

Catherine Beaulieu Bouvier Lamoureux. (c.1820-1918)

Catherine was Métis, of Métis and Dene ancestry. She spoke several languages including Michif, Chipewyan, Slavey and Cree. She was educated at St-Boniface Grey Nun's convent, and raised in oral traditions, which she kept alive. Catherine practiced Dene spirituality and culture, and was influenced by missionary nuns and Christianity. Catherine completed some schooling in the Red River settlement in Manitoba, and there learned silk embroidery and beadwork, which she adapted to a uniquely Métis style using caribou and moose hide.

Catherine was the daughter of François "Old Man Beaulieu II" and his wife Catherine St. Germain. This Metis matriarch of Fort Providence was known by her Slavey name, Ehtsu Naats'I ("Grandmother of the Winds," "Fast like the Wind"), which meant the speed and courage which she demonstrated while driving with her dog-team. Catherine was born at Fort Simpson, NWT. As the only daughter, she was no ordinary woman as she was the equal to most men living in the north. She had learnt many of the essential northern survival skills from the people in her life; her father; her four brothers and her mother.

Catherine married Joseph Bouvier (1810-1877), son Jean Baptiste Bouvier Sr. and Maegerite Laraute, in 1840 at Fort Smith. In the 1860s, they settled permanently at Fort Providence. They had five children; Marguerite (1853), Joseph Jr. (1855), Jean-Baptiste (c. 1857), Catherine (1858) and Marie-Madeleine (1859). Joseph was employed as a headsman on Hudson's Bay Company York Boat and barge crews. Joseph died in 1877 and in 1879 she married her second husband, Jean-Baptiste Lamoureux at Fort Providence. She died at Fort Providence in 1918, having outlived both husbands.

Jean LeMouel, a Metis from Yellowknife tells the following story about Catherine:

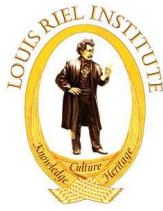
She could trap and hunt like a man and was a great traveller by dogteam or canoe. A few of her grandchildren who are living today remember and talk about the trips she used to make from Fort Providence to Fort Rae during the winter, a distance of 150 miles. With two or three other Native women, without the help of men, they would set out with dogteams. Due to the road conditions, number of dogs and load for the long trip, they walked all the way on snowshoes, which took many days while camping out every night. After visiting with their relatives and friends in Fort Rae, they returned to Fort Providence with loads of caribou meat. Catherine also carried the mail to and from Rae and Fort Providence. There were also many wolves in those days. They were often seen and their howling was heard throughout the night. But nothing seemed to stop her! The Bouvier family at Fort Providence would supply the trading companies from the results of their hunting and fishing. Also, they were very helpful to the Roman Catholic Missionaries who greatly appreciated their assistance, both material and intellectual. In this sense, they were protectors and interpreters, helping the missionaries with the language and teaching. It is also said that during the waterfowl hunting seasons great quantities of wild geese and ducks were provided by the Bouviers to the Roman Catholic Mission.

Catherine is reported to be the source of the Chipewyan oral history obtained by Father Émile Petitot and Father Grouard.

References

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