

*The Lineage
of
Chief Aeneas*

A History of People and Place



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May 2005

There is a mountain peak in the northern Swan Mountains named after Chief Aeneas of the Kootenai. It was a popular name among Indians of the Flathead area, was carried through the lineage of Kootenai chiefs in various forms, and has alternatively been spelled Eneas, Aneas and Inneas. [1] It is reported to be derived from an attempt to render in English the Flathead pronunciation of the French name Ignace. [2]

The lineage reported here centers around Chief Eneas Paul, chief of the Dayton Creek Kootenai, believed to have been one of the signers of the Hell Gate Treaty of 1855. It begins with his father, Young Ignace, an eastern Iroquois moved west, who journeyed to St. Louis in 1839 to bring back with him Jesuit missionary Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet. It leaves off with the death of his son and last formal chief of the area Kootenai, Chief Koostatah Big Knife, in 1942. It is of necessity a story of how the Iroquois brought Christianity to western Indians in advance of Lewis and Clark and of how the Indians contended with the European settlement that would soon follow.

Young Ignace (Iroquois Ignace, Petit Ignace, Ignace Chapped Lips, Big Knife I)

Young Ignace was among a group of some 24 Iroquois who settled among the Flathead in the Bitterroot Valley sometime between 1812 and 1828. Having been preceded by other Iroquois converted to the Roman Catholic faith prior to coming west with the fur trade, the group was led by Ignace Lamoose and thought to have comprised a separate migration perhaps encouraged by reports from earlier Iroquois fur traders. Ignace Lamoose, also known as Old Ignace to distinguish himself from the younger Ignace in his group, married into the Flathead tribe and taught them numerous Christian beliefs and customs.

In the summer of 1835, Old Ignace and two of his sons journeyed over 2,000 miles to St. Louis in search of a Jesuit priest to bring back to the Flathead. Assured that the church would send a priest if possible, they returned home the following spring. When no priest arrived after a year's time, Old Ignace, three Flatheads and a Nez Percé set out again for St. Louis. They were all killed by Sioux before reaching St. Louis; at Ash Hollow on the North Platte.

Two years later, in the summer of 1839, Young Ignace set out for St. Louis with Pierre Gaucher, another Iroquois. They were assured that a priest would be sent the following spring. Pierre returned home with the news while Young Ignace stayed until spring, when he accompanied Father Pierre Jean DeSmet to the land of the Flathead. DeSmet travelled back to St. Louis, then returned in 1841 to found the St. Mary's Mission in the Bitterroot Valley, the first in a series of missions to the northwest Indians. [3] Young Ignace

also travelled with DeSmet during his visit with the Crow Indians in the summer of 1842.

Young Ignace was reported to be a “restless wanderer”, whose knowledge of the mountains proved valuable to white explorers. Lieutenant John Mullan credited Young Ignace with showing him the pass over the Coeur d’Alene Mountains through which he built the first wagon road over the Northern Rockies from Fort Benton to Walla Walla: the Mullan Road.

It is reported that Young Ignace had two children, died about 1880, and was buried in an old Indian cemetery near Arlee. [4] Other records of genealogy suggest that Young Ignace had three children. [5]

Chief Aeneas Paul (Eneas Paul Big Knife, Big Knife II, Koostatah I)

Chief Aeneas Paul was born half-Iroquois in 1828. He inherited the name Big Knife, a name which had been given by the Pend d’Oriettes to his father, the Iroquois Young Ignace. [6] His mother’s name was One Hoof. She was later called Mary. [7] Aeneas Paul was Chief of the Dayton Creek Kootenai (also called the Flathead Lake or Somers-Dayton-Elmo band) [8, 9], during a time when a treaty was negotiated with the federal government and tensions between the Indians and early settlers ran high.

Chief Aeneas and other chiefs had to contend with encroachments on their reservation, which was established by the July 16, 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate. While it is reported that Chief Aeneas Paul signed the 1855 treaty, none of his known

names appear on it. It is supposed that either he signed using the name Paul See or Gun Flint, or was not eligible to sign for the Kootenai because of his Iroquois blood, even though he had used his influence in the negotiations. [10] After a more major Kootenai chief, Chief Michelle, signed the 1855 treaty, he returned to Canada and Aeneas Paul rose from his position as a sub-chief to be his successor. [11] By another, perhaps conflicting account, Aeneas Paul became the chief when his predecessor, Chief Baptiste, was killed by the Blackfeet near the site of present-day Hungry Horse dam in 1876. [12]

In 1882, the Northern Pacific Railroad petitioned for, and on September 2 was ceded, a 200 foot by 53 mile right of way for a railway across the reservation. Chief Arlee asked the assistant attorney general, Joseph McCammon, for one million dollars for the right of way and, when McCammon dismissed it out of hand, Chief Aeneas complained: "You [white men] told us that after awhile we would be intelligent and rich like white men. We are poor now. We try to have whites assist us, and they won't because we are Indians." Chief Arlee said:

We only want a fair bargain. . . . My forefathers, our chiefs . . . were like men with veils over their heads; they could not see. . . . When Governor Stevens arrived and he began talking about this part of the country, they had no idea of their country; they were stupid. They signed the treaty. This reservation was offered by the man who made the treaty [Stevens] and we are holding onto it. [13]

McCammon finally obtained the chiefs' consent by promising to pay \$16,000 to the tribes and \$7,625 to indi-

vidual Indians whose farms the railway would cross. He also promised to urge the government to move the northern boundary of the reservation from the north-south midpoint of Flathead Lake to the Canadian border. This would include an area suitable for hunting and fishing where at that time only eight white families squatted in a group at the head of Flathead Lake. Nothing was ever done to adjust the northern border and white settlement of the Flathead Valley increased rapidly. [14]

As white settlement continued and tensions grew, Chief Aeneas and other area chiefs demonstrated a remarkable ability to keep their people in check and at peace. It was not without harsh words, however, that Aeneas responded when faced with ever-increasing white settlement, increased illegal trafficking in liquor, a transfer of power from the Chiefs to newly-appointed reservation court judges, and a prohibition on the use of the whip as punishment, even though it was earlier introduced by white teachers at the mission schools. When during an 1889 council Indian agent Peter Ronan declared the debauchery and drunkenness among the Kootenai as the worst in his memory, Chief Aeneas responded:

Michel [Revais], tell the agent when the Great Father first sent him to us, he was a much younger man than he is today. His children have grown up around him on our reservation and I see one of his boys with him who was born in our country.

I was also young and strong - I looked like a chief - I felt like a chief. In my youth our nation was at war with a great many tribes, and the last of our enemies that we made peace with was the Blackfeet. I was the

war chief of my tribe and was called Big Knife. Today we are at peace with all of our enemies. The Blackfeet are our friends, and some of their children are at school with our children at the mission.

Until within a few years, there were few white people near our reservation. Now they surround us on all sides, thick almost as the leaves of the forest. When you came here there was only one white family living at Horse Plains. No white people at all at Thompson Falls; no miners in the Coeur d'Alenes; and where the big city of Spokane Falls now stands I remember of but two white families living there . . . In the days I speak of, my young men could get but very little whiskey - none knew the taste of it but those who hung around your settlements. It is different today! They have acquired the habit and love the influence of whiskey, and in spite of your laws can procure all they can pay for.

In the old times I would take my whip in hand and chastise any of my Indians that broke the law either by getting drunk or committing adultery, or any other crime, and they feared me and my authority. . . . I could control my children then - I call my tribe children. Take the whip from my hand, I have no control. We have no good jails like the white people - no other mode of punishment in our camp, and the wild and dissolute young men laugh at talk when it is not followed by punishment. The heart of a white man must be very small if he cannot see the necessity of authority by a chief in an Indian camp; and when I lose the use of the whip I lose all power to control my people. [15]

One time of particularly high tension between settlers and Indians was when a son of Chief Aeneas was slain by a white man. According to one of the settlers' versions, the son was crazy drunk and attempting to break into the Rich hotel when he was shot by a neighboring white man. The story told the Indians, however, was that the son was killed in a brawl with another Indian. It is reported the Indians grew increasingly restless while Chief Aeneas questioned witnesses all the following day, learning nothing of reliable fact, and the Indians quieted only after some one hundred settlers armed themselves in a group. [16]

Other versions of the story, however, credit Chief Aeneas with "admirable restraint at this and all times", report that this was the second son he had lost at the hands of settlers, and hint that his sons were driven into doing whatever the settlers held against them. [17] According to Frank Linderman, a man who came to the Flathead Valley in 1885 and documented the ways and stories of the Kootenai, "Aeneas . . . was a strong man, and at least twice held his people in check when the young bloods among them were clamoring for revenge against the white settlers in the Flathead valley [who had killed his son]. Even then, when he must have found it difficult to control his own wrath, he counselled peace, and smothering his pride, held the Kootenai tribe from running amuck." [18]

Chief Aeneas Paul is also credited with having been an interpreter to Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, whom his father Young Ignace had brought to Montana to bring the Christian faith to the Indian people. [19] The Indians' request for and aid to the Jesuit priests was mindfully undertaken in light of one of their elders, Shining Shirt, whose prophecy foretold of a time when "men wearing long black dresses . . . will teach

you about ?Amotqen, the good spirit who sits on top, and about ?emtep, the evil one who sits at the bottom.” [20] Aeneas Paul’s aid to DeSmet, however, did not necessarily carry over to other white men. As one historian concludes: “Chief Eneas was no lover of Whites and on one recorded occasion treated White men with contempt, but he was respected by all responsible citizens for his devotion to his people . . .” [21]

Chief Aeneas Paul had six children by his wife, Woman’s Cry of Triumph (also known as Suzette): Samuel, Pierre, Kathlean, Marian, Isaac and Kustata (Koostatah). Kathlean and her husband Kilowatt (an English twist on his Indian name), had a number of children, with several dying in infancy and a son named Phillip surviving. Marian and her husband Louis Broken Leg had a son they named Peter Pierre Broken Leg. Isaac and his wife Suzette had a daughter named Mary. Records show that son Samuel was killed at age 17 and son Pierre “died young.” [22] The family line eventually came to have a considerable intermixture of white blood, including families such as Finley, Ashley and Gravelle. [23]

Chief Isaac Big Knife (Isaac)

When Chief Aeneas Paul died about 1901, his son Isaac became chief and was called Chief Isaac Big Knife. He died soon after, in 1902. [24]

Chief Koostatah Big Knife (Kustata, Koostatah II)

Koostatah II was born to Chief Aeneas Paul and Woman's Cry of Triumph on May 5, 1856. He followed his father and brother as Chief of the Kootenai when Chief Isaac Big Knife died in 1902. Following Isaac's death, Isaac's wife Suzette became the wife of Chief Koostatah Big Knife. They had no children. [25, 26]

In 1935, Congress passed the Indian Reservation Act, which allowed tribes the option to incorporate and govern themselves through a tribal council. The Salish and Kootenai chose to do so, recognizing that the Act also dissolved formal chieftainships. Hence, Martin Charlo was the last formal chief of the Salish and Koostatah Big Knife was the last formal chief of the Kootenai. They served as honorary members of the tribal council and, when they died, there were to be no more chiefs.

Chief Koostatah Big Knife died on October 4, 1942, in Dayton. A requiem high mass was held in his home by the Reverend John O'Kennedy on October 7. Father O'Kennedy used the opportunity to praise both Koostatah and his father, Aeneas Paul:

It was largely through his father's aid, acting as an interpreter to the great missionary, DeSmet, that the Kootenai Indians embraced the faith and it was largely through the dead chief's influence that the tribe has kept until today strong and living the faith that DeSmet preached to them. [27]

In spite of the Indian Reservation Act, Baptiste Mathias, born in 1879, had been appointed subchief to Koostatah for the purpose of continuing the traditional Kootenai ceremonies. He became full chief on Koostatah's death and reigned until his own death in 1966. [28]

A Return to the Land

With even this brief history of several generations of an Iroquois-Kootenai family and lineage of chiefs, a walk through the northern Swan Mountains takes on a new meaning and perspective. Along the foot of Mount Aeneas runs a trail leading south to Broken Leg Mountain. To the north, high in the peaks, Lamoose Lake lies nestled at the foot of green meadow and rocky scree. In the eastern distance is Mount Baptiste.

This is not only a land of exquisite beauty, it is also a land where Iroquois, Kootenai, Salish and people of mixed descent lived out their lives according to the prophecy of their elders and were forever changed by their realization of it. The names ascribed to these places serve as a reminder that we too are afforded the opportunity to meet our destiny with grace and integrity.

Notes

1. Johnson, Olga Weydemeyer. 1969. Flathead and Kootenay: The Rivers, the Tribes and the Region's Traders. The Arther H. Clark Company. Glendale, California. Page 345.
2. Ewers, John C. 1948. Gustavus Sohon's Portraits of Flathead and Pend d'Oreille Indians, 1854. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Volume 110, Number 7, November 26, 1948. Smithsonian Institution. Page 60.
3. Ewers, John C. 1963. Iroquois Indians in the Far West. Montana, the magazine of western history. Spring 1963. Page 8.
4. Note 2, page 61.
5. Genealogy records on file with the Salish and Kootenai College Library, Pablo, Montana, Page 19; and Harry Holbert Turney-High's "Ethnography of the Kutenai." Memoirs of the Am. Anthropological Assoc. Number 56. 1941.
6. Note 1, page 345.
7. Note 5, page 19.
8. River, Celeste. 1997. In her Bison Books introduction to Frank B. Linderman's "Kootenai Why Stories".
9. Johnson, Olga Weydemeyer. 1957. Last Uprising. News article in The Spokesman Review. January 6, 1957.
10. Note 1, footnote to page 346.
11. Char-Koosta News. 1958. The Kootenai Hereditary Chiefs. Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Flathead Agency, Montana. July, 1958. Vol. 3, No. 9.
12. Note 1, page 345.
13. Fahey, John. The Flathead Indians. University of Oklahoma Press : Norman. Pages 228-229.

14. Note 13, page 229.
15. Note 13, pages 244-245.
16. Note 9.
17. Note 9.
18. Note 8, citing Frank Linderman's memoirs and letters.
19. The Daily Missoulian. 1942. Great Chief Goes to Rest in Faith He Long Fostered. Missoula, Montana. October 19, 1942.
20. Flathead Cultural Committee. 1993. A Brief History of the Flathead Tribes. Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. St. Ignatius, Montana. Page 7.
21. Note 1, page 346.
22. Note 5, Turney-High, pages 135-137.
23. Note 1, footnote to page 346.
24. Note 11.
25. Note 11.
26. Note 5, genealogy records, pages 16-19.
27. Note 19.
28. Memorial stone in the Dayton, Montana cemetery on Black Lake Road.

Written
May 2005

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This booklet is published and distributed by the
nonprofit:

Swan View Coalition, Inc.
3165 Foothill Road
Kalispell, Montana
59901

406-755-1379

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Cover photo of Chief Aeneas Paul
courtesy of
Northwest Montana Historical Society

Printed on Recycled Paper