

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: WILMA MOORE
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS:

INTERVIEW LOCATION:

TRIBE/NATION: NON-INDIAN
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
DATE OF INTERVIEW:
INTERVIEWER: MURRAY DOBBIN
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD
SOURCE: SASK. SOUND ARCHIVES PROGRAM
TAPE NUMBER: IH-396
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 96
PAGES: 38
RESTRICTIONS: NONE

WILMA MOORE

Wilma Moore was a teacher in Saskatoon who was involved in the organization of a Metis Society in the 1930s and 40s - the Saskatchewan Metis Society.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Early days of the Saskatchewan Metis Society.

(The material on this tape is vague and repetitive. The informant appears to be confused and forgetful and has misplaced any documentation she had about the Society. It does not appear to be a useful source of information.)

Murray: I'll start by asking you when you first got involved with the Metis people and the Metis Society in particular? Do you remember what year that would have been?

Wilma: No. I don't remember and I'd have to check up on that. Now, if I'd had a little warning that you were going to come, I'd have spent a day going over it. But I haven't done anything.

Murray: Do you still have some of the documents from those days or just...?

Wilma: I have but I haven't got them here.

Murray: Oh, I see.

Wilma: I haven't the book here or anything like that.

Murray: Well, you know, I'll be here until Friday or Saturday. Maybe, would it be possible for you to get it in a couple of days or is it...?

Wilma: No, I don't think it would be because I left it in a locker in Prince Albert.

Murray: Oh, really.

Wilma: Yes, our home is there you see.

(Break in tape)

Wilma: ...we were busy. We did a lot of work and organizing and that's what really, that's what... Now, the Indians have never really achieved anything very much at all until that society - and that Metis Society was really quite a wonderful society because the men and women all joined it. We didn't publish very much. We just held meetings, but we had large meetings.

Murray: How many people might have come to your meetings?

Wilma: Well, it depended on the meeting and what we were going to do. We had big meetings with important people coming and whatever place we took would be full. We were never short of people attending. One trouble is, in a thing like that, you can't do anything without spending money and there was nobody interested, no funds. Absolutely no funds. And I had to find... and we managed one way and another. I've even forgotten... I'd have to take some time to think up the people again.

Murray: The ones who were involved with the Metis people.

Wilma: The Metis people that I was with, you see.

Murray: Mr. R.O. St. Denis?

Wilma: Oh yes, he was one of our officers.

Murray: And a Mr. Vandale?

Wilma: Oh yes, the Vandales, too.

Murray: And there was one other name. Fred De Laronde.

Wilma: Oh, yes. Fred De Laronde was the best of the three of them. He's a good fellow.

Murray: In terms of leadership, eh?

Wilma: Oh yes, in every way. Some of the others were... a lot of them, they had a bad start, you know. They were never looked after. The Indians were looked after, the white were looked after but they were let to dangle. And they were...

Murray: Sort of a forgotten people?

Wilma: Well, more or less.

Murray: What would be the largest number of Metis to come to a meeting? Would it be a hundred maybe?

Wilma: Well, it would all depend. If it was a picnic, there would be more than that.

Murray: Right. But for an actual meeting?

Wilma: For an actual meeting, oh, I'd be afraid to state without...

Murray: An approximation is all I'm after.

Wilma: Well, you'd have a big room and it would be full. And the executive did practically all the work, you know.

Murray: There was a handful of leaders who did most of the work then, eh?

Wilma: Well, I kind of got away from it and I'd have to get my thinking cap on and get my connections in my mind again. I'm always very busy at something and I forget how it was I started that thing. I was just trying to think. I've had to think that up, too.

Murray: Would that be in your documents as well then?

Wilma: No, no.

Murray: Just a matter of thinking about it, eh?

Wilma: Yes. There was not too much documentation because a lot of them couldn't read you know, and that. And the ones that ran it, like DeLaronde and St. Denis... he liked to be in the limelight very much. And he was good in his way but he wasn't one of the heavy workers.

Murray: What about Thomas Major, do you remember him at all?

Wilma: Who?

Murray: Thomas Major?

Wilma: Oh yes, Majors, I had forgotten about them. I kind of forgot all...

Murray: He was from Regina, I think, or Lebret.

Wilma: Yes. Well, they were down... they weren't very near us, you know. We had a lot of large meetings but we didn't have those itemized as our executive or our workers and I haven't been thinking about it at all lately.

Murray: We could talk about it for a little while and then maybe I could come back on Friday or something and you could think about it between now and then. Would that be helpful? I could do that. We could chat and whatever you can remember we can talk about but I can come back, too. Maybe on Friday if that would be...?

Wilma: What about next week?

Murray: Well, I'm going back Saturday.

Wilma: Back where?

Murray: To Saskatoon.

Wilma: Oh, oh you're in Saskatoon.

Murray: That's where I live, yeah.

Wilma: Oh, what are you doing there?

Murray: Well, I'm just writing a book. That's all I'm doing right now is writing a book on these two men.

Wilma: On which two men?

Murray: Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris.

Wilma: Malcolm?

Murray: Norris. I don't think you...

Wilma: I didn't know him very well.

Murray: You might have known Jim Brady. You wrote him a letter in 1943.

Wilma: Yes. He wasn't one of our real background workers though.

Murray: No, he was from Alberta when you wrote to him. I think you had probably left Saskatchewan when he came to Saskatchewan.

Wilma: And I didn't know him too awfully well. Our executive was not a large executive but when they called meetings, I had a long list. I don't know where they... that's what I'm trying to think up, where in the world that list of the membership was.

Murray: How many members in the whole province would there have been?

Wilma: Oh, I don't know. We had a lot of members.

Murray: Would it be over 1000 do you think or can you remember?

Wilma: Well, I didn't have a thousand names but that didn't say too much for it because...

Murray: It was informal.

Wilma: We had a big... it was very informal. But we had a small working executive. And this small working executive had to find the funds and everything, you see. And so, we didn't spread it too much. You couldn't spread it where you were providing the funds and you're working for your own living and...

Murray: Didn't have time to..

Wilma: Pardon?

Murray: Didn't have that much time to devote to it, I guess.

Wilma: Well, no. That was the whole thing. Well, I spent a lot of time on it, no question about that. And then my brother was a Presbyterian minister in the Indian work, too, at the time. Well, we might as well go into my room.

Murray: Oh, okay.

(break in tape)

Wilma: Okay, in sort of work that was just working amongst them. And I've forgotten the names too, you know. I'm not a very good person to come to right now. I'd need a little time to ruminate on it.

Murray: Well, I can...

Wilma: It gets out of your...

Murray: Sure, if you don't think about it....

Wilma: Especially, I'm always busy. I'm not one of these that lie around.

Murray: Right.

Wilma: Things have to move.

Murray: That's right. I agree. Well, maybe I can ask a few questions and we'll see what we come up with. I'm wondering if 1937 was the year that it started? Does that seem...?

Wilma: Well, I can't tell you. It was when you started on the dates that I began to think I'd better...

Murray: Right. That's difficult.

Wilma: I can't... I'd have to compute and it would take me too long to...

Murray: To do right now.

Wilma: To do anything for you.

Murray: Right, right.

Wilma: Because so much depends on everything, you know.

Murray: It's too bad that you hadn't gotten that letter. And then you would have known I was coming, yeah.

Wilma: Well, my letters went astray. No, I didn't know you were coming.

Murray: Right, right.

Wilma: My letters, I don't know. There was a spell there that they were very irregular. How did you address it?

Murray: Oh, I addressed it to you here. At this building.

Wilma: Oh, you did.

Murray: Yeah.

Wilma: I should have got it then. When? How long ago?

Murray: Oh, I'm not sure. I'd say probably two or three months.

Wilma: Well, it doesn't matter. It can't be helped.

Murray: No.

Wilma: And there is nothing very much at stake there.

Murray: No. One of the things that I'm wondering was if you ever took the brief to Ottawa, the one that was done by Noonan and Hodges, the two lawyers? It was a brief that the two lawyers from Regina drew up for the Metis Society.

Wilma: Yes, I remember that brief.

Murray: You were going to take it to Ottawa. I'm wondering if you ever did.

Wilma: Yes. Oh yes, oh yes. We certainly did. But nobody had very much success with Indian work. If you took Doukhobor

or took Germans or took anything under the shining sun,
Hottentots even...

Murray: But not Indians.

Wilma: Okay, but they never have, that's why I took it on. Because there were a bunch of people that were clever but they were living on the roadsides. And, oh, my brother's congregations had a lot of them and I had a lot of them in one way or another. I was teaching then. And I just forget how it was that I just crystallized and said, "Well, we'll just organize something." But I had been working with them quite a little while before there was any organization at all. Of course, we lived amongst them, my brother and I. I went up every weekend to the mission to take the singing and look after the music and the playing the organ in church and all that sort of thing. I kept it right out that way. And then quite a lot of the halfbreeds, you see, the Metis as some called them, they came and we had a lot of them in the congregation.

Murray: This was in Saskatoon was it?

Wilma: Then it just grew out of it. There wasn't any ordained plan but it just...

Murray: A natural development.

Wilma: Yes, and I just haven't got my finger on the tape. I've forgotten the names. I had a secretary's book around somewhere but, I don't know, I was looking for it the other day and I can't see it. And you know, people here in this part of the country, they don't seem to mind, they don't care a hoot about things. You look after your books yourself and that's it. Look after them.

Murray: But you still have that book somewhere?

Wilma: I haven't found it yet. I'm watching for it. I think it was stolen. I went out one Sunday afternoon. I left it. That particular part of it was about that thick, typed, and I left it on the dining room table and I went out for a walk. When I came back, it was gone. Now, that was a great loss. And I don't know what happened. Somebody come in and I didn't have the doors locked and they came in. I suppose they thought they'd wait, someone that knew me. But evidently they knew me too well and they thought they'd just pick up the book. Probably intended to bring it back.

Murray: Right, and forgot. I'm wondering, when you went to Ottawa, did you go with any of the Metis people?

Wilma: Oh yes, there was a delegation that went down.

Murray: Do you remember the names of those?

Wilma: 'Zero' was the result of that.

Murray: Who did you meet with? A government minister or...?

Wilma: Oh yes, we had, (chuckles) with all the frills.

Murray: The red carpet treatment, eh?

Wilma: Yes, definitely. But that was it.

Murray: Just the treatment, nothing concrete.

Wilma: Oh yes, yes.

Murray: Do you remember who you met with?

Wilma: Well, no, if I had time. This was only half, not even half. I have about two or three hundred files and if I had time to go through them... I'm doing a little work on that myself now. Not the Metis alone but other things drawn into it. And I wanted some of that material and I... well, I just got lazy. I've been lazy on the job. I worked hard at it and then I just said to myself, well I'm through for a while. I'll start some more again.

Murray: How long did the meetings in Ottawa last? Did you just meet for one day or...?

Wilma: Oh no, we had a week down there. No, we had (chuckles)... We were in the council chamber with all that long, long tables there and were lined. We had quite a crowd of them, you see. And that was quite the expense, too.

Murray: Who paid your way down to Ottawa? Did the government pay the way?

Wilma: I'm trying to think about that. Now you know, it's a long time and you forget that sort of thing.

Murray: Sure, it's a very long time ago.

Wilma: Especially, I never considered that very important. I don't remember. I'm afraid that you'll think I'm not very much help.

Murray: No, you're very helpful. In fact, you see, I didn't even know that. I knew that you had planned to go to Ottawa but I never knew that you had or not.

Wilma: Oh, yes. Oh, we certainly did.

Murray: So you are helping.

Wilma: We certainly did. We were entertained royally by the uppity-ups down there that were interested in northern Canada and in, particularly, the Indian and Metis.

Murray: Was it a government minister? Was that who you met with, government ministers?

Wilma: Oh yes, we had. Yes, it certainly was.

Murray: More than one or was it just one minister?

Wilma: Well, we had a long table and we had a good representation lining both sides of it.

Murray: Was that the same year that the brief was completed, that you took it to Ottawa?

Wilma: I guess it would be.

Murray: I know that, just to see if I can jog your memory, that the brief was completed in July in 1943. That's when it was turned over to the Metis Society. And I know from a letter of yours that you were planning to take it to Ottawa in August of that year.

Wilma: I'd like to see some of those. If I saw those letters of my own, there is no question that a lot of the things would come back to me. You haven't any?

Murray: Well, I don't have them here but I do have them in Vancouver.

Wilma: Is there anything that is in them that is solid fact or anything of that nature?

Murray: Well, I'll tell you. The only letters I have are two of your letters to Jim Brady. He was in Alberta at the time.

Wilma: Oh, he was the member of parliament?

Murray: No, no. He was the secretary of the Metis Association in Alberta. And you had written to him because that organization had been successful in getting land from the provincial government in Alberta. And you were inviting him to Saskatchewan to a meeting of the society because at this meeting you were planning the delegation to go to Ottawa. And

that's the only letter I have of yours. I don't have the actual letter, I just have a copy of it. But in the letter, you told Jim Brady that a delegation was going to go in August to Ottawa.

Wilma: If I saw the writing of my own, I mean...

Murray: This is just typed.

Wilma: The way I put it, it would relate.

Murray: Yeah, well I'll bring it back to you on Friday.

Wilma: Anything you have, if you brought it. Just a few words here and there might be the string that would take me along it. For years I haven't thought of the thing because I've been very busy with other things. I was in politics and goodness knows what not.

Murray: Right. Do you remember when you went to Ottawa, whether it was summer or winter?

Wilma: Oh, it wouldn't be... well, I don't know. I don't think it would be winter.

Murray: Probably summer or fall maybe? It's hard to remember isn't it? I'm just trying to get an idea of when it might have been. I suspect it must have been that same year that the brief was completed, 1943.

Wilma: The sad thing is that somebody wanted that, apparently. And that brief was stolen.

Murray: There is a copy of it in the archives in Regina.

Wilma: Where did they get it?

Murray: I don't know. But the government had a copy of it. Back in 1943.

Wilma: Well, I'd like to see that. If I saw that, I think I could probably.. I don't know now. You see, after that I went smack into politics. I spent my time and my work and I did a lot for the Metis people. But the thing is that the government never, never were good to those Metis people. They were not and it was very hard to get anything out of them. And they had to be good to the Indians because there is a treaty with them.

Murray: Right. But the Metis were left out of it.

Wilma: Oh, and how.

Murray: You say you got directly into politics after that? Was that with the Liberal party? You were in the Liberal party, were you?

Wilma: No, it wasn't. I belonged to the Liberal party. They got very lackadaisical and lazy and I didn't like the attitude to this, that, and the other.

Murray: Including the Metis.

Wilma: Oh yes, oh yes. Including, always including, at that time, in that period and it has been ever since. We have connections with the Indians and the halfbreeds. Well, my brother has especially. It's too bad you didn't come when he was here because...

Murray: I thought he would be. I didn't realize...

Wilma: Well, he has been but Rev. Donovan asked him to go down for a week of holidays down there and he went down for a week. Then, when he was supposed to come back, he phoned to say that he wasn't coming back until this coming Saturday, Friday or Saturday. He didn't know just which day. He said Donovan wanted him to stay a little longer. I don't know why. Anyway, I got that word this week, you see. But if he'd been here, I think he could have jogged my memory a little bit because I had to depend on him quite a bit for the toting around. He had two cars at the time and I had a car; that was three. And we were busy, kept them - oh, the roads, you see, there is no - that was another thing. Now, any place you go, you can get a main road that's paved. Well, you didn't. When you started out, you never knew whether you were going to sink over your wheels in mud or not. And I very often did.

Murray: You mentioned that you were dissatisfied with the Liberal party. Did you then join another party?

Wilma: Yes, I walked out of it. I never stayed in anything... They got very... well, I don't like to say very much about them because when you walk out of a party, you just shut your mouth and that's the way I did.

Murray: Did you join the Conservative party after that?

Wilma: No, I didn't. But we organized one of our own and that was where we did all our work then.

Murray: What party did you organize?

Wilma: Well, I'm just trying to think what..., we had really, honestly, we had about... I had about three on the go and I had to, now and again, I had to get them amalgamated, this and that. It was a drifting population. They were living on the road allowances and every old place you could imagine, and starving, most of them. Now that's the fact of it, terrible though it was. I have to laugh when I think of it. (chuckles) There are some very funny episodes there if I had time to think of them. But it was quite a thing you know, the Metis organization in Saskatchewan. Really registered. And it would have registered more if I had kept on with it. But...

Murray: So you were never a member of the Conservative party, just a member of the Liberal party?

Wilma: I'm trying to think. That's why I'm talking to you about one thing and I'm trying to think of something else.

Murray: Right.

Wilma: My family has always been Conservative. That's why I mentioned Conservative. My brother is a Conservative and never will be anything else. But if I didn't like the way the Liberals or the Conservatives acted, I didn't think the

Liberals were quite fair to the Indians and I hopped out of it. I was president of the Women's Liberal at the time for the province. Well no, first vice of the province. And of all the Saskatchewan business, I was president and so I was very busy at the time. And kept busy with one thing or another. But the thing was, we didn't have money.

Murray: The Metis Society.

Wilma: Yes, but Mackenzie King helped us out once. I went down to Ottawa. I took a trip down there. I said to myself, "Now, I'm getting nowhere fast here with them." Because nobody knew anything, nobody wanted to touch anything. Frightened of everything, every little thing. Oh, but we this and that. So I took a trip down and I didn't phone Mackenzie King until I was in Winnipeg because I didn't want any bystanders around there to sort of put the kibosh on it. You never know. And so when I got as far as, where was it, Winnipeg I think, I sent a wire down that I was coming down to see him. I knew him well and he'd think twice before he refused me anything. I was very careful not to ask for anything but we got a lot from him.

Murray: What sort of help did you get from him?

Wilma: Oh, all kinds. Not too much money but we did get grants of money and we had a treasurer. Well, we had a regular organization and everything went through the funds but we had so many expenses and so much to do that we never had enough money to do what we planned to do. But there is one thing, the Metis Society would never have been in Canada anywhere if it hadn't been the work we did on that. That was the beginning, the foundation, and the end. Everything.

Murray: I'm wondering, I want to get back a bit to that brief. What did you think of the brief? Did you consider it a good brief?

Wilma: I considered it quite a good brief. And it had a lot of things that I would like now, of information of dates and names and all that sort of thing. And with my work, I'm different than most people. You can ask them and they can

rhyme over. But I was doing a lot of things, various organizations, and I was a great success at it but I didn't do it the way most people do. When I took on anything to do, I did it. And then when I got through as far as I wanted, for the time being, I threw it out of my mind altogether. And then, when I was ready, I'd pick up my notes and my minutes and anything I had and read it. Then I'd know where I was at. I'd begin all over again.

Murray: Right. So if you don't have those minutes it's difficult to remember.

Wilma: No, I haven't, I don't know what happened to them. One book. It was about that thick. Oh, I had one big book that

got lost. I suspect, and I still suspect, that someone took it.

Murray: This was in Saskatchewan was it?

Wilma: Yes, in Saskatchewan.

Murray: Well, you mentioned that you had some papers in Prince Albert, in a locker in Prince Albert.

Wilma: Yes, I had, and I used those after that.

Murray: Those are still there, are they?

Wilma: No, I gave up the locker and that's what I've been... While I'm talking to you, my mind has been divided, trying to wonder what did happen to some of those. And I still don't know. I went overseas, you know. I got an appointment to the embassy in Paris and I was there three years and I had quite a good experience there.

Murray: Did you leave Saskatchewan after the war?

Wilma: Oh, yes.

Murray: That was right after the war ended, eh?

Wilma: No. What was the date you have? 1937?

Murray: I have... 1937 was the date, I think, when the Metis Society was first registered with the government.

Wilma: Yes, I think so. 1937, I think that was the date. And then, well, we had a secretary-treasurer. I mean a secretary. And I'm trying to think too, who he was.

Murray: Not Martin Knutson?

Wilma: Who?

Murray: Martin Knutson?

Wilma: Yes, that man was a member.

Murray: Or maybe Ed Klein?

Wilma: Ed what?

Murray: Klein?

Wilma: Yes, that name is familiar.

Murray: But you were secretary after 1932?

Wilma: Well, I was just whatever it needed. If I had to be president, I was president. And I was president part of the time, but I liked to have them in office as much as...

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Murray: ...Historical Society.

Wilma: Yes.

Murray: And did some research for the Metis, I think.

Wilma: Yes, he did some of that and...

Murray: You knew him?

Wilma: Oh yes, I knew him quite well.

Murray: Was he in the Liberal party?

Wilma: He was just whatever came handy, I think.

Murray: (chuckles) So he wasn't active in the Liberal party then?

Wilma: Well, no. Well, no, no, he wasn't really one of the Liberal party men at all. But I believe he was Liberal.

Murray: He would have voted Liberal then but not active as a party member?

Wilma: Oh yes, I think so. I went Independent myself, you know.

Murray: Right. This was after you were dissatisfied with the Liberals.

Wilma: Yeah. (chuckles) Well, they deserved it, if anybody ever did. They had been in power a long time and all they cared about was getting the graft, whatever they could pick up, and they picked up an awful lot. And I was just so disgusted and all these Metis around doing nothing and not having anything, nobody caring for them. That's when the Metis gained their self-respect. It started right there.

Murray: With the Metis Society, yeah. That was the first time, I think.

Wilma: Well, it's the first time that I've known. Well, yes, I knew things pretty well, too. But you don't like to go putting that in print because it looks as if you're putting a crown on your head or something. (chuckles) Oh yes, they laughed at us. One of the first meetings that I had of that, after we organized, (chuckles) if you'd seen us, you'd laugh too. As it was described to me, I was going down the hill, that hill in Prince Albert that's on, what is it, second...?

Murray: Second Avenue or Second Street.

Wilma: No, it's that steep hill. Down from the hill, down, the second and then third and fourth, around there somewhere.

We were going to have a meeting or they'd had a meeting, I forget which. I suppose I could think it out. And we were going down the hill and (chuckles) somebody phoned me, "We saw you going down the hill today. What motley crew was it you had following you?" (chuckles)

Murray: This was the Metis.

Wilma: (chuckles)

Murray: That was other peoples attitude.

Wilma: It made me so mad. That's what I'm laughing at. How angry I was. And then somebody phoned me. I said, "Never mind, you'll be laughing on the other side of your face before this is over." And that proved, too. I don't like to say it but I wouldn't want this put in. This is the way I'm going to tell you, but this will give you an idea. You see, when I'm going to give anything, I have to turn it over and say, "No, I must not say that or say that." There is a lot of that where you're dealing with Metis. An awful lot of that. And some of it you're not too sure about, you see. Repeating what one said and another said and all that boom bah and such. So, you have to be careful and if you have plenty of time, you can sort it out. But if you're talking, you just talk as you were doing, it sounds kind of awful. We were going down the hill this day and I had about half a dozen following me down to a meeting. (chuckles) That was the beginning.

Murray: You lived in Prince Albert then, did you?

Wilma: Yes, but it was so funny, they had it in Punch, a picture of this winding down. I didn't like it very well, and (chuckles) oh dear, there was a lot of that. But the Metis, they were very loyal. They stuck by it in everything. And if we had had money to go on... I had used up what spare cash I had and then you can't do anything if you haven't the cash. And the government weren't ones for giving anything. They give to the Indians what they had to, but badly. But they did destroy the Indians rather than help them and, of course, I made a point of that on every possible occasion. The government turned down. They got so mad at me because I quit the Liberal party. (chuckles)

Murray: So they didn't appreciate your talking. There was some hard feeling, I think, between some of the Metis in Regina and some in Saskatoon. Do you recall that at all?

Wilma: Yes. I don't know what happened to that book. I just don't know.

Murray: But you do remember that? There was some hard feeling between some of the Regina and southern Metis and Saskatoon Metis?

Wilma: If I had the names of the people, it would come back to me.

Murray: Well, let's see, there was Joe Ross. Remember his name at all?

Wilma: Well, his name is familiar but...

Murray: Tommy Major and Joe La Rocque?

Wilma: Oh, La Rocque, yes La Rocque and De Laronde. De Laronde was a fine fellow.

Murray: He was from Mont Nebo.

Wilma: He was, and he really was a reliable man. I could depend on him to the drop of a hat.

Murray: Why was there that hard feeling, do you remember?

Wilma: No. I'd have to... if I got an inkling, I'd be able to follow it out.

Murray: Well, the way I understand it is this, that in 1942 the Metis Society, which was at that time mostly Regina people, was very inactive. And you started it up again in Saskatoon but the people in Regina felt that they were still the executive. And what happened, it was at a meeting in Saskatoon, there was another executive elected and I think that the old executive in Regina felt that that was unfair. That was my impression.

Wilma: Well, there wasn't too much of that during my regime. I don't remember just when that happened. Whether it was after I gave it up or before.

Murray: This was at the time that you were involved in it because it was 1942.

Wilma: Yes, but if I knew just what, at what period, I could link it up with the men and then I'd know.

Murray: Well, I'll tell you. The man who was president of the southern, when Regina was sort of in control, was Thomas Major. And then at the same time, Mr. St. Denis was elected in Saskatoon.

Wilma: Oh, St. Denis. Now there, there's a name. Is he living yet?

Murray: No.

Wilma: No. Well, he didn't help us very much.

Murray: St. Denis.

Wilma: No. Unreliable.

Murray: Someone said he had a bit of an alcohol problem. Is that..?

Wilma: Oh well, a lot of them had that. They were a lot better when we had this organization going. For the first time in their whole lives in history, they were men.

Murray: Was the main concern of the Metis to get land? Was that what they wanted most? Or were there other things they were concerned about?

Wilma: Oh, we had the whole thing. Oh, we covered quite a lot of territory. But land was one thing. I considered that if the Indians were given reserves, these people definitely had a right to have land. Well, that's one of my pushes. And that kept the Metis very loyal because they wanted it, too. But then, the government were not helpful. They hated the Indians; they had to do it with the Indians. And they hated the halfbreeds. They didn't want to do and they were all starving.

Murray: So basically, did the government ever do anything for them?

Wilma: For the Metis?

Murray: Yes. Once the organization was stronger?

Wilma: Well, (chuckles) they did one thing that I remember. I wanted to go to Ottawa to try and push something through, something that we'd worked on a lot and that would hold water. And, oh I was so annoyed.

Murray: Did Ed Klein go down with you?

Wilma: It's just coming back. This particular episode, to let you see what a miserable lot they were, the party. No wonder I kicked the bucket and got out of them. And they, oh, they were furious at me. The Liberal party never rose again. And I came across one of the... that man in a great big stomach of a fellow with a...

Murray: Thatcher?

Wilma: No. In Saskatoon and, well, his name will probably come back to me now. I can see him, visualize him. And I hadn't seen him since all this. And his head, oh yes, (chuckles) he was head of the Liberal party and I hadn't seen

him since all this went down. I said I'd forgotten about it

and I forget his name but it'll come back. And I said, "Oh, Mr. So and So." I went to shake hands with him and be pleasant. I'd forgotten all about the thing that was the rumpus and row. It wasn't in my mind at all. And so I said, "How are things with you?" "Well, as well as can be expected, thanks to you." (chuckles)

Murray: So he didn't think you'd helped the Liberal party very much.

Wilma: No, I certainly had to step out of there. I didn't have to, because you can sit in, but I decided that I was getting nowhere fast that way.

Murray: Was that mostly because of the Metis issue?

Wilma: Oh yes, altogether. Oh yes, oh yes.

Murray: Was the Conservative party any better as far as the Metis were concerned?

Wilma: I didn't get into the Conservative party because they were too stuck up. They, at that time, they were few in number and didn't have much influence anyway and they weren't what I considered really working hard. And there was no use bothering because I'd have had to build up the Conservative party. The Liberal was already built up beautifully. All I had to do was pick them. There was a man there that was a great enemy of mine and that was, oh my goodness, what was his name. I never knew until after he died what his ambitions were. And my work with the Metis party was just - oh you know, politics is in everything - was just slaying him and cutting him out of everything.

Murray: Were the Liberals trying to influence the Metis to vote for them? Or did they even bother with them?

Wilma: No, no, there was none of that. We didn't go into... Wait, we did have a little dab of politics when we wanted to and... oh, yes, that's... I remember now. The biggest battle I had, and I won it, was just on that, on that ground. I'd have to take time to go back into that. It was quite intricate and it lasted on quite a while. You see, nobody wanted the Metis. Nobody. And they had got so that they despised themselves even. Well, when this society got going and they held their heads up, they could go anywhere, the rest of the people, and they had to be noticed. And besides that, I took another... I decided that I would jump into politics and I'd help myself out that way, and I did. We'd never thought, we'd got a grant of money on various occasions that came in, which would never have come if I hadn't have gone into politics. I went down once and laid down the law. And I was so cross when I got this down. I just wanted to talk to the three people, men that had to do with it.

Murray: This was in Ottawa?

Wilma: In Ottawa.

Murray: Was one of them the Indian Affairs minister?

Wilma: Well, wait till I finish telling you this. This is funny now. How did this meeting... oh, I think if I had time, I could piece it together. I'd called a meeting - they'd called a meeting - I forget which. The Liberal party, anyway, we were on very good terms. There was nothing wrong that way.

And at this meeting, I didn't expect it. I just expected three men to talk this thing over and go to brass tacks. And when I start a thing, I never stop till I get it and I was determined that these men were going to be slain if they didn't come through. And I didn't want a crowd. I just wanted the three men and when I came to the place, I knocked at the door. I noticed it was locked and they came and opened the door and there was this long table in the Parliament Buildings and on both sides, lined, filled. I thought, "What under the sun?" Oh yes, this was, I'm getting a little bit more of it now, this was not a Metis meeting. This was a political meeting. I was head over heels in politics too, you see. And I went in because I thought that would help and it did help.

Murray: This was in Saskatchewan, was it?

Wilma: Yes, in Saskatchewan. And I didn't care whose head I knocked off, not a bit. And I did knock off a lot of heads, I can assure you. And (chuckles), some of them hated the ground I walked on. And I didn't know until not long ago... he's dead now, this man. I didn't realize how nearly I was to losing my position in Saskatoon. He was the big shot in the collegiate, you see.

Murray: And you were teaching?

Wilma: That's the technical collegiate was where I was teaching, and I didn't realize that he was such a sort of a wicked man, and he was. That he had no compunction about knocking a person to pieces. Well, anyway, in this case, he... and it's all part of the general picture, you see. That was the day I think that we had called a big meeting. We had a long table in the Parliament Buildings. I didn't mean that. I

wanted the heads. And I wrote asking for a meeting and expenses. They did that for the people that came. And I only wanted a small meeting. I got down there...

Murray: And it was a big meeting. They paid the expenses then, for you to come down?

Wilma: Oh yes, they did. Well, they had to. They couldn't get out of it. I didn't start on them until I knew I had them licked. And then I got after them. And, (chuckles) several years after, I happened to see Murray MacIntyre. The names are coming back now a little bit. He was a head of this great

big... He was a big fat slob, a lawyer, and he was the head of this aggregation that was trying to knock the daylights out of me, you see.

Murray: This was in Saskatchewan?

Wilma: Oh yes, because I had broke...

Murray: You had broken the loyalty with the Liberal party.

Wilma: Not only that. They wouldn't have cared about that. But the Liberal party never came back and it hasn't come back. It's getting a little bit up but I've kept very quiet because, I tell you, I had a pretty tough time there and the people, well, it was a nasty thing. There was McKool, I don't know if you ever heard of Charlie McKool?

Murray: No.

Wilma: Well, he was the underdog that... not an underdog, he was a dog. I didn't like him at all. He was a great man in

the United Church with young people, if you please. And here, all this Metis crowd that he was trying to destroy all the time because he didn't like anything like that. The Liberals didn't like this society, this Metis Society. But when the voting came, they wanted their votes, of course, and well, that's another story again. I needn't go into that right now. It had so many passes that it's hard to pick something out and talk about it.

Murray: Did the Liberal party try and get the Metis votes in each election?

Wilma: No, they knew they couldn't get them because they were the ones that had knocked them down, you see. And there was animosity and I like to keep the animosity hidden and down as far as I could out of sight. But it was there very much and I had to watch it and keep it down. And it wasn't easy. There was the Metis on the one side and then the Liberals on the other and I was head of the Liberals in Saskatoon at the time. And here we were, you had to know how to play all your cards and it was a very difficult thing. And the Liberals were always stooping to anything and everything that would help them. And the Conservatives weren't big enough to take any account of so nobody bothered about them. The CCF were on the come up too. But they all featured in one way or another, it was a...

Murray: Do you remember what party Tom Major was connected with?

Wilma: Major? Well, yes.

Murray: He was a left winger, I think.

Wilma: He changed his stand and when a man changes round, if

I'm working hard getting something put over, I just brush him aside. I won't be bothered with him. And of course, I forget now what happened to him but I know that I had the support of all these Metis crowd.

Murray: In Saskatoon.

Wilma: Oh, yes. I had them solid. And not only Saskatoon, that centre, but all over Saskatchewan. All over Saskatchewan. And we even had... my brother put on a big thing, the biggest thing for Indian and halfbreeds that's ever been put on. I don't know how many thousands came from all over Canada to it, and from the States at that particular time. You see, there is a lot came into this thing and all had their little pick and their little say. And that's why it's so hard to take it and, if you go to write on one thing, there were a lot of things happening on both sides and you have to be very careful about it because those people and all that were joined there, you had to be awfully careful. They got offended so easily. And I had to be particularly careful because they were out to get me, the Liberals were.

Murray: After you left the party.

Wilma: Oh yes, they were...

Murray: You don't remember what year that was? Was that before the war was over that you left the party?

Wilma: I think I could find out in some of my records somewhere. I wouldn't want to just say right offhand.

Murray: Right.

Wilma: But, if I help you at all, I'll have to find those records and find where they are and then I might get something that might be of some use.

Murray: Right. Well, I think...

(break in tape)

Wilma: Well, I've had to kind of put that together in my mind.

Murray: Did Fred De Laronde go with you?

Wilma: Well, Fred De Laronde was with me right through.

Murray: So he probably went to Ottawa with you? It's hard to remember.

Wilma: I think he did. In fact, I'll have to stop and think. There is one vision comes to my mind of that meeting and... oh yes, I'm very angry about this. I went down to see... now, I didn't help people that time. I thought I was going by myself, you see. And I was going to meet those people and put them

over a barrel, and I could do it. And they gave me the meeting but at the time that I got the word I wanted this meeting, we were having trouble too, otherwise. And, anyway, we went down, I went down and I had a representation, there was Mr., I think La Rocque was there and De Laronde and...

Murray: Saul Pritchard? Was there a Saul Pritchard?

Wilma: Oh yes, there was Pritchard, oh yes, yes, yes.

Murray: He was down with you?

Wilma: I'm not sure whether he went down but he was...

Murray: One of the people.

Wilma: He was one of my workers. They fooled me on that. The government got working in and...

Murray: This is the federal government?

Wilma: The federal government. And I knocked at the door when I got down there, you see, where the meeting was to be and one of them... I've forgotten who his name was, I might be able to find something. I don't know whether I can or not. I've got an awful lot of stuff. And he - that is what I was laughing at for that little while - he made a nice bow at the door when I knocked and I didn't expect a big meeting. I just wanted to see these people and talk to them and I had everything arranged and put them over a barrel.

Murray: But they pulled one on you.

Wilma: They pulled a big one on me. They opened the door and he bowed so nicely and I looked up to see - I hadn't called a meeting like that. Of course, I didn't do the calling. I was asking the government for, I named one or two. I thought two would be all and myself would be about three, you see. But he

opened the door and he said, "Well, you see." Something like this, I've forgotten his words now. I had it somewhere or other. "We've done more than call a meeting. We have a delegation." A delegation isn't what I asked for. We've got a whole meeting here. This long table and all kinds of people on both sides of it.

Murray: Would these have been civil servants?

Wilma: Civil servants and Metis, wherever they could pick them up that were on the right side that they'd plastered up a little bit. And people I didn't know and I just was so... I said to myself, "There is going to be two fools here, not just one." And we got sitting there and I didn't speak. They kept yarning around and I didn't answer. And, "yes" I said once in a while and "Yes," "No," "Well I wouldn't just remember that." Anything I didn't want to say, you see, I didn't just remember

it. I forgot it, temporarily, of course. And they got so mad then, so the meeting broke up in anger. Nothing done.
(chuckles)

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
INDIAN-FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS				
-negotiations	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	10-17, 20-29, 31-33, 36-38
METIS				
-land claims	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	28, 29
METIS				
-political organization	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	2-17, 20-31, 34-37
POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS				
-Metis Association of Alberta	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	15
POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS				
-Metis Society of Saskatchewan	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	2-17, 19-31, 34-38
POLITICAL PARTIES				
-Conservative	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	19, 30, 34
POLITICAL PARTIES				
-Liberal	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	17-19, 23, 26, 30, 31, 33-35

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	24-26
REGINA, SASK.	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	26, 27
SASKATOON, SASK.	IH-396	WILMA MOORE	96	11, 26, 27, 34, 35