

The following submission was made by M. Mitchell
in support of the inclusion of Ancestor Mary Petrin.

Wajou-Petrin Family

The oldest remembered ancestors of this family was Mary Petrin (b. 1857) and Isaac Wajou (1852), also known as Johny Isaac or John Mclsaac.

The current member of the BAC that traced their lineage through this family have the surnames Chamberlain, Chartrand, Higson, Phinney, Campbell, Barker, Cook, Romain, Wrighs, and Doyle. They identify places such as Stonecliffe, as significant locations where they hunted, fishes, picnicked and gathered for family functions. One descendant recalls-

I remember having huge gatherings and picnics. I remember hunting season, a lot of men coming to our house to hunt with my grandfather [Thomas Antoine Chartrand, b. 1890] and sharing in the meat. Beautiful Christmas' and holidays and picnics.

The oral family history claims that Mary Petrin

...was a princess from Deux Montaigne. Her father was a chief there. Then, there was a war between the Indians. The Iroquois raided the village and killed her father and mother. She had climbed a tree and hid there. A while later, some of her tribe who had survived had come by and seen her in the tree and knew what had happened to her family. One couple took her with them and brought her up.

Mary Mitchell, a granddaughter of Mary Petrin Mclsaac wrote "The Rocher Capitaine Song" which includes this excerpt about her grandmother:

Today I take pride in introducing to you my grandmother Mclsaac, she of the gentle ways and kind and generous heart. She was born at 'Lake of Two Mountains' about 60 miles north of Montreal. It was during the early years when Native people sought new beginnings in their old way of life, seeking to cling to their culture and life style in a world that seemed indifferent, since they were the conquered race. Thus they became wanderers in the land they once claimed as their own. The result as history shows, an once proud race subdued, uncertain and bewildered, ever seeking change, ever finding rejection, and ever accepting the harsh reality that they were as 'Aliens' in their own country. Grandmother's family travelled the water route, and eventually arrived in Mattawa. There she met and married Grandfather (John) Mclsaac, in the year 1871. They then travelled down river and when they arrived at the little village of Bissett's Creek they decided to settle down there. ...Grandmother saw two of her ons go off to war (1914-1918) along with their conrade: I salute their bravery by writing their names: Tom Mclsaac; Alex Mclsaac; and Jim Tooley. (All killed in action). ...During the terrible influenza outbreak in 1918, she and her good friend Mrs. Mary Tooley (Jim's mother) nursed the villagers back to health, going to each home, never for a moment considering their own health in the precious care they rendered. ...In all the years of her married life she stood by grandfather's side steadfast and true, in good times as well as in tragic circumstances. For example, the great forest fire that totally destroyed their little cabin home, and save for the brave

fight they fought would have claimed their lives and that of their helpless little ones.

Mary Petrin was also a midwife, reportedly walking miles to deliver babies.

John and Mary are known to have eleven children, ten of whom were born at Bissett's Creek (1873-1893), one at Deux Rivieres (1883), as shown on the family tree, Mary Petrin and John Mclsaac and their children lived mainly around Bissett Creek in Maria Township. Most of John and Mary's children were baptised as Saint-Anne Parish in Mattawa in the 1870's and 1880's, their son John was buried there in 1872 and their daughter Sophia (Maria) was married there in 1891. One son, Joseph Richard (1873), and one daughter Sophia Marie (1876), are known to have left descendants that are part of the Bonnechere community.

In 1881 the census shows that John Isaac (39) and his wife Mary (28) were residing in the census district of Head, Clara, & Maria Townships in Renfrew County North. Bissett's Creek was located in this census district. According to this record, John was born in the "North-East" and Mary was born in Quebec. Their origin was given as "Half-Breed", John and Mary were shown with Joseph (8), Francis (4), and Margaret (3). The children were also listed as "Half-Breed".

Ten years later the census enumerates the family in the same location. John Mclsaac (45), his wife Mary (43) and their children: Dick (18), Sophia (16), Maggie (14), James (12), Thomas (10), Florence (8), and William Joseph (4).

The 1901 census shows them again in Head, Clara & Maria Townships. They were enumerated as John Mclsaac (48) born at Hudson's Bay, his wife, Mary (48) and their children: Maggie (22), James (20), Thomas (18), Florence (16), William (11), Annie (10), and Alexander (7). While his wife's origin is recorded as French, John was recorded as being "tete du Bule", and the rest of the family were "tete & F.B.". Tete du Bule was a term used to describe the Algonquin-speaking peoples of northern Quebec, more accurately called the Attikamek.

As noted above, two of the children of Isaac Wajou and Mary Petrin, Joseph Richard Mclsaac and Sophie (Maria) Mclsaac left descendant that are part of the Bonnechere community.

Joseph Richard Wajou (Mclsaac) was born at Bissett Creek. Joseph Richard married Caroline Tooley. According to family tradition the Tooley's were close family friends of Joseph Richard's mother Mary Petrin. The surnames of the descendants of Joseph Richard Wajou and Caroline Tooley, includes: Brown, Chards, Robinson, Julian, Welsh, and Stencell. Most of these descended from Joseph Richard and Caroline Tooley's daughter, Mae Louise Mclsaac who married Benjamin Royal sometime prior to 1930.

Sophia Wajou (Mclsaac) was often called Maria Mclsaac. Her daughter and her niece attested to this fact. Her daughter Elmira Chamberlain Chartrand stated:

...Sophia Mclsaac and Maria Mclsaac is one of the same. She was my mother. Some people called her Sophia, others called her Maria. But she is the same woman married to my father Frank Chamberlain....

Her niece Mary Mitchell swore:

...I know as a fact that Sophia Mclsaac Chamberlain and Maria Mclsaac Chamberlain are the same woman. She was my Aunt. I remember exactly when she changed her name. She did not like to be called Sophia. This is a true fact. I swear it to be true.

Sophia (Maria) Mclsaac married Frank Jean Chamberlain in Mattawa in December 1891. Her older sister Margaret Isaac Wajou was one of the witnesses. Sophia and Frank lived most of their married life around Stonecliffe which is just down river from Bissett's Creek. According to one of her descendants, Sophia had waist length jet black hair.

Like her mother, Sophia had eleven children. Her third daughter Florence Henriette Chamberlain, was born in Stonecliffe in 1896; Florence Henriette was identified as "Indian" on her daughter's birth certificate. The descendants of Florence Henriette are members of the Antoine First Nation.

Some current BAC members are descendants of Sophia Maria Wajou and Frank Chamberlain, mostly through their daughter Mary Elmira Chamberlain who married Thomas Antoine (Joseph) Chartrand in August of 1928. These descendants now bear the surnames; Chamberlain, Chartrand, Higson, Phinney, Campbell, Barker, Cook, Roman, Wrighs, and Doyle. One of these descendants wrote the following memories of her family:

My first memories are of both my grandmom [Mary Elmira Chamberlain, b.1912] and great grandmom [Sophia Wajou, b. 1876] brushing this waist length hair. It was beautiful jet black, like silk. Also my grandmom singing in Indian, a song. The holidays were always a huge gathering. Food would be made and brought by visitors, stories would be told, a big campfire or bon fire would be made. The elders would sit around talking, beans were cooked under the sand. Another memory is, if someone was in trouble or needed help, people would listen to them, work together to help each other.

Conclusions

The Bonnechere Algonquin First Nation can demonstrate its historic connections to each other through genealogical information, vital statistics, census records and oral family history. They recognized each other as forming part of a community that has been interacting for well over a century.

The Bonnechere ancestors have concentrated in the Renfrew County-Algonquin Park and Nipissing area since at least the mid to late nineteenth century. Specific information of families resident in that territory prior to 1851 is extremely scarce so it is difficult to demonstrate occupation before that time. Family history accounts suggest that many ancestors had no recollection of residence elsewhere, some were reputedly from Lake of Two Mountains and a few individuals immigrated to the area from other parts of Ontario and Quebec.

The areas of particular significance to these families include: Petawawa, Pembroke, Stonecliffe, Bissett's Creek, Grand Calumet Island, the Fort William Indian mission, Algonquin Park and Black Bay. It is at these locations that they fished, hunted, and trapped with inter-related families and marked the passage of yearly and life time events with friends and family.

The Aboriginal descent of most of the family branches is demonstrated through census records and vital statistics documents. One particular family, the Turcottes, have not been able to clearly demonstrate this link, however, family recollections, associations with other Algonquins and lifestyle all suggest that these people are part of the Bonnechere Algonquin Community. The most telling evidence is the fact that the people consider themselves community members as having Algonquin heritage.

This community has not shared an exclusive living area but has lived amongst both the status Algonquin community of Golden Lake and the non-Aboriginal communities of the Ottawa Valley. Despite their geographical separation and lack of exclusive village site, they have maintained a sense of social and cultural connection, have depended upon one another in fulfilling the everyday practical demands of existence, and have perpetuated their common ancestry by marrying amongst themselves and sharing culturally and socially significant activities. In addition, they have experienced the pressures of discrimination that exclude them from both the nearby status community and the non-aboriginal communities in which they live.

Appendix A. Census Data Published In Indian Affairs Annual Reports

The Department of Indian Affairs annually compiles extensive data on Indian peoples under its charge, including an annual census of the Indian population broken down by geographic locale.

Between 1867 and 1891 the Department enumerated the Indian population over a portion of the Ottawa Valley, including Carleton, Lanark, Renfrew, and Nipissing Counties in the Province of Ontario.

This data contains several noteworthy features. In 1868, for instance, the Indian Affairs Census data recorded 185 "Golden Lake Indians in the County of Renfrew" and 85 "Golden Lake Indians, Province of Quebec," indicating that the Department at least implicitly recognized that there were significant numbers of people in different locations with strong ties to the community at Golden Lake. This could potentially mean that at that time the Department gave some validity to the traditional Algonquin subsistence patterns and kinship networks which were more inclusive than the later imposition of the administrative unit of the 'band'.

Further, in the 1870's, the census data identified large numbers of people living in Lanark, Renfrew, and Nipissing Counties specifically as Algonquins. However, after about 1880 there is no record of Algonquins in either Lanark or Nipissing, the latter of which had been consistently enumerated at 387 people. Shortly thereafter, in 1882, the numbers for Renfrew County jump from 176 to 673. This

may indicate either a migration of people to a new location or a decision on the part of the Department to associate people with a fair degree of seasonal mobility with a new location or community with which they had a fundamental connection. At this rate, it is worth noting that the combined numbers given for Lanark, Renfrew, and Nipissing counties amount to about 80 people fewer than the numbers recorded for Renfrew County after 1882. It should also be noted that the Department kept a separate record for the Algonquin of Golden Lake, which was presumably not included in the former total. While it is difficult to account for this discrepancy, it does reveal that there was a sizeable Algonquin population in the Ottawa Valley living at locations other than Golden Lake.

Several dramatic shifts in the census numbers occurred, the first being between 1891 and 1892 when the population recorded for Renfrew County falls from 763 to 286. Then between 1901 and 1902 the numbers recorded again fall from 286 to 198. The numbers recorded in Renfrew County drop once more from 198 in 1917 to 49 in 1924. While there is an increase of 42 persons in the numbers recorded for Golden Lake during that same period, clearly this does not fully account for the change.

Finally, a quick examination of the total Algonquins recorded in each year reveals some interesting discrepancies. This number represents the entire Algonquin population enumerated by Indian Affairs in both Ontario and Quebec. Between 1873 and 1880 this population was consistently recorded at just over 2000. However, the recorded population suddenly drops to 1670 in 1881 before rocketing up to almost 2900 in 1883. From there the numbers gradually decline until 1902 when the population is recorded as about 2000, where it remains fairly steady for the next 7 years. However, in 1911 the population is recorded as just over 1200, representing a loss of 800 people in the space of a few years. Between 1911 and 1917 the population remained at that level, but by 1924 it had again dropped to just under 1000. Up to World War II, the population consistently registered in that range.

What this document demonstrates is a degree of inaccuracy in the Department's enumeration of the Algonquin population, due at least in part to the traditional mobility perpetuated by the kin and social networks. Moreover, this points to the incompleteness of the Department's knowledge regarding the extent of the Algonquin population during that period, where they were living, and the affiliations that existed between the different communities.