

Insights Into Métis History: The Historic Document Collection of Iris Vitt and Frank Walters

On Aboriginal Day, June 21, 2016, Métis Elder Iris Vitt donated a set of Métis historic documents to the Louis Riel Institute. These documents had been collected by her father Frank Walters. These documents give insight into the history of the Robertson, McKay, and McDonald families living in the Parish of St. Andrews, Manitoba. In a handwritten note, Frank Walters describes the documents:

Oak Hammock, Manitoba:

Dispatched by boat to England from York Factory, [some of these documents are] purchase orders filled at the HBC warehouse in London England. [The goods were] Returned to York Factory the next year then delivered by York Boat to Lower Fort Garry for customers in and around St. Andrews.

The documents were saved by the Adam McDonald¹ family living on the Donald Road, and the trunk they were in was bought at a yard sale in 1983. A descendant of the original McDonalds that came to settle near Oak Hammock, Manitoba. [The family] died out so they were all found in the trunk. Mr. Fuchuk of Henderson Highway (a dealer in antiques) sold them to me.

The beautiful handwriting on these sheets is worth keeping as well as the HBC business they represent.

Documents:

1. 1848: An invoice for goods at Moose Factory with a tally of wages, gear and gratuity for James Robertson.
2. 1852: An invoice for goods shipped on board the Prince Albert to Moose Factory, Hudson's Bay at the desire of Mr. William McKay², for an account at the risk of James Robertson.
1 single barrel flint gun, with twist barrels, one extra barrel, 2 ramrods, 2 moulds and packing: £ 7.12.0 with commission £ 7.19.7
[pounds/shillings/pence]
3. 1854: James Robertson's requests out of Moose Factory sales shop (list of goods).
4. 1855: James Robertson's requests out of Moose Factory sales shop (list of goods).
5. 1857: HBC balance sheet for the late James Robertson, dated Hudson's Bay House, London, 31st May, 1857. £ 130.19.10
6. 1858: Invoice of goods shipped on board the Prince Arthur, Captain D.D. Wishart for Moose River on the account of Mrs. Robertson: A slab for Head of Grave, engraving and gilding inscription, packing case and cartage to dock: £ 6.16.6.

¹ Adam McDonald b. 1835, the son Donald "Big" McDonald and Jane Beaudry, he died at Oak Hammock. Adam married Maria McKay, the daughter of William McKay and Mary Bunn, January 8, 1863 at St. Andrews.

² William McKay was the father-in-law of James Robertson Jr. (b. 1815). James was married to Louisa McKay b. 1816.

7. 1864: Shipping Bill; Goods ordered by Mrs. Robertson shipped via the Prince of Wales to c/o Mr. William McKay, St. Andrews, Red River Settlement. £ 11.13.6
8. 1864: goods ordered on behalf of Mrs. Robertson by Rev. J.A. MacKay³. Dated Stromness, May 10, 1864. £ 12.2.6
9. Cover sheet: description of a piece of a parcel of land situated within the NE quarter section of Section 27, township 13, Range 3 East.
10. 1877, 21st Oct.: Survey report of the land noted above.
11. 1891: Municipality of St. Andrews council minute.
12. 1889: Municipality of St. Andrews council minute.
13. Quit Claim Deed made out on October 13, 1891, at Selkirk, for \$240.00 from Charles Edward McKay to William Thomas Moore – evidently his step-father. This is the land reserved for the Children of the Half Breed Heads of Families.

James Robertson and Louisa McKay

James Robertson (1815-1857)

James Robertson Jr. was the Métis son of James Robertson Sr. and Caroline Lal-o-way-sho (Cree). James Sr. was an HBC carpenter from the Orkneys

Louisa McKay (b.1816)

In 1841 Louisa, the eldest daughter of William McKay and Mary Bunn married James Robertson at Mistassini, he was the son of Lal-o-way-sho and James Robertson Sr. Louisa McKay was born May 16, 1816. James died in 1857 and Louisa then moved to St. Andrews to live with her father William McKay.

Louisa McKay's sister Elizabeth McKay, born April 28, 1838 at Mistassini married Thomas Moore, the son of John Moore and Clemence Ross in 1859 at St. Andrews. She subsequently married John McKay, the son of John McKay and Mary England in 1867 at St. Clement's. Her son, Charles Edward McKay's quit Claim deed is shown above.

Scrip affidavit for Robertson, Louisa; born: May 16, 1816; husband: James Robertson; father: Wm. McKay (Métis); mother: Mary McKay (Métis); claim no: 289; scrip no: 2178 to 2185; date of issue: May 1, 1876; amount: \$160.

Robertson, Louisa (née McKay, wife of James Robertson) - Scrip number 2178-2185 - Amount 160.00\$ (20.00\$ each).

Scrip affidavit for Peebles, James; born: 1811; father: James Peebles (Scot); mother: Mary (Indian); claim no: 275; scrip no: 2074 to 2081; date of issue: May

³ John Alexander McKay, was Louisa McKay's younger brother. J. A. McKay, Church of England priest, educator, and translator; was born on July 14, 1838 in Mistassini (Que.), tenth of the twelve children of William McKay and Mary Bunn, who were both Métis. On August 4, 1864 he married Margaret Drever, they had five daughters and one son; he died on 26 Nov. 1923 in Battleford, Sask., and was buried in Prince Albert, Sask.

1, 1876; amount: \$160; wife: Isabella Peebles, who died November 8, 1872; her mother: Mary McKay (Métis); her father: Wm. McKay (Métis); her heirs: her sisters Louisa, widow of James Robertson; Elizabeth, wife of John McKay; and Maria, wife of Adam Macdonald; claim no: 276; scrip no: 9068 to 9070; date of issue: July 3, 1876; amount: \$160

McKay, Louisa (heir of Mary McKay; widow of Louis Robertson) - Scrip number 1929 - Amount 20.00\$.

William McKay, b: April 15, 1793 in Albany Factory, James Bay District, Rupert's Land – (He later changed the spelling of his surname to "MacKay"). He was the son of Mary Favel and John McKay (1758-1810), both Métis He died on March 12, 1861 in St Andrews Parish, Red River Settlement. He married Mary Bunn

Mary Bunn b: April 15, 1798 in Moose Factory, James Bay District, Rupert's Land [Ontario] m: January 27, 1815 in St. Pauls Parish, Red River Settlement. She died May 27, 1873 in St. Andrew's Parish, Manitoba Father: Thomas Bunn Mother: Sarah McNab

In 1809 William joined the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and, after the death of both of his parents in 1810, seems to have gone with Joseph Beioley (1785-1859) to the James Bay area where he served at various posts. Around 1814 Joseph Beioley married William's sister Isabella McKay. After the HBC-NWC union William's brother-in-law Joseph Beioley was made a Chief Factor and was appointed as a Rupert's Land Councillor in charge of the Rupert River District on the east side of James Bay. In addition, from 1824-25 Beioley managed the affairs of the Moose River District. In 1825 he was reappointed to the Rupert River district.

In 1832 Beioley put William McKay in charge of the HBC post at Mistassini (Quebec). At that time the family had seven children. At Mistassini, five more children were born to William Mary.

In 1857 William McKay retired to the Red River Settlement, hoping to get land promised by the HBC to its retiring employees, a promise on which the company reneged. He took up land in Mapleton, south of Selkirk, MB.

Adam McDonald

Adam McDonald b. 1835, was the son of Donald "Big" McDonald and Jane Beaudry, he died at Oak Hammock. Adam married Maria McKay, the daughter of William McKay and Mary Bunn, January 8, 1863 at St. Andrews. Maria McKay was born in 1840 at Mistassini, Quebec. Maria died on May 2, 1912 at Oak Hammock.

Scrip affidavit for McDonald, Adam; born: January 10, 1835; father: Donald McDonald (Scot); mother: Jane Beaudry (Métis); claim no: 228; scrip no: 1705 to 1712; date of issue: May 1, 1876; amount: \$160.

Scrip affidavit for McDonald, Maria; born: 1840; wife of Adam McDonald; father: Wm. McKay (Métis); mother: Mary (Métis); claim no: 229; scrip no: 1713 to 1720; date of issue: May 1, 1876; amount: \$160.

Hay scrip for Lot 78 outer two miles Parish of St. Andrews - McDonald, Adam.

Quit Claim Deed made out on October 13, 1891, for \$240.00 from Charles Edward McKay to William Thomas Moore – his step-brother. This is the land reserved for the Children of the Half Breed Heads of Families, see the St. Clements Broadside.

Scrip Applications:

Scrip affidavit for McKay, John Alexander; mother: Elizabeth McKay; father: John McKay (Métis); children: John Alexander, born: August 27, 1869; Charles Edward, born: Jan. 26, 1870; following are children of Elizabeth McKay and Thomas Moore: Rachel Moore, born: March 12, 1858; Wm. T. Moore, born: June 8, 1881.

Scrip affidavit for William Thomas Moore; born: 8 June 1863; father: Thomas Moore; mother: Elizabeth McKay; Deponent: John McKay

Scrip affidavit for McKay, Elizabeth; born: April 25, 1838; wife of John McKay Jr.; mother: Mary Bunn; father: Wm. McKay; claim no: 2581; scrip no: 12158; date of issue: April 20, 1877; amount: \$160.

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No. 6450 & 6451
FORM B

1304
No. ~~117~~ Claim of

1. John Alex. McKay
2. Charles Edw. McKay

These are second applications
patents already issued here
applicant No 1850. copy
specimens together with
one of the title sent
to Metropolitan

Halfbreed child under 18 years

St. Clements

Affidavit of head of family and Certificate of Baptism.

Second application
affidavit 1956 same
perman

CANADA
PROVINCE OF MANITOBA:
COUNTY OF SELKIRK.
City of Winnipeg.

John McKay

of the Parish of *St. Clements*
Lafar

in the County of *Lafar* in said Province, make oath
and say as follows:

That *John Alexander McKay* Born *at St. Clements on August 27th 1868*
Baptized 6th September 1868

Charles Edward McKay " *at St. Clements on January 26th 1871*
Baptized 27th February 1872

are the children of *John McKay*
a *half-breed* and of *Elizabeth McKay*

The said *John McKay* is a Half-Breed Head of Family, and was residing in the Province of Manitoba, on the 15th July, 1870.

The said children will respectively be 18 years of age at the dates unde-mentioned:

John Alexander McKay on the *27th August 1886*

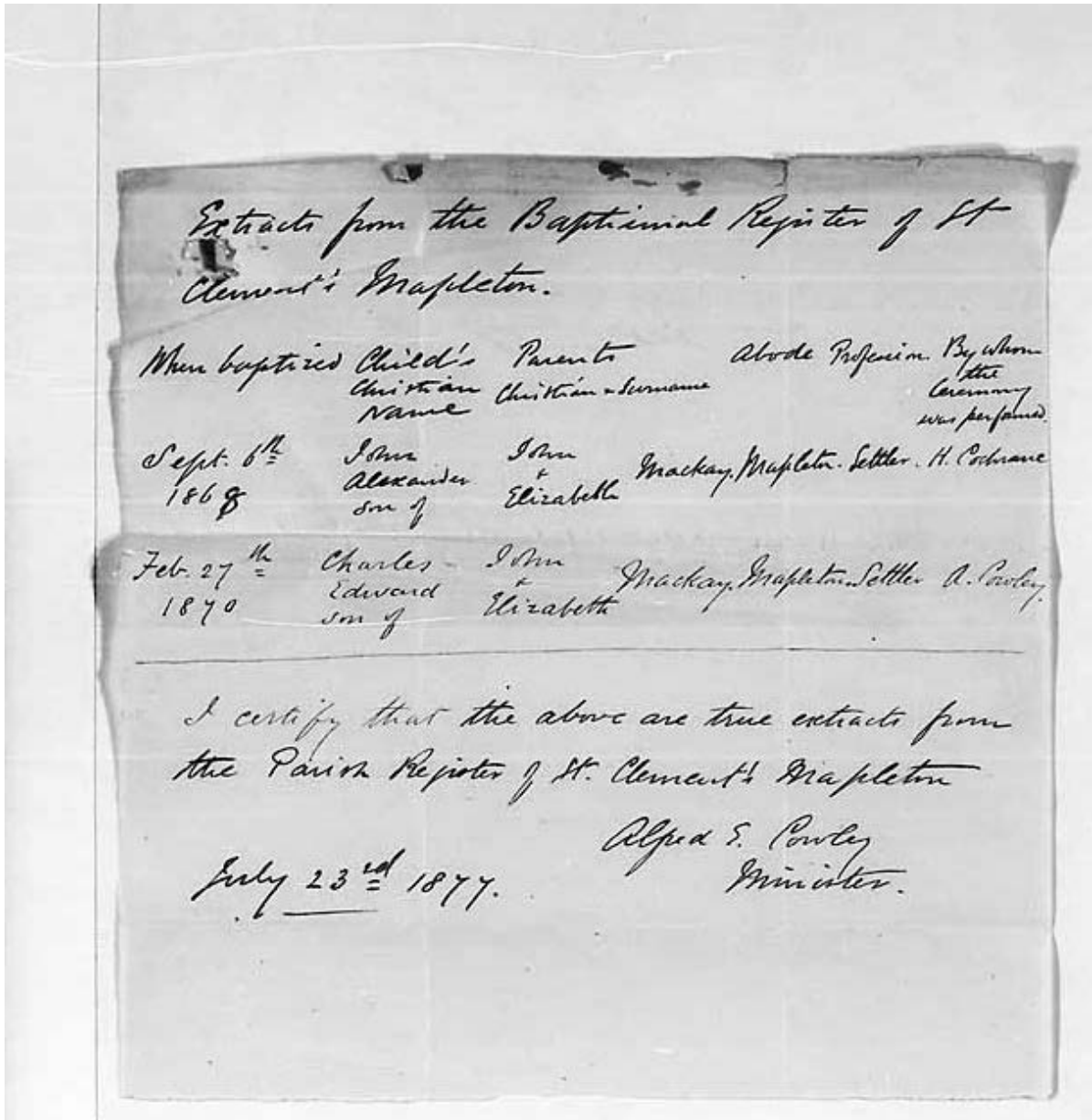
Charles Edward McKay " *26th January 1888*

The said children are entitled to participate in the allotment and distribution of the 1,200,000 acres of land set apart for Half-Breed children, pursuant to the Statutes in that behalf.

Having first been read and explained over to him in English
And the said deponent declares himself ~~unable~~ able to sign his name.

Sworn before me at the aforesaid City, }
this *24th* day of *July* 1877. } *John McKay*

Donald Todd
Agent Dominion Lands.



Iris Vitt née Walters (b. 1931)

Métis historian and Elder Iris Vitt lives in Selkirk Manitoba. Iris is the daughter of Frank Walters (b. 1898) and Minnie Foord (b. 1911).⁴ Iris is a Métis genealogist and

⁴ Minnie Foord (1911-1989), was the Métis daughter of Frederick John Foord (1879-1961) and his Métis wife, Margaret "Tina" Christine Kirkness (1886-1944). His Métis great grandparents were Joseph Kirkness (1856-1922) and Margaret Phillips (1867-1947). His Métis great-great grandparents were on the paternal side; Andrew Kirkness (b. 1820) and Sarah Setter (b.c. 1820) and on the maternal side; William Phillips (b. 1842 in Birsay, Orkney Islands) and his Métis wife Charlotte Lambert (b. 1846).

historian who is preserving her father's studies and research on the Bungi language of the Métis. Iris has donated her father's research tapes to the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the Louis Riel Institute. She has also donated considerable historical material to the Red River local in Selkirk, Manitoba.

Frank Walters (1898-1995)

Iris Vitt's father, Frank Walters, was a Métis historian and cultural preservationist with a particular interest in the Bungee (Bungi) language of his wife's family. This language was spoken by the so-called Orkney-Cree Half Breeds who lived in the parishes along the Red River north of the Forks and up to Lake Winnipeg. It was the language of his wife's grandparents and great grandparents. Franks best known article on the Bungi language is "Red River Dialects: Bungee as She is Spoke" which appears in his book *Pieces of the Past*, Winnipeg: Bindery Publishing House, 1993: 68-71. This book contains many anecdotes and historical vignettes from the St. Andrews parish of Manitoba. It is an update of:

Walters, Frank J., *Pieces of the Past : A Collection of Tales of Old Red River*. West Selkirk, Man: F.J. Walters, c1989.

At the time the book was written it was estimated that less than 200 people were able to understand, explain, or write Bungee. Previously, Frank had published his Bungee article in the journal of the Red River Historical Society. Frank spent his later years telling his stories to classes of children in the Lord Selkirk School Division.

Walters, Frank J. "Bungee As She Is Spoke." *Red River Valley Historian and History News. The Quarterly Journal of the Red River Valley Historical Society*, 3 (4), 1969–1970: 68-70.



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Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute

Scrip affidavit for Kirkness, Andrew; born: 1820; father: Andrew Kirkness (Scot); mother: Mary (Swampy Cree); claim no: 1014; scrip no: 7690 to 7697; date of issue: July 30, 1876; amount: \$160