

Bobtail Band: Metis Who Left Treaty

Treaty 6 was negotiated with the Plains and Wood Cree Indians in what is now central Alberta and Saskatchewan at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt in 1876. Prior to that Cree people used to gather in the Muskwaçis area ("Bear Hills") on occasion for social and spiritual purposes. This particular location had a special significance to the Crees when reserves were set aside, and so many chose it as their place to live. Bobtail desired a reserve near Pigeon Lake and on September 25, 1877 Chief Bobtail and two of his Councillors signed an adhesion to Treaty Six.

Thirty one and a half (31.5) square lands were originally set aside for the Bobtail Band of Indians. The land became abandoned due to a dispersal of the original inhabitants. After it lay substantially vacant for a period of time, it was granted to the Montana Band of Indians. In 1909, the reserve was surrendered, so that today the Montana Reserve is not 31.5 square miles but rather 10 square miles. This surrender is currently being contested in the courts by the Tribe.

Metis who withdrew from Treaty:

Charles Allard	Band # ___.
Alexis Cardinal	Band # 10.
Isaac Cardinal	Band # 10.
Suzanne Bremner nee Gandenal	Band # 39.
Jean Baptiste Cardinal	Band # 23.
Baptiste Cardinal Jr.	Band # 23.
Bichy Cardinal	Band # 23.
Isaac Cardinal	Band # 23.
Pierre Miscenas dit Durand	Band # 24.
Isabel Cardinal Durand	Band # 24.
Cow-as-ah-tow-wach-ahnum	
Wife of Francis Piche	Band # 2.
Jacques Cardinal	Band # 22.
Betsy Cardinal	Band # 22.
Monique Dumais	Band # ___.
Baptiste Degraisse	Band # 12.
Alexis Josie	Band # ___.
Francois Piche or Coyote ¹	Band # 2.
Susette Piche or Putchchun ²	Band # 1.
Cecille Piche	Band # 1.
Angele Piche	Band # 1.
Alexis Piche ³	Band # 1.

¹ Also called Mescakanis, Bobtail's son (1840-1924). Coyote was a participant in the 1885 Metis Resistance.

² Putchchun (1805-1911) is Bobtail's wife and mother of Coyote.

Michael Piche	Band # 1.
Marie Piche	Band # 1.
Baptiste Piche ⁴	Band # 1.
Peeaykatoot Piche dit Big Thunder	Band # 32.

³ Chief Keskayo, "Bobtail" also known as Alexis, was born in 1829, the son of Louis Piche (Metis) and Opihtaskiwis (Cree). In 1849, Bobtail married Catherine Cardinal (Pierre) dit Mustatip at Pidgeon Lake. Her father's name was Pierre Cardinal dit Eia-io-wew and her mother was Marie Catherine Cardinal. Alexis Jr. and Catherine had four children; Cecile b. 1852 at Lac Ste. Anne, Francois b. 1847 at Fort Pitt, Angele b. 1864 at Metis Crossing (Victoria) and Alexis b. 1866 also at Metis Crossing. Bobtail's desired a reserve near Pigeon Lake and on September 25, 1877 Chief Bobtail and two of his Councillors signed an adhesion to Treaty Six.

He was a signatory to the Treaty Six adhesion in 1877 at Tail Creek. Not wanting to participate in the 1885 Resistance Bobtail led part of his band to Montana. Later, they were part of the expulsions of "Landless Cree" from that state. He had what was to become the Montana Reserve. He died in 1900. Samson and Ermineskin did not sign the treaty and split from Bobtails group. Inspector Wadsworth noted that while the Department appeared to recognize both Ermineskin (Baptiste Piche) and Samson as chiefs, they were not signatories to the Treaty. Both demanded their names be added and they get the appropriate medals, but the Department ignored these request. Wadsworth to Dewdney, 1 February 1884. RG 10, vol. 3640, file 7452 pt. 3. The relationship of the Ermineskin people to Bobtail and Bobtail's demand for a large reserve based upon his understanding of the treaty can be found in David Lupul and Brenda Gainer, "A history of the Bobtail Band and Its Reserve," Unpublished Paper, T.A.R.R., May 1978.

⁴ Baptiste, whose Cree name was Sehkosowayanew, and was also called Ermineskin, was also the son of Louis Piché Sr. and Opeh-tah-she-toy-wishk (a Plains Cree woman).



MOUNTAIN CREE

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Recognized by the Government of Canada

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Thank you for your response. As you may realize, we have considerable internal information on Bobtail and the Bobtail history, as well as having researched the band history for the past 40 years. This is in part curiosity and at this time to establish proof of continued existence of the Bobtail Successors as a Non-Treaty band. In this we are recognized by the National Energy Board, Natural Resources Canada, Heritage Canada and Parks Canada.

With regard to the posted article, there are a number of errors:

In 1877 Bobtail signed as Head Chief on behalf of all the ASINI WACHI WI INIWAK bands, not all of whom were at the Treaty 7 meeting where Bobtail signed. Bobtail's following at this time consisted of a number of 'bands' or 'sub-bands'. In 1877 Bobtail signed at Gleichen (not Tail Creek) along with two headmen, Samuel Meminowatow Piche, Chowek and Francois Piche. A fourth party under Abraham signed at Fort Pitt. Covered under Bobtail's signature were also the future Enoch Band, Louis Bull Band and CHIPOS OSTIKWAN's Band. Records indicate that he asked for a reserve on the upper Bow River (200 band members were already living at Calgary by 1873); this was refused, whereupon his second choice was a reserve in the Pigeon Lake area.

Bobtail followed the same process as the Blackfoot, where all bands/sub-bands signed as a united group under the Chiefs and sub-chiefs. Bobtail expected that the reserve would be for all the Mountain Cree sub-bands, as was the case for the Blackfoot, hence a fairly large size.

In 1878 Jean Baptiste Ermineskin Piche and Samson (brother-in-law to Bobtail) signed as Headmen at Buffalo Lake. Another group under Wapoos signed at Fort Walsh. Ermineskin had signed in 1877 as an ordinary band member. Some 1000 band members did not sign Treaty. Abraham's, Chowek's and Wapoos' bands thereafter disappeared from the records. In a court deposition the Samson Band stated that they were 'Bobtail People'.

None of these headmen were recognized as Chiefs.

Putchchun, aka. Isabelle Pochen was Bobtail's 1st wife; he is known to have had some 5 wives. Tradition has it that Isabelle was Francois 'Coyote's mother but given that she was born 1805 and he was born ca. 1854-57 this is uncertain.

Bobtail is said to have been born in 1829 (and married a woman 24 years his senior?), but this refers to Alexis II.

In 1884 Bobtail's following returned to MASKWA WACHIS to take up reservations. Bobtail did not return to Montana. Bobtail was in charge at Maskwacis. He maintained a neutral stance in 1885 and would neither support nor condemn the rebellion. He declared it a matter of conscience, and did not prevent those who wished to leave to do so. When looting broke out at Maskwacis he sent out the O KICHITA to suppress it. When the Alberta Field Force arrived in 1885, where he met General Strange et. al.

Subsequent to the 1885 rebellion the band members were unhappy with the Treaty situation and in the fall of 1885 Bobtail and his family withdrew from Treaty. Most remaining band members also withdrew from Treaty. Bobtail moved to Calgary. In 1886 Bobtail's family, including Coyote, re-entered Treaty at Maskwacis. After Bobtail withdrew from Treaty Samson and Ermineskin were recognized as Chiefs.

Francois Coyote moved to Montana, where he became part of the Rocky Boy Band under the name Poor Old Coyote. No members of the Treaty Bobtail Band other than Francois Coyote were in Montana at the time of expulsions. In 1876 these Indians evicted from Montana were placed on the Bobtail Reserve.

From 1879 to 1900 some 230 band members disappeared from the Treaty rolls without explanation. By 1909 only some 31 persons remained in the Treaty 6 Bobtail Band, the remainder had withdrawn from Treaty and existed as Non-Treaty band members. The government now transferred these 31 to the Samson or Ermineskin Bands and declared the (Treaty) Bobtail band as extinct. Thereafter the Bobtail Reserve was transferred to these evictees. It was subject to court challenge. The courts found that the Bobtail Descendants, whether Treaty or Non-Treaty, could still have a legal claim to the reserve.

Ermineskin was a younger brother of Bobtail. The Piche were a large family, a number of the males being Chiefs, and many of the girls being married to men who would become chiefs.

I attach a listing of publications that cover some of this information.

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