

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF JEREMIE JEREMICK'CA



THE LAC LA MARTRE READER PROJECT

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Dedicated to the memory of Dennis Beaulieu 1957-1984

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A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF JEREMIE JEREMICK'CA
(1879-1955)

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Cover illustration by Jim Martin

As recorded by the mission in 1879, Jeremie Jeremick'ca was named Firmi Jeremick'ca, but we prefer to call him Jeremie Jeremick'ca as all the people did.

Jeremie was born on May 15, 1879 and baptized by Father Bruno Roure on June 15, 1879. His place of birth was most likely around Lac La Martre.

Jeremie Jeremick'ca was the son of Jacques Wefwon and Adelaide Tlintsin. He was a brother to Firmi Pomi, Andrew Zoe, Madelaine Romie and Julie. Firmi Pomi is the only one that still remains with us today as the others have all passed away.

The mission has recorded that he married Adele Tafwetsi, a daughter of Tafwetsi and Dzielli by Father Bruno Roure, O.M.I. on July 2nd, 1902 probably in old Fort Rae.

Almost nothing has been written about this man and yet he is remembered as a great man, who always had worked for his people. He did not become a leader by election, but rather by success in hunting, trapping and fishing, which is the traditional way.

Jeremie was a headman when Treaty number 11 was signed and he accepted the treaty under his chief, Monfwi of Fort Rae. In later years after the treaty, Jeremie spoke for some of his people who were in court, and the treaty party took his own words and set the men free.

In the days of hardship in Lac La Martre, he led his people to the end of the lake where Grandin River enters the big lake. Soon there was a village here that lasted into the 1940's when people began moving into the present day settlement of Lac La Martre.

From talking to the people it is clear that Jeremie came from a well-known and respected family. He is described as a happy, kind and friendly person, and as a wise man who treated everyone fairly.

People from other communities respected him as much as his own people. Children especially loved Jeremie, for he loved them and spent much time with them. Even in his old age, he would play with the children.

One story told by the local people about Jeremie's unfailing good nature, was about a trick played upon Jeremie by some boys.

They asked to have a race with him and he agreed to challenge them. The boys had planned ahead and had tied a rope across the path. During the race the boys jumped over the rope but Jeremie did not see it because of his age.

He tripped over the rope, and everyone laughed including Jeremie who said, "My grandsons are getting smarter all the time!". People said Jeremie would never get angry at anyone, and undoubtedly this is why the children liked playing with him so much.

Jeremie's daughter recalls that he never got mad at them or ever slapped them. He would always be happy to see children come visit him and he would tell them stories till late at night. Then he would walk them home or carry the younger ones.

Jeremie was described as an unselfish man, giving both his time and his possessions to those in need. Whenever people were in need, they would go to him with their problems, and he would listen to them and help them find a solution.

People would listen to Jeremie and when he saw that a neighbour was out of firewood, he would ask the younger men to get wood for them and they would, using Jeremie's canoe or dogteam. His kindness was deeply appreciated and everyone loved him because he cared for his people.

Jeremie was a religious man and would say his rosary every morning and every evening. On Sunday he would gather the people together to say the rosary together and then have a short feast together. Often a hand game or a drum dance would follow in the evening.

Jeremie being a Chief, a wise man and a prophet after the manner of his people, realized that one day his people would need the new education and so he wanted a school in the settlement.

He asked the government to provide a teacher and in the late 1950's they did. While the children were in school, Jeremie would sit with them to ensure their attention to the teacher.

As Jeremie grew older he passed this authority and responsibility to Jimmy Nitsiza Sr. and today because of their efforts, Lac La Martre has a modern and beautiful school.

Jeremie Jeremick'ca served his people well and was a chief until his death on August 9th, 1955 and was buried on August 10th in Lac La Martre.

His wife Adele lived on until her death in Lac La Martre on May 12, 1972 and was buried beside her husband. At Jeremie's funeral people came from many other communities to show their love and pay their respects to him at his graveside.

Today in the cemetery in Lac La Martre his grave is covered by the branches of a bush like a blanket and at the head, there is a stone that reads simply, Chief Jeremie Jeremick'ca. Died August 9th, 1955.

