

Fred Delaronde. (1892-1969)

By Leah Dorion

Today, most people can explain the importance of Metis leaders such as Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel but overall many people are unable to name a few of Saskatchewan's early Metis leaders from only forty years ago. Fortunately, contributions made by leaders such as Fred Delaronde are remembered.

Fred Delaronde was born on July 9, 1892 at Oak Point Manitoba that was traditionally a Métis settlement. His father was Paul Delaronde¹ of French background and his mother was Maria Primeau a Metis. Fred could fluently speak the Cree and English languages. He was educated at St. Michael's School in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan where he completed up to grade eight. Fred is remembered as being very musical and he loved to play the violin. He was always interested in farming, Metis culture and family. He eventually married Clara Schwartz and lived near Mont Nebo, Saskatchewan and had six children. He was instrumental in organizing the first Metis local at Mont Nebo with other Métis people and families such as Joe Cameron, John and Henry Letendré, the Robillards, Dubuques and the Dreavers.

What got him first involved with the Saskatchewan Métis Society (SMS)? Fred persistently talked to other people about how the Metis were marginalized or left out of the benefits of mainstream society and had no support. He adamantly told stories about how Metis people missed out on Treaty privileges because the Metis had taken scrip. It were these issues that motivated him to get involved and politically organize the Metis people at the provincial level in order to strengthen Métis organizations at the local level.

Fred was elected president of the Saskatchewan Métis Society from 1945-1947. Prior to that he was active in the society in the early 1940s. One of his political commitments was to raise awareness about the need to educate Metis people. At a meeting of the SMS in June 25-26, 1943 he passed a resolution which stated that: "Be it resolved that the Government be asked to give special attention to the unfortunate circumstances in which a very great number of Métis children find themselves as to schools. The Metis people of this Convention, realizing that a good education as well as a knowledge of history and the Constitutional development of the laws of our country is essential to a successful life, hereby request the Government to give every assistance possible to this organization in its efforts to see that each child gets a good education."

Delaronde became president during a very difficult time for the SMS. In 1944, the SMS membership was at it's lowest which was due in large part to the impact of WWII. At that time many locals of the SMS were inactive. WWII affected the Delaronde family, as four children, Lawrence, Archie, Vernon, and Verona were involved in Canada's war effort.

In 1945, Fred Delaronde was elected president of the SMS and given the enormous task of reviving the organization. He immediately pressured the CCF government to deal

¹ Paul signed as a witness to Treaty 2 in Manitoba on August 21, 1871.

with Metis issues and acknowledge the renewed leadership of the SMS. In 1945 and 1946, he had a difficult time trying to get government to meet with him; the Provincial government would not recognize the fragmented SMS. The Provincial government was not sure as to who represented the provinces Metis people because there was also another active Metis organization called the Saskatchewan Métis Association (SMA) that represented Northern Metis people. In 1946, a convention was held in June for the province's Métis people. The provincial government pressured the two organizations to unite, as they wanted to deal with only one Metis political organization that was the one voice of the province's Metis people. After this 1946 convention the SMS went dormant for a while after a disappointing meeting with government.

In 1947, the SMS had a meeting. Fred Delaronde was still recognized as the president as no elections had occurred in the previous year. Fred Delaronde reported that there were 30 paid members of his local at Mount Nebo. He also stated that, Joe Cameron was the last elected secretary. In, 1947, Fred Delaronde now focused his leadership efforts on working to organize a unified province wide Metis political organization. Malcolm Norris and Joe Ross were appointed to work on establishing a provincial organization and drafting a constitution and bylaws. The SMS faced enormous challenges trying to establish a new provincial wide organization. After 1949, the Métis political organizations were relatively inactive until the renewed interest of the Métis public and leadership in the 1960s.



Fred was given an important leadership role during an intense developmental time for Metis political organization in Saskatchewan, which is now almost a forgotten part of Métis history. Delaronde passed away on November 2, 1969 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Reference:

Leah Dorion, "Fred Delaronde", *Eagle Feather News*, Nov. 1999: 18.



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