

## **BIOGRAPHY OF ROBERT PAQUETTE**

### **Original text**

Letter written to Hayter Reed Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1894

Robert Paquette Sr. of St. Francis Indian Reserve whose ancestors were white people was adopted while yet very young some seventy years ago by an Indian woman of the same place and became her own child instead perhaps of one she had recently lost by death and became member of her tribe more so because the Indians implicitly by a resolution adopted in their council or impliedly by admitting him to their council, to share in their land and in the distribution of their annuities to be in their midst, to own a house and other property in their village etc. etc., accepted him as a member of their band. Paquette was married twice and each time to an Indian Woman. He had one son, by his first wife, Thomas. Thomas Paquette was also married to an Indian woman and brought up a numerous family, the eldest of whom is Robert Paquette Jr. who is also married to an Indian woman and has two or three children. The old man Robert Paquette also brought up a large family by his second wife. Three of his daughters and two of his sons Samuel and George have also married Indians of the same place. Paquette's grandchildren have a white man's name but scarcely any of his blood. Whereas a good many now members of the band have Indian names but very little Indian blood. This is owing to the fact that Paquette and descents have all married Indians whereas on the other hand some Indians and their descendants have all married whites. The result is as already stated. All the children and grandchildren of Robert Paquette were born and brought up at St. Francis Indian Reserve. The Indian language is their mother tongue and they all live the Indian mode of life, they all have been considered and treated as members of the band according to all former statutes which defines an Indian as «Secondement – Toutes personnes résident parmi les Sauvages dont les pères et mères étaient ou sont descendus ou dont l'un au l'autre était de Sauvages d'un Sauvage réputé appartenir à la tribu ou peuplade particulière de Sauvages intéressés dans les dites terres ou propriétés immobilières, ainsi que les descendants de telles personnes; » Statuts Refondus. Bas Canada

Since the coming into force of the Indian Act 1886 it has been held that Robert Paquette whose ancestors were white people could no longer be considered as a member of the band and so the names of his children and grandchildren were also erased from the pay list without regard to all former Statutes and to immemorial custom and usage of the Indians.

I contend that Paquette and family have been dealt with unjustly and if there be any doubt in your mind as to whether they were wronged or not I would respectfully refer you for more ample information on the subject to the Honorable Judge Charles Gill, 946 St. Denis St., Montreal who was born and brought up at St. Francis and is well acquainted with the parties in the case.

Paquette and family are all Protestants and Catholicism has brought to bear all its influence against them. The Roman Catholics of St. Francis have always shown unfriendly disposition towards the Protestants. I have learnt of late through a reliable source that the Priest. Mr. Roy of St. Francis last Sunday warned his people from the pulpit not to vote for any Protestant at the coming election of Chiefs. Another cause which prompted the complaint against Paquette and family was vengeance. At the election of Chiefs in 1880 Joseph Laurent promised favors to Robert Paquette if the latter would vote for him. Paquette would not formally reply to such an insinuating courtesy. He did not vote for Laurent then the latter opened a regular warfare against him and family. Laurent argued at the time and may argue again that should Paquette and family be admitted into the membership of the band, all others who have Indian blood on their mothers side out likewise be numbered with them. In reply I would say that all the Abenaki half-breeds under similar circumstances should be treated even as the Paquettes but those of whom reference is made by Laurent never lived on the Reserve, do not talk the Indian language, do not live the mode of life and were at not time considered by the Indians on the Indian Departments as members of the band. Paquette and children still live here, the Indian is their language, hunting and manufacturing baskets is their mode of earning a livelihood as it is of all other Indians of this band. They have been deprived of their former privilege to participate in the councils of the band and to share in the annuities. I earnestly entreat you in their behalf to look over their case if possible before the next election of Chiefs that they may exercise their right of vote if they be restored to their former social position.

I have the honor to be  
Sir,  
Your humble and obedient Servant  
Chief H. L. Masta

Reference: National Archives of Canada  
Indian Affairs  
RG10, Microfilm C-12778,  
Volume 2110, File 20,219