

Rawdon was “a Devil of a Place” for Settler Michel Nicolas and his Indigenous Kin

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The dedication mass for the Roman Catholic chapel at Rawdon, on 21 September 1834, was described by A VISITOR AT RAWDON in the (Montreal) *Vindicator*, 26 -09-1834 and in the *Canadian Advertiser* of 03-10-1834. The occasion was of great interest because it established a parish church for Irish and English speaking Roman Catholics, who at that time comprised nearly half of the population of the township. The story provides a view of the recently founded community, its customs and traditions and for the author, the surprise was the presence of an Indigenous couple, who lived in the township.

Despite many years of work with Rawdon’s history, I had never encountered an acknowledgement that there were non European residents at Rawdon, only general remarks that Indigenous people had trails through the bush. This newspaper account places them in the historical record. The research that follows suggests there were two or three individuals at Rawdon from almost the time it was officially opened to settlement in 1820 and that shortly, other Indigenous settlers followed them.

The language used in the 1834 stories is not acceptable to readers today but it reflects the thinking and usage of the day. From his comments, ‘a visitor at Rawdon’ was apparently familiar with Jean Jacques Rousseau, the 18th-century Enlightenment philosopher and his idea of the noble savage. Rousseau, believed that original “man” was free from sin, appetite or the concept of right and wrong, and that those deemed to be “savages” were not brutal but noble.

‘A visitor at Rawdon’ describes the chapel as “modest yet beautiful” and the service was attended by young and old, “groups of persons issuing from every part of the forest generally on foot” but some in vehicles of every sort. At 11 o’clock there were 600 people for the mass, followed by an excellent band of amateurs who struck up [*St.*] *Patrick’s Day in the Morning*; the band and choir gave several fine pieces of music at proper intervals. In attendance were Louis-Olivier Deligny who served the parish 1832-1835 and was succeeded by Roderick Ryder, 1835-1836. Both vicars were from St-Jacques-de-l’Achigan. Mr. Deligny was too tired from the extensive preparations to preach a sermon, to the disappointment of ‘a visitor at Rawdon.’ Much praise is awarded the young pastor who is much loved by his congregation and “highly respected by all denominations, a concourse of whom were present.” A handsome collection was taken by a young lady “like an Angel from Heaven” for whom “purses flew open by *themselves*.” “What gave interest ... was the appearance of a richly clad Indian and his squaw. The beadle had them placed on chairs immediately opposite the Altar and every attention was paid to them, the devotion they manifested contrasted strangely with their wild dress – there was in the man’s look something which bespoke his consciousness of his being from the race of those who were once the Lords of the Soil which the white men now possess. I was informed after mass that he was a good man and a great Hunter and sober in his habits & the only red man in those parts. Nieu his wife was a peaceable good creature. [In all official and church documents, she is named Marie, probably her Catholic baptismal name. The writer seems to have learned that Nieu was her name, in her own language].

After mass and Vespers, which were said at the same time, our worthy Priest had prepared a good repast for people at a distance in which honour many of the sons of Old Erin, Citizens of Rawdon, partook, among whom was Michel the Indian Prince and his wife and A VISITOR AT RAWDON.”

I believe that “Michel, the Indian prince” was Michel Nicolas, accompanied by his wife Marie. I found him later on the ‘Township of Rawdon: Rawdon & Village Patents, 1852’ from *Greffe de l’Arpenteur Général du Québec*. It states that Michel Nicolas was “authorized to occupy” the SE ½ of Lot 7 of the 11th Range (and possibly the NW ½ as well). The date is not marked, only “O.C. 2338”. In the same registry, Lot 6 of the 11th Range is marked “Indians”, with no further information. The 1840s Holtby township map attaches ‘Mitch’ and ‘Mitchell’ to these locations, which is explained by the research that follows.

To whom did “Indians” refer? There is strong evidence that a small Malecite community existed at Rawdon for a number of years and events for them, in the parish registers of the Catholic churches at Rawdon and St-Jacques, are included below.

My friend Guillaume Petit of Joliette¹ directed me and other members of *la Société d’histoire de Rawdon*, to the files of the Office of the Secretary of Indian Affairs for Lower Canada and Canada East² and see endnotes 3 and 4. The Indian Affairs secretary, Duncan C. Napier (c. 1788 – 1865), had been the resident agent at Montreal 1840 – 1857. A conscientious administrator, he attempted to be thorough and fair when administering Indian-white relations in a department whose roots lay in the province’s French past. He maintained the Indian Department’s status quo in Lower Canada but the system was totally unsuited to deal with conflicts with the parallel Crown land system for incoming British settlers. Napier’s retirement in 1857 coincided with Britain’s retreat from Indian affairs in Canada and marked the end of an anachronistic administrative system.

In the records of Indian Affairs³, we read that in the period 1836 – 1839, free title was promised to Michel Nicolas and his brother John Nicolas by Lord Gosford (then governor in chief, British North America). Files dated at Montreal, 06-06-1839, make a clear case and inform us that Michel Nicolas of “River St John” has occupied [since at least] spring 20-05-1836, Rawdon Lot 10 [sic], Eleventh Range, of which he has ten acres cleared and a house. The brothers signed the documents with their marks.

James Hughes, the Superintendent of Indians Affairs for the District of Montreal, was present at the 1836 Gosford interview concerning the brothers’ Rawdon land, which they had for “17 or 20 years & that there were people who wanted to deprive them of their lots without having titles for them”. Gosford told them they might remain there and that one of them should come to Quebec and his Excellency would order that titles be given them.

William Holtby (who was later Township secretary treasurer) wrote on 9 December 1839 that as a surveyor he had known Michel Nicolas for 16 years “as a resident settler”... “at which time no other settler occupied the land and no improvements made by any other than himself”. Holtby arrived in Rawdon as a settler himself c. 1823 and knew Nicolas “as a peaceable man of good character.” He had surveyed for him four years before (c. 1835), numbers 5 and 6 in the Eleventh Range also, for his brother, at lot number 5, 100 acres. It gives me a certain satisfaction that Holtby, my maternal 3X great grandfather knew and worked for Michel Nicolas as he struggled to have his claim recognized.

William Rogers, a civil servant, wrote: “An Indian friend of mine ... sent a petition ... for land on which he has been a squatter for 19 years” and can have it under Lord Durham’s ordinance but must pay for it. “As far as the Indian is concerned this is testament to taking it away for, he has no money.” The superintendent (Hughes) confirms that Lord Gosford told the Indian that there would be no charge. Rogers wrote a letter to a superior, to see what could be done and adds “as you know Rawdon is a devil of a place & the poor Indian is annoyed in all ways for want of his title.”

The humble petition of Michael and John Nicholas [sic], Malecite Indians, to Charles P. Thompson, the new Governor in Chief states that they have resided in Rawdon “above 19 years” and “they have been driven successfully from the different cabins they resided in ... about six years back they situated on two lots then unoccupied and without any improvements and have built on them & cleared & cultivated ... they paid Mr. Holsby [sic Holtby] schoolmaster and surveyor to survey” ... “his certificate attached” as referenced above. The Petition was signed by Michel Nicolas, using aboriginal syllabics, and John Nicolas made his mark on 23-03-1840 and this is followed in the file by the official copy issued at Montreal, again with their signatures, 24-03-1841.

But this was not the end of the delay for the brothers and their struggle continued. Edward MacGie (aka McGie), a prominent settler, then Crown Land Agent for Rawdon, wrote, 15-07-1840, in answer to a letter from Indian Affairs concerning “two Indians”. MacGie says Mitchel [sic] Nickles [sic] of Lot 7, 11th Range is in dispute with Carney, a commuted pensioner “that received an order for said lot” and “if not mistaken Mitchel will hold the lot”. “As to the other Indian, he claimed a lot preferred to Murphy.” He left this lot and resided at 11th, lot 6. MacGie “had no time to visit the lot in question.”

The 1842 “*census of Indians of the Township of Rawdon & Chertsey*”⁴ establishes that the indigenous settlers named in the church extracts, which follow, were residents.

	M	F	m 1-10 yrs, f 1-10 yrs		48 in family	
Michel Nicolas	1	2			3	Amalacete
Pierre Nicolas	1	1	1	2	5	Amalacete
Joachim Denis	2	2	1		5	Amalacete
Jacque [sic] Laniere	3	4	1	2	10	Abenaquois *
Ignace Picard	1	1	2	1	5	Huron
Thomas Laporte	1	1		2	4	Amalacete
Jacques Bissonne 1			1	2		Amalacete
Pierre Joseph ⁵	2	1	1	2	5 [sic 6]	Abenaquois *
Paul Joseph	2	1			3	Amalacete
Jean Baptiste	1	1		1	3	Amalacete
Louis Dofinée Dauphine1		1			2	Abenaquois *

* Abenaki: were Algonquian-speaking people of the Northeastern Woodlands of Canada and USA as were the Amalacete /Malecite

Some Events for these Families

Transcriptions of events taken from *Société De Généalogie De Lanaudière* differ slightly from those found in the Drouin Index in Ancestry.ca. The Indigenous communicants were identified by the priest (each used his own language) as “Indian” “translated as Sauvage” in the French of the day. The church record is also confused, when the priest had difficulty determining the surnames of individuals, although many of them spoke French and some could write their names in syllabic script. In the following extracts, it has not always been possible to determine the correct names and relationships but it is clear that this was a close-knit community. The name of the Indigenous settler, Michel Nicolas, and others with that surname

are represented. One wonders, are Nicolas Joseph, Joseph Nicolas and Peter / Pierre Nicolas one man? Is one of these men Michel's brother John/Jean? Some basic French terms have not been translated.

- 29 February 1836 – *baptisme* of Michel Nicolas *né de légitime mariage de Jacques Michel le 'sauvage' et Magdeleine Pierre Michel de cette paroisse* (St-Jacques). It is clear the parents are indigenous and Michel the surname. The mother's birthname "Pierre" is a surname used by other Indigenous settlers. The sponsors were parishioners Louis Leblanc and Marie-Louise Dugas of St-Jacques-L'Achigan, where the baptism took place.
- 15 October 1837 – Father Denis McReavy baptized, at Rawdon, "Peter Michael born the twenty fourth of September last of the lawful marriage of Peter Nicholas [sic Pierre Nicolas] and Genevieve Lanier [sic Launier], Indians residing in Rawdon" The sponsors Michael St. Nicholas [sic Michel Nicolas] and Sarah Mullin [daughter of Irish settler Robert Mullen of Lot 10 N/ 8th Range. She married John McAbby, in 1849, an Irish settler at Lot 10 N, 8th Range, in 1861]. The child is named (Pierre Michel Nicolas) for his father and presumed uncle. Lanier or Launière is an Amalacete surname.
- 3 April 1838 McReavy "interred in the cemetery of this parish the body of Peter St. Nicholas [sic Pierre Nicolas] who departed this life the day before yesterday aged six months & seventeen days" child of Pierre Nicolas and "Genevieve Lanier [sic] Indians". Witnessed by Michel Nicolas and Louis Archambault [aka Jean-Louis Archambault of Lot 4, 11th Range, a *Canadien* neighbour, with family at l'Assomption].
- 19 November 1839 - François "Sovage" baptized, the son of Pierre Joseph and Louise Guilmet of Rawdon, sponsors were Joseph Mercier and Ursule Gagnon.
- 1 March 1840 - baptized at St-Jacques, Jean-Baptiste Nicolas, fils de Joseph Nicolas et Thérèse Pierre Joseph de Rawdon. He died at Montreal aged 10 August 1841 and buried the following day at Notre Dame Church, Montreal, parents were of the parish.
- Charles Picard of Rawdon, 8 days, was baptized 6 June 1840 son of Ignace Picard and Marie Pierre Joseph of this parish: *parrain* Thomas Laporte, *marraine*, Magdeline Pierre Joseph.
- 20 May 1841 baptized at St-Jacques - Marie Louise Joseph, born 15 April, the daughter of Nicolas Joseph "Sauvage" and Geneviève Lornière [sic Lanier] of Rawdon, witnesses Magloire Granger and Dina Marion. Magloire Granger and his wife Dina Marion were members of *Société des Défricheurs de St-Jacques de la Nouvelle-Acadie* founded in 1848 at St-Jacques to support colonization in the Township of Chertsey and later were neighbours of Michel Nicolas at Chertsey, Lot 19, Fifth Range.
- 18 January 1842 – Fr. Joseph Vallée baptized Marie Scholastique Nicolas, born 12 December 1841 "du légitime mariage de Joseph Nicolas 'sauvage' et de Therese Salicorne [sic not legible] of the mission of Rawdon, *parrain* Jerome Picard, *marraine* Ursule Gagnon.
- 18 January 1842 after three bans of marriage were read at Rawdon and St-Jacques, "Louis Dauphini 'sauvage' domicilié à Rawdon" major son of the late Medard Dauphini of the St Francis Mission⁶ and Agnes Convaque of Rawdon and Marie Scholastique Picard, minor daughter of Pierre Picard, farmer and Hélène Zacharie, were married at Rawdon, with permission of Bishop Ignace Bourget and witnessed by Joachim Denis, Paul Lelievre, Amable Picard and Pierre Picard. This couple were not Malecites; the groom was perhaps Abenaki and the bride Huron.
- 23 October 1842 – baptism of Michel Thomas Laporte at Rawdon, son of Thomas-Joseph Laporte, sauvage and Magdeleine Pierre, 'sauvage', witnessed by Jean-Louis Archambault and Marie Nicolas (wife of Michel Nicolas)

- 23 January 1843 – baptism of Louis Denis, son of Joachim Denis, *cultivateur*, and Catherine Dauphine was born 18th January, *parrain* Thomas Kinchella (aka Kinsella), Irish neighbour at Lot 6 of 10th Range and *marraine* Marie Locas (Eleanor Renaud dit Locas) was his wife.

It becomes clear that there was no real communication between Indian Affairs and those who were issuing permits on Crown lands. The system depended on accurate records and mail to Montreal and Quebec City. Military settlers and other new arrivals were on occasion directed to lots previously granted. I have written about David Petrie who was badly treated and abused in such a case in [Citizens Petition](#), 11 June 1834.

Napier's young son apparently assisted his father's in the office and wrote to him about several matters including the misnaming of lots in the Eleventh Range and concerning a letter from the Roman Catholic Bishop, 27-03-1840, which he had forwarded with other "French letters." Dearest Papa, from your affectionate son, George", and adds, in closing that "after a heavy fall of snow this morning it is now clearing off and the streets are filled with water."

A memo to Rogers from Napier, 27-03-1840, acknowledges there has been an error and lot 7 was named incorrectly as lot 10. Memo to Rogers from John Davidson, at Commissioners of Crown Lands, 28-03-1840, points out this error from the Rawdon Land agent's report. "It is desirable that you forward correct information on this point." Kerr to Rogers that "Your friend the Indian will be maintained on paying etc." 30-03-1840.

Letter from Davidson to Rogers, 09-04-1840 reiterates that under Lord Durham's regulation squatters must pay. The claims of Brian Carnie [sic] and the Indian Mitchell [sic] to the se ½ of 7 / 11 have been inquired into, with favour to Mitchell, as he had done the clearing before Carnie. No one, Indian or otherwise can claim a free grant "this land when granted must be paid for." He names lot number five as clergy reserve and that number six was open (not assigned). All settlers receiving Crown grants paid certain administrative fees.

27-03-1841: Statement of the Land Department with Colonel Napier's report on the petition of Michael Nicholas and John Nicholas, Indians of the Amalicate Tribe ... for titles to Lots 5 and 6 of the Eleventh Range. It is signed by several of the Land Department. This continues to confuse the name of Nicolas and the location. Brian Cairnie had been given an occupation permit by Crown Agent Thomas Griffiths [sic Griffith] on 08-01-1835 but it was not confirmed by the Land Department. Carnie claimed to have entered the lot and made improvements "but was disturbed by Mitchell, an Indian" subsequently it was confirmed that "Mitchell the Indian" was the first occupant. Mr. Napier is instructed to confirm if Mitchell and Nicolas are one and the same person. Lot 5 is a clergy reserve and therefore not available. No. 6 is crown reserve but is open on the list of lands and at the government's disposal "these Indians are entitled to prefer for a claim" as per Lord Durhams proclamation "previous to September 1838 without title."

Edward MacGie (aka McGie), crown agent, certified on 10-06-1841 that "Mitchel Nicolet [sic] an Indian is a resident squatter (and has been there six [sic] years past) under Lord Durham's proclamation on No. 7 Lot of the Eleventh Range of Rawdon".

30 April 1842 Rawdon (file translation DB Parkinson) we the undersigned have known, since two years Ignace Pierre, Paul Joseph, Joseph Nicola and Jean Baptiste as honorable people of good conduct James

McEvoy, Jean Louis Archambault, Bélonie Fortin, Mag Granger, Ovide Leblanc, A. Dugas, Marc Granger, Cyrille Archambault, J. B. Leblanc. "Since I left the Rawdon Mission, I have only received praise from the Catholics for the Indians." Father Joseph Vallée, St-Jacques, 1 May 1842. [additional signature] Jacques Leblanc. *[Some of these subscribers have been identified as Indigenous or other friends of Michel Nicolas. The identity of others is not known].*

18 April 1843: Survey by William Holtby was requested by Mitchel [sic] Nicolas and Thomas Kinchella and signed by them with their marks, as witnessed by Luke Daly. Also signed by Tom Holtby (15 years and assisting his father.) Irish settler Kinchella is associated in various documents with Lots 5 and 6, north of 10th Range and with 11/ 6, the Clergy Reserve lot. The purpose of the survey was to determine the line between 10th and 11th ranges and Holtby mentions finding the markers from his c. 1835 survey. Nicolas wanted to clarify his claim to four hundred acres, the whole of Lots 6 and 7. Holtby provided a clear map showing the course of the River Lac Quarria [sic Ouareau] on the east side of the lots.⁷

10-09-1844: Letter addressed to Mr. Mitchel Nicola [sic], Indian, Rawdon from Alex'dr Daly, Rawdon agent, to inform that the lots have been returned for sale and that only way he may keep them is to pay, otherwise they may be sold to any person. Appended on the side is a note from T. Bouthillier of the Land Office possibly dated 18 September, "the bearer [?] represents himself" in possession of lots he has largely improved for which he can pay by [script incomprehensible]. If so, I see no great objection to give him the [incomprehensible word] he requests."

Michel Nicolas believed he was authorized to stay on his land and he appears to have been the occupant when James Dignan, the Irish born surveyor from Berthier, visited this stretch of the 11th Range, between 26 and 28 October 1844. The purpose of the survey was to confirm the exact dimensions of the properties, so that that land and timber could be legally identified and sold. Dignan made these remarks: "lot 7 the clearance of an Indian"; he marked "road to Canadian [sic] settlement (Chertsey) in the rear of the township"; "hemlock and spruce, good soil" "lot 6 was the "end of Indians' clearance." For an idea of what this country was like when Nicholas farmed and hunted there, visit the website of *Forêt Ô Cascades* <https://ocascades.com/>. This camp ground is on the exit, *Chemin Joanne*, off Route 341 that passes through lots 8 and 9 of the Tenth and Eleventh Ranges before it disappears in the bush. This is stony, rough country and it was late to be opened for settlement.

Memorandum: 3-12-1845 Michel Nicolas' application for a title for the land he occupied. It is a scrambled review of the work of Hughes and Davidson and a statement from Nicolas that he has been a Rawdon resident, of the lots in question, for upwards of twenty years, has cleared 40 acres and "erected a substantial house." He is prepared to sell his improvements forthwith. What is being offered to Nicolas is difficult to discern. Following this is an appeal, in a note from one unnamed government employee to another, that Nicolas is badly treated because he was promised free title, 22-02-1845.

A new governor general Charles Murray, Earl Cathcart and yet another petition, 30-12-1845. It tells the story again from a sympathetic if somewhat racist perspective. The writer is not identified. "The petition of Michel Nicolas an Indian warrior of the Amalците tribe of Indian of Canada East, humbly sheweth that unlike the great majority of the members of his tribe abandoned a wandering course of life as a hunter and trapper and has applied himself steadily to the cultivation of land for a livelihood. That is now nearly twenty one years since your Lordship's petitioner with the abovementioned in view and with little more than an axe and a blanket and a scanty supply of provisions undertook to clear the land. He is at present settled in the Township of Rawdon ... which at he time was an almost impenetrable forest and

many miles from the residence of any white man.” More concerning his trials with bureaucracy “for an ungranted lot” ... “ which he had rendered valuable by the sweat of his brow.” His case for title, as promised him previously, was not being dealt with and he felt his claim was vulnerable; he was “alarmed by the rapid advance of white settlers into the forest in his neighbourhood.”

The 1852 Rawdon Census⁸ named Michel Nicolas, 61 and his wife Marie Nicolas, 65, born at St. Johns [sic] New Brunswick. Their near neighbour is Michael Bowey [Bowie or ?] is named (illegibly) as Michael Bo ... on the Holtby Township Map, located at 11 /8 beside where Nicolas was designated on the previously mentioned ‘Rawdon & Village Patents, 1852’. His birthplace is accurate, the census taker was a Notary Public, John Horan. Nicolas is a surname of indigenous families in New Brunswick mentioned in <https://acanadianfamily.wordpress.com/>.

It seems the aforementioned petition to Governor Murray (December 1845) was successful. An unsigned file dated 06 Sept 1856, by Michel and Marie Nicolas, from notary Aimé Dugas of St-Jacques, gives his property to his friend Magloire Granger (later of Chertsey). This gift was later overruled by the files of Montreal Notary John Horan, who handled the business of many Rawdon citizens and had been a resident there. Michel Léonard of *la Société d'histoire de Rawdon*, examined his files at BANQ and determined an outline of the Nicolas property but it misses important details. Horan recorded a gift from Michel Nicolas to Patrick Monahan [sic] on 13 April 1857 and a will (Horan 692, 993, 694), with transfer of property to Patrick Monahan [sic] on 8 April 1858 (Horan 569) and a Quittance on 13 April 1858 (Horan 571). Title was granted to Patrick Managhan [sic] in 1866.⁹ Also, there is a gift from Michel Nicolas to Marie Nicolas and their wills, which were papered on 6 October 1859 (Horan 492, 493, 494). Sadly, BANQ informs that the “notarial acts from 1854 to 1899 are presently lost.”

The Dugas file is important because it mentions the date when Nicolas acquired ownership, 18 February 1846. We do not know the source but wonder if it is connected to “O.C. 2338” from the 1852 list of patents, where Nicolas is owner (as mentioned previously.) Although this conclusion is speculative for me, it is well based because he was able to sell his improvements to Lot 7 of the Eleventh Range.

On 1861 Chertsey, Montcalm Census, Michel Nicolas, 74 [sic], and Marie Nicolas, 72, are identified as “Indian”. This was noteworthy because few Indigenous people who were not on reservations were identified by race. The couple lived on the Chertsey, Fifth Range at Lot 19 in a one story frame house with 4 acres and had no family. This is also the location for the miller François Mercier and for Magloire Granger, with a general store and for the priest Father Bourbonnais, each with separate houses. We may assume this is the centre of the village. It is also only a few miles from where Michel Nicolas had been located on the Rawdon Eleventh Range. Granger and his role in the story has been mentioned.

Marie Nicolas, wife of Michel Nicolas was buried 24 March 1864, in the St-Théodore Cemetery at Chertsey. She was “trouvée morte hier agée de quatre-vingt-huit ans et une enquête ayant eu lieu.” [Translation: “found dead yesterday aged eighty eight years an inquest having taken place.”] Witnesses were neighbours Denis Granger and François Mercier. The priest’s wording of the registration suggests that her husband Michel Nicolas was living in 1864.

The 1871 Rawdon Census names Patrick Manahan, 67, and wife Bridget and children born in the USA.¹⁰ Living with them is Michael Necalet [sic], 90 years, born in New Brunswick, a Roman Catholic widower. He is described as Indian; the word tribe is stroked out, and a hunter. In the margin “Indian tribe from St. Johns Newbrunswick [sic]”. Also, Alex’dr Daley enumerator, April 25, 1871.

There is no record of his burial at Rawdon, Chertsey or elsewhere in Quebec. Perhaps he died in the woods that he loved and he was quietly buried there by his friends, although we know he was a loyal Catholic and we were introduced to him attending a mass.

Likewise, we wonder why the small Malecite and Indigenous settlement of family and friends did not flourish and ultimately disappeared. What became of his brother Pierre and to his brother Jean, who signed the petition with Michel, and the others who, with their wives and children, were named on the 1842 "Indians" census.

Michel Nicolas clearly aspired to be a settler and farmer and he relished his chosen location in the wilderness of the then unsettled township, where he could hunt and live peacefully. The policy at Indian Affairs had encouraged Indigenous settlement, and Michel appears to have had friends and supporters in both government offices and the settler community, who liked and admired him. However, he was seen as an outsider by the Crown Land administrators, who insisted on enforcing their rules, disregarding exceptions made by earlier governors-in-chief. Rawdon was turned into a "devil of a place" by administrators who mostly operated from a distance; it was difficult for any settler who ran afoul of the system and then had to wait years to receive their letters patent. Despite Michel Nicolas's consistency, patience, and support, he was kept in a state of uncertainty for decades. His story is unique, and he should be recognised alongside the European and American pioneers who helped open the township.

¹ Guillaume Petit has covered some of this story at his excellent website <https://montrealbb.ca/indiens-rawdon/>

² https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/napier_duncan_campbell_9E.html

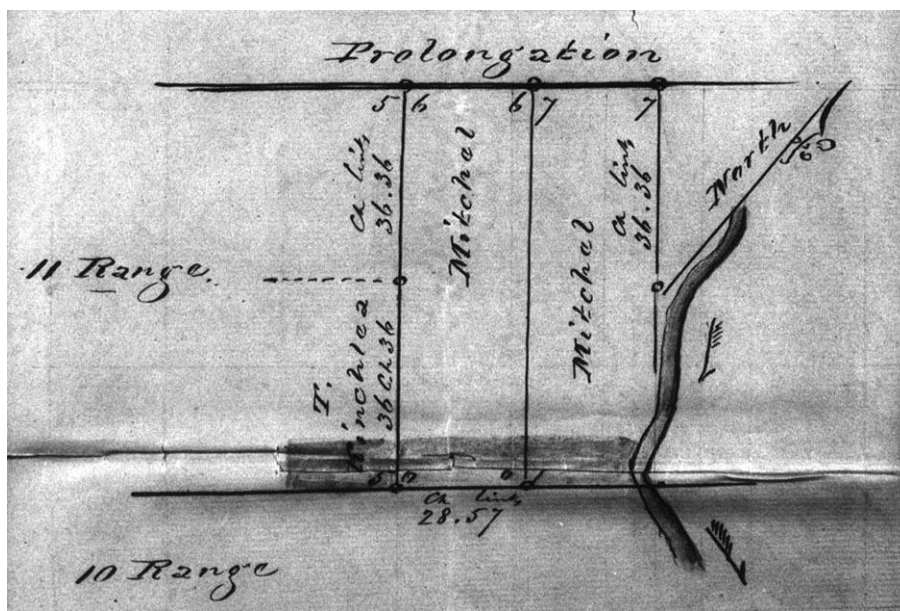
³ https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c11028/

⁴ https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c13379/83 page 46089

⁵ Pierre Nicolas (c. 1777-1836) is believed to be the son of Pierre Nicolas and Marie Denis, Maliseet of Saint-Basile Madawaska, the latter having sided with the American insurgents against the English during the American Revolution (1777-1783) <https://wolastoqiyikatonikek.ca/Album-de-familles.php>.

⁶ A noted Catholic Indian mission village under Jesuit control was near Pierreville, Yamaska district originally established at the falls of the Chaudière River, on the south side of the St. Lawrence, as a refuge for the Abenaki and Pennacook Indians who were driven from New England by the wars of that period: they were French in sympathy and largely Catholic. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13348a.htm>

⁷ https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c11028/531



⁸ The indigenous people of New Brunswick include the Malecite (or Maliseet). The Malecite are Algonquian speaking and traditionally lived in the Saint John River valley. In 1840, there were more than 200 members of the Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk (Malecite) First Nation living on the banks of Rivière Mitis that flows north, to the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River. It is likely as many more lived between Lévis and Rimouski, particularly on the Viger Reserve. If Michel and Marie had connections there, they would have known French, as they seemed to. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/government/quebec-at-a-glance/first-nations-and-inuit/profile-of-the-nations/malecite> and <https://wolastoqiyikwahsipekuk.ca/en/our-services>

Serge Goudreau in his book *Autochtones de l'est du Québec* wrote (in 2023) of Malecites from the St. John River, New Brunswick settling at Maskinongé 1821 - 1827. In February 1842 some of them through an intervener / interpreter named Ignace Picard, petitioned Indian Affairs Secretary Duncan C. Napier for 1,600 acres of land at Rawdon (LAC, C-13379 RG10, vol. 597, pps. 46087-46088). The 15 petitioners included these surnames Denis, Joseph, Laporte, Launière, Neptune and Nicolas. Some of these families were resident at Rawdon in the period before and after 1840, see pages 4 and 5.

Maxime Gohier wrote about Indigenous settlers in a 2014 UQAR doctoral thesis, *La pratique pétitionnaire des Amérindiens de la vallée du Saint-Laurent sous le Régime britannique* <https://archipel.uqam.ca/6534/>. He included the names "Michael Nicholas and John Nicholas" in 1840 (LAC C-II 028, RG 10, vol. 78, pps 43542-43544). He mentions the movement of Malecite families from Bécancour to Rawdon where Secretary Duncan C. Napier hoped to see the emergence of "an extensive Indian settlement in that section of the Province".

⁹ There were two Manahan [sic] men at Rawdon - Michael and Patrick both with sons named Michael and Patrick and I trust that I have finally placed Michael Nicolas with the correct one.

¹⁰ Patrick Monahan, 60, born in Ireland was living at Rawdon for the 1861 census, 200 acres, located at 10th Range, Lot 7, with his wife Bridget and six children who were born in Pennsylvania.