

The following submission containing personal information was made by
M. de Braux in support of the inclusion of Michel McDonald

Impact Statement - Michelle de Braux (Michel McDonald RIN #14703)

Kwey Kwey. Michelle de Braux n'dizhnikaaz. Toronto n'donjibaa. Shabot Obaadjiwan n'donjibaa. Kaawiin daaziin n'dodem.

I am writing this impact statement in support of the inclusion of Michel McDonald on the Schedule of Algonquin Ancestors. John Christmas McDonald was the father of my maternal grandfather, John Steven McDonald, and Michel McDonald was John Christmas McDonald's father.

My grandfather "Dada", John Steven McDonald, was born in 1923 in Hopetown, Ontario, on the traditional unceded territories of the Algonquin. He was one of 10 children and, due to stigma and fear, he and his siblings were raised to deny and be ashamed of their indigeneity. My Dada told me stories of being bullied and called "Red Indian" at school and that when he told his parents they suggested he tell the bullies that he wasn't an Indian. And yet, on every census prior to his birth, the family members were recorded as "Indian". I have to wonder if some of this reticence to share the truth may have been an attempt to avoid the Residential School system (much in the same way that some European Jews raised their children Catholic in order to avoid the Holocaust).



My grandfather, John Steven McDonald, on the family farm, circa 1940.

Despite this bullying and shame, or perhaps because of it, at the beginning of World War Two, my Dada and his brother volunteered for the Canadian Army and served overseas. My Dada

drove munitions trucks in Ortona, Italy. He told me about driving his truck, full of explosives, up winding mountain pathways in the middle of the night – without being able to use any headlights so that he would be undetected by the enemy. Surely his childhood on the Land helped him develop the skills he needed for those journeys.


When my Dada returned from the war, he brought with him an English wife and they lived with the extended family in their farmhouse near Lanark. No longer able to clear trees in the bush due to a war injury, my Dada used his Veteran's payout to attend school and train for a government job. Eventually, he was able to move his wife and daughters to Ottawa.



My grandfather, John Steven McDonald, and his wife, Peggy, at their wedding in 1945.

When my mother, Valerie Diane McDonald, was born in 1946, my Dada had to fill out her birth certificate. In those days, parents were asked to indicate their racial origin and specifically told NOT to indicate “Canadian”. My Dada wrote Canadian anyway, demonstrating that he understood that to be his ethnicity. Fascinatingly, the registrar actually crossed out Canadian and wrote “Scottish” above it. This could only have been a (poor) guess using his last name as

evidence of European roots, as my family has never emphasized any Scots or Irish heritage. When I teach my First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Governance course, I joke with the students that most of our last names come from whichever Indian Agent was recording us on his registers.



Ontario
Office of the Registrar General
Bureau du registraire général

Certified A True
Photostatic
Print of a Record

on file at the
Office of the Registrar General
Ontario, Canada

Photocopie certifiée
conforme d'un document

déposée aux dossiers du
Bureau du registraire général
(Ontario) Canada

Registration Number: 1946 097545
Numéro d'enregistrement : PAGE 1 of 2

Certificate number: P4649485
Numéro du certificat :

Date issued: Oct 20 2022
Date de délivrance :

File number: 22375933-01-2
Numéro de dossier :

719 FORM 4

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS
This form is placed in a PRINTED envelope, marked "Registration Statistics-Free, penalty for improper use \$100", and properly addressed to the nearest Division Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages will pass through the mail "FREE".

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING. WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK. THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD.

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO—VITAL STATISTICS ACT
REGISTRATION OF A LIVE BIRTH

Registration Number
097545
For use of Registrar General only.

1. PLACE OF BIRTH: City, Town or Village of: <u>PEATH</u> Street or road: <u>PEATH HOSPITAL</u> <small>(Birth occurred in a hospital, give name instead of street and number)</small>	
Township of: <u>Hammond</u> County or District of: <u>Lanark</u>	
2. PRINT FULL NAME OF CHILD: <u>VALERIE DIANE MCDONALD</u> <small>(Surname or last name)</small> 5. Are the parents married to each other? <u>YES</u> 6. Date of birth: <u>DECEMBER 10 TH 1946</u> <small>(Given or Christian names)</small>	
3. Sex of child: <u>GIRL</u>	4. Single, Twin—Triplet—Other: <u>Single</u> <small>Place an X on the proper word. For a plural birth, fill in a form for each live child</small>
7. Was this a premature birth? <u>NO</u> If premature, state length of pregnancy in weeks: _____	
FATHER	
8. PRINT full name: <u>JOHN STEVEN MCDONALD</u> 15. PRINT full name before marriage: <u>PEGGY RACHEL KING</u>	
9. Permanent residence at time of this birth: <u>LAMARK BOX 196</u> 16. Permanent residence at time of this birth: <u>LAMARK BOX 196</u> <small>(Usual place of abode. If non-resident, give place and province)</small>	
10. Citizenship: <u>CANADIAN</u> 17. Citizenship: <u>Canadian</u> <small>CITIZENSHIP (NATIONALITY) is defined in terms of the country to which the person owes allegiance. The term "CANADIAN" should be used as descriptive of a person who was born in Canada or who has rights of Citizenship in Canada, unless he or she has subsequently become the citizen of another country.</small>	
11. Racial Origin: <u>CANADIAN Scottish</u> 18. Racial Origin: <u>ENGLISH</u> <small>RACIAL ORIGIN is defined in terms of the people to which the person—traced through the father—belongs, whether English, Irish, Scottish, French, German, Russian, Ukrainian, etc. The terms "CANADIAN" or "AMERICAN" should not be used for RACIAL ORIGIN, as they represent CITIZENSHIP (NATIONALITY).</small>	
12. AGE at time of this birth: <u>23</u> years	13. Birthplace: <u>CONANTO, ONT</u> <small>(City or place, province or country)</small>
14. (a) Trade, profession or kind of work: <u>TEXTILE</u> <small>(As operator, grader, clerk, etc.)</small>	14. (b) Kind of industry or business: <u>TEXTILE MILL</u> <small>(As paper mill, lumber, bank, etc.—If "Labourer" specify kind of work above)</small>
MOTHER	
21. (a) Trade, profession or kind of work: <u>Housewife</u> <small>(As operator, saleswoman, stenographer, etc.)</small>	
21. (b) Kind of industry or business: <u>AT HOME</u> <small>(As textile, retail, law office, etc.—If "Housewife" in own home answer "At Home")</small>	
22. How many children born to this mother—up to the time of and INCLUDING THIS BIRTH: (a) Were born alive? <u>1</u> (b) Are now living? <u>1</u> <small>(a) Were born dead after twenty-eight weeks pregnancy?</small>	
23. Name and post office address of informant: <u>P.R. McDonald, Lanark, Ontario</u>	
24. Name of doctor, nurse or other person in attendance at birth, and post office address: <u>DR J.F. NORMAN, 22 FOSTER ST. PEATH ONT.</u>	
25. Marginal notations (Office use only)	
DEATH RECORD ON FILE: 1996-05-025041	
I certify the foregoing to be true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. <u>7.3 2/2/47</u>	
Given under my hand at: <u>PEATH</u> , this <u>12</u> day of <u>DECEMBER</u> , 19 <u>46</u>	
Signature of Person: <u>P.R. McDonald</u>	
Division Registrar's Record No. _____ Date of registration: <u>December 12th 1946</u> <small>(For use of Division Registrar only)</small> Signature of Division Registrar: <u>[Signature]</u>	

Detail from my mother, Valerie Diane McDonald's birth certificate. Note Line 10, in which my grandfather identifies his "racial origin" as Canadian and the registrar has crossed it off to write "Scottish".



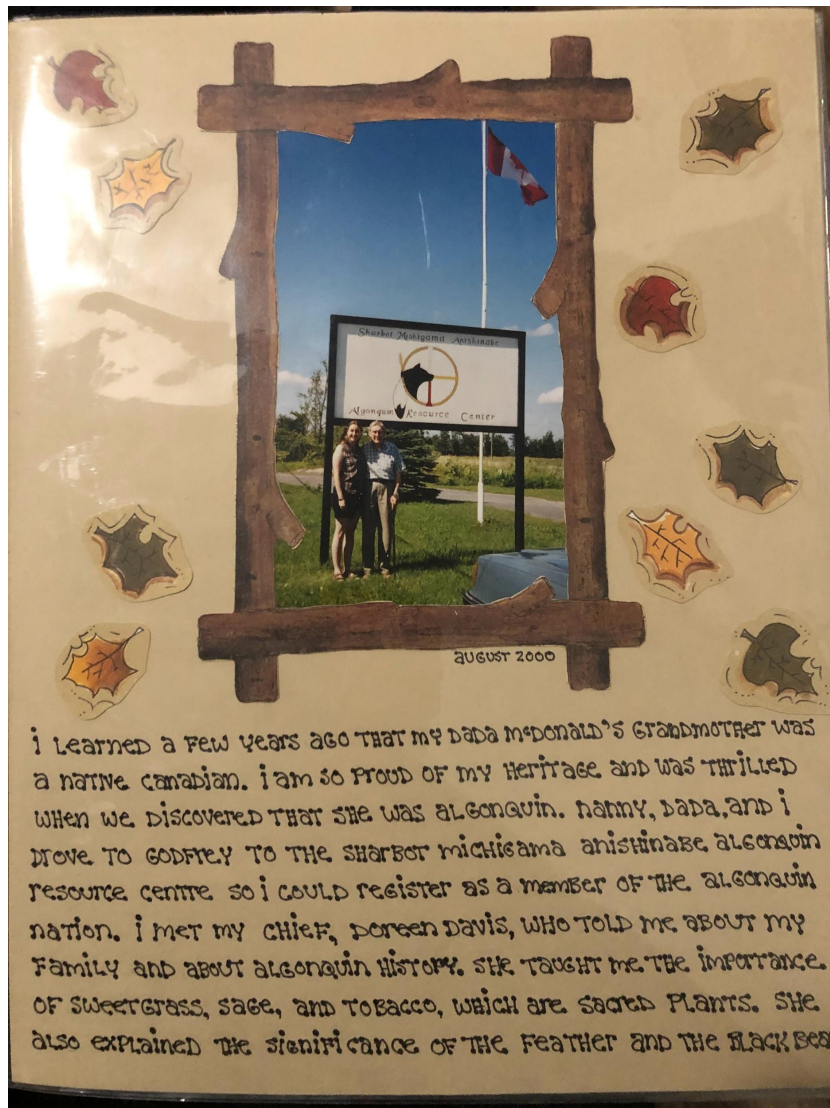
My mother, Valerie Diane McDonald, circa 1948.

My beautiful mum, whom I lost in 1996, dealt with similar teasing; in fact, she was called “Hiawatha” whenever she went to visit her mother’s relatives in England and later on when she chose to live there with my father to have me. When they returned to Canada, my mother did not raise me to know my culture but she did choose to live in the country which she felt was a better environment for children.



My mother, Valerie Diane McDonald, and me, 1974.

In later life, my Dada's nephews became aware of their Algonquin heritage by being asked to sign on to what was then the Sharbot Michigama Anishinaabe Algonquin First Nation, and encouraged my Dada to reclaim his culture. In turn, my Dada brought me to the band office and asked me to register as well. Chief Doreen Davis was so kind and welcoming, sharing teachings about the importance of the black bear, of wrapping the feather's shaft, and medicines. I was also sent newsletters and harvesting information, to keep me informed and connected to community.



Scrapbook page created by me in 2000, showing me and my grandfather, John Steven McDonald, at the Sharbot Michigama Anishinaabe Algonquin Resource Centre and mentioning my meeting with Chief Davis.

My Dada was quite frail and beginning to show signs of Alzheimer's when he started going to powwows and I joined him. Settler culture often treats our elderly veterans dismissively but at powwow young men and women came to my Dada with such respect, gently helping him up to

walk around the circle with them for the Veteran's Honour Song. The look on his face – pride, dignity, joy, belonging – will stay with me forever.

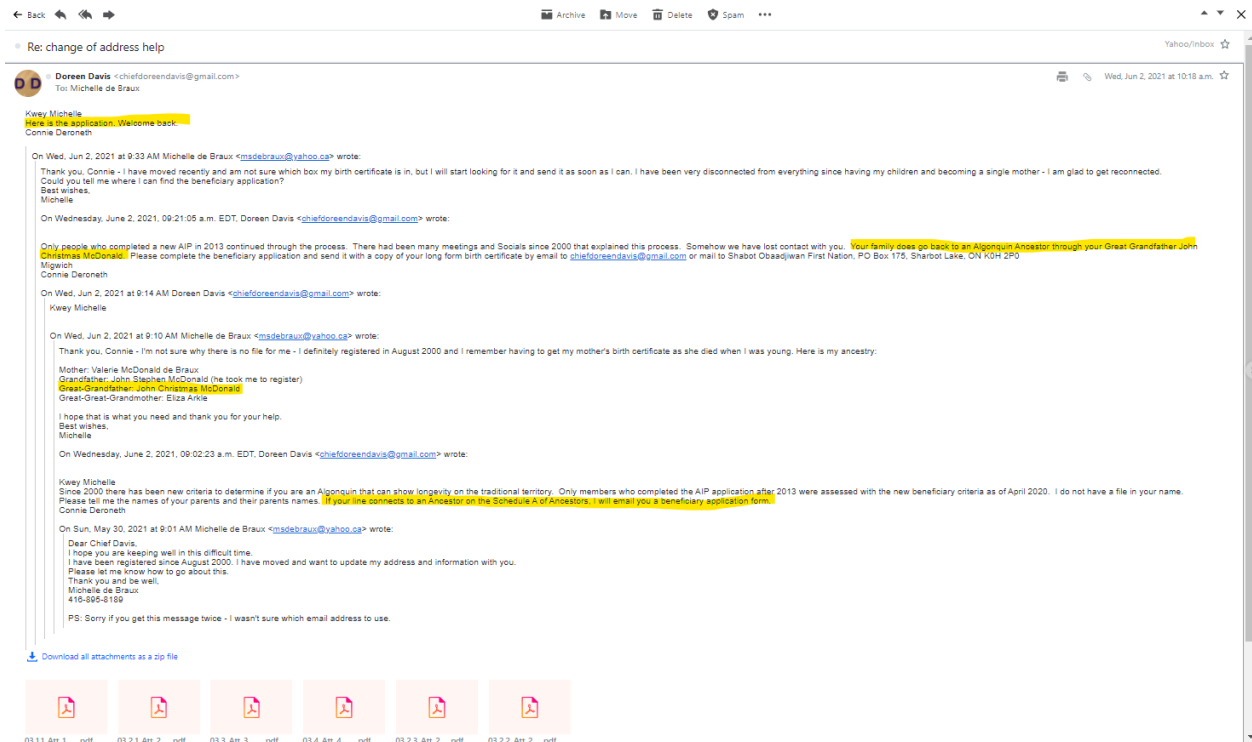
I became disconnected from the Shabot Obaadjiwan community when my grandfather died and the busyness of young single motherhood made travel challenging. I continued to make cultural connections with the Anishinaabe community here in Toronto, including taking courses for my Master's degree with Indigenous faculty, being gifted teachings by Elder Andrew Welesley, and by taking my First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies teaching qualifications. I am now the Head of High School at Kâpapâmahchakwêw - Wandering Spirit School, a First Nations school in the Toronto District School Board. I teach Governance, History, Language and Worldview, Beading, and Anishinaabemowin, as well as working as a Guidance Counsellor. I continue to learn and to participate in ceremony to honour my ancestors. Our school Elder, Grandma Pauline Shirt, is working to connect me with folks in the Algonquin Nations so that I can learn their teachings and maybe even find my clan.



Me in December 2022 after a Solstice Water Ceremony in Toronto. My ribbon skirt was created as a tribute to my mother and other ancestors who walk the Spirit World. Since my mother's death, and without then understanding my culture, I have always "found" my mother in the moon, so I included that image on my skirt as well.

Some time ago, I reached out to Chief Davis to update my address information, as I had not received mailings for some time. I was told that when the office moved, my information had

been lost, and I was asked to resubmit all my documents. I had just moved and had another baby, and I couldn't find anything, so I let it go. I tried again, during the pandemic, and was told the process had changed somewhat. I was asked for my root ancestor and so indicated John Christmas McDonald, and was told that he was an approved root ancestor. I had to re-order birth certificates (including my mother's death certificate which is traumatic and took me some time to be able to do), fill out a form and resubmit all my documents. I was told I had to wait for my file to be reviewed by the official registrar. It wasn't until I was speaking with my cousin Bob Majaury that I learned that our Algonquin identity had been challenged.



Email chain from 2021 in which John Christmas McDonald is referred to as an Algonquin Ancestor and I am sent the beneficiary application and welcomed back to the Shabot Obaadjiwan community.

Shame of being perceived as a “pretendian” has always been a challenge for me as I have tried to learn what was stolen from my family. Overcoming that to work at Kâpapâmahchakwêw and to introduce myself in my language and be able to say I belong to somewhere - Shabot Obaadjiwan n'donjibaa - means more than I can ever express. When I say that, I know my mother, my grandfather, and my other ancestors are with me. To lose that connection is to lose my mum and Dada all over again.

My family was wanted. We were asked and encouraged to register with our community. Now it seems as though we were wanted when numbers were important to bolster the land claims process but that once they start talking about dividing up beneficiary money we aren't wanted anymore. What you all don't understand and never asked me is whether I care about the money. I don't. And yes, I put that in writing. Money doesn't replace land and language and a way of life

that was stolen from us. Put the money where it can benefit community - to help those who need help, to help us revitalize our language, to teach our children, to look after our elderly. Sharing is our traditional way - selfishness and greed is the settler way. So too is relying on problematic and contradictory settler documents, accounts, records, history, and notions of blood quantum to verify Indigenous belonging when our community had already encouraged our membership based on long-standing ties and relations in community.

All I ever wanted was to belong somewhere and to honour my ancestors with that connection. I don't understand why my family was wanted for 20 years and now is not. I don't even know if I can ever again feel a deep connection with a community that rejects me. I was welcomed home - where will I go to find my ancestors now?

Chi Meegwetch for reading my letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle de Braux'.

Michelle de Braux
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