

NOTABLE FIGURES

OF THE MISSISSAUGAS OF THE CREDIT FIRST NATION



by Darin P. Wybenga



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EARLY LEADERS & ANCESTORS



Chief Wabbicommicot

“Ye Chief Man North and West upon Lake Ontario...”

Few people today recognize the name of Pontiac as being anything other than a make of car, but to the British authorities in North America during the early part of the 1760s, the name invoked images of rebellion and bloodshed. Pontiac, an Ottawa Chief, the primary leader of a loose coalition of Ojibway, Ottawa, Pottawatomie, and Huron-Petun people, led an attempt to drive the British from the Upper Great Lakes in 1763. The First Nations greatly preferred their previous relationship with the French who had “controlled” the Upper Lakes prior to their defeat in the Seven Years War (1756-1763). In their relationship with the First Nations, the French had been respectful—they took the time to learn First Nation languages, they generally respected First Nation customs, and they even intermarried with the people. The French, desiring to harvest the furs of the land, asked for no land apart from a few sites for trading posts and mission churches, and they recognized the sovereignty of First Nations by supplying presents to them in exchange for passing through their territory. The British were everything the French were not. The British had great need of First Nations’ land as a place to settle their ever growing colonial population—a population that would greatly diminish the resources utilized by the First Nations. The British also failed to regularly provide the accustomed presents to the First Nations. Withholding gifts of powder and shot to the First Nations meant that many people struggled to obtain enough food for their families. Unlike the French, the British paid little heed to First Nations’ traditions and customs and often treated the people with contempt rather than the respect that the French had displayed. Chafing under British “rule”, Pontiac and his followers initiated a conflict that saw the capture of nine British forts, the death of some 2500 individuals—civilians and soldiers, and the siege of Fort Detroit.

Chief Sekahos, leading some 170 Anishinaabe warriors from the Thames River region, participated in the rebellion, but Chief Wabbicommicot, a Mississauga Chief of the Toronto area (Mississaugas of the Credit territory) managed to keep our Credit River ancestors out of the conflict. Recognizing that the French had been conquered in North America and that Britain was the sole European power in the region, it seemed unwise to the chief to participate in any action that would reduce the flow of British trade goods to his people. Wabbicommicot had always been favourably disposed to the British. As

early as 1761, Wabbicommicot had accompanied Sir William Johnson, British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to Detroit in order to quiet some of the unrest First Nations groups were exhibiting in their relationship with the British. In 1763, prior to the commencement of hostilities by Pontiac, he had appeared at Fort Niagara to warn the British of the impending danger posed by Pontiac and his followers. When Pontiac with his assortment of Ojibway, Ottawa, and Pottawatomie warriors laid siege to Detroit in 1763, it was Wabbicommicot who travelled to Detroit and used his influence to lift the siege of the fort. It is unknown which words Wabbicommicot used to convince the warriors to lift the siege and enter into peace talks, but it might be speculated that his words warned them of their dependence on European trade goods—especially the powder and ammunition with which to hunt. He also probably cautioned the warriors against “biting the hand that fed them”. Sir William Johnson recognized the role of Wabbicommicot at the Treaty of Niagara talks in 1764. Wabbicommicot, whom Sir William regarded as “ye Chief Man North & West upon Lake Ontario and so far upon Lake Erie as ye big [Grand] River” was one of only twelve Ojibway leaders at the talks and Johnson recognized his role in helping to end the hostilities of the previous year. Johnson, at the talks, produced a wampum belt signifying an end to hostilities and a resumption of peaceful trade with the former First Nations allies of France.

Wabbicommicot’s relationship with the British, his stature among other First Nations, and his tactful diplomacy that was grounded on practical reality, all bear witness to a period of a time when the Mississaugas of the Credit were a people of great influence in the Great Lakes Region.

Augustus Jones

Augustus Jones (c. 1757-1836) was an American born surveyor who rose to prominence as the Deputy Surveyor General of the Nassau District of Upper Canada. As a Crown surveyor in the early days of Upper Canada, Jones mapped an immense expanse of land that included much of the treaty lands and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. The lands surveyed included most of the townships from Lake Erie to the Head of Lake Ontario; the lands along the Grand River; the north shore of Lake Ontario between Toronto and the Trent River, and the town plots of Niagara and York. He also completed the survey of Yonge Street that connected Lake Ontario with Lake Simcoe, and also the survey of Dundas Street that connected Lake Ontario with the Detroit area.

Jones in his work employed First Nations people in his survey crews and was well-liked and respected amongst them. He married Sarah Tekarihogen, a Mohawk, and went on to father eight children with her. He also maintained a relationship with Tuhbenahneequay (Sarah Henry), a Credit River Mississauga, with whom he fathered two boys – John Jones (b.1798) and Peter Jones (b.1802). The two boys lived with their mother’s people until 1816 when they went to live with Augustus at Stoney Creek. Both boys went on to become chiefs of the Credit River Mississaugas with Peter becoming a Methodist Missionary, the founder of the Credit River Mission Village, and a tireless advocate of his people.

Augustus Jones, surveyor as he was, made careful note of many of the geographical features he dealt with in his occupation. In 1796, one of the documents he wrote listed the Mississauga names, as well as their English meanings, of over thirty rivers and creeks flowing in the lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Below is a small sample:

Names by the Mississaugas	Names by the English	Explanation
Pesshinneguning	Ouse (Grand River)	“the one that washes the timber down and drives away the grass weeds”
Missinnihe	Credit River	“the Trusting Creek”
Cobechenonk	Humber River	“Leave the Canoes and Go Back”
Chi Sippi	Rouge River	“Large Creek”
Adoopekog	Etobicoke River	“Place of the Alders”

Jones, for reasons unknown, left his position as Crown surveyor in 1802. He went on to farm and later held respected positions as a militia captain and a magistrate. He died at his farm near Paris, Ontario, in 1836.

Thanks to Donald B. Smith for his copy of the document written by Augustus Jones detailing the Mississauga place names.

Chief Quinipeno & Joseph Quinipeno

Grandfather and Grandson

In 1812, Chief Quinipeno¹, the principal chief of the Mississaugas at 12 Mile Creek, was concerned as he reflected upon the plight of his people. His once vibrant band had seemed to slowly waste away before his very eyes. Times had not been good for the Mississaugas as disease, famine, and death itself were their constant companions. It seemed that things had begun to go awry when the Mississaugas began negotiating treaties with the British Crown. Expecting to share the land with the newcomers and live their lives as they had always done, the people were sorely disappointed with the advent of the settlers. Farms and settlements sprung up throughout the countryside with fences and ploughed fields that hindered the movements of the people. When attempting to camp on their own territory, angry farmers sometimes drove them away at the point of a gun. The newcomers polluted the waters and took more fish than they needed; hunting worsened as wild game became scarce as more settlers arrived on their lands. His people struggled to feed themselves. Quinipeno had expressed his people's disappointment and disillusionment as he spoke on behalf of his people during treaty negotiations with the Crown in 1805². The feelings he expressed on behalf of the Mississaugas fell on deaf ears. To make matters worse, the Mississaugas would become involved in the war between Britain and the United States. Quinipeno needed to strengthen his people for the calamitous times they were facing.

Drawing upon the traditions of his people, Quinipeno sought to inspire his band. While alone, during a period of fasting and prayer, the chief had dreamed of a spearhead which was interpreted by him to mean that he was now invincible against arrow, tomahawk, or bullet. Soon after, Quinipeno gathered his people to inspire them with a demonstration of the gift he had acquired in the dream—just as the chief could not now not be overcome by arrow, tomahawk, or bullet, the people would not be overcome by the problems that assailed them. Taking an old tin kettle in his hands, he explained to those assembled that he would use it to catch a musket ball fired at his face. Moving a short distance away, the chief held the kettle before him and commanded one of the warriors to fire. Quinipeno lay sprawled on the grass dead. Rather than providing inspiration, Quinipeno's unnecessary death would erode the peoples' faith in their traditions and help set the stage for the advent of change.

The primary agents of change were the Rev. Peter Jones (Kakkewaquonaby) and Chief Joseph Sawyer (Nawahjegezhegwabe). Under the guidance of Jones and Sawyer, the Mississaugas had become fervent Methodists and began enthusiastically transforming themselves into successful farmers at the Credit River Mission Village. Interestingly, Chief Quinipeno's own grandson, Joseph Quinipeno, born about 1815, caught the spirit of change as it took hold of the people. Joseph would have been one of the first pupils at the schoolhouse when the Mission Village was established. Rev. Peter Jones wrote of Joseph Quinipeno:

An Indian lad, named Joseph Quenchenau [Quinipeno], belonging to the Credit tribe, showed great love for his books, and was very punctual and attentive at school. But best of all, he loved his Saviour, and regularly, night and morning, offered up his private prayer to God. In the twelfth year of his age he was taken ill, when he committed himself into the hands of his Maker, saying he was not afraid to die, for he knew God would take him to heaven. After he was dead, his friends placed all his books, consisting of his Bible, Indian hymn-book, and spelling-book, on the top of his coffin, because he had loved them so much. I was very sorry to lose such a promising boy from our little society; but God saw best to take him, and therefore we must bow to His sovereign will. - from Peter Jones's, *History of the Ojebway Indians*

Joseph Quinipeno, so full of promise, died young and would never witness the achievements of his people during the 19th century. For that matter, neither did his grandfather, Chief Quinipeno, see the changes that raised his people's spirits from despair to hope. One wonders what grandfather and grandson would have thought about the changes that had taken place. Would the grandfather lament the loss of tradition; would the grandson rejoice at the "progress"? If both, were somehow able to see the Mississaugas of the Credit at this point in the 21st Century, what would they say?

To read more of Chief Quinipeno, see Donald Smith's book, *Sacred Feathers; The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquanaby) and the Mississauga Indians*.

¹ The Dictionary of Canadian Biography provides several spellings of Chief Quinipeno's name including: Quenepenon, Quenebenaw, and Kineubena.

² Chief Quinepeno participated in the Toronto Purchase and Head of the Lake Treaties. Although both treaties were negotiated in 1805, the Head of the Lake Treaty was ratified as Treaty 14 in 1806.

Nahnebahnwequay (Catharine Sutton)
b. 1824, Credit River Mission Village, Upper Canada
d. 26 Sept 1865, Grey County, Canada West



Nahnebbahnwequay, who often referred to herself as “Nahnee”, was a strong resilient, Anishinaabe woman who confronted the commonly held prejudices of the 19th century against First Nations’ peoples and women.

Nahnee, a member of the Mississaugas- a sub-group of the Anishinaabe people, was born at the Credit River in 1824 to Bunch and Polly Sunegoo. As part of the Mississauga band at the Credit River, Nahnee was raised during the time when her people were transitioning from a seasonally migrant

lifestyle to an agrarian lifestyle that more closely resembled that of the nearby settlers. Living at the Credit River Mission, Nahnee would have experienced the tensions of Mississauga customs and traditions adjusting to cope with the world and life views of the burgeoning settler population of Upper Canada. Ever mindful of her people’s culture, Nahnee received a settler education at the Credit River Mission Village where she would learn the skills necessary to make her an articulate spokesperson on the behalf of First Nations. She was heavily influenced by the piety of Methodist missionary and Mississauga Chief, Rev. Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and his English born wife, Eliza Field Jones. Regarding Peter Jones as an uncle, she shared his same devout faith and sense of Christian duty while remaining a proud First Nation’s woman.

In 1839, she married William Sutton, an equally devout Christian, and together they built a prosperous farm at the Credit Mission Reserve. All seemed well at the Credit, yet the inability to gain title to their lands, diminishing natural resources, and the encroachment of settlers caused the Mississaugas to consider the relocation of their Christian agricultural settlement. The Suttons, along with three other families from the Credit, joined the Anishinaabe of Nawash, near Owen Sound. The Suttons were welcomed by the Nawash band with some 200 acres of land which, through their untiring efforts, was

soon transformed into a thriving farm. In 1852, William and Nahnee, along with their ever-expanding family, left their farm to engage in mission work on the Garden River Reserve near Sault Ste. Marie, and then later, among the Anishinaabe of northern Michigan. When the Suttons finally made their way back to Owen Sound in 1857, they discovered that the settler demand for land and government duplicity had been combined to result in the surrender of Nawash territory. The lands on which the Sutton farm was located were to be put up for auction.

Nahnebahnwequay, whose name means “standing” or “upright” woman in Ojibway, was determined not to lose her farm. She appealed to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs arguing that the chiefs of Nawash had signed over the 200 acres of her farm to her; the Superintendent countered that First Nations’ land was held communally and not possessed by individuals. Attempts to receive compensation for the improvements she had made to her land, as well as attempts to receive the annuity money due her while she was away on missionary work were also rebuffed. The Superintendent claimed that since Nahnee had married a “white man” and had been out of the country during the time she was completing her missionary work, she was not entitled to the funds she requested. Clearly the decision was arbitrary on the part of the Superintendent as no legislation at that time existed to deprive “Indian” women of their status for marrying a non-native, and in fact, the Nawash community still considered her a member of their band.

Undeterred by the rebuff of the Superintendent, Nahnee was able to purchase her land back when it went up for public auction. Again she was met with frustration as the Department of Indian Affairs disallowed her purchase as “Indians” were minors in the eyes of the law and did not have the right to purchase the lands. She was caught in a catch-22 situation wherein she was not an “Indian” for the purpose of receiving her annuity money, but very much an “Indian” when deprived of her rights to purchase her land back. Angered by the circumstances in which she was entangled, she sent a petition to the provincial parliament in Toronto seeking resolution to her difficulties. The petition was unsuccessful and Nahnee would have to find another way to carry her fight forward.

The opportunity to take the fight forward occurred at a General Indian Council in 1859. The Council appointed Nahnee to cross the Atlantic and inform Queen

Victoria herself of the struggles of First Nations in Canada West. Nahnee had crossed the Atlantic once before in 1837 when she had accompanied Rev. Peter Jones when he, on a mission similar to hers, placed the concerns of his people before the Queen. Hampered by a lack of funds to make the journey, Nahnee, alone and pregnant, set off for New York to raise the necessary monies for her mission. Nahnee undertook several speaking engagements in which she explained the plight of the First Nations and what she hoped to accomplish while in England. Her listeners were impressed with her message as well as her sense of purpose, humility, and piety. The Quakers especially took to Nahnee's message and helped to ensure the necessary funds were raised for her journey and that she was armed with letters of introduction that would ease her way through British society.

Upon her arrival in England, British audiences were thrilled to hear Nahnee speak to them of the reasons for her visit. British attendees at her talks were mistaken if they thought they would see a "wild Indian" as Nahnee presented her people as a society moving along the path to "civilization". There were no war-whoops, tribal dancing, or native regalia in Nahnee's presentations, but there was an articulate, dignified, determined lady fighting for the rights of her people. On June 19, 1860, Nahnee met with Queen Victoria and was immediately struck by the kindness shown by the monarch. Nahnee was pleased when the Queen offered her all aid and protection, and then appointed the Duke of Newcastle to investigate the injustices that were the subject of complaint. Nahnee made her way back to Canada in September of 1860, but she did not go alone for she had given birth to her sixth child.

Hopeful that her visit to Queen Victoria would help to right the wrongs of which she had protested, Nahnee was greatly disappointed when the Duke of Newcastle could find no basis for her complaints. The Duke, investigating the complaints Nahnee had laid before the Queen, had only taken the word of Indian Department that it was "kindly disposed" towards the First Nations. The Duke's investigation turned out to be really no investigation at all and the hopes held by the First Nations for justice were dashed. Nahnee's own reputation appeared to be tarnished as the Duke readily accepted the feeble claim by the Department of Indian Affairs that her purchase of land had been disallowed as she was suspected of engaging in land speculation. The Duke further upheld the department's claim that Nahnee had no claims as an "Indian" because of her marriage to an Englishman.

Her arbitrary treatment by the Indian Department rankled Nahnee deeply as she knew personally of other First Nation's women who had married settler husbands yet had not been ill-treated by the government. It was not until 1861 that the Department of Indian Affairs granted her a small sum for the improvements she had made on the farm, but still no money was forthcoming for the annuities owed her as a member of the Nawash band. She was even allowed to purchase the lands she had successfully bid on four years earlier.

Nahnee would live until November 8, 1865. Until the very end of her life, she was a zealous advocate for the rights of First Nations people. She resisted the efforts of the government to open Manitoulin Island for settlement in spite of promises that it would remain under First Nation's stewardship. When an editor of a newspaper made disparaging remarks about the "Indians", she put pen to paper and took him to task for his foolishness. When the members of her band were ravaged by a devastating fire, it was Nahnee who advocated on their behalf to the people of Britain asking for money and supplies. Upon her death, she left behind a loving family and legacy of strength and determination that would be an example for others to emulate when all appeared gloomy.

Dressing For The Queen

If going to visit Queen Elizabeth, what would one wear for the occasion? Would you put on your very best attire before approaching her Majesty, or would a casual, relaxed selection from your wardrobe be acceptable. What if you were representing your First Nation—would traditional dress be your choice? Very few people actually get to meet their monarch, but two Mississaugas—one a chief of the Credit River people, and the other a former member of the Credit River band, met their Queen in the 1800s.

On September 14, 1838, Rev. Peter Jones, missionary and Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit, arrived at Windsor Castle to have an audience with Queen Victoria, monarch of the British Empire. Jones was to present to the Queen a petition, on behalf of his people, requesting title to their reserve lands at the Credit River. Before actually meeting the Queen, however, a question had to be resolved: What would Jones wear before the Queen? Jones tells of the dilemma in his diary:

His Lordship [Lord Glenelg, Colonial Secretary] appeared glad to see us, and gave us a hearty shake of the hand. The conversation was about the costume in which I should be presented to the Queen. His Lordship thought I had better appear in the English dress, as he did not know what the Indian dress was, and therefore did not know if it would be proper to appear in it and asked if it was like the Highland Scotch dress? We informed His Lordship that it was not like the Highland dress, but that it was a perfect covering, and that I had appeared in it at large promiscuous assemblies. Lord Glenelg then said he would go and speak to, Lord Melbourne on the subject. He was absent a few minutes, and on his return said that Lord Melbourne thought I had better appear in my English dress. So we left Lord Glenelg with the understanding that I should come up to the Castle in my English dress; but to bring my Indian costume to the Castle. Lord Glenelg came to the inn in about half an hour after we had left the Castle, and said that he called in order to request that I would bring with me the whole of my dress to the Castle. At about half-past 2 p. m. we rode in a close fly to the Castle and on appearing before His Lordship, I showed him the Indian costume, and when he had looked at it, he said I had better begin to put it on. I said if His Lordship thought it best to put it on I should. He replied that it was, and asked how long it would take me to dress? I said about twenty minutes. His Lordship then left us the use of his room to dress in. I then proceeded with the assistance of Mr. A. to undress and to put on the Indian costume as fast as I could, and finished dressing by the time specified above.

Although a respected Methodist clergyman, Jones often wore traditional garb during the many speeches he gave throughout Britain to raise money for mission work back in Canada. A showman, as well as a minister, he knew his traditional attire would draw the curious to his talks, and hopefully, he could then convince them to contribute to his cause. In time, Jones would refer to his traditional dress as his “odious Indian Costume”. Why would Jones refer to his traditional dress in such a fashion? Perhaps a clue can be gleaned from a letter written by Nahnebahnwequay (Mrs. Catharine Sutton). “Nahnee” was born at the Credit River Mission Village in 1824 and lived there until she moved to Nawash in 1846. A fierce advocate for her people, she found herself in England on June 19, 1860, to present the grievances of the Nawash people respecting their lands and rights to Queen Victoria. Like Peter Jones before her, the issue of what to wear before the Queen was problematic. Her people at Nawash

desired that she wear traditional dress before Victoria, but Nahnee would not do so and dressed as would any of her respectable settler neighbours back in Canada. The British press reported her sentiments:

This is the way we dress... we are not pagans...we try to be like white people...and do what we can to be civilized people."

Nahnee was not ashamed of her people when she said, "*we try to be like white people*", but was articulating that she and her people wanted to enjoy the same respect and rights enjoyed by Her Majesty's other subjects throughout the Empire.

Jones, at the Credit River Mission Village, had seen his people pulled back from the brink of extinction and transform themselves into highly successful farmers with a village containing a mill, mechanic shops, a school, and a church. Perhaps wearing his "*odious Indian Costume*" harkened back to a time when his people were dismissed as pagan and uncivilized. While the transformation from a traditional lifestyle to an agrarian one had not been an easy one, the Mississaugas could pride themselves on their resiliency and adaptability. Nahnee, who had grown up in the Mission Village, was proud of her people and the way they had shown themselves every bit as capable and worthy of respect as any settler in Canada.

To learn more about Peter Jones or Nahnee, read Donald B Smith's, *Mississauga Portraits: Ojibway Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada* and *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians*.



THE CREDIT RIVER MISSION



Egerton Ryerson

A Missionary at the Credit River



The Methodist missionary arrived at the Credit River Mission Village on September 16, 1826. A young man of 23 years of age, he was faced with the daunting task of helping the Mississaugas grow in their newly acquired Christian faith. Within the first ten days of his arrival he was thrown into his work as one band member accidentally shot himself while in a stupor and perished as a result. Death paid a visit a scant few days later as two more burials were conducted—that of a newborn baby and the other of a man who had committed

suicide. However, not everything in the first days of his ministry was gloomy. Within nine days of his arrival, the Credit Mission villagers had resolved to build a structure that would function as both a schoolhouse and a chapel. Forty dollars was contributed at once by the Mississaugas with another sixty dollars enthusiastically pledged. Three weeks later the missionary had succeeded in raising, from the neighbouring settlers, the remaining funds needed to complete the construction.

A vigorous man, the Credit River Mississaugas named their missionary “Cheechock” meaning a “bird on the wing” as he seemed to be constantly on the move amongst them. In addition to preaching the Sabbath sermons, conducting Christian education classes, and attending to the day-to-day pastoral care of his flock, the missionary endeavored to learn Ojibway. Eight months after his arrival at the Credit, he spoke in Ojibway to his congregants and many were delighted to hear a settler speak about God and Christianity in their own tongue. The vigour of the missionary was not only apparent as he carried out his religious duties amongst the people, but it was also made known through his physical labour. In 1827, a visitor to the Credit River Mission found the missionary, a half-mile from the mission village, clearing the land for planting with the assistance of between twelve and twenty village boys. During the farming season, he regularly spent an hour or more every evening and morning working in the fields and teaching the Mississaugas the

rudiments of farming.

The missionary did not stay long at the Mission village, but when portions of his diary were published many years later it was clear the mutual affection and esteem the Mississaugas and their minister felt for each other. The missionary especially held in high regard the Chief of the Credit River Mississaugas, the Rev. Peter Jones, and would speak glowingly about his friend and colleague on the occasion of the latter's death in 1856. Upon his departure from the Mississaugas in 1828, the missionary continued to carry out his new duties with the same energy and dedication he had exhibited at the Credit River. Other than his ministerial duties, he found time to edit *The Christian Guardian* newspaper, speak for the reform of government in Upper Canada, and become the father of the Ontario public school system. In 1948, the province of Ontario established an institution of higher learning named in his honour.

His time among the Mississaugas of the Credit was brief, but his later career would leave a lasting mark on the history of education and public life in Ontario. The young missionary known to the Mississaugas as "Cheechock", the "bird on the wing", would go on to become one of the province's most recognizable historical figures.

You can read more about the life of Egerton Ryerson in his biography, *"The Story of my Life"*.

John Jones & William Wilson

An Apt Pupil

John Jones (1797-1847), the schoolteacher at the Credit River Mission Village and the brother of Rev. Peter Jones, looked about his classroom and felt great satisfaction as his students worked away at their lessons. A few days earlier, on February 22, 1828, Jones and twenty of his pupils had made their way to York with the purpose of putting their learning on display before members of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada and the Lt. Governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland. The event, held that evening in the Methodist Chapel, showed all those assembled that the children of the Mississaugas were adept learners, and in many ways, were more advanced in their education than their settler neighbours. The young scholars began the evening by singing hymns in both Ojibway and English. Recognizing that a substantial portion of their learning was tied to the Mississaugas' newly acquired Christian faith, the students also recited the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments to the great satisfaction of the audience. Lest anyone think that education at the Credit River Mission was only confined to spiritual matters, the students also displayed their spelling, reading and writing abilities. The girls of the school even had the opportunity to exhibit the fruits of their sewing and knitting lessons. Those assembled would have marvelled at the nimble minds and educational prowess of the Mississauga children.

Perhaps one of the nimblest minds of the Mississauga children belonged to William Wilson. Born around 1815, Wilson was educated at the Credit River Mission amongst forty or so other children and stood out as a student of superior abilities. His dedication to his studies and natural talents would have caught the eye of his teachers, as well as Rev. Peter Jones, and the Rev. Edgerton Ryerson, the first Methodist missionary stationed at the Mission Village. In fact, Ryerson was so impressed with William's abilities that he arranged to pay for William's further education beyond that which was offered in the village. William was able to spend time at Upper Canada College in York and the Upper Canada Academy in Cobourg. Education, at those schools, focused on a classical education consisting of large doses of Latin, Greek, logic, and debate, amongst other subjects that were designed to develop the leadership skills of those so taught. William Wilson, an "Indian boy" of the Credit Mississaugas, found himself learning among the elite of Upper Canada. What is more, he stood at the head of his class at the Upper Canada Academy. A gifted poet, an

example of his verse was published in the May 22, 1838 edition of the *Christian Guardian*. Entitled *England and British America*, the poem ran for some two hundred lines, consisting of four stanzas, and provided ample evidence of William's classical education. The excerpt below from *England and British America* is set at Niagara Falls — within the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Was he thinking of our ancestors when he penned the words to this part of his poem?

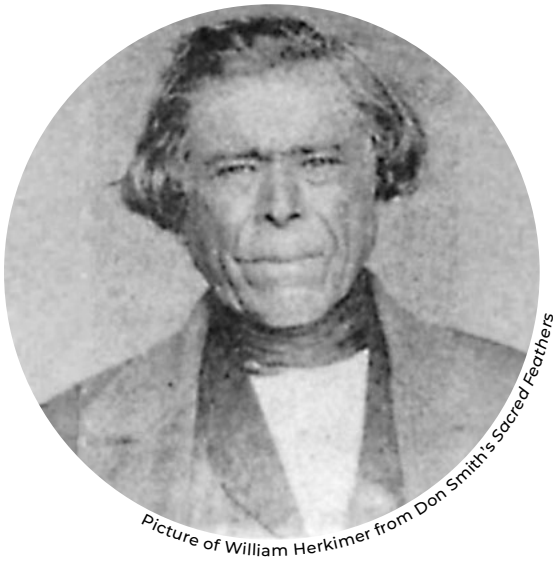
England and British America

*Where dread Niagara in thunder roars,
As o'er the rocky steep his deluge pours,-
Along whose banks the lonely Indian wound,
And in the scene his kindred spirit found,
Here boundless plains in fragrant verdure stretch,
Bright landscapes there invite the artist's sketch;
Here forests dark their stately branches wave,
And rivers there in solemn silence lave.
But though this land with ev'ry good is crown'd,
And choicest gifts on ev'ry hand surround,-
Though Nature here has wrought its grandest plan,
Yet does the mind deplore the fate of man.
Those lordly tribes that lin'd these mighty lakes
Have fled, and disappear'd like wintry flakes.
Lo! On the mountain tops their fires are out,
In blithesome vales all silent is their shout;
A solemn voice is heard from ev'ry shore,
That now the Indian nations are no more,-
A remnant scarce remain to tell their wrongs,
But soon will fade to live in poets' songs.*

The poem is a remarkable achievement for a young man not even removed a single generation from the hardscrabble life led by the Mississaugas prior to the founding of the Mission village. Hope for the future would be built upon the education of the First Nation's youth and the innate adaptability and resilience of the Mississauga people. Sadly, William Wilson, one of the most promising youths of the Credit River Mississaugas, contracted smallpox and died while in New York near the time of his poem's publication.

William Wilson's poem in its entirety can be found in *History of the Ojebway Indians* by Rev. Peter Jones.

Rev. William Herkimer



Picture of William Herkimer from Don Smith's Sacred Feathers

The grave of Rev. William (Minowagiwan) Herkimer is one of three graves located in front of the New Credit United Church. Herkimer's companions in the small cemetery include Chief George King and Chief Joseph Sawyer. Highly esteemed by the people of New Credit at the time of their deaths, the three men were accorded a prominent place of burial within the community.

William Herkimer was born at Rice Lake, in 1801, to the fur trader and loyalist Lawrence Herkimer and his Rice Lake

Mississauga wife, Majiyakamekoqua. He was the youngest of three brothers—Lawrence (Negahnub) was born in 1787, and Jacob (Kiweyob) in 1799. All three brothers were early converts to Methodist Christianity and made their homes at the Credit River Mission Village after its establishment in 1826. Lawrence and William would eventually both make their homes at New Credit after 1847.

William appears to have been an enthusiastic convert to Christianity, and as such, became a Methodist missionary after his conversion. He served at various locations throughout what became Southern Ontario and even served as far away as Kewawenon, some 250 miles west of Sault Ste. Marie. He was ordained a Methodist minister in 1846 and spent the latter part of his life ministering among the people of New Credit. While his Ojibway name, Minowagiwan, meant “the pleasant stream”, it might be suggested that William was not quite as pleasant as his name suggested.

The Rev. Edgerton Ryerson recorded William's admonishment to a fellow band member who became intoxicated after being encouraged by a settler to drink beer. William said to all assembled, *“Brothers, the white man can't pour it down your throat, if you will not drink. When white man ask me to drink, I tell him, 'I am a Christian, I love Jesus, 'and they go right away and look ashamed. Oh Jesus, let us poor weak creatures be faithful, and serve thee as long as we live.”* Later, writing from the Saugeen Mission, William explained

his calling as *“trying to do good to men and duty to God.”*

William’s convictions were also expressed on non-religious matters. At the Credit Mission Village, he and his brother, Lawrence, were leaders of a faction that was a “thorn in the flesh” of Rev. Peter Jones, Joseph Sawyer, and their followers. While embracing the Christian faith, the Herkimers and their group did not feel the need to abandon all the traditional ways of the Mississaugas. The Jones and the Herkimer factions clashed over such things as land holding, child rearing, and even what was considered acceptable entertainment for the people of the mission village.

Herkimer’s prowess was not limited to preaching the gospel or to opposing reforms he thought wrong, but was also expressed physically. Displaying both strength and endurance, he reportedly placed a disabled fellow missionary on his back and carried him some fifty kilometers between the Saugeen Mission and Owen Sound. Another example of his physical prowess was his marriage at 70 years of age to the 23 year old Elizabeth King. Perhaps even more interesting was the birth of a child to the couple on 20 March 1875. Less than a year later, on 3 October 1875, William Herkimer went to meet the God he worked so hard to serve.

Eliza Field Jones



Painting of Eliza Jones. Image Courtesy of Victoria University Library, Toronto

Eliza Field, born on June 1, 1804 in Lambeth, England, was a lady of refinement, privilege, and courage. She defied the social conventions of her day and participated in an inter-racial marriage. Despite the initial misgivings of her parents and the public, in 1833 she married the Rev. Peter Jones of the Mississaugas residing on the Credit River Reserve. Well received among her new people, she adjusted to life on the reserve where she taught the girls how to sew and the children about Christianity. A mother of five children, her life with Peter was a happy one until his death in 1856.

She died in Brantford on August 17, 1890—a pioneering woman in more ways than one.



A sketch of the Jones' home at the Credit Mission by Eliza Jones Date Draw 1833, published by 1883 Source Egerton Ryerson's *"The Story of My Life"*



LEADERS OF THE MOVE TO NEW CREDIT



Rev. Peter Jones

“History of the Ojebway Indians”



The Rev. Peter Jones (1802-1856), Methodist missionary and Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit, is a polarizing figure among the people of New Credit and other First Nations peoples in Canada. He is often vilified as a leader who “sold-out” his people’s culture and traditions in favour of a non-indigenous world and life view. Others view Jones as a person striving to help his people cope, survive, and even prosper amidst the flood of incoming settlers to Upper Canada. No matter the side one takes in the debate regarding

the merits of Peter Jones, one is forced to recognize and appreciate his authorship of *History of the Ojebway Indians: with especial reference to their conversion to Christianity; with a brief memoir of the writer.*

Published posthumously in 1861, the *History of the Ojebway* provides an eyewitness account of the culture of the Ojibway people during the late 1700’s and early 1800s. Jones would have drawn upon his own memories, as well as that of his mother and grandparents, to paint a portrait of Mississauga life. A reader is able to learn about burial customs, husband/wife relationships, amusements, hunting and fishing, spirituality, and a host of other cultural matters all written by an individual who intimately participated in the lifestyle of the Mississauga people at the time.

Throughout the book, but especially in the last chapter, Jones’s pride in his people’s accomplishments since the establishment of the Credit River Village is evident. Instead of hunting and fishing, the people had cultivated oats, wheat, peas and other crops. Despite having no training in mechanics (the trades) the Credit River village boasted a handful of carpenters and a shoemaker. The children at the Credit were learning to read, write, and do arithmetic in a highly satisfactory manner considering that English was not their first language. Sadly, what Jones regards as sources of pride, must, when examined from a 21st century perspective, appear lackluster. First Nations are

currently busy attempting to recover what was long ago lost them as they transitioned from one world and life view to another. It is extremely doubtful whether first nations will ever recover but a small fraction of what was lost. It is somewhat ironic, that Peter Jones, the agent of transition, would help to preserve in *History of the Ojebway*, some of the cultural history that was lost.

Anecdotes

Every now and then, one stumbles upon a goldmine of information. Such is the case with the Rev. Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) material found in the Digital Collection of the E. J. Pratt Library at the University of Toronto. Most MCFN band members will recognize Jones (1802-1856) as their former chief and minister who helped the First Nation adapt their lifestyle to meet the tsunami of challenges facing them in the 19th century. Entering “Peter Jones” in the search box of the digital collection will reveal a host of documents written in his own hand. Among the materials found in the collection are a number of sermon notes, a collection of letters to his wife, Eliza Field; a few portraits, and most interestingly and importantly, a book containing a number of Anecdotes that Jones had collected during his work as a Methodist Minister.

Anecdotes are short, interesting and amusing stories that are factual in nature and provide information about a person or event. Most of the stories Jones collected in his book have spiritual overtones that may be off-putting to modern readers, but the anecdotes themselves are invaluable as a portal into our past. The stories are able to speak to the reader as they are related with integrity, warmth, and sincerity by Jones who had personal knowledge of what, or whom, he was writing about. For instance, read the anecdote that explains how the first chickens came to our people at the Credit Mission Village.

Mrs. Crane and her Chickens

“Soon after we assembled at the River Credit for the purpose of forming a settlement and our wigwams were pitched on the Credit flats, I observed a few chickens about the wigwam of Chief Crane and asked Mrs. Crane what she was going to do with the chickens. “Oh,” she replied, “I am going to begin to have domestic animals like the white Christian people. These chickens are

my first efforts towards civilization. I bought them off the white people on purpose to lay eggs and hatch chickens.” At this time there was not a single cow or horse, pig, or sheep to be owned by one Credit Indian and now they have a great abundance of them.”

Some of Jones’s anecdotes explain traditional beliefs and practices of the Mississaugas which might otherwise have been lost to our memories if they had not been written down.

Changing Names in Time of Illness

“It was a custom among the Ojibwa to change the name of a sick person. They made a feast and offered sacrifices to the manitous and during the prayers of the powwow a new name was given to the sick. Their idea was that the messenger of death had been commissioned to come after the person bearing such a name so that by changing the name when death came it would not find the name in that person. So death would be cheated of the object of his visit.”

As mentioned earlier, anecdotes are often amusing and, as in the case of John Sunday and the Horseradish, Jones’s sense of humour emerges as he teaches an important truth. John Sunday (1795-1975) was a fellow Methodist missionary and Mississauga Chief from the Kingston and Belleville area.

John Sunday and the Horseradish

“At one time, the Reverend William Case took John Sunday to visit some of the principal cities of the United States for the purpose of raising funds for the Canadian Missions. John went one day to dine at one of the preachers’ houses between Albany and New York. While eating, the preacher was talking to John about religion and amongst the good things at the table was a dish of horseradish scraped fine. John, not knowing what it was and supposing it might be something sweet, took a spoonful of it in his mouth. Presently tears came into his eyes. The preacher, observing the tears and supposing that John was weeping for joy at what the preacher was talking [about] began to shout, “Glory! Glory! Glory!!” John, as soon as he could raise his hand and pointed to the dish and said, “It is that, It is that.” We may see from the above that tears are not always to be depended upon and are very deceptive.”

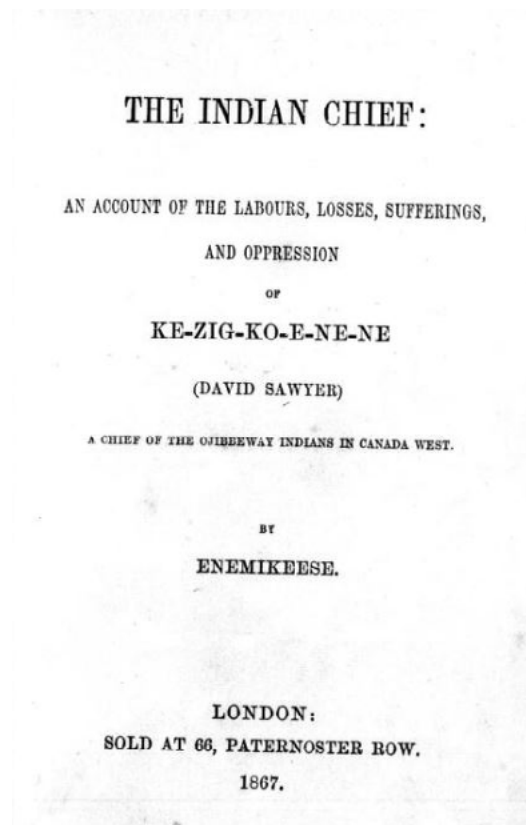
Entertaining and informative, the anecdotes collected by Jones are a treasure. Jones died on June 29, 1856 in Brantford, Ontario. During the latter years of his life, his body seemed to be worn out from the rigors of travel he had endured in the service of his people. One of the “maxims” in his book of anecdotes seems to describe Jones and his life:

*An humble man Is like a good tree:
the more full of fruit the branches are
the lower they bend themselves.*



Chief David Sawyer

November 11 marks the anniversary of the death of Chief David Sawyer of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Born about 1812 at the head of Lake Ontario into the family of Chief Joseph Sawyer, David worked as a missionary, preacher, and interpreter at Saugeen, Muncey, and Nawash near Owen Sound. He returned to live at New Credit in 1861 and, after the death of his father in 1863, became head chief. Under his leadership, New Credit became a prominent First Nations agricultural settlement. Long before books about Rev. Peter Jones and Dr. P.E. Jones were written, David Sawyer was the subject of his own biography in Conrad Vandusen's *The Indian Chief: An Account of the Labour, Losses, Suffering and Oppression of Ke-zig-ko-e-ne-ne (David Sawyer), a Chief of the Ojibeway Indians in Canada West*. Published in 1865 and available online today, the book illuminates the lives of both David Sawyer and his father, Joseph Sawyer.





BUILDING NEW CREDIT



Dr. Peter Edmund Jones

Pioneer of Indigenous Journalism



Picture of Peter Edmund Jones, ~1898. Picture Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Dr. Peter Edmund Jones (1843-1909) was a man of many talents. The son of Chief Rev. Peter Jones, he was the first status Indian to graduate with a medical degree from a Canadian medical school. He served as the Chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and later as its Indian Agent. He was an accomplished chess player, taxidermist, and collector of First Nation curios. Between 1885 and 1886, he was also a newspaper publisher.

The first edition of Jones's paper, *The Indian*, was published by the Indian Publishing Co. of Hagersville, Ontario, on December 30, 1885, and was the first Indigenous newspaper in Canada. Jones wrote many of the articles himself and sought to educate his Canadian First Nation readers about their recently granted right to vote under the Indian Advancement Act of 1885. Jones wanted his First Nation readers to take advantage of their opportunity to vote and possibly elect members to Parliament who would give voice to First Nations' concerns in Ottawa. Not merely a political newspaper, Jones also included stories about other First Nations throughout Ontario, local Six Nations and New Credit news, cultural pieces, as well as the usual newspaper fare of life events and announcements. Jones even saw fit to include a serialized biography of Joseph Brant as well as a serialized version of *The Last of the Mohicans*. Especially interesting to read, and revealing of the times, is some of what would now be classified as offensive advertising. Advertising directed at the people of New Credit and Six Nations by Hagersville merchants stated: "*The Indians will always be treated right and goods sold cheap*" or "*Indians dealt with and waited upon in the same manner as other people.*" A perusal of *The Indian* will show modern readers that, despite the passage of time, the more things change the more they stay the same for First Nations people.

The *Indian* lasted for 24 issues and then was abruptly folded in 1886. Jones could not obtain sufficient subscribers to make his newspaper profitable.

Jones, despite the lack of success in his journalistic endeavor, must be saluted as a pioneer of Indigenous journalism.

The New Credit Public Library has available for reference a collection of all 24 editions of *The Indian*. The library is indebted to Fiona Clark, the widow of Dr. Allan Sherwin, for donating his copies of *The Indian*. Dr. Sherwin was the author of the award winning book *Bridging Two Peoples: Chief Peter E. Jones, 1843-1909*.

Dr. Jones and the Prime Minister

Sir John A. Macdonald, prime minister from 1867 to 1873 and again from 1878 to 1891, was responsible for the birthing of Canada in 1867, the stitching together of the country by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the promotion of a national policy that fostered Canadian business and industry. For the Indigenous people of Canada, Macdonald is primarily remembered for his less than stellar treatment of First Nations.

The people of New Credit, through the person of MCFN Chief Dr. Peter Jones, can be said to have had a special relationship with Sir John A. In 1882, the people of New Credit extended an invitation to the prime minister to be present at the grand opening of the Council House. Macdonald begged off the invitation and left many disappointed at his absence. Chief Dr. Peter Jones was undoubtedly one of those disappointed. Macdonald had had a passing acquaintance with the doctor's father, Rev. Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby). Dr. Jones and his brothers were staunch supporters of Sir John A. with the doctor actively campaigning on the prime minister's behalf.

John A. reciprocated the feelings of the doctor and wrote glowingly of the people of New Credit and their Chief, Peter E. Jones:

The small Chippewa [Mississauga-Ojibway] Band are a progressive people, their advancement being very marked. They have recently developed a code of Municipal Laws... for the better government of their people, which is remarkable for the ability displayed by their Council in framing of its provisions, and will no doubt be productive of much benefit to the community.

Macdonald was very pleased that Chief Jones and the Council had, in 1883,

adopted a form of municipal government as it meant in his mind that the Mississaugas were gradually assimilating into settler society—an idea central to Macdonald's policy regarding the "Indians." Macdonald gave the *"efficient Head Chief"*, Dr. Jones and his leadership, much of the credit for *"the satisfactory conditions found at present"* on the reserve.

Jones's active support of the prime minister and the Conservative Party paid large dividends to the band financially—at least so it seemed initially. Jones had filed a claim for almost \$69,000 against the Crown contending that the Province of Canada had sold Mississaugas of the Credit land at Port Credit, Oakville, and Bronte without first obtaining a surrender. In 1884, despite the opposition of the Auditor-General and the Dept. of Finance, Macdonald ordered the amount of the claim paid to the First Nation. The fact that Jones was campaigning on behalf of Macdonald at the time likely influenced John A. to settle the claim in the band's favour. After the death of Macdonald in 1891, the government considered the claim paid out to the Mississaugas in error and took back the \$69,000, with interest, from the band's funds.

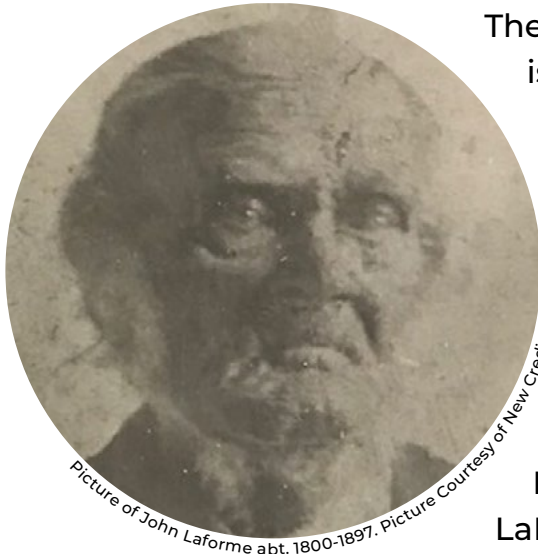
One hand washes another and Jones helped Macdonald by supporting Macdonald's Electoral Act of 1885. The Act extended the right to vote in federal elections to Indigenous males in Eastern Canada without the loss of their existing rights as a status Indians. Jones threw his support behind Macdonald and wrote a number of newspaper articles defending the legislation and urging its passage in parliament. Once the Act was passed, Jones exhorted the readers of *The Indian*, a newspaper he published in Hagersville, to exercise their newly acquired right to vote. Opposition cynics contended that Macdonald created the Act to acquire much needed votes in the up-coming election. Granting the right to vote to the "Indians" was likely seen, by Macdonald, as another positive step on the path to the assimilation of the First Nations.

Eventually, the relationship between John A. and the doctor seemed to sour. Jones's newspaper, *The Indian*, which he had used to support Sir John A. and the Conservatives, was not a financially viable operation as insufficient readers subscribed to the paper. A plea to Sir John A. for financial support fell on deaf ears and the paper folded in 1886 after publishing a scant 24 issues. Also falling on deaf years were recommendations Jones made for the refinement of the Indian Act. Macdonald had asked for Jones's suggestions in the wake of the Northwest rebellion of 1885 when the Metis and some First Nations

in the West rose in armed rebellion due to their shoddy treatment at the hands of the Canadian government. Jones supplied his recommendations to the government in 1887, but Macdonald did not see much virtue in Jones's suggestions. There is no doubt that much of the public, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, regard John A. with jaundiced eyes, but how do they regard the doctor who worked so hard on his behalf?



John LaForme



The study of genealogy, or one's family history, is an absorbing hobby that occupies the spare time of millions of people worldwide. Hobbyists spend millions on subscription sites such as Ancestry.com to track down the records left behind that document the lives of their ancestors. While birth, marriage, and death records do much to frame out an ancestor's life, they do little to add colour to the life of an individual.

Fortunately, for the descendants of John LaForme, a document that provides some insight into the life of their ancestor does exist.

In the late 1880s, an investigation to determine who had rights to band membership in the MCFN gathered information concerning the origins of many of the families of the First Nation—among those families was the family of John LaForme. The investigation provided information that any family historian would “drool over” as it contains the words of John LaForme telling his own story. His testimony was taken down by Inspector Dingman of the Indian Department on February 9, 1888 in the New Credit Council House.

John Laforme and his brother, Stephen LaForme, were of French Canadian origin, who lived among the Mississaugas at the Mission Village at the Credit River. When the Mississaugas moved to their present location, the LaForme brothers moved with them to “New Credit.”

John Laform senr. sworn, said-

“I am in my 90th year of age. I was born in the city of Quebec. I am clear French. My wife was Betsey Walker. She was a clear blooded Indian woman. She was the daughter of Chief Walker of a band of Indians living near the Rond Eau and I understood my wife was born in that part of the country. I was married to her by the late Peter Jones at the Old Credit. The principal men of the band received me and my family into the Band after we came here [New Credit]. This was done under the direction of the late Peter Jones, Chief, I personally shared in the interest money of the band

after I came here. I was on the payroll only about three years. I was living with Betsey Walker quite a little while without being married. The late Rev. Peter Jones came to me and told me I would have to leave the Reserve [Old Credit] unless I got married. He told me this on a Saturday and the next day Sunday I got married to Betsey Walker. By the late Rev. Peter Jones in the Mission House on the Reserve. This was shortly after the late Rev. Peter Jones came to the Credit as a missionary. He also baptized my children. I had one child before I was married. ... I was with the Band of the Old Credit 9 or 10 years before the Band moved here. I and Betsey Walker went to Muncey Town to live before we were married and we lived there about two months. We got presents there once. I was admitted into the Band here within two months after I came here. I was taken off the list through a mistake of Wm. Herchmer."

Although census records vary, they indicate that John LaForme was born in Quebec around 1800. His death is listed in the New Credit Church records as occurring 12 April, 1897, at the age of 99 years. With his wife Betsey Walker, he had for sons: James (d. 1812), John (1838-1912), David (1847-1915), Alexander (1851-1889) and a daughter, Angelic (1846-?). If one were to add up the descendants of John and Betsey that have been band members of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the total would exceed 1200 people.

Stephen LaForme

The last entry used John LaForme's own words to tell the story of his marriage to Betsey Walker and the establishment of the Laforme family among the Mississaugas of the Credit River. This tidbit will focus on John's brother, Stephen Laforme.

Unlike John, we know very little of Stephen's early life and how he came to live among the Mississaugas at the Credit River—even his birthdate is a matter of speculation with some census records indicating he was born as early as 1811 and others as late in 1819. It is known, however, that he married Nancy Herkimer on December 17, 1837 at the Credit River Mission and remained married to her for slightly over 35 years until her death on February 7, 1873. The relationship between Stephen and Nancy saw the birth of four children. Three of the children, Sophia (1840-1897), Sarah Ann (1842-?) and Mariah (1845-?), were born at the "Old" Credit, while a son, Joseph (1851-1925), was born at New Credit.

Captain James McLean, explains how he, Thomas Wood and brothers, John and Stephen Laforme, came to New Credit when the Mississaugas migrated in 1847:

At the time of the surrender of the Old Credit Reserve and when it was decided to move here [New Credit] I asked in Council over which Capt. Anderson presided, what should be done with the four white men who had married Indian women, meaning myself, my son-in-law, Thomas Wood, and the two Frenchmen, John and Stephen Laforme. Shall they remain here[Credit River] or go with the Band? Capt. Anderson said. "Yes. let the boys go with the Band", and Chief Sawyer [Joseph] , father of the present David Sawyer, and the other Chiefs took me by the hand and arm and said " we want you to go with us; and it was then unanimously agreed that we should go with the Band, receive lands, become members and share with the rest.

Stephen, along with the other "white men", was provided with a money grant from the band in the amount of \$50 to purchase a yoke of oxen and \$150 towards construction of a house. Stephen took the money, built a frame house, and set about farming 50 acres of land on the SE corner of lot 9, Concession 2

of Tuscarora Township.

The first years at New Credit would have been difficult for Stephen and his family. Much of the lands that made up New Credit were in a state of nature when the Mississaugas arrived in May of 1847. Clearing enough land to put crops in the ground and erecting a home would have been a priority for Stephen upon his family's arrival. His contemporaries described him as an industrious man, and no doubt he worked hard to get his farm in order for the oncoming winter. In fact, the entire First Nation had cause to be proud. Within eight months of their arrival at their new home, some families had cleared between two and four acres which they had sown to wheat. For its spiritual and educational needs, the community had also speedily erected a place of worship which also did double duty as a school house.

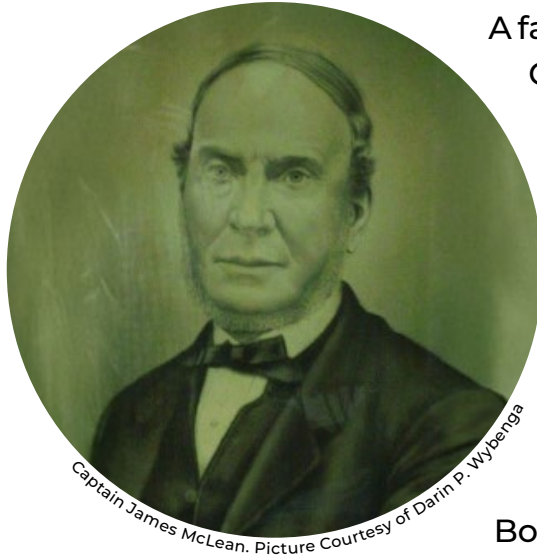
Despite the proximity of his farm to the New Credit Mission Church and his self-identification as a Wesleyan-Methodist, Stephen struggled to live up to the ideals held by the church-going people of the community. The New Credit Mission Book records the ups and downs of Stephen's religious life. Although never exactly stating what "great sins" Stephen had committed warranting the admonishment of the church, it may be stated that he was no teetotaler, was known to drink to excess from time to time, but was not considered a drunkard. Considering Methodism's aversion to alcoholic beverages, it is not too hard to imagine why Stephen had his ups and downs with the Church.

Stephen outlived his wife by some 18 years and died on 29 March, 1889. His last will and testament left assorted household goods to his three daughters, but left the farm to his only son, Joseph. Sadly, as is often the case, the validity of the will was disputed by one of the children. Unlike daughters Sarah and Mariah, who had changed band membership upon marriage to Six Nations husbands and could therefore make no claim to land at New Credit, daughter Sophia had retained her band membership and could possess land on the reserve. It was her contention that she had helped to improve her father's land, and as such, was entitled to half of the family farm. Initially, the Band Council sided with Joseph and respected Stephen's last wishes recognizing him as the sole legitimate heir to the farm. Sophia appealed the decision before a new Council in 1891 where it was decided that the land should be divided equally between Joseph and Sophia. Eventually, the Indian Agent, Dr. P.E. Jones, sought direction from the Indian Department in Ottawa. The

Department ruled that as Stephen Laforme was a “whiteman” and he could not legally “will” his farm to anyone. Under the Indian Act, the land belonged to the heirs of Stephens’s wife, Nancy Herkimer, and therefore the land must be divided equally between Joseph and Sophia.

The descendants of Stephen LaForme having band membership among the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation number almost 200 people; while such descendants of his older brother, John, are almost six times that number.

Capt. James McLean



Captain James McLean. Picture Courtesy of Darin P. Wybenga

A fallen grave marker in the New Credit Townline Cemetery reads: Captain James McLean died Aug 8 1891 aged 87 years. As is often the case when reading the stones in a cemetery, one is often drawn to wonder about the life of person whose name is inscribed upon the monument. Fortunately, James McLean left behind records that provide a glimpse into his life among the Mississaugas of the Credit people.

Born in Scotland in 1804, McLean came to Upper Canada when he was about 13 years of age. Little is known of his early life, but one document suggests that his parents operated an inn near the Humber River and that they later became estranged from him upon his taking a wife, Notinoqua (Sarah Thompson), from among the Mississaugas of the Credit. McLean lived among his wife's people as they transitioned from their traditional lifestyle into an agrarian community, and would later accompany his adopted people when the band relocated from the "Old" Credit to New Credit. The story of McLean's marriage and his arrival at New Credit is provided in his own words, as taken down on May 16, 1881:

I am in my 83rd year. I have been living among and have known this Band ever since I came to this country in 1817. They were all pagan then. I married a member of this Band. In about 1821 I was married to a member of this band according to the Indian rules of marriage which consisted in my bride being given to me by her father and mother and the Chiefs. She was the daughter of an Indian called Black Jacobs. After the band became Christianized ... I was married according to Christian marriage to this same woman. That was about in 1823. My wife was an acknowledged member of the Band and always was until she died. My wife owned 50 acres of land at the Old Credit before the surrender of that Reserve which I improved by virtue of my marriage to her. After the surrender I was paid for all my improvements. At the time of the surrender at the Old Credit Reserve and when it was decided to move here [New Credit] I asked in Council over which Capt. Anderson presided what should be done with the four white

men who had married Indian women, meaning myself, Thomas Wood and the two Frenchmen John and Stephen Laform? Shall they remain here or shall they go with the band? ... Chief Joseph Sawyer and the other Chiefs took me by the hand and arm and said 'we want you to go with us; and it was there unanimously decided...

When the band came here the families received lands by drawing lots. I was not present at the time, but the late Chief Joseph Sawyer drew a lot for me, being the S1/2, lot 12 of Tuscarora. I refused to accept it because it was too far back in the woods. In returning home I saw some of the Six Nations chiefs and they asked me if I had drawn land. I answered that land had been drawn for me but I refused to accept it. They said there would be a Council of their Chiefs the next day and asked me to attend and they would see if I should not have land. I attended the Six Nations Council ... I was given lot No 1 Con 1 of Oneida. But there was a squatter on that lot and I could not get possession of it and I took up the south ½ of Lot No.3 in the same concession instead of it. This lot had no squatters on it but all the other lots had. During the following fall these squatters were all dispossessed of the lands and the Mississaugas took temporary possession until the locations were decided by Council. I first took possession of this lot in 1848, and my possession was approved by Council, I have held it ever since.... I have made valuable improvements, have 78 acres cleared and fenced and all necessary farm buildings.

James McLean was not one to be content merely working the farm—even while farming the land at the “Old” Credit he took an interest in doing other useful things. It is known he captained a ship on the Great Lakes for a time and partnered with the Mississaugas in a shipping venture and in the construction of the band’s own schooner—the Credit Chief. While living at New Credit, he functioned as the Indian agent for a few years, served as the band’s forest warden, and was even a justice of the peace. McLean outlived his wife by 12 years and eventually settled in the west end of Hagersville leaving his farm in the care of his grandson, Oliver Wood. His descendants, primarily of the Wood family, still number themselves on the band list today.

Capt. Thomas Wood



Captain Thomas Wood had prospered since his arrival at New Credit in 1851. He had been born in England and had immigrated to Canada when he was about 12 years old. Little is known about his early life, although it is known that “he came among the Mississaugas of the Old Credit” when he was 15 or 16 years old. In 1841, he married Pitiwasinoqua (Betsey McLean) of the Mississaugas of the Credit and the couple would have three children, James, Sarah, and Elizabeth, before the Mississauga Band moved to

New Credit in 1847. While the Mississaugas established themselves at their new home, Captain Wood and his family would remain behind at the Old Credit as Wood was the Captain of the Mississaugas of the Credit’s schooner, the Credit Chief. The sale of the schooner in 1850 or ’51 meant that the Woods could move to New Credit and rejoin the friends and relatives that had went on before them. Captain Wood, in 1888, described how he acquired and improved the land on which he lived:

When I first came here [New Credit] the Mississaugas gave me S ½ of Lot 9 Con 1 Tuscarora, but it was so far as in the woods that I did not like to move on it and Chief Smith and Chief Anthony of the Six Nations told me to wait until they put the squatters off the Oneida land and they would give me a lot there near the plank road [Highway 6 today]. After the squatters were removed a Six Nation[s] Indian had possession of S ½ , Lot 5, Con 1 Oneida, I bought his possession for \$40. The late Chief Joseph Sawyer told me to buy the possession of[f] Brant because good-will was better than ill-will, that I might possibly take the land without buying it but it was best to buy it. I did buy it as stated above, and settled on it with the approval of the late Chief Joseph Sawyer and have occupied it ever since. I have made valuable improvements on it, have 85 acres cleared and fenced and all necessary farm buildings and a valuable orchard on it. I bought out Brant in 1850 in the fall and took possession in 1851. ... I had a large family by Captain McLeans’s daughter of whom four boys and three girls are now living.

The boys are James Wood, Oliver Wood, William Wood, and John Mclean Wood. The daughters are Mrs. Sarah McDougall, Mrs. Elizabeth Jones, and Susannah Kergan. I made all the improvements on my place except 15 or 20 acres which were partially cleared when I got it.

After 23 years of marriage Betsey died in 1865 at the age of 43. The Captain remarried three years later to Rachel, the daughter of Chief David Sawyer, but unfortunately the couple's infant son died a little over a year into the marriage. A little over six months later, death visited Captain Wood again with the death of his second wife. Undeterred by the loss of his first two wives, the good Captain was married for a third time, in 1871, to Margaret Roulston, a widow from Haldimand County. The marriage to his third wife would last almost 23 years until his death in 1894.

The death of the Captain led to a series of unfortunate events that caused great deal of turmoil in the Wood family. The Captain's will left the entire estate to his son, James McLean Wood, and made no provision for any of his other children. The angry siblings disputed the will arguing that their father, a non-band member, had no legal right to "will" his farm on Indian reserve land to anyone. They rightly pointed out that the land should belong to heirs of their mother, the Captain's first wife and member of the band, Betsey McLean. The Indian Department agreed, but no peace came to the family as the children squabbled over how to best to divide the estate in an equitable manner. The problem was eventually solved, but a residue of bitterness would remain in the family for years to come.

Today, there are still many descendants of Wood family on the Mississaugas of the Credit Band list, although only a few actually have the Wood surname. Interestingly enough, the house at New Credit where Thomas and Betsey Wood raised their children still stands just outside of Hagersville and many band members will know it as the home of the late Lloyd S. King.



VETERANS & MILITARY FIGURES



Lawrence Herkimer

Veteran of the War of 1812

In the early morning hours of June 6, 1813, a brutal battle occurred during the War of 1812. The Battle of Stoney Creek saw a small British force accompanied by a handful of First Nations warriors defeat an American force twice its size. Among the warriors that day was a future Mississaugas of the Credit band member, Lawrence “Negahnub” Herkimer. Born in 1787 at Rice Lake, Lawrence was the offspring of Loyalist fur trader Lawrence Herkimer and Magiyakamigoqua, a member of the band of Mississaugas living at Rice Lake. Prior to the War of 1812, Lawrence was employed as a messenger carrying military dispatches between Niagara and York. Besides taking part at the battle of Stoney Creek, Lawrence also participated in the unsuccessful defense of York in 1813. He ruefully remembered, many years later, that he had desired to participate in the sacking and burning of Lewiston, New York on 19 December 1813, but had arrived too late at the scene to take part in the actual fighting. His wartime experience during the War of 1812 also included escorting prisoners three times down Lake Ontario.

Lawrence was one of the earliest Christian converts at the River Credit Mission and became a devout Methodist who served as a class leader and steward of the New Credit Mission Church until his death in 1877. Not willing to completely abandon traditional Mississauga beliefs and customs, Lawrence and his brother, William, were leaders of a faction that clashed with the Rev. Peter Jones over his willingness to adopt settler norms of conduct at the River Credit Mission village. The Herkimer faction’s disputes with Jones and his group over such issues as child rearing, land holding, and worldly amusements highlighted the difficulties the Mississaugas had transitioning from a traditional worldview to that of one more resembling their settler neighbours.

When the Mississaugas moved to their present location in 1847, Lawrence, a widower, stayed behind with his son, David, at the Credit River. Missing his people, he followed them to New Credit in 1851 where he occupied a log cabin and carried on farming on the North ½ of Lot 1, Concession 2, Tuscarora Township.

The War of 1812 service of Lawrence Herkimer, and also that of Chief Joseph Sawyer, is commemorated at the New Credit Veterans Memorial.

Cameron Brant

April 22, 1915 marks the commencement of the 2nd Battle of Ypres during World War I. It was during this battle that Lt. Cameron D. Brant, a New Credit band member, was killed while leading an attack on the enemy. Brant completed grade school at New Credit, finished high school in Hagersville, and attended the New Credit United Church. The New Credit Public Library has gratefully received into its collection the medals earned by Lt. Brant and also a book purchased and inscribed by him during the war. Plaques memorializing Brant's sacrifice as well as that of fellow WWI veteran Maxwell Tobicoe may be found in the New Credit United Church sanctuary.

Battlefield Reading

What would you have read if you were serving overseas as a soldier during World War One? Would you have scanned the newspapers hoping to glean some hint of the war's ending and your return home to Canada? Would you have read and reread the letters of loved ones in order to keep alive the hope that one day you will see them again? Perhaps you would have read the Bible to prepare your soul if tragedy overtook you in battle. Or maybe, you would have read a book of poetry—for that is what Lt. Cameron D. Brant read.

Cameron Daniel Brant (1887-1915), was a member of the Mississaugas of the Credit Band and was one of the first enlistees soon after war was declared in 1914. Commissioned a Lieutenant, Brant sailed for England in October 1914, completed training at Salisbury Plain, and soon thereafter was sent to France. A capable soldier and confident leader, Lt. Brant was killed leading his men in a counter attack at the 2nd Battle of Ypres on April 24, 1915.

Although a plaque has been placed in the New Credit United Church to commemorate Brant's sacrifice and his name is etched on the New Credit Veterans Memorial, the First Nation had no personal object of his that tied him to his military service. It was not until 2014—100 years after the beginning World War One, that the New Credit Public Library, seemingly out of nowhere, received such an item.

In July 2014, the library received a call from the Town of Picton, Prince Edward

County, Ontario. The caller introduced herself as a worker at a used goods store and asked if the library would like to receive a book owned by Cameron Brant. Evidently, while arranging the used books in the store, she had opened up a book of poetry, *Songs of a Sourdough* by Robert Service, and was intrigued by the inscription inside its front cover that contained Brant's name, battalion, brigade, camp and the date, 7/1/15. Additionally, in a different hand and ink, was written: "*Died in Action Flanders April 1915*". After doing a bit of research, the worker decided that the book should go to Cameron Brant's First Nation and reached out to the MCFN library. Although skeptical as to whether the book had actually belonged to Brant, the library accepted the offer and waited in anticipation for the book to arrive in the mail.

The book arrived at the library a few weeks later in early August. A quick comparison of the inscription inside the book to Brant's signature on his attestation paper proved that *Songs of a Sourdough* had belonged to Brant. The library had gained a precious addition to its collection.

The poems that Brant was reading were rich with images of Canada and would have brought memories of his home, an ocean away, to mind. The fact that Brant was reading poetry ran counter to the thinking of the time that "Indians" were "Noble Savages" and naturally militaristic and uncivilized when engaging in warfare. Sir Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister of the Militia at the time, worried that the enemy, encountering First Nations soldiers on the battlefield, might "*refuse to extend to them the privileges of civilized warfare.*" As he sat reading poetry in the trenches or a bomb proof shelter, Brant presented a refined image of "Indians" to those around him, and challenged many stereotypes held regarding First Nations people back then and even today.

No one is sure how the poetry book made its way to Canada from Europe. Perhaps, shortly after his death, the book was sent along with Brant's other personal effects to his grieving widow. Perhaps the unknown person who wrote, "*Died in Action Flanders April 1915*" carried the book to Canada. No matter how the book arrived, a grateful First Nation is glad to have it as it helps to remember New Credit's contribution to the Great War.

A few lines borrowed from the poem "*Spell of the Yukon*" as found in *Songs of a Sourdough*, seems fitting to remember the time when the Mississaugas of the Credit sent its "boys" off to war:

*"Send not your foolish and feeble; send me your strong and your sane.
Strong for the red rage of battle; sane, for I harry them sore;
Send me men girt for the combat, men who are grit to the core;
Swift as the panther in triumph, fierce as the bear in defeat,
Sired of a bulldog parent, steeled in the furnace heat.
Send me the best of your breeding, lend me your chosen ones;
Them will I take to my bosom, them will I call my sons; ..."*

-Robert W. Service