

Residents of Whonnock IR 1

When Joseph Trutch, chief commissioner of lands and work visited the Whonnock Reserve in 1862 he counted the population as 13 men, 14 women, and 9 children. Unfortunately the names of these individuals were not recorded. Neither do we know the families they formed.

The main source of the names of First Nations people living in in the Fraser Valley from the 1860s onward are the registers of baptism, marriage, and death of the Fathers of the O.M.I, Order of Mary Immaculate. The Fathers wrote down the Native names as best they could but the spelling of the same name differs widely from record to record as capturing the sounds of a Native language is a challenge for anyone unfamiliar with the language.

Because of the variances in the spelling it is hardly possible to trace the name of the same individual in the records. For example in a petition dated December 1868 are the names of eight men from Whonnock: *Kolasten*, *Slapken*, *Tseatlak*, *Sltemten*, *Saykwlatse*, *Skerhalam*¹, *Saaha*, and *Skwayaten*. Only a few months later in another petition for a similar purpose the names are Charles *Sal-tem-ten*, Jules *Skou-kiaten*, Adolph *Kou-Keaten* and Alick (without a Native name). These are also identified as residents of Whonnock village and some if not all would have signed the first petition. Still, not more than one name in the petitions seems to be referring to the same person: *Sal-tem-ten* and *Sltemten*.

It is sometimes helps to trace individuals when given a “Christian,” first name at baptism. These were mostly French names such as Antoine, Gabriel, Pierre, Fidèle, or Achile.² An 1878 “Indian Census”³ shows Halkomelem names and “Christian” names for the men living on the Whonnock Reserve. They are listed as Fidelle *Tse.ah tluk*; Agile *Skutz.tun*; Captain *Sa lahk.wa kun*; Jim *Sin.temt.tun*; Julius *Sim.kwy.eth*; George *Ah.ah*; John *Kwess.kun*; and John *Skoit'l suk*. Again, most of the names can't be matched with those of 1868 with the possible exception of *Tse.ah tluk* (*Tseatlak*) and *Ah.ah* (*Saaha*).

After Confederation “Indian Agents” acted as enumerators to include the Native population in the federal census. They faced the same problems as the OMI fathers and created a hotchpotch of spellings, adding to the confusion by a variety of English versions of the French names given by the OMI.

The 1878 “Indian Census” included the names of Fidelle *Tse.ah tluk* and Agile *Skutz.tuna*. In 1905 Kwantlen Chief Cassimir recognized these two, “Old Borie” Achile and Chief Fidele, and their descendants, as the only true “Ho-nocks” still living on the Whonnock Reserve.⁴

“OLD BORIE”

The OMI records show that on June 6th, 1866 Achilles *Sirkoulatsa*, son of *Kouatkalat* of Whonnock was baptized in Matsqui. On that same day he married Eléonore *Krouisselevondt*, daughter of *Skrayetetletch* of Port Douglas. Achilles's age at that time is approximately 25 years.⁵ His father, known as Kolasten of Whonnock, was probably put his sign on the petitions. His son known as Achile or “Old Borie,” born around 1840, would live well into his seventies.

¹ Probably Faustin Skeyerélem, a son of Kolasten, See note 4.

² These first names received at Baptism became the surnames for their descendants, replacing the original Halkomelem names in the records.

³ RG 10 08387, Indian Census 1879, Yale to Coquitlam.

⁴ English speakers corrupted the French first names Achile and Fidèle to Agile, Ashel, Asheel, or Fidele, Fidell, Fidelle etc. For consistency the spelling Fidele (without accent) and Achile are used throughout except when quoted. Borie will be the preferred spelling for Achile's alias (?) also written Borrey, Bory, or Borrie etc.

⁵ There is also a record of the marriage of Faustin Skeyerélem, 28-year-old son of *Koualoughsten* (sp?) from Whonnock dated 6 June 1866 and, on 22 February 1873 one showing the marriage of probably a brother, Basille Colasten and Margarite. His fathers name is recorded as *Kouotlautsten* (sp?). A transcript of a selection of OMI entries includes the note: “Bacil, chief of Whonnock, 1877”

On September 5th 1866, the baptism is recorded at Mission of “Marie,” a daughter of Achile and his wife Eléonore from “camp des Honock,” the Whonnock Reserve. The OMI records show the burial of a 5- or 6-year old child of Achile, “watchman Honoc” on April 2nd 1871. In January 1878 the baptism is recorded of a three-week old daughter called Ida. The parents are Achille *Scastan* and Eleanor *Kwassiloutte*.

Eléonore may have died before 1886 when Achile, then 60, married Sophia (55). The “Indian Census” of 1887 showed that “Borie” had two children, both daughters—no names shown—and two “youth,” a boy called Louis and an unnamed sister. “Old Borie” seems to be missing from the 1881 census but in 1891 he is shown as “Ashel,” a 72-year-old man married with “Sophia” of 80 years. He is missing again from the 1901 census but reappears in the 1911 Census as 101-year-old “Borrey Asheel.”

The 1891 census does not show any offspring in his house but—this is a guess—there is a nearby household of a James “Schell.” That surname could easily be a corruption of a name pronounced “Ashel.” The 58-year-old James Schell is shown with a 21-year-old wife Louisa and two children: Stanley (2) and Mary (1).

In 1911, Borie, said to be a centenarian but probably in his seventies, shared his house with three “lodgers,” a 38-year-old woman called Felicite and her children: son Georgie (12) and daughter Susanne (10). It is not clear if these were relatives or not. It was perhaps just a convenient arrangement for the old man.

FIDELE

Somewhat more information can be gathered about Chief Fidele and his offspring. The first OMI record of the Chief was for his baptism on Christmas day 1863. His name was recorded as Fidele *Tsielsak*, a Kwantlen man of about 25 years. The OMI records of November 1871 include the baptism of Augustin, son of Fidele *Siatlark* of Whonnock and Augustine *M-Tsa*. The child Augustin may have died in infancy.

Ten years later the 1881 Canada Census shows Fidele, as a 50-year-old man listed only with his given name “Peter” married to “Susan,” age 55. They were the parents of two sons called Felix and Peter of respectively 12 and 7 years.⁶

In the 1891 Census “Peter” Fedele is a 55-year-old married man and his wife’s Native name is shown: “Metzet.” Their sons are 17-year-old Felix and 9-year-old Peter.

In 1901 now “Chief” Fedele was shown as a widower of 85 years (should be 65) and his sons Felix and Peter as 30 and 26 years old.

Lastly in the 1911 census 70-year old Chief Fidele is present with a 40-year-year-old wife Felicity.

Chief Fidele’s son Peter Fidele married Amanda Skrelia from Matsqui on September 6th 1898. The 1901 census shows the couple at the Whonnock Reserve. They are shown to have an infant daughter called Christine but a listing of the Indian Agent of that time show an infant son called Harry.⁷ Peter and his family are not listed in Whonnock in the 1911 census. It is possible that they moved away or Peter died. Notes of an interview done around 1937 mentioned Amanda’s maiden name as “George” and suggested that she was married to a second husband Dick Harry. She had a son first called Fred Fidele who was later called Fred Harry, taking the surname of his stepfather.

Peter’s older brother Felix Fedele would stay in Whonnock until his death in 1928. He was born in January 1875 and baptized on February 27th 1875 at St. Mary’s in Mission when he was a month and a half old. His parents are shown in the OMI records to be Fidele *Tsiattakre* and Augustine *Metsa*.

⁶ The ages shown here are as recorded in the Census and were obviously just guessed by the enumerator or his informant, or both.

⁷ The OMI records of August 1904 show the baptism of a son of Peter Fedele called Eli Francis, born in Whonnock. The name of the mother is listed as Catherine “whose maiden name was Jany.” It is not clear if the father was Peter Sr. or his son.

The 1901 Canada census shows Felix as 30 years of age and married to 26-year-old "Isabella" with an infant son called Charles, who may have died in infancy.⁸ Around 1902 Felix and Isabelle had a daughter called Amy and in September 1904 they had another son they called James.

The 1911 census shows a 30-year-old woman called "Mary" as Felix's wife, but that is probably a mistake. The family included James, then 10 years of age.⁹

Virginia Catherine, born 14 January 1912, was baptized that same month, a daughter of Felix and Isabelle, here called Isabella James.¹⁰

Another daughter called Lucy Ann was born around 1915 and it is thought that she later married a man from "up north."¹¹

Virginia Catherine died in Victoria BC on 16 January 1931 of pulmonary tuberculosis. Her death certificate shows her age as 12 years of age but since she was born in 1912 she would have been around 19 years in 1931. Her father, Felix Fedele, had died a few years earlier, in 1928, of the same disease that was so widespread and so lethal.

Felix's sons James and Robert were the last male Fideles living at the Whonnock Reserve. Robert drowned in the Fraser at Albion in April 1937. The *Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Gazette* reported that the 16-year-old had been helping on the fishing boat of his brother-in-law Dominic Gabriel¹² when he slipped, and fell into the water.

A just as tragic an event ended the life of James, a bachelor all his live. He was apparently asleep and died of smoke inhalation when his house at the Whonnock Reserve caught fire on November 16th 1951.

⁸ Infant mortality was high with tuberculosis as the main cause but also the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 had a major impact. The following footnotes show the names of two girls and two boys, children of Felix and Isabella, who may never have reached maturity.

⁹ Also in the household are daughters Celestine (8) and Rosie (6). Nothing more is known about the two girls.

¹⁰ In September 1913 Felix and Isabelle are mentioned as the parents at the baptism of an infant called Frances Xavier, born 17 August 1913. No other records found about this child.

¹¹ A son, called Robert was born around 1921. Again, we have no further information about what happened to him.

¹² Amy married Dominic Gabriel on June 4th 1922.

1891

128	Fedele	Peter	M	55	M	-
	Fedele	Metzet	F	60	M	W
	Fedele	Felix	M	17	-	S
	Fedele	Peter	M	9	-	S

1901

36	Fedari	Chief	M	85		Head
	Fedari	Felix	M	30	M	Head
	Fedari	Isabella	F	26	M	W
	Fedari	Charles	M	1	S	S
	Fedari	Peter	M	26	M	Head
	Fedari	Maud	F	22	M	wife
	Fedari	Christine	F	1	S	D