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LAWRENCE COOK:

Lawrence Cook, a WWII veteran and long time resident of Cumberland House, knew Jim Brady in 1949/50.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Jim Brady: his work in Cumberland.
- Government programs in northern Saskatchewan: those that worked and those that didn't.
- Work of the Legion in Cumberland House.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Lawrence Cook is a long time resident of Cumberland House and knew Brady and worked in community affairs with him. He talks in the interview about the CCF government policies and how the people reacted to them, the Legion, the various Co-op efforts that were tried in Cumberland - including the Credit Union, Co-op fishing, timber operations and trapping, and the government store. The only informant to talk about efforts by Brady to organize a Metis Association in Cumberland in 1949.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I am speaking to Lawrence Cook of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. Lawrence, can you remember the first time that you met Jim Brady and the circumstances of it?

Lawrence: I believe it was in 1947 in The Pas; that's where I

met Jim Brady. At that time he told us he was coming to Cumberland. He came in as a field officer. So we came back from The Pas and he came up on a boat at that time. I knew Jim was a very nice man to get along with. He knew people pretty well.

Murray: Did you work with Jim at all?

Lawrence: No, actually we didn't. I didn't work with Jim but he was a field officer and he was, well, he was a native field officer. The first native field officer we had was Jim Brady. And actually I didn't work with Jim but he used to come up the camp there more or less patrolling and Jim was well liked. Yeah. And that summer we worked at the farm. This was the time they were building this experimental farm here.

Murray: The CCF was doing that was it?

Lawrence: Yeah, it was the CCF government in power that time. And we worked there all summer, me and my brother. And Jim used to go around taking pictures. In fact, I think I've still got a few of those old pictures that he took. And then he used to go around to each family and ask the people if he could name the babies. This is what he done. He named a lot of babies, newborn babies.

Murray: He'd pick the names for them?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. He'd pick the names for their kids.

Murray: What kind of names did he give, do you remember?

Lawrence: Oh, I don't remember. Anyway, he had some pretty hard names to remember.

Mrs. Cook: He named one his own name, Jim Patrick Brady.

Lawrence: (Chuckles) So, I don't exactly remember how long he was here. I think he was here for a couple of years.

Murray: I think he left in 1951. That's what other people have remembered.

Lawrence: Yeah, somewhere around that time. We used to go to the DNR office. They used to call it the DNR office at that time; now it's the DNS. But we used to go to the office down there. We used to get a bunch of boys and we used to sit around and have a meeting, you know. He started up this Credit Union. Of course, that was something new to us. And finally got it going and then we started this co-op fishing. That was all his ideas, you know, Jim. All his ideas. We started on this fishing co-op and it still carries on today. And, in fact, we went to Prince Albert. We went with Jim; he was the one who took us to P.A. And we went to a course there for one week.

Murray: This was for the fishing was it? The co-op?

Lawrence: Yeah, fishing on the offshore boat, how these co-ops work, you know, like the co-op store.

Murray: How many people from Cumberland went to that series of classes?

Lawrence: There was four of us that went. Five with Jim Brady.

Murray: And the government paid your way for that, eh?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, we got room and board. Actually we didn't get paid but our room and board were...

Murray: But your expenses were...

Lawrence: Yeah, paid for. But we went up by boat from here that time. That was before the Squaw Rapid dam. We got as far as Squaw Rapids and from there we got in a car there. They come and met us there with a car.

Murray: Oh yeah. You say that you quite often would have little meetings in the DNR office. What kind of things would you talk about in those meetings?

Lawrence: Well, this is what mostly he talked about was his Credit Union. How people could help themselves to start up this Credit Union. He'd lecture, you know. He'd do all the lecturing and tell us what it's all about and then we got pretty interested in it. Of course, we just come back at that time from overseas, you know. We were, and Jim himself, I think he was a veteran. And I suppose he wanted to do something for Cumberland, you know. He didn't want to come and stay here just as a field officer. He wanted to get something done for the Cumberland people.

Murray: Community development, that sort of thing.

Lawrence: That's right. And actually, he ran a logging camp here one winter, too. And after that then he left. He must have stayed here about two years, I guess. At the most, I think, two years.

Murray: But did he influence people quite a bit in those two years?

Lawrence: Yes, he sure did. Yeah, he sure did.

Murray: What do you think people learned from Jim Brady? I mean, not just the specific things like the Credit Union and things, but did they learn something more from him about community development than...?

Lawrence: Yes, I think so because from there on we worked on different things. Like they got the residents to start farming and things like that, you know.

Murray: And the co-op fisheries.

Lawrence: Co-op fisheries.

Murray: Those things have lasted all this time then?

Lawrence: Right, yeah right.

Murray: What happened to the Credit Union? It didn't last too long?

Lawrence: No. You see, what happened there is that non-members were the ones that were looking after the Credit Union, the books. You see, people were just borrowing money right and left and not paying the money back was what happened to our Credit Union. And by the time we knew what was going on, it was too late. So we had to disband that Credit Union.

Murray: It went broke?

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Did the government put money in to start with? To help the Credit Union?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so.

Murray: It was just the local people.

Lawrence: It was just decided by the local people after Jim had talked to us and told us what it was all about. We made good use of it, you know, as long as you got the honest people in there. But as soon as you get the people that's not too honest about things like that, well something had to go, you know.

Murray: So people just wouldn't pay back.

Lawrence: No, that's right, yeah. And we felt pretty bad about it too. I think Jim felt pretty bad about it because he was the guy behind this thing.

Murray: Do you think he viewed it as his own failure?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

Murray: Did other people think it was his fault?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so. I think we had to blame ourselves for this. We had our board of directors, of course, but I suppose we weren't active enough on that project. Actually, I guess we were a little green about it to start with. That's the size of it.

Murray: You were lending out more money than you should have.

Lawrence: Right. Yeah, this is true, yeah.

Murray: Do you remember the co-op sawmill that Jim started? Could you give me a bit of history about that? How long it lasted and how many people worked for it?

Lawrence: Well, I think it lasted about four seasons, you know. And actually I really don't know much about this because I didn't work there but I know a lot of boys worked there. And they done a lot of hard work in that place.

Murray: They worked year round?

Lawrence: No, it was just a seasonal operation. But, and there again, I think it was the people that failed, you know. It was not Jim's fault; it was the people that failed. Sure, we had some good workers in there but some workers just didn't cooperate the right way so we could make a success out of it.

Murray: When Jim left do you think he was pretty depressed or upset about these things, like the Credit Union?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so.

Murray: Do you know why he left?

Lawrence: Well, in the first place, I think Jim got fired from the job. I think that's what happened.

Murray: Or he got forced to quit or something.

Lawrence: Yeah. And I think he made up his mind he was going to go and I think this is why Jim left. And then from here on then he went to La Ronge, and then we heard here that they disappeared. I think today it's a mystery.

Murray: Yeah.

Lawrence: What happened, nobody knows.

Murray: Nobody knows, yeah.

Lawrence: But I'm sure that all the people that knew Jim got along with him, he was a nice man to work with.

Murray: Did people see Jim as a leader in Cumberland House?

Lawrence: Yes, I think people realized it. Because, see, Jim had an education; he was a pretty educated man old Jim. You see, he come from Alberta, I think.

Murray: Lac La Biche.

Lawrence: Yeah, Lac La Biche, that's it. This Tompkins, you know, he used to work for the CCF government too. And I

suppose that's how come that Jim Brady got this job. He got this job and then he came to Cumberland. But as far as we know, everybody liked Jim. I don't think Jim had any enemies in Cumberland when he left.

Murray: Was he active in all kinds of community things?

Lawrence: Well, I think pretty well he was because as I said that Jim was all over, trying to get the people going and try and develop this. And I think Jim was all behind this, you know. We know for a fact that he was the guy that started out all these projects.

Murray: Was he interested in education as well?

Lawrence: Yes, he was pretty well interested in education. I guess he could only do so much too when he was working for the government. He was limited. But I knew Jim would have liked to see more done for Cumberland and have people do more for themselves.

Murray: Was that part of his message all the time, that people should do things for themselves?

Lawrence: Yeah, that's right, yeah. That's right, that's how Jim was. See, I suppose where they came from, that's what they were doing in Alberta, you know.

Murray: Not to be dependent on government or other things.

Lawrence: That's right. Do things for ourselves; try to help ourselves.

Murray: Do you remember much about the Legion just after the war? What kind of activities was the Legion involved in? What kind of things did it do for the community?

Lawrence: Well, we were involved very much in recreation. We were involved in recreation and, well, we were involved in pretty near everything in this community as far as the Legion is concerned. I think the Legion has done a lot for the community. Now like these students, when the students go out to high school - you know, high school in The Pas - we used to give them some money to pay their way out. And the first of July, we would donate money, and New Year's celebrations, we'd

donate money. And anything that the people asked from the Legion we would do it. We would buy hockey outfits for young kids, for young hockey teams. And sometimes we hold banquets, you know. Or they hold courts there. That's where they hold their courts now twice a month, the RCMP. We have the facilities, like we have a phone there and everything like they want.

Murray: Would people come to the Legion for help if they had problems?

Lawrence: Well, not exactly. We helped the members out. We help the members out if they're in need. Like, if they want to go to the hospital or if their families want to go and see them in the hospital, then we help these victims. And then of course, what they call these wakes, when the people dies, we donate something to make sandwiches with or... Of course, I think it's part of our duty as I said that. The money we make in the settlement, well, it just circles around and comes back. It comes back here. And then we have picture shows twice, two picture shows. Bingo, we have bingos twice a month. And when a veteran dies, we have a wake in the Legion.

Murray: It was mostly helping veterans then, eh?

Lawrence: That's right.

Murray: Would you ever help people who weren't veterans if they needed help?

Lawrence: I don't think it's our policy to help people that, you know, that... As I said, we help the veterans out.

Murray: But as far as the movies and things were concerned, that was for everyone?

Lawrence: That's for everybody, that's right. That's for everybody, yeah.

Murray: Would you say that the Legion was sort of like a Metis Society in a way in those days?

Lawrence: Yes, it is, you know. I guess there is only two native branches in Canada and this is a native branch, you know. But we have outsiders join our Legion. Like we have a manager here that is managing a lodge here; he is in our branch. And then we have another guy from, what do you call this place now?

Mrs. Cook: Carl Creek.

Lawrence: Carl Creek. And then we have a guy that's running the cafe there; he's in our branch.

Murray: Are these white people?

Lawrence: Yeah, white people, yeah.

Murray: After the war it was all native?

Lawrence: It was all native, yeah. And actually where we started this branch from, we had a field officer by the name of Joe Johnson. I wonder if you heard about his name?

Murray: I've heard his name. Everybody mentions his name.

Lawrence: Yeah, in fact, they got his picture up in the Legion

there. And he was the guy that started us off on this, you know, to organize this native branch. And we had quite a few white people in our branch. And I think which is nice.

Murray: Was Joe Johnson, he was a white man was he?

Lawrence: Right, right. He was a field officer here. He was the guy that organized this branch. I understand there is only two native branches in Canada. There is one in Ontario someplace, you know. And I think we had somewhere around 39 members to start with but, you see, a few of them have passed away now and I think we've only got about 22 members now.

Murray: Was Jim active in the Legion?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. He sure was.

Murray: He'd come to the meetings?

Lawrence: He joined our branch so he could come. Yeah, Jim was very active in there.

Murray: How often would you have meetings?

Lawrence: Once a month. You would have a meeting once a month. That's when we get together because it's pretty hard to get together. Like I'm a trapper and..

Murray: People are all over the place.

Lawrence: That's right. And I'm a fisherman. And I was a secretary and a treasurer for seven years, I think, for the Legion.

Murray: Did Jim ever hold any positions like that or was he just a member?

Lawrence: No, no, he was just a member, an ordinary member.

Murray: Do you remember him speaking up at meetings? Was there anything that he thought the Legion should do or they should start doing?

Lawrence: Not exactly. But I suppose when we were having a meeting, you know, he used to, well he had his say.

Murray: Like anyone else.

Lawrence: That's it.

Murray: Is the Legion as active now as it used to be?

Lawrence: Well I guess it's still active but as I said we're...

Murray: Not as many.

Lawrence: We're kind of thinning out. We've lost four or five of our members now, passed away, you know. But, well actually we're not as active as we used to because it's so hard to get your members to pay up their dues. Now, this is not the only place that this happened to; this is pretty well all over. But we consider that we're still hanging on, you know. I don't exactly remember, anyway there was about eight of us that was awarded those 25 years pins. And we had about three or four life members. So we still feel that...

Murray: You're an active...

Lawrence: Active, that's right.

Murray: Did Jim ever talk about politics at all? To you or in a group that you were in? Like in those meetings?

Lawrence: No. No, Jim never talked about politics.

Murray: Could you figure out from what he said, what his politics might be?

Lawrence: No.

Murray: Would you have known whether he was a CCFer or a Liberal or...?

Lawrence: I know he was a CCFer. We know that. He was with the CCF.

Murray: But he never campaigned for the CCF in Cumberland?

Lawrence: No, he never did, no.

Murray: Were there any elections in Cumberland while he was here?

Lawrence: Ah, that I don't remember.

Murray: He came in 1949 and left in 1951. There probably wouldn't have been any provincial elections.

Lawrence: No, no. Because, in fact, I can remember, we were still in England when they had the election, you know. Well, we were voting over there.

Murray: Yeah, in 1944.

Lawrence: Yeah.

Murray: Right.

Lawrence: And when we came back, there was something new to us, the CCF government.

Murray: Did Jim ever talk about the need for a Metis

Association or Metis Society?

Lawrence: Yeah, I think he did do that. I guess in fact, this is where it all started, you see. From Alberta and when they moved to Saskatchewan then, him and this old Tomkins and...

Murray: And Malcolm Norris, eh?

Lawrence: Yeah, Malcolm Norris, yeah. That's the guy I'm talking about. Malcolm Norris. In fact I think they were the guys that organized all this things, like in Alberta when

they, when Malcolm Norris was there. Jim and this old Tomkins, Peter Tomkins,...

Mrs. Cook: He formed a local here didn't he?

Murray: Malcolm?

Mrs. Cook: Yeah. A local society.

Lawrence: Yeah. Well, you see, they were the guys that worked on this, that started the people. This Metis society, like they called it the Metis Society. And of course, and I guess it took a long time before they got organized.

Murray: What was the first year that they started organizing? Do you remember that?

Lawrence: Oh, there I don't remember.

Murray: (to Mrs. Cook) Would you remember what year that was they first started to organize?

Mrs. Cook: It was 1949.

Lawrence: 1949?

Mrs. Cook: 1949 because I was the secretary then.

Lawrence: Yeah, probably around there, around 1949.

Murray: It was that early, eh? Was that Jim that organized that?

Lawrence: Yeah, that was Jim and Malcolm Norris.

Murray: What about in 1964? That's when the present Metis Society was first organized. Do you remember Malcolm coming through then as well?

Lawrence: Beg your pardon?

Murray: Did Malcolm come at that time?

Lawrence: No, no, no.

Murray: You don't remember him coming in 1964?

Lawrence: No. See, at the time they had that what they call them Batoche Days, we went down there and Jim Sinclair then was running as the president. But Jim Brady wasn't there and neither Malcolm Norris wasn't there.

Murray: How often did Malcolm come to Cumberland House?

Lawrence: Not too often. Oh, he must have come around maybe once a year.

Murray: And when he was coming he was still working for the government was he?

Lawrence: Right, he was working for the government.

Murray: What would he be in Cumberland for? What would he be doing?

Lawrence: Oh, I suppose he talked to people just like Jim there trying to put the people wise, you know. How to work at things, how to work things.

Murray: So it could be for quite a few different reasons?

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: When the CCF came to power and started putting in all these programs, do you think the people appreciated them? Did most people support the CCF or were there some who were suspicious?

Lawrence: Well, I guess there was a lot of people who were suspicious and there was a lot of people that believed in them. But I don't know. We feel that the CCF had some good points and they had some bad points. I suppose every government is like that in power.

Murray: What do you think the bad points would have been?

Lawrence: Well, really they enforced a lot of laws that it's pretty hard for the people. Of course, I guess back in the depression years, you know, we didn't pay no tax or income tax or - of course there was no work anyway. And then when the CCF government came into power then from there we knew what income tax meant and we knew what taxes meant and I guess that's... a lot of people figure that... I suppose they took it the wrong way. But I guess we pretty well have to because we knew we got away with it and we can't always get away with things.

There was one guy asked me from Regina, he was a teacher from Regina and he says, "Do you people pay tax?" And I says, "Yeah, we pay tax like you. I pay like you. I pay everything." And he thought that was kind of funny. So "Yes," I says, "I'll tell you the difference. What they call the treaty people, they don't pay their licenses. They get a free

permit or they can kill a moose anytime of the year and..."

Murray: As many as they want, eh.

Lawrence: That's right. But I says, "Me, us people, what they call a Metis, I can't do that." I says, "I can't go out and kill a moose. By golly, I'll get pinched." I says, "That's the difference."

Murray: Do you think that that made people angry or upset that the treaty Indian could shoot when he wanted to and the Metis couldn't?

Lawrence: Yes, I suppose we don't feel right about it because after all,...

Murray: You are all the same people.

Lawrence: Yeah, we're the same, you know. They're Indian people and we're Indians, and we can't get out and kill our moose anytime we want to. We'll have to pay for our license.

Murray: When did that first start? That rule? That the Indians could shoot anytime but the Metis couldn't?

Lawrence: Well, I suppose that started 100 years ago when the Queen of England... That's the way I understand it.

Murray: So did you have to buy a license and things even before the war?

Lawrence: Oh yeah.

Murray: You did? You couldn't just go out and shoot anytime?

Lawrence: No, you have to get your license and you have to get your trapper's license, you have to get your bird license, you have to get your moose license.

Murray: So that's been going on for a long time.

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Before the war, even before this.

Lawrence: Yeah, before the war, yeah. Well, there is a few of these things the people are upset about. Like the CCF government lay down a compulsory program that we had to sell our fur to the fur marketing service. Which I think it wasn't fair for the trappers. And probably in some way, things are all right; some way it's not. Sturgeon fishing, we only get 6000 pounds a season. And when we get that 6000 pounds, that's it. They cut it off. I think it's good thing for the people but a lot of people don't like the idea.

Murray: Do you think a lot of people were against it because

it was....

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Lawrence: ...know what it had done. It was all right but see, what the people didn't like at that time, you had to sell your fur there. And to top it off they were pooled, (inaudible). You don't get any more even if you got nice fur. You paid for somebody else's fur, you know.

Murray: So it doesn't matter what the fur, you get paid for a number of pelts.

Lawrence: Yeah.

Murray: Not the quality.

Lawrence: That's right. Well, this is (inaudible).

Murray: Because some had better fur than others.

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Did people feel cheated then, do you think?

Lawrence: Well, I suppose. Take for instance, the muskrats. If you got a nice bunch of muskrats and another guy comes along and he gets the same price for those muskrats whether they are big or... and then the other guy that's got good muskrats, then he didn't get any more for that.

Murray: So there was no incentive to get good fur.

Lawrence: No. See, that's all in the past now. Like, they said we can ship our fur wherever we want to sell them. Sell them locally here, ship them out.

Murray: How long did the compulsory thing last?

Lawrence: I think it just lasted one year.

Murray: And people complained about it and they changed it, eh?

Lawrence: That's right because the government realized that the people didn't like the idea and they had to do away with it.

Murray: Right. What about the co-op fishing? Did that work out better?

Lawrence: Yes, it did because before this co-op fishing started, you used to sell sturgeon here locally in Cumberland or we'd take them down to The Pas and we only get 10 a pound

for sturgeon. And since we got this co-op, since it started, the prices came up. Because we had our agent. Like the Co-op fishing, that's our agent for fishing. They find out where we can get the best price for our fish. Most of our fish is shipped out anyway to Winnipeg and from there the sturgeon is shipped to the States, I understand. Now we get \$1.75 a pound for sturgeon.

Murray: \$1.75?

Lawrence: \$1.75 a pound compared with 10 a pound back in the thirties. But probably, if you were still fishing locally as a private fisherman probably wouldn't have got that price yet, you know.

Murray: So the co-op has really helped.

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: What about the government stores? There was a government store established here in Cumberland too, eh?

Lawrence: Yeah.

Murray: What did people think of that?

Lawrence: Well, it was all right, I think, for the people. We had, of course, the Hudson's Bay

and in those days we had small buyers, you know, small store-keepers and then they started to pull out and all we had was the Hudson's Bay. And I'll tell you, the Hudson's Bay can rob people on their own fronts, when they have the advantages.

Murray: When they were the only store, prices went up did they?

Lawrence: Yeah. So we asked the government if they could put a store in Cumberland and they did put a store in Cumberland. So finally they told us that they were going to sell our store to the co-op and turn it into a co-op store.

Murray: Did people think that was okay?

Lawrence: Yeah, it was the people who were satisfied with it. And this is the way it still carries on today.

Murray: When you say you asked the government to put in a store, how did you ask them? Would you have Jim Brady ask them or would you ask them directly? How did that happen?

Lawrence: No, no, we got the officials in Cumberland, to come and have a meeting with us.

Murray: Oh, I see.

Lawrence: This is how we got it started.

Murray: Do you remember the names of any of those officials?

Lawrence: I knew quite a few. I think Quandt, Mr. Quandt was one of them. He's in La Ronge now. And Joe Johnson of course. He's a field officer now. And Earl Dodds. You know Earl Dodds?

Murray: Yeah.

Lawrence: Yeah, quite a few.

Murray: Jim Brady around in those days?

Lawrence: Jim Brady was around.

Murray: That must have been before Jim Brady came to Cumberland.

Lawrence: Right, oh yeah, yeah that was before that.

Murray: That was right after the CCF was elected.

Lawrence: Because they had the store at the DNR office that time.

Murray: Oh, I see, so it was there already when Jim got here.

Lawrence: Right.

Murray: Did they sell all the same amount of stuff that the Bay did at first or was it not as big a selection?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so. But see, a lot of people moved to the government store enterprise here. They wanted to get away from the Bay.

Murray: Most people thought the Bay was giving them a bad deal then?

Lawrence: Right. This is true because you need another store here and we had to get our store. And if you could realize that they got to the other store, it was good for the people.

Murray: So they supported the CCF on that part?

Lawrence: That's right. They supported the store; they supported the government.

Murray: I heard that in 1948 - and this is a story I'm not sure is true so you could maybe tell me - that there was a lot of resentment against the CCF and that in 1948 they voted against them and that the government then stopped some of the services. Do you remember that happening at all?

Lawrence: Ah, no. No, not exactly.

Murray: I heard that in 1948 the Liberals won the two northern constituencies.

Lawrence: Yeah.

Murray: But you don't remember anything about some of the services being cut off because of that?

Lawrence: No.

Murray: It may not be a true story.

Lawrence: There is one thing I can say now that our native people are involved in a lot of government jobs today since these - I don't know whether to call them NDP or CCF. We got a lot of our native people involved in government jobs now,

which didn't happen before. All the jobs, all the employment here, like all these new buildings that's going up, it's all done by our local people, you know.

Murray: All built by people who live here.

Lawrence: The local people, eh. And they don't need any outsiders to come here and fill our openings. (Inaudible)

Murray: Do you think that over the years people got more skilled and more educated and that's why they're working now?

Lawrence: Oh, I think so, I think so.

Murray: Could they have done those jobs back in days of the CCF do you think?

Lawrence: Beg your pardon?

Murray: Do you think they could've done all the jobs they're doing now back in those....

Lawrence: Oh yeah, if they are given the chance.

Murray: But they were never given the chance.

Lawrence: They were never given the chance. This is what I mean, you see. We're given the chance now. And I think there is some reason why that's - sure there is a lot of people that doesn't appreciate what the NDP's doing, but there is a lot of people appreciate what they are doing for our native people now, see.

Murray: So they are giving native people a chance to run their own lives, eh?

Lawrence: Right, that's true. Yeah, that's true.

Murray: And you think that that wasn't true with the CCF?

Lawrence: Well, I suppose some people look at it that way but I think it started when the CCF was in power because this is

where our local boys were working for the DNR crew.

Murray: So the CCF sort of started that?

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Getting native people to run their own communities.

Lawrence: That's right, it's all started there.

Murray: That's what the co-ops were about I guess, eh?

Lawrence: Yeah. All started with the CCF.

Murray: There was the period between 1964 and 1971 when the Liberal government was in power. Did they make any changes in any of the programs?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so. Not very much if they did.

Murray: They left things pretty much the same.

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: Did you think their government was worse or better or about the same as the CCF before?

Lawrence: Oh,...

Murray: Can you think of any changes at all that...?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so.

Murray: They didn't cut things off, any programs off or anything like that?

Lawrence: No, no, no.

Murray: Were they harder on welfare, the Liberal Party, do you think, the Liberal government? Or were they about the same on that too?

Lawrence: No, I guess they were about the same. Now I think this is one thing that the welfare didn't cut down a lot through. As I said the NDP government is getting our native people involved in all these jobs. This cuts down welfare a lot. Because I watch the television and I read the papers that... You take up north, for example. The welfare is cut, maybe in half, I don't know. Not as many people is on welfare as they used to be, because people didn't get a chance to get jobs. And when they wanted something done for the house or anything like that, then it was push a bunch of outsiders in here and then they were the guys, the people that were making the money, not the locals.

Murray: They'd bring construction workers from the south to

build the houses.

Lawrence: That's right, that's right. But since they started this program that the local people get the first chance at everything now, this has cut down the welfare a lot. I think which is good.

Murray: So it's a lot better now?

Lawrence: That's right and I think it's good for the people because I know a lot of people would rather work than go on welfare. I know I was on welfare one year I was sick. I didn't like the idea of drawing welfare because I'd rather work and make my own living than draw welfare. Yes, they cut down on welfare a lot. Oh, naturally there is people that's on welfare but this happen anyways.

Murray: Right.

Lawrence: Some people are handicapped or sick or...

Murray: Can't work for some reason.

Lawrence: That's right.

Murray: Do you remember when welfare first came into Cumberland? When did they first start paying welfare?

Lawrence: Yeah, well this was back in the thirties. In fact, if I could remember.

Murray: That was relief for a short period then, eh?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah, and we used to go and work. We were building dams or we used to build roads around the settlement here.

Murray: It was relief work then?

Lawrence: Relief work, yeah.

Murray: But that wasn't quite the same as welfare, eh, because you worked for that?

Lawrence: No, no, because we worked for it, you see. But like, a single man would get so many days to be on the job, say a week. And then they put you off and then they'd give a married man a chance. Of course, they didn't make much those days.

Murray: Just enough to survive.

Lawrence: Just enough to get by.

Murray: When did they start paying welfare, the kind of welfare, like social aid where you didn't have to work to get it?

Lawrence: Well, I suppose 1945-46 it started here in Cumberland House, paying welfare out. The amount of people that was on welfare in 1945-46, that's down more than half today.

Murray: There were a lot of welfare then, eh?

Lawrence: Yeah.

Murray: Is that because there just weren't any jobs?

Lawrence: Well, there was no work for them to do and so there was no jobs. And then at that, when you were employed, you were just barely making ends meet because we weren't getting the money then, the kind of money.

Murray: When was the toughest time that you can remember in Cumberland House?

Lawrence: Oh, the toughest times I guess was back in the thirties.

Murray: That's when things were toughest, eh?

Lawrence: Yeah, back in the thirties. You couldn't buy a job. All the jobs we could do is fighting fires because it was pretty dry, like the summers, you see. And all we were getting was 15 an hour to board ourselves. No, 15 an hour and board. And if we board ourselves we get 20 an hour.

Murray: Right. When was another tough time?

Lawrence: Oh, I guess that's those three summers that I remember. That was the toughest.

Murray: That was the worst?

Lawrence: Yeah, that was toughest I'd say.

Murray: Was it pretty tough after the war too or not so bad then?

Lawrence: No, everything changed after the war. Everything was booming here.

Murray: So there were lots of jobs then, eh?

Lawrence: Lots of jobs. And muskrats, muskrat prices were good. Everybody was making money.

Murray: What year would that have been?

Lawrence: That was in 1945-46.

Murray: You said earlier that there was quite a bit of welfare in 1946. Maybe it, was it later then and...?

Lawrence: Well, you see what happened, a lot of people don't care to trap anyway. Just like a lot of people don't care to work.

Murray: So those were the people who were on welfare.

Lawrence: They don't do a thing but get welfare. And naturally the people that's left you know, like widowers or women that were deserted by their husbands with kids and that. And now, I don't think anybody wants welfare as long as they are capable to work.

Murray: Can you remember, this is getting away from the other topics we've been talking about, but the role that the churches played in Cumberland over the years?

Lawrence: Beg your pardon?

Murray: The church. What kind of things did the church do in Cumberland?

Lawrence: For the people?

Murray: Yeah, besides religion. Did they help organize things too?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so. I don't think they were involved too much in, for instance, to try and organize things like that.

Murray: Were they back years ago? Like in the thirties or forties at all?

Lawrence: No.

Murray: Did they encourage people to stay in Cumberland and put their children in school? Is that something they did?

Lawrence: Ah, yes, I think that's one thing. The churches were helping to make sure these kids get their education. And of course, I suppose that's part of their work, to help people.

Murray: But you can't remember them doing anything else besides the school and church itself?

Lawrence: No.

Murray: I've heard one person say that some people didn't approve of Jim because he lived with a woman that he wasn't married to. Do you remember if people were upset about that sort of thing?

Lawrence: Oh, I think so. I think so but, well, I suppose actually I suppose that was up to Jim, you know.

Murray: That was his business.

Lawrence: That's right, yeah.

Murray: But were some people angry with him for that?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so. Not that I know of.

Murray: None of the people you knew were.

Lawrence: No.

Murray: That didn't bother anybody.

Lawrence: No.

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
DEPRESSION (1930s)				
	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	21,22
FISHING				
-commercial	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	15,16
FISHING				
-regulations	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	15
FUR TRADE				
-modern	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	15,16
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY (H.B.C)				
-monopolization by	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	17,18
HUNTING				
-regulations	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	14
HUNTING				
-rights	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	14
INDIAN-PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS				
-Saskatchewan	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	13,18
METIS				
-Indian nations, relations with	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	14
METIS				
-political organization	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	11,12
POLITICAL PARTIES				
-CCF/NDP	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	11,13,18-20
POLITICAL PARTIES				
-Liberal	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	20
TRADE				
-cooperatives	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	3-6,16
TRADE				
-government stores	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	16,17,18
TRADE				
-marketing boards	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	15,16
WORK				
-job creation	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	19
WORK				

-welfare	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	20-23
WORLD WAR II				
-Canadian Legion	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	7-10

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
BRADY, JIM	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	2-7, 9- 13, 17
CUMBERLAND HOUSE, SASK.	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	2-24
NORRIS, MALCOLM	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	11-13
PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	3
SINCLAIR, JIM	IH-363	LAWRENCECOOK	75	13