

Nicolas Chatelain (Chastellain). (c. 1798-1892)

Nicholas Chatelain (Chastellain) was born in the 1790s in the vicinity of Grand Portage, Minnesota. He was the son of a French Canadian father and a Saulteaux mother. He was married to Anne Nanette Chartier and they had at least seven children.

- Guillaume Chatelain, married Angelique Mainville.
- Joseph Chatelain, married Josephine Morrison (Morriseau).
- Marguerite Chatelain, married John Jourdain.
- Narcisse Chatelain, born December 1821 at Fort Frances, married Nancy Finlayson then married Fanny Anne Hourie.
- Marie Anne Chatelain, born November 15, 1833 at Rainy Lake.
- Louis Chatelain, born March 1847 at Fort Frances.

Nicolas was active in the Robinson Treaty negotiations of 1850 as a member of the Fort William Anishinaabe Band. It was his work for the HBC as an interpreter, trader, and post manager between 1822 and 1870 that brought him to Rainy Lake. By 1871 he was also an interpreter for the federal government. In 1884 when the Metis elected him as Chief he was forced to step down because he was receiving a salary from the Dominion government. John Jourdain was appointed in his place.

Other than the fact that Nicholas fought in the War of 1812, little is known of his early life. He first appears in the HBC records in 1822 as a 'Canadian Servant' then in 1823 as an interpreter at Rainy Lake, Ontario. In 1850 he was present at the signing of the Robinson Treaty with the Ojibway at Sault Ste. Marie. He was then a member of the band at Fort William, which included a large number of Metis members. In his 50 years with the HBC he worked at a number of posts between Fort Francis and Fort William as a trader-manager, postmaster and interpreter.

In 1871, he was hired by the federal government as an interpreter and was present at the treaty negotiations with the Ojibway and Metis at Lake of the Woods (Treaty No. 3). On October 3, 1873 Chief Mikiseesis (Little Eagle) signed Treaty 3 where he asserted control over the lands now assumed by the Fort Frances, Ontario area on behalf of what is now known as the Couchiching First Nation. It was the Fort Frances area Chiefs that recommended that their members with French grandfathers be allowed into Treaty #3. It was because these members lived within the Anishinaabe community as Anishinaabe people. In 1875 Nicolas Chatelain negotiated an adhesion to Treaty #3 that resulted in a "Half-Breed" reserve for the Metis families connected to Mikiseesis' Rainy Lake Band. The Half-Breed Reserve was surveyed as reserve 16A. In 1967, both the Rainy Lake Band and the 16A reserve were amalgamated.

It was Chatelain who requested that the Metis be included in Treaty No. 3, Morris refused this request but indicated that those Metis that so wished could sign an adhesion to the treaty. On September 12, 1875 Chatelain, acting on behalf of the Metis of Rainy Lake and Rainy River, signed a memorandum agreement with Thomas Stoughton Dennis. This agreement known as the "Half-Breed Adhesion to Treaty No. 3" set aside two reserves

for the Metis and entitled them to annuity payments, cattle and farm implements. Unfortunately the Department of Indian Affairs did not ratify this agreement and over the following ten years the Metis sought to receive the promised benefits. In August of 1876, Chatelain informed Thomas Dennis that the promises had not been kept. The matter was referred to Indian Affairs who declared that they would only recognize the Metis if they agreed to join the Ojibway band living nearby. Evidently some interim annuities were paid. A further attempt to obtain treaty rights was made in 1885 when Chatelain on behalf of "The Half-Breeds of Rainy Lake" petitioned the department for annuities, in the amount of \$782 for forty-six people. They also requested the cattle and farm implements they had been promised. Since this followed on the heels of the 1885 Resistance, the government relented and back payments from 1875 were granted. Chatelain and others continued after 1886 to lobby for the full compensation due, but the department would not move any further and considered the matter closed.

On March 6, 1892 Chatelain died in the Metis community at Fort Frances. McNab quotes an Indian Agent describing Chatelain as "one of natures noblemen, six feet four inches in height, 98 years old and totally blind." The HBC record of his postings is shown below.

NAME: CHASTELLAIN, Nicholas PARISH: Native, CANADA ENTERED SERVICE: 1822 DATES: b. 1798

Appointments & Service				
Outfit Year*	Position	Post	District	HBCA Reference
<i>*An Outfit year ran from 1 June to 31 May</i>				
1822-1824	'Canadian Servant'			B.239/g/62-63
1824-1850	Interpreter		Lac la Pluie	B.239/g/64-89; B.239/u/1, fo. 54
1850-1851	in charge	Guard House	Lac la Pluie	B.239/k/2, p. 484
1851-1859	in charge	Lac de Bois Blanc	Lac la Pluie	B.239/k/3, p. II, 35, 55, 80, 108, 129, 149, 170
1859-1860	Postmaster		Lac la Pluie	B.239/g/99
1860	Freeman to Southern Department			B.239/g/99
1863-1868	Postmaster	Hungry Hall	Lac la Pluie	B.239/k/3, p. 274, 295, 317, 338, 360
1868-1869	Postmaster	Fort Frances	Lac la Pluie	B.239/k/3, p. 386
1869-1870	in charge	Eagle Lake	Lac la Pluie	B.239/k/3, p. 415



Filename: Chastellain, Nicholas (b. 1798) (fl. 1822-1870) JB/DM:ck September 1986 ; June/99/mhd; Reformatted LC Jan.2002

Reference

McNab, David. "Nicolas Chatelain." Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. XII (1891-1900). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990: 187-188.



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