

## Metis Expulsion from Montana 1882<sup>1</sup>

In 1882, U. S. Army troops encountered a group of “Half Breed” families, numbering about 100 people, living along the Milk River. The troops proceeded to burn out their homes and force the families back into Canada. Apparently, the confrontation started when the leaders of the mixed-blood families kidnapped a local sheriff who was trying to collect taxes from them.

The petitioner also described two encounters some of their ancestors had with the U. S. Army in the early 1880’s as evidence of community in Montana during that period. For example, in 1882, U. S. Army troops encountered a group of “half breed” families, numbering about 100 people, living along the Milk River. The troops proceeded to burn out their homes and force the families back into Canada. Apparently, the confrontation started when the leaders of the mixed-blood families kidnapped a local sheriff who was trying to collect taxes from them.

During his captivity, the sheriff made a list of the 20 individuals, identified as the “principal men of the settlement” (Healy 4/1882).<sup>2</sup> Only 15 of the names on the document were legible, and 10 of these individuals were the petitioner’s ancestors.<sup>3</sup> An analysis of the 10 men showed they originated from the Métis settlements of Pembina County in North Dakota, or St. Boniface and St. Francis Parishes in Manitoba. Seven of the men or their spouses had mixed-blood Pembina Band ancestry, and many were living in the Métis settlement area of Pembina County from the 1840’s to the 1860’s. Most of them ventured into Montana from the late 1870’s to early 1880’s from their wintering area of Wood Mountain in Saskatchewan during buffalo hunting forays. Four of these men and their families returned to Montana after the Army expelled them, and one of those applied for Canadian Métis scrip in 1885, suggesting he viewed himself as part of a much larger ethnic group. In six instances, either they or close relatives wound up at the Turtle Mountain Reservation of North Dakota in the 1880’s and 1890’s suggesting a later affiliation with that group rather than a “Little Shell Community Group” in Montana. Four of them remained in Canada, mainly in Saskatchewan, and two of those applied for Canadian Métis scrip.

In the fall of 1883, U. S. Army troops also rounded up and deported several camps of small sets of “half breed” families in northern Montana that had stolen and

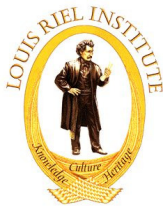
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<sup>1</sup> Summary taken from “Summary under the Criteria and Evidence for Final Determination Against the Federal Acknowledgment of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana.” Prepared in Response to a Petition Submitted to the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs for Federal Acknowledgment that this Group Exists as an Indian Tribe. October 27, 2009:182-184.

<sup>2</sup> He identified Alex Brien (Brillen), one of the petitioner’s ancestors, as the “chief” of the “half breed” settlement; he described another as “chief advisor.”

<sup>3</sup> They were Alexander Brien (b. 1850; database reference # 5824), Leon Laverdure, (b. abt. 1844; #8223), Alex Fisher (b. abt. 1821; #9079), Alex Fisher (b. abt. 1841; 9126), St. Pierre Morin (b. abt 1845; #9732), Charles Joseph Morin (b. 1846; #9033), Alex Gardipee (b. 1842; #6673), Pierre St. Denis (b. bef. 1842; 5801), William Klyne (b. 1849; #7708), and Louis Belgarde (b. abt 1831; #4545).

killed some cattle. They probably numbered about 15 families, with 16 men, 24 women, and 71 children (from about 10 intermarried families).<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> They were Belgarde, Amyotte, Decouteau, Rainville, Poitras, Klyne, Pelletier, Ouellette, Houle, and Lafournaise.