Mr. MacDonald moved from Nova Scotia to Saskatchewan in the mid-1940s to help organize the commercial fishing industry. He worked for the CCF government in various administrative positions during the next decade. He has also worked in Spain and Australia for the United Nations.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Growth of awareness of the north.
- CCF programs to improve conditions in the north.
- Malcolm Norris and James Brady. His personal and professional contacts with them.
- Development of single government agency in the north.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

A.H. "Gus" MacDonald was brought from the Maritimes in 1946 to aid the CCF government in its efforts to organize the commercial fishing industry in Saskatchewan. He became Director of Fisheries and did most of his work in northern Saskatchewan. He became Director of Northern Affairs in the mid-fifties. He talks about the efforts of the government to
implement changes in the north, the meetings held with native people, the problems of lack of staff and money, the racist attitude among many civil servants, the feeling that things had to be done for native people. Talks about Norris and Brady, the things that concerned them, the kind of men they were, what their jobs were and the efforts to get rid of them. The complete lack of facilities in the north, the building from scratch of government programs and the difficulty in selling same to the native people. In general, he gives an impression of government activity as it grew from 1946 to early sixties.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I am talking to Gus MacDonald of Saskatoon. Mr. MacDonald, you worked in the Department of Natural Resources for the first CCF government. Could you describe how long you worked for the government and what your positions were?

Gus: Well, I came here from Nova Scotia in 1945 to help the government with their marketing organization. The government had decided to go ahead with a fish marketing organization and they were having some difficulties with this organization and asked me if I would leave United Maritime Fishermen, with whom I worked at the time in Halifax, Nova Scotia, which was a big cooperative marketing organization, to come and assist them. So, for the first two years, I was trying to sort out with others, the marketing of fish in Saskatchewan. Later, I became the Director of Fisheries in 1947 and in 1957, I was appointed Director of Northern Affairs which was, included all the resources of the north and an area of approximately 110,000 square miles beginning somewhere around Montreal Lake, north of Montreal Lake.

Murray: When you were in the fisheries, was that pretty much restricted to the northern half of the province in any case?

Gus: No, the fisheries included all of the province and before I came into the position, it was quite limited in some ways. There was not too much fishing in the north. There was some but the government felt that the resource had considerable potential which wasn't being used. But it also included sport fishing, which was very important in the southern areas, and so it took me to all parts of the province.

Murray: So you didn't spend all your time in the north in the first years you worked for the government?

Gus: No.

Murray: When would you say you started spending the majority of your time up there?

Gus: Well, actually, because of the emphasis on fish marketing and commercial fishing in the north, I would say that I spent a great deal of my time in the north. Let me say 75 percent of it. Simply because of the fact that commercial fishing had been
opened up. Well, let me say it wasn't opened up but the
government had built three big, at that time, big, rather large
filleting and freezing plants. There was no road but they used
to freeze these fish and take them out in the wintertime. Or
fly them out later by aircraft. And because of the
government's investment in this and their interest in trying to
get the Indian and Metis people, who were only trappers prior to
this time - generally speaking, there were some fishermen but
they were primarily trappers - to get them involved in
commercial fishing and this is one of the things that we were
expected to do. And because of this, the headquarters of the
fisheries division was moved from Regina to Prince Albert in
1946.

Murray: Could you describe a bit, as far as the north was
concerned, what was the structure of the government in terms of
hierarchy? A general idea of how many people were working and
how that department worked, as far as the north was concerned.

Gus: Well, there were very few people actually, when you think
of the area that was involved, which was, if I remember
correctly, it was approximately 25,000 people in the area that
was at that time, which was considered the northern region.
And most of these were Metis/Indian people, about half and
half. Or, a little more than that. They were 85 percent.
Fifteen percent were white trappers and white fishermen who
had, for one reason or another, gone to the northern areas.
And unlike today, and unlike even the time when I left in 1964
to join United Nations, a good deal of the northern fishery was
a mobile fishery where they moved from lake to lake. They
didn't live on these lakes but they had camps and would spend a
month or several weeks or two months or so on a particular lake
and then move on to another. As far as the government itself
was concerned and the number of say, government personnel
looking after this huge area, I would say it was a mere
handful. There was a field officer if I remember at La Ronge
and one at Stony and one at Ile-a-la-Crosse and one at Buffalo
and I think one over at Flin Flon and....

Murray: In Cumberland area there?

Gus: Yeah, Cumberland House itself had, I don't think it had a
full-time, what you would call a field officer at that time.
It had an assistant to the fellow, I believe, who was at Flin
Flon.

Murray: Who would have been directly above them in terms of
the department?

Gus: The northern region at that time was responsible, as far
as I know, directly to the deputy minister in Regina and they
later appointed a man as the, what did they call him, Director
of Northern District, I think. Somewhere around the late
forties.
Murray: So he would have been responsible then to the deputy, and the field officers would have been responsible to him.

Gus: Yes. Well, there wasn't very much activity in the north, as you know. There was a bit of prospecting and a little bit of timber and some fish and a bit of fur. But there wasn't very much and there was no roads. There was no road to La Ronge, as you probably know, and there was no road to Ile-a-la-Crosse, nor to the west or east side. So people had to fly out and as a result, of course, there wasn't very much in the way of communication between the few scattered field officers in the north and the rest of the administration.

Murray: Where would you have fit in as Director of Fisheries in those early years? Were you part of that northern structure?

Gus: Well, at about the time I came, a little after, the government then began to take the north quite seriously and they got a few more men in the north at various lakes and began to encourage the fishing in various parts and also they did encourage the establishment of a different trapping setup than had previously been the case. They had individuals, white individuals and some Indians and some Metis, had large, huge areas but they weren't defined. And so you had certain areas that weren't being trapped, some places being overtrapped and a little bit of tension and conflict about whose border was where. There was quite a number of trappers scattered around although the number of government people were limited. That is people who could give them supervision or any assistance if they needed it. It was quite limited.

Murray: You say that the government started to become more seriously interested in the north. I'm interested in the political figures of the time. Who initiated that interest do you think, as far as you could tell? Was it the minister at the time?

Gus: Well, there was a combination of things. One thing, the government minister in charge appointed a commission of fisheries at that time. We called it the Royal Commission of Fisheries of which I was a member in 1946 and I think it went on until late 1946 or 1947 and Dr. Clemens with the University of British Columbia was the chairman. And to some extent, we went all over the north, to every settlement of any kind.

Also, prior to that, the new trapping block system had been inaugurated and because of this, it meant that the government had to undertake to appoint several people, one of whom is still in the north. Both people that they appointed actually to take charge of these trapping blocks, or to the establishment of them, were pilots and they had their own planes and they went to these people. Many of these people, as you know at that time, in 1945, were nomadic. They were on the go all the time. If you want to see a trapper, you wouldn't go
to a settlement. You went to the trapline and you spotted him from the air wherever he happened to be and you landed and usually the Indian would make tea for you and his whole family was with him. And this is a very interesting anthropological and sociological thing, it was after the family allowance thing came in that this system of nomadic trappers disappeared and there was a great deal of debate about this, even yet I should think.

Murray: When did the family allowance come in?

Gus: I think it was in 1946, something like that, 1945 or 1946. Or it may have been a little later. I'm not sure, but certainly not any more than one year later. They had some problems. The problems that it created, as you know, is that the woman received the money for a child provided the child went to school. And to do this, they couldn't go on the traplines. So they had to establish some sort of a residence somewhere and put these children in school. And the family allowance cheque was paid to the woman so the man did then go on the trapline. But generally speaking, and it always does when you put in any sort of a regulation governing one aspect of a culture, you affect all other aspects. And how it affected the trapping situation in the north was that the trapper then, to be with his family periodically, would only go on the periphery of the trapline and not in the far out areas.

Murray: Was this anticipated at all by the government do you think?

Gus: As far as I know, no.

Murray: It was a haphazard result of that policy.

Gus: Well, it wasn't expected. You see, no one at that time, to my knowledge, and I think I read whatever was written in those days, didn't realize that when you do interfere with a culture in any way, even in a minor way, you affect all other aspects of it. And this was not foreseen, no.

Murray: You worked for quite a period with the government. Do you recall differences in attitudes towards the north by the different cabinet ministers at all?

Gus: Well, education. As you know, Mr. Woodrow Lloyd who was the Minister of Education when I came here (later became the premier and was certainly a very outstanding individual) and he built schools all over the north, wherever they were needed, and very fine schools. And he put it within, as far as possible, the established system. Because there was an established system of missions, as you know, in various parts of the north and he cooperated very closely with them. Although, one of the arguments at the time was that they were incorporating into the whole education system of the country, the mission schools which before that time, as far as I know, were not entirely within the school system of the province. I may be wrong there but it seems to me that there was some
argument about how they were going to mesh into the provincial system after the government took over, or at least had a great deal of say, about the administration of the mission schools.

Murray: What about the individual ministers of DNR? I was thinking first of this Joe Phelps, I believe, and then Mr. Brockelbank. Was there any discernable difference in policy initiatives between those two men or any other ministers of the north?

Gus: Well, as far as the cabinet was concerned, the cabinet ministers, many of whom came to the north and in a number of forms - for instance in minerals and Phelps at that time was in charge of minerals as well as other resources, but there was education, there was health and welfare and so on, various ministers that were concerned - and I must say that whatever differences these ministers may have, they kept it to themselves. I should think that this also was one of the policies that all governments do decide on, or most governments, that their cabinet ministers accept the policies that are decided on in cabinet and they don't argue about them in the field. I would say, no. I would think that usually you would find that if you had a strong minister who was very vocal and very strong, you would have this particular individual perhaps do things that perhaps others didn't agree with. But in any event, they never told us that.

Murray: Right. I was just wondering whether there was any minister who was particularly interested in bettering conditions in the north? Among the ones you worked with?

Gus: I would think the man that was attempting to do most was Mr. Phelps and he had so many irons in the fire, both in the south and in the north, that he divided his department into two. One part of his department the deputy looked after entirely, and the deputy happened to be a geologist and he looked after minerals and other aspects of it that came under the department. But Phelps looked after resources, you know, like timber and wildlife and fish. He deputized as well as was a minister for them.

Murray: He was a deputy as well as a minister?

Gus: He was a deputy as well. We didn't usually go through the deputy when we were dealing, in the latter stages anyway, with our particular aspects like fisheries or the fish board which was a crown corporation type of thing, these other forestry and so on.

Murray: I have talked to a number of people about the government in the north over that period of years, that twenty year period more or less, and some of them, not all of them, have said that there was a tendency for things to be run from Regina, that major policy decisions were made in Regina, sometimes to the dislike of those employees in the north. Did
you ever discern that kind of thing in your experience at all?

Gus: Well, I think this is true of all governments, that power and decision making is usually done where the power is and this is usually where the legislative assembly is and where the ministers are and where the money happens to be budgeted and allocated. I had problems, like all administrators, with budgets and with programming because you only could get so much money for the programs and that was that. There naturally is and will always be - as there is today in our part of the country in connection with Ottawa - that is that the people who do make some very widespread policies that affect the lives of everybody, will be at a centre thousands of miles in the case of Canada, but in the case of Regina and in the case of here, hundreds of miles away. Like if you were at La Ronge without a road, it would take you a long time to get your views and your ideas on programming down to Regina. And in these days, no one did a great deal about involvement. I think Phelps, Mr. Phelps, I shouldn't (inaudible) personality, but I think he made an effort, on the advice of others likely, that he would ask the fishermen in the north what type of marketing did they want, fish marketing as an example. And the same, I think, was done about fur. And he sent out something like three thousand questionnaires to fishermen and received fourteen hundred replies which is understandable because there was very few post offices and some of these people never got their questionnaires and so on. But on the basis of their replies, they said they wanted the fish board without knowing what a fish board was and without having any detail about how it would work or who would work it and so on.

Murray: This is one of the alternatives given in the questionnaire.

Gus: This is an example, for instance, where involvement did take place and where Regina at least made one effort. And they did the same with mines and mineral, not so much mineral things but prospecting and various other things. They did their best to go up and meet with the people and I think they very likely saw more ministers during that period than they had ever before. Simply because the government eventually took over their own aircraft from a company that had been long established in the north. And because these planes were there, they were used by government employees to go around and hold meetings with people. As a matter of fact, personally, and I'm sure a lot of other people that were involved, we would spend as much as 50 percent of our time with the fishermen and with the trappers and with others in their cabins. There was no hotels and no places. We just lived like they lived and carry our sleeping bags with us and do the best we could. Regina did have a great deal of say and a great deal of control but at least the views of these people were supposed to, at least, be transmitted by us, exactly the views we could discern or discover, whatever they happened to be.
Murray: Was that particularly so in the four years that Mr. Phelps was minister? That that kind of consultation and give and take took place?

Gus: Well, I don't know whether you know Mr. Phelps but he's a very unusual individual and when he was younger (I haven't met him for many years) he was a tremendously active individual. And he had spent a good deal of time in the north himself. He was quite a strong individual. I'm probably getting away a little bit from your particular question but it seems to me that there was a tendency on the part of some ministers to perhaps promote and develop an idea which may have been agreed to in a public meeting in the north but which may not have been perhaps what the people really wanted. As a matter of fact, there was a great deal of confusion as to what they did want and this is understandable because they were very isolated. Like the fishermen lived ten to fifteen miles apart on Reindeer Lake, as an example. And so, even to hold a meeting there, you had to notify them days in advance for them to get in to this particular meeting.

Murray: How were policies actually arrived at? They would be initiated by people within the department and then they would make an attempt to sort of test them on the people to see how the people responded? Would that be the normal procedure of developing a policy, any particular policy?

Gus: Well, it depended, I suppose, a great deal on the department. As I think I mentioned, in the late forties, various firms like welfare and health and education and so on, became rather strong in various parts of the north and I should think that they had their men up there saying, "Do you want a school and what kind of a school do you want?" Or trying to determine what type of social situations existed and what, within the framework of the budget and the policy of the government, that could be done about it. I'm not so sure that in all cases, people were involved. I think that, like with a lot of governments, that things were imposed often without either sufficient indepth study of the consequences or without the people being involved sufficiently in the implementation of the programs. This was the way things were done in these days in all the provinces.

Murray: Were there any mistakes that were made that you can think of that might not have been made if it would have been possible to consult all the time on these things?

Gus: That's a rather difficult question, that is if we're just talking about the northern part of the country not including Prince Albert but north, say, of what used to be considered the northern area at that time, Montreal Lake. I don't know of any very serious problems. The fish board ran into all sorts of trouble but we had hundreds and hundreds of meetings - just talking about my own particular field. And we were with the fishermen and slept with them and ate with them and we were on
the ice with them and in the boats with them and, in our case, I felt we were doing... Perhaps we didn't have enough people to do it or enough skills is another thing. We didn't have any anthropologists or sociologists and all the people that you would have perhaps today. But later we got into that. In the sixties and so on we had anthropologists and others. I can't point out any particular thing. There was always certain people that felt the missions had too much to say about things. And we voted on everything. Fishermen had to vote. Not had to, but if they wanted the fish board or didn't want it and what not, it was voted. In the first case, when the fish board first started, because the people said they wanted it, then of course, there wasn't much consultation after that until such time as they ran into very serious trouble in 1948 by making it necessary for the fishermen to deliver their fish, whether they wanted to or not, without originally laying the basis for this type of development. So we had a great deal of hostility develop.

Murray: On the part of the fishermen?

Gus: Yes. And we had to go around then and hold meetings everywhere and because of these meetings, the policy was changed. As you know, Saskatchewan is a great country for meetings. This is how the Wheat Pool has developed so I think the northern thing developed the same way. Mistakes were made by the fish board and quite a number of them. We had inexperienced people trying to operate big filleting plants (not so big but they were big in a sense) and trying to sell fish and so there were quite a number of problems and the fishboard ran into serious problems and serious losses at that time. But they later were able by changing the policy to a more democratic one in which the fisherman were asked to vote whether they wanted a particular board to market their fish or not. And if the majority of the fishermen said they didn't want it, then they could do whatever they wanted with their fish. They could sell them to anybody.

But I think this happened also in fur. You see, nowadays and in many countries anyway, if you inaugurated a system such as a fur marketing and even though the people may ask for it, they don't know what's involved in it. And then the government didn't have the men or the time perhaps, certainly not the men, to go out and to explain to these people and get them involved by getting them in discussion groups (which they would do today) to discuss it and to become familiar with all of the various implications and whatnot in it and then make a decision as to if they want it this particular way or not.

Murray: Was there an effort made when you perhaps realized that you didn't have enough staff to carry out the surveys you'd like to, was there an effort to get more staff but there just wasn't the money? Was that one of the experiences you had?

Gus: Well, certainly yes, we were limited by the amount of
funds we had. And also to a large extent, because of the vast areas, we had to consider how many people do you have in a vast area with poor or no roads and poor communications to do a particular thing. Do you leave people by themselves and visit them once every two months or three months or four months or do you get one man in there on a lake with 25 fishermen who are scattered over an area of 150 miles. I think there were two factors. One of the exciting things about the CCF government was that there was a very, very serious attempt to involve the people and try to find out what should be done to try and help them out. And of course, there were some very brilliant and outstanding people involved. Particularly, you may know that there was a secretariat in Regina. George Cadbury of the Cadbury family of England. He was the first Director of - I think it was called Planning and Development section, although I must say that it seemed to me that they ran into trouble in this area because ministers of various, twelve or fifteen ministries there....

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Gus: ...somewhat of a joke or somewhat of a saying anyway that there was a Siberia in the northern area and it was completely isolated so if a person didn't fit in in the south, they would just send him up north. He couldn't do much harm up there even if he didn't do much good. And I think to some extent, there were quite a number of people up there who were efficient regulations-wise, that is they had read various acts and regulations and they went about trying to put these into effect. And I don't know whether I told you or not, but because of the isolation of the people and the Fisheries Act itself, a fisheries officer could apprehend somebody who he felt was violating a particular regulation and also hold court. He could be the judge, the magistrate, the arresting officer and whatnot. We eventually got that changed but it was still in the Fisheries Act, which is a federal act, which is an act of Saskatchewan and the other provinces, a federal act.

Murray: Administered by the provinces.

Gus: The provinces administer them under a set of regulations. I think, generally, the idea of the act is that the federal government is responsible for the fish in the water and the waters in which they breed in. And after they are taken out of the water, the province takes over and the jurisdiction of what happens to them after that is the provincial responsibility.

Murray: Did that situation change in your period of employment with the department in terms of being able to get good staff? When do you think that began to change or was it always a problem?

Gus: Well, it was very difficult to get people to work in the north because of the fact that the social life was almost nil.
That is, it depends on the individual. He had no movies to attend and the schools were not the type he would like to have, in many cases, his children attend. He lived in communities in which it was difficult to get groceries into except by plane periodically and his housing conditions weren't what they ought to be and whatnot. But this changed even during my time. Good houses were built and we also did everything we could to get the Public Service Commission, which they later did, to provide incentives for people to work in the north. It started first in fisheries and wildlife and as soon as the Public Service Commission agreed that because of being considered, to some extent, hardship posts or, let's say, less desirable posts for a person to have his family in and family educated, they offered certain incentives for people to live in these communities. They gave them a couple of weeks longer of vacation per year plus an additional increase in their salaries, and after this, we were able to do something about getting better men.

Murray: In our conversation I think you used the word 'dragged' the co-ops into the north. You fought to establish them. Could you describe the effort to get the various co-ops going in the north?

Gus: I think there was always two points of view on the development of cooperatives and because my training particularly was in cooperatives (I had also involving people in the Maritimes in programs to help themselves), my bias, and I try to be as open as possible about this, was to get the people to do their own thing. Development itself cannot be done by anybody outside. It must be done by the people. And this was a mistake, I think, that others were making. The idea was that the Indian-Metis people were not educated and they were isolated and they were scattered and therefore, we had to do things for them. And I just - and others as well, I don't say I was the only one - took the attitude that we had to involve these people in all these programs and get them to understand what they were and get them to put them into effect if they agreed with them. And this is how cooperatives came into effect. Actually, originally the government decided to set up plants under the fish board and then they found out quickly that they couldn't very well operate plants because Indians had been living under a debt system for many years. As a matter of fact, the status to some extent, the status of a trapper, and sometimes a fisherman, was measured by the amount of debt he could get from the Hudson's Bay Company or some other trader. And because this had become a tradition with them, the government then found they not only had to set up a fish board but also they had to set up grocery stores; and they established six stores. This was decided at a board meeting of the crown corporation, of the fish marketing crown corporation.

Murray: Do you know what year that would have been?

Gus: Well, it seems to me that it must have been after the
fish board was established in, I think, 1944 or 1945. It probably was in 1946 because otherwise the fishermen that were selling fish to the fish marketing board couldn't be outfitted because the private dealers and the Hudson's Bay Company would not give them credit unless they were getting the fish in return. So the government set up these stores.

Murray: Did those work out quite well?

Gus: Well, I was a member of the board. There were some twelve people on the boards and I used to, whenever I had an opportunity, try to say that the people could do this for themselves. That we shouldn't, as a board or as a crown corporation, be doing things for the people that they were quite capable of doing themselves. And this caused a great deal of debate. There were many that felt that these people couldn't operate things themselves and my idea was that if they can't, then teach them to do it. And eventually many years later, probably about ten years after they had established these things, the cabinet was quite interested in - and always had been, particularly the premier, Tommy Douglas - in transferring or having a transfer of these into cooperatives. This had been stated previously that this was the intent in the first place. They didn't think it was proper for the government to be selling bacon and eggs and this type of thing to people.

Murray: It was meant to be a temporary sort of thing to bridge...?

Gus: It was a thing to help them to bridge over this idea of no credit from private individuals who would not receive the fish. But one of the factors I felt that hindered this was the vested interest that was built into the store complex as well as the fish complex. Your managers, of course, like everybody else, they don't like to change what seems to be working somehow. And they felt that their positions were endangered and we had a lot of opposition from some of these people.

Murray: When you were going to change them to co-ops?

Gus: To make a change. And, of course, they never did change because those in charge felt that the Indians couldn't run them. And eventually, I remember one occasion, we had a meeting about this and we had these two sides again but eventually the particular group that I was connecting with, we convinced some of the cabinet ministers that they should establish these... Well, going back a little further, for instance, the government also got to the stage where it felt that if the people could not take over the marketing of the fish, that they, as a little province, not handling much of the fish of the country - a small portion of it actually relative to the Great Lakes and to Ontario and so on, Manitoba - that the government should either ask the people whether they wanted to run these things themselves or get out of the business themselves. And we went around. We had meetings all over the place and the people did
tell us everywhere we went without exception that they wanted to run them themselves and they didn't want them turned back into the hands of private entrepreneurs or individuals. And as a result then, we had an educational program to do. And

fortunately I suggested to the committee that they set them up legally as cooperatives even though they weren't. The reason for this is to keep them on the track. You need to have something in which you have some...

Murray: Structure or other.

Gus: Some structure or other that was legal that you would have deviations all along the line and people doing as they please, and the manager and so on. So, this was done by the Co-operative Department. I think Mr. Arneson was the deputy minister. He drew up the legislation and it was passed that these would be handed over to the people. And we went to each place and told the people what was involved. I think it was some three million dollars involved of government money. And it was thought at that time that the people would never repay it, the Indian, Metis, and the whites, the people who belonged to those cooperatives would never repay it. We built a cooperative by putting the roof on the house first. We knew this, of course, but then we knew we had to do a lot of educational work. And the people took them over and, as far as I know, I think they repayed the government three million dollars in something like six years.

Murray: That's quite amazing. In six years.

Gus: Well, it's interesting in that it worked. It took a long time to do it. I think it took them six years to take them over and do it. But in the meantime, we were trying to show cooperative films and trying to get across with the Co-operative Department.

Murray: How long did the educational program last on that? To bridge the co-ops? And when did that start? Was it the late fifties that you started into that...?

Gus: Well, we started the cooperatives, of course, early. And I think from the time we started the cooperatives until they took over complete control of them, I thought it was around fourteen, fifteen years.

Murray: So, it would have been the late fifties by the time it was completely in the hands of the native people?

Gus: Oh, longer. See, because it was a crown corporation until fifty something.

Murray: Oh, I see.

Gus: See, the crown corporation ran for quite a number of years, twenty-five years.
Murray: Oh, I see. So it would be the middle sixties then? Approximately that that...?

Gus: I have a record somewhere. I would be guessing but it seemed to me to be... no, the turnover would be about 1960, 1961.

Murray: One more question before we get directly into Brady and Norris. Was there ever talk, well certainly there was later on, but during your employment, of a single agency for the north that would handle all aspects of things in the north which is what the present DNS is based on?

Gus: Yes.

Murray: When did that sort of concept first get aired among government people?

Gus: Well, I think, I could be wrong but it seems to me that Morris Miller, who is also now working in Ottawa, was with the Royal Bank for a while, he was our development officer in the Resources department. Miller was a very bright chap from Montreal and he was looking into various crown corporations and resources and various other aspects of the resource structure and suggesting changes. One of the changes he suggested was one that this business of a lot of agencies working in the north was kind of confusing. Confusion by the lack of coordination of agencies and by each one becoming compartmentalized as they tend to do. He wrote one or two papers about the idea that apart from confusing the people and overlapping programs and lack of coordination, that a single agency should be established. I remember talking to him about this. I had been in Australia for the United Nations on a trip and I had had a look at some of the legislation they used there on the northern territories and I gave Morris a copy of this to have a look at and it may have, to some extent, influenced him, I don't know. But he did think, at that time, there was a great deal of isolation, as you know. There was no telephones. We had two-way radios which Resources built themselves and hired out to fishermen and so on and these did give us communications. But there was no roads, and air flights to the remote places were not that frequent. And so, it seemed that in sending three or four men, each representing an agency out to a village, miles and miles away, was not only expensive but to some extent, confusing. Because, as far as the people were concerned, many of whom never had an opportunity to go to school, they considered anybody that showed up there as 'the government.' And it was very hard to say, "Well, I only represent one little part. You've got to see somebody else about this other part."

Murray: It was frustrating for native people.

Gus: At that stage. I don't know much about it now. I've
been up there and talked a bit but not very much about what's happening now. But at that stage certainly it was very desirable.

Murray: What year was that that you mentioned you gave that paper to Morris?

Gus: I'm not sure I gave it to him. I at least showed it to him. I think it was... I came back from Australia in 1957 and I had two years leave of absence from the government here. I wasn't in Australia all the time but I was in Barcelona for a year and three months in Australia. I would think it may have been in the early sixties. The paper may be available somewhere down there in Morris's file.

Murray: Would that be in Regina?

Gus: I think so.

Murray: I want to talk a little bit now about Brady and Norris. Could you describe Norris to me as you knew him? Norris's personality, you know, his sort of views of the north and general feelings you got about him as you knew him.

Gus: Well, I first met Malcolm, I think, perhaps the first day that he arrived in Prince Albert. He came up with the minister, Mr. Phelps, and he came in to see me in the late afternoon and he was a very pleasant and very interesting fellow. I'm not sure what time of year it was. It seems to me it was in the late fall or something. You couldn't tell from his appearance what ethnic background he had or mixture he was. We had a rather pleasant conversation about, he told me mostly that he was a Metis and he had organized the Metis with several other people in northern Alberta and that he had hoped to do the same in Saskatchewan because he had been employed by the department to help with the Metis-Indian, Metis probably particularly, in the north.

Murray: Had he been hired with any particular goal in mind for him to accomplish?

Gus: I don't know about this because I never saw his job description while I was a social friend of his for many years as well as a colleague, working colleague. Mind you, we didn't always agree but we agreed on many things. He was a little bit at a loss himself I think, at times, to try to determine what his particular job was. He eventually was called a special field officer but what that special meant, I don't think he or anyone else, at least I didn't know.

Murray: Did he take his own initiative on jobs to do things that he felt should be done?

Gus: No. Well you see, he first went up there, he worked with this rather feeble organization in the fifties. It got strong later, but when he went into Northern Affairs first, it was
somewhat of a feeble organization. They were still building these fur blocks and Malcolm was used as an interpreter. He was very eloquent in the Cree language and he was used as an interpreter in these and very often he didn't agree with the policy and when Malcolm didn't agree with a policy he didn't take very long to tell people about his disagreement, regardless of who they happened to be. I would say he was a very pleasant and certainly a very interesting individual. Completely dedicated to the Metis-Indian cause, widely read in these subjects as well as economics. And also a very eloquent public speaker which he did on any occasion that offered an opportunity for him to discuss particular things that he was trying to promote.

Murray: What was your impressions of Brady over the period you knew him?

Gus: Well, Malcolm was very vocal and very much of an activist. And never got very far away from the things that he was particularly interested in, and that is to help the Indian and the Metis people. But Brady was a very quiet individual and worked quietly. As far as I know, he never worked in Prince Albert in any of the administrative centres; he always appeared to be in the field. The difference between him and Malcolm were... I would say Brady's interests - it was hard to tell, you know. He worked quietly and probably was very effective. But it seemed to me also, while he didn't speak the language (and you and I disagreed about this the other day), I understood from others that he understood the Cree language but was always reluctant to speak it. But he certainly lived with the Cree people all the time he was in the north.

Murray: What kinds of problems did Norris find in his work that he talked to you about in trying to get programs across to the people? Did he consult with you a lot on those kinds of things?

Gus: Well, many times. To begin with, you see, he was a very courageous man. That is, courageous in the sense that when it came to principles, he always told everybody where he stood on the particular thing, regardless of what the meeting happened to be. As a matter of fact, I remember on one occasion, a minister came to Prince Albert two or three weeks after Malcolm had been hired and he had a meeting, public meeting, two or three hundred people. And during this meeting an Indian got up and disagreed with the minister. The minister had said that the fish board had done a great deal of work in the north in a certain way. This particular fellow was a Metis and well, didn't put his case very well, but he said that he disagreed with the minister in that the fish board didn't help him, it ruined him. He had just left the service and bought a lot of nets and they didn't pick up his fish. The fish board was supposed to pick it up at a certain time and he lost all his fish. He lost all his nets. And therefore, it was wrong for the minister to be saying they had done all these great things
when it had ruined him financially for the time being. And the minister, of course, was very, you know, was in a dominant position. It was his meeting and the Indian didn't have much chance, in a sense, in rebuttal. But Malcolm, who was sitting with me at the time, and my wife, he got up and he gave a great dissertation to defend this man. And he said to the audience that he was ashamed of them because they were all white people and this poor Metis fellow was trying to express himself and the people were laughing at him. But he said that if he couldn't put forth his point of view, Malcolm said, "I think I understand it and I will do it." And he did it very eloquently and of course, people were quickly changed from ridiculing this fellow to being on his side, sort of. And I thought this was not only courageous for Malcolm but he got, after the meeting, he was really physically upset himself about the business. He felt that he had gone too far and that he was going to lose his job and all these things. But nothing came of it.

Murray: That was Mr. Phelps that was at that meeting, wasn't it?

Gus: Yes. I don't like to go into personalities but this happened to be Mr. Phelps. But it indicates also that Mr. Phelps was capable of being criticized by a newcomer and yet not say anything about it or do anything about it.

Murray: You mentioned in our phone conversation before that Norris wasn't a program person in the same sense that you were. That he was often trying to get native people to build up their pride in themselves. Could you expand on that a bit, how he saw that in the role of government and his role in the north?

Gus: Well, I think this goes back a great deal. He told me on one or two occasions of his early life. That his father was a Hudson's Bay factor in Edmonton or around that area somewhere, and his mother was a Cree Indian and he had gone to the proper schools of factors. I don't know where they were. I think one was in Winnipeg and one was somewhere else in Alberta. He told me about what a hard life he had, that he was being attacked frequently or belittled by others because he was an Indian and he said that there were times when he had to fight his way to and from school all the time. Because of this, Malcolm always had this, almost everybody you'll meet will tell you, a chip on his shoulder. He seemed always to have a chip on his shoulder about this. Very sensitive man. And he always seemed to me to be thinking in terms of the very bad way in which Indian and Metis people were being treated and how they had lost their pride in themselves. How they had lost their traditions and how, somehow or other, this pride had to be built back into them. They had to relearn what they had forgotten. Their whole traditions, great traditions, that the Indians had that had been destroyed by the encroachment of the white man and by technology and so on. And so he was mainly interested in these things. When it came to programming, like now for instance, if you sat down with Malcolm and said, "Now what type of housing
do you think these people should have or what type of programming should we have," and so on, it was very difficult to get him to give you very positive things about this. Perhaps because this wasn't the way he thought. He was thinking about all of the injustices.

Murray: This was foremost in his mind.

Gus: He was an ombudsman it seemed to me, for the Indian-Metis cause. And always, wherever he went – of course, he didn't have to go very far – if he met an Indian or a Metis, he would hear of all the problems. And of course, you could see them everywhere, the way they lived and their schools, their dress. And because of this, he was writing to various other departments. He had a lot of correspondence with everybody, welfare and medical people and the educational people and the resource people. And as a result, of course, he was regarded as someone who butted in and who was getting into programs he knew little about and whatnot. But as far as Malcolm was concerned, I would say that he knew quite a lot about the programs. He didn't like them, perhaps, because they were in some way not solving or they were continuing the injustice to the Indian or the Metis which he saw all around him. This is the way he struck me. When it came, for instance, to finances or to programming, he was very often critical of me because I was a director, as you may know, of Fisheries and of Northern Affairs and I had programs and I had budgets and I had to live by these. And very often Malcolm and others would think that I should be doing other things which I didn't have the authority to do, or the policies to do, or the money to do.

(End of Side B)

(Side A, Tape IH-388A)

Gus: Stereotypes that people...

(break in tape)

Gus: ...which was very bad. Twenty-five years ago it was regarded that an Indian was lazy and was dirty and he was a drunkard and he was illiterate and he was a lot of things. So a stereotype was built up that there was something about an Indian that was inferior in some way to white people. And I think this is the thing that Malcolm and Brady helped to dispel. All the anthropologists years before that had proved that there was no difference in people. It was the difference in the environment in which they found themselves and the economic disadvantages they had because of their culture being completely broken up and having to live in a kind of a no man's land without any anchors.

Murray: I think I've probably asked you this indirectly but I'd like to get back to it. What role did Norris play while he was employed in the policy area? Was he more than just an employee? Did he suggest policies and was he consulted on
policies, that kind of thing?

Gus: In the early years, I think he attended all our meetings, during the forties anyway. Up until the early fifties, our meetings consisted of quite a large number of people, twenty to thirty people who, most of us, had a lot to do in the north and Malcolm attended these. And he was the type of fellow, as I said, his principles were such that he could not let anybody belittle or run down a Metis or an Indian without starting to dominate the discussion. Later on, of course, Malcolm ran into lots of trouble, as I said, with other agencies and with the Resources agency because he was considered somewhat of a troublemaker and this is true of all administrations. If you have anybody who is doing, say, community development work, he's got to be on the side of the people. And if he is, he is usually against the bureaucratic administrations that develop. And when this happened, of course, he was ostracized or at least he wasn't invited to these meetings. I remember on one occasion he told me that he was asked either to be quiet or go along with government policy or stay away from the, I think it was the trappers' meetings. I'm not sure but they had yearly trappers' meetings and Malcolm would very often get in and as you know, these are a mixture of Metis, Indian and white people in the Trapper's Association of the north. I'm not sure what the policy things were because I only attended them to talk about fish, not during the whole meeting. But I should think he was probably trying to get the Metis and Indian to have larger traplines and also to teach him, probably much more efficient ways of trapping.

Murray: So, at some point was he not invited to these meetings any more? And what year would that be?

Gus: I think he was given an option. I think he attended. The option was that once the government laid down its policy on fur or on fish - this is true of course of all administration, or should be or usually is - you are allowed a certain amount of scope, but if you have a great public meeting and people who belong to the association and belong to different political persuasions, then your policy, if you are a government employee, must be clear and must be understood by those concerned. Well, Malcolm would apparently oppose these policies in the public meetings and this caused considerable confusion within the ministries. I think he wasn't forbidden from going to the meetings but he was told, "Once we make these policies, you can have a say before we make them but after we make them, we don't go around in public disagreeing with each other about them." I think this was the thing. But you can understand from Malcolm's point of view that he was in the north a good deal of the time, he wasn't where these policies were being made and maybe in any event he couldn't influence them because there were more people like the Indians and Metis themselves that couldn't quite understand, quite often, what he was talking about. I think I told you on the telephone that I used to hear from other people was that in his Cree speeches to the people, his Cree was excellent Cree, very often go over
their heads.

Murray: Too good.

Gus: Too good for them. Too high calibre.

Murray: Can you recall any input that he had into particular policies?

Gus: Well, it seemed to me that his main thing was spreading awareness of the situation of the Metis and the need to do something about it. And his continuous speeches. He didn't do all that much writing but his speeches, anyway, brought to the fore always the big problems that had to be solved in the north. I'm not saying among the Cree themselves but among the administrators. And we eventually got anthropologists in, as you know. And I think all of this helped the department realize that we better get some specialists in here to have a look at this. One fellow was brought in by the deputy or minister from Toronto University who spent a couple of years here, Valentine. And Valentine wrote some papers and he did make people very sensitive to this marvelous Indian culture. That it is a culture and that the stereotype we had, or most people had, about Indians was completely unrealistic because of the fact that their own culture was breaking down and the mores and whatnot of the Indian people had been destroyed and they were trying to find their way in this no man's land of the reserve (which had no resources on it or very little) or relearn, which they were unable to do at that time, the values of the past.

Murray: You mentioned that Norris was familiar with Marx and certainly he considered himself a socialist. When he was talking to you or other officials of the department, did he suggest explicitly socialist kinds of programs to you or was that more in the back of his mind?

Gus: Actually, I think he was a Marxist because we often talked about Karl Marx and some of his writings, but I don't remember really Malcolm discussing many ideas about what we ought to do program-wise to alleviate the situation. At that time you see, it was rather strange in the north. Strange in this way, that we had not many people. There was only twenty-five thousand people as I said and the only resources were fur and fish. And these resources were not sufficient for them to make a living on so resource-wise, the situation appeared to be rather hopeless and programming, when you have no resources, is not very good. But he was very strong on education and he talked a great deal about education. He also was unhappy about the type of education which, of course, is coming now more to be known by everybody - that is that the Indian was not receiving the type of education that he should have been receiving. Everybody was trying to bring him up to the image and likeness of the 'pale-faces,' as Malcolm would call them, or the white people. So, since then of course, there have been people like there are now at the university and others who have devised programs of education for the north. And I think, well
I've been away a long time, but most of these programs now are being implemented. They have a different, certainly a different biased content than the southern schools.

Murray: Were you aware, during the time that Norris was working for the government, of his efforts to establish a Metis association? Did he ever talk to you about that or were you aware of his activities?

Gus: Well yeah, this seemed to be, of course, the thing he wanted to do. He talked to me many times about what they were able to do in Alberta and how he thought that we could do the same thing here. I'm sure, everywhere he went with the Metis, he was talking to them about the need for an organization and eventually I think he succeeded, he and others. They eventually did get a Metis Association. I'm not too familiar with it because about that time I left the department.

Murray: What about Brady? Was he involved in that as well? As far as you know?

Gus: Well, Brady worked for Malcolm in northern Alberta and was a very good organizer apparently, according to Malcolm. And over in Saskatchewan, he worked with the government only part of the time. He was a store manager one time I think over on Pelican Narrows for about a year and then he was a field officer. We did have at that time, you know, one or two Indian field officers. We had one at La Loche and, he wasn't a field officer but he was... We had one Metis at Beauval, we had an Indian at Ile-a-la-Crosse and Jim Brady was the conservation officer over at Cumberland House. Strangely enough, I used to see Brady probably several times a year but we used to discuss many things. Because Brady was a little different than Malcolm in that I think he read widely in other areas and other fields and while he was very interested in the Metis people and doing something about it, he was not as active or at least not obviously as active to me, who sat most of the time or a good deal of the time in Prince Albert. Of course, I wasn't in the field. I was in the field as much as I could in the early days, about 50 percent but then this just came down as the administrative chore became greater. So I wasn't all that familiar with Jim's work really. I liked him. He was a very likeable fellow and he was very quiet in the way he spoke. Probably more in the line that the Indians themselves were used to. They are very quiet people generally. But it's hard for me to understand why he didn't speak Cree. If he didn't, then he must have spent most of his time with the younger ones because the older ones couldn't speak any English.

Murray: Did either of them ever talk to you about the idea of a single agency for the north? Or were they interested in that particular idea?

Gus: Well, I think they were both, at least Malcolm was, opposed to this idea of so many people going in with so many
confusing programs. They realized that these people couldn't grasp the fact that they had five or six agencies to deal with. And consequently, of course, both of them had the job of trying to cut across these various administrative lines to get things done and I think it annoyed them quite a lot although I don't recall specifically that they had come to me with them. Malcolm did mention it to me. He used to mention the confusion. Of course, quite a number of these people didn't get along with Malcolm because he was outspoken and didn't waste much time in telling people what he thought about them, if they were operating programs that weren't in the best interest of the Indian and the Metis people. And he had a phrase for them. He used to call them yahoos. Everybody seemed to be a yahoo to Malcolm with whom he didn't particularly agree in connection with programs. I'm not sure what he meant by this but actually it's something about people who are uncouth or rowdy people and so on. But he used the phrase yahoo quite a lot, meaning, I think, people who were incapable of understanding, in his view, types of programs that should be promoted for the Metis.

Murray: One final question, when was it that there was this multitude of departments acting in the north? In the first years that you were there, was this the case or did this develop gradually?

Gus: No, no, it developed quite a bit, you see, and a lot of these started with very small programs. As an example, welfare. They had a very small program in the north, practically none. And as a result, Malcolm and others used to write to Regina. Myself, I'd go through the deputy, very often tell the others we had lines of communication we had to follow or channels of communication. Then they set up a program, a social welfare program, which was to be a provincial one and which I think did a great deal, although it caused quite a lot of administrative problems as well. That is, when they had the cost-sharing welfare programs and they started to pay unmarried mothers and build houses or get houses and build them for unmarried mothers and for children through the social welfare dominion/ provincial cost-sharing program. It was a marvelous thing because it did, for the first time, indicate that the governments were very interested in these children whether the girls were married or not; and it helped them to look after these babies. But, on the other hand, it did create problems. Malcolm was very much aware of this and he was, personally, you know, as a person, he was a very good family man, Malcolm. And very loyal and that to his family and to his children and did a great deal for them. But I think I've gotten a bit away from your question there.

Murray: Well, I was trying to get an idea of the time factor in terms of the departments that came into the north.

Gus: Oh, yeah, well I would think it was the middle sixties, it seemed to me, where these social welfare programs developed
on a large scale because welfare was so badly needed in the north. Well, I would say jobs were more needed than welfare. Then there was a danger when the welfare programs came in that you were beginning to interfere with the resourcefulness and initiative of the individual. But if the resources weren't there, the people were hungry and they had no clothes and they had no houses and so on. Something had to be done. And we ourselves, we had our own housing program and we didn't get much money. We got it actually from the Credit Union in Regina to start our first program in Pine House. But we didn't build houses for people. We got the people to build them themselves and they had the input into them. It was their labor that built them. We had sawmills in the north and then we gave them the lumber at cost and we gave them a supervisor to help them build houses, very much the way they do cooperative houses in the south here. But all of the houses were done in this way and the program development, I would think, you would have to say started on a very large scale in the latter part of the sixties. Some of these programs became very large with education and welfare.

Murray: This would be under the Liberal administration then, after 1964, eh?

Gus: No, I'm sorry, 1950.

Murray: The late fifties.

Gus: The late fifties, yeah.

Murray: Right, from 1956 onwards.

Gus: I would think, yeah.

Murray: Is this when the education and the co-ops as well, the Department of Co-operatives would have been more active during that period as well?

Gus: There was quite a lot of activity.

Murray: So up until the mid-fifties, it was almost exclusively DNR?

Gus: (Inaudible) yes.

(End of Side A)

(End of Interview)

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