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Louis Pictou Mi'kmaq Manuscript

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ca.1903

1 vol. (140 p.) (0.1 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 342 bd



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The Pictou family were prominent members of the Bear River Band of the Mi'kmaq nation in Nova Scotia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Notably, Chief Benjamin Pictou (1830-1931) lived for over a century, witnessing the evolution of the Mi'kmaq economy from hunting, fishing, and trapping to include guiding and attempts at agriculture, and was listed by the anthropologist Frank G. Speck in 1922 as having a hunting allocation near Sporting Lake, southwest of the Bear River.

An extensive, unidentified manuscript written in Mi'kmaq (Micmac) language, using the "hieroglyphic" (pictographic) writing system. At one time, the manuscript was apparently in the possession of Louis Pictou, an "Indian guide" on the Bear River, who

stating that the manuscript was written by his "ancestors."

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Background on Louis Pictou

The Pictou family were prominent members of the Bear River Band of the Mi'kmaq nation in Nova Scotia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Notably, Chief Benjamin Pictou (1830-1931) of Lequille, N.S., lived for over a century, witnessing the evolution of the Mi'kmaq economy from hunting, fishing, and trapping to include guiding and attempts at agriculture. He was listed in the anthropologist, Frank G. Specks' study, *Beothuk and Micmac* (1922) as having a hunting allocation near Sporting Lake, southwest of the Bear River. Eight of Pictou's children survived to adulthood and numerous grandchildren followed.

Mi'kmaq is among the few languages indigenous to North America to have developed a writing system prior to European arrival.

Scope of collection

This undated and as-yet unidentified manuscript is written in the Mi'kmaq (Micmac) writing system and contains at least two texts, written dos-a-dos. A loose page laid into the front of the manuscript includes records of the births and premature deaths of Joseph William Pictou (1909-1910) and Joseph St. Clair Peters (1907-1909) and a possible ownership inscription dated 1903 of Mrs. Sarah Ann Pictou, Indian Hill [Reserve], Bear River, N.S.

Although the extended Pictou family appear to be involved in the provenance of the manuscript, its precise authorship remains uncertain. The name Sarah Ann Pictou coincides with a daughter of Benjamin Pictou (1862 or 1864-1959), however the inscription clearly notes her as Mrs., suggesting someone who married into the family, whereas Benjamin's daughter was married Joseph Fossie well prior to 1903. An accompanying newspaper clipping from approximately 1930, but undated, indicates that the manuscript was owned by Louis Pictou, who may be the son Chief Silvi Joseph Pictou and grandson of Benjamin. In the article, Louis is identified as an "Indian guide" on the Bear River, and states that the manuscript was written by his "ancestors."

Written on printed lined paper and bound in with red cloth-covered boards, the appearance of the manuscript is consistent with a date from the latter quarter of the nineteenth century.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Provenance not recorded.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, July 2015.

Digitized content

The Pictou manuscript has been digitized and is available through SCUA's online repository, *Credo*.

Bibliography

Ricker, Darlene A., *L'sitkuk: The story of the Bear River Mi'kmaw community*. Roseway : Lockeport, N.S., 1997.

Speck, Frank G., *Beothuk and Micmac*. New York : Museum of the American Indian, 1922.

Language:

Mi'kmaq

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