

Petition from Metis at Blackfoot Crossing: September 19, 1877.

September 19, 1877 Petition from John Munro¹ and other Metis at Blackfoot Crossing petition presented to Lieutenant-Governor David Laird Lieutenant Governor, N.W.T. Covering Copy Of Petition Presented To Him At Blackfoot Crossing Of Bow River On 22 September 1877 By Certain Half-Breeds concerning Metis land claims.

Blackfoot Crossing, 19 September, 1877.

Honourable Sir, - It is with sentiments of intermingled hope and fear that we, the undersigned, your petitioners, approach you to-day. It is to claim your kind sympathy and help in our present deplorable circumstances that we undertake to present you this paper, and to that end we will briefly state our reasons, to which we humbly pray Your Excellency would give the kindest consideration. Before the year of the small-pox, 1870, memorable for its disastrous effects on the native population of this country, we, your petitioners, although not rich, were, however in comfortable circumstances. We had small homes of our own near Edmonton, and cultivated the soil more or less. Hunting was plentiful and we were encouraged by the Hudson Bay Company to follow it as much as possible, because their only interest in the country was the fur trade. They were the only merchants amongst us, and this unique interest prevented them from giving any encouragement to the husbandman, and consequently from bringing farming implements for sale, except very few, which were sold at such an enormous price that the poor man could not think of buying them. Thus, honourable Sir, the only encouragement to farming was given by the ministers of the various denominations in our country, and their means also were limited. It was by their advice and assistance that we took to farming as much as our poverty would allow us. Our little gardens, our few cattle and the produce of our hunt supplied us with plenty and we were happy. But the year 1870 came, that year so terrible to remember, in which the dire malady decimated the whole population and following in its wake was famine. This combination of evils ruined us, driving us from our homes and compelling us to lead an entirely nomadic life, as the Indians on the plains. Since that time we have nothing to depend upon but our guns. The game we kill feeds ourselves and our families, and the furs we gather are our only money wherewith to buy clothing, and God knows we do not see how we are to rise above our present condition. It is on this account, Hon. Sir, that we now appeal to the charity you bear towards all your subjects. We hail your arrival as the opening of a new and better era for us all. We humbly approach you to-day and beg you to help us. The help we implore is farming implements and seed to begin with. We want to settle and till the land, but we have no capital—nothing at all to start with. Also, Hon. Sir, we beg that the game laws not be too stringent, until such time as we have something else to subsist on; otherwise we shall be unable to live.

Will your Excellency give these things the kindest consideration?

In conclusion, Hon. Sir, we, the Half-Breeds, your petitioners, welcome you to this country and wish you many years of happiness and prosperity, whilst we sign ourselves the devoted and humble subjects of Her Majesty the Queen and the most obedient servants of her delegate.

¹ Munro was employed as an interpreter for Treaty Seven, negotiated just days prior to this petition: On Monday afternoon, September 17, 1877, Commissioners Laird and Macleod met with the chiefs who were in attendance at the treaty grounds. James Bird, assisted by John Munro and Isidore St. Duval, handled the interpreting for the government. Jean L'Heureux, who lived in Crowfoot's camp, acted for the Indians although his services were paid for by the government.

Signed by:

Allard, Joseph
Allard, Louis
Anas Jr., Baptiste
Anas Sr., Baptiste
Bellecourt, Alexis
Bellecourt, Joseph
Boucher, Edward
Boucher, Jules
Boucher, Louison
Boucher, Pierre
Bruno, Alexis
Cameron, Thomas
Campion, William
Cardinal, Narcisse
Collin, Henry
Collin, Richard
Dagneau, Daniel
Dagnon, Isaac
Deschamps Sr., Baptiste
Deschamps, Baptiste
Deschamps, Francois
Deschamps, Joseph
Dumont, Jean Baptiste
Fayant, Paul
Flavel, Basile
Frederick, Roger Paul
Godin, Antoine
Grey, Magloire
Grey, Michel
Gouin, Augustin
L'Hyrondele, Joseph
Larocque, Francois
Lawrence, Basile
Lemire, Francis
Munro, John
Munro, Francis
Nadeau, Pierre
Petitcouteau, Alexandre
Rouselle, Johnny
Rouselle, Louis
Vandal, Francis
Ward, James

41 signatures



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research
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