of the Student Neestow Partnership Project.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Malcolm Norris: his political views, his involvement with the Neestow Project, his visions for the future, his family, his frustrations and short-comings.
- the Student Neestow Partnership Project.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Jim Harding is a sociologist and in 1964 was involved with the Centre for Community Studies which was a group of academics at the U of S in Saskatoon. They were involved in doing socio-economic studies of northern Saskatchewan. Harding met Norris in this connection. Later, Norris acted as a Metis advisor to the Student Neestow Partnership Project, which was sending white students into Indian and Metis communities as a cross

cultural exercise. Harding talks about the Neestow Project and about Malcolm's political views from Marxism to analysis of Indian and Metis politics.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I'm speaking to Jim Harding from Regina. Jim, I'm interested, partly out of curiosity, how you first met Malcolm, and how that contact was first made, if you can recall that?

Jim: Oh, I went into northern Saskatchewan in '64 with the Centre for Community Studies and had decided the only way I would stay in university was to do research out of the university, and worked out a piece of their research on quality of life and the economy in the north, and it was through that work that I began to attend Indian Eskimo Friendship Association - primarily white run, but a few of the Indian and Metis. And I think I heard Malcolm at one of those initially and then I found that he was an exception to most of the other Indian or Metis people that were speaking, most of whom are pretty passive. I began talking with him and I told him about my experiences in the north and then when the Neestow Project began to occur, he was contacted to participate in the orientation, and I don't believe he was free or he could get off work. But we took different people up to P.A. and he met different people over that summer. So it was really through going into the north with the Centre that I ultimately tracked him down.

Murray: I'm going to refer to the letter you wrote earlier. A couple of times you mentioned in the letter that...

Jim: Now I should say that once I met him - and it's too bad that my father's not here - and then mentioned that I was really impressed by this guy and that he was kind of giving coherence to some of the feelings I had about the north being colonial and I didn't have the words... But I experienced that

summer things like - I knew a little about the theory of caste in communities - I experienced and I saw it and I really needed to talk to people who had put that together. Then when I mentioned his name, my father had recalled that he had been active with some of them in a group that used to meet at the Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle. They were kind of into left wing human relations, adult education things, and that Malcolm had hooked up with them and had actually come to one of their sessions at Fort Qu'Appelle and that he had felt that the whites were just blind to some racial things. Bill had remembered he and a very close friend of ours that was there, talking with him late into an evening and being made aware, for the first time, that when they went at this human relations adult education, that they were culturally kind of blind or biased. So that people knew of him who were older than me when I mentioned him. So that his name sort of got reinforced. Actually Bill knows this, you know. You should maybe track him some time.

Murray: Sure.

Jim: He knows that stuff really well.

Murray: You mentioned in the letter that one of the things that attracted you to Malcolm was his synthesis of a Marxian analysis and the economic and cultural state of the Metis and his awareness of class and race in Saskatchewan and how that worked. Can you expand on that, how he expressed that to you?

Jim: Yeah, well let's remember I'm saying this twelve years later, right.

Murray: Right.

Jim: What Marxian kinds of thinking to me at that stage was, was very much the kind of quest for freedom and liberation and kind of... it was very compatible with a kind of self determination. It wasn't an awareness of political economy of class, so it was the young Marx. And it struck me that Malcolm, I think, was one of the first people I actually met who could work at those two levels and talk about the kind of struggle of the Metis in the '30s. (He gave me some kind of sense of the history.) And the regeneration of it, the failings to link up with the white sort of agrarian socialist movement, and some attempt to grapple the changes in the structure of the economy. He was working at those two levels. He wasn't dehumanizing his own people when he was using the analysis, but he saw the need to have that analysis, to recognize that there were different potentials at different times. I know one night that he was talking about why, in his view, the Metis kind of movement had receded and was then kind

of reoccurring and, of course, he thought it was fairly related to what's happening in the States. I don't remember the details but he was the first person that I met in this province who was talking at those two levels and was talking about the importance of a kind of a racial analysis of class, in a sense. And I had taken sociology and stuff and no one was...

Murray: Talking about it.

Jim: Ever talking about that. No one talked about the colonization of the Indian at all in formal education at that point.

Murray: But that's what he was talking about?

Jim: Yeah.

Murray: Did he use those terms, colonization?

Jim: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. And he was talking often about other things in other parts of the world and I couldn't keep up with him. Like, I couldn't see the links. I didn't know enough about what was happening in Africa or anywhere else. But he was clearly kind of thinking on those levels.

Murray: Was Africa important in his sort of overall analysis in terms of comparing the north and the colonies and that?

Jim: Okay, this isn't based on memory, but I think that the only way Malcolm could have been approaching the day-by-day things the way he was, was to understand that neo-colonial things involved different, more subtle manipulations of the government and indigenous people and that was a danger for the people in the north that he saw some moves into neo-colonial things. And I was receptive to that because I saw that happening in terms of the student movement being co-opted by the government. And he saw that in terms of the native movement; and the fact that I was a student at that point and the reason we were even talking was because we were trying to make those links, so that students would get off the campus and learn.

Murray: So he saw resurgence of the native movement and at the same time the danger of that being co-opted by government?

Jim: Yep, yeah. And I think he had one foot in organizations that were, in effect, front groups for government or what I would call "buffer groups" like the Indian Eskimo Association, which very quickly to me - I had been in the States and I had a sense of the black movement pushing through the stereotypes that they had of themselves when they were working with whites who were patronizing and paternal, but

caring, you know, and etc. - the do-gooder. And I sensed a lag here, that the native people had not pushed that through. So he was in those groups; he had one foot in those groups. And in a sense he was a token, radical Indian in those groups because he was so isolated and most people couldn't deal intellectually with what he was saying.

Murray: They were taking their fair share of (inaudible).

Jim: They would let him talk and then go on and the level would shift back to a totally lack of analysis or strategy for what they were doing. Now the interesting thing is that if I hadn't met him and if we hadn't had pretty good communication, I doubt whether I could have gone to some of those meetings and been accepted as someone who had a right to be. They were beginning to separate off. There was one separatist session at an Indian Eskimo thing and, if I recall, they were mostly treaty Indians. Malcolm was there and I was there, and there was no problem for me going into that, whereas some of the big-hatted ladies who were running the organization clearly wouldn't have even tried to go in. So it made me aware that in many ways it wasn't really a racial separatism even though people might understand that - that it was more...

Murray: Political.

Jim: Yeah. Yeah, whether people could feel they could begin to clarify their situation with certain people there or

not. And for me, that was important because I never got sucked in to the racist interpretations that started to come into the Neestow Project, where some of the Indian Affairs and other people almost were trying - they were consciously or otherwise encouraging that kind of mentality among the students before they went out on the field. And it had an effect. It made them very self-conscious rather than going right in. I have never not been accepted in an Indian or Metis community, if I'm for real. Meaning if I'm not there to do some nasty, dirty rotten thing, and I haven't done that. So that just learning that from Malcolm was fairly important.

Murray: Was the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians one of the front organizations that Malcolm would have...?

Jim: I don't ever recall him... There was a couple of people who were sort of resource people for the Neestow Project who were Federation staff, if I recall. Jack Emms - was he around the FSI?

Murray: I'm not sure.

Jim: Okay, well he's one name. Well, he and Malcolm were on good speaking terms, but they were clearly coming - it was almost a north south at that point. He was glad that we were able to get some support from the FSI and from some of the Metis Friendship Centres. But I don't think he was interested... I mean, he was interested in forming the Metis Association; he wasn't interested in forming a native association.

Murray: He realized there was no point in trying to form an organization that would embrace both treaty Indians and non-status.

Jim: No, no, for sure. But I mean, he felt that we had to have contact with Indian reserves as well as Metis communities.

Murray: How was he accepted by the treaty Indian leadership? Was he respected by them but not trusted, or how was he seen?

Jim: I can't tell. I really couldn't tell because I wasn't even able to even find out whether Malcolm supporting us publicly - what effect that had on our relationship to some of the northern reserves which clearly had been told that we were something we weren't, by someone, in terms of the responses we got back. The consistency among some of them as if we were (A) from the east, because of the confusion in the press, and (B) somehow politically motivated as part of the partisan stuff going on on reserves in terms of booze and Liberals and everything else. And we probably were thought to be linked to the NDP by some.

Murray: And Malcolm had always been linked to the NDP.

Jim: Yeah. So that was probably going on. But what they didn't understand is that we weren't linked to the NDP at all,

that we were doing something that ultimately would jeopardize their policies as much as the Liberals.

Murray: Right. You mentioned that Malcolm saw the different periods in history as being a resurgence or a sort of recession in terms of native politics. And obviously, he must have seen '64 as being a resurgence, but '64 was also the time when the NDP was defeated by the Liberals and I'm wondering whether his increased political activity, in terms of extra-parliamentary

activity, was a coincidence or whether that sort of shocked him into political activities?

Jim: Well, his instincts were always extra-parliamentary. The reality of his isolation meant that he often had to do the best he could with people like the Centre - you know, enlightened researchers who might have an impact on the policy of the NDP. And, in fact, some of us who did that northern study were drafting NDP policies in relation to the Indian/Metis and Malcolm was encouraging of us doing that. So it was like he would have rather gone the other way but the opportunity to do it... I mean, he, more than any person that I met in the north, encouraged us to really do the Neestow Project. And to not get side-tracked by all the opposition and the in-fighting and stuff that he knew would come down, better than I did. I mean, I walked into it naively and then began to realize that it was such a hot potato. So I would say that his sort of involvement in NDP stuff was a last resort, rather than a first choice.

Murray: Although he'd stuck with the NDP more than Brady had, in fact, over the years in Saskatchewan.

Jim: Well, he worked for them.

Murray: Right. So that was an obvious thing. But I'm interested in getting a feeling for whether that decision in '64 to start organizing the Metis Association was one that came out of a feeling that the time was now right, that it wasn't simply a reaction to the NDP being defeated, and the Liberals now being in office.

Jim: Yeah, I don't know. Because I wouldn't have been involved in those discussions at all. I think Malcolm treated me as a kid who was learning. Not as a confidant.

Murray: Right, so it wasn't an equal exchange. Right.

Jim: Mind you, he did offer to turn over his files at one point when he did have the heart problem and he talked about it quite openly. That was another thing, he was one of the first older people I had met who was leveling about his health problems. Everybody else that I knew around here was covering over.

Murray: Right. That's an interesting aspect. I'm jumping

all over the place but that's something that I wanted to find out, too. What were his feelings about the likelihood of good leadership developing? He obviously had some hopes for Don Nielson at some point and perhaps some others, but was he optimistic about leadership in the native movement? Or did he talk about that?

Jim: Well, he was almost cynical about some of the Indian and Metis who were sort of seen as spokesmen in the Indian Eskimo or government conferences. And he obviously didn't feel that they really were representative at all. But the problem was, his involvement in the Prince Albert Indian/Metis Friendship would have been, in a sense, his only direct links as well. And I mean, he lived on the other side of town from the P.A. Metis. He took me over there once but it became fairly clear - and I've kind of seen the same thing in the States, that a number of the blacks who were active weren't in fact, at that point, from the actual ghettos. So they knew more directly that the situation was a lot worse than their own. I mean, he was a middle class Metis, by and large. He had a pretty good house in P.A. compared to the... He wasn't middle class in any sense but that's a relative thing.

Murray: Did that bother him?

Jim: Well, it sort of - he was caught. I imagine it did. I know that it did bother him that his daughters were being so integrated into white society in P.A. and were kind of dating flippantly and stuff; because I remember one night we were up very late and his, his older daughter came home and she was late...

Murray: Was that Betty?

Jim: I don't remember. She was younger than me but not by that much. He kind of grumbled after she went to bed that they kind of didn't know anything, they weren't very political and everything else. So he was obviously kind of concerned that maybe his own offspring might be losing touch with what he thought was... So I imagine it did.

Murray: That contradiction of them having the education so that they'd have a decent standard of living and at the same time, losing their contact.

Jim: Yeah. I mean, he was marginal, marginal, you know. And maintaining his link was a heavily intellectual thing,

although, I mean, he obviously had direct involvement in the Friendship Centre.

Murray: I've heard some people describe him in La Ronge, when he would have discussions with other people about the NDP, as being a sort of left wing social democrat. Obviously the picture you're painting is quite different. Would you see him as a militant and an activist?

Jim: I wouldn't see him as an activist in the sense that he would have been out there, but he was certainly wanting to encourage that, and whether he would have come with that or not is something I can't say. If there, in fact, had been militant actions that he... I mean, there's no way I can know that. But he clearly was, intellectually, not a left wing social democrat. You know, he was a...

Murray: Libertarian Marxist? Would that be of something...?

Jim: Well, he used a Marxian kind of frame of reference but not the kind of industrial class kind of categories. In some areas he was really trying to be appropriate and in that sense it was him who was analysing it. He studied, from what I could tell, a good deal. He was very proud of his books. He would often mention that he was the only really self-educated Indian who had gotten into political theory; so he prided himself on that.

Murray: He didn't mention Jim Brady?

Jim: No.

Murray: Because Brady was certainly his equal in that sense.

Yeah, I was going to quote a sentence from your letter, but - "One of the first strong influences that kept me from going toward an ideological Marxism was Malcolm's ability to read Marxist analysis into historical description of present conditions." That's the kind of thing you're talking about.

Jim: Yeah. It was his thinking, the way he thought and the way he talked that attracted me, not the way he quoted.

Murray: Right.

Jim: He really had a live mind, and there weren't too many people around that did. Yeah, he was an exception. But I was generally overwhelmed by the north - (A) Finding someone like him who - I mean I had images of underdevelopment and people who didn't know what was happening to them. Fairly shocked by not only him but some other people that I met who had a pretty good glimmering of what was going on to them.

Murray: Did Malcolm have much hope for the Metis Association he was organizing being independent of government and being a different organization? He obviously wanted it to, but did he ever express his expectation to what might happen after he was...?

Jim: I wasn't around those discussions because I lost the job, partly related to this, and left the province at the point where I think a lot of the internal stuff in the Metis Association was happening. But I know that he was encouraging us because we were independently financed. If we had been a CYC Project, he would have been skeptical of us. I was as concerned as he was about us being independent and we got our

funding primarily from real grass roots fund raising in Saskatchewan as a political, not just a financial, strategy to get various groups that had been active in peace things to start thinking of racial and caste sort of things in the north. And I think that's the main reason why he backed us, because we were indigenous in our funding. We did have one, I think, grant from a student council and one grant from a peace foundation that was relatively independent. He would always talk about the need for that and that was clearly why a lot of the groups funded by Indian Affairs... Well, he was suspicious of Indian Affairs actually being involved in our orientation. I wish I could remember whether that was one of the reasons that he wasn't directly involved. Look in this file. You'll find the agendas, and you might find his name on some of them.

Murray: Right. You talked a bit about his involvement with the Neestow Project. Could you describe his contribution to it over that period of time that you knew him, besides the orientation?

Jim: Well, he clearly was supporting a public... had forgotten, but that's clear. And he was encouraging the staff at P.A. to help with the orientation. Pat Uhl would be able to answer this in more detail, but I think he'd put her in touch and worked relatively closely with her when she was

placed there. And I wouldn't be surprised if she had a lot of good discussions that sort of really broadened her view of the problems. So in that sense it was kind of a counsel to Pat who was situated there. And when the Green Lake Project opened up, I'm not sure, because I'd left. That had happened the second year and then I had left; I wasn't directly involved. Whether he encouraged the Metis Association in Green Lake to work with them or whether there were tensions with some of the people because they weren't as explicitly political... They were tending to be kind of civil rights oriented although they were beginning... I don't know. I would guess that there wouldn't have been direct contact with some of the people who went into Green Lake, so I don't know. Because without knowing them myself... Malcolm might have considered them a little patronizing. Linda, Linda Ceas(?) is the person who would know that. Maybe Richard Thompson. I don't know.

Murray: Right. Conway mentioned, when I was talking to him, that Norris was a bit - how to put it - he was surprised by the phenomenon of radical student action. That he hadn't seen this developing. How did he view that, as a phenomenon? Was he able to place that, from his perspective, in some sort of historical context? Was he surprised by these...?

Jim: Well, he talked very positively about what was happening with SNIC in the southern states and knew that that was students who had left campuses and had really, in a sense, offered their skills in organizing as a stage in getting indigenous organizations. Yeah, he would be skeptical of it till he saw it, but I don't think that was a... it certainly wouldn't have been the kind of stereotype that you would get

from sort of vulgar Marxists who would say that it's impossible. And if anything it would be, "Well, you prove it and then I'll believe it." He was often making cutting remarks about people being white middle class and didn't know anything about what was going on. So there would be a tension, for sure, between him and say, some of the sons and daughters of civil service left wingers. And that's why the thing I mentioned about Bill was interesting because he had met some of those people and there had been tension - face-to-face.

Murray: That tension would always be there.

Jim: Sure, sure. I mean, it was a north-south race class. Because I mean if you looked at his house and you looked at (laughs) at some of the houses of the socialists in Regina, and he wouldn't be invited. I never saw him. I'm sure he would be down here on things but you wouldn't see him mixing in those social circles, nor would he have felt comfortable.

Murray: The north-south thing's interesting too because I think he distinguished in the north-south way, the Metis organizations as well. He wanted to prevent, for a time anyway, the amalgamation of the southern Metis Society and his organization. Did he talk to you about that at all?

Jim: No. I would never talk to him, but I'd understand it. I mean, he felt that it was really important for us to get students into the deep north and north of the DNS line.

(END OF SIDE A)

Jim: Yeah. I'm almost visualizing the room in the house. Not quite.

Murray: Brady was convinced that native people would not progress at all until socialism was established in society as a whole. I expect that Norris felt that as well but I'm wondering if he separated his socialist politics from his native politics in any way. But I think Brady did that to some extent. He associated with people in the Communist party in terms of debates and discussions, and in his association with native people was a thing that was...

Jim: No, I think he did that. And whether he would be caught in the same dilemma as a white who would say that there is a need for supportive community programs just because of the desperation and that you have to work at that level... I mean, I got a sense of his relationship to that Friendship Centre was very much that at that stage.

Murray: He had ignored it for quite a while, actually, because it was a colonial institution.

Jim: Right.

Murray: He got involved partly because he got a job there when he was fired by the government.

Jim: Right. Right. So he was caught obviously in the middle of this thing. Clearly it was his own experience that allowed him to see the danger of losing perspective from that kind of marginal position and getting integrated into government funding and that kind of stuff.

Murray: Did he ever talk about Jim Brady at all?

Jim: Yeah, that's where I think I first heard the name, but I can't at all...

Murray: He didn't come into the discussions?

Jim: Brady didn't come into my experience and he wasn't a real person to me so I didn't...

Murray: Pay much attention to the name.

Jim: Didn't remember. No.

Murray: You never met him or anything, eh?

Jim: I think maybe he was at one of the things I was at but I don't think I ever met him or talked to him. Not knowingly. Collier would probably know more about it. Collier used to hang around with Norris.

Murray: Yeah, I've talked to him, too.

Jim: What would be interesting to me is, I guess, how much the images are jibing.

Murray: Oh, great.

Jim: Are they?

Murray: Yeah.

Jim: Because you'll know these aren't - I haven't talked to anybody else.

Murray: Right. No, most of them... It depends on who he was talking to, to some extent.

Jim: You know what I think I should say to you is - it's kind of after the fact but it's a pretty strong feeling that I had at that time - is that I had been very much moved by direct action stuff in the antiwar movement in the States and the civil rights. I'd come back with a really gut level feeling that racial things were very vital and that we, social democrats, had not even mentioned them. And there were no people in the university that I was working with who even knew what the Christ I was talking about, including the kind of left

wing sociologists (who were all southern-either American trained and come back, farm populists). And to be very honest, Malcolm was the only person I met in the whole bloody province, who intellectually validated that. So that it played a very crucial - and I don't know whether he would know this at some, well maybe he would - he had played a very crucial thing in me deciding I was going to put that much energy into the Neestow thing because it was very clear that if there wasn't leadership, there wasn't going to be a Neestow project.

Murray: Right.

Jim: And there was a lot of people pulling it back, trying to kill it, including a lot of university people who didn't relate it positively to the States. So that what I am saying is that from the northern perspective he could relate to the direct action politics in the States. And the southern university left and NDP left people just did not have any sense of that at all.

Murray: Right. He had obviously followed, through periodicals or whatever, the actions of SNIC.

Jim: He had, eh? Yeah, because he was always talking about that.

Murray: So his politics were quite compatible with the idea of direct action? As far as you could see?

Jim: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he saw that as moving, his people moving and changing through those kinds of things, and that that was what was needed. Yeah, but I think that's important because that would be, if I was to say one thing, that would

be that he was the linchpin for me, connecting experiences in the States with the student activism in Saskatchewan and the NDP would be - well, I mean, I didn't get that kind of support among left social democrat people, many of whom just recently have left the NDP. I mean there was just an incredible lag so that his development was way ahead on that. And it's because he was close to reality.

Murray: I think I asked you this before, but again I'm trying to get a feeling for whether you got the feeling that he had always had this analysis but was frustrated in a sense that the political environment didn't allow him to pursue it or whether it was a conclusion he had come to after being...

Jim: Well, I'd be careful of a great man interpretation of consciousness; that if you are in fact isolated, you don't really have the chance to develop that line of thinking. And my own feeling is that he had that perspective latent and that he always wanted to steer the discussion that way. In my case he didn't have to because that's kind of what I was trying to grapple with. But that's the direction he went and in various workshops that I sat in with him, in various contexts of university or Indian Affairs or whatever, he was, in a

grumbling way, saying that people had to organize themselves and stop always trying to get the hands out and get themselves organized. But he probably lost perspective on that through his isolation, the way anyone else would. And therefore did the next best thing in his views, which was to work in the NDP things. So it's not like he had a static correct line, it was like it was...

Murray: It was experiential, his whole...

Jim: It was difficult to probably move on something and confirm it or change it if others weren't moving with you. And that's why he welcomed us with open arms in the Neestow thing, because he sensed, well here is some momentum!

Murray: The first light that he had seen.

Jim: Some momentum, you know. And the fact that it was coming from white students didn't seem to bother him and he

didn't get all hung up at all on - "Keep out of our business!" or, "You have no right to learn about the north." I mean, he wanted people to learn about the north.

Murray: I'm wondering if you could describe a bit what his role was in some of these meetings you've mentioned? You mentioned in the letter also that it was almost as if he felt he was a voice in the wilderness, in a sense. You say he felt that he was somewhat institutionalized?

Jim: I got a very strong feeling when he would talk, that a lot of people were just dismissing him and not listening to him and that obviously had to have a strong effect on him. You could tell, sitting next to him, that he would be having frustrations building up in him and he would just not be saying anything.

Murray: He would hesitate to say anything?

Jim: Well, and he would actually go. Be very silent, and just be sitting, as if, well, something's happening and that there's not much chance to do much about it. But he was there, you see. There weren't other places for him to be. But I remember long periods... and then I also remember him, after some of those things broke up, pouring out his skepticisms and his criticisms.

Murray: And his frustrations.

Jim: After the meeting had broken up. He didn't know how to intervene. He was being kind of subtly dismissed and I almost sensed that - well, I know some of the people kind of feared him. You could feel that.

Murray: He was so powerful. In his personality.

Jim: Well, intellectually he was - he would come out with

things that they just couldn't get a handle on, but they couldn't dismiss. So that they would be caught where they couldn't patronize him, but they wanted to kind of say, "Oh Malcolm!" Right, but they couldn't. But he was getting those two things. He wasn't getting an equal response about what he was raising. He was always raising historical points, if I recall. He was always trying to add a historical kind of dimension to discussions, and everybody else was getting sucked

into - "Well, now that we've decided that there's a problem, what should we do about it? Should we have another meeting?" etc. etc. No, he wasn't in a very envious position and he probably went through a lot of doubt and stuff. In that situation. Because he was alone. There was no doubt he was a loner in those meetings, you know. I could identify with that because I was often feeling the same way in other contexts.

What was really very strange is I never could figure out his relationship with his wife. I don't know if that...

Murray: No, I would like to talk about that.

Jim: His relationship to his family and his wife, I just... I got a feeling that his politics was out of the home and his home was - he had a job and he was paying for a house and he was really a white breadwinner in relation to his family.

Murray: Two lives.

Jim: And that he was also an Indian or a political analyst and trying to be active in the native movement, and his wife never sat in on the discussions when I was there. Whether she did when other people were there, I don't know. She would go to bed earlier, she would stay to the kitchen, she would be cordial. I had suppers there a few times but it was a very traditional.

Murray: Did you get any feeling of hostility from her at all or resentment? That you can remember?

Jim: I got a feeling of...

Murray: She wished you weren't there?

Jim: Not my business. Right. Which suggested to me that Malcolm maybe wasn't integrating his politics with his home situation. And I've seen the male-female contradiction in so many Indian and Metis political homes now.

Murray: It was typical then in his home to some extent?

Jim: Yeah. Well, it was no different than my home.

Murray: Right.

Jim: Except, well maybe a little. The irony though is that we worked really closely with the women on the project who were activists.

Murray: He wasn't chauvinistic towards them?

Jim: No, no he was really a fine kind of counsel to Pat, as I recall it. So that it's again, the same thing. He was caught in a situation but could see the potential of something else and was encouraging it rather than restricting it. So his practice was progressive, in terms of what he was trying to build. He clearly had tension in the home around his political things and I wouldn't be surprised if it was sort of a traditional thing, you know. "You may lose your job," etc. etc. "Why don't you tone down." I mean I don't know, maybe there was pressures, house mortgages.

Murray: Did he ever attribute his failure to influence native people to any particular thing or was it just the time wasn't ripe, or people had to go through a stage, or how did he...?

Jim: This is not something that I would have even thought then, but looking back I would say he was pretty clearly saying that it was because other people didn't understand the problems in a historical way, that they could not act in a way that would change it, and that he did. So it was clearly a kind of a vanguard, you know, false consciousness - the way he understood it. I wouldn't be able to judge - that might have been the case in the north. My guess is that other people were probably latently ready to broaden their perspective by definition of you know their experience and that maybe he was just unable, unsure about how to open that up. But he certainly wasn't criticizing himself.

Murray: Right. That's what I wanted to...

Jim: When he talked. Right. And I must say that a couple of times when I was with him, I felt that he was talking at me a little and that we weren't...

Murray: He wasn't as sharing.

Jim: There were a couple of times when I felt that "Well, I wish I could... That's it for me." I had run out. And these are fairly long things. We had a couple long evenings that went late into the night. So I mean, he wasn't ever really leveling with me, but I was probably not of the age or otherwise to... But maybe he never leveled with anyone about his own feelings that he had shortcomings and didn't know how to resolve the gap.

Murray: He was often criticized by his close friends for coming on too strong with native people. It wasn't so much a problem with white people because, in a sense, it was more

important to native people. But he would berate native people too, for allowing themselves to be patronized, too.

Jim: No, he was aloof. I think that's fair and I think that in that sense, that some of the things that happened in workshops - his inability to really rethink how he would approach it - might have been, you know...

Murray: He didn't adjust his approach to his audience, I think perhaps.

Jim: Yeah. Yeah, but see, I was hearing him for what he was saying. I wasn't evaluating his impact because that wasn't how I was involved in it.

Murray: Right.

Jim: I didn't know one thing from another at that point, as far as Indian politics.

Murray: Can you recall anything that would shed some light on his relationship with the average native person - not native leaders but native people who might come to a meeting who were not experienced politically? Can you recall whether he actually had conversations with people like that?

Jim: Well, the thing about him, the only exception to meeting in his house and in private kinds of - having long discussions... And I was more inclined to get into the community. When I was in Ile-a-la-Crosse, I was crashing with different Metis people and said "no" to the whites who wanted to board and room me. I was kind of, really wanted to get into the thick and thin and I didn't do that when I was with Malcolm. When I left Malcolm's house, then I went down to the pubs in P.A. and I started talking with people. I don't think I ever did that with him.

Murray: He didn't fraternize with people in the bar?

Jim: No, I don't have that impression of him fraternizing. And in that sense, he may have been possibly disgusted and moral about the state of the Indian people in the north.

Murray: The role of alcohol in particular?

Jim: That's right. You can go in and out of that. It's sometimes easy to say when you're on the inside of something, it's supportive and necessary to keep something going. But from the outside it's decadent. And historically it is decadent, given that people could obviously be doing much more positive things with their lives. So I mean, I sensed that separation. The only time that I ever did anything with him... There's some things we did socially that I can't pin point. But I know I was at a wiener roast with his daughters and some others and I don't know whether Malcolm came. I thought the whole family might have come. There were some things that were more integrating into social things but they're not very vivid. The

only exception that I can recall is when he took me down and introduced me to the people at the Centre and was encouraging of us getting to know them on a face-to-face basis.

Murray: You mentioned that at the meetings, these things he would say didn't get much response. Can you recall the various things he said? You mentioned a couple of them in your letter and I expect I know them but - the whole independence from government and the fact that group was divided - were there any other lines that he would take?

Jim: The fact that it was white people who were often at the front cheering the Indian Eskimo and it was Malcolm sitting, and you could sense that Malcolm felt he should be up there, not them.

Murray: He would state that? That's something he would get up and say?

Jim: He wouldn't say that that way but he would articulate the contradictions in the room. No one else would, by saying things. And I think actually he was instrumental in those separate meetings at that one - I think it was '63 Indian Metis meeting. There was an annual meeting in Saskatchewan of the Canadian Indian Metis, I'm sure. And he was at it; I was at it.

Murray: That would have been what, '65?

Jim: No, it was while I was doing my thesis and I finished it in '64, so it's earlier. But it would be those kinds of things that would be, in a sense, a challenge to the legitimacy of the meeting to really make decisions and then the point about the need for independence. And because those two things had to be resolved before you could actually talk about what you would be doing, he would just be kind of flipping in skeptical comments about the kinds of things we really should be doing. And I can't say that I have any kind of clear image of what he really saw that maybe an independent Metis movement to be doing. I really don't. Programmatically.

Murray: It might have been vague in his mind then, of what it would really do?

Jim: Yeah, yeah. It was more that he was negating what was going on and that he was able to kind of affirm an alternative. And for some that would be seen as obstructing. For me it made total sense, because I didn't see these things as doing anything.

Murray: Self-determination was the thing that perhaps was in his mind in terms of an independent organization.

Jim: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: And that that organization, if it was...

Jim: I mean, I have no idea what he thought about things like land claims.

Murray: He never talked about them?

Jim: Or tax base in the north or any of the things that are programmatically important. I have no idea. So it's maybe that I couldn't hook into that concrete kind of program stuff at that point or that he wasn't talking about it. I mean, I think our discussions were far more - not programmatic but kind of analysis.

Murray: So he didn't see programs as such then as being relevant?

Jim: I wouldn't be surprised if he wrote about stuff like that. I wouldn't be surprised if he would have, in fact, spent a lot of time at home criticizing stuff. I don't know whether he wrote that much but he seemed to have a fair amount of stuff around. Maybe it was stuff he collected and read and never put his hesitations down or anything on it. That's what I don't know.

Murray: Did he ever talk about the whole history of the CCF reform programs in terms of his analysis? Or he accepted more or less the Centre for Community Studies analysis as being the correct one? Because he was involved in it from the start. I mean, he attempted to put pressure on the CCF to improve its attitudes and that kind of thing in the north.

Jim: Yeah. Yeah, he was supportive of that. Whether he thought that was actually going to be a basis for change in policy - I mean, that's that question you keep asking and I don't know the answer to that. It might have been for him much like Chile was for lots of people who still had some kind of hope that there would be some enlightenment. And then Thatcher came in and that, as an option, was pretty much cut off very quickly.

Murray: He obviously saw the division between Metis and treaty Indian as being a fairly important thing. Did he ever talk to you about his understanding of the roots of that kind of dispute?

Jim: No. Well, I was around when those kinds of things were being discussed, but I'm just barely myself getting on top of that. So, I mean, I wasn't in a position. But I can't say that that would have been one of the things that I'd learned from him. I probably learned more about that by talking to those people like Jack Emms who were in and around the early kind of FSI stuff, and very much into the kind of cultural identity and positive cultural identity. And never was Malcolm talking about positive cultural identity. He was talking about economic conditions and the need for, you know, doing something directly about that; and not talking in terms of the Metis needing some kind of a cultural identity, but the needing of political organization. Ironically, that's what he emphasized.

They talk cultural identity but they basically build political organization. And they're skeptical of other provinces where the Indian movements are going cultural identity, you know. Whether Malcolm has any part in that, I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised, but I don't know the context.

Murray: He knew almost all the Indian leaders in the provinces.

Jim: I mean, I would expect that Malcolm would probably be one of the people, if you tracked that down, that would be presenting that perspective credibly. That the crucial thing was, that a lot of the problems of people would start to be resolved once they were politicized. And I mean, he's right if you look at alcoholism among the Indians. Those who have political organizations begin to resolve their internal alcohol problems. So that would be, to me, really significant if you could track that back. It would be significant in terms as if some of the FSI people not being so haughty and so suspicious of the Metis. You know, being manipulated by government. I mean, they might have a right to be at this point, but if the historical links could be established, then some of the Metis would maybe be in a stronger position to see a more positive... I'm trying to remember whether he used the word native. I don't think he ever did.

Murray: It was Metis or Indian?

Jim: Yeah. And that's fairly symbolic. I mean, I found myself even using it a little bit when I came back here. But I'm very quickly not, because it clearly is a government sociologist's term. It's not a reality, politically or socially.

Murray: Reality, right.

Jim: In that sense, Malcolm's warnings about government co-optation of the Metis, whether Malcolm foresaw that that could be a strategy of the federal government to undermine the Indian land claims, and the kind of cohesion politically of the Indian movement, I don't know. If you could track that down then you'd really be able to answer how concrete his historical analysis was.

Murray: It's only two years after he died that that started to happen?

Jim: That's right, that's right. That to me would be the most interesting thing to try and link in conversations. And the only people I can think of are Louis Xhignesse and Jack Emms. Not because they necessarily understood the issues...

Murray: They might remember the conversations?

Jim: They might remember the conversations and the people. Louis was around then and Bindra was around. I think Bindra

was around, yeah. You'd know their names - Xhignesse and Aaron Bindra?

Murray: I don't think so. But that's certainly, I'll...

Jim: Well, Xhignesse was, was one of the people who came here and saw the need for cross cultural audio/visual and communication things and he's done some of that around the university. And Bindra was a sociologist who had taught in black area in the States, Detroit, and came up here and had a very much working class approach to race. And was shitting not only the left who didn't acknowledge race at all, but very dogmatic in some ways about the need for the Indian to be integrated into the working class before they would be an effective movement. I think he was wrong, historically, on that. Because that happens in one situation doesn't mean that people wait to struggle in another point on that. I mean, then you would abolish the antiimperialist struggles in Africa. I mean, that's silly.

Murray: Right. Yeah, I think Brady tended to think that.

Jim: Yeah, he didn't. Well, see, that's where Malcolm - Malcolm didn't think that way and I think that, in that sense, you might be able to trace much more, you might be able to confirm that he was really tormented because he really could see some of the way the government strategies were unfolding. Have you seen any of the documents of the federal government on this manipulation of semantics?

Murray: No.

Jim: I'll show them to you.

Murray: Yeah, that would be useful.

Jim: Because, I mean, they are explicitly playing with the semantics of Metis, Indian, native and status. And that's been done all over Africa. I mean, good Christ it's done in Israel. It's done everywhere where there's a colonial relation between indigenous and foreigners. And they, I'm sure, have learned a good deal from other administrative officials all across the world.

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