

Battosh, Joseph Letendre dit Batoche. (c.1800-1816)

Joseph Letendre, a Métis, was the only member of Cuthbert Grant's party to have been killed at the Battle of Seven Oaks on June 19, 1816. Joseph was the youngest son of Jean Baptiste Letendre also known as Okimawaskawikinam and "Batoche." The North West Company agreed to pay Mme. Josephite (Cree) Letendre compensation for the unfortunate accident that led to her son's death because of the "good character her husband always bore."

James Bird was on his way to Carlton House when he stopped at "Upper Nippoe" now known as Nipawin on the Saskatchewan River, and visited the Jean Baptiste Letendre dit Batoche, the father of the NWC man that was killed at the Battle of Seven Oaks. He records in his journal:

Dec.14 1816: "The Canadian Master of this place, Battoche, is father of the young Halfbreed who was killed in Red River.¹ Having heard that the old Gentleman always disapproved of his Sons' joining in that affair and that he had reproved Mr. Hughes, even in the hearing of our people with all the bitterness of parental grief, for having occasioned the death of his Son, I sent for him with a view of ascertaining his real sentiments regarding that event and of the cause in which his son had fallen. He did not sit long before he adverted to the subject in Question loading Masers Hughes and Halden with the severest reproaches. It was THEM said the old Man with great warmth who deprived me of my Son; By flattering promises and artful insinuations they induced him for the first time in his life to disregard my advice and to act in direct opposition to my wishes; I never, continued he, would consent to his going to Red River because I believe the business he was to be engaged in to be both cruel and unjust, a sufficient proof of which was, the Northwest Proprietors themselves refraining from taking a part in it. Who was it, he exclaimed, that sent for my Son? Mr. Alexander McDonnell and Mr. Duncan Cameron I answered. It is on one of those if I ever see them, said he, that I will be revenged.

I praised the old Gentleman's discernment and liberality and assured him that the day is not far distant when he will have reason to congratulate himself for having acted with such regard to the duties of a civilized being and for having scorned to be made a wretched tool of the Northwest Company."²

¹ Jean Baptiste Letendre (also known as Okimawaskawikinam and "Batoche"), born August 30, 1762 in Sorel (Que.), he married *circa.* 1785 à la façon du pays Josephite "Crise," a member of the Cree nation, in the Northwest. He died in or after 1827, probably in St. Boniface.

Jean-Baptiste Letendre, *dit* Batoche, came to the northwest in the 1780s. In 1785–86 he was employed by the North West Company in the Athabasca department as a "devant" or bowsman. He is listed as an interpreter in the region of Fort des Prairies (Fort-à-la-Corne, Sask.) in 1804. Marie-Anne Gaboury and Jean-Baptiste Lagimodiere, who spent some time in the area in 1808, are reported to have met the Canadian Batoche and his Cree family. In 1810 Letendre or his son, who was also called Jean-Baptiste, was with the explorer David Thompson. In his diary Thompson mentions that Letendre and his family arrived from the region near Beaverhill Lake (Alberta), bringing a hundred or so beaver pelts. That year Letendre or his son went with Thompson to explore the Athabasca River as far as the Rockies but quit the expedition in January 1811 at the camp on the Canoe River (B.C.), a tributary of the Columbia.

In the 1810s and 1820s Letendre engaged in the fur trade on his own account as a "freeman." Along with his family he owned a trading post called Batoche at Muskootao Point, west of Fort-à-la-Corne on the north bank of the Saskatchewan. The Letendres also stayed for a time in the Red River Settlement during this period. On 19 June 1816 one of their sons was killed [likely Joseph Letendre dit Batoche born ca. 1800] in the engagement at Seven Oaks, known in historical writings by the Métis and French of the west as La Grenouillère. The NWC agreed to pay Mme Letendre compensation for this unfortunate accident because of the "good character her husband always bore."

² 1M19 B.27/a/6 HBCA microfilm numbers: Reel 1M257 B.239/b/69



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