

(Submitted to Wulustuk Times, January 2012)

Excavating the Wolastoqiyik Language

Malecitæ
Amalecites

Marisheetes

Oo_lastu_gi'_uk

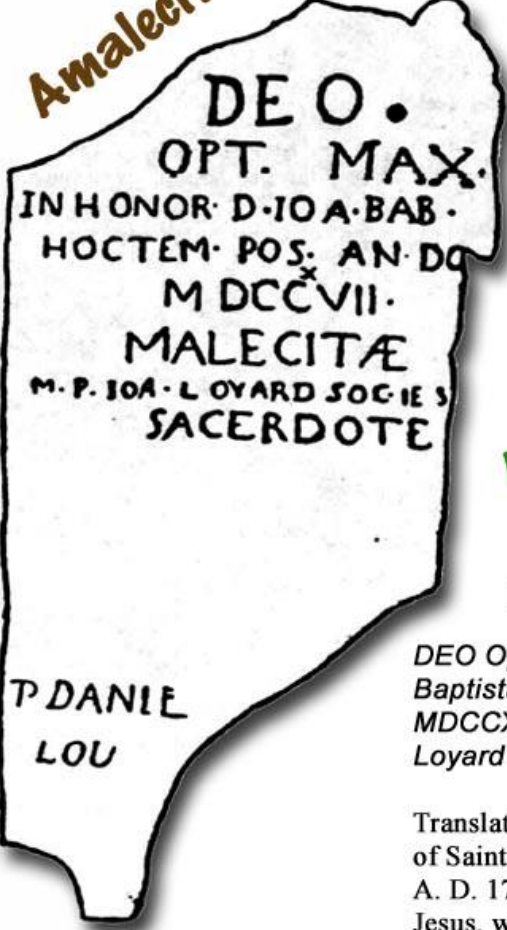
Eqpahak "head of tide"

Ovarastegouiaks

qapit, beaver, "red tooth"

Wōlastōkwiyōk

Medoctec "end of the carry"



Meductic Stone Tablet

DEO Optimo Maximo In honorem Divi Ioannis Baptistæ Hoc Templum posuerunt Anno Domini MDCCX VII. Malecitæ Missionis Procuratore Ioanne Loyard Societatis Iesu Sacerdote.

Translation: "To God, most excellent, most high, in honor of Saint John Baptist, the Malecites erected this church A. D. 1717, while Jean Loyard, a priest of the Society of Jesus, was procurator [or superintendent] of the mission."

EXCAVATING THE WOLASTOQIYIK LANGUAGE

Mareshites, Marasheete, Malecite, Amalecite, Malecetes, Ma'lesit, Maleshite, Malicetes, Malisit, Maleschite and many more spellings. So many variations of one name.

The Maliseets, as we refer to them today, never called themselves by that name before the white man came here. It was assigned to them by others. The first recording of the name was by Gov. Villebon at Fort Naxouat (Nashwaak) in a letter to Monsieur Jean-

Baptiste de Lagny (France's intendant of Commerce), Sept 2, 1694 in which he describes their territory:

*The **Malicites** begin at the river St. John, and inland as far as la Riviere du Loup, and along the sea shore, occupying Pesmonquadis, Majais, les Monts Deserts and Pentagoet, and all the rivers along the coast. At Pentagoe't, among the **Malicites**, are many of the Kennebec Indians. Taxous [aka Moxus] was the principal chief of the river Kinibeguy, but having married a woman of Pentagoet, he settled there with her relations. As to Matakando he is a **Malicite**. [Madockawando was an adopted brother of Moxus. In 1694 he was Chief on the Wolastoq]*

Over the years there have been various explanations of the proper spelling and origin of this word. Vincent Erickson wrote in the "Handbook of North American Indians" that the name Maliseet "appears to have been given by the neighboring Micmac to whom the Maliseet language sounded like faulty Micmac; the word 'Maliseet' may be glossed 'lazy, poor or bad speakers.'" Similarly Montague Chamberlain, in his Maliseet Vocabulary published in 1899, suggested that it was derived from the Micmac name *Malisit*, "broken talkers"; John Tanner in 1830 gives the form as *Mahneshets*, meaning "slow tongues" and states he was given that name by a "native." In 1878 R. R. Bishop Baraga in his Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language refers to the name *Maléchites* as being derived from the Cree *mayisit* or *malisit*, "the disfigured or ugly foot"; Father Joseph-Pierre-Anselme Maurault in his *Histoire des Abénakis, depuis 1605 jusqu'à nos jours*, in 1866, says it is from *Maroudit* or *Malouidit*, "those who are of Saint Malo." Rev. Eugene Vetromile in his Indian Good Book published in 1856 says both *Micmac* and *Mareschite* come from an old Abnaki word, *malike*, which means "witchcraft" on account of their many "jugglers" or shamans, and he adds, "hence the French name *Micmac* is a substitute for *Mareschite*". Tappan Adney, in his attempt to reconstitute the old tribe of the St. John River Indians, writes in a brief to officials in Ottawa that "after confederation they became officially known as Malecites or Maliseets, a term of reproach of Micmacs, the word Mal-az-it, 'One who talks poorly', or as Rand gives it, 'One who talks gibberish.'" So it is obvious that the origin and meaning of Maliseet is controversial.

I will offer one more possibility. In the Catholic Encyclopedia, the definition of MALISEET begins with this statement, "Also MALECITE, MALESCHITE and AMALECITE, the last being the official Canadian form." According to this definition then, the Catholics' official name for these inhabitants they found living in this new world was *Amalecites* or in Latin, *Amalecitæ*.

In February 1849 the Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the "Province of Canada" reported that "the tribe of Amalecite Indians residing in the Townships in the rear of the Parish of L'Isle Verte were praying for aid to open a Road leading to the said Parish." In 1871 Charles Tupper (who became the 6th Prime Minister) approved an allotment of

\$100 be paid out of the Lower Canada Indian Fund "for the relief of that portion of the band of Amalecite Indians living at Riviere du Loup." In 1888 Col. Garrick Mallory refers to the well known Gabriel Acquin as "an Amalecite, 66 years old, who spoke English quite well." In 1889 Indian agent Narcisse Lebel wrote in his report, "The Amalecite Indians of Viger are dispersed in small groups over the counties of Temiscouata, Rimouski and Kamouraska." Indian Agent James Farrell also referred to them in 1890 as "the Amalecite tribe." As late as 1902 the Department of Indian Affairs in their annual reports referred to the "Tribe or Band" in New Brunswick as the "Amalecite." In their report ending June 30th that year they refer to the Woodstock Reserve as being Amalecite, "Purchased May 22, 1851, by the Provincial Government, for the use of the Amalecite tribe of Indians at the Maductic. No. 281."

The early French missionaries referred to the first inhabitants of this land as *Malecitæ* or *Amalecitæ*. Evidence of this is on the slate-stone tablet that was discovered in 1890 in Meductic at the site of the old chapel that was built in 1717. On the tablet was a Latin inscription and the word *Malecitæ*. The full Latin inscription reads as follows:

DEO Optimo Maximo In honorem Divi Ioannis Baptistæ Hoc Templum posuerunt Anno Domini MDCCX VII. Malecitæ Missionis Procuratore Ioanne Loyard Societatis Iesu Sacerdote. Interpretation: "To God, most excellent, most high, in honor of Saint John Baptist, the Malecites erected this church A. D. 1717, while Jean Loyard, a priest of the Society of Jesus, was procurator of the mission."

Why did the Catholic missionaries use the name AMALECITE? What was its origin? The early French and English translations of the Holy Bible from the Latin Vulgate contained stories about the Amalecite people. These people were the first nation in the biblical story of creation, the aboriginal people of the land of humankind's origins. Amalec, the grandson of Esau, was the founder of this first nation. The Catholic Encyclopedia says of this ancient Biblical tribe, "the Amalecites were nomadic and warlike." Did the native peoples of the St. John River country remind the missionaries of the Amalecite nation in the Bible? It is quite possible that the Catholic missionaries, who were fond of giving biblical or Christian names to the Indians who they converted to Christianity, also applied this biblical name Amalecite to the Wolastoqiyik people as a whole. In much later translations of the Bible the hard "c" or "ch" in Amalecite was replaced with "k" as Amalekite.

The term Malecite without the leading "A" was used commonly up into the 1740s. Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix refers to Malecites in his "Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle France" published in 1744. However, by the 1750s another spelling of Malecite started to appear, written as Marisheet or Maricheet. In 1758 Abbé Pierre Antoine Simon Maillard refers to them as Mariqueets and Maricheets in his "Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets Savage

Nations, &c." He mentions also that the Maricheets "used, till lately, to be in a constant state of hostility with the Mickmakis. But, however, these nations may be at peace or variance with one another, in one point they agree, which is a thorough enmity to the English."

Rebel Col. John Allan, Indian Agent for the Eastern Department of the Continental Congress in the American Revolution named a military schooner in honour of the Maliseets because they were helping his cause in separating from the "British tyrants". He called the schooner the *Marisheete*. In his journals he refers to them as the St. John's Indians and also as the Marisheetes tribe (spelled variously Merecheete, Marasheet, Maracheete). He recorded in his journals meeting with all of the Marisheete chiefs in the summer of 1777 at Aukpaque (now Eqpahak). When the British advanced on Aukpaque he led about 500 of the Marisheetes on a long exodus from the river, going up to Meductic and down the ancient trail "by the lakes" to Machias, Maine where they resided nearby the rebel headquarters in small encampments until after the revolution. I gave more details of this exodus in last month's newsletter.

One of the possibilities for this change of Malecite to Marisheet could be related to the problem the Wolastoqiyik had in trying to pronounce some of the English and French letter sounds. The letter R was one. There was no R in their language. The word "crazy" became "clasy". Mary became Mali, which eventually became Molly. Pierre became Piel or Piol. The first son of Pierre became Piolsis (little Piol), or Polchis. The son of Paul also became Polchies or Paul Schesh. The name Martin became Moulton. Charles became Sha'les or Sauls and Saulis. Likewise J was another problem. Jacques became Sok or Sak, and son of Sak became Saksis (little Sak) or Sacobie (baby Soc). The early French missionaries had called these first nations Amalecites or Malecites, basically a Hebrew term, and the Indians began using that name to refer to themselves, proud to be recognized as the "first nation". Of course Malecite was easy for them to say as there was no R in it. In later times when the English or French heard this unfamiliar term from the Indians, and also hearing them having trouble pronouncing other English and French words, they assumed they were trying to say the word Marisheet but couldn't pronounce the R. And so, Marisheet became the name recorded.

Erickson stated in the "Handbook of North American Indians" that the term which the Maliseet use for themselves is *Wōlastōkwiyōk*. That it is derived "from the name they gave to the St. John River, in the drainage area of which they dwell; it means 'people of the St. John River' or, more exactly, 'people of the beautiful, good, pleasant river.' " According to Chamberlain in his "Malecite Vocabulary", the name they apply to themselves is *Wulastuk-wick*, "dwellers on the beautiful river," or, as given by Maurault, *Ouarastegouiaks*, "those of the river whose bed contains sparkling objects." The "Indian Good Book" published in 1856 by Eugene Vetromile gives them the name *Ulastook* on the opening page. W. F. Ganong spelled the name *Woolahstukwik*. Tappan

Adney who spoke the Wolastoqiyik language, broke the word down this way, "O_lastu_gi'_uk." He often disagreed with his contemporaries like Montague Chamberlain and W. F. Ganong about many Indian names of rivers and places. He contended that the name of the river Wul-as-tukw did not mean "beautiful river", but rather literally, "pleasingly, it flows through its channel, river that." He put the name in the active voice grammatically, not how it looks or feels to an observer, that is to say, not in the passive voice. It has life, a spirit, in the name. He also stressed that it refers to the river country not just the river. That the ancient general name of their people also included the Passamaquoddies (*Peskotomuhkatiyik*) and Penobscots (*Panuwapskewiyik*), and they all were called "Wal-un-tuk-wi-uk" meaning "The River-Country People".

The name debate has gone on for years and it constantly changed so that for any decade the people are given a different name. But always it is the English or French writer who is trying to define who they are. These River-Country people know who they are and they know that their language, which contains their history and their culture, is very much endangered now. The history of their people buried within their language, the names of animals, rivers and lakes, in stories, songs and dances, is a history that predates Europeans coming here. For example their legends about Koluskap (Koluwo = good, ap or nap = man or male) tell about giant beavers that dwelled in this land. Most of the early historians and other writers considered these to be mythical fables. However, in the mid-1800s archaeologists discovered fossil remains of giant beavers measuring over 8 feet long and weighing up to 485 lbs with teeth up to 6 inches long. A tooth of a giant beaver is in the collections of the New Brunswick Museum. It turns out that these legends were NOT just imaginary FABLES. The Koluskap legends and other stories contained events and landmarks that describe the land of the Wolastoqiyik like a verbal map. The white man was always amazed how the Indians could travel through parts of their lands they hadn't travelled before and not get lost. Besides being intimate with nature, the animals and birds, the sun and moon, and the seasons, they also used their Koluskap stories to guide them. They would look for the face of Koluskap in the steep rocky bank of the river (near Mactaquac), for the snowshoe islands where Koluskap took off his snowshoes (flooded by Mactaquac Dam in 1967), and for the rocks stained red with blood at Grand Falls and Plaster Rock where Koluskap had thrown the big rocks after the retreating giant beavers that had dammed the river at its mouth (Reversing Falls area). The whole landscape of the River-Country people was described in stories all the way to the Notre Dame Mountains in Quebec, the extremity of their territory. Other places in Wolastoqiyik land were given descriptive names. *Eqpahak* (Ekwpahak or Aukpaque) means "head of tide", or "where the swift water starts." It defines that unique location on the river to where the Fundy tides reach. *Metawtik* (Meductic) is the end of the carry or the journey, marking the end of the well-known route by land, river and lakes to Passamaquoddy and Penobscot country.

Abekagwimek (Becaguimec stream), a place where the salmon lie side by side in smooth water. *Sigtahaw* (now Bristol) means "where he killed him" and refers to the place where a Mohawk Chief and Maliseet Chief engaged in a battle all afternoon until finally the Maliseet killed the Mohawk. *Pohenegamook* (a lake) means "Grab it from them." *Chikunik'abik* (the destroyer place) or *Checanekepeag* (the destroying giant in Gyles memoires) is the older Maliseet name for Grand Falls. It refers to the legend of Malobiannah, the legendary Maliseet woman who led a war party of Mohawks in birchbark canoes over the Great Falls and saved her people at Medoctec from a surprise attack. Today this great falls is most often referred to as *Kapskuk*, or *Cobscook*, simply meaning where the water falls over huge ledge formations. There is a Cobscook in Maine too. Unfortunately this is an example of modern name revisions dropping the oral traditions that were once associated with the older names.

Wolastoqiyik language is very descriptive. It preserves events and places that once existed in the past. The missionaries and colonists preferred to name places after saints and famous people, or from places they came from in the old country: St. Anne's Point (now called Fredericton), Gagetown, Maugerville, Arthurette, Knowlesville, Jacksonville, Florenceville, Bristol, Sheffield, Kingsclear, Douglas, Odell, Hart's Island, etc. None of these names describe the places. Likewise animal and bird names of the Wolostoqiyik are descriptive. Squirrel is *mihku*, "the one that is red." Partridge is *mociyehs*, "he does not fly straight." Snipe is *enemik-coss*, "rocks his backside." Porcupine is *matuwehs* or *pomatuwehs*, "the one that is climbing all the time." Beaver is *qapit*, "red tooth." Other aboriginal languages are similar. In Penobscot beaver is *tomahq*, "cuts wood". By studying the languages we can learn that a beaver is an animal that cuts wood and has reddish coloured incisors.

In the history of the white man invading the land and establishing his "dominion", imposing his culture and his complex written laws to satisfy the greed of the ruling Crown, the Wolastoqiyik language was deliberately suppressed. Every effort was made to eliminate it by the early Catholic missionaries and later by the residential schools. In so doing, they have almost wiped out the oral records of prehistoric man in this region, and along with it a history of the ages, of a culture that lived in very close relationship to the animals and plants and survived off them for food, medicine, clothing, utensils and tools. This is of great value to us all today. It is not out of date knowledge.

Times are changing. On June 11, 2008 Prime Minister Harper offered Canada's aboriginal peoples an official apology for the government's involvement in the Indian residential school system and its ongoing policy of forced assimilation. A step in a new direction has been taken. Even though it is a small step, it changes the attitude of the past governments. In recent years a special group of ethnologists, a type of language archaeologists, have begun "digging" into aboriginal languages for clues and evidence of past events and artifacts just as they have done archeological excavations on

historical land sites. They can learn more about the prehistoric world that existed in this land before white man came here and understand it much better. Excavating for artifacts of history and culture buried within the language to learn more about ancient peoples and the wild animals and natural events in this land is one more reason why we must preserve the language and legends of the first peoples of this land. There is truth and reality in those stories, as well as a treasure chest of rich life values. We need to start digging deep into the many layers of the language to discover artifacts of great value to ALL mankind, not just the Wolastoqiyik. Everyone stands to gain from what treasures are uncovered. Studying white man's writings about the language will not do it. It is difficult to use letters to describe sounds, especially Wolastoqiyik sounds. Just look at the many ways Maliseet and Wolastoqiyik have been written. But there is a solution. Modern digital video technology allows us to record the voices of the few remaining elders who still speak the language. The expression on their faces, the hand gestures, and the tone of their voice all capture the oral tradition of the River-Country people who never had a written language. Recording them in natural scenes, doing traditional work, basket making, pounding ash, gathering birchbark, harvesting medicinal plants, visiting historic sites, and then linking the scenes interactively by GPS data to digital information in a database could not be done before now. It is also a tool for teaching the next generation the language and culture that was always passed on orally. Such a project has already started. It is a new beginning, a new era of hope. This is the new age of digital oral traditions. May the New Year hear distant drums and the voices in the mists along the river shouting "Hey Hey" as the blessings of the ancestors echo throughout the land of the River-Country people.

..... all my relations, Nugeekadoonkut.

Also refer to Wulustuk Times article November 2015, [Amalecite - Manifest Destiny](#)
and Wulustuk Times article in Feb 2015 [Maliseets, Muskrat People, or Wolastoqewiyik?](#)