

Mary Cocking, (Budd). (1780-1850)

By Ray Beaumont, Frontier School Division #48

Mary Cocking was the mother of Henry Budd, the first ordained Native minister in the Church of England in North America, and grandmother of mother of the famous Metis interpreter Peter Erasmus Jr., who was employed by the Cree as their interpreter for Treaty Six negotiations.

Mary Cocking, Wash-e-soo-E'Squew (Agathus or Mary Budd), was the Metis daughter of Matthew Cocking a HBC factor and Kahnawakan (or Ke-che-cho-wick), a northern Cree woman (Cocking's second wife). Kahnawakan was part of the "Homeguard Cree" communities at York Factory and Norway House. Mary eventually moved the Red River. She married a Muskego Cree Metis by the name of Budd, he died around 1811. Their children were: James Budd (The Cask) born c. 1799, Rebecca Budd born c. 1800, Catherine Budd born c. 1805, Sarah Budd (Nehowgatim or Four Legs) born c. 1809, the Reverend Henry Budd (Sakachuwescum or Going Up the Hill) born c. 1810, and Nancy Budd born c. 1806. Catherine Budd married Peter Erasmus Sr. and was the mother of famous Metis interpreter Peter Erasmus Jr., Nancy Budd married Horatio Nelson Calder and this family became part of the Metis group which James Sinclair led to the Columbia River in Oregon Territory in 1841.

The name chosen for Matthew Cocking's second daughter, who was Henry Budd's mother, is revealing. "Wash-e-soo-E'Squaw" is derived from *Wa shisoo* "she is bright, she shines" and *iskwao* "woman," and in this form means, "she shines in her brightness, shines in her glory." The use of *Wa shisoo* rather than the more common *Wa sisoo* is an important clue to the origin of the name. *Sh* is a sound in Cree found historically only along the Hudson Bay Coast, not in the interior. Consequently, its presence here suggests her people were coastal Cree.¹ A slight change in the spelling of the name in later years allows the possibility of an even more specific location. Because "Wash-e-soo-E'Squaw" is the name used in her father's will, it is probably the correct one, but later references give the name as "Wash-e-hoo-E'Squew," which has a different meaning. *Wa sahoo* is the Cree name for "Severn," therefore, "Wash e hoo E'Squew" might mean "the woman from Severn."² Although her father's spelling probably indicates the true meaning, later changes in the name may have assumed it referred to her place of origin—a logical error, if indeed she came from Severn. And she may have, as her father was there from 1777 to 1781, the approximate time of her birth.

While the account books and her father's will provide important information about her, references to Wash-e-soo-E'Squew³ also appear in correspondence from time to time.

¹"*Sh'*, a sound heard only among the Crees of Hudson Bay,...anyone in Hudson Bay will discover that *Sesep* in the interior becomes *Sheshep* on the coast. It is the 'Shibboleth' which distinguishes the Eastern Cree from the Western Cree Indian." See R. Faries & E.A. Watkins, *A Dictionary of the Cree Language* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1938, 1986) v.

²I am indebted to Ken Paupanekis, Cree Consultant, Frontier School Division, for his suggestions on the possible meaning of the name. See also R. Faries & E.A. Watkins, *A Dictionary of the Cree Language* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1938, 1986) p. 502.

³Although there are a variety of alternatives, Wash-e-soo-E'Squew is the preferred spelling used throughout this essay. It is close to the original in Matthew Cocking's will, the only change being "E'Squew" in place of "E'Squaw." "Squaw" has taken on a derogatory meaning and a harsh, monosyllabic sound. Hopefully, "E'Squew" is a closer approximation of the Cree *Iskwao*, meaning woman, with the "a" pronounced as in "made" and the "o" as in "snow."

Two letters are very informative. The first was written by Alex Robertson at Norway House to Robert Miles, York Factory. It reads as follows:

Norway House 3 Feb 1825

Mr. R. Miles

Dear Sir/ On the Annuitants List forwarded to this there is a Balance of £32.5.4 in favor of Mathew Cockings Three children & of £84.11.2 in favour of Tho^s Ishams Three children - if, by reference to documents of former years, it could be ascertained what portion of these sums each Legatee is entitled to you will oblige me by forwarding a Statement of the Same in the Spring - Mrs. Holmes/Kees e cow e cum a coot/ says that for the four years of 1816/17, 1817/18, 1818/19, and 1819/20 She received no part of her Annuity. Nor did her Sister/ Wasihoesquew/ any part of hers for the year 1818/19. Agatha/Mrs. Cook/ it is presumed has invariably received her Annuity in full.

With respect

From your Obe^t. Serv^{nt}

Alex Robertson⁴

This letter indicates the confusion connected with sorting out the accounts of the annuitants, particularly when they moved from place to place. It also suggests that Kees-e-cow-e-cum-a-coot was at Norway House in 1825, and other evidence confirms this.⁵ Since she was knowledgeable about the account of her sister, she must have been in contact with her. Certainly Wash-e-soo-E'Squew did go to Red River in the Fall of 1822, but she may have travelled back to Norway House from time to time, possibly to visit a daughter and a son who resided there.⁶ The following letter from William Hemmings Cook provides evidence that she was indeed at Norway House in May 1825, and adds information which helps to explain why she and her younger sister, Mrs. Cook, were both called "Agathas" in the Hudson's Bay Company records.

Red River 25 May 1825

My Dear Sir

Could I ask the favor of you to inform me the state of the Annuitants' Accounts who are designated by the names of Agathas, Washihow Esqow & Keshechow e cummicoot - my partner is one of these (Agathas) & her arrears of 3 years accumulation were last Summer £10.18.10 - instead of the net sum of £18 - some wrong payment of this annuity must have taken place owing to the Gentm at the Factory not being able to identify the parties - the name of Agathas being an Appelation suitable to any of the Half-Breed Ladies - Mr. Jones informs me that a Box⁷ procured by Mr. West on behalf of WashehoEsqow was marked with the name Agathas - from which I conclude that the Arrears of Annuity taken by Mr. West for Washeho Esqow was debited to Agathas - & thus the deficinency in my wifes Acct may have occurred - Washehow Esqow on the other hand complains of the deficiency of her account but she being a resident at Norway House & no doubt frequently applying to the Store for supplies of Prov' etc may have overrun her reckoning before she was aware of it, for like the rest she is no dabster at arithmetic & would have no Idea of the limit to which she could proceed with the ample or rather enormous sum of £6 annually.

Any little information you can afford on the foregoing matter will greatly oblige.

Dear Sir
yours sincerely

⁴ HBCA, B.239/c/1, fo.181, York Factory, Correspondence Inward, 1808-1828, Alex Robertson, Norway House, to Robert Miles, 3 February 1825.

⁵ Residents listed at Norway House in 1822/23 under "Holmes" include one woman, two boys, two girls, with the notation "Husband retired to Europe." (PAM, HBCA, B.154/d/2, fo.11d, p.18, Norway House Report 1823) In Sep 1823, the eldest son went to England. (C.1/100, Ships' Logs - Prince of Wales 1823, fo.3d) In the winter 1823/24, under "Holmes" are listed one woman, one boy under fourteen, and two girls under fourteen. (HBCA, B.154/e/3, fo.5d/6, Report for Norway House 1825) "J. P. Holmes wife, Keese cow e cumacout" also made purchases between 1827 and 1829. (B154/d/29, fo.51d; B.154/d/30, fo.5d, p.8; B.154/d/33, fo.6, p.7)

⁶ Evidence that Wash-e-soo-E'Squew visited Norway House in later years comes from her son's correspondence. In a letter dated 8 Aug 1847, Rivier du Pas, to Horatio N. Calder, Henry Budd makes the following remark concerning his mother, "...and my old Mother (who is by this time at Norway House) she was very well, too when she left this; she is gone there to see my sister who resides there." (PABC, A/E/R731/C12/B85) In a letter from Cumberland Station, 10 Aug 1849, to his sister Nancy, Henry Budd says, "...our Mother was quite well when I left her at Norway House, I have just arrived from Norway house and taken our Mother there...." (PABC, A/E/R731/W921.91) In a letter written at Christ Church, Cumberland, dated 11 Aug 1851 to the Calders, Peter Erasmus tells his aunt, "your mother and Sisters are all well in health and strength your Sister at Norway house is quite in good health...." (PABC, A/E/R731/W921.91)

⁷ Cook was correct. Just such a box had been sent from York Factory. See B.235/d/20, p.196, fo.17d, Retired Servants Book Debts, Red River District, Vol. 2, 1824/1825, which records the following: "Nov 24, By Trade Charges pr fret of 1 piece goods from YF to RRS, fall 1823, being Annuity for Aggathas, £1/17/6."

This letter contributes significantly to the picture emerging regarding the identity of Henry Budd's mother. While she and her sisters were at or near York Factory, there was no confusion about their names, but problems arose later when they moved to Norway House, then Red River, where they were unknown.⁹ Since all "Half-Breed ladies" could be called "Agathas"—a small but significant detail - the accountants at Red River simply used that name for Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, and opened the door for confusion with her sister, who had been called Agathas in the account books at York Factory for years. This becomes clear as the name changes are traced in Wash-e-soo-E'Squew's account from 1824, when the "Woman on Missionary Establishment" was the equivalent of "Aggathas," to 1827 when she was more specifically identified as "Wahahesquew." Moreover, Cook in his letter clearly links Wash-e-soo E'Squew to John West and the mission, and just as clearly distinguishes her from Aggathas, who is his wife.

Evidence from other sources supports the linkages already made between "The Woman on Missionary Establishment" and the Rev. Henry Budd. The baptism of "Waso-eyesquew" in 1828 also gives her new name, "Mary Budd."¹⁰ Later, scrip applications for two of her children, Henry and his sister Catherine, confirm that "Mary" was indeed the mother of both.¹¹

Past confusion over the identify of Wash-e-soo-E'Squew stems in part from a biographical sketch of Peter Erasmus, Budd's nephew, written at a much later date by George Gooderham. In it he states that Peter's mother Catherine was a granddaughter of Chief Factor William Hemmings Cook¹². Therefore, by implication Henry Budd would have been a grandson of Cook, or so Irene Spry assumed in her book on Peter Erasmus. She tried to reconcile Gooderham's information by suggesting that Wash-e-soo-E'Squew had at least one child by Cook named Aggathas and this child was the mother of the Budd children.¹³

⁸ HBCA, B.239/c/1, fo.201, York Factory Correspondence Inward, 1808-1828, William Hemmings Cook to Robert Miles, 25 May 1825.

⁹ Mrs. Holmes lived at Norway House for a few years before following her sisters south to the Colony. She seems to have died at Red River in 1835. (PAM, Reel M277, MG7, B7-1, St John's Cathedral, Burials, 1821-1900, No. 167, and HBCA, Reel 4M5, E.4/1b, fo. 301d, No. 167.)

¹⁰ On 11 May 1828, Waso-eyesquew/alias Mary Budd, a Half-Breed Woman, who lived at the Church Mission House was baptised by William Cockran. (PAM, Reel M277, MG7, B7-1, St. John's Register No.1, Entry No 645, p. 94) The transcript of her baptism in the Hudson's Bay Company register only gives the name Mary Budd. (HBCA, Reel 4M4, E.4/1a, No. 744, fo. 69d)

¹¹ Catherine Budd of Portage la Prairie, was identified as the widow of Peter Erasmus, born 1805, daughter of Budd, an Indian or Half-Breed, and Mary, a Half-Breed. (PAM, C-11878, RG15, Vol.1507, p.12, "Department of the Interior, General Index to Manitoba and North West Territories Half-Breeds and Original White Settlers, Half-Breed Heads of Families, Manitoba")

The scrip application for the deceased Rev. Henry Budd states he was born in 1819, father unnamed, mother Mary MistaKanash, and married in 1835 to Elizabeth Work. The application, no doubt filed by his daughters after his death, errs on his birth and marriage dates. Scrip was issued to his daughters Flora Ballendin, E. L. Deschambault, and E. J. Cochrane. (PAM, C-11872, RG.15, Vol.1475, p.105, "Department of the Interior, Northwest Half-Breed Commission, 1885. Alphabetical List, known as Book E in the report.") Although his children knew their grandmother's name was Mary, they appear unclear as to the surname, if indeed it was such. There is no equivalent meaning for "Mistakanash." "Mistakuya'sew" means "a large Englishman," therefore, her name might have some reference to her European background. It might also have been a nickname of some sort. "Miseke'yask" is the Cree for the Herring Gull. (R. Faries and E.A. Watkins, *A Dictionary of the Cree Language* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre) pp.91, 329)

¹² Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Peter Erasmus, 1833-1931:1. Gooderham also wrote that Peter's mother was "an Ojibway mixed-blood" when in fact her native heritage was Cree.

¹³ See inside the back cover of Spry's book on Peter Erasmus for a family chart.

The evidence, however, does not substantiate this hypothesis. There is no support anywhere for the contention that an intervening female existed between Wash-e-soo-E'Squew and the Budd children. There was only one "Woman on Missionary Establishment" at Red River in the years in question, and she was Wash-e-soo-E'Squew.¹⁴ Moreover, her age does not allow for an extra generation. Since she was born some time between 1775 and 1783, she could have been no more than twenty-four years old when The Cask or James Budd, the eldest known child, was born around 1799, hardly enough time for her to have been his grandmother.¹⁵

As has been pointed out above, "Aggathas," a "half caste" widow, "The woman on Missionary Establishment," was described in the CMS correspondence as the mother, not the grandmother, of Henry and Sally Budd. "Aggathas" was just as clearly identified as Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, the daughter of Matthew Cocking, in the records of the Hudson's Bay Company, thus confirming her mixed race status. And, as will be shown below, these same records provide evidence that she was a widow from about the winter of 1810-1811.

How else then can we reconcile the Gooderham statement? There is no doubt William Hemmings Cook was brother-in-law to Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, as he eventually married her half-sister Mith-coo-coo-man-E'Squaw alias Aggathas alias Mary Cocking. If a child of one of his daughters had been raised as Catherine Budd by Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, that would have made the latter her "mother," Henry Budd her "brother," and she would have been granddaughter to Cook as well. However, in her Half-Breed scrip application Catherine describes herself as born in 1805, the daughter of Budd, an Indian or Half-Breed, and Mary, a Half-Breed.¹⁶ Thus, she confirms what the records have implied; Wash-e-soo-E'Squew or Mary Budd was in fact her mother, not grandmother, and William Hemmings Cook no more than an uncle by marriage.

There is also no evidence indicating Cook was father to any other of the children of Wash-e-soo-E'Squew. In 1812 Miles Macdonell claimed two wives were living with Cook at York Factory, while another, presumably the first, had been repudiated by that time, apparently because of old age.¹⁷ Could Wash-e-soo-E'Squew have been one of those wives? While the York Factory records rarely name the Cree hunters, when they

¹⁴ CMS records indicate there was only one "Woman on Missionary Establishment" in October 1822 and 1 July 1824. The 1827 Census of Red River Settlement confirms this information. (HBCA, Reel 4M4, E.5/1, fos. 8d/9, "Statistical Statement of Red River Settlement 31 May 1827")

¹⁵ Budd's burial record in 1829 indicating his age as 30. "James Budd, Red River Settlement, buried 21 January 1829, supposed about 30 years, by William Cockran." (PAM, Reel A86, CMS12, Class "C," C1/0, "Orig. Letters, Journals & Papers Incoming, 1822-1880," "Burials in the Territory of the Hudson's Bay Company, North America, in the years 1828/9," No.44.

¹⁶ PAC, C-11878, RG15, v. 1507, p. 12.

¹⁷ PAM, Reel 171, MG2/A1, Vol 1, p.354/355, Selkirk Papers, Miles Macdonell, Nelson Encampment, to Selkirk, 31 May 1812, "M^F Cook appeared anxious to keep all the new comers from the Factory scarcity of firewood was given out as the ostensible cause - It may easily be supposed that a chief who occupies himself the Mess Room, with a squaw occupying an apartment on each side opening into it, would not be very desirous of having his family arrangements deranged by visitors." And on 29 May 1812, Vol. 2, p.376/377, Macdonell to Selkirk, "They [traders along the Bay] have almost uniformly taken up with Indian women, some have a plurality, & even to these their cupidity is not always confined. The present Chief of YF has three wives by whom he has a numerous issue. One he has discarded for being old - the other two are younger & live with him at the Factory." PAM, Reel 187, MG 2/A1; Vol 67, pp.17868-9, Selkirk Papers, Rev. Charles Bourke's Journal, 1 May 1812, suggests there were three wives at the fort. "Governor Cook supports a Seraglio like the Grand seignor. He maintains 3 wives locked up, he keeps the Keys himself, & I am informed he is so exhausted that a Man who saw him but a few years ago, would not after some absence [sic] know him to be the same."

do, as in 1811 and 1814, Wash-e-soo-E'Squew and her family were living away from the fort. There is no hint they ever lived there.

She was certainly not the first wife. Wash-e-soo-E'Squew was born no later than 1783, the year following Matthew Cocking's return to England, and must have been a mere child when William Hemmings Cook arrived at York Factory in 1786.¹⁸ Cook's first wife is likely to have been Kahnawapanakan, described in 1821 as "a deceased Indian woman," the mother of his eldest daughter Nancy,¹⁹ who was herself born in the late 1780s.²⁰

Nor is she likely to have been Cook's second wife. Like Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, she has been described as "half-caste,"²¹ but there are a number of compelling reasons why the two women are unlikely to have been one and the same. In 1812, Cook apparently had two wives living with him at York Fort. Although there is no specific proof for that year, Wash-e-soo-E'Squew lived away from the fort at those times when the records provide details. In 1815, Cook claimed to be the father of ten children, all accounted for,²² while Wash-e-soo-E'Squew had at least six by that time.²³ Cook's children, one or two of whom probably belonged to the second "half-caste" wife, were being born at about the same time as those of Wash-e-soo-E'Squew. Consequently, it appears quite clear that Cook's second wife and Wash-e-soo-E'Squew were two different women.

Moreover, no evidence has been found to suggest that William Hemmings Cook claimed any of Wash-e-soo-E'Squew's children as his own, or that they acknowledged him as their father. Yet he apparently acknowledged children by two, and possibly three, country wives,²⁴ and a review of his account at Red River shows his children and

¹⁸ HBCA, B.239/a/86, fo. 57.

¹⁹ Nancy's scrip application states she was the daughter of William Hemmings Cook and Kahnawapanakan. (PAM, C-11878, RG15, v. 1507, p.23). Her baptismal record in 1821 adds that her mother was a deceased Indian woman. (HBCA, 4M4, E.4/1, fo.33d, No. 111.)

²⁰ Her scrip application states Nancy was born in 1785, while her burial record in 1875 claims she was one hundred years old. (PAM, Reel M32, MG7 B3, p.15, St. Mary's, Portage la Prairie, Burials) Neither is accurate. When she was baptised in 1821, Nancy had already been the country wife of James Sutherland deceased, was currently married to William Garrioch, and was the mother of seven living children. It is likely, therefore, that she was born shortly after her father's arrival at York Factory in 1786.

²¹ Irene Spry describes the second wife as half-caste, but does not cite her source. Wm. H. Cook's HBC Biography does the same. Still, it is possibly true. Samuel, who was born c. 1797, was described as the son of a "half caste" woman, and the mother of Charles, c. 1804, was described as "Agathas". Since neither of these men is ever described as the son of Mary Cocking, they may have been children of the second wife. (PAM, Reel 4M4, E.4/1a, fo.44, No.280 and fo.46d, No.315; PAM, C-11878, RG.15, v.1507, p.21)

²² By 10 September 1815, William H. Cook had ten children, (HBCA, E.8/5, fo.128) although his HBC Biography lists only four sons and five daughters, perhaps because Richard seems to have died young. See his will (HBCA, A.36/5: fos. 50-51). Their names were Nancy, born 1787-88 (marr. 1. James Sutherland, 2. Wm. Garrioch); Joseph c. 1792 (Catherine Sinclair); Samuel c. 1797 (Isabella Gaddy); Jane, c. 1790-1800 (1. John McNab 2. John Flett, 3. Henry Heckenberger); Jeremiah c. 1802-1804 (Eleanor Spence); Charles c. 1804-1805 (1. Nancy 2. Catherine Anderson); Richard c. 1805 (See HBCA, B.239/a/115, fo. 17d); Margaret 1808 (Wm. Sandison); Mary c. 1810 (Wm. Leask); Catherine 1815 (1. James Lyons 2. Jos. Kirton). There may have been another son named John, c. 1790s, as John and Joseph Cook obtained provisions at York Factory 3 Oct 1804. (HBCA, Reel 1M677, B.239/d/127, fo. 85d) John must have died before 1816.

²³ Wash-e-soo-E'Squew's son *The Cask* (James Budd) was born c. 1800; daughters *Catherine*, wife of Peter Erasmus, born 1805; *Nancy*, wife first of Michel Rhein, second of Horatio Nelson Calder, born c. 1805-1807; *Nehowgatim* (Sarah Budd), wife of Alexander Birston, born about 1809; and *Sakachuwescum* (Henry Budd), born no later than 1811. Another daughter at Norway House was probably born around 1800-1805.

²⁴ Only Kahnawapanakan and Agathas/Mary Cocking have been clearly identified as mothers to any of Cook's children.

grandchildren were given support from time to time.²⁵ The Budds, on the other hand received none. Therefore, while Henry Budd was grandson to a Chief Factor, it was to Matthew Cocking, not William Hemmings Cook. The connection to Cook was that of uncle, although Peter Erasmus might have correctly addressed him as grandfather without violating Cree practice. Perhaps this is where the confusion arises. Erasmus referred to his Rhein and Calder first cousins as “brothers”²⁶, a typically Cree custom between parallel cousins. Therefore, it is quite possible he called William Hemmings Cook “grandfather” as a term of respect.

Although the foregoing reveals much about Wash-e-soo-E’Squew, more can be gleaned from the journals, wastebooks, etc., of York Factory before 1820. References in them to the Cree by name are infrequent prior to 1810 and after that it is generally only male heads of families or hunting parties who are so identified. Still, there are a few women named, women who often appear to have been heads of families in their own right. The reason for this is not difficult to surmise. The life of a Cree hunter was precarious, and some came to untimely ends, leaving behind widows and small children who either relied on the Hudson’s Bay Company post for supplies or attached themselves to relatives and friends. Such seems to have been the circumstance in the case of Wash-e-soo-E’Squew. The earliest known references to her in the York Factory post journals occur in April 1811. They indicate she lived north of the fort, but close enough to come in regularly for supplies, and further suggest she had recently become a widow.

Winters along the Hudson Bay Coast were often arduous, but according to Miles Macdonell, who was there the following year, the winter of 1810/1811, “was the severest ever known in those parts,²⁷ game disappeared, & many of the improvident [sic] natives perished thro cold & want.”²⁸ Others were kept alive with provisions given them by the Hudson’s Bay Company which for purely economic reasons, quite apart from common humanity, had to assure the survival of the Home Guard Cree.

During the early months of 1811 a number of families, including a couple which may have been headed by women, journeyed to York Factory for food. On February 7, for instance, “Two Women from the Northw^d came in for a supply of Oatmeal etc for their families,”²⁹ and a week later provisions were given out “to 2 family of Northward Indians” and “By Mr. Aulds Order to Nancy Jefferson” as well.³⁰ At the beginning of March, “2 Indians who came in from a Distressed Family to the Northward” received biscuits & oatmeal,³¹ and two weeks later, “Two Indian women came begging in the most urgent manner a supply of Oatmeal etc. their families being in a very distressed situation.”³² Although none of these people are named, other than Nancy Jefferson,³³ it is evident that at least two women from the north were among those who came in for food.

²⁵ William Hemmings Account at Fort Garry. B.235/d/1, p. 65, fo. 34; B.235/d/3, fo. 56d, p. 112; B.235/d/18, fo. 60, p. 109; B.235/d/20, fo. 33d, p. 228; B.235/d/22, fo. 52d, p. 56; B.235/d/28, fo. 36, p. 63; B.235/d/34, fo. 30, p. 51; B.235/d/38, fo. 28d, p. 46; B.235/d/41, fo. 35, p. 58.

²⁶ See PABC, A/E/R731/C12/Er12, Letter from Peter Erasmus Jr. to Horatio Nelson Calder, 27 June 1850.

²⁷ North side of Nelson River in the vicinity of Seal Island. Macdonell was writing from York Factory.

²⁸ PAM, Reel 171, MG2/A1, Vol 1, pp. 54/55, Selkirk Papers, York Factory, letter from Miles Macdonell to Lord Selkirk, 1 Oct 1811.

²⁹ HBCA, B.239/a/119, fo.49 and B.239/d/155, fo.6d.

³⁰ HBCA, B.239/d/155, fo.7, entry for 14 Feb 1811.

³¹ HBCA, B.239/a/119, fo.50, entry for 5 Mar 1811.

³² HBCA, B.239/a/119, fo.50d, and B.239/d/155, fo.9d.

While their identity is uncertain, they may have been the two widows who had attached themselves to a hunter named Thuthat, a man “from Sams Creek on the North side of Nelson River” who occasionally acted as “Master of the Goose Tent” there. On March 24 he came to the fort to obtain oatmeal for his own family and those of two widows “belonging to Natives lately deceased.”³⁴ Whether Wash-e-soo-E’Squew was one of these widows is difficult to determine, but her name is associated so often with Thuthat in the following two months that the circumstantial evidence at least suggests a connection of some kind.

The first reference to her occurs April 7 when provisions were given out to four “Indians” from the “distressed families to the Norward.” Three of these people, namely “Washehow Eq, Skewnish, and Twaootum,” are listed in a marginal notation,³⁵ Skewnish being the daughter of the late Captain Jonathan Fowler,³⁶ and Twaootum a local hunter who later moved to Oxford House where he was described as a chief in the 1820s.³⁷ The fourth family head is not indicated, but as mentioned earlier, existing evidence points to Thuthat.³⁸

There are other possibilities, too, as several families gathered together at Sams Creek when Thuthat was placed in charge of the Northern Goose Tent there on April 18.³⁹ Family heads included Mehaum and Wetassum, whose names were also associated with Wash-e-soo-E’Squew in later records. Nevertheless, in the early months of 1811 the linkages to Thuthat are more compelling. In late March, he was described as a “northward Indian” in distress, supporting two widows and their families in addition to his own. Two weeks later, Wash-e-soo-E’Squew, Skewnish, Twaootum, and one other person arrived from the northward to obtain provisions for their families. Being named in

³³ HBCA, B.42/d/71, fo.10d, Churchill Accounts, 1793/1794, “Wappy & Nancy Mr. Jefferson’s Wife & Daughter.”

³⁴ HBCA, B.239/a/119, fo.50d, entry for 24 March 1811 “An Indian Man arrived from Sams Creek on the North side of Nelson River - craving a supply of Oatmeal etc - in consequence of two widows & their children belonging to Natives lately deceased - relying on him for support.” B.239/a/117, for the same date provides the additional information, “who occasionally acts as Master of the Goose Tent.” On 25 Mar, B.239/d/155, fo.10, “To Thuthrat 3 Family’s 12 qts oatmeal.”

³⁵ HBCA, B.239/a/119, fo.51, entry for 7 April 1811, “Four Indians arrived from distressed families to the northward. Sent to each family 1 Gall Oatmeal & 1 goose.” In margin: Washehow Eq, Skewnish, Twaootum. B.239/d/155, fo.11, entry for 6 April, “To 4 Familys of Northward Indians, 16 qts Oatmeal, 4 Geese.”

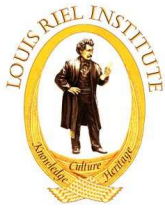
³⁶ HBCA, B.42/d/71, fo.10d, Churchill Accts, 1793/1794, “Skunish, Daughter of the late Captⁿ. Jonathan Fowler.” Her mother was probably Wappy, country wife to Chief Factory William Jefferson of Churchill. HBCA, B.42/b/44, fo50, states, “We have received £13.3 of Mr W^m Jefferson for the use of his children at your Factory as last Year vizt. To Wappee £5 To her daughter Ann £5 & to Squanish £3.3.” Compare to Footnote 53.

³⁷ HBCA, B.239/d/153, fo.16d, Indian Debts 1810/1811, lists “Tuotum” with the note “Went to O.H.” B.156/a/11, lists him as a chief at Oxford House.

³⁸ See HBCA, B.239/d/155, fo.13, 14, and 14d for entries dated Apr 30 and May 12, 14 and 18, 1811 respectively. Although Anchuckuck was listed in the May entries, he is unlikely to have been the fourth hunter. Between April 19 and May 1, he was with “Wetasum” taking a packet to Churchill. While he was away, Thuthat and Wash-e-soo-E’Squew obtained provisions on the 30th. His close association with Thuthat after May 1 may be explained by a relationship of some sort. In December 1810, for example, Thuthratt and his son received provisions, and two days later Ancheeckuck also received biscuits and oatmeal. See B.239/d/149, fo.68, entries for Dec 18 and 20. Perhaps Thuthat was father to Anchuckuck, whose employment as a packeteer suggests a young man. On the other hand, Thuthat’s job as master of the goose tent implies age and maturity. Thuthat’s name disappears from the records by 1812.

³⁹ HBCA, B.239/a/119, fo.51, notes a Mr. McLaughlin was sent to Sams Creek on Apr 10 to prepare for the goose hunt and on Apr 18, Thuthat was employed “to convey Salt & ammunition to the Northd. Goose Tent & engaged... to conduct the business there.” B.239/d/155, fo. 11d, records on Apr 12 that five families about to leave for Sams Creek were given salt venison. On Apr 19, Thuthat and 6 familys of Indians at Sam’s Creek received provisions. (fo.12) Supplies were given to Mehaum & five families of Indians from Sam’s Creek on April 29, to Thuthat and Washeho Essquoas on April 30, and to Wetasum and Anchuckuck May 1. (fo.13)

their own right, the women were probably heads of families,⁴⁰ and quite possibly the two widows mentioned earlier in association with Thuthat. Several references to Wash-e-soo-E'Squew and Thuthat together in the following weeks adds plausibility to this argument. Indeed, the existing evidence suggests she was a widow, whose family was dependent at times for their sustenance on friends and relatives among the Homeguard Cree, as well as the charity of the Hudson's Bay Company.



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⁴⁰ One has to be cautious about assuming that all women named in the stewards' books were widows. Jenny Johnson received provisions in her own name, even though Kehecowethin, described as the father (or was he father-in-law?) of her son, was living. (See B.239/a/124, fo.78) And Wash-e-soo-E 'Squew and Skunish may have been mentioned because they were annuitants and thus had their own accounts. Still, Thucotch, Mr. Jacobs' daughter, was also an annuitant, and the only reference to her found outside the account books so far is a note that her annuity was taken to her by Pimme. (B.239/d/161, inside front cover.) It is the combination of information that suggests Wash-e-soo-E'Squew and Skunish were widows by 1811.