



The Maliseets' Hospitality

Tradition dictates that the Maliseets warmly welcomed the first families who arrived in the Madawaska region in 1785. Rev. Thomas Albert refers to the dignified and eloquent chief, François-Xavier, as a benefactor and protector of the newcomers. How can we explain this great generosity of the “Madawaskaks” toward strangers? And can we believe this openness, when we learn that some 20 years earlier, these native people, feeling threatened by an increasing number of hunters and merchants who were attracted to the resources of the area, had complained to the Quebec government, who, consequently, banned Canadians from hunting in this Maliseet territory in 1765. Allow me to offer a few assumptions as to the evolution of attitudes and mentalities between 1765 and 1785.

- The fact that two half brothers, Pierre Duperré

and Pierre Lizotte had resided in the Maliseet village in 1783-1784, could

have helped to prepare the arrival of the first settlers. Afterwards, the two “Pierre’s” had gone down to Sainte Anne des Pays Bas and had returned in 1785 with the founders of the Madawaska colony. As acquaintances of the Maliseets, they could have played an intermediary role.

- It could also have been that the “Madawaskaks” already knew the leaders of the Acadians who came to ask for their hospitality. In fact, Joseph Daigle, Louis and Michel Mercure and a few others, had often traveled through the area while carrying mail between Halifax and Quebec. If they petitioned for lands in the Upper St. John Valley, it is that they knew, before hand, that they could count on the Maliseets’ hospitality.

- The diplomacy

of the Madawaska pioneers, the condition of these poor exiles who, humbly and respectfully, asked to settle in the area could have influenced the attitudes of the first inhabitants. Let us admit that it is hard to distinguish fact from fiction in all this especially when we learn that in the first year, a militia was created for the protection of the new settlers. A petition dated July 16, 1789 shows that difficulties arose when some merchants from Kennebec began a trade in spirits in the territory, and furthermore, gave bad advice to the Indians. It is certain that the importance of the « Madoueskak » village declined at the end of the 17th century, as the Tobique Reserve was officially established in 1801.

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