

Joseph Nolin. (1804 - 1872)

Joseph Nolin was the son of Jean Baptiste Nolin and Marie Angelique Couvret (Métisse). His father was a famous fur trader out of Sault Ste. Marie and his two sisters, Marguerite and Angelique became the first Metis women schoolteachers in Manitoba. Joseph married Louise Frederic, the daughter of Jinier Frederic and his wife Louise before 1834. They had ten children.

Joseph's oldest brother Louis Nolin was Lord Selkirk's official interpreter and interpreted for the 1817 Selkirk Treaty with the Cree and Saulteaux. Joseph and his brother Augustin (b. 1781) also worked as interpreters. They were hired by the Anishinaabeg and their chiefs to make notes on the Treaty Three negotiations at North West Angle with the Saulteaux in 1873. Joseph Nolin recorded these in French however the French copy has not survived. The English translation survives as the "Paypom Treaty" or "Paypom Document". Joseph also signed as a witness to Treaty Three.

The family is shown as #119 on the Pembina Census of 1850. He is 46 years, his wife Louise is 38, their children Jean B. (16), Josette (12), Joseph (11), Mary (6), Francois (5), Marguerite (2) and 75 year old Louise also living with them.

In 1850, Major Woods reconnoitered the "North-Western Frontier of the Territory of Minnesota" at the behest of Secretary of War,¹ 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; 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.*

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

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.²



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

² Alexander Ramsey, Letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 21, 1850. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1850*, pp. 43-64