

ANISHINAABEK RESEARCH – July 17 2010

Prepared by Aandeg Skelly [first name pronounced 'on-deck']

Although relatively new to genealogy, I have an extensive knowledge of the Anishinaabe Bands in the Thunder Bay and Rainy River Region. My husband is a member of Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek reserve and Ojibway is his first language.

As we are located in Northern Ontario, I will use the word "Anishinaabek" (pronounced just the way it's written) to refer to the type of research I will do. Many are confused as what term to use, Indians, First Nations, Aboriginal's. To me, it seems only right, to use the word that they use to refer to themselves. Although, Anishinaabek is an Ojibway word meaning 'The People,' I've noticed its use among the Cree, Chippewa, Minnominee and Pottowatmi as well. Sometimes it is spelled with a "g" on the end instead of a "k". If it is spelled Anishinaabe it means one person, and Anishinaabek it is plural.

There are many challenges to doing Anishinaabek genealogical research.

- being a nomadic people with an Oral history (not written)
- having one name and not a last name to group families
- traditionally changing names throughout life – having nick names
- willingly changing names as priests entered their area and baptised them, or where the North West Company (the priests and Fur traders were mostly French) and Hudson's Bay post managers wrote up their fur ledger credits (mostly English/Scottish) giving their interpretation of a name or just a new name they could write and pronounce
- understanding that in some cases the baptism date was recorded as a birth date even though the person was a married adult
- once Treaties were drawn up and the Indian Agent wrote the Band Pay Lists (the Indian Agents were mostly English/Scottish) again changing names to suit themselves
- being sent away from families to Residential Schools and having to pick English names and losing touch with family
- being adopted to non-Anishinaabek families
- INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) not doing research unless you know your reserve
- Church of England's policy to only proceed on research when two names are given
- Translating Anishinaabe names into English

People have approached me, having hit a dead end with INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). They may know that their family lived at a certain reserve but INAC

doesn't have any record of them. Each reserve has Pay Lists starting in the mid 1800's when treaties were signed and although relatives may have lived at one reserve they may have been paid at their original reserve. Also, understanding that not all Anishinaabe had a treaty and are therefore not on Pay Lists.

The brochure "Tracing your Ancestors in Canada" put out by Library and Archives Canada refers to Indian Affairs RG10 records. If anyone has tried to read these Pay List records, you would agree how frustrating it is. Here is an example of a record. Besides being very difficult to read, note that it shows that a man would have a wife and children, but doesn't give their names. If the husband dies she is then referred to as his widow, still no name. When a child died, all that is written is "child died".

Assiniboia Band. Paid at <i>Assiniboia</i>							
No.	NAME.	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876
0	Best Bird	15	17	15	15	56	200 14
1	Head eagle						5
11	Head with new head	1	2	2		5	25 5
42	Head with new head	1	1	2		5	25 6
31	Head with new head	1	1	4	1	7	25 7
64	Head with new head	1	1			2	10
13	Head with new head	1	1			2	26 2
14	Head with new head	1				1	5 1
15	Head with new head	1	1	2	3	7	25 7
16	Head with new head	1				1	5 1
17	Head with new head						
23	Head with new head	1	1			2	10 2
27	Head with new head	1				1	5 1
36	Head with new head	1	2	1	2	7	25 7
53	Head with new head	1				1	5 1
44	Head with new head	1	1	1		2	15 4
55	Head with new head	1	1	2		5	25 4
37	Head with new head	1	1	1		4	20 2
48	Head with new head	1	1			2	10 2
49	Head with new head	1	1	5		4	40 9
63	Head with new head	1	1			2	10
19	Head with new head	1	1			3	15 5
56	Head with new head	1	1			2	10 5
60	Head with new head	1	1			2	10 5
24	Head with new head	1	1			2	10 2
26	Head with new head	1	1			3	15 5
		30	36	36	34	1	155 7 15 14

I would like to say miigwetch (thank you) to the volunteers who transcribed the 1901 and 1911 Canada Census through Automated Genealogy. They did an incredible job. Here is just an example:

7	65	Naysumaycabowecke	F	Daughter	S	20	▯
8	65	Apanayconinck	M	Son	S	18	▯
9	<u>66</u>	Waysueeskonnerng	M	Head	M	42	▯
10	66	Okeewaykaygue?	F	Wife	M	37	▯
11	<u>67</u>	Neenapeek	F	Head	W	29	▯
12	67	Aquaynapananck	F	Daughter	S	11	▯
13	67	Awanaquot	M	Son	S	9	▯

Unfortunately, the Census was only taken in the most accessible areas, thus leaving out a very large area thickly populated by Anishinaabek.

My initial interest in Anishinaabek Research came from helping my husband with his family genealogy. Although Father Maurice's research was a key component it only covered the Roman Catholic portion. I consider myself fortunate to have spent some time with Father Maurice and am greatly appreciative of the life work he undertook on behalf of the Anishinaabek.

Next, because of the research I was doing, I have assisted a couple of Bands after they had initiated a Land Claim. The Land Claim project exposed me to many documents showing the families and history of this area, including Hudson Bay Records and Band Pay Lists. Finally, by organizing and attending cultural/spiritual activities on Lake Nipigon (Animbiigoo Zaagig'gun) like Jackfish Island Cultural Days, I have built a good knowledge and working relationship with not only local bands but also their governing bodies.