

## **Jean-Baptiste Wabiskawan Piché “Ermineskin”. (1835-1906)**

Baptiste, whose Cree name was Sehkosowayanew, and was also called Ermineskin, was the son of Louis Piché (Métis) and Opeh-tah-she-toy-wishk (a Plains Cree woman). He was the younger brother of Chief Bobtail.



Ermineskin with his granddaughters.

John Buffalo was interviewed about Bobtail and Ermineskin on April 18, 1975 by Richard Lightning.

Source: <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/bitstream/10294/2001/1/IH-169,%20169%2B.pdf>

My grandmother was present at the time when they received their final payment there. That is also the time the chiefs were given their authority, and also the councillors. That is when Bobtail became a chief and Ermineskin wanted to become a chief also but he was told that he couldn't become a chief because they were related. However he was told that he could become a councillor, so he did.

This was told to me by my mother-in-law, Mrs. Smallboy. She is about 108 or 100 years old and she is being cared for in Edmonton. I hear this old woman

telling the story of the treaty; she was there. Bobtail, the first chief was her grandfather. It was also during that time that they came to Hobbema. That is what the old Mrs. Smallboy said. She said that the reserve here at Hobbema was one whole reserve at the time. Then Ermineskin decided to separate to form the Ermineskin band. His older brother (Bobtail) gave him a portion of the reserve. He was then the chief and his councillor was Louis Bull, David Headman, Johnny Ermineskin another man. Finally Louis Bull asked Ermineskin if he too could have his own reserve. Ermineskin did give him some reserve land - he was the chief of that reserve. So there the Ermineskin reserve and the Bull reserve, they wanted to be on their own. When all that had taken place, Bobtail took enfranchisement. He left the reserve for his people, that was the Montana Reserve.

My mother-in-law said that Samson also asked for some reserve land from Bobtail, that was a long time ago, so old Chief Samson also received some reserve land. So Montana became a small reserve as a result. The people who now live there were transported here by freight train; they were wandering around before they were gathered and shipped here. The freight train stopped at Ponoka and the Indians were brought to the Montana Band. They stayed there for one winter and in the summer they started to wander away again. Their excuse was that they were going berry picking but they left for good and today they are the Crees of Rocky Boy, Montana - those people are from here. Some of the older people fled to Montana during the Rebellion [1885]. So that is how they made their homes in Montana, according to my mother-in-law.



Ermineskin, Charles Rabbit and Joe Samson

Piché, Josephte - Concerning her claim as a head of family - Address, Victoria - Born, 1842 at Mission St. Paul - Father, Modeste Cantara alias Cotteret, (French Canadian) - Mother, Marie Clare, (Métis) - Married, 1859 on Plains to Baptiste Piché - Children living, four (names on declaration) - Children deceased, three - Scrip for \$160 - Claim 1095.

Scrip Certificate No. 332 Form A for \$47.00 in favour of Josephte Cantara. Refund of Treaty Money.

Piché, Josephte dit Wabikaskawan; for her deceased children; Jean Marie, born: 1865 at Vermillion; died: 1878; Marie, born: 1875 at Bears Hills; died: 1881 at St. Albert; address: St. Albert; father: Jean Baptiste Piché dit Wabikaskawan; (Métis); mother: Josephte Cantara or Omilkis (Métis and deponent); claim no. 2103.

Reference: RG15, Interior, Series D-II-8-c, Volume 1363, Reel C-14997, Access code: 90

References:

Botting, Gary. Chief Smallboy: In Pusuit of Freedom. Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2005.

Information was also provided by Katrina Bull and George Littlechild.



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