

Ambrose “Smokey” Laboucane (1917-1987)

Ambrose was the President of the Métis Association of Alberta (1975-1976). Ambrose was the son of Pat Laboucane. In 1939 he married his first wife Mary Cardinal and they had two children Lawrence and Nancy. In 1945 he married his war bride Doreen. They had four children together; Julian, Jeanette, Mike, and Garry. Doreen was a nurse in England and that's where they met while he was being treated for a war wound. He was a trapper in the Fort McMurray area of Alberta, served in World War II, escaped from a POW camp, became a boilermaker, was for a time the president of the Alberta Métis Society, and loved to play the fiddle.

Smokey Laboucane: Former MAA leader passes away

By Rocky Woodward

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The Métis community, friends and relatives across Alberta and British Columbia are mourning the death of leader and past president of the Métis Association of Alberta, Ambrose “Smokey” Laboucane, who passed away suddenly of a heart attack on June 27, at Kelowna, B.C.

Ambrose attended school at Fort McMurray until he was 14, when he decided to work on one of the many river boats that travelled the waterways from McMurray north. He worked as a deckhand, among other duties, on the Athabasca River, Lake Athabasca, the McKenzie River and as far north as the Arctic.

During the winter months when the river routes were frozen over with ice, Ambrose trapped with his father, Pat Laboucane.

In 1939, he married Mary Cardinal and they had two children. When war broke out, Ambrose joined the Canadian (Calgary Highlanders) army and in 1943, he was shipped overseas. Ambrose fought in Europe as a sniper, just as many other Native soldiers did. It was no secret that, because of their experience in the bush and as trappers, many Indian and Métis men were enlisted as snipers and couriers.

Ambrose was seriously wounded in France and spent six months in a hospital in England. In 1945, he returned to Canada with a war bride. Ambrose and Mary were divorced while he was overseas.

Ambrose, with his wife Donna, settled in Hamilton, Ontario where he worked in a steel mill as a millwright for 15 years. It was during this time that Ambrose formed a band called "Smokey and the Country Gentlemen". Two members of the band included his own children, Julian and Jeanette.

Over the years Ambrose had won many fiddle contests and was recognized as an outstanding musician and entertainer.

Sometime around 1970, the Laboucane's moved to Kelowna, B.C. where he became known as a very successful entrepreneur, running a hardware store that specialized in aluminum awnings.

In 1973 Ambrose returned to Alberta and went to work as a welfare officer for the Métis Association of Alberta, under then president of the association, Stan Daniels. In 1975, he ran for president and won. After serving for one term and losing in the next election, Ambrose returned to Kelowna where he went to work for the B.C. Native Friendship Centre. He was a part of the spiritual of the medicine wheel and was known as "Red Cloud."

Ambrose leaves behind him eight children: Lawrence, Nancy, Julian, Jeanette, Michael, Garry, William and Joshua. He has nine grandchildren. He is survived by three sisters, Alvena, Florence and Lucille and one brother, Lawrence. Ambrose was pre-deceased by his brother Wilfred and sister Betty.

"Ambrose always stood proud as a Métis, as an outstanding representative of his own people and as a proud Canadian," said Muriel Stanley-Venne, president of MSV Consulting and former general manager of Settlement Soonyaw Corporation.

"Ambrose proved himself to be an honorable man who fought for the rights of Métis people in this province," commented MAA President Sam Sinclair.

- See more at: <http://www.ammsa.com/node/16091#sthash.5Ncm6UGC.dpuf>



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