

Chief Little Shell III Biography.

Known as Chief Ayabe-way-we-tung “He Who Rests On His Way” or Ase-anse

Background:

In the fur trade era Alexander Henry the Younger was situated at Pembina and trading with Chief Tabashaw, Little Shell I, Old Wild Rice and others from 1801 to 1804. Many of his French Canadian and Métis voyageurs intermarried with these Chippewa people during that time. Henry himself married the daughter of Ah-ne-him-ish or Liard (translated as Cottonwood) in 1801. Laird was the brother of Little Shell. Thus, Alexander Henry became Little Shell’s brother in-law.

Roland Eugene Marmon¹ reports:

The first time Ais-saince or Little Shell I appeared in the pages of recorded history is in the journals of an English Northwest Fur Company trader Alexander Henry the Younger (the son of Alexander Henry the Elder.). This journal is a detailed account of his experiences while establishing fur trading posts for the Northwest Fur Company along the Red River from the years 1800 to 1810. According to Henry Jr., Little Shell and forty other Saulteurs (Chippewa) men were waiting for him and his voyageurs when they arrived in 1800 at the fork of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. The combined force of Ojibway and European men then descended the Red River to exploit fur resources there.

Henry gave this diverse group of men the name, “The Red River Brigade,” and gave a complete listing of the names of everybody involved in the expedition, including the Ojibway.²

Henry listed the Ojibway in his brigade as coming from two different home lakes: Leech Lake and Red Lake.³ Henry listed Little Shell in the Leech Lake category. In the listing, Henry translated the Ojibway name to French and English. Ais-saince can be translated to Petite Coquille, Henry’s French translation, and Little Clam (which would later change to Little Shell in Henry’s journal), the English equivalent.⁴

Of the forty Ojibway men waiting for Alexander Henry in the spring of 1800 at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, seven are listed as being from the “Red Sucker of Beavers, inhabitants of Red Lake, which they abandoned in 1790.” The remaining thirty-four Ojibway men including Little Shell are listed as

¹ “Last Card Played: a History of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa and the Ten Cent Treaty of 1892.” University of Arizona, Ph.D. thesis, 2009: 20-22.

² Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the years 1760 and 1776*. Boston: Brown Publishing, 1901: 24.

³ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

being from “two bands of O-ge-bois (Ojibway) or Saulteurs, inhabitants of the Mississippi, Leech Lake, etc., and have since left their lands since the years 1789-90.”

If accurate, Henry’s account means Little Shell and other Ojibway may have been roaming in that part of the country (Red River) for at least a decade, away from their home locations in present day central and northern Minnesota. During this time it was very probable that this group of Ojibway were involved with the fur trade.

Alexander Henry the Younger married the daughter of an Ojibway chieftain of the Red River Brigade named Liard (translated as Cottonwood) in about 1803. Liard was Aissaince’s brother, which meant Alexander Henry became Little Shell’s brother in-law, according to European custom. Henry even noted it in his journal he considered Aissaince his brother and had great respect for Liard his father-in-law.⁵

Chiefs:⁶

- Little Shell I: Little Clam Shell, Aisainse, or La Petit Coquille, died in 1813.
- “Makadeshib” Black Duck: Chief from time of Little Shell’s death in 1813 to 1824.
- Little Shell II: Was also called Weesh-e-damo, Tacgitcit or Split Rump, the son of Little Shell I, Chief from 1824 to his death circa 1868.
- Little Shell III: Known as Ayabe-way-we-tung or Apitwewitu, or in short form Wenis, meaning Long Voice, also Egec, became chief when his father died until his death in 1901.

The historical record indicates that Chief Little Shell I was killed in a battle with the Dakota at Devil’s Lake in 1808. His son, Little Shell II was too young to become chief at that time. Subsequently, Makadeshib (Black Duck) becomes the chief.⁷ Black Duck village is reported to be located at Stump Lake, to the east of Devil’s Lake. Black Duck was active in North Dakota as well as in what is now Manitoba.

⁵ Harold Hickerson, “The Genesis of a Trading Post Band: The Pembina Chippewa.” *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 3, Number 4, Fall 1956 (Indiana University Press), 163, 260.

⁶ Provided by Dr. Nick Vrooman.

⁷ Michael K. Keplin of Turtle Mountain reports that: Black Duck had distinguished himself in warfare against Dakota Chief Wa-nah-ta at Red Lake. His daughter Okimahkwe "Great Woman" (Makadeshib) was born 1824. He notes that she was one of the wives of Little Shell III and was ten years older. She died before Aug 01, 1889 in the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation, Dakota Territory.

Chief Ayabe-way-we-tung “He Who Rests On His Way” or Ase-anse (Little Shell III)

Little Shell III married Okimahkwe "Great Woman" (Makadeshib). She was the daughter of Chief Makadeshib (Black Duck) and was born in 1824.. She died before August 1, 1889 in the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation, Dakota Territory. Okimahkwe's brothers were:

- Makadeshib II, born circa 1815. He was also called “Louison Lerat.”
- Pitowewkiizhik "François Norbert" Lerat (Makadeshib) was born about 1825 in the Red River Settlement Manitoba. He died Dec 28, 1887 in Dakota Territory on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation.
- Pieskanahapit was born about 1827.

Little Shell had an adopted boy, a stepson, the son of Great Woman; Chipatakoenn, “Green Man” (b.1872).

Little Shell's second wife was Oskinskwa “Young Woman” (b. 1858). Her sister was Little Stone. He had two children with Young Woman; a daughter named Ga Na Wa pan (b. 1880), and a son Gyi ka emihelet “Reading the Day” (b. 1884).

Band Census:

- No. 1/Indian Name:Esens/English Name:Little Shell/Relationship:Father/Sex M/Age52.
- No. 2/Indian Name:Okimahkwa/Relationship:Wife/Sex:F/Age:62.
- No. 3/Indian Name:Oskinigihkwe/ English Name: Young Woman/Relationship: Wife/Age 27.
- No. 4/Indian Name:Kanawapan/English Name: Facing/Relationship: Daughter/ Sex:F/Age:3.
- No. 5/Indian Name:Kyikaemikeket/English Name: Reading the Day/Relationship: son/Sex:M/Age:1

Enumerated on September 6, 1887 Census by Ernest Wm. Bremmner Chief Farmer:
Census 1887/Full-Blood Chippewas, Turtle Mountain Band/ Devil's Lake Agency
Dakakota, John W.Cremssie U.S. Indian Agent.

The family of Essens as of June 1887.

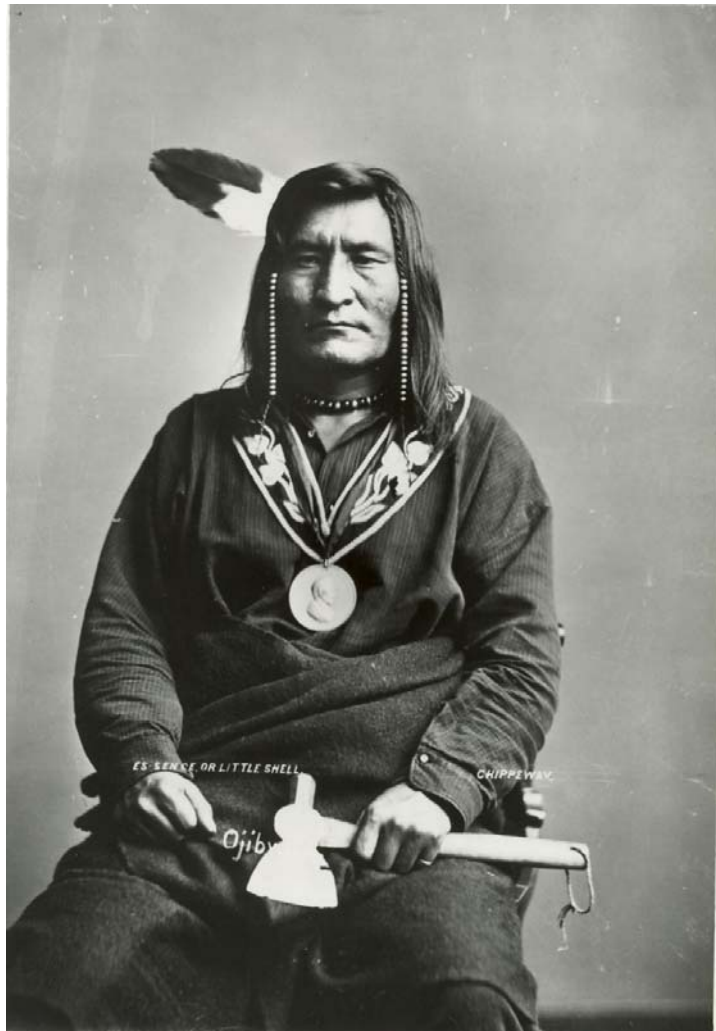
- No. 22/Indian name: Essens/ English Name: Little Shell/Relationship:Father/Age:55.
- No. 23/Indian name: Okimahkwe/ English Name: Great Woman/ Relationship: Wife/ age 62.
- No. 24/Indian name: Oskinigahkwe/ English Name: Young Woman/Relationship: Wife/ Age 28.
- No.25:/Indian name: Kannawapiw/ English Name:Facing/Relationship:Daughter/Age:5.
- No.26/Indian name: Joseph/ English Name:-/Relationship:Son/Age:3.
- No.27/Indian name: Chipatakoenn/ English Name: Green Man/Stepson/Age:15.

Great Woman married Essens “Little Shell III”. Little Shell III was born Bet. 1825-1830. He died Bet 1900-1901 in the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation in Rolette County, Belcourt, North Dakota and was buried in St. Anthony's Cemetery, on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation, Rolette County in rural Belcourt, North Dakota.

Es-en-ce or Little Shell; in 1896 gave his name as Ayabe-way-we-tung “He Who Rests On His Way.”(1829-1900). He was Chief of Pembina Ojibway at the Red Lake/Pembina Bands Treaty of October 2, 1863. The signer was Little Shell No. 3 or Ayabe-way-we-tung. In 1874 at Washington he stated that his Father and Grandfather were Chiefs of the same band before him.

Great Woman and Little Shell III had one child: Chipatakoenn “The Green Man”. He was born about 1872. He was related to his father by adoption and to his mother by birth.

- Little Shell’s father, Little Shell II, signed the Red Lake Pembina Treaty with Commissioner Ramsey in 1863 as Chief of the Pembina Band of Chippewa.
- Little Shell III was a nephew of Chief Broken Arm and Assiniboine Chief Red Stone was his uncle. Both Broken Arm and Red Stone were chiefs in the Canoe Paddler Band. Broken Arm had also been the Chief at Moose Mountain prior to White Bear.
- Little Shell III, is known for his resistance to signing the McCumber Agreement of 1892.
- He was married to Okimahkwe, “Great Woman” (b. 1823). She was a daughter of chief Black Duck. His second wife was Oskinuskwa “Young Woman” (b. 1858). Her sister was Little Stone. He had two children; a daughter Ga Na Wa pan (b. 1880) and a son, Gyi ka emihelet “Reading the Day” (b. 1884). Little Shell III was born between 1825-1830. He died between 1900-1901 at the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation in Rolette County, Belcourt, North Dakota and was buried in St. Anthony's Cemetery.
- He and his followers lived and hunted in the corridor north of the Missouri River, along the Poplar River, Wood Mountain and Moose Mountain and along the upper Assiniboine River. He and his followers had moved at one time to Montana, The Little Shell Band of Montana is recognized by the state but not by BIA.



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