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ROBERT MAHOOD

Robbie Mahood is a medical doctor who has been active in the peace movement for many years and who worked in the Neestow Student Partnership Project in 1965 while he was a student at the University of Saskatchewan.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Neestow Student Partnership Project: its origins, development and the controversy surrounding it.
- Malcolm Norris and his role in the project.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Robbie Mahood was a student involved in the Neestow Project in the middle sixties. This project involved the sending of community development workers into native communities and reserves all across Saskatchewan. Some of these projects were in northern Saskatchewan. Malcolm Norris was involved as a native advisor to the project.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: Maybe we could start just by having you describe what

the Neestow Project was and how you got involved and what the aims of the thing was. I'm not familiar with it at all.

Robbie: Okay. Well, the Neestow Project was conceived originally as an attempt to transplant some of the methods and experiences of community organizing in black areas in the southern United States into Canada with respect to native people. That is, it was fundamentally inspired by the civil rights movement in the States. And a number of the people who were instrumental in starting the Neestow Project had, in fact, been to the States and had some direct contact with the civil rights movement there and with white student involvement with black people in the States. As best as I can recollect, the Neestow Project sort of grew out of a series of discussions in the winter of 1964/65 at the campus in Saskatoon. In particular, there was a conference on the native question in Canada which my memory is fairly hazy on but it was sometime in the winter of 1964/65. My best guess would be sometime after December and probably before February or maybe in February. One person in particular was fairly key in initiating the project and that was Jim Harding who at that time was teaching

in Regina, had been an NDP candidate in the by-election in 1964 and was a fairly key figure in both the NDP and the emerging sort of student left which was barely emergent at that time.

(Phone rings - break in tape)

Murray: You were talking about Harding.

Robbie: Yeah right. There were also a number of people involved in it from the Saskatoon end of things. Now, I think at Christmas of 1964/65, the Student Union for Peace Action was formed which grew out of the Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which was essentially the university wing of the 'Ban the Bomb' movement. And as a consequence of this, when the Neestow Project was being organized, a number of people from outside of Saskatchewan were invited to attend an organizing conference in the spring of 1965. This would be about April/May, 1965.

Murray: This was the second meeting? This was after the meeting before?

Robbie: Yeah, this was a meeting internal to the project. This was after the project was launched. Essentially the organizers of the project advertised that there was going to be a project and that the project was interested in recruiting people to live and work on reserves in the province of Saskatchewan, across the province. The basic sort of motivation was that there was a role to be played for students in terms of, first of all, learning what the situation was for native people, and secondly, of assisting in whatever way they

could with native peoples, the realization of certain demands or the, you know, whatever was possible. In fact, I mean, the

rationale was the community-organizing rationale although it was put in terms of the mutual learning experience and the kind of cross-cultural kind of motivation was there from the beginning. In fact, in the letter that was sent out to various band councils across the province I would say that the cross-cultural kind of emphasis was probably primary. I think the fact that the left involvement in it was somewhat less prominent was to cause us problems later on because, in fact, we underwent a certain amount of Red-baiting which was not effective in destroying the project but certainly undercut the presence that we had.

Murray: Was the emphasis on the cross-cultural thing in this letter, for example, was that at the time an accurate reflection of what was felt about the group or were you down-playing the involvement of left wing people, do you think at all?

Robbie: Well, I think it would be necessary to talk to people like Jim Harding and possibly John Conway, some of the people who were more instrumental in organizing it, about that. I don't think that people were entirely free from a fairly liberal kind of position on native people in general. And I'm not entirely sure that there isn't some substance in that anyway, because certainly there was a question of cultural differences there, which I wouldn't want to discount. But the prevailing framework was very much a sort of liberal one, I suppose, and to the extent that the people involved were also

fairly political people and albeit they were developing their politics and their politics were evolving, nevertheless...

Murray: But it reflected a civil rights sort of thing?

Robbie: I think that would be fair to say, yeah. Probably the best thing you could read on that would be a paper by Jim Harding called "The Powerless Minority" which he wrote, I think, prior to the Neestow Project which reflects a sort of basically, a liberal sociological position, fairly radical position, on native people. Not what I would describe as a Marxist position. Now at the conference that was held in the winter on the campus that I referred to earlier, one of the people who spoke there was Malcolm Norris. And he was subsequently brought in as one of a series of native kind of advisers to the project which he agreed to do subsequently and, in fact, served in that capacity to the extent that he was able to. He wasn't entirely well at that point. I think he'd probably already had one heart attack at least and he was under certain...

Murray: He was about to have his stroke probably too. I think he had a stroke in 1966 or something.

Robbie: Yeah. He was clearly not in completely good health. Let's see, some of the other people who were involved were brought in and involved themselves in the capacity of advising to the Neestow Project were Don Nielson who was a teacher at

the time in Prince Albert, a younger Metis activist, and to some extent a protege, I suppose, of Malcolm Norris. Also a Metis fellow from Winnipeg whose name escapes me (his first

name was Jean), who was a specialist in group relations in small group discussions, group dynamics, I suppose you would say. And given Harding's predisposition towards - his training as a psychologist - this was part of the orientation for the Neestow Project (Inaudible).

Murray: It was sort of training...?

Robbie: Yeah, it was training in group dynamics and it was a fairly important part of the orientation that spring. But basically what happened is that about a dozen reserves and/or Metis communities, no, sorry, check that. They were all reserves, in fact, at that point. About a dozen wrote back in response to a letter that was sent out to the band councils, saying yes, they would be prepared to accept a student to live on a reserve for the summer. On the basis that was stipulated. And so people were recruited to the project as prospective student volunteers and an organizational apparatus was established in the spring together with this orientation conference. So that was the basic outline of the project.

Murray: Right. Just one small thing, do you recall who would have recruited Norris in the first place? Do you have any idea who would have contacted him first or where his name would have come up in the first place?

Robbie: Well, I think that Conway was probably instrumental in that because he had worked in Prince Albert, I think, the summer of 1964, at the penitentiary. I think that he was also fairly instrumental in organizing the conference that winter,

on the campus. It's possible also that Ken Collier was as well. But I'm not sure where... I don't think anybody knew Malcolm very well before that point but it was rumored that he would be a good person to speak at a conference.

Murray: Right. 1964 was the same year that the Metis Association was organized in the north. Were you aware of that going on at the same time?

Robbie: Yeah, I guess. I don't personally remember it, quite frankly, but I'm sure that would have had something to do with Malcolm's... and I don't know whether he was president but I seem to recollect that he held some official position in the Metis Society by the time I became more familiar with this, with him.

Murray: Could you describe what happened after that point? People were sent into the communities. You were one of the people that went.

Robbie: Yeah, that's right.

Murray: Could you describe your experience? And then, was it a typical experience do you think?

Robbie: I'm not sure if any one was typical but I went to Mistawasis Reserve which is west of Shellbrook, north of Blaine Lake, between Prince Albert and North Battleford. I think probably my summer was a little more uneventful than some people's, but on the whole I get the impression that it was in fact mostly a learning experience. In the initial first summer

there was very little in the way of community organizing per se. Which is understandable, I mean it's...

Murray: You were more getting a feel for the place.

Robbie: Yeah. In fact there is quite a certain amount of culture shock that you undergo as a white middle class student and fairly young at that, going into a totally strange situation. And basically my experience is one of developing a number of friendships with people on the reserve. And it wasn't a terribly political experience although I did come to sort of learn a fair amount about relations between the reserve and Indian Affairs and a certain amount of history of the reserve, etcetera.

Murray: Did a lot of talking basically to people on the reserve.

Robbie: Right. I lived initially in an abandoned schoolhouse on the middle of the reserve. Then subsequently I tented outside of a family's house, with their agreement, of course, for I guess the latter part of the summer. There were a couple of people on southern reserves. As I recall, Little Black Bear I think was the name of it and I think Cowessess as well. And there was one person in Buffalo Narrows, no, two people in Buffalo Narrows and one person in Patuanak which is a Chipewyan reserve community in the north.

Murray: Right. Do you recall who were the people in those...?

Robbie: Yeah. Richard Thompson and Mike Acker were in Buffalo Narrows, both from Toronto. Brian Rands was in Patuanak from

Regina. Pat Uhl was another girl who had had considerable experience in the civil rights movement in the States and had subsequently moved to Canada and been active there in the peace movement, was in Prince Albert. And she would have gotten to know Malcolm fairly well I think. And then, gee, I'm trying to remember where else there were people. I guess that was about it.

Murray: As far as the north was concerned then, it was Patuanak and Buffalo as far as the line north of P.A?

Robbie: Yeah, this was in the initial summer. At the end of that summer - and I'm trying to remember how this came about, but I was peripherally involved in it, I think it came about

through Pat Uhl's contacts in Prince Albert - but we found out about a situation in Green Lake which involved a land dispute. A dispute over land between the provincial government - I think it was a leasing problem of some kind and the details really escape me - but between the provincial government, which at that time would have been the Department of Municipal Affairs because there was no local self-government in the north in general.

Murray: It was the Liberal government as well was it?

Robbie: Yes, this would have been the Liberal government. Yeah, it would have been. I'm not sure of that. The history of relations between the government and the community wasn't all that much better with the CCF. I don't think there was much difference at all as far as they were concerned.

Murray: It was basically bureaucratic?

Robbie: It was basically the state, in that sense, versus a woman whose name was Virginia Moran who ran a fish-filleting service in the community and also I think a small general store or cafe if I'm not mistaken. But anyway, she was involved in the dispute with the government over some question of leasing the land where she was located, I think. They wanted her to move and she had an understanding that she had leased it for quite a length of time. She felt she had a right to be there. The course of our involvement is somewhat hazy in my memory but, at any rate, we became involved in this situation and agreed to sort of help her draft letters and protest and I think a petition and a few other things if I'm not mistaken. And in fact, what happened is that Green Lake appeared to be a much more...

Murray: Fertile ground?

Robbie: Fertile ground for community organizing in the sense that it had a certain coherence and integrity as a community which was not really the case in most reserves as far as I could tell. And it's much more characteristic of certain Metis communities in the northern part of the province in that respect. And that certain history of struggle, I think, as well. Perhaps not all that explosive but certainly the people remembered having fought certain battles in the past. And there was a certain consciousness there, at least a residue of consciousness, about these struggles and about the position of the Metis people and about the injustices and....

Murray: In politics in general as well.

Robbie: Yeah, about the arbitrariness of the government and etcetera, etcetera. And I think to some extent, it certainly seemed to be people that, in a sense, were easier to relate to as far as we were concerned as white, middle class students, than people on the reserves. Quite frankly I think there was a certain feeling of much more of a response there generated a

certain cord of communication or whatever.

Murray: Would that have been partly because the reserves may have been more self-enclosed than a place like Green Lake?

Robbie: Yeah. Well I think we've found always that there was a certain barrier to communication. I think it had, perhaps, something to do with the economic... there was a bit more economic activity in Green Lake which made the community a bit more self-sufficient. I don't want to overemphasize that. Now, I'm just judging from my experience on Mistawasis, but on Mistawasis there was a fair amount of atomization of the people there. They were split into various factions on the reserve and different family and family ties had a real impact and divided people in a number of ways. Indian Affairs was a fairly overwhelming sort of bureaucracy that just seemed to keep the reserve in a sort of atomized, divided sort of situation, you know, in a hundred and one different ways. Nothing that you could, sort of, point to directly but the whole impact of several decades of this situation had left a definite legacy, I suppose, on the reserve. So I certainly noticed a difference between Green Lake and the reserve that I was on. And so, this all happened at the very end of the summer.

Murray: Of 1965?

Robbie: Of 1965. And subsequent to that the Neestow Project did in fact continue for another winter and in Green Lake with three or four people there.

Murray: Do you recall the names of the people who were in Green Lake?

Robbie: Yeah, Richard Thompson, who was originally in the Neestow Project in the first summer, and two people who hadn't been involved up to that point. Rob Wood and Linda Ceece. Rob Wood was from Ontario, I think, and Linda Ceece was from the States and had been involved in SNIC, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, and then subsequently moved to Canada.

Murray: Were you in Green Lake over the winter as well?

Robbie: No, I wasn't. I went back to school and, in fact, my involvement with the project sort of terminated other than I was quite happy to sort of participate in the odd discussion; but I wasn't really involved after that point. The following summer, if I'm not mistaken, a number of people went to reserves including Sally Mahood and Linda Ghan on Cowesses Reserve and I think a couple of other people whose names escape me who went to another reserve (I think around Prince Albert but I'm not sure). So it did continue for another summer and I think maybe even part into... No, I'm not sure of this, but at a certain point the project essentially folded when the people in Green Lake left the community under... well, I think that they in fact were Red-baited to a certain extent and there was

a certain hostility to them. Now, I don't think it was just

Red-baiting. There might have been all kinds of reasons for it, but at any rate, it didn't seem to work well for them.

Murray: They were probably no longer effective, was that why they left?

Robbie: Yeah. I'm not sure how effective they were at any point and I'm not really the person to discuss that with you. It would be better to talk to somebody who was more directly involved. But, in a sense, the whole idea of using white, middle class students to... I don't want to overemphasize middle class but in cultural terms it certainly meant something.

Murray: Certain perspectives were involved.

Robbie: Yeah, the whole concept of using white students to organize native people, even in an assistive capacity, was on pretty shaky ground. And it's really not... which I think a lot of us realized. I certainly realized it by, you know, maybe the first year after the project started, to go out and consolidate those impressions. Now there is one other thing that I should probably stress and that is that at the end of the summer of 1965 the Neestow Project participated in a nationwide conference to assess a number of community-organizing experiences which had gone all across the country, mostly under the auspices of the newly formed Student Union for Peace Action, SUPA, the sort of Canadian variant of STS in the States, the Canadian left. And this included a community-organizing project in Kingston; one in the black community in Truro, Nova Scotia (that wasn't quite as important); a community-organizing experience in a community

in Quebec (I can't remember the name of it) where there was a Bomarc base, an attempt, in fact, to get the community to agree to shutting down the Bomarc base; a project in the Kootenays in B.C. with Doukhobor people; and the Neestow Project. So there were a whole series of projects which...

Murray: These developed independently but you had accomplished a discussion.

Robbie: Yeah. The Neestow Project wasn't formerly under SUPA's auspices but, in fact, we participated in it.

Murray: The others were, were they?

Robbie: The others tended to be. I'm not sure if they all were but they tended to be more directly related to SUPA and more directly under the organizational auspices of SUPA. And the conference was held in Saint Calixte, Quebec, which is about forty miles north of Montreal in the Laurentians - kind of a holiday, a small holiday centre - and was sponsored by SUPA. And it was, I suppose, a fairly typical kind of coming

together of this newly emergent student movement, I guess. And in that sense, it was fairly exciting and involving a very interesting kind of experience but also very heterogeneous and politically not very coherent. But you know, you get a group of maybe a hundred young people sort of together for the first time. I think it was probably one of the first manifestations of any sort of cross-country student radicalization of any kind. And for that reason it sort of had a certain historic input.

Murray: Were there papers presented at that conference at all?

Robbie: Yes, there were. There were summaries, I think, of each of the projects. I don't have a copy of them but I think that it might be possible to try to locate that material. There was fairly lengthy documentation in my recollection and including the Neestow Project which included descriptions of all of our experiences and a number of sort of overviews. And I think that probably Jim Harding took responsibility for a good deal of the writing, being a fairly prolific writer. In fact, he worked very hard on the project, initially. Not so much during the summer but at the end. He played a fairly key role organizationally getting the thing not just off the ground but also carrying it through. His involvement dropped off after the first summer but in the first summer he played a very key role. He was in the leadership of SUPA, like, literally.

Murray: When was this meeting conference on these community development programs?

Robbie: It would have been in the very latter part of August and the very first few days of September in 1965.

Murray: In 1965?

Robbie: Yeah.

Murray: So the project continued over the winter over into the summer?

Robbie: That's right, into the next summer and possibly into the next winter but I'm not really sure of that. I think probably it was not in existence past that point. It tapered off is my impression. I'm not clear where one could say the project actually ended. New people are involved and a number of people I don't really know and am not that familiar with.

Murray: Do you recall your impressions of the... you described it a bit in Green Lake... but about the political consciousness of the people in Green Lake. Is it possible for you to go into any more detail on that about how people responded to political ideas or the idea of organizing around certain issues? Were there a lot of people, for example, that would respond to that in Green Lake?

Robbie: Well, I think people were much more open to it and they clearly saw a certain role for people such as us and saw that we...

Murray: There wasn't a hostility towards white people from the south?

Robbie: Not really, no. And there wasn't as much sort of reticence and, well, just sort of shyness and reserve that you find in native people in general, I think, when they're confronted with white people who are more highly educated, more articulate, etcetera. There wasn't as much of that in Green Lake. People were more vocal and more articulate, I think.

Murray: And willing to talk about things?

Robbie: Willing to talk, yeah. And willing to enlist you in whatever it was that they were concerned about. Politically, and it's fairly hard to define, I mentioned that they certainly had a consciousness of themselves as Metis people. I can remember Virginia Moran's husband showing me a tea cup, a brass tea cup that belonged to Louis Riel and which had been passed on to him through his family from Batoche, from the final defeat of the Metis people. Well, I mean, obviously that had a fair amount of significance to him.

Murray: So there was a certain pride of being Metis in Green Lake?

Robbie: Yeah. And you know, a certain continuity with the first Metis settlements in Saskatchewan. And the French. French was still spoken in Green Lake by older people at that point, as well as Cree. I think it was probably mostly Cree but certainly a good chunk of the community would have spoken some French. Now, I'm not sure how people saw themselves politically there. I think there was a certain amount of political naivete in the sense that I don't think they counted themselves as Liberals or NDP for instance. I think that it probably was a base for a sort of Red-baiting campaign against student, sort of, outside agitators. But on the other hand, part of that is certainly due to maybe community, local resentment against outsiders. Because we were, in fact, outsiders. And especially after we moved in and lived in the community or several of us did. And I think certainly the church's influence is fairly evident.

Murray: They took an active role you think then? Or at least behind the scenes?

Robbie: I expect so, yeah. I think you should really talk to somebody who actually was there.

Murray: You weren't there for that long at Green Lake?

Robbie: No, I was only there for a few days, in fact, towards the end of the summer in August of 1965 which is when a number

of us went up there. Pat Uhl, myself, and Richard Thompson and, as I recall, a photographer who was taking photographs of the project, a guy named Tommy Wakiana. And we discussed the possibilities of moving someone in but didn't actually sort of make a decision. It wasn't in our power. But we had the impression that it would be a good place for people to try and work.

Murray: Do you recall some of the other native people involved in Green Lake?

Robbie: Well, there certainly were some Bishops but I'm not sure if Rod Bishop was involved. I'm not sure if he lived there at the time but the Bishops were fairly key in the community. An elder Bishop at any rate. The name Fiddler comes back to me. I'm not sure what... Also I think Lalibertes, there were some Lalibertes there. I should have done a much better job of taking down names. I was back once to Green Lake, I think, in the subsequent winter but not any more often than that. And as far as I know, none of the people who actually lived there have been back since. There has been

no real continuity or contact with people there. But that's my recollection of the situation in Green Lake.

Murray: What were your impressions of Malcolm Norris? Could you describe how you saw him at that point and what his role was? And another thing I was going to ask was if he ever came to Green Lake at all? Or was he involved in Green Lake when you were there?

Robbie: Okay, well the first time I ever remember seeing him was at the conference in 1964/65 on the campus and he gave a speech there. He was a very good speaker....

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Robbie: ...he was in a sense, he was to some extent isolated in his own movement. I think part of that might have been... I think that he also grew up in Alberta and then moved to Saskatchewan. So I seem to recollect that he was somewhat reluctant amongst other reasons to go to Green Lake because of this, that he didn't want to become involved because he thought it might...

Murray: Might harm things?

Robbie: Might harm things, right. There was some reluctance on his part.

(break in tape)

Robbie: But that's about the extent of my recollection of, my first impressions of him.

Murray: Right. In this one speech here you've been talking about, was it clear from that speech at any point that he was a socialist? I mean, obviously he was, but did he have any sort of coherent analysis that you could call socialist?

Robbie: Well, I'm not sure of that. I think to the extent that he played up the collective aspects of traditional native culture and the conception of owning property in common and not appropriating resources on a private sort of basis, yeah. I mean I would say that, in general, he had a general sort of anti-capitalist, albeit maybe in fairly populist sort of terms, that he would certainly have presented that sort of position throughout his speech and throughout his...

Murray: It wasn't an explicit thing but it was clear from what he was saying.

Robbie: No, no, it wasn't explicit in that sense but it certainly wasn't untypical of people in the left wing of the CCF. I mean, I think he shared most of that sort of rhetoric of left social democratic sort of framework certainly, you know. And I think that's probably how one would have to describe his politics. But he was basically clearly a militant and more of an agitator rather than a propagandist in the sense that he was presenting a whole coherent sort of framework and analysis.

Murray: Right. He was a sort of a fiery individual which would encourage people to...

Robbie: Right. I think that would be a more accurate reflection of the kind of a speaker he was.

Murray: Do you remember what Don Nielson's role was in the thing?

Robbie: Well, okay, I don't have too many happy recollections of his role. I think that his involvement in the Neestow Project was quite sincere. I think to some extent it was probably at Malcolm's urging but I think he also had had contact with John Conway previous to this at any rate, although it may have been subsequent actually. At any rate, at a certain point in the Neestow Project, we came under attack because there was a certain amount of publicity surrounding this project. We issued press releases; Harding was very efficient in that respect.

Murray: Unfortunately, perhaps.

Robbie: Well, no. I think it was a necessary thing to do and I don't think there was any point in hiding it but we issued press releases in the Star Phoenix and possibly the Leader-Post, I'm not sure. But anyway, it became a public sort of thing. Not a big issue but people obviously knew about it and it was of minor public interest. One of the resource people

that we brought in to give a presentation was a guy named Zenon Pohorecky who was then, I think, maybe a one-man anthropology department at Saskatoon. Anyway, he was one of the first of the anthropology faculty at Saskatoon. And he, at some point

in the proceedings - this is around in the spring of 1965 while the Neestow Project was being organized and sort of when they were having their orientation sessions - he issued a public statement attacking the Neestow Project and particularly Harding's involvement, as I recall, attacking Harding personally as a left wing agitator and basically sort of a Red-baiting sort of attack. And also, at some point, and I'm not too clear on the chronology here, Nielson essentially collaborated with Pohorecky and became involved in one of Pohorecky's press releases as sort of substantiating Pohorecky's claim, in some sense, saying that we were illegitimate and that we didn't have the authorization of the native people and so on and so forth. I think Nielson allowed himself to be used by Pohorecky. I don't know whether he has any regrets about it but in a, basically, a political maneuver against the Neestow Project.

Murray: When would this have been, in the summer of 1966?

Robbie: No, this is right at the beginning, in the spring of 1965, May/June of 1965. May, probably.

Murray: Right.

Robbie: And one of the people who was involved as a prospective sort of student volunteer in the project also quit and associated his name with Pohorecky's attacks. So Pohorecky was trying to almost seem to maybe organize a separate kind of project or kind of split the Neestow Project. But in fact, I mean, his maneuver failed. I think partly because he is a fairly confused and rather erratic individual himself. Not terribly principal because he was confused. He wouldn't even

express any outright hostility in the negotiations that were conducted. I remember going over to see him once and accusing him of Red-baiting and manipulating and it was sort of like water off a duck's back. And he was all smiles and deny everything. Very weird guy. So, I sort of have harbored some resentment against Don Nielson because of the role he played at the time. Now, he also contributed the name to the project.

Murray: Neestow means cousin?

Robbie: Neestow means brother-in-law. Now, I don't know, I don't speak Cree and I know practically no Cree, in fact. But there is also some sense of it being used as a term of insult. Now, I'm not sure if it's equivalent to either coupled or being coupled, I don't know. But it seems to me it has some sort of slightly off-color implication as well.

Murray: It can be used in both ways. I've seen Norris write a letter 'Dear Neestow' to a friend and yet use it also in a...

Robbie: Yeah, and I'm not sure. It seems to me it has some sexual connotations in the sense I described it. I'm not too clear. I don't know when this became clear to me but I think during the course of the summer it certainly became clear. Now I think, as I recall, that Don Nielson contributed that suggestion as the name for the project. It wasn't called the Neestow Project initially. It was called something else. Eventually it was called Student Neestow Partnership Project, SNPP, and Neestow was the word that was sort of the token Cree word which was, I think, contributed at Don Nielson's suggestion. But I've always thought of him playing a joke on

us at our expense, which perhaps we deserved for being such pious Liberals as to name the project that way. But I was always a little bit ambivalent. I could never quite tell what reaction it was having on the native people that I ran into.

Murray: But Norris continued did he? To advise the project?

Robbie: Yeah, my impression is that he continued to give us support to the best of his ability. I think that he developed a friendship with Pat Uhl and that she was in Prince Albert over the summer and was a very capable, extremely articulate and very good person. And that he continued to have contact with her over the summer and give qualified support to whatever we were doing. But increasingly, I think, he was very insistent that his role was over, that he was retired, basically. That he was a sick man, he was going to die and that basically he was passing the ball on to someone else, you know, that he couldn't continue to play any sort of active role. And in a sense, his whole role in this thing was something like a reactivation, I think, after he had been sick and had already decided that he was finished, his role as an activist was finished. So it was kind of like a last kind of...

Murray: Last stand or...?

Robbie: Yeah, a little bit, you know. He was willing to kind of give a boost to this conception, to this project, without himself taking major responsibility for it which he wasn't in a position to do.

Murray: Do you recall ever running across Jim Brady during any of that time?

Robbie: No, I'm quite sure that I never ran into him but it's possible that other people on the project did. I remember hearing about him, but I can't separate that from hearing about his death. And I'm not sure even when that was.

Murray: That would have been a year after the project ended. It was the spring of 1967.

Robbie: The spring of 1967, it was that late. You see, my impression is that it would have been earlier but I guess... when did Malcolm die?

Murray: In the end of 1967, December.

Robbie: I have the feeling that I remember hearing about Malcolm's concern about the circumstances of Jim Brady's death. But beyond that, that's about it and I don't...

Murray: You don't recall any details of his concern? I mean, was there suspicion at the time?

Robbie: Yes, I think that was the context in which it occurred. I don't know who I heard that from. It could have been... I'm not really sure where I would have heard that from but it was certainly on the grapevine, sort of, that Malcolm was concerned about the death of a good friend of his who had been up north for a number of years.

Murray: So you don't remember hearing anything explicit about Brady's political involvement at all?

Robbie: No, well....

Murray: It wasn't in that context that you heard?

Robbie: Well, sort of in the context of him and Malcolm being old buddies and maybe political comrades in previous struggles, presumably in Alberta or maybe in Saskatchewan as well. I'm not sure and I never really got a clear picture of it so I really can't illuminate very much.

Murray: Is there anything else that you can recall that I haven't asked you about that would be useful about the Neestow Project or about Norris?

Robbie: No, I think that covers it pretty well. I think that you should try to dig up some of the documentation on the Neestow Project and maybe even to go back through the Sheaf or Star Phoenix around the winter, including the winter of 1964/65. Try to find if there was any coverage of this conference, and then through the spring and summer maybe.

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

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