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SASKATCHEWAN
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INTERPRETER:
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LEON MORIN

Mr. Morin, a resident of Green Lake, was one of the first people in that community to join the Metis Association.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Organization of the Metis Association in Green Lake by Malcolm Norris.
- Early days of the Association.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Leon Morin is a resident of Green Lake and was one of the members of the first Metis Association in Green Lake. He talks briefly about the first meetings and Norris' visits to town.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I am speaking to Leon Morin of Green Lake. Leon, do you remember the first time you met Malcolm Norris and where you met him?

Leon: Well, I don't remember what year, you know, but I met

him quite a few times when he was around. Yeah. But I don't remember what year...

Murray: Do you remember, was it at a meeting you met him or on the street? How did you first meet him?

Leon: I met him at Mr. Bishop's here the first time.

Murray: Was it a meeting of some local people or just you and Mr. Bishop and Malcolm?

Leon: No, it was only Mr. Bishop and Lawrence and...

Murray: Malcolm.

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Right. Do you remember what he talked about, that first time you met him?

Leon: Well, he was talking about the Metis Society, I think they called it that time. He told us about what he was trying to do and what was going to do, you know.

Murray: Do you remember what kinds of things he wanted the Metis Society to do? What did he hope that that organization could do for Metis people?

Leon: Well, the first time I heard, he come from Alberta somewhere. And he was working at it, the same thing over there. And he moved out here and started over here again.

Murray: Did he tell you about Alberta? Did he tell you much about what he did in Alberta?

Leon: No, no, he didn't say much about Alberta.

Murray: Did he have any particular ideas about changes that should be made? Did he talk about that at all?

Leon: Yes. But there was lots of things I don't remember. I see him about three times and I...

Murray: That's about all eh?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: What kind of man was he? How would you tell people about him?

Leon: He was a nice man, pretty nice man to talk with. Yeah.

Murray: Do you think that people in Green Lake understood what he was saying about organizing?

Leon: Well, some of them but not all of them, you know.

Murray: What did the others think? The ones who didn't understand him?

Leon: Well, really, some people, they don't believe what he was working at. That's the way I find out. But some of us, you know, we understand what he talked about and so we agreed with him.

Murray: Did he talk about the Metis people being discriminated against and exploited? Is that what he was saying?

Leon: Yeah, that's what he was saying.

Murray: And some of the people agreed with him but lots of people didn't agree with him.

Leon: Yeah. That's right.

Murray: How long after the first time you met him did the Metis Society start up here? Did it start pretty quickly?

Leon: Yeah, it started pretty quickly. Not very long after, he come back again and he had a meeting then. So, I went to the meeting but I don't remember all, you know. That's quite a while ago. Yeah.

Murray: A good twelve years ago, I guess, eh?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Do you remember anything about the meeting? Can you remember anything at all about what happened there?

Leon: No, no I don't remember but I know there was quite a few people there.

Murray: How many do you think were there?

Leon: Oh, it's over, about 50 anyway.

Murray: Fifty. So that was quite a few people for Green Lake, eh.

Leon: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: Was it mostly men or were there women there too?

Leon: Women too. Yeah.

Murray: Were they the older people from town or the younger people, do you think?

Leon: Well, some of the older people and some young fellows.

Murray: So all parts of the community came to the meeting?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Did Malcolm do most of the talking at that meeting?

Leon: Yes. But he asked us questions too, you know. What we've been on here and what kind of living we had and...

Murray: What problems you had?

Leon: Yeah. And what trouble we had, you know. All that.

Murray: Right. Did he ask you then if you thought a Metis society was a good idea?

Leon: Yeah, yeah, because that was nice for us, you know. And we know he's a smart man and we are really, some of us, we agree what he says.

Murray: Do you remember if most of the people at the meeting agreed with him or were there some who just didn't understand?

Leon: Well, the way I seen it is somebody don't want to start right away, you know. Some of them, they don't believe him too.

Murray: Did they think he was too radical maybe?

Leon: No, no.

Murray: They just didn't believe him.

Leon: They just....

Murray: Or they just disagreed with him. Did people buy memberships then? Did that happen at that meeting?

Leon: Yeah, yeah, quite a few of us, we bought, yeah.

Murray: So that first meeting that he came to, it was where he first sold the memberships?

Leon: Yeah. We bought lots of them.

Murray: How many? Do you think half the people there bought memberships or more or less?

Leon: Less.

Murray: Less than half, eh?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: How many? Maybe fifteen, do you think? Or could you guess at how many might have bought memberships?

Leon: No, there was quite a few. I think it's somewhere around 35 when it started.

Murray: That was the beginning, eh?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Did it grow after that? Did more people sign up after that?

Leon: Yeah, there was more people. They were getting to understand then, you know, what he's trying to do.

Murray: Did you elect anybody for the local in Green Lake? Was there a president at that time or just a bunch of members?

Leon: Well, I think he come back again. Then they put a president there now. The first meeting I don't think there was any.

Murray: It was just for members that time.

Leon: Yeah, just the members, yeah.

Murray: How long after that first meeting did he come back? Was it quite soon or was it a few months?

Leon: Yeah, a few months I think, yeah.

Murray: Who was elected president at that time?

Leon: Old Bishop, I think.

Murray: Alec Bishop, eh?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Was there just a president elected or were there some other people elected too?

Leon: No, just some of them, three of them. I don't remember which but...

Murray: You can't remember the other people, eh?

Leon: No. No.

Murray: What happened after that? That was the last time that you remember Malcolm coming then, eh? Or did he come back after that, after that second meeting?

Leon: Yeah, he come back once again, you know. But I just see him. I didn't even know they had a meeting. I just come from somewhere and I just see him and he was ready to go, you know.

Murray: Oh, I see. He did have a meeting that time but you didn't make it?

Leon: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: So he didn't come after that, eh?

Leon: No, he didn't come after that.

Murray: Can you remember what year that was at all?

Leon: No.

Murray: Pretty hard to remember, eh?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: What happened after that? What did the Metis Society do in Green Lake? What kinds of things was it doing for people?

Leon: Well, really it didn't do much right on the start. It's pretty hard to get people kind of stopped and some of them they try to help them, you know, that...

Murray: It was new to people, eh?

Leon: Yeah, it was new. We never thought of that at all here.

Murray: Did you have meetings by yourselves without Malcolm?

Leon: Yeah, oh yes, yeah.

Murray: How often would those meetings happen?

Leon: I don't remember what happened but we had a few meetings. We tried to raise money, too. We used to put up dances and...

Murray: You'd hold dances and things, eh?

Leon: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: And you would have a dance and it would say 'Sponsored by the Metis Society'?

Leon: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: What would you do with the money that you raised?

Leon: I don't know. Well, we raised a little bit. I was playing there, you know, and I didn't charge much. Only five dollars a night sometimes, you know, and I'm trying to make...

Murray: Fiddle player, eh?

Leon: Yeah, yeah. I remember that. I played a lot for them.

Murray: And everybody came out to those?

Leon: Yeah, yeah. There was quite a few of them.

Murray: Were there any people who really talked badly about the Metis Society, who really didn't like it?

Leon: Well, some of them, yeah. Some of them.

Murray: Who really thought it was bad, eh?

Leon: Well, they just couldn't understand what they were trying to do, you know. But I know there was some of them really against it.

Murray: What about the white people in town? How did they feel about the Metis Society?

Leon: Well, the first time they didn't like it. Not very many would like that, you know. But afterwards, they come to the dance, some of them. They helped a little with money.

Murray: Oh they did. So the white people helped the Metis Society too after. This was after it got started?

Leon: Not really working on it but they come at the hall and they spent money, you know.

Murray: Right.

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: So they weren't helping but they would come to the dances and things?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Can you remember at all what kinds of things they used to talk about at those meetings? Not any particular problems but just what kind of things might be talked about?

Leon: No, I don't remember at all, no.

Murray: Would it be housing maybe, or unemployment? Would that kind of thing be talked about?

Leon: Yeah, I think so, yeah. Yeah, I heard them talk about it.

Murray: Did that Metis Society keep growing right until now or was there a period when it sort of died down a bit?

Leon: Well, after Malcolm Norris moved, you know, it kind of died off. But we started over again.

Murray: So there was a period after Malcolm died or moved to Calgary that things weren't as active?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: How long would that have lasted? A year or two maybe or...?

Leon: Yeah, about two years, yeah.

Murray: And then it started up again after that?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Who started it up again after that period?

Leon: Ah, Bishop.

Murray: Alec again, eh?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Was Rod Bishop involved at the time too?

Leon: Yeah, and then after, Rod Bishop, he took over.

Murray: Right. Was Howard Adams involved at all during that time?

Leon: Yeah, yeah. That's the time, yeah.

Murray: Did Malcolm ever talk about discrimination? Was that something he talked about?

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Did he ever talk about native people being proud of themselves? Did he ever say that to people?

Leon: Yeah, yeah.

Murray: I'm just wondering what kinds of things Malcolm used to talk about, you know. I know it's hard to remember. It's a long time ago. But other people have told me that he would say to people, "Well, you should be proud to be Indian and proud to be Metis."

Leon: Yeah. Oh yeah, yeah.

Murray: Do you ever remember Malcolm talking about the land issue? Was that ever an issue around here about Indian and Metis people getting land?

Leon: Yeah, he talked about land. Well, it's pretty hard to remember. That's quite a while ago, you know.

Murray: Right, right. What's the biggest meeting you can remember in Green Lake for the Metis Society? In those early years, you know, when Malcolm was still around?

Leon: No, I don't remember.

Murray: Would there be 100 people maybe at one of them or would that be too big a number?

Leon: Yeah, just about, yeah. Somewhere around there, yeah.

Murray: Around a hundred, eh?

Leon: Yeah, 'cause I know that a lot of times the hall was just full, you know, and so it must be close to 100 anyway.

Murray: Right, to fill it up.

Leon: Yeah.

Murray: Can you remember any of the people in Green Lake now who used to go to those meetings regularly?

Leon: No, I don't know what - some of them, the old people, I remember. But the younger people I don't remember, yeah.

Murray: Right. You don't remember any of the names of the older people who used to go to those meetings, eh?

Leon: Oh yes, yeah.

Murray: Could you tell me some of those people, their names?

Leon: Yeah, old Bishop and Tony Fleury and George LaFleure and John Kental and old Boyers.

Murray: Boyers?

Leon: Yeah. And George....

Murray: Can't think of his last name, eh?

Leon: No, I can't think of his last name but there was quite a few of them.

Murray: Any Fiddlers go to the meetings?

Leon: Yeah, yeah. Fiddler and Toby, Fred LaLiberte and, yeah, that's...

(End of Side A)

(End of Interview)

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