

## **Jean Baptiste Lafournaise dit Laboucane. (1815-1875)**

Jean Baptiste was born at Red River circa 1815, the son of Joseph Lafournaise and Susanne Leclair dit Allard. He married Marguerite Gosselin, the daughter of Michel Gosselin and Marguerite Assiniboine Duroleaux. Baptiste as a voyageur for the NWC stationed at Fort des Prairies (Edmonton). He then became a “freeman hunter for the HBC in the same area. They moved to Red River in 1831. Jean Baptiste, Marguerite and their children are shown as family #145 in the Pembina Census of 1850.<sup>1</sup> He is shown as a hunter. His son Gabriel was a sub-leader for the 49<sup>th</sup> Rangers, the Metis Scouts of the 1873-74 Boundary Commission. Their children were:

- Jean Baptiste Jr. (b. 1832)
- Gabriel (b. 1834)
- Joseph (b. 1837)
- Gilbert (b. 1838)
- Guillaume (b. 1840)
- Elzear (b. 1842)
- Marguerite (b. 1844)
- Jerome (b. 1847)
- Genevieve (b. 1848)
- Angelique (b. 1852)
- Cecile (b. 1854)
- Louise (b. 1854)

Jean Baptiste died at Smokey River, Alberta sometime before 1876.

In 1850, Major Woods reconnoitered the "North-Western Frontier of the Territory of Minnesota" at the behest of Secretary of War,<sup>2</sup> acting as an advance man for the treaty-making expeditions to come. He described his meeting with the Chippewa Métis Indians at Pembina:

I urged them to organize themselves into a band, and appoint their chiefs that they might have some order and government amongst themselves with chiefs ...; that as they were, if the United States had any business to transact with them, there was no person to address from whom *the wishes of the people could be obtained, &c., &c.*

Major Woods also organized the French people he identified as half-breeds:

On the 24th of August these people had returned from their Spring hunt, and about 200 of the hunters came to see me. They had appointed four men as their speakers. *I told them that in virtue of their Indian extraction, those living on our side of the line were regarded as being in possession of the Indians' right upon our soil;*

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<sup>1</sup> Listed as “Lafournier”.

<sup>2</sup> Major Samuel Woods, *Pembina Settlement*, Executive Document No. 51, House of Representatives, 31st Congress, 1st Session.

that they were on our frontiers treated as component parts of the Indian tribes; that they either came under the Indians' laws or regulations, or formed such for themselves. **I urged them to organize themselves into a band under a council or chiefs**, invested with ample authority to act in their name, in all matters which might arise to affect their interests ... The next day they returned in about the same numbers, and **presented me with nine names as the committee they had selected for the future government of the half-breed population within our borders.**

The Metis presented the following names as their elected chiefs and councilors: J.B. Wilkie, Jean B. Dumont, Baptiste Valle, Edward Harmon, Joseph Laverdure, Joseph Nolin, Antoine Azure, Robert Montour, and **Baptiste Lafournaise**.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Ramsey, Letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 21, 1850. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1850*, pp. 43-64