

**THIS IS A LETTER TO EXPLAIN MY
RESPONSE TO VELDON COBURN'S
LETTER AGAINST THE INCLUSION OF
MICHEL McDONALD AS A ROOT ANCESTOR**

To member of the Algonquin Tribunal:

I am the second son of Frances McDonald, identified as "Indian" in the 1921 Census, along with her sister and father, John Christmas McDonald.

I get the impression that Mr. Coburn thinks that Indigenous people who didn't go to a reserve had a much better life than those who did. I can only speak for those who didn't go to a reserve.

My mother got a grade four education, and that was thanks to a teacher who spent extra time with her, when she could get to school.

Why didn't she get to school regularly? Her father would go to work in the bush as a teamster in the area of Sturgeon Falls Ontario, and his wife, my Grandmother, stayed at home all winter with a large family. My mother had to stay home and look after the younger children while my grandmother did outside chores, like splitting wood for example.

When my mother was fourteen she went to work fulltime for a farm sawmill combination. The sawmill owner employed several men, and my mother's duties were to clean, bake bread and do all the laundry for everyone. Baking the bread meant getting up at 3:00 AM. She had twelve boils on her stomach one time, but was not excused from doing a large washing by hand over a tub and washboard. I think the fact that her family was identified as Indian, a minority at the time in the area, accounted for her mistreatment. My mother was paid \$4.00 per month for the work she did, but more often than not she was given used clothes in lieu of cash.

My mother married my father when she was 17, and they lived on the second concession of Lanark Township, in the County of Lanark. My brother was born on May 21, 1938, and he was delivered at home by my **mother's maternal great-grandmother Jane Kelford, who was the mother of Joe Whiteduck known as Kelford (Rosenberger Papers on Whiteduck page 231)**. Times were still very hard because, like in the Ompah area where she had come from, the road was usually not plowed in winter, and when it was, it was done with a wooden plow pulled by a team of horses. Fences would be removed so horses could get around the snow drifts. This is coming first hand from my memory.

The first car I remember my dad having was a 1928 Chev. The first house they had was built by my dad cutting cedar logs by hand (no chain saw) after work in the spring. He cut the logs in my paternal grandfather's bush. My mother peeled the logs during the day, and they built their first home. There was no electricity or the conveniences electricity provides, that we take for granted today. Mother grew a garden, and a root cellar kept carrots, and potatoes from spoiling over winter. She made ninety percent of our clothes. When food was scarce, she didn't eat, said she wasn't hungry. The war was raging in Europe and her younger brothers were fighting there. We raised a pig that we killed in the fall,

and it provided meat over the winter. A new mattress meant going to my paternal grandfather's straw mow and filling the tick with fresher straw. My paternal grandfather had died a few years earlier.

I remember loving to visit people who had cows, because that was when we got fresh milk and butter. At home we drank Carnation evaporated milk mixed with water, and in the summer we had fresh meat on Sunday only, which was purchased in Lanark Village on Saturday night.

We went to school like everyone else in the area, by walking a mile and a half across country with no road, and at five I remember the difficulty wading the snow. Spring and fall were wonderful. This was about the time the teacher went around the room grades one to eight in the one room school house, asking each child what nationality they descended from. When she got to me I said "Indian". That evening my older brother told my mother. After the treatment from non-natives while growing up, my mother was trying to hide it, and was not at all pleased with me. This was the difference of living off reserve among mostly non-natives, and living on reserve where everyone was native. Then you wonder why people didn't give their true identity. When one of my mother's sisters married a non-native his parents were very upset because their son married an Indian.

There is much more, but I think you get the picture. Even though we didn't have the opportunities that later generations have had, we had a good work ethic, and with hard work, we have done very well. We survived because of the hard work and love of our hardworking parents, and our work ethic came from the example they set. Times change and we and our descendants are the beneficiaries of that change.

This bit of my history is just to give you the idea that I experienced a little of what my ancestors experienced. I have no doubt that they had it more difficult, because their geographic location was even more isolated.

The Census takers were not going to have an education in the eighteen hundreds comparable to the twenty first century as suggested by Mr. Coburn. They would have to know the trails in the back country, and where people lived, no (GPS). They had to travel during the day, while walking or driving a horse. They had to travel at a time of year when the trails were passable. Last, but not least they had to be able to read and write. Communication was not such that appointments could be made, so they spoke to whoever was in the home, usually the women looking after the children. Needless to say the Census Taker didn't get home every evening. This is why I say, when he met indigenous people he might write Cree rather than Algonquin, because it was easier to spell.

Mr. Coburn has his reasons for how he feels, and I respect that. I also respect that he had the courage to put his feelings in writing even though I disagree with most of what he wrote.

I am including a copy of Mr. Coburn's letter, with my observations in RED.

Yours truly

Robert (Bob) Majaury

Dear members of the Algonquin Tribunal:

I am responding to Mr. Veldon Coburn's letter, requesting the removal of Michel McDonald as an Algonquin Root Ancestor. I am using red lettering to make it easier to read.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Algonquin Tribunal

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RE: Michel McDonald (RIN #14703)

Dear Tribunal members,

Please find enclosed a genealogy of Michel McDonald (RIN #14703) in supplement to the Enrolment's Officer's report with the following observations:

One area of concern that I wish to bring to your attention is the AOO Registrar's comments in Michel McDonald's case which, in my opinion, seems to demonstrate an implicit "bias" in his favor for him to be given the benefit of the doubt and be considered by the Tribunal as an "Algonquin" due to his numerous relationships with Algonquins and thus let him and his enrolled descendants remain on the Schedule of Ancestors and the citizenship rolls..

Likewise, to the Registrar's report, my analysis of Michel McDonald's life also shows that he and one of his sons, Peter, indeed did have multiple relationships, including marriages, with various Algonquin individuals during their lifetime.

However, while he did on several occasions identify and was identified as an "Indian" in his lifetime, never once did he or any one of his children from his third wife, a French-Canadian, identified per se as an "Algonquin" prior to his passing in 1907. It is only much later that his

children started to identify as Algonquin. The simple explanation is the descendants of Michel McDonald only identified as Algonquin when they were invited to enrol in the Algonquin land claim. Until that time they only knew they were descended from an Indian, who lived within Algonquin traditional territory. It is my understanding that other Algonquin people also referred to themselves as Indian or French Indians as well if they had mixed ancestry. For instance my mother referred to Kate Pierre (Jocko) as an Indian, and did not call her Algonquin. Popular vernacular of different eras can also shift in time. We referred to our Whetung relatives, as Indian not Mississauga. Everyone referred to themselves as Indian in my mother's generation among themselves. Not within the general public scenarios.

In fact, in the 1871 census, Michel McDonald (or his 2nd Algonquin wife Mary Constant) stated to the enumerator that he was born in Manitoba and was of Scottish origins. In the 1901 census, he himself (or a senior member of his family) again stated that he was born in Manitoba and clearly declared to the enumerator being of Cree French Breed origins. This identity is consistent with a person of mixed Cree-French heritage who would have been born

in Manitoba which is the homeland of the Plains Cree and Metis peoples. Think of when Michel McDonald was born, approximately 1839. Michel McDonald wasn't even sure of the exact date of his birth. He apparently wasn't able to name his parents on any document, but Mr. Coburn says he stated to the Census taker in 1871 that he knew he was born in Manitoba approximately 32 years earlier. Please keep in mind that only a portion of the province known as Manitoba today was named Manitoba, and it was only named Manitoba in 1870, a few months before the 1871 Census. Prior to that and when Michel McDonald was born it was Red River. Michel McDonald was living in rural Renfrew County, and according to the 1901 Census, he could not read. So please tell me how he would have been up to date on geography and politics in Canada, while not being able to name his parents, or consistently knowing his exact age. Census takers in the time period this refers to had to be local, so they would know the trails, and where the people were located. They travelled by foot, or by horse and buggy. They travelled by day and only when the trails were passible by being clear of snow and mud. There was no way of making appointments, so in most cases they interviewed the women who were in the home looking after the children. The men were hunting, trapping, making syrup, or cutting wood spring and fall or collecting feed for animals in summer when the Census taker would be visiting.

As a result of the above statement by the census' respondent, Michel McDonald's entire household, including his servant, Sarah Whiteduck, were listed by the enumerator in the 1901 census as being of Cree French Breed origins except for the servant's infant daughter, Mary Brown who was listed as English, no doubt after her father, Georges Brown.

However, while I did not do any research on Sarah Whiteduck genealogy given that she was the McDonald's family servant, the AOO Registrar's nonetheless undertook extensive genealogical research in regards to Sarah Whiteduck which demonstrated that not only was she Algonquin, she was also related as a cousin to Michel McDonald's two long deceased Algonquin wives !! Instead of just stating the facts surrounding Michel McDonald, his family and his servant identification in the 1901 census and leaving the Tribunal decide on the merit of the

documented evidence before them, the AOO Registrar in her Report's Summary stated:

"The identification of Michel McDonald as "Cree French Breed" on the 1901 census is somewhat questionable as Sarah Whiteduck who lived with him was also described as "Cree French Breed." Sarah Whiteduck is shown in multiple genealogical records as being of Algonquin descent with no known non-Indigenous ancestors"

In my opinion and if you agree, the following response to the Registrar "biased" comments in my view would be necessary:

1) Despite the innuendo raised by the Registrar in stating that Sarah Whiteduck "lived with Michel McDonald" and implicitly was perhaps his third Algonquin wife, there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that her relationship with Michel McDonald was anything else than a professional "Employer-employee" relationship and/or that she and her child resided full time in-house with the McDonald family or worked there only during the daytime when the census took place. I've been reading the work of Joan Holmes for years, and I don't recall reading anything that she has written, that suggested that Sarah Whiteduck was or could have been his third Algonquin wife. Mr. Coburn makes it very clear that he has no idea what conditions were like in the back country in the late eighteen hundreds and early nineteen hundreds, when he says maybe Sarah only worked for wages during the day and went home in the evening. Roads were not plowed or maintained in the back country. Sarah would not have a vehicle to commute even if they were maintained. Sarah needed a place for her and her child to live, and Michel needed someone to look after his children, it's that simple. I was born in the back county almost eighty years ago, and I can tell you first hand that's how it still was in the nineteen forties. For the reasons I explained earlier it was most likely that Sarah

Whiteduck was the person being interviewed. You will see that it says she spoke Indian in the 1911 Census, and was living with other members of her family in 1911 who probably answered Algonquin to the Census Taker's question.

2) Given the Registrar's findings that Sarah Whiteduck was Algonquin, it then becomes quite obvious that she was not the person who was interviewed for the census. Indeed, if she had been the person being interviewed and/or had participated in the interview, she would have surely declared that she was Algonquin and not a Cree French Breed as she was erroneously identified. At the time in 1901 it could have been an assumption on the part of the Census taker, as it was apparent that they were Indian and Cree was much easier to spell than Algonquin. For the reason stated above it was most likely that Sarah Whiteduck was the person in the house being interviewed. She would have been the person most likely to know the identity and ethnicity of the father of her baby.

3) In effect, the person usually interviewed in a census is the Head of the Household. In this instance, it would have been Michel McDonald or, if absent, his eldest child, Georges, who would have been old enough at 20 years old. However, the level of details provided in the census, for example, in terms of employment and wages would indicate that Michel McDonald himself was the respondent. It has been made clear that Michel McDonald would not have known his exact tribal affiliation, so he may have said he didn't know, at which time the Census taker put down Cree Fb for both, knowing they were Indian. It is most likely that it was Sarah Whiteduck that was interviewed. It is hard for me to read, but I think it says he was employed for two months, and earned sixty, and I assume that meant sixty dollars. That is information anyone could know, as conversation was common within the home at that time. It certainly would not have been sufficient income to pay cash to hire a servant, regardless of who answered the question. I believe it just confirms the long close relationship Michel had with the other Algonquin people in the territory.

4) In any case, whoever was interviewed clearly declared that Michel McDonald was born in Manitoba and identified as a Cree French Breed and further added that the infant child, Mary Brown, was of English origins. As a result, it would be reasonable to infer that the enumerator simply wrote down what he was told and listed everybody in the household, including Sarah Whiteduck, as being of Cree French Breed origins except for the infant child, as English. This is further evidence that it was Sarah Whiteduck who was interviewed, because she would be the one to know who the father of her child was, and what his ethnicity was.

5) Consequently, the Registrar's comments to the AOO Tribunal that the 1901 census is "somewhat questionable" as Sarah Whiteduck was erroneously listed as a Cree French Breed instead of Algonquin unjustly challenges the honesty and integrity of the enumerator.

6) There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that the enumerator would have written down anything other than what he was specifically told and had the legal obligation to do during his interview. It is also highly unlikely that he would have misunderstood the word "Manitoba" for "Ontario" or the words "Cree French Breed" instead of "Algonquin" when told where Michel McDonald was born (i.e. Manitoba) and what his tribal origins were (i.e. Cree French Breed). Mr. Coburn is fixated on the 1871 Census, but ignores the fact that the 1881 Census states that Michel McDonald was born in Ontario. He also ignores the fact that four of Michel McDonald's adult children stated at different times that their father was born in Ontario in their marriage records

7) Sarah Whiteduck being Algonquin and a cousin of Michel McDonald first two wives and employed as his servant in 1901 are irrelevant to his birth place of Manitoba and his selfidentification as a Cree French Breed in the 1901 census.

Here are the facts related to Michel McDonald and his descendants, as I see them.

- Michel McDonald was an Indigenous man living in Algonquin traditional territory in all available documentation.
- He was recorded as being associated with other Algonquin people on multiple occasions, and only Algonquin people.
- One Census document gives his place of birth as Manitoba. Seems almost impossible. It may be more convincing if it had said Red River, as he would have known it.
- One Census documents his birth place as Man.
- One Census documents his birth place as Ontario.
- Four of his Children have Ontario as their father's place of birth in the 1921 Census. I got a little confused when it said birth place of father for the males, but when it came to Eliza (female) and it said birth place of father, they had to mean her father, so the same would be for her brothers. That is five documents stating his place of birth was Ontario, one Manitoba, and one Man.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Veldon Coburn