

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: MEDERIC MCDOUGALL
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: ST. LOUIS
SASKATCHEWAN
INTERVIEW LOCATION: ST. LOUIS
SASKATCHEWAN
TRIBE/NATION: METIS
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
DATE OF INTERVIEW: JULY 12, 1973
INTERVIEWER: CAROL PEARLSTONE
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: J. GREENWOOD
SOURCE: SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES BOARD
TAPE NUMBER: IH-134
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 23
PAGES: 21
RESTRICTIONS: THIS MATERIAL SHALL BE
AVAILABLE FOR READING, QUOTATION, CITATION, AND ALL OTHER
RESEARCH PURPOSES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS WHICH MAY
HAVE HERETOFORE BEEN OR WHICH MAY HEREAFTER BE ESTABLISHED BY
THE SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES BOARD OR ITS SUCCESSORS FOR THE USE
OF MATERIALS IN ITS POSSESSION; SUBJECT, HOWEVER, TO THE
PROVISION THAT NO COMMERCIAL PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST OF THE
INTERVIEW IN WHOLE OR IN PART SHALL BE MADE WITHOUT PRIOR
WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE INFORMANT, HIS HEIRS, LEGAL
REPRESENTATIVES OR ASSIGNS.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mr. McDougall is descended from French and Scottish halfbreeds, among them the Lepine family.
- He himself is an active member of his community and has served as school trustee, councillor, church trustee, etc. He is also active in the Metis Society of Saskatchewan.
- The Metis way of life and philosophy.
- Riel Rebellion.
- Memories of WWI, WWII and the Depression.
- Discrimination against native people.

Carol: ...born here in St. Louis here in 1903, and what did your parents do here?

Mederic: Well, my parents just lived on the farm and my dad, to make a living, went out working on the railroad, went out freighting and done all this kind of work. He was never really a farmer but he did farm a little bit, maybe a few acres to raise a bit of grain. But otherwise, he went out working. I remember that he told me that he worked on construction, road construction, worked on the Ferry Hills(?) and things like that. I remember him telling me things like that.

Carol: He didn't have any land, a river lot or any other farm land or anything then, eh?

Mederic: Well, he had a river lot. That is where we lived. Just west of St. Louis here about a half a mile. That was his homestead and that's where I was born.

Carol: But it wasn't enough to make a living?

Mederic: No, it wasn't enough to make a real living out of farming, but anyway, his way of life wasn't a farmer. He just seemed to care more to go out and do work and earn his living in that way.

Carol: And both your parents were Metis?

Mederic: Yes. My mother was a French halfbreed. She was a Lepine and my dad was a Scottish halfbreed, Metis, and then some of them have been traced that they came from Scotland in the years way back but of course, he was a halfbreed. His mother was, her name was Irvin. I wouldn't know her first name but I believe it was Virginia. Maria, rather. Yes, that's right, Maria Irvin and she, as much as I remember, was an English halfbreed.

Carol: That was your father's mother?

Mederic: That was my father's mother, yes.

Carol: And what about your father's father?

Mederic: Well, as I said, on my grandfather's side...(cut off). Well, that is as much as I know, is that my grandfather McDougall was of Scottish descent, but these people came from Winnipeg and came up west here, so, this is how our descendants were.

Carol: What about your grandmother McDougall?

Mederic: Well, my grandmother McDougall, was Maria Irvin and to me she was ...

Carol: Oh, that was on your...

Mederic: On my father's side.

Carol: Oh, I see.

Mederic: Yeah, that was on my father's side. She was, as much as I know, an English halfbreed.

Carol: And where were your parents born?

Mederic: Well, my dad was born in northern Manitoba. But my mother came from Winnipeg when she was about 11 years of age. So, she must have been born in the surroundings of Winnipeg

somewheres.

Carol: Why did they come, why did they leave there and come here?

Mederic: Well, the reason that they came up west was because there was trouble down there. You see, they were living in the neighbourhood of St. Boniface and up in there and this is where the trouble had started in the 1870s. And it happened that my grandfather's brother, who was Ambroise Lepine, was one of the leaders in that trouble, in that uprising down there. So, there was dissatisfaction down there so they figured that by coming up west, I suppose, that they would have more freedom. So they moved up west to the district of St. Louis which was, their homestead was - where my grandfather Lepine homesteaded - was about nine miles west of St. Louis and this is where they stayed. I believe they came up here in 1883, which was a couple of years before the Rebellion, and then when the Rebellion was on, well, my grandfather happened to take part - my grandfather Lepine that is - happened to take part in the Rebellion. And of course, after the Rebellion, he was taken a prisoner because I remember my mother saying that she had went to see her dad when he was in jail but I wouldn't know how long he was in jail. I certainly could have knew all this because I lived with my grandmother, Mrs. Lepine. I lived with her for about six, seven years, something like that, until she passed away. She was living with us when she died. My mother kept her.

Carol: She was living at your house? You weren't...

Mederic: We were living in her house.

Carol: Why was that?

Mederic: Well, the reason was that when my grandmother got so old that somebody had to take care of her, she owned this place. So my mother, we moved the family, my mother and dad and all of us, moved up there on this farm and she took care of her mother until her mother died. And this is how we stayed with her and this was her place until she passed it on to my mother for keeping her.

Carol: How much schooling did you have?

Mederic: I went to grade seven. I took grade seven. And in them days, it was so different to now. I used to walk as far as three and a half miles to go to school. I don't think that I ever had, I would say that the closest that I had to go to school was about two miles in all my time of school. I remember that I had broke the record for attending school. I attended school for two years without missing a half a day of school. And then for that prize, for attending for the regularity prize, I got a book. So, it was just a little encouragement.

Carol: Did you like it so much that you didn't..?

Mederic: I was rather ambitious I guess, but I liked school.

Carol: Did you learn French and English in school?

Mederic: Yes, we learned French. In fact, it seems a little bit queer to me that I still can read and I would say that I never have to write it but if I had to, I could write a letter in French that I think people could understand but I haven't forgot it that much although, I never read too much of it. But I can still read French.

Carol: Who ran the school in those days?

Mederic: Well, in them days it was pretty well the same as it is now. There was trustees. And I would say that the government had the control of the school - in that sense - and we would let in the taxes and then we would get a certain amount from the municipalities and that is how the school was run.

Carol: Were there Metis people that were the trustees?

Mederic: Well, in my time, there was Metis people in certain districts but I attended school in different places of course. When I attended school in St. Louis, there was, I would say the majority were Metis people and then when I moved up west to live with my grandmother, there again it was - I would say there it was pretty well 100% Metis people up around that district. But then I also went to school in Fenton when my dad was ferryman there. My dad was ferryman in 1917, 1918. And I was staying with him because mother was staying with her mother and she sometimes come and visit down there, but most of the time she was staying with her mother. And my dad was running the ferry in the summer and I stayed with him and went to school in that district. There it was mostly English people, English speaking people. Of course, I would say that then people were English speaking people but they were also halfbreeds because most of the people that attended that school were Adams. There was Charlie Adams' grandchildren. There was Colin Adams' two daughters and there was old Mrs. Harris Adams, she was a widow, and she had about four children attending school and then there was only two boys - I was one of them and little Jimmy Brown was one of them, and he was an English halfbreed boy. He was staying with - he was I believe adopted to Alec McLeod. He was staying at the Alec McLeod's anyway but it wasn't their boy. He was an adopted boy or just living there. His name was Jimmy Brown, James Brown is what they called him. So, that was when I went to school down in Fenton district.

Carol: What did you think of having a grandfather that was in jail?

Mederic: Well, to me, I don't mind the idea that my grandfather went to jail. Because if he seen things the way I see them now, if a person has a good reason and if it's

something that was to help in his way of life and in helping his people, helping the people, I don't feel ashamed at all that my grandfather was in jail.

Carol: What about then, though? Do you remember how you felt about it when you were a boy?

Mederic: Well, when I was a boy, it didn't - I didn't feel hurt about it because I just figured well, my grandfather went to jail for this reason and I didn't see that I should be ashamed of it at all. I never felt hurt about it. When I was a boy, it didn't seem to have struck me at all in that way anyway.

Carol: Did your friends talk about that sort of thing much, or...?

Mederic: No, I wouldn't say that they did and I am sorry that we didn't talk more about it because nowadays, I would like to know more about it and I would like to know more of how the people felt about it because it seems that we didn't talk too much about it. In fact, I knew that - my mother told us that she had went and visited him and I never inquired too much about it. It was just we were young and we didn't take too much interest in anything of that kind.

Carol: How were things different then than now? In the way of life and...?

Mederic: The way of life, I would say, was different in a sense. We were more free, I would say, because we used to have a different way of life. It seemed that we had to all work together and we lived together more than we do nowadays. It seemed that we would visit one another and we'd join in and help one another more than we do now. And I would say that it seemed that it might have been because we were mostly all halfbreeds together. We weren't as mixed as we are today. In them days when I was growing up, I was living amongst people that were all halfbreeds pretty well, and I would say that our way of life was a little different. We don't look for the future to try and just try to gather money or something for the future. The way it was - if we would get enough wheat to grind to have flour for the winter for instance, we thought we were well away. We would kill an animal in the fall, butcher a pig or something, and then we thought we were well away. As long as we had a few potatoes and this kind of food for the winter, we didn't worry about having dollars. In fact, we didn't have much dollars, I can say that. We were always pretty hard up and rather poor people.

Carol: Would you want to live like that again?

Mederic: Well, under the circumstances of today, I don't think we could live that way because right away, as soon as you would be in that position, you would be on welfare. Because I know that a lot of people nowadays, that maybe could do a little bit about it but are on welfare and, being that they are on welfare

and get their way of life, they don't seem to be interested in going out and doing these things. I don't know if it is a lack of courage or the lack of ambition but I know that we used to have much harder times. We would get out and go and cut wood and haul wood to make a couple dollars and do these things. Of course now, you see, this is the change of life. You don't have to haul wood. You burn gas, you burn oil, and you burn all this. So it is altogether so different that you don't have

to do these things. And of course in them days, we used to hunt and we wouldn't pay attention to the law. If we felt like going out to kill a jumper, we would go out and try and kill one if we needed one and we didn't take so much chance of - well, it wasn't only for sport really. In fact, it was sport in a way but still we done it more for a way of life. Because I remember that I went out many a day and didn't get anything and I would just have to go the next day to try and make darn sure I got something because we needed meat and that was all there was to it. But nowadays, well, the people don't have to do these things. In fact, they are not equipped the same. We used to always have a couple or three horses and stuff like that and we would go out hunting on horseback and we'd get our game by this kind of hunting. Well, nowadays, if a fellow don't go out for sport, he won't go at all because he won't go out and walk all day like we used to. I have seen times when we used to leave before daylight and walk all day and come back at night when it was dark and sometimes didn't get nothing. We didn't always go out hunting on horseback but sometimes we did. So this is why I say that today, if people have to go out, it is mostly for sport because if it is not for sport, they don't seem to hardly go out at all. So it is quite different from the - but that way of life was, to me, enjoyable because I'll have to say that if the people lived more that way, I think it would be more interesting. Because right now, people just sit and wait for their way of life sometimes. But there is still the odd people that have to do it this way though, so it is kind of interesting anyway.

Carol: What happened if somebody was sick and they couldn't go out hunting or they couldn't - like now, if somebody's sick, will they have better chance of getting welfare or something like that?

Mederic: Well I have to say that as much as I remember of people being sick, when we were sick, we just had to cope with it. We didn't get help from governments because we were sick. We would mostly depend on our neighbor or depend on our family or somebody for help.

Carol: And would they help each other a lot?

Mederic: Oh, that was the only way out. We had no choice. We had to help ourselves or else nothing we can do about it.

Carol: But I mean, say somebody was sick for years or something?

Mederic: Well, if they were sick for years then we just kept them for years that's all. Because I remember that my

grandmother lived with us and I'm sure she was, I'm sure that she was in bed for maybe close to a year or something like that.

Carol: What if it wasn't a relative though? What if it was somebody that had no relatives or...?

Mederic: Well, to me, I would say that in the district that I lived we were mostly all people that knew one another. And it was pretty well all relatives and those that weren't related to us would have their own relation as well anyway. So this was the way of life. You didn't depend on the government or depend on the municipality that much to get help, you pretty well had to fight your way out. In fact, we had a neighbor woman that raised a family and she was a widow and that is the only way she raised her family was by getting help from her neighbors and the way they used to do it sometimes was they used to call this a "bee". If somebody needed help, the whole neighborhood would join in together and in one day they would put in a little crop, put in the field for instance. The fields weren't that big them days but that was the way they would do it. They would just go to work and put the crop in for this woman and that was it. And I remember this Mrs. Rainey it was. And she was a sister to my mother, she was a Lepine also and she used to get right out and dig senega roots and do all these kinds of things to try and earn a dollar to raise her family. So that was our way of life so we had no choice but to help.

Carol: You were talking before about how you used to read to your grandparents?

Mederic: Oh yes, well, you see when I was a young fellow, because I was educated a little bit, and this is grandfather and grandmother McDougall, they couldn't read or write. So it was during war time, 1914 - 1918, and of course, we heard a lot about this war and because I could read a bit I used to go down there with a newspaper and read to them and they were very interested. They used to get me down there and liked to hear me read the news about the war especially. So, to them, it seemed that the war was quite interesting at that time.

Carol: Did most people want to go and fight, most of the men that went or...?

Mederic: Well, no, I wouldn't say that they wanted to go and fight that bad because I had one of my brothers went into the war and I think that it was just a case that they thought they had to go and fight. They pretty well had to in a sense because I remember, I believe there was conscription and when there is conscription, you had no choice, you have got to go.

Because I don't think that the people, for instance, they didn't see no reason that much to go and fight because it wasn't in this neighborhood. It wasn't to defend their own way of life or anything so they pretty well just had to join

the army. That was why a lot of our people went I believe.

Carol: Did most people know what it was about?

Mederic: Well, when you ask the question that people knew what it was about, well, I will have to answer that to me I don't think that too many people know what a war is about there. They just don't know what the heck it is about but they are told so many things that most people are inclined to maybe believe some of these things. So they think that it is their right to go and fight but I think that not too many know what the heck they are going to fight for.

Carol: I sort of skipped the Rebellion, I was just asking how much talk you heard about that and when you were younger?

Mederic: Well, when I was young of course, I say that it is too bad that we didn't know that this was coming up about the Rebellion of - the Rebellion would be so interesting in history as it is today because I could have got a lot of information from my grandmother which was a person that took part in there. She was the wife of one of the leaders in the Rebellion and I'm sure that she could have told us a lot. But, as I say, when we were young, we were not too much interested in these things so I don't know that much but I do know that it was brought up that my grandfather one time, they had to go to Prince Albert, it was in regards to getting in touch with the government. And he was along with Gabriel Dumont that time and they went to Prince Albert and then they didn't get a right answer or they didn't get what they were asking for or something because I remember that it was mentioned that Gabriel Dumont, on his way back he said, "Well, it seems that we'll have to walk in blood." So I suppose that by that, he meant that they would have to go fighting or something. This is why he said this. And of course, I don't know too much about anything about my grandfather in the Rebellion, only that I know that he did take part and they always used to say that he was Riel's right hand man. But then I remember one little story my mother was saying about them. One time when the boat was going by, they went to look over the bank. My mother was just a young girl, about eleven.

Carol: Which boat would this be?

Mederic: That was the Northcote. And they went over to look at this boat going by and all at once they heard the bullets flying by them, you know. And my grandmother, they went over from the bank, they run back and they run into the bush and my mother was taking this as a joke because my grandmother didn't know how much effect a bullet would have I suppose because she had a big bark over her head to cover herself from the shells that was flying. So, it was not much of a protection but I suppose that she thought it was protection. But I remember my mother saying this. So that's the way it was in them days. They had to get under cover because they could have been shot at at any time I suppose. It seemed that it was this way

anyway.

Carol: Do you remember, were there many, when you were younger, were there police around a lot or any troops from the east still here or...?

Mederic: No, not in my time. In fact, when I grew up, well you see, this was something in the past, there wasn't that many cops around and we weren't molested by cops in my young days because we didn't get into any trouble that was, that there was reason for them to come, so we didn't have them come around too much.

Carol: What about the Depression years, do you remember?

Mederic: Well, in the Depression years of course, well, then I was grown up and we were married in 1933, and of course, then the times were really tough. So shortly after we were married then come these hard times and we had to work and when I say we had to work, well, we had to work for such small wages. I remember that I had three children and I was working for a farmer at \$15 a month and we had to board ourselves on this. Of course, he was helping us out by giving us some meat and we were getting some eggs from him and we could also milk a cow for our own use which was of some help, but in them years though we had to really go out for work. Before I started to work on this farm, we had to work in a bush camp and we called this the concentration camp at that time because we had to live in an old barn; that was what we had for sleeping quarters. I'm sure if it was today, that the people wouldn't accept this at all but in them days, we had no choice. We thought we had no choice and I do believe that we, the halfbreeds at that time, should have done something about it. But we didn't dare, I would say, do something about it for fear that we might not get help and that was the way it was worked. If you didn't go to work, you wouldn't get welfare because in fact, I was sitting in the Reeve's office one day and one of the councillors phoned them and told them that this one fellow

didn't want to go to work. Well, he said, "If he don't go to work, he just bloody well won't get no welfare and that's it." So, you was forced to go to work. He had no choice and that is what we thought. But I think that if we would have been organized like we are today, we wouldn't have had to take that, because there was no reason why we should have been forced to go to work in them conditions. In fact, it was I believe, just as much as living in concentration camps in any country as far as that goes because we were forced to go work. We had no choice.

Carol: Was there any heat in those barns or anything?

Mederic: Well, there was heat. There was an old stove and things like that but it was certainly not comfortable. We had to sleep on a bunch of straw and a few blankets. That is the way we had to take it. That was the conditions.

Carol: And how many hours a day?

Mederic: Well, we worked - as far as the work goes, we would start to work I suppose at pretty well, eight, nine o'clock. We weren't forced to such regular hours. We was a little bit free in that way but still, it was very uncomfortable and we weren't too well dressed - especially there were some of them that were certainly not dressed for the conditions of the weather. So it was pretty rough.

Carol: About how many hours a day usually?

Mederic: Well, we would work till dark. In the winter days it was five o'clock when it was dark, so the days weren't that long. But the conditions were rough because we didn't have too much to eat and this being forced to go to work is what makes it bad. That means that our freedom was lost under these conditions.

Carol: And what about the Second War?

Mederic: Well, the Second War of course, I have been always one of those fellows that is deadly against wars so naturally, any war is not pleasing to me but I remember one morning, my four brothers come to my place and they told me, "Well, we are going in to join so you might as well come along with us." and I said, "You fellows can bloody well go, but I am not going," so I stayed home. Well, they were trying to tell me that the people that joined would, after the war, would have good jobs and all this kind of stuff and that if I didn't join that I would never get a job and so, they were making people believe all these things. But as I'm one of these people that kind of

have my own decision, my own mind made up, I decided not to go. To hell with the rest of them, regardless if I had a hard time or not, I wasn't going to go because I have never been of the opinion that wars are any good. I can't see that anybody that is a Christian, that is a good Christian, can abide by going to wars because I am deadly against it and that is what I had against the Second World War because I remembered the First World War. I remembered that the war was fought with the Germans. It was supposed to be that the Allies had won this war and to me, I couldn't see that they had won anything because about 20 years after, here they had to go and fight Hitler, which was the German leader again. So it goes to prove that I think that people shouldn't go fighting wars because they never get anything out of it anyway, as far as I'm concerned. It is only a big cost to the country.

Carol: Were some people forced to go, some of the Metis forced to go?

Mederic: Well, again, there was a lot of our people, the halfbreed people that were living under pretty poor conditions and of course, a lot of people think that anything is better than living under poor conditions so...

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Mederic: Well, some people went because they had such a poor way of life that they had no choice some of them. And I would say that lots of our halfbreed people were living under poor conditions and they thought that joining the army, well, you are always promised that you are going to get a job and you are going to get this and you are going to get that, so they figured that that would be one way of life that would be maybe better. I know that some of our people joined for them reasons. But I don't think that too many of them got that much out of it. In fact, one of my brothers that had went to war, he come back and he wasn't one bit better off because when he come back, he still didn't have a home. And after me staying back from the war, I still had to help him out to get a home so I don't think that anybody gains anything by going to war.

Carol: I know some of the veterans got land or a lower price for land or something? They had to pay less for land?

Mederic: I understand that there was some, oh, I don't know if they call that Soldier's Settlement Board or what it was; I never took too much interest in it and I heard some things

about that. I do believe that if somebody wanted to take advantage of this and knew how to go at it, that it could be that they got some help out of it but a lot of our people weren't educated and by not being educated, of course, you don't know how to get around things and you don't know how to take advantage of these things so you usually lose out and somebody gets the cake. That is the way I have seen it. So I know there are a lot of our people that certainly didn't benefit by going to war anyway.

Carol: Okay, I am going to ask you some things now about today. First of all, about the RCMP and if you think they treat the Metis people any differently from the whites?

Mederic: Well, I haven't had to deal with the RCMP that much but if they treat the whites like they treat us halfbreeds, they must be kind of rough in a way, because the experience that I have had with the cops, and this is only once at my place, was that they come and I would say that they assaulted us because we were having a friendly party and in fact, we were celebrating my birthday and we had a few people here and my son got into trouble in the beer parlour and he had come home and I didn't know about this until I seen the RCMP driving into the yard. And when I seen him drive into the yard, I wondered what in the heck are they coming here for so I mentioned this and then Butch said, "Well," he said, "they are most likely coming for me." So, well, by this time the cops had got out the car and they were coming into the house. So I was standing by the door and the door was open and they were standing in the porch. And then I was talking to my boy in French and I was giving him heck because he had got in trouble in the hotel but I was

talking French and that is where I made my mistake. I should have never talked English, I should have kept talking French and maybe we wouldn't have got into this trouble. I finished talking in English and I told my boy, I said, after giving him heck for having got in trouble, I said, "If there is anything between me and Cushy, you leave it to me." And by this time the cop, he grabbed me by the shoulder and he tore my shirt.

Carol: He grabbed you by the shoulder?

Mederic: Yeah. And when he done this, of course, I just turned and I put him through the door and out he went and the other cop was standing there and by this time my boy figured that they were going to get after me, that he would get into it too, so he started getting after this other cop and my wife and another woman grabbed my boy and they were holding him, so when I come back in, this cop had his gun pulled to shoot my boy because he was standing with the revolver in his hand. So, if

all our people are treated this way, I would say that it is not very nice treatment I am sure because they should have never went this far for the little trouble that had happened. So, I am not too sure but I hear that there is a lot of things that are happening that some of the halfbreeds get beat up and all this kind of stuff. Well, I am inclined to rather believe it because I have seen it by my own eyes what happened at my own place and by this happening in my own place for just the reason that the boy had got in trouble in the beer parlour, I think that this certainly shouldn't have happened here. I should have never had a cop pull a gun in my house to shoot my boy for just a little bit of trouble like this. And this, I'm sure that nobody, these RCMP will not, even if my statement is read any place that they will not deny this because if they do, we have got a lot of witnesses to prove that this happened. So, I am sure that it never will be denied. That is why I say that if these things happen in other places, it's certainly a misfortune to our people to be treated this way.

Carol: What about the treatment of the kids at school?

Mederic: Well, in regards to, I would say, discrimination at school, this has happened. But in our district of course, we are, we were and are still the majority in this district of St. Louis, and by that, we are not discriminated on too badly. We can hold up our own. But I would say that when I was younger, I was going to school, we were always inclined to think that the sisters would take for the French people, the French kids at school. And for that reason, of course, I got into little troubles with some of the boys at school because I was inclined to think that we had a right to defend ourselves and it ended up being that I thought that the sisters were taking for the French boys. Well, that kind of riled us up that much more so we did get into a little bit of hassles on account of that. But, I do believe that there was some discrimination but we didn't suffer too much from the effects of it. I think that we were inclined ourselves to not go to school, especially, not myself but some of them, were inclined to not go to school.

They weren't too interested in school and by that, I think that we brought some of this on ourselves.

Carol: Well, people have told me that this goes on now in St. Louis and some of the other people I have interviewed elsewhere.

Mederic: Yes, I would accept that it does go on. I still believe that there is some discrimination. But I think that it is up to us to get up and stand up for our rights and I think that if we do, they would have quite a hard time to discriminate us. This is why I say that...

Carol: In a place like this where you are a majority?

Mederic: Yeah, in a place like we are the big majority, it is up to us to stand up for our rights and I think that now, we are getting a bit braver. I know that when I was younger, I would have certainly never tried to speak up like we are speaking up now. We are getting to the point where we think that we certainly have the right to defend ourselves and talk up so we are trying to do this.

Carol: What about the treatment by the church officials, the nuns and the priests?

Mederic: Well, to me I can't say that the nuns are trying to not treat us fair but I think that their ways are different to ours. In fact, I know that some have tried to do to the best of their way of trying to help us, and I know this for proof because I was a trustee for many years and in contact with the sisters at the time that I was trustee. It seemed to me that they quite often tried to help our people but, you see, it seems that by doing this, they sometimes don't go at it the right way. They don't seem to know our way of life as well as they should be able to help us. And I think this has something to do with it. I don't think that they are trying to be discriminating to us or mean to us but I think that they don't quite understand our way of life and this is what causes a little bit of disagreement sometimes. As far as the priests, well, the priests don't seem to mix up too much with people. Regardless who they are. So, I don't think that I can say that the priests of our time is discriminating against us. But, as I say, we are getting...

Carol: Again, some people have told me that they spend more time with white people. They spend more time talking to them and if they go and visit them, they stay longer, and if they are sick, they are more apt to get a visit and a longer visit and like this.

Mederic: Well, you see, I happen to be one of those that has taken part in so many things. I have been the church trustee, I have been on the school board and all this, dealing with these people, the nuns and the priests, that for my part, I have been fairly well treated. I suppose that there is some that maybe can say this, that they are neglected a bit but I think that the sisters have been pretty fair to our people.

They'll accept it. As I say, when I was younger I used to figure that they were taken for the French people in place of us and it maybe still is that way yet but I don't notice it so much anyway.

Carol: And what about the social, the welfare people? Do they treat the - is there any difference there in how they treat people?

Mederic: Well, I would say that in my time of being a councillor, that our people weren't treated like the white people. In fact, I know of a case where we had a man that was in cast, he had been operated on and his family was suffering from the want of food. I know that I had to buy milk for the baby for two weeks to help this family out and they couldn't get help and I know that there was another family that was in not near as bad a position, but they were French people and they were getting help. So, I can say that...

Carol: In the same community?

Mederic: In our own community of St. Louis. So, I know that our people at that time, the halfbreeds, because it was even mentioned that the halfbreeds weren't going to get this and they didn't at that time. But today, I don't know. Being that I am not on the council, I don't contact the people too much. I don't know of how many white families that have welfare but I am sure that there is some that have. Because people on welfare sometimes don't seem to want it known so they try to keep it secret as much as they can. But, whenever we have problems with welfare, nowadays, we are so well organized that we can pretty near come up and cope with the situation. Our welfare committee and ourselves can get up and

Carol: The Metis Society....

Mederic: The Metis Society is... I'll say that if we had the Metis Society going as strong as it is today in the times when we were working in this concentration camp (which I call it), we certainly would have done different than what we are going now. Them days I would say that we would have been better treated because we reckoned today in defending ourselves and organizing and things like that, but I can say that we can be thankful to the Society and to our group of people that are organized today to be able to do what they are doing. Because I am afraid that maybe, we would still be treated the way we were because some of these welfare workers, I notice, are pretty rough. But, being that we are organized and I know that when we mention that we are from the Welfare Committee of the Metis Society or a field worker of the Metis Society and things like that, we are recognized much better than we used to be.

Carol: And what do you think about the whole thing about integration? Is that important or not important?

Mederic: Well, to me, I am not against integration if you mean

integration by intermarrying with other people. Is that what you mean by integration?

Carol: Well, okay, that too but what I meant mostly was just mixing. Do you think that is important as far as the Metis people are concerned? Or it is important to the betterment of - you know, in terms of solving some of the problems that they are having like the welfare, problems with the welfare, the school, the RCMP, etc? Or do you think that that's not a very important question and how...

Mederic: I don't think that it's that important. I think that we can hold our own by organizing between ourselves and I don't think that we have to integrate with the other people to have to have a decent way of life. I am sure that we have enough people in our young people and even in the older people that are well enough educated and that can look into these matters of our rights and things like that. So, if we happen to integrate and if we happen to deal with others, I think there is nothing too much wrong with that but I wouldn't say that we really have to, to be able to hold our own amongst the people. I think that we are people today that can defend ourselves, can prove to the government that we have certain rights, and that we don't need to have to go to the white people to have to solve our problems. I think we can do that on our own. So, I am not against mixing but I am certainly not saying that we have to depend on them for our way of life.

Carol: What do you see as the most important thing the Metis can do to solve some of the problems that they have?

Mederic: Well, I think that one thing that they can do is to try and organize in different ways. For instance, maybe in regards to education, they can take interest in education and if they are not satisfied with the way people are educated in certain ways, that maybe taking up different courses or, I don't know what you would call this, but going into, for instance, into electricity and into different ways of making their livings for instance. Well, I think that these are some of the things that they should look into. And by doing these things, we have got some very capable people that wouldn't certainly have to live on welfare for a living. But again, there are so many unemployed that under the conditions that we live, that we are going to have to depend on some way of help because regardless what we do, it seems that regardless who you

are, that there is a lot of people that have no way out but to get help. So, I think that they could maybe, for instance, I would say that they maybe could try and get some way of getting a start. Maybe by getting a grant from the government or some kind of help. It's quite a problem to really go ahead. I know that a person with a family, for instance, that has to start now, it is pretty rough. And you take, like, the way that the Metis and the Indian people were living before, even up in the north. They were depending on this way of life, of hunting and trapping and fishing and things like that. And nowadays, you try to do that for a living and you are up against the wall.

Sometimes you come to a lake that is polluted, you can't fish. You try to get out and hunt, it is with this white civilization, we might say or going into the north and opening up the north in regards to different things such as mining or maybe going into oil fields and like that, well, then the people can not have the same way of life. So there is problems that I don't know just how to solve myself really.

Carol: What do you think the main reason is, why the Metis have more problems than the whites?

Mederic: Well, I don't know. In a sense I would say they have more problems, but there is a lot of white people that have problems also that we maybe don't know too much about sometimes. But I would say that our way of life was to just not try to get down and work and try to gather money or work to try and put things away for the future. So by not doing it this way, then you are pretty well always against the wall. If you need help, well sickness comes on and things like that, then it seems that maybe we have these problems on account of living in a different way. We have a different way of living so it makes it a little more difficult and we are, it seems that the people are kind of oppressed and they get to drinking and there is a lot of our people have the downfall of being drunk. They like drinking, so it makes it pretty rough.

Carol: Do you think that has anything to do with the discrimination that you have talked about by the...?

Mederic: I don't know if it is really the discrimination part of it but it seems that, I suppose maybe you could mention discrimination because I think that some of our people think that they are not treated fairly and by not being treated fairly, they get kind of disgusted and they get discouraged and they kind of go down the drain a bit for that reason. So, it's quite a problem to solve, I'm sure.

I'm certainly proud of what the Metis people are doing nowadays. I am certainly glad to have taken part in the Society for so long. I have been with the Society since the 1930s, since the hard times. And then of course, the Society kind of went down the drain a bit but then again it's, I would say, it is on the uprise and I'm certainly pleased to be one of the people that has taken part in it and to know that we have so many capable people now. It is encouraging to know that we can face the governments and that we can go out and hold our own in a lot of places and in a lot of cases. So this is one thing that I am certainly proud to be, is to be a halfbreed that can get out and say that we are people that are trying to do something for ourselves. I guess that would be it.

(Break in Tape)

I got up and fought with these French guys many a time. Why? Because I was a halfbreed?

Carol: I have got this on by the way.

Person X: Did you know you were a halfbreed when you were, let's say seven years old? Would you know the meaning of being a halfbreed, that was being a less person than the white guy?

Mederic: No, when I was young, we didn't look at it in that way, that we were less or something like that. It was just that we were a group of people and we were halfbreeds and then we run into these other people like the French people. At that time, they were old country French and it seemed that there was a disagreement there between ourselves. We weren't looked at - we didn't think that we were looked at in...

Person X: Did you realize that the halfbreed was, already when you were a young guy, looked down upon by the white people?

Mederic: Well, yes, we thought that. That is why we kind of got on the uprise of it and we used to think that there was a difference there somehow between us.

Carol: Did the French - you know, the French French, treat you any different than the - I guess there weren't any English around here, just pure English, eh?

Mederic: No, it was mostly old country French. There was no English talking people much in them days.

Person X: And they used you as their slaves.

Mederic: You see, the way it was, the old country French at that time were hard working people and you know, they seemed to think that we were, maybe a little different in our ways. We just lived like we live, eh. We have a good time and I remember I worked for one French fellow and I used to take the day off and go to the Batoche Sports in them days which was on the 24th of July and anyway, he used to kind of laugh at me when I would want to go to the sport and about me going. What will you gain by going to the sports, eh? Him, he wouldn't go. He would stay right there and work and he really was a husky good worker as far as that goes.

Carol: How often did you take a day off though?

Mederic: Well, you couldn't take very many days off, I'll have to say that, but I used to take the days off to go to a picnic like Duck Lake or Batoche. When I would come back from the picnic, then the next morning, then he would start laughing at me, "Well, what did you gain by going to the picnic? Did you gain anything? Are you any richer?" And he would laugh at me because I went to the picnic. This is why I say that we had a different way. He would stay right there and try and make the dollar, eh. So, today he is a well-to-do person of course, but I'm still living the same as I did in them days. We live from day to day yet. And if we can earn a dollar, we...

Carol: Still, it sounds like you worked pretty darn hard though.

Mederic: Well, I'll have to say that I used to put in good days working at this place. I used to get up at five o'clock in the morning and I'd finish my day at about eight, eight thirty at night. So, they were always pretty good days.

Carol: I don't see how you can work much harder than that.

Mederic: And I always remember that I - and I still am a slow eater. It reminds me, I used to sit at the table at dinner time and take my time to eat because that was all the time that I had, was the time I sat at the table. When I left the table, then I had to go to work right away. I had to go and work in the garden and hoe up potatoes or sharpen pickets or always try to do something until the horses were ready to go in the field. So this is why I used to take my time and I am still the same. I am a slow eater.

Carol: So am I. I am a slow eater too and I don't know why.

Mederic: But you know, they talk about freedom. I often like to mention some of the things that happen when you are a laborer and in our position. I remember that I lost my job from one place and the reason that I lost my job was because I think maybe I was a little bit bold at times when I got mad. I told my boss that if there was any slaves in Canada, was fellows like me working for fellows like him. So maybe I had a reason.

Carol: No wonder you got fired. (laughter)

Mederic: Maybe that was a reason to fire me but I thought, by golly, I didn't feel too contented that morning so that is what I come out with. I guess it was a kind of a rough statement to make because I didn't last there too long. But I kind of felt that way because I didn't know too much about slavery but I figured, boy, that is kind of rough. If there is anybody was slaves, well, I thought it was me.

Carol: What kind of a job was it?

Mederic: Well, it was working for a farmer and I used to, in fact, I had signed a contract. I am always sorry that I didn't keep this contract. I had signed a contract that I had to get up at four thirty in the morning for a month in the spring and at five o'clock during the summer days and at four thirty again in the fall during the harvesting and at six o'clock in the morning all winter so I had signed this and at the bottom though, there was no set hours to quit so it didn't matter it seemed what time I quit, that was the contract. So, I was always sorry that I didn't keep this contract because I am sure that a lot of people wouldn't believe that we had to do things like that.

Carol: So you worked as late as he wanted you to work?

Mederic: I often worked until ten o'clock at night, but he never told me to stop so that means that there was no limit. I don't know if I had worked for 24 hours if he would have come and stopped me. So this is the time that I - it was during these kind of jobs that I mentioned this being a slave.

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
ALCOHOL				
-abuse of	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	18
DEPRESSION (1930s)	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	10,11
DISCRIMINATION				
-against Metis	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	13-16,19,20
EDUCATION				
-attitudes toward	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	17
EDUCATION				
-day schools	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	4,5,14
FAMILY				
-care of elderly	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	4,8
HUNTING				
	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	7
METIS				
-Red River Rebellion (1870)	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	3
METIS				
-Red River colony	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	3
METIS				
-attitudes toward	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	13-16,19,20
METIS				
-origins of	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	2
METIS				
-political organization	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	16,17,19
POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS				
-Metis Society of Saskatchewan	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	16,17,19
RED RIVER COLONY				
-and Rebellion (1870)	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	3
RIEL REBELLION (1885)				
-accounts of	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	9,10
RIEL REBELLION (1885)				
-aftermath of	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	3
ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE				
-treatment by	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	13,14
VALUES				
-sharing	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	6,7,8
WORK				
-for wages	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	20,21
WORK				
-shared	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	6,8

WORK				
-unemployment	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	17,18
WORK				
-welfare	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	6,10,11,16

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
WORLD WAR I				
-attitudes toward	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	9
WORLD WAR I				
-enlistment	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	8
WORLD WAR II				
-attitudes toward	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	11,12
WORLD WAR II				
-enlistment	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	11,12
WORLD WAR II				
-treatment of returning veterans	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	12,13

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
DUMONT, GABRIEL	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	9
FENTON, SASK.	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	5
LEPINE, AMBROISE	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	3
LEPINE, MAXIME	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	9
NORTHCOTE, THE	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	10
ST. LOUIS, SASK.	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	2,3,5
WINNIPEG, MAN.	IH-134	M. MCDOUGALL	23	3