

## **Louis Guiboche (Gibotte). (1785-c.1859)**

Louis, also known by the Indian name of Nemisses (Minissis) and the nickname Little Pigeon (Petit Pigeon) was a Metis fur trader, born in Rupert's Land and employed as an interpreter by the NWC in 1804. Although his origins cannot be precisely identified, presumably he was born of a French Canadian father and an Indian mother. In March, 1779, Philip Turnor of the Hudson's Bay Company met a trader named "Gibosh" employed by Jean-Étienne Waddens, in the area around Upper Hudson House (near Silver Grove, Sask.) on the North Saskatchewan River. Some years later, in May 1788, a Louis Guiboche of Berthier-en-Haut (Berthierville), Quebec, was taken on as middleman paddler by McTavish, Frobisher and Company, a co-partner in the North West Company. Both references may well be to Louis Guiboche's father. Alternately, the Louis Guiboche working for the NWC in the Lower Red River department in 1799 is equally likely to have been the subject of this biography or his father.

From 1815 to 1818 Guiboche was an interpreter for the HBC at Lesser Slave Lake (Alta), and in 1818-19 he was in the Athabasca country. The following year he seems to have settled in the Red River colony, but during the 1820s he travelled regularly for the HBC to York Factory, on Hudson Bay, as well as in the English River district. Then with Cuthbert Grant he undertook independent trading in the Qu'Appelle Valley region. The fur trade companies vied for his services and the North West company, at one point wanted to re-hire Guiboche in 1820 - "at any price".

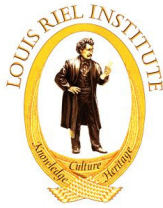
Guiboche had a special role during these years. With Cuthbert Grant, he was an independent merchant who contracted to carry the company's trade goods and supplies between the colony and Hudson Bay. George Simpson, the HBC's governor, appealed to Guiboche and Grant in 1826 to stem the opposition to the company's monopoly mounted by the American fur traders from the south. The two were fitted out by the company and authorized to trade in the region between Turtle Mountain (Man.) and the Qu'Appelle River, with the object of acquiring the furs coveted by the independent traders. Probably in recognition of the success of this venture, Guiboche was appointed interpreter-clerk for the Winnipeg district in 1828. The following year he held the position of postmaster and winterer at Netley Creek, but in 1831 he retired and returned to the Red River settlement.

When the colony's first census was taken in 1827, Guiboche had declared himself married and the father of seven; a census in 1832 showed that his possessions included a house, four horses, seven oxen, four carts, and two canoes, but that he did little farming, and this suggests that his livelihood came mainly from hunting and transporting goods. He owned properties on the Assiniboine River west of the colony, and near the fork of the Red and Seine rivers. However, around 1835 he began to dispose of these, keeping only one lot for himself at St. Boniface, where he lived. Meanwhile, his work obliged him to travel. Nothing further is known of his pursuits until 1859, when a note in the colony's records dated October 13<sup>th</sup> states that Guiboche had died and that his sons wished to sell his land.

Governor Simpson, not normally lavish with his compliments, said of Guiboche in 1830, that he was “very steady and correct, well qualified as Postmaster.” His role as an interpreter for the Indians was considered indispensable by those running the HBC. (Contributed by Diane Payment.)

*Reference*

Morice, A.G. *Dictionnaire Historique des Canadiens et des Métis Français de L'Ouest* (1908) Translated by Peter J. Gagné, Gail Morin CD-ROM Version. (pp. 221-222).  
Payment, Diane. “Louis Guiboche (Minissis, Little Pigeon).” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VIII (1851-1860). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985: 349.



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