

Métis of Oak Lake Petition for a priest (1886)

Oak Lake, Lac des Chênes, also called Flat Creek, Manitoba:¹

Oak Lake, the Lauder Sand Hills and the Souris River plain to the south were traditional Métis wintering places since the buffalo were numerous on the plains here. Oak Lake was a watering stop thirty-two miles west of Brandon. A long-time Métis wintering stop, the Métis permanently settled it by the late 1860s. In 1824, Brandon House on the Assiniboine River was abandoned and Fort Mr. Grant was established to the south, on the Souris River in 1826. Here Cuthbert Grant and Louis Guiboche were to trade with the Métis and Indians between the Turtle Mountain and Qu'Appelle. This fort closed in 1861. Fort Desjarlais was established by the American Fur Company to the south of Fort Mr. Grant by Joe Desjarlais in 1856. It was destroyed by fire in 1856. Both of these posts were staffed by 50 to 100 Métis men.

Gerhard Enns has recorded that the Métis and Euro francophones of Oak Lake petitioned Archbishop Taché for a resident priest in 1886, noting that they had no one among them to baptise, marry, or bury them, and their children were unable to take catechism. This petition was signed by both French Métis and French Canadians from Quebec and Belgian French and gives some idea of the families in the community in 1886.

Petition for Resident Priest 1886		
MÉTIS		NON-MÉTIS
Andre Berard	Thomas Breland	Francois Deleuque
Wm. Dauphinais	Casimir Dauphinais	Joseph Lapierre
Joseph Courchene	Ernest Ducharme	Auguste Blondeau
J. Baptiste Davis	Francois Gervais	Aime Marcotte
Maxime Marion Jr.	Amable Marion	Theophile Poirier
Maxime Marion Sr.	Antoine Gladu	Janvier Loiselle
Napoleon Lafontaine	Antoine Lafontaine	Joseph Turcotte
John Leveiller	Joseph Leblanc	Hormislas Fileau
Maxime Rielle	Wm. Lafournaise	Antoine Eneault
James Whitford	James Whitford	Joseph Carpentier

¹ Lawrence Barkwell, *Historic Métis Settlements in Manitoba and Geographical Place Names*. Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2018: 66.

Jr.	Sr.	
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Taché finally dispatched Joseph A. Bernier, a French-Canadian Priest, in 1887. He quickly began to build a church in the railway-town of Oak Lake, but lived among his Métis parishioners close to the lake itself.

Source:

Gerhard Enns: *The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Oak Lake Métis to 1900.*

<http://ecclectica.brandonu.ca/issues/2003/2/ens.asp>



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