

Victor Jean Baptiste Lafferty (Laferté). (1887-1980)

By Albert J. Lafferty in collaboration with Jim Lafferty,
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Victor Lafferty, a Métis of French, Cree and Dene heritage was born at Fort Liard on January 4th, 1887. His parents were Boniface Laferté and Madeleine Bouvier-Laferté. As a youth Victor lived with his parents in Fort Liard and Fort Nelson while his father worked for local trading companies. At the time there was no school in Fort Liard and Victor could not be accepted at the Sacred Heart School in Fort Providence, as they did not take students who were beyond 14 years of age. In order to attend school Victor was required travel from Fort Liard by boat to Athabasca Landing (Waterways) and then by horse drawn wagon on to the Settlement of St. Albert situated along the Sturgeon River. At the time he was sixteen years of age.

While in the Fort Edmonton area, Victor boarded with his aunt Marguerite Bouvier-Gairdner who had moved from Fort Providence to St. Albert with her husband who was employed with the Hudson's Bay Company. At the request of his family in the Mackenzie District, Victor returned to the community of Fort Providence after attending school in the south for three years.

In 1912, he married Marie Rose Mandeville, a Métis of Chipewyan Dene and French Heritage who was originally from the Fort Resolution area. They were blessed with nine children, four daughters and five sons. Four of his children died at a young age.

Victor was fluent in both Michif French and Slavey. He also had a working knowledge of the English language. In 1921, Victor served as interpreter for Chief Paul Lefoin and Commissioner Henry A. Conroy who was in charge of the Treaty 11 Commission at Fort Providence. Following the signing of Treaty 11, some Métis families in the Mackenzie District were given scrip cash grants by the Mackenzie Half-breed Commission which was part of the Treaty process in 1921.

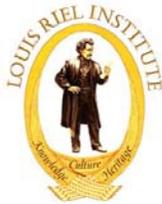
Throughout his life Victor provided for his family by hunting, winter trapping, fall fishing, home gardening and wage employment with the Roman Catholic mission and trading companies. In the winters he also did contract work cutting and cording wood fuel for the Mackenzie River steamers as well as transporting mail by dog team from Fort Resolution to Fort Simpson. He was skilled at carpentry and traditional log home construction and is known to have fashioned his own homemade, implements such as paddles and hand made tools.

During his lifetime Victor traveled along the northern water routes from Fort Smith to Fort Good Hope and Fort Nelson while in the employment of the Hudson's Bay Company as an interpreter. His young family lived in, Fort Wrigley, Fort Norman and Fort Good Hope for a few years before returning to Fort Providence. In 1938 Victor's wife Marie Rose passed away leaving Victor to care for his family on his own. During his lifetime Victor witnessed tremendous changes in the development of North; from York boats, tracking along major water routes, river steamboats, to diesel powered river

transportation. He saw the arrival of the first mail planes that landed in Fort Providence. He was also witness to the first court session held in Fort Providence following the signing of Treaty 11.

In the 1970s, Victor was interviewed prior to the Paulette case concerning the Aboriginal title and treaty rights of the Dene and Métis of the Mackenzie River District. During this period staff at the Métis Heritage Association and Métis researcher Jean M. LeMouel also interviewed him. Together they provided a series of rare historic photographs for the book entitled, *Our Métis Heritage, A Portrayal* produced by the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories.

Victor was very knowledgeable and carried a wealth of stories relating to Northern history, life experiences and the strong character of many of his contemporaries. He often recounted old time stories about the way of life, enduring traditions, happy times and hardship experienced by his Mackenzie District Métis relatives and the Dene. At the age of 93 years, Victor passed away after a lifetime of contributions to his family, community and the North.



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