

RESERVE PERIOD

With the entry of the Iroquois, other Chippewa groups, and Metis into the west, the existing bands faced increasing competition, not only for fur but other resources. At the same time they became increasingly dependent upon the traders for tools, ammunition, and some staple food items. However, physical proximity of the various native groups contributed to peaceful and close relationships with other groups exploiting the same areas. White settlement further encroached into their lands. The perceived need for a transcontinental communication system and arable lands for homesteading as well as the potential for mineral wealth provided the impetus for negotiation of treaties by the federal government with the native peoples to extinguish the title of original inhabitants to their ancestral lands (Fedirchuk and McCullough 1993).

The Alexis band signed an adhesion to Treaty 6 in 1877 at Edmonton.

Beyond the Saskatchewan were two...small Woodland bands which had intermarried to a limited extent with the Crees in the area. These were led by chiefs named Paul and Alexis. A sixth band, descended from the old Strong Woods group, was under the leadership of Sharphead, and hunted in the Pigeon Lake and upper Battle River regions...Those under Paul and Alexis remained... isolated, living by hunting and fishing in the bush north-west of Edmonton. Farther south, the Sharphead band usually gravitated to the buffalo hunting Crees (Dempsey 1988: 43-44).

In the north, the three bands which came under Treaty Six all chose reserves in their traditional hunting areas. Alexis' band, with 42 families, took a reserve on the shores of Lac Ste. Anne, while Paul's band settled on Lake Wabamun. Initially, Sharphead's followers were at Pigeon Lake but when the fisheries failed in 1883, they were induced to take a reserve on Wolf Creek, just south of the present town of Ponoka.

Of all the Stoney bands in Alberta, the Sharpheads had the most tragic history. Although consisting of 36 families in 1883, they were struck down by a measles epidemic three years later and, in 1889 and 1890, epidemics of grippe and influenza reduced them to a mere handful. In the latter year, their reserve was closed, with most of the survivors going to Paul's band, and a few to Morley (Dempsey 1988: 45-46).

Former Chief Joe Alexis, grandson of Aginas, the first band chief to sign the treaty (on which his name is given in Cree as Alexis-Kees-Kee-Chee-Chee), told me in 1964 that before the treaty the Aginas (Alexis) people were always northwest of the North Saskatchewan River, and wandered in the area of Isle Lake, Lac Ste. Anne and Chip Lake (Anderson 1968: 45).

The annual reports made by the Indian Agents between 1878 and approximately 1900 document, from a 'white' perspective, the development of the Alexis Reserve and the lifestyle of the members. It is significant to note that over this temporal span, no dramatic change in economic lifestyle from the pre-reserve period occurred.

The failure of the local fisheries and depletion of local game resources had important implications to the reserve period as they precipitated an attempt to modify the traditional lifestyle of the native peoples. In his annual report dated December 31, 1878, Vankoughnet (Canada, Sessional Papers 1879, Vol. XII: 12) advised the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs that the Indians of the North-West Territories were *being deprived of the staples of life...* He suggested immediate measures be introduced to prepare the Indians for the changes that were taking place. The policy outlined by VanKoughnet (Stanley 1992: 237) *subsequently governed federal relations with the Indians of the North-West* and included the following conditions.

...Government to adopt early and energetic measures to prepare them for the change in their mode of living and sustaining themselves and families, which must inevitably take place, when they can no longer kill sufficient buffalo and fish wherewith to feed themselves and families.

Instructions in farming, or herding and raising cattle...should be furnished to the Indians, and in such manner as will effectually accomplish, within the shortest period, the object sought for, namely, to make them self-supporting.

The Indians should be encouraged by precept, and, when necessary, by pecuniary aid to erect houses and barns. The use of the tent and wigwam should be discouraged as much as possible, and every effort should be made to induce them to abandon their old habits of life and to adopt those of the White man (Canada Sessional Papers 1879, Vol. XII, No. 7: 12).

In addition, the government was advised that

Their Reserves should be subdivided into lots and each head of a family should receive a location ticket, covering the land to which he is entitled (which land, of course, as stipulated under the Treaties is non-transferable).

A school should be established on each of the Reserves, on which one has not already been established, as soon as there is a sufficient number of families thereon to warrant it; and competent teachers should be appointed to these schools, who should possess, besides their other attainments, a knowledge of farming, or of herding and raising cattle (as the circumstances of the country may require), and this knowledge should be utilized for the instruction of the Indians in either occupation.

There is...nothing to prevent operations towards this much-to-be-desired end being initiated and vigorously prosecuted in the North-West Territories and in the Province of Manitoba, under the supervision of competent and reliable men, who, in turn, should have over them an Inspecting Officer, possessing the very best attainments, and of unimpeachable integrity, whose duty, among other matters, it would be to go from one Reserve to another and mark the progress being made by the Indians in their industries, and see that the men employed to instruct the Indians in farming or herding and raising stock attend to their duties.

The Inspecting Officer should also be the medium for the purchase of cattle, seed, implements, etc., for the Indians, and he should regulate the points and dates at which the payment of annuities shall be made. The dates of payment might be so arranged that the Inspecting Officer could be present at each point to hear any complaints that the Indians might have to make, see that everything was conducted properly, and, if possible, settle any differences that might arise and, if this were not possible, he could report the particulars to the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs for decision (Canada Sessional Papers 1879, Vol. XII, No. 7: 6).

It was anticipated that the farming program would solve both the short- and long-term of subsistence for the Indian and that within a short time they could raise a surplus to contribute toward the expense of feeding the Indians. To help solve the

long-term problem of subsistence, the instructors were to impart their knowledge of farming to the Indians (Carter 1990: 83). The terms of the recommendation were implemented and the Indians were assigned farm instructors which were located at sites called Farming Agencies. Nine Farming Agencies were established in the area of Treaty 6 and two in that of Treaty 7 (Table 1). In 1879, Thomas Page Wadsworth was appointed inspector of the farming instructors' locations as well as supervisor of the distribution of food supplies, cattle, farming implements, etc., etc., among the Indians in the Territories (Canada Sessional Papers 1880, Vol. XIII, No. 4: 14). The agency farms or 'home farms' also called for the establishment of two "supply farms," which were to be distinct from the home farms, in the Treaty Seven area, one near Fort Macleod and the other near Fort Calgary. Large quantities of produce were to be raised, but the farmers at these sites were not given the additional responsibility of instructing the Indians (Carter 1990: 82).

Table 1 Northern Farming Agencies and Government Farms

NORTHERN FARMING AGENCIES			
NAME	LOCATION	TREATY AND AGENCY	REMARKS
W. A. Loucks	Reserves near Prince Albert	No. 6, W. P. Clark	Buildings off reserve
G. Chaffey	Reserves near Fort Carleton	No. 6, W. P. Clark	Buildings off reserve
J. Tompkins	Reserves near Fort Carleton and Duck Lake	No. 6, W. P. Clark	Buildings off reserve
B. Sherrin	Battleford	No. 6, W. L. Orde	Buildings off reserve
J. Delaney	Frog Lake	No. 6, W. L. Orde	Buildings off reserve
P.J. Williams	16 miles from Fort Pitt	No. 6, W. L. Orde	Buildings on reserve
R. S. Donnelly	2 miles south of Saddle Lake	No. 6, J. G. Stewart	Buildings off reserve
S. B. Lucas	On Bow River, trail 32 miles south of Edmonton	No. 6, J. G. Stewart	Buildings off reserve
J.J. McHugh	Lac La Nonne, 32 miles from Fort Edmonton	No. 6, J. G. Stewart	Buildings off reserve

GOVERNMENT FARMS			
NAME	LOCATION	TREATY AND AGENCY	REMARKS
H.J. Taylor	30 miles west of Fort MacLeod	No. 7, no agent	---
T. Wright	Bow River, 5 miles from Fort Calgary	No. 7, no agent	---

(Source: Canada Sessional Papers 1880, Vol. XIII, No. 4: 99)

Another purpose of a Home Farm was to serve as depots of supplies of seed, implements, and provisions (Carter 1990: 83). Because of the food crisis

issuing relief was to become one of the primary functions of the farm instructors. Aid...was to be used as a means of instilling a self-help mentality, which, it was believed, would eventually free the Indians from their poverty. In the minds of many officials, the Indians' want of food was due, not to the collapse of their economic system, but to personal failing, indolence, and extravagance. "Work for rations" would introduce the principle of toiling for ones' livelihood. It was declared that the "system pursued in affording relief to the Indians is calculated to accustom them to habits of industry; and at the same time to teach them to depend on their own efforts for subsistence" (Carter 1990: 84).

Listed under Farm No. 17 at Lac la Nonne, Rivière Qui Barre were the bands of Katechetaywaysnon (Alexander), Alexis Mitchel, A. M. Tommy LaToback (also known as le Patac alias Enoch), and A. M. Mah-mah-nah-wah-ton. In spring of 1880, two of these bands had newly settled on reserves. In 1881, a total of 150 acres had been broken with 113 acres under crop. The farm had a dwelling and store houses, granary, and stables and was manned by two white assistants and one interpreter under the direction of J. J. McHugh. The associated reserve had eight new houses, and all 49 broken acres fenced and in crop (Canada Sessional Papers 1880-81, Vol. XIV, No. 14). In 1882, the Alexis band had 19 acres of barley sown and 11 acres of potatoes. In 1888, the agency was moved from Edmonton to Stony Plain Reserve and the farm buildings at Rivière qui Barre were moved to Alexander's Reserve, some six miles away (Canada Sessional Papers 1889, Vol. XXII, No. 16: 89).

A letter dated December 13, 1881 from Indian Agent W. Anderson, reported on the conditions of some of the native groups in Treaty 6. Food shortages, largely as a result of failure of the fisheries, were prevalent and he (Canada Sessional Papers 1882, Vol. XV, No. 6: 84-85) noted the need for instituting mitigating measures.

Distress commencing amongst the Indians and numbers of helpless women flocking in to the post, I considered it well to start a soup-kitchen for them, a work of some difficulty as the Indians were prejudiced against it...I was fortunate in being able to procure some large kettles for the purpose, and directed the farm instructors at...Rivière qui Barre to adopt the same plan for the relief of local distress among the aged and weak...Great prostration from a sickness that confined nearly all the Indians at Lake Ste. Anne's and White Lake, to their tents, and prevented them from fishing and hunting, made it necessary to send out

immediate relief in medicine and provisions, the Roman Catholic Mission at Lake Ste. Anne's kindly administering them. The fishing at Lac la Nonne failing, I induced part of the band to go into the McLeod's Lake, and try the fishing there. We were, however, disappointed, the lake not turning out well and worms destroying the nets.

In that same report, he records that the *Alexis band* asked in the spring, if their money could be kept for them until the autumn, as they desired to go into the mountains to hunt if this could be done. As this action on their part was most desirable I promised to pay them on their return. Upon their arrival in November I accordingly paid them, keeping the lists open until they came in (Canada Sessional Papers 1882, Vol. XV, No. 6: 85). Anderson (Canada Sessional Papers 1882, Vol. XV, No. 6: 84) also investigated some accusations concerning cattle which resulted in the discovery that *the Indians were starving* as a result of the sickness which had prevented them from fishing and hunting. In the following year (Canada Sessional Papers 1883, Vol. XVI, No. 5: xv), it was reported that three out of the five bands on reserves between Rivière qui Barre and Edmonton were doing so well in adopting an agricultural lifestyle that the home farm could be closed.

The report for the year 1885 (Canada Sessional Papers 1886, Vol. XIX, No. 8: lv) identified the cause of the fishery failures in most large northern lakes, including Lake Wabamum and Lac Ste. Anne, as the taking of large numbers of whitefish during the spawning season whereas in succeeding years Mitchell (Canada Sessional Papers 1888, Vol. XXI, No. 15: 94) blamed the failure in fisheries on the prolonged drought. The poor fisheries continued until at least 1888. He further commented that previously Lac Ste. Anne was the favourite winter quarters of the freemen who hunted bison on the plains in summer. In the report for December 1887, C. J. Cornwall and J. B. Plant (Canada Sessional Papers 1888, Vol. XXI, No. 15: lv) documented the activities of the bands in the Edmonton District. *During the winter a considerable number of furs was obtained by those who employed themselves hunting*, indicating that many in these bands continued their traditional way of life, hunting and trapping on their traditional territories. In fact, W. C. de Balinhard (Canada Sessional Papers 1890, Vol. XXIII; No. 12: 79) reported in 1889 that the *Alexis band*

may be called the hunting band of this agency; they are in the woods nearly all the seasonable part of the year and with their fishing in the autumn they do a great deal towards their own support, but leading such a wandering life, their

progress in agriculture is small. A prairie fire visited this reserve while most of the hunters were away and destroyed their stables and houses, and all their contents, and many of the widows were rendered very destitute, not having a vestige of anything left, but owing to the supplies sent in at once by the Department they have been tolerably well provided with necessary clothing and tents.

The report for the year 1883 (Canada Sessional Papers 1883, Vol. XVI, No. 5: 181-182) summarizes the responsibilities of the Rivière Qui Barre, Farm No. 17. Four bands, Alexander and Alexis Wood Stoney, and Michel and Tommy La Potack which consisted of *Edmonton stragglers* were discussed. It was indicated (Canada Sessional Papers 1883, Vol. XVI, No. 5: 181-182) that prior to the institution of the home farm, the Wood Stonies had

eked out a precarious existence by fishing and hunting about Lac La Nonne. The fish have almost been exhausted from this lake and there was little difficulty in persuading them to leave...Alexis' Band have not done as well, there being a division in their camp with reference to the location of the reserve, the chief having had it surveyed on Lac Ste. Ann, whilst a portion of the band, under a head man, will persist in remaining at Stoney Lake. Unfortunately for the chief and his immediate followers his farms were visited by a hail storm in August, which totally destroyed his barley. Had it not been for this, his success would have drawn the seceding members of the band to him.

John C. Nelson, in charge of surveying the reserves in the district, reported on December 16, 1891 (Canada Sessional Papers 1892, Vol. XXV, No. 14: 206) elaborated on the circumstances concerning the division of Alexis' group and survey of the reserve for Paul's band.

On the following morning...I proceeded over some very rough country to White Whale Lake to make a survey of the reserve and fishing station for the members of Chief Alexis' band, to whom a reserve had not yet been allotted. These for the most part are followers of Paul, one of Chief Alexis' headmen...It may be well to observe that in 1880, Mr. George Simpson, D.L.S., surveyed a reserve at Lake St. Anne for Alexis and ninety one souls. Mr. Simpson reported that the other members of the band, who were then absent, had elected to take their portion of the reserve at White Whale Lake, where they have always hunted and fished. The yearly average number of Indians in Alexis' band, including Paul and his followers, for the last ten years, I find by the pay-sheet to be 208; last year the number was 219, and upon this basis the allotment of land has been made.

Population figures recorded for the various reserves in the Indian Agent records fluctuated widely. For example, the Alexis band at the 'Stoney Lake Reserve' numbered 100 individuals in 1882 (Canada Sessional Papers 1883, Vol. XVI, No. 5: 202). By December of 1883, their number had risen to 205 (Canada Sessional Papers 1884, Vol. XVII, No. 4: 205). In 1885, they number 200 (Canada Sessional Papers 1886, Vol. XIX, No. 4: 159) only to fall again to 151 in 1896 (Canada Sessional Papers 1897, Vol. XXXI, No. 14: 271). These figures are at substantial odds with those presented by Anderson (1968: 60) based on the annuity payments.

In 1885, it was determined that Treaty 6 was too large and cumbersome as a single administrative unit and was subdivided into three with the southern portion (Peace Hills) including the bands of Samson, Ermine Skin, Bobtail, and Sharphead; the Victoria portion consisting of six bands, and the western portion including Enoch, Pass-pass-chase, Alexander, Alexis, Michel, the St. Albert mission, *orphans and stragglers* (Canada Sessional Papers 1886, Vol. XIX, No. 4: 70-71). Undoubtedly, the rebellion of 1885 also had some bearing in this decision as stricter surveillance of the natives peoples was put into effect. However, during the rebellion, the bands in the western subdivision remained on their reserves with what appears to have been little unrest.

In 1887, a severe measles epidemic had afflicted the bands in the Edmonton District. That winter, whooping cough was also prevalent on all the reserves in the Edmonton District. These ailments carried off many of the native peoples and severely affected not only traditional subsistence practises but also attendance at the local school (Canada Sessional Papers 1889, Vol XXII, No. 16: 89; 1888, Vol. XXI, No. 15: lv). Two schools were in operation on the Stony Plain Reserve (Enoch) and at Lac La Nonne; as well an orphanage and school under the direction of the Roman Catholic diocese in St. Albert (Canada Sessional Papers 1888, Vol. XXI, no. 15: lv). In that year a *new school opened and a teacher supplied, by the Rev. John Hines, at Stony Lake* (Canada Sessional Papers 1888, Vol. XXI, No. 15: 141). In 1889, three schools are in operation, one at Enoch's band and two at Alexander's Reserve (Canada Sessional Papers 1889, Vol. XXII, No. 16: lxxv). Some of these schools were closed for several months between June, 1893 and January, 1894 (Canada Sessional Papers 1895, Vol. XXVIII, No. 14: 143, 175), apparently as a result of the small

number of enrolled students. By 1896, 30 children were in attendance at the school on the reserve (Canada Sessional Papers 1897, Vol. XXXI, No. 14: 177). However, it was noted in 1908 that it was difficult to keep the school open as the children did not attend being out in the 'bush' with their families (Canada Sessional Papers 1907-08, Vol. XLII, No. 27: 166).

After 1890, reports on the districts continue to provide information on the general state, welfare, and lifestyle of the Alexis band. In 1890 (Canada Sessional Papers 1891, Vol. XXIV, No. 18: 56), the Alexis band was said to be comprised of *Stonys and a few Cree Indians; their reserve is situated on the north shore of Lake Ste. Anne. Till now they have been hunting, fishing, and doing very little farming, but are now decided to farm, as they see that fur-bearing animals and fish are getting very scarce.* In the report of 1890 by E. McColl (Canada Sessional Papers 1891, Vol. XXIV, No. 18: 208), he mistakenly identifies the Alexis and Alexander bands as Cree. In 1891, C. de Cazes, Indian Agent (Canada Sessional Papers 1892, Vol. XXV, No. 14: 79), reported on the status of the band.

The old Chief Alexis has been replaced by Yosé, who received his appointment in April last. He makes a very good chief, being intelligent and industrious. This band, although considered a hunting one, has managed to get through a fair amount of work. The acreage put under crop this spring equals twenty-seven acres, consisting of three of wheat, eighteen of barley, three of potatoes and three of garden produce. Several dwelling houses and stables have been erected, and sixty-five acres of land fenced. The cattle in the hands of this band are looking well. A school has been opened on this reserve, under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, and is a great success. The teacher is an Indian, having been formerly a pupil of the St. Albert Industrial School. This band has suffered but little from ill-health.

In 1892, A. McGibbon (Canada Sessional Papers 1893, Vol. XXVI, No. 14: 118) reported on Indian Reserve 133 (Alexis).

I now returned to Lac Ste. Anne, or Joseph's Reserve, No. 133. There is a small store at Ste. Anne, on the mission property, where the rations are stored and issued once a fortnight...Joseph's Reserve is about six miles from this point. The band has fourteen houses. Most of the Indians were away, but I found the houses comfortable and cleanly kept. A new school-house had been built during the year. It was situated on a point in the centre of the reserve facing the lake. The trees in front - that is between the building and the lake - had been cut down, and it is proposed to make a garden on this spot, so that the boys can be taught gardening during part of the day. The spot is a very pretty one...

In 1896 the families constituting 'Joseph's band' (i.e. Alexis) consisted of Alexis, Painted Stone, Michel, Kootenhayoo (2 families), Joseph or Soosay, Mustooch, Widow Rosalie, Joseph (ex chief), Louison, Alexis (son of Paul), Benjamin (son of Mary Michel), Waycahn, and Pierre. In the nine years since the signing of treaty, the predominant lifestyle of this band had changed little from the pre-reserve period. *The Indians of this band are hunters, and fishermen, from which pursuits they make a good living. Almost every family had a net set in the narrows of the lake, and when they wanted to eat, went to their net...fattest, most beautiful whitefish weighing four to six pounds each...With such resources as these at their doors, one can readily understand that there is no need to do much farming* (Canada Sessional Papers 1897, Vol. XXXI, No. 14: 277-279).

Between 1892 and 1904, Joseph's (Alexis) band was still reported to rely primarily on hunting and trapping for a livelihood (Canada Sessional Papers 1893, Vol. XXVI, No. 14; 1905, Vol. XXXIX, No. 27). It is interesting to note that when A. McGibbon (Canada Sessional Papers 1894, Vol. XXVII, No. 14: 199) had visited the reserve in fall, 1893 he found *The Indians were nearly all absent, only an old man, and six women on the reserve. The old man, and four of the women, were helpless, and the other two were kept busy attending to them. Four new houses have been built here, and three stables...The herd were...total 20...In private stock, they have 25 horses, 2 cows, and one young beast.* In 1897 (Canada Sessional Papers 1898, Vol. XXXII, No. 14: 182), it was recorded *The Lac Ste. Anne Indians are fishermen, hunters and guides in the mountains. From these pursuits, together with their cattle-raising and some gardening, the Indians make a comfortable subsistence without much material assistance from the Government.*

With regard to the habitations on the Alexis reserve, the report of 1900 (Canada Sessional Papers 1901, Vol. XXXV, No. 27: 204) indicated that *At the Narrows of the lake, where a few years ago there were several Indian houses and stables, there is nothing left but two unroofed houses; there were three tents at the point. Painted Stone, headman, has a house and small farm ten miles away, but it is rather inaccessible, and he is not living there this summer.* Similarly in 1904 (Canada Sessional Papers 1905, Vol. XXXIX, No. 27: 156), it was recorded that *Although the band, among them, keep some 20 head of cattle, the members look to hunting and fishing for their living...Their houses are, in general, poor, being only occupied occasionally...* This is reiterated in 1907 (Canada Sessional Paper, 1907-08, Vol. XLII, No. 27: 166).

In the 1894 report (Canada Sessional Paper, 1895, Vol. XXVIII, No. 14: 113-114), *St. Joseph's Band, Lac St. Anne*, had progressed in having additional acreages of gardens and fields, hay, and land broken. *One Indian here, "Peter Painted Face," got fifteen bags of flour last year from his wheat. It was Ladoga and was the first of this kind ever grown at St. Anne's.* The band had 18 head of cattle and 25 horses and five head of cattle in private stock. It was also reported that this was one of the most successful hunting years that the band had had.

In 1895, Joseph's (Alexis) band was economically in very admirable circumstances.

...The hunt had been good and was expected to keep so during the winter. Many of them had earned considerable, at the same time they had not been unmindful of work on the reserve...Most of the band were on the reserve at the time of inspection, as they could not travel in the deep snow. The women were busy making snowshoes, and many of the men expected to leave in a few days on the hunt, leaving, of course, some at home to attend to the cattle...The reserve is a good one, and the Indians seem to have the right idea of making the best use of it, namely, hunting in winter, and taking care of their crops in summer...(Canada Sessional Paper, 1896, Vol. XXIX, No. 14: 255).

According to Anderson (1968: 56), between 1913 and 1934 the reserve experienced a 'feeble agricultural period' in which only the harvest of wild hay and some garden vegetables was conducted. The reports of the Indian Agents for this period represent brief acknowledgements of the reserve and its peoples with little detailed information. It can, therefore, be assumed that the traditional economic lifestyle continued to be practised and traditional territories were exploited. In 1942, the system of registered traplines was instituted and two blocks of traplines were assigned to the Alexis people. These areas consisted of a northern component in the Whitecourt/Blue Ridge area and the Cynthia/Wolfe Creek area to the south (Anderson 1968: 38). These areas, at least in part, coincided with earlier historic territories. At the same time, increased settlement and development provided the opportunity for wage labour as the band members were hired to help clear land and work in saw mills. The Family Allowance Act of 1948 also served to place money in the hands of the band and somewhat alleviated the threat of food shortages (Anderson 1968).