

SASKATCHEWAN ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

by Endl Crane

Ms. Crane is a research officer for the Saskatchewan Archives Board. Her note is an up-dated version of the note which appeared in the Fall 1977 issue of the C.O.H.A. Bulletin (Vol.2 No.3).

The Saskatchewan Oral History Programme, which originated with the Department of Culture and Youth as the Towards A New Past programme, was transferred in March of 1977 to the Saskatchewan Archives Board. The programme is now permanently established at the Archives, and the budget, once a temporary one renewed from year to year, is now guaranteed.

In 1977 eight collectors working for two-month periods produced 155 hours of oral history documentation. Three other collectors will soon submit an additional 50 hours of tape. A brief statement about the themes of each collecting project is included below.

--Biographies of Two Métis Society Founders--Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady

Eighty-five hours of tape collected in 1976 and 1977 compose a character study of the two Métis leaders, exploring their ideological development and influence on Native movements. The Canada Council is funding the preparation of this oral material for publication.

--Saskatchewan Writers and their Works

A Saskatchewan writer interviews 17 other Saskatchewan writers who discuss topics such as the creative process, influences, such as landscape, climate and the Depression, on their writing, favourite authors, the role of literary affiliations, current affairs, travel and autobiographical information.

--The History of Horse Showing in 4H Achievement and Agricultural Exhibitions

The collector and 26 informants are members of the Saskatchewan horse showing community. The interviews concentrate on such subjects as horse showing from the 1930s to the present, travelling the horse showing circuit, competing in the Toronto Royal Fair and the history of 4H clubs in various provincial centres. The informants are representative of the owners and breeders of the full spectrum of horse varieties in the light and heavy horse categories in Saskatchewan.

--Blacks in Saskatchewan History: Recent Immigrants, 1950-Present

A political scientist and immigrant from Barbados conducts interviews with eight immigrants from the West Indies, one immigrant and two descendants of immigrants from southern United States and one immigrant from Nigeria. Their occupations include accounting, auto body work, factory work, farming, professional baseball, psychiatric nursing and small business. Some themes explored are comparisons of health conditions, housing, wage scales, and quality of life in Saskatchewan and country of origin, a critique of immigration policy, racial discrimination experienced in Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan as a land of opportunity.

--Trapping in Northern Saskatchewan

A northern Saskatchewan trapper interviews 13 colleagues who over the years depended on trapping for their livelihood. Trapping is characterized as a healthy and disciplined life producing strength of character. Women tell stories of life as a trapper's wife homemaking in the bush and their equality when up against the challenges of nature on the trapline. Also documented is the evolution of trapping technology from 1915 to 1977, techniques for trapping and snaring a variety of animals, observation of wild life behaviour, fur control programmes and conservation including trapping quotas.

--Pedagogical Pioneers: A History of Education in Saskatchewan

Twenty-five informants, members of Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan which endorsed the project, tell the story of teaching in Saskatchewan schools from 1916. Teachers' reactions to the formation of a union, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, is thoroughly documented. The advantages of the formation of larger school units is discussed as is the role of the local board. The role of the teacher and the school in the rural areas, the quality of education in Normal schools, and the effect of the Depression on salaries are other topics explored. This project received the sponsorship of the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan and was planned by their Jubilee Archives Committee. A graduate student of the College conducted the interviews.

--Saskatchewan Rivers Development Association

This oral history project, consisting of eight interviews, supplements the extensive collection of the Association's papers deposited in the Saskatchewan Archives. The movement to build a dam on the South Saskatchewan River was initiated originally by members of the Boards of Trade of Regina and Moose Jaw. These people had lived through the 1930s and had experienced the devastating effects of the drought conditions. They felt strongly that irrigation must come to Saskatchewan.

Members of this group, as well as opponents of the dam and irrigation, are interviewed.

The three other collecting projects still in progress are Héritage canadien-français de la Saskatchewan, An Oral History of the Wahpeton Dakota, and the Effect of Rail Lines on Small Saskatchewan Communities.