

## 1886 Spy report from Alexander McKay to Lieut. Gov. Dewdney.

Alexander McKay, the author of this report, was born at Red River on November 20, 1846, the son of Edward McKay and Caroline Cook. He died on January 11, 1902 at Medicine Hat. Alexander was the grandson of John Richards McKay and Harriet Ballendine.

Alexander married Virginie Larocque (b. 1852) in 1865 at Fort Pembina. She was the daughter of Joseph Larocque and Sophie Marchand. They had the following children:

Alfred; born 1868 at Fort Qu'Appelle  
Anne; born 1872 at Cypress Hills  
Joseph; 1872 Moose Jaw  
Philip; born 1874 Fort Qu'Appelle  
Emma; born 1875 Mire Creek  
Alexander; born 1877 at Selkirk  
Maria; born 1879 at Medicine Hat  
Joseph Lawrence; born 1881 at Prince Albert  
Sarah; born 1881, Cypress Hills  
Eliza; born 1884 at Medicine Hat, and  
Edmond; born 1887 at Medicine Hat.

Pembina County  
Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1886

Report of a tour made by A. McKay on my arrival at Pembina County. I saw "Henry Sammat"<sup>1</sup> – "Louis Rolette"<sup>2</sup> and several others making nine in number, they were anxious to find out what my errand was in that part of the country, answer, was I am come to see this place and Turtle Mountain, to find out if I could make a living easier here than where

I am at present, advice I got from the parties, do not go to the Turtle Mountain for at present the people belonging to that part does not agree, and another thing, they would not like to see you as you have come from the north, also they said that "Michel Dummah"<sup>3</sup> had reported to them, that he had all the Sioux to join him, he was giving the people to understand that he was "Gabriel Dumont."

Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> This morning I left with "Pierre Larocque" from St. Vincent and on our way he asked me what errand I was on, are you come to find out any partys (sic) who were in the Rebellion last spring? My answer was no, I came to find out where my mother-in-law lived and what like the country is, and if I could make out a living easy in this part of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Jerome *dit* St. Matte.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Rolette, born at Pembina, May 6, 1860, the son of Joseph Rolette and Angelique Jerome. He married Julienne Bouvier in 1888 at Pembina.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Dumas.

From St. Vincent I hired a team belonging to “David Sammat”<sup>4</sup> (asking the same questions, giving the same answers) and went on to Mrs. Larocque’s.

9<sup>th</sup> Jan. Late this evening reached Mrs. Larocque’s, my mother-in-law’s place, she was very anxious to find out what my errand was, I told her that I had written to her several times and that I never got an answer that I thought it better for me to find out for the satisfaction of my wife to know if you were alive, here I felt I got a cold reception, but after some talk, and after finding that I was looking after my own affairs, it was only then they made free and gave me some news, that is “Philippe Larocque” and “Elie Larocque” and the old woman, these are my Brothers-in-law.

They all advised me to try and leave north as soon as possible, as they heard there was to be a big row in spring, and although at present the English and French halfbreeds are living together, that the French are very bitter against the English, believing that “Riel” was hung without cause, and if it was not for “Riel” that the half-breeds would never get their rights.

13<sup>th</sup> “ Today hired “Elie Larocque’s” team to go to St. John’s, and, Bay Center, and Olga where some other of my wife’s relatives was, camped at Mrs. Larocque’s, next day went on to Olga, after seeing all there was there, and had a talk with them, they was anxious that I should leave north, as they was certain there was going to be a big row in spring, I remained in these three several places five days, from Olga, I returned to St. Vincent—on my way to Winnipeg.

19<sup>th</sup> Jan. I encamped at Poplar Point where some more of my Mother’s relations were living, after asking me some questions they began to talk about Riel, and the man who captured him, that he did wrong and should have been punished instead of Riel.

20<sup>th</sup> I left for Brandon and camped with the Sioux, where I intended remaining for several days, to try to find out if these Indians had promised Michel Dumah<sup>5</sup> to join him in the spring to raise a row, I remained with them four days, they reported to me that last spring the halfbreeds asked them to join them, but they refused as already once they fought with Amer. And they would never fight with white people any more, as we are living comfortable where we are.

25<sup>th</sup> To day left the Sioux camp and went to Griswold,<sup>6</sup> where I heard there was a halfbreed camp, on making this place, and after enquiring, I found out that a family was going to Turtle Mountain who was in the late rebellion\*

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<sup>4</sup> David Jerome *dit* St. Matte, born in 1837, the son of Martin Jerome and Elizabeth Wilkie.

<sup>5</sup> Dumas

<sup>6</sup> Location of the Sioux Valley Reserve.

\*Antoine Lafontaine<sup>7</sup> he is at Turtle Mountain, but his family were going now, his wife is daughter of Roderick Ross.<sup>8</sup> Lafontaines (illegible...) 25 in Duck Lake fight.

I being acquainted with the man who was taking this family through I said if I could run fast enough to keep up, that I would follow, this man said he would take me through, and the next morning we started out, taking not three days to get to St. John's in Turtle Mountain, we encamped at Wm. Davises Junr and next day went on to Louis Davis<sup>9</sup>, where I remained four days, these Davises, were very kind to me, after they found out what my errand was, they gave me every information, about the Indians and halfbreeds how they could not agree about the reserve, the old people of that place, namely Wm. Davis Sr.,<sup>10</sup> Gabriel Poitras Sr.<sup>11</sup> Grand Josse and three others, these are very old men, Andrie Marrion, Louis Marrion<sup>12</sup>, all advised me to leave the north, as they were expecting there would be a row in the spring, they said that a great many Fenians, along the boundary line south are trying to get the halfbreeds and Indians to rise against the Government as Riel was hung without a cause.

Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> 86 I returned to St. John's, I camped with Pierre Mallater,<sup>13</sup> on my way out, there were some partys did not know I passed they reported they reported to each other that a McKay, had passed, that could neither talk Cree nor French, Andrie Marrion<sup>14</sup> told them, if a McKay, he will talk Cree for I know all the McKays, hear I was going to be arrested by the two scouts, namely Gaspard Jerome or *Pipsis*, and Callius Hool,<sup>15</sup> they wanted to find out my errand, I told what I had said before but (they) would not believe me also

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<sup>7</sup>Lafontaine, Antoine *dit* Faillant. (1849-1889)

Antoine was the son of Calixte Sr. and Charlotte Adam. He was born at St. François Xavier and it was there that he married Madeleine Ross and in 1871 married Marie Delorme at Lebret. In 1878, Antoine and other Metis buffalo hunters at Cypress Hills wrote a petition asking for a special Metis reserve of land. Typical of buffalo hunting families Antoine and Madeleine had children born at Saskatoon, Wood Mountain, Cypress Hills and Crooked Lake. They were living at Saint Laurent at the time of the Resistance. He was one of the fighters at Tourond's Coulee and at Batoche. He was a Captain of one of the 19 companies led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Metis Resistance at Batoche.

<sup>8</sup> Ross, Roderick. (b. 1829)

Roderick was a St. Francois Xavier trader, the son of Hugh Ross and Sarah Short. He married Marie Delorme the daughter of Urbain Delorme and Madeleine Vivier. He became a resident at Lebret near the Catholic Mission.

<sup>9</sup> Davis, Louis. (b. 1856)

Louis was the son of Jean Baptiste Davis and Julianne Desnominé. His parents were both members of the Turtle Mountain Band. He married Theresa Desjarlais at St. François Xavier. His father was one of the Metis hunters who had signed the Half-Breed petition from Lake Qu'Appelle in 1874. Louis was a member of Captain Edouard Dumont's company, one of the 19 *dizaines* led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Metis Resistance.

<sup>10</sup> Davis, William (b. 1824)

William was the son of Jean Baptiste Davis and Josephthe Saulteaux. He married Marie Enno. He and his brother Jean Baptiste Jr. were both members of the Turtle Mountain Band.

<sup>11</sup> Poitras, Gabriel. (b. 1820)

Gabriel was born at St. Francois Xavier, the son of Francois Poitras and Marguerite Grant. Gabriel was a Turtle Mountain Band member. Gabriel was married to Isabelle Malaterre.

<sup>12</sup> Louis Marion, born March 17, 1840 was the son of Narcisse Marion and Marie Bouchard. Louis was married to Marie Andronique Ross.

<sup>13</sup> Malaterre.

<sup>14</sup> André Marion

those which were with me, my partners, told them if they did not believe, that they were willing to be arrested as we were all traveling together, after a long talk, the scouts then began enquiring about Osoup, and if I had not seen him on my way down, they seemed to be anxious of his arrival there, these scouts, then began to tell me that as you are coming to live on the Turtle Mountain, and that there will be a row in spring, you could tell Front-Man and party that we are ready, and that we have got the Fenians to help us, hear (sic) I was told that Baptist Fayant,<sup>16</sup> of Swift Current told Antoine Canada<sup>17</sup> and Pierre Lavellier<sup>18</sup> {and several others that I was a spy} that I was traveling around to find out what the people were doing hear (sic) I had to burn my memorandum, for fear I would be found out.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell  
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research  
Louis Riel Institute

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Houle, was born on September 5, 1861, the son of Antoine Houle and Genevieve St. Pierre. He married Henrietta Turcotte. They appear on the Turtle Mountain Band census in 1884. He died in 1926.

<sup>16</sup> Baptiste Fayant.

<sup>17</sup> Canada *dit* Enno, Antoine Jr. (b. 1857)

Antoine was the son of Antoine Canada *dit* Hennault Sr. and Catherine Davis. He married Margaret Dumais, the daughter of Charles Dumais and Marie St. Arnaud in 1880 on the Milk River and then married Marie Celina McKay, daughter of Leonard McKay and Sarah Lambert in 1884. Antoine, also known as Antoine Enno Jr. was a Turtle Mountain Band member. He and his wife Celina appear on the Turtle Mountain Band census for 1884.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Léveill 