

## The Métis-First Nation Band at Upper Fort Garry

By Lawrence J. Barkwell<sup>1</sup>

For many years in the mid-nineteenth century there were mixed Saulteaux-Métis Bands living on the camping grounds at Upper Fort Garry on a semi-permanent basis. The men of this group were sometimes employed as trip-men and casual labourers by the Hudson's Bay Company officers at the fort. They became known as the Fort Garry Band and in 1870 when Manitoba entered confederation they were led by Chief Na-sha-ke-penais, who signed Treaty No. 1 in 1871 on their behalf.

Na-sha-ke-penais was the son of Le Premier, who was also known as Old Grandes Oreilles who signed the 1817 Selkirk Treaty.<sup>2</sup> In 1817, Old Grandes Oreilles was one of the chiefs who ceded the strip from Fort Douglas south to Pembina. The Red river businessman Andrew McDermott noted that "Grandes Oreilles wished to have the area south of Point Douglas where his relatives were buried as his river access after the Selkirk Treaty." Historian Laura Peers has also noted "While the Saulteaux men might gather at Fort Douglas en route to war expeditions in the summer, their seasonal visits to the Forks, with additional visits to Métis kin in the settlement, to settlers to sell country produce, to bury their dead in the burial ground on Point Douglas, and to the fort to request gifts of tobacco, continued even after the building of Lower Fort Garry, which was much closer to the Peguis Indian Settlement, in the early 1830s."

Historian David Burley has noted the existence of the Fort Garry Band and its occupation of the environs of Upper Fort Garry at mid-century: "While they never settled permanently there, the Saulteaux and Cree Nations of southern Manitoba area regularly visited the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Their seasonal encampments, religious ceremonies, and trading in and around Winnipeg in the 1860s and 1870s were sufficiently common for settlers to consider "the Fort Garry Band," numbering about five hundred in 1871, a nuisance and, until they signed Treaty One, a potential danger."

Historian Sheldon Krasowski (2011) has identified the band as the Oak Point Nation. He appears to have chosen this name as an appropriate way to describe a seasonal encampment on the Seine River, at present-day Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes. By 1852, a sizable settlement had been established at Pointe-des-Chênes that included both original Métis settlers and newcomer individuals and families. That year, the people at Pointe-des-Chênes entered into a formal purchase agreement with Saulteaux Chief Grandes Oreilles [son of Les Grandes Oreilles]. Krasowski suggests that these Saulteaux were part of the Roseau River Band and that Grandes Oreilles had insisted the agreement be made in order to accommodate the expansion of his group in the area. Grandes Oreilles, according to Krasowski, was also known as Na-sa-kee-by-ness

---

<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at *the American Society for Ethnohistory, 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting*, Winnipeg: October 12, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Canada Sessional Papers #20, A, 1871, 34 Victoria pp. 18-19, September 21, 1870, Archibald to the Secretary of State for the Provinces. Na-sha-ke-penais or Flying Down Bird also was known as Grandes Oreilles after his father.

(Na-sha-ke-penais/ 'Flying Down Bird) of the Oak Point Nation. The expansion probably did occur because by 1856 Pointe-des-Chênes had a trading post, hotel, general store, and a jail.

Historian and archaeologist Norman J. Williamson offers details on the next phase of the band's history, placing it in the context of the machinations to remove Indigenous people from Winnipeg:

In the fall of 1867, a swarm of locusts had settled on the Red River and when their eggs hatched in the following spring they stripped the country bare, threatening the entire region, colony, Indians and all, with starvation. Money for relief was raised in Canada, London and the United States and the Canadian government took advantage of the situation to use a make work relief scheme, as an excuse to build a military access road from Fort Garry to the Lake of the Woods in order to facilitate the annexation of the Hudson bay Company territories.

The road was one of McDougall's public works patronage schemes but when Snow, the appointee boss of the project, got to Red River, he, John Schultz and a third Canadian, Charles Mair went into partnership in a fraud scam.

John Schultz set up a store at Oak Point on the west end of the construction. Then Snow would only pay the men [Métis and Indians] working on the road, who were getting paid at a rate of £3 a month, on orders at Schultz's store. Shultz then overcharged the crews. For example he was charging the labourers £3. 12 shillings for a £3 barrel of flour (Stanley 1963: 51).

Furthermore Schultz and his Canadian mob which included Col. Dennis, a government spy Snow and Charles Mair began to stake the best property in a land grab along the Dawson road. Because of the over hunting by the population of the Red River settlement the Indians of the region, known as the Fort Garry Band were starving and it was easy for Schultz at Oak Point to get them to sign away land for food for their children. (Williamson, n.d.)

During the negotiations of Treaty 1 in 1871 officials made a concerted effort to remove the First Nations and Métis bands from the Upper Fort Garry area. According to Diane Payment, Parks Canada historian, the Kakekapenais (Bird Forever) and Na-sha-ke-penais (Flying Down Bird) bands, of which a good number were Métis or Half-breeds, were told to take up reserves around Fort Alexander and Brokenhead respectively. (Payment, p. 62.)

The Fort Garry Band led by Na-sha-ke-penais (Flying Down Bird, Grandes Oreilles) negotiated and signed Treaty 1 at the was paid at the Stone Fort or Lower Fort Garry in the summer of 1871. In the records of the negotiations there appear two entries dated August 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 1871:<sup>3</sup>

1 <sup>st</sup> payment Fort Garry Band	\$426.00
---	----------

---

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Indian Branch of the Secretary of State. Ottawa: 182:26. The Indians were paid \$3.00 per head, thus, 142 received the first payment and 215 received the second payment.

2<sup>nd</sup> payment Fort Garry Band

\$645.00

It appears that the followers of Chief Na-sha-ke-penais were to be allotted land on the Roseau River originally along with the three other Pembina Bands. This was considered good farming land. However, the Fort Garry Band wanted land that was good for hunting and fishing and chose the Brokenhead River. The Indian Band refused to move to Roseau and refused annuity payments until the location of the Reserve of their choice was granted. The final survey for the Pembina Bands was not completed until 1887, when approximately 13,350 acres were surveyed at the confluence of the Red and Roseau Rivers for the bands of Wakowush, Kewetayash, and Nanawanaw, three of the four Roseau River Chiefs who signed Treaty 1. The fourth Band, the Fort Garry Band under Nashakepenais, who were living northeast of the Roseau River area, opted to take his people to a reserve at Broken Head on the south shore of Lake Winnipeg when he realized that they would be put on a reserve at the mouth of the Roseau River. The authorities complied with the wishes of the Chief and band and granted them land on the Brokenhead River. The Fort Garry Band merged with that of the Broken Head Band<sup>4</sup> and Chief Na-sha-ke-penais and a group of 204 moved to Brokenhead River.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, three hectares (7.4 acres) became the Na-Sha-Ke-Penais Indian Reserve (surrounded by East St. Paul).

In commenting on the payments for both Treaty Number 1 and 2, the Commissioner found:

" . . . most notably in the Indian Settlement and Broken Head River Band a number of those residing among the Indians are in reality Half-breeds, and entitled to share in the land grant under the provisions of the Manitoba Act."

"I was most particular, therefore, in causing it to be explained generally and to individuals, that any person now elected to be classified with Indians and receiving the Indian pay and gratuity would, I believed, thereby forfeit his or her right to another grant as a half-breed, and in all cases where it was known that a man was a half-breed, the matter, as it affected himself and his children was explained to him, and the choice given him to characterize himself. "A very few only decided upon taking their grant as Half-breeds. The explanation of this apparent sacrifice [emphasis added] is found in the fact that the mass of these persons have lived all their lives on the Indian Reserves (so called) and would rather receive such benefits as may accrue to them under the Indian Treaty than wait the realization of any value in their half-breed grant."<sup>6</sup>

The annual report on Indian Affairs for 1875 noted, "The Fort Garry Band, now better known as the Broken Head River Band, had formerly selected their Reserve on Rousseau [Roseau] River, near Pembina. At their request this Reserve has been transferred to the mouth of the Broken

---

<sup>4</sup> The Broken Head River Annuity list for 1875 shows the following Métis band members: William Bear with a family of nine, four Flett families and one Stove and one Hope family. William Bear Jr. later becomes a councillor to Chief Raven.

<sup>5</sup> St. Clements Heritage, "Brokenhead Indian Reserve no. 4 (submitted by felix keuhn/slh) [www.stclementsheritage.com/index.php/heritage-articles/political-a-community-organizations/brokenhead-reserve](http://www.stclementsheritage.com/index.php/heritage-articles/political-a-community-organizations/brokenhead-reserve).

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Morris, "The Stone Fort and Manitoba Post Treaties", in *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories*. Toronto: Williams & Williamson, 1880: 42.

Head, on the shores of Lake Winnipeg ... This Band had for a long time been in the habit of spending the greater part of their time in the vicinity of the settlements, seeking a living a little by hunting and fishing, and at other times begging.”

Sarah Carter (1989) has noted: “One segment of the Broken Head band took great interest in farming. This was the group officials called the “heathen” or Fort Garry Band. The Chief Nasekepanis worked diligently on his own farm and appointed one of his councillors to oversee the farming of other band members. The Christian faction of the band did not show as much progress.”

Neither “Oak Point” nor “Fort Garry,” the frequently used band names for those who followed Chief Na-sha-ke-penais was an accurate label. The terms were based on two sites among many that were used by the First Nation community. The people themselves moved through territory stretching eastward from the Red River through much of what is now southern Manitoba.

The names of their two chiefs should be returned to a place of honour in local history. Grandes Oreilles signed the treaty of 1817 between the Saulteaux and Lord Selkirk. And his son, Chief Na-Sha-Ke-Penais (sometimes Na-Sa-Kee-By-ness and other spellings, Flying Down Bird, or Grandes Oreilles as he was known to the local Métis and Europeans), signed Treaty One. Today, the only recorded use of the name in public circulation is a small reserve, vacant, just outside Winnipeg in East St. Paul, the Na-sha-Ke-Penais Indian Reserve. Though 60 kilometres from the main reserve, at Brokenhead, the Baaskaandibewiziibiing (Brokenhead Ojibway Nation), this fragment of land preserves the memory of two prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century First Nation leaders.



Saulteaux Indians, Fort Garry, ca. 1857-1858, by William Napier  
PAC No.: C-146728

Napier was hired as an engineer on Hind's expedition to Red River. Trained as a topographical artist, he sketched a number of scenes while en route to Red River, as well as different winter activities around Fort Garry where he spent the winter of 1857-1858. In this watercolour, Napier depicts local Indians in their traditional clothing.



"South Gate, Upper Fort Garry 1857" This painting is by William Napier [1829-1894]



Fort Garry Band at Oak Point 1914

Posted on Norman J. Williamson: <http://everlastingexile.weebly.com/>

This band appears in the report of the Indian branch of the Department of the Secretary of State for the provinces in 1872 as having been paid at the Stone Fort on Aug 4 and 5th 1871. "Because of the embarrassment their claim to the city of Winnipeg lands outside the Selkirk survey and their reservation within that survey were to Canadians like Schultz who was the largest land owner in Winnipeg they were scattered among other bands by the Canadian government. Today they are ignored at places like "the Forks", which was the camping ground by which they took their name, for the same reason." (Williamson, "Canada's Hero of the West." n.d.)



From Mission to Partnership Collection, "Saulteaux Indian (Bungay)," 93.049P1772N, *United Church of Canada Archives - Digital Collections*, accessed November 7, 2016, <http://uccdigitalcollections.ca/items/show/1359>.

## References

- Burley, David. "Rooster Town Winnipeg's Lost Métis Suburb: 1900-1960." *Urban History Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2013: 3-25.
- Carter, Sarah. "Site Review: St. Peter's and the Interpretation of the Agriculture of Manitoba's Aboriginal People." *Manitoba History*, No. 18, Autumn, 1989.
- Friesen, Gerald, personal communication January 20, 2017.
- Hall, D. J., "'A Serene Atmosphere'? Treaty 1 Revisited," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 2 (1984): 321-58; *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 30th June 1875* (Ottawa, 1876), 116.
- Hall, Norma, personal communication November 14, 2016.
- Krasowski, Sheldon K. "Mediating the Numbered Treaties: Eyewitness Accounts of Treaties between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples, 1871-1876" (Ph.D. diss., University of Regina, 2011), 63-99.
- McDermott, Andrew, "Peguis Refuted," *Nor Wester*, 28 February, 1860.
- Morris, Alexander "The Stone Fort and Manitoba Post Treaties", in *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories*. Toronto: Williams & Williamson, 1880.
- Payment, Diane: "Native Society in Transition in Manitoba 1870-1900." Parks Canada Microfiche Report Series #383, n.d.. 57-124.
- Peers, Laura. "The Ojibwa, Red River and the Forks, 1770-1870," in *The Forks and the Battle of Seven Oaks in Manitoba History*, ed. Robert Coutts and Richard Stuart (Winnipeg: Manitoba Historical Society, 1994).  
<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/forkssevenoaks/ojibwa.shtml>.
- St. Clements Heritage, "Brokenhead Indian Reserve no. 4 (submitted by felix keuhn/slh) [www.stclementsheritage.com/index.php/heritage-articles/political-a-community-organizations/brokenhead-reserve](http://www.stclementsheritage.com/index.php/heritage-articles/political-a-community-organizations/brokenhead-reserve)
- Stanley, George F.G. *Louis Riel*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963.
- Williamson, Norman J. "Canada's Hero of the West." n.d., <http://everlastingexile.weebly.com/>



**LOUIS RIEL INSTITUTE**  
*Knowledge • Culture • Heritage*

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