

**Petition of the Red River People for the return of Father G. A. Belcourt**  
—addressed to the Archbishop of Quebec, Bishop Signay.<sup>1</sup>

[Copied as on manuscript with all the original mistakes.]

White Horse Plain  
15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1847

Rev. Arch Bishop of Quebec:

In the affliction we find ourselves at present, for the department of Mr. Belcourt, we put our hope in the Arch Bishop of Quebec. He is the only person that is able in this country for the Indian language and for the English too.

Great number of persons which do not understand at all the French and so that all the Indians at the other Vicinity are quite discontented for they say if they leave the place once, that they will not be got so easily.

At present Mr. Belcoyurt was always useful in this country, at present he is necessarily wanted, for if the Blood was not shed, its Mr. Belcourt we owe that. If we don't get Mr. Belcourt after this, we have our rights from England, and that the company does not right to us, and so the public are not pleased if there's no person to hold and bring them to the right way, that there shall be troubles.

Mr. Belcourt he is the only person that can hold peace for they like him, without the affection we have for Mr. Belcourt to be only the motive for his return is it not allowed to like and to desire who has always been to us a good father and the best of our friends we always find in him a priest and good guide and charity for our souls, its him who made us Christians and instruct us in our religion.

Without missing the respects of the Bishop a character and judging our Ecclesiastic superior we are obliged to say that if we don't see our church soon falling we hope only in Mr. Belcourt, and all the presents in money sent by the respectable priests in Canada, and all the sacrifices which was given by the public when we reclaim in favor of our church which was answered that it is sufficient for Indians.

All our hope is in you Arch bishop will if you please satisfy our prayer and hope on your charity will again for us you will excuse our ignorant if our heart could speak it would be better speched than our pen, and in assisting us, you will work for our souls and we shall not be ingrate.

We have the honor to be Right Reverend Arch Bishop,  
Your affectionate servants  
(signed)

---

<sup>1</sup> Assumption Abbey, Richardton, N.D., Belleau Collection, Roll 2, 1847: pp. 19-21. [Provided to the Louis Riel Institute by Émilie Pigeon.]

Joseph Guilbeau  
Charles Grant  
Louis Gargu py  
Jean Bte. Gargu py  
Paul Paul  
Joseph G rare  
Francois Paul  
Pierre Leveille  
Jean Bte. Lepin e  
Charles Desjarlais  
Louis Leveille  
Pierre Leveille  
Jean Bte. Faillant  
Charles Gladu  
Pierre Genot  
Louis Roy  
Pierre Roy  
Jean Bte. Morond  
Louis Laroche  
Baptiste Paul  
Ignace Potias  
Andr  Cardinal  
Louis Morin  
Baptiste Beauvier  
Paul Paul  
Joseph Woelette  
Joseph Woelette  
Isidore Woelette  
Joseph Lepin e  
Baptiste Bruy re  
Cuthbert McGillis  
William McGillis  
Charles Morin  
Francois Morin  
Jean Bte. Malaterre  
Alexis Maleterre  
Basile Maleterre  
Roger Montour  
Henri Page  
Francois Gurot  
Pierre Falcon  
Baptiste Falcon  
Gr goire Falcon  
Henri Poitras  
Henri Poitras  
Joseph Potras  
Charles Gladu  
Michel Gladu

Joseph Gladu  
Alexis McGillis  
Olivier Paul  
Francois Robinson  
Baptiste Robinson  
Alexandre Berland  
Paschal Montour  
Bonaventure Gagu py  
Louis Gargu py  
Jean Bte. Gervais  
Basile Gervais  
Paschal Montour  
Abraham Montour  
Joseph Pich e  
Francois Pich e  
Calisse Lafontaine  
Louis Gounvil  
Joseph Leveille  
Joseph Larech  
J. Bte. Laroche  
Olivier Laroche  
J. Bte. Morin  
Louis Pich e  
Alexis Gounvil  
Antoine Gounvil  
Joseph Gounvil  
Antoine Gounvil  
Augustin Gounvil  
Edouard Linghin  
J. Bte. Ledoux  
Joseph Chehan  
Joseph Chehan  
J. Bte. Lafontaine  
J. Bte. Gervais  
Francois Gervais  
Alexis Gervais  
Basile Gervais  
Joseph Lacouture  
Antoine Ledoux  
Antoine Paul  
Marc Paul  
Moise Berland  
Michel Monette  
Edouard Welx  
J. Bte. Malaterre  
Charles Pelletier  
Cuthbert Grant fils  
Jeames Grant

Antoine Monette  
J. Bte. Faillant  
Pierre Poitras  
Alexandre Genot  
Francois Faillant  
Joseph Faillant  
J. Bte. Adam  
Cuthbert Faillant  
Paul Faillant  
F. Xavier Faillant  
Moise Faillant  
Andr  Monee  
Pierre Potras  
Paschal Berland  
Francois Potras  
Jean Monette  
Andr  Desjarlais  
Jourdy George  
Jean Potras  
Francois Monette  
Maxime Potras  
Joseph Potras  
Francois Potras  
Charles Gladu  
Pierre Gladu  
Andr  Gladu  
Joseph Gladu  
Francois Bonneau  
Francois Bonneau  
Joseph Morrison  
Isidore Roy  
Pierre Roy  
Francois Falcon  
Joseph Pich e  
Francois Morin  
William Boston  
McNish Boston  
Xavier Morin  
Pierre Martin p re  
Pierre Martin fils  
Alphonse Martin fils  
Abraham Martin fils  
Pierre Boyer  
Isidore Boyer  
Joseph Boyer

Et un grand nombre autres qui auraient donné volontiers leurs noms, mais ils ne sont pas encore revenus de la chasse des Prairies.

Les signatures écrit desous ont été donné volontairement par les gens de la Fourche.

Louis Galerneau	Louis Landri	Francois Larivière
André Carrière	Toussaint Foié	Louis La Ferté
Louis Sans Regret	Joseph Rail	Amable Brancoine
Daniel Carrière	Toussaint Foie	Angus McDonald
Antoine Caron	Louis Landri	Gabriel Salomon
André Miyet	Joseph Bagneau	Joseph Lavoyan
Antoine Twesignier	Charles Laviolette	Salomon Amlin
Pierre Ducharme	Baptiste Laviolette	Joseph Robert
Alexis Goulet	Charles Laviolette	Manuel Champagne
Joseph Amiotte	Antoine Laviolette	Pierre Betourne
Roger Goulet	J. Bte. Boie	Augustin Brabant
Pierre Blondent	Gabriel Lafurnase	Fillebert La Deroute
Martin LaValley	Joseph LaFurnase	Francois Lyonnaies
Louis Beaveare	Joseph LaFurnase	Jean La Deroute
Antoine Vandalle	Joseph Parento	Fillebert La Deroute
Baptiste Bereard	Louis Delorme	Alexis Henry
Denis Bereard	Antoine Liest	Joseph Lyonnies
August LaValley	William McMillan	J. Bte. Lepine
J. Bte. Boivin	Norbert Lawrence	Antoine du Nord
Pierre Gladieux	Benjamin Lawrence	Francois Plante
Etienne Contois	Olivier La Ferte	Joseph Gaudry
Baptiste Contois	Louis Gonzague	Pierre Gonzague
Baptiste Shore	Alexis Lespérance	Pierre La Ferte
Baptiste Perralt	Baptiste Perrolt	Dominique Ducharme
Norbert Perralt	Joseph Ducharme	Charles Lawrence
Edward Perralt	Baptiste Lawrence	Moise Lawrence
Louis Real	Benjamin Lawrence	Emillien Jeanthow
William Dease	Joseph Jeanthon	Baptiste Lépine
Charles LaValley	Joseph Galerneau	Pierre Lavalley
Aliki Wincel	Elea Jeanthon	Maxime Lépine

### **Background:**

As early as the mid-1830s there had been disputes between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Métis over the Métis right to free trade. Belcourt believed that the Métis title to their land should be recognized, that they should be allowed a voice in government, and that "free trade" in furs was their right as natives of the northwest. He was a leader at meetings held in February 1846 at the house of Andrew McDermot in the Red River Settlement where they drew up a petition in French, setting out the claims of settlers, Indians, and Métis. This petition, with 977 signatures, was dispatched to London, where it precipitated an extensive inquiry into the position of the HBC.

The Hudson's Bay Company criticized Belcourt for what it saw as his inciting discontent among the local Indigenous population. The Company administrators decided that the priest should not be allowed to remain in British North America. Governor Simpson requested that the archbishop of Quebec, Mgr Signay, recall Belcourt. In the fall of 1847, after suffering the indignity of having his luggage searched for furs, Belcourt went back to Canada.

This petition of November 1847 was the community response to Father Belcourt's removal.

When HBC Governor George Simpson learned that there was a possibility that Belcourt might re-establish himself at Pembina, a base for the buffalo hunt and a Métis settlement on American soil, 60 miles south of Upper Fort Garry he invited Belcourt to come back to Red River, provided that he undertook "not to interfere in the politics of the country." Belcourt refused. In 1848, however, he did begin a mission at Pembina, a refuge outside the control of the HBC. In a sense, Belcourt went into partnership with the American fur Company and the Métis hunters against the HBC.



**LOUIS RIEL INSTITUTE**  
*Knowledge • Culture • Heritage*

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