

George “Sneppy.” Atkinson, II . (1777-1830)



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George Atkinson II was born at Eastmain House (Quebec), the son of George Atkinson Sr. and Necushin, a Cree woman. George and his younger brother Jacob (Shesheep) were educated in England. George began working for the HBC in 1792 at age 15. In 1793 George Jr. accompanied a HBC exploration party to the Canadian post at Lac Cheaquacheston. Later the same year he caused a second expedition to be abandoned after he refused to take command of his canoe following the accidental death of the steersman. From 1803 to 1806 he went north where he was in charge of the La Grande Rivière Post. He was made a member of the council for Eastmain district in 1807 at a meeting held during his return visit to England. He returned to Grande Rivière and remained there until the post closed in 1813. He was also in charge of whaling operations during his final three years at this post. He was then assigned to survey the Great and Little Whale Rivers in 1816. On his second trip in 1818 at Upper Seal Lake he made the first observations of freshwater seals.

He exercised a great deal of power over the Indians of the district. James Clouston, who took over his exploring duties, wrote that the Crees believed that Atkinson could kill them by his conjuring powers. He also reported that Atkinson was encouraging them to demand higher prices for their furs. The company then made attempts to move him to the Red River Settlement. However, he performed one last duty for the company, he was guide for William Henry's 1828 expedition into the Ungava peninsula. Soon after his return he did move to Red River where he died on September 25, 1830.

George's will mentions his Cree wife Winnepaig-osquai and fourteen children. These included, sons George III, Samuel, Richard, Henry, Thomas, John and one other whose name is unknown. Most of these boys went on to work for the Hudson's Bay Company at one time or another.

Joseph Atkinson, born c. 1820 at Red River was probably either the unnamed son of George Atkinson II or a son of George Atkinson III. Joseph worked at Fort Chipewyan for the Hudson's Bay Company in the early 1850s, along with Henry Atkinson, Joseph Chartier and Joseph Mercredi, a fact that may account for the association of all three of these families at Grand Rapids in later years. Joseph was at Red River in 1855 and remained there for a couple of years before returning to fur trade country and settling at Grand Rapids in the early 1860s. After the Treaty of 1875, Joseph became a member of

the Grand Rapids Band, and served as a Band Councilor for a number of years. Joseph Atkinson married Sarah Lambert, probably the daughter of Michael Lambert from Red River. They raised a large family, and many of their descendants live in Grand Rapids today. Joseph died of natural causes in 1910.

Reference

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