Tony Wood was an employee of the Saskatchewan government and worked in the northern part of the province. He was associated with the school for prospectors and was a friend of Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady.

HIGHLIGHTS:
- School for prospectors.
- Norris and Brady: their aspirations for the north and for native people.
- Norris and Brady: a contrast in styles.
- Northern elections and the role of political parties.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Tony Wood is a long-time government employee in northern Saskatchewan and worked with Brady and Norris from 1952 to their deaths. In the interview he talks about the prospectors' school established by Norris and its importance. Indicated some of the ideas Norris had for the north that are now implemented. Contrasts Brady and Norris in their approaches to
native people, in arguments in their personalities.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I'm speaking to Tony Wood of La Ronge. Tony, you've been with the government in northern Saskatchewan since the early fifties, and you became acquainted with both Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady. Could you tell me a bit about Malcolm's involvement in the government and what his job was, and what his contribution was?

Tony: Well, his contribution was considerable when you think of the various sort of things he worked in, and the various jobs he had with the government. And he was instrumental in starting the prospectors' school, which now is continued. The school I'm running is a continuation of what Malcolm Norris started. And, of course, I believe that Jim Brady had some input into that. And in those days it was a prospectors' school and the individuals had to go their own routes, and they were not given too much assistance from the government - other than the canoe and equipment and this sort of thing. Whereas now it's enlarged into wages and a three month job or better for the summer, you see.

Murray: Did Malcolm actually start the program? Was it his idea? Do you know that?

Tony: I would say, as far as I know, that it was Malcolm Norris's idea.

Murray: What would be the benefit to the people who took the course? Prospecting, to the layman, at least to me, is a pretty risky sort of thing. How much benefit do you think people have gotten out of that plan and the present plan?

Tony: Well, it's very considerable. After I left the government and went out to B.C., and was in Edmonton for some time, I would meet people from Stanley Mission out in British Columbia. Very lonely, but working, and only working on account of having gone to the prospectors' school and was prospecting out in British Columbia. And no doubt there was considerable amounts from Stanley Mission and other points, to Eastern Canada as well.

Murray: What kind of jobs would they get after they'd been trained at this school?

Tony: Well, it was mostly prospecting in the field which they seemed to love and like very much.

Murray: This would be an individual thing, they wouldn't be working for the companies or would they?

Tony: Yes, they would be working for the mining company.
Murray: I see. So some would be just prospecting on their own, would that be possible? Or would it most likely be...?

Tony: It would most likely be with companies, with various companies. People who had met them here in Saskatchewan and then liked their work and what they were doing and took them out with them out to various places - B.C. and so on.

Murray: Would they receive a pretty good pay for that kind of work?

Tony: Yes, it was good pay for the pay that was being paid at that time. It was very good pay, but it was only some seasonal work.

Murray: What was Malcolm's role in the department at the time? Was he just running the prospectors' school or was he always coming up with ideas, that sort of thing? I'm trying to get a feeling for what he contributed beyond just his particular job.

Tony: Oh, no. Malcolm had many, many ideas about many things and always spoke out on them.

Murray: Can you remember any particular projects or policies he thought should be followed by the government?

Tony: Not right offhand, I can't. (Break in tape) He always looked ahead and he would now be just another three or four steps on, if he was still living, no doubt.

Murray: So he was ahead of his time in terms of what he felt should be done in the mineral field, eh?

Tony: Yes, this is right, yeah.

Murray: Can you think of any other ideas, particularly in the mineral field, that he had and performed?

Tony: Well, it's quite hard to think of them now. It's quite difficult to think of all those things now. If I got talking to some of the old-timers and different people who had had discussions with him, no doubt a lot of these would come up and we would add them up amongst ourselves to bring out all the many things he had and the ideas he had.

Murray: Malcolm was a socialist. Did he ever try and apply his views on socialism to what he thought should be done in the mining field? Or were the two things separate?

Tony: This would be difficult for me to say.

Murray: He didn't talk to you about that that much, eh?

Tony: No. Well, he would be discussing amongst in a group at a party, but it's quite some time now since Malcolm's been
dead, you see. And to just walk in here this morning...

Murray: Right, try and pull it out of your head.

Tony: And pull it out of your head, you know, it's quite difficult, you see.

Murray: Was there ever any talk of the government actually getting into mining and doing the mining itself? Or owning the mines, at that time? By people in the north.

Tony: Oh, yes. Malcolm was for this and discussed this, you know, the government should be getting into it. Oh yeah, definitely. Yeah, Malcolm...

Murray: And Brady as well?

Tony: Oh yes, and Brady as well, yes, yes.

Murray: What about their attitude towards the other industries in the north, the forest industry? Did they have similar views to all resources about the government being involved?

Tony: Yes, the government and the people involved. That was their way and their method throughout. Oh yes, definitely.

Murray: What do you recall of Brady's contribution to the prospectors' plan or was it an incidental part of Brady's work?

Tony: Well, I think it was incidental in most cases. But he was very good with people who he'd be out with, or younger people he would go out with, in explaining geology and mineral occurrences and this type of thing. Brady, Brady was quite good this way.

Murray: He was good as a communicator?

Tony: Yes, this is right, yeah.

Murray: Although he didn't speak Cree.

Tony: No, he didn't speak Cree, but he had a awful lot of patience though, more patience than Malcolm Norris did, you see. And Malcolm had to be up and going steady.

Murray: You had to keep pace with him or he got impatient with you?

Tony: This is right, this is right, you see. And where Malcolm would get more impatient, Brady would have more patience.

Murray: What was the result of that impatience? Did that bother people at all with Malcolm? Did he put people off at all, do you think?
Tony: Yes, yes, I think he did. I think, yes, Malcolm did that. And it was because things wasn't going fast enough in the right direction. And it would make Malcolm very impatient and, of course, this put people off, you see. Whereas with Brady, Brady had more patience and he would tend to talk to people longer and explain more, explain the situation more, and why it was going that way, and why it was going slow. And in some cases he would want things to go slower. Because he understood to change people fast, too fast, caused too much disruption and the people tend to lose interest, you see.

Murray: So you think maybe Brady actually had more realistic understanding of the native people in that sense?

Tony: Yes, I would say. Well, this is difficult. Malcolm understood the native people, but he was so far ahead of most native people and white people himself, that he was so far ahead of them in thought and in action, that this would annoy him and it seemed to create an upset within himself.

Murray: A frustrated man?

Tony: Frustrated, yes. He was so frustrated in trying to accomplish many things he wanted to accomplish and to get people to go along with the idea. And, of course, many things he wanted to accomplish are being done today, and at that time, if they had been done, it would have made Malcolm probably the most happiest person in the world.

Murray: What kinds of things are happening today that he would have liked to have seen then?

Tony: Well, like just in this prospectors' program. After the school we continue on paying them wages and put them out in the field for the summer. And anything they found is staked on behalf of the prospector and the government of Saskatchewan. And these are the type of things Malcolm had suggested many, many years ago.

Murray: I wonder why they were not implemented at that time. Can you speculate about that at all?

Tony: No. This is a very, I'd say, a very touchy subject.

Murray: Right. It was a political decision.

Tony: A political decision, yes. And at that time I was just a conservation officer and very low on the rung.

Murray: So that those decisions would be made considerably up the ladder somewhere?

Tony: Up the ladder, yes, this is right.
Murray: Did Malcolm constantly put that kind of pressure on those people up on the top of the ladder to do those sort of things? Was that part of his activity?

Tony: Yes, I would say that was part of his activity, yes.

Murray: He was always pushing those...?

Tony: Yes, always pushing those, yes.

Murray: What were some of the other things? You mentioned more than one thing that is happening now that Malcolm had suggested. Can you think of other areas?

Tony: Well, you see the crown corporation is formed now. Malcolm would have suggested this years ago, that the government should get into the mining and get involved with the companies as well as mining strictly on their own, if necessary - and also in with the mining companies.

Murray: So this is something that he was suggesting?

Tony: Yes, this is right. At least he thought it was a step in the right direction, which is more or less proven to be so today.

Murray: You mentioned before we started the interview that there used to be lots of social get-togethers where there was all kinds of talk. Can you describe La Ronge in those early years, what it was like in terms of those kind of get-togethers and what sorts of things would be talked about?

Tony: Well, you see, at that time the village was very, very much smaller, and if the weather was bad for several days and aircraft didn't get out, you'd have caught up on your work. There was time for leisure in the evening and to sit around and discuss with people, whereas today the place is much larger, the road goes north. If you don't get things out by aircraft, you can at least drive it north 270 miles. Whereas those sort of things... this was the end of the road.

Murray: So if the weather was bad you were grounded?

Tony: Yes. If the weather was bad you were not only grounded, in many cases there was shortage on aircraft and you had to wait your turn until the aircraft got back. And if the aircraft in some way got called on a fire, you could cancel that day out and say, "Well, we'll go tomorrow." And, of course, that evening you had some time to sit around and talk to people.

Murray: What kinds of things were talked about in those days? Were people of like minds or were there lots of arguments and debates?

Tony: Oh, there was arguments and debates going on, for and against and this sort of thing, you see.
Murray: And Malcolm took part in all those, eh?

Tony: Oh, yes. Malcolm always looked for an intelligent someplace he could talk intelligently with, or get into an argument with somebody over something at any time.

Murray: He liked to argue?

Tony: Oh yes, he liked to argue and he liked to talk about his ideas as well as listen to other people.

Murray: How would you characterize Jim Brady in that same sense?

Tony: Well, Jim really wasn't as excitable, but Jim Brady was very, very intelligent. And you would see them together discussing things and talking things over.

Murray: But Brady didn't like to argue as much as Malcolm, would that be true? Or did he like to talk, too?

Tony: Well, he had a different method, and a different approach at putting across his idea. He would back an idea up with all thoughts and detail, whereas Malcolm would bring out one or two very sharply and say, "Well..."

Murray: That's all it needs.

Tony: That's all it needs, you see.

Murray: So Brady was more methodical and detailed than Malcolm when they argued.

Tony: Yes. I believe when they argued, but quieter spoken and had a different approach. This is kind of difficult to explain. I'm not saying that Malcolm was always in hot water or anything like this, but you knew, if you was going to argue with Malcolm he would put down one, two, three, definite points and say, "Well, what about these?"

Murray: And he'd force you to answer those.

Tony: Yes, and you had to answer those immediately, you see. Whereas Jim Brady would do it maybe in a longer detailed method, you see. And it's really difficult to...

Murray: Would it be that Brady wouldn't always be demanding that you answer those points? Would that be a difference?

Tony: No, I wouldn't say that. Brady wanted answers as well, but he would point out to you that, in something he would point out to you that these points hadn't, they weren't fulfilled there, you see, these points since there was always the discussion on the treaty rights and the Hudson's Bay Company and all these treaties that was made years ago. Well,
for instance, Malcolm would say, "What about all the land the CP got for the railroad?" Whereas Jim Brady would point out, "Well, when the CP come north, see, in order to get them to put the railroad through, they was given this land. They haven't backed down on those deals, and I don't think we should back down, you know, on the rights for the native people."

Murray: A much calmer approach.

Tony: Yes, a calmer approach, you see. Where Malcolm would say, "What about this, this, this, that?"

Murray: Which would you say, or maybe you can't judge this, who was the more effective in their arguments, as far as influencing people, do you think?

Tony: Probably Brady on the local level, but when you get to speaking to groups and going out, probably Malcolm was. Malcolm was heard on T.V. and radio where Brady didn't do this as much, you see. Of course, maybe it was because Brady didn't get the opportunity, or was never asked to do, but on the local level, Brady would probably go further with the people in a community than Malcolm would, you see.

Murray: Yeah. Would Malcolm be more influential with white people and Brady more with native people? Is that a fair assessment?

Tony: Yes, I think that would be. Yes, I think that would be.

Murray: I've heard it said that Jim was more of a native person in some ways than Malcolm. Does that make sense to you?

Tony: Yes, that, yes, yes, yes, yes, that does. That does make more sense, you see. But not only more native. Once you got to know Brady, you knew some of the things he didn't like and that would get him riled up or get him mad, and you didn't discuss those because you know they were genuine problems he had. And as long as you didn't bring up in a discussion, or argue with him about those, you could go on to many, many things that Jim was very, very, very intelligent about. He could forecast many things that were the outcomes of...

Murray: He was an analyzer.

Tony: Yes.

Murray: What were some of the things that you said might have annoyed him, or the things he wouldn't talk about?

Tony: Well, some of the subtle ways in, I believe it's subtle ways, in discrimination and this type of thing that really bothered Brady, I know, when you talked to him. So I wouldn't bring up discrimination. I wouldn't discuss this with him too much in, at any point, because I knew it would
eventually rile him, get him all riled up and he'd get off on a tangent when his intelligence was so more wisely used than bothering about what people had done. His intelligence for the future of the people, and future of many things was far more, oh, to be of far more use. You know.

Murray: Than getting him upset about things that can't be solved immediately.

Tony: Than worrying about small, small things that would get him all riled up about, you see. It was far better off to get Brady on something else, some other subjects, because it was a waste of Brady's intelligence, you see. As you have pointed out, you know, this is correct - absolutely.

Murray: What about Malcolm in discussing things? Were there things that you wouldn't talk to Malcolm about? Or did he approach things differently in that area?

Tony: Well, Malcolm didn't discriminate against no one. Because I know, I can honestly say. I remember getting into an argument with him once, and really getting after Malcolm, but that was because he was sort of arguing about a dock here in town here. And he was going to close the road off and the only person it would hurt was McIver McAuley. And I pointed out that this was one of his blood brothers and that to do this to McIver McAuley would certainly cause him an awful problem. You see, and he was crossing here down the old lake where he can get his trucks up and McIver was running the fish plant and if he went around the other way - if Malcolm cut him off - he'd have to go up that hill, and lots of times he got stuck and spun out on the hill, you see. And I got quite mad at Malcolm. I pointed all this out and Malcolm just steamed out of the office, and of course, he went over to his cabin. And at ten o'clock I went over and I said to him, "Malcolm," I said, "look, are you buying coffee or me buying coffee?" And, of course, Malcolm kind of laughed, you know. He said, "You're just an Indian lover." (laughs) You see.

Murray: And so he changed his mind, did he?

Tony: Oh. But let's face it, he may have been just pulling my leg and seeing how far I wanted to go. I don't know.

Murray: Did he do that sort of thing?

Tony: Oh yes, really, subtly underneath. You'd never know that, you see.

Murray: (laughs)

Tony: Oh, you'd never know that about Malcolm, you see, because Malcolm...

Murray: He'd be testing you, but you wouldn't...
Tony: You wouldn't know it until after you'd been sucked in, see. So we went down for coffee and, of course, I went to pay for the coffee and Malcolm had paid for it. So I told him that wasn't fair at all, just a little argument, you see. But sometimes we'd get into a little argument but it never lasted with us, because he knew basically that I, you know, well I try to never discriminate against them. I always tried to treat other people as I would wish to be treated myself. But at least I think I am. And as long as you did this with Malcolm or Brady, you're okay. But when you started, you know...

Murray: They had no tolerance for discrimination at all?

Tony: No. This is right, this is right. And yet they would fully agree with you that, you know, the reason I don't visit Jones's place because they want all the, you know, all the animals and woods and the leaves is right in the centre of the floor, and I don't want it. But it gives you no excuse not to treat Mr. and Mrs. Jones, or anybody, you see... It's just that you have different ideas so that's why we stay in each others, you know... But to discriminate and say that because they are a certain nationality they are, you know, not people to associate with, this is wrong, you see.

Murray: Let's get a bit into Jim and Malcolm's political life. They were both, of course, very interested in organizing native people, and from what other people I've talked to understand, one of the things they tried to do was to instill pride back into native people. Can you recall that aspect of their talks, or discussions that you had with them?

Tony: Oh, yes this is right, this is right, yeah. Some years ago here there was a - well, I would say it's not over eighty, ninety years ago - there was an Indian chief who lived in Pelican and, of course, nobody knew who he was or what he was; but they had dug up the grave and there was wire wound through his ears, you see. And what used to bother Brady and myself and Malcolm Norris was to see here was an Indian chief who went all through the pain of having this copper wire braided all through his ears and what a proud man he must have been. And here in a period of eighty years, and when you see the Little Hills Indian walk and he is hanging his head and hardly look out of the corner of his eye at you where has that proud gone to, you see. But at the same time I had discussed with Brady, I said, "Well look, Jim, what hurts me is the Indians on this side of the river, the Kitsakie reserve, make jokes about the Little Hills as they walk through there," and I said, "this doesn't help either." And Brady would agree with this, you see. But they had learned this discrimination practice from the white forebears.

Murray: What kind of things did they try and do to get people to have that pride? Did they talk to people...?
Tony: Oh, yeah. Well, these talks used to go on with Brady steady, you know, day after day, night after night, in many places. Brady would sometimes be on these talks and as long as he had a few dollars left he didn't look for any job, because this is what he was doing.

Murray: So he preferred to be out talking to people?

Tony: This is right. And Jim was terrific on a survey, he could do a survey and not miss a detail, and bring many, many, many results in front of you - over and beyond what they... He'd tell you where the guy had been, what he'd done, mostly trapping or fishing, how many nets he had, how many traps he had, and the area he covered in trapping and this type of thing. And as Jim pointed out in real detail, when you pick up a firefighter and you take firefighting with you, why don't you consider where he fishes and how many nets he has? What is it knocking down your fish productions? Why take a good, a real good fisherman with many nets when you can take another fellow that doesn't have any nets?

Murray: So he's always thinking about every aspect of it?

Tony: Oh, every aspect on it in detail, you see. Jim was pretty good at this.

Murray: What was their activity in the CCF? Do you remember that at all? Were they active in the party?

Tony: Yeah, I believe they were quite active. Yes, I believe they were quite active, you know, and worked quite hard at it, you know.

Murray: Was there a large number of people in the CCF at that time or was it quite a small group in La Ronge?

Tony: No, it was always a very small group in La Ronge, very small group. And of course, with the native in many places it was something new and something different, and the native people are very hard to change in their ways and what have you.

Murray: So most of the people would be whites in the CCF, was that true or...?

Tony: Yes, this is right, yes. Yes, this is definitely right.

Murray: What were the elections like in the years that you were here? Do you recall some aspects of the elections? It was mostly the CCF versus the Liberals, I guess.

Tony: Yes, this is right, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Murray: What were the campaigns like in those days?

Tony: Well, the campaign is quite difficult, you see,
because a lot of the settlements that you'd go into, as I remember it, and as I see it now in some cases, you go into a settlement but half of the settlement is out commercial fishing on some island, away up Reindeer Lake in case of Southend, Reindeer. In case of Stony Rapids or Black Lake they're all out doing something on some other lake, Riou Lake. Or in case of Wollaston Road half of them's over on another, Hatchett Lake, fishing, and half is over here. And it's very difficult to campaign in a deal like this, you see. It's also difficult to run an election here, you see. Where the ballot boxes should be?

Murray: Do you think native people at that time voted on the basis of the different ideas of the parties, or was it more a personality thing? How do you think native people viewed the election in those days?

Tony: Well, even to today I don't think - there's hundreds, and hundreds of native people do not know the difference between municipal, provincial, and federal politics. Even right today. And I mean, there's a lot of our white society that doesn't even know the difference. So if you don't know the difference, whatever the voting, it's only for something you might like on T.V., eh.

Murray: Right. It's not a political decision they're making?

Tony: It's not a decision on the future direction of their life. It's on some image.

Murray: So that elections didn't really play an important role in the people's minds in those days, or today?

Tony: Well, I think to a point it does play a sort of an important role, but is it the right importance that what elections are really for, on the subjects and on the direction they really wish to go?

Murray: Right.

Tony: Would you agree with what I've just said about many people and who and how they vote?

Murray: Oh, this is my experience as well. That's, of course, in just the last few years. But I would suspect that if it's true now, it was probably true then as well.

Tony: Yes, you see.

Murray: Did Brady or Norris ever talk about that problem, or did they see that as a problem?

Tony: Oh, Brady did. Brady, this is why he was still steady educating people, steady. Brady would be walking, and walking steady day and night and sitting and talking and talking and talking to people. Brady could see this very, very clear. Well I believe Malcolm saw it too, but just, Malcolm
did not have time for that. He was too busy reading all the magazines, taking all the clippings, finding out what was going on all over the world. Where Brady has seen the root of the problem, was starting from the root of the problem to educate the people in knowing where they wanted to go and what they stood for, and what they voted for, what they wished to vote for.

Murray: So Jim spent a lot of time in people's cabins talking?

Tony: Oh, this is absolutely correct, yes.

Murray: Where Malcolm was busier with his job.

Tony: With his job and criticizing world opinion and many, many, many, and picking all the faults out of some people doing a survey that only done the survey for only one purpose, or one aspect of it, where it should have involved many things, you see. 

Murray: Right. Malcolm was an outspoken person. Did he create any resentment or hostility among people in the department against him?

Tony: I would say, possibly, yes. I would say, possibly, yes. Because, well, he likely irked them. His facts were true, his figures were true in most, most all instances, you see. And this is what really, really got people uptight.

Murray: Because he was right most of the time.

Tony: Right.

Murray: Were there ever any people who would like to have seen Malcolm out of the department? Or who might have tried to get him out?

Tony: Well, I felt very bad when the government changed, and a gentleman from the mineral resources branch asked me to Prince Albert. And when I went in, he told me I was being transferred to Uranium City, and he also said, "Would you come with me." And he walked up and fired Malcolm Norris, or told Malcolm Norris he was being retired. In other words...

Murray: Fired.

Tony: In other words he was being fired in the hospital and I thought it was in very, very, very bad taste that the man could do that.

Murray: According to Allan Quandt he wasn't actually fired when he was in the hospital. That this didn't happen. But that story has gotten around.

Tony: Well, I went with that gentleman to that hospital and
he was saying he was being retired. And what was done after that to hold him off, or what anything, what corners had been turned, I don't know, but I went with that gentleman. And, of course, I guess he'd been instructed to do just that.

Murray: And this was just a few months before Malcolm would have retired?

Tony: This possibly could have been so, and they retired him a little early. Well, I don't think it was worth a few months to retire a man early, you know, you see.

(END OF TAPE)

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