

Really Hard Journey

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Really, it was a velvety dark soft night,

We had to build a fire to cook the evening meal,

We called each other "cousin" et "mon frère,"

We laughed at each other's jokes.

Nous exchange hard facts

Of the massive country,

We were crossing.

We were engagés to the Northwest, French, Scot, Montréal.

We contracted to John Jacob Astor, Manhattan Island.

Around this fire, we were simply relatives,

From a pool of two thousand personne

With mothers from Île-à-la-Crosse—Dene et Cree; Great Plains—Yankton Sioux,

Chippewa—Great Lakes; Nipissing et Algonquin—Maskiongé

Moi, I was travelling avec ma femme et deux enfants,

My son Jean-Baptise was already a veteran, four-years-old,

This was the second voyage,

Pour my famille.

We were with Lewis and Clark,
Now for John Jacob Astor.
The other men talked of the North West Compagnie,
And the Hudson's Bay Company
Coming Sud from the North.
A region so vast it would take a century to explore.
We asked about the old families on the Great Lakes,
They were well, all the way to St. Louis.
When one of the younger voyageur asked,
"What does all this mean for the whole continent?"
Each man said, "Je ne sais pas."
As the embers died down,
And now comfortable in our bed robes,
A voice said, "I think les Américains will decide,"
"And Britain will make a lot of noise" said another
As we drifted in and out of sleep,
Someone mumbled, "Que pasa los Indios?"
"Why do you bother asking? Look who owns the guns and the gunpowder."
"Yea, les Indiens own the horses,
They have intimate knowledge of their regions,"
Another declared, "We cannot kill them all," then,

“It would be like killing our mothers.”

The night took over and we slept.

Who was there?

Moi, Pierre Dorion Jr., Pierre Delaunay, Francis Landry,

Jean-Baptiste Turcotte, André LaChapelle, Gilles LeClerc.

Did they make it back?

Non.

Written and Dedicated to Joanna Seraphim, PhD, Ethnologie et Anthropologie Sociale à
l'École des Hautes Études de Sciences Sociales, Paris, France

Area of study – the lives of Métis women in an urban environment