

# Stand! And Be Counted A Wyandotte

## The Notes

*"In the old time the various clans used to camp separately, on the 15th of August, their feast time, they would assemble at a single place. The people before separating used to select a place where they would assemble, on the next year. It was often at the same place. When the feast was over they would scatter out again for their fall and winter hunting. The only time in the year when they were camped together was for this feast, in August. This would last altogether from a week to ten days. During that period they would take up various kinds of sports and dances and would recite the tales of their adventures. At the end of the feast before separating they would proceed to the census in order to know their numbers. Each clan, separately, would set down an elm-bark tray, the clan had a figure of its own animal represented, that is, the bear, turtle, hawk, snake, etc.. That mark was to be seen inside of the tray. As in one clan there would be more than one family, the various heads of the many families would come severally to the tray and drop into it as many grains of corn as there were people in their own family. When each member of the clan was thus represented in the tray by a grain of corn, some specially appointed people, probably ..... chief and council, or a man from each clan, would examine the relative strength of each clan by the examination of the number of grains. They did not count the grains of corn, but judged of it only by examining the quantity of corn." (XVII, Eldredge H. Brown - Barbeau Field Notes of 1911-12: B-G-88.5)*

**1. The first censuses were conducted by... ourselves** during the Green Corn Feast. Unfortunately we do not have these records today. The French, British or Americans were not the first to conduct them, we ourselves did. Keeping numbers were important. Why do you think it was important to know the strength of the clans, and ultimately the tribe?

Back in the day individuals identified themselves with the clan first, even more so over their own family and the tribe in whole. A.) Keeping numbers showed the relative health of the clan. B.) Keeping numbers showed the relative health of the tribe. C.) The largest clans would yield the greatest influence within the tribe. Over the last 360 years of our history it's impossible to truly know an accurate census of the clans, but generally speaking the three most populous and influential clans appear to be the Big Turtle, Bear and Porcupine followed closely by the Deer. As we're all too aware, the importance of the clan ultimately faded away and our identity as a tribe, over individual clans, became supreme.

**2. Tribal identity is the way in which we identity ourselves today, but who are we?** If I asked everyone here that is a Wyandotte to, "Stand! And be counted a Wyandotte," the majority of you would stand, but why? Who are you? Before we can stand and be counted or identify ourselves as being anything we must first know who and or what we are. So, let's go back to the beginning and determine whom we are.

**3. Huron, Wendat, Wyandot and Wyandotte.**

**4. The Windsor Border Region.** Shortly after the dispersal everything about life would have been just short of chaotic. Life as it had been known would have suddenly ended and the instincts for survival would have prevailed. The merging of Tionontati and Attignawantan would have been instantly easy, but not necessarily immediate. For some time we were known as the Huron-Tionontati, which represented the two distinct "tribes" that simply called themselves Wendat. One of the first recorded descriptions of us comes from an anonymous memoir dated 1718. This extract is from *The Windsor Border Region: Canada's Southernmost Frontier, A Collection of Documents*, by Ernest J. Lajeunesse.

*"The Hurons [Wyandot] are also very near; perhaps the eighth of a league [approx. 1/2 mile] from the French fort. This is the most industrious nation that can be seen. They scarcely ever dance, and are always at work. They raise a very large amount of Indian corn, peas, beans; some grow wheat. They construct their huts entirely of bark, very strong and solid; very lofty and very long, and arched like arbors. Their fort is strongly encircled with pickets and bastions, well redoubled, and has strong gates. They are the most faithful nation to the French, and the most expert hunters that we have. Their cabins are divided into sleeping compartments, which contain their Misirague, and are very clean. They are the bravest of all the nations, and possess considerable talent. They are well clad; some of them wear close-fitting coats. The men are always hunting, summer and winter, and the women work. When they go hunting in the fall, a goodly number of them remain to guard the fort. The old women, and throughout the winter those women who remain, collect wood in very large quantities. The soil is fertile; Indian corn grows there to the height of ten to twelve feet; the fields are very clean, and very extensive; not the smallest weed is to be seen in them."*

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*"Before you arrive at the fort, which stands on the left, a league below the island of St. Claire [now Belle Isle], you find on the same side two populous villages very near each other; the first is inhabited by the Tionnontatez [Tionontati], a tribe of the Hurons [Wyandot], and the same who after having wandered to and fro for a long time, first settled at the falls of St. Mary and at Michillinlackinac; the second is inhabited by the Potawatomi Indians. On the right, somewhat higher is a third village of the Ottawas, inseparable companions of the Hurons [Wyandot] from the time that both of them were driven from their country by the Iroquois. There are no Christians at all amongst these last, and few, if any, among the Potawatomis; the Hurons [Wyandot] are all Christians, but have no missionaries. It is said they will admit of none, but is only true of a few of their principal men who have not much religion, and who do not suffer the others to be heard, who have been a long time desirous of having missionaries sent them."*

This goes to show that from early on, even among the early misperceptions as to who we were, the underlying truth of us as being Tionontati was clearly identified and defined. Why do you think it would have been easy for us to have been given the title or name Huron, after the destruction of the Huron Confederacy and dispersal of 1649-50?

**5. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft** (Mar. 28, 1793 – Dec. 10, 1864) was an American geographer, geologist and ethnologist that was noted for his early studies of Native American cultures. Schoolcraft's massive work, *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting... the Indian Tribes of the United States* was published in 1851-57 and spanned six volumes. It was praised and also criticized for its various shortcomings, including a lack of organization that made the information almost inaccessible. In 1954 the Bureau of American Ethnology prepared and published, *Index to Schoolcraft's "Indian Tribes of the United States."* It contains a wealth of information, for example, the number of fighting men of the Northern tribes in 1736, of which the Wyandot were one. It also shows the number of fighting men in 1764 and 1812. The book lists the Wyandot as having 200, 300 and 300 fighting men respective of these years. Whereas the Huron [of Lorette], located in a village at Quebec, had only 60 fighting men in 1736. As noted earlier the Ottawa, who we were all but inseparable from, could field 600 fighting men in 1736 and 900 in 1764 and 1812 respectively. Henry did not conduct these censuses, he just compiled the numbers from previous lists.

During the American Revolution Schoolcraft states that the British, against the Americans, employed 100 Wyandot. He goes on to state, "*They [the Wyandot] have been more active, under the influence of Lt. Governor Hamilton, against the United States, than any other nation.*" Hamilton was British, and appointed Lieutenant Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs at Fort Detroit. History states that he is notorious for paying a bounty for scalps, many of which would have been American settlers at the hands of the "renegade" Wyandot from the Detroit area.

Additional censuses as given by Schoolcraft accounts for 542 Wyandot in Ohio in 1825 with claim to 163,840 acres of land, more than any other tribe in Ohio at the time. In Michigan Territory he only accounts for 37 Wyandot. However, in 1829 another census by Schoolcraft states that there are now 600 Wyandot in Ohio, 40 in Michigan Territory and as he states, "*The residue of the tribe, amounting probably 100 persons, lives upon the river Aux Canards, in Upper Canada.*"

What of any importance was Schoolcraft conducting these censuses? Who did Schoolcraft work for? A division within the United States Department of War, which morphed into the Bureau of Indian Affairs under the authority of the Department of the Interior.

Schoolcraft goes on to state that in 1836, there were five groups, or tribes, that were not under treaty stipulations to remove west of the Mississippi River.

What year were we removed from Ohio? 1843. The New York Indians or the Iroquois had an accumulative population of 4,176 tribal members; the Menomonee had 4,000; the Ottawa and Chippewa had 2,564; the Miami 1,100 and the Wyandot 575 tribal members including adoptive whites. Preceding this list he classifies the tribes without a treaty as being, "...within striking distance of the western Frontier." Clearly the government was accumulating population data, making everyone stand and be counted, for the purpose of removal.

Finally, in 1846 after our removal, Schoolcraft accounts for the Wyandot on the Kansas River. This census is a little more detailed:

Males over 18 years of age – 147  
Females over 16 years of age – 132  
Number of males under 18 years of age – 144  
Number of females under 16 years of age – 130  
Total number of Indians – 553

Out of this list do you notice anything interesting? The men outnumber the women. What does that ultimately mean? The men will have to seek wives outside the tribe resulting in a severing of the clans for that particular family.

During this same census it was determined that out of the 553, 3 supported themselves for the general benefit, 7 were engaged on their individual account, 2 were carpenters, 2 were shoemakers, 3 were tailors and 500 subsist by agriculture. Being that the majority of the tribe was farmers the government want to know more. There were 885 acres in cultivation producing 150 bushels of wheat, 23,400 bushels of corn, 287 bushels of oats, 5,663 bushels of potatoes and 154 bushels of beans, 40,000 melons of all kinds and 944 pounds of butter all with an estimated value of \$6,747.00. Not too shabby when compared to the other tribes. We had 308 horses, 8 work oxen, 159 milk cows, 269 beef cows, 20 sheep, 1,443 hogs and an estimated \$4,400.00 in agricultural implements. Value of the products from our annual hunts \$0.00. Oh... but there is more. Each tribal member was paid \$20.00 per year,

with a total amount of annuities paid to the tribe at \$17,500.00, plus an additional \$220.00 furnished to the tribe as iron and steel. In conclusion, we had 2 schools with 2 teachers and 40 male scholars, and 30 female scholars. There was 1 church with 49 male professors of religion and 57 female professors of religion. The 1 temperance society had 110 members, which is more than the number of those that regularly attended church on Sunday morning. As a side note, even by today's standard the 106 Wyandot that regularly attended church would make a fairly large church today.

According to Schoolcraft's censuses, what were we involuntarily standing, and being counted for? Simply put, we either had real property value or we were an expense to the federal government, his censuses were determining our value. In Kansas we happened to live on land worth more than we were worth; hence, we were terminated. Of course this is all of my own speculation, but does anyone disagree?

**6. James B. Finley's classic description.** While Schoolcraft and his cronies, also known as Indian agents, are conducting their censuses, another individual was making his own assessment of our ancestors. The Rev. James B. Finley eloquently describes the classic Wyandot in his *History of the Wyandott Mission*, on pages 48-49. As I read his classic description and something describes you, feel free to Stand! And Be Counted A Wyandotte. I can't imagine that something, if not many of these points, still describes many of us today... I know they do me.

*"In infancy the Indian males are placed on a board, and wrapped with a belt of cloth or skin, to make them straight. In early life they are subjected to hardships, and stimulated to acts of courage, activity, and firmness. The females are rather low of stature, and slow in motion. This may arise from their manner of life, being brought up to hard labor, and to carry heavy burdens. The men possess a lively imagination. This is discovered in the strength of their figure of speech and illustration. Their memory is remarkably retentive; and this may arise from their being destitute of the knowledge of letters, and having to commit all to memory. The correctness with which they can retain is most astonishing. In a speech made to them, every point is retained, considered, and answered distinctly. Their history and traditions are all kept in this way. They comprehend with great acuteness what belongs to their interest; and have given unnumbered specimens of their native strength of mind, and of their eloquence. They excel in stratagem to effect their purposes, both in the chase and in war. They are proverbial for their benevolence, and for the strength of their attachments to a friend, implacable [incapable of being appeased], revengeful, and untiring in the pursuit and punishment of their enemies. They are strongly suspicious, and always on the watch. They set the highest estimate on their liberty, and look with contempt on those who think themselves above them. They glory in daring feats, either in war or on the chase. They suffer privation [poverty] without murmur, and torture without complaint; and believe it unmanly, and below the dignity of a high-minded Indian, to complain, on any consideration. They seldom manifest any surprise at any thing or circumstance, nor do they betray any curiosity, but look with sober indifference on all things. They are calm and cool in their deliberations; and when once their minds are made up, are unchangeable in their purposes. They never forget an act of kindness, but will seek an opportunity to repay it; and I know of nothing that will so effectually bind the Indian, and make him feel his obligations, as repeated acts of kindness. The word friend amongst them means something, and will make them risk life and property to save a friend. But on the other hand, they never forget an injury or insult; nor will they ever be at rest until they fully satisfy the passion of revenge; and are untiring, and always on the watch, to execute their designs."*

Wow. That almost makes us look human instead of a piece of tormenting property. With these traits, even though we were small in numbers, it's no wonder we were leaders,

lawyers, preachers, warriors and peaceful, yet potentially problematic foes of the government. Our removal from Ohio and ultimate termination in Kansas was to be a lasting hope, though unrealized by the government, because we're still alive and doing very well in Oklahoma today.

## **7. We are Wyandot and Wyandotte today because of fate and politics.**

### **The Treaty of 1855.**

#### Article I

"The Wyandott Indians having become sufficiently advanced in civilization, and being desirous of becoming citizens; it is hereby agreed and stipulated, that their organization, and their relations with the United States as an Indian tribe shall be dissolved and terminated on the ratification of this agreement, except so far as the further and temporary continuance of the same may be necessary in the execution of some of the stipulations herein; and from and after the date of such ratification, the said Wyandott Indians, and each and every of them, except as hereinafter provided, shall be deemed, and are hereby declared, to be citizens of the United States, to all intents and purposes; and shall be entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of such citizens; and shall in all respects be subject to the laws of the United States, and of the Territory of Kansas in the same manner as other citizens of said Territory; and the jurisdiction of the United States and of said Territory, shall be extended over the Wyandott country in the same manner as over other parts of said Territory..."

### **The Treaty of 1867.**

"...whereas a portion of the Wyandottes, parties to the treaty of one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five, although taking lands in severalty, have sold said lands, and are still poor, and have not been compelled to become citizens, but have remained without clearly recognized organization, while others who did become citizens are unfitted for the responsibilities of citizenship; and whereas the Wyandottes, treated with in eighteen hundred and fifty-five, have just claims against the Government, which will enable the portion of their people herein referred to begin anew a tribal existence: Therefore it is agreed:"

#### Article XIII

"...A register of the whole people, resident in Kansas and elsewhere, shall be taken by the agent of the Delawares, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, on or before the first of July, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven, which shall show the names of all who declare their desire to be and remain Indians, and in a tribal condition, together with incompetents and orphans, as described in the treaty of one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five; and all such persons, and those only, shall hereafter constitute the tribe: *Provided*, That no one who has heretofore consented to become a citizen, nor the wife or children of any such person, shall be allowed to become members of the tribe, except by the free consent of the tribe after its new organization, and unless the agent shall certify that such party is, through poverty or incapacity, unfit to continue in the exercise of the responsibilities of citizenship of the United States, and likely to become a public charge..."

**8. The high price of remaining Indian.** Life in Indian Territory wasn't easy, nor was our ancestor's noble goal of remaining Indian. Standing! And being counted a Wyandotte, eventually became something that was just a little less than desirous. Why? Why after desiring to move to Indian Territory was it so difficult to Stand! And be counted a

Wyandotte? One of the first reasons, as simple as it may seem, is our very small tribal population. The required census of 1867 found 521 that considered themselves to be Wyandot. There were 248 males, 270 female and 3 infants. Of these 305 had life circumstances that labeled them as being destitute, 206 had a moderately easy life, 2 easy and 8 did not define their life status. There were 242 residing in Kansas, 151 in Indian Territory, 63 in Indian country, 2 in California, 15 in Canada, 4 in Colorado, 6 in Indiana, 5 in Missouri, 2 in New Mexico, 5 in New York, 19 in Ohio and 7 unknown. There were 8 that retracted their United States citizenship, and 18 that could speak little to no English. As early as 1874 tribal leadership in Indian Territory began to notice that our traditional way of life was beginning to fail. To combat this they enacted that in order to vote, which was restricted to the males, each had to register by their clan. A list prepared on May 29, 1874 registered 15 men of the Big Turtle clan, 7 from the Small Turtle, 19 from the Porcupine, 6 from the deer, 5 from the Snake, 18 from the Bear and 6 from the Wolf. Totaling just 76 men, they were less than the number of people here in this meeting today. Did you notice anything else? There were only 7 of our 12 clans represented. How can a people and tribe continue to hold onto their traditional culture and way of life with so few numbers? Difficult choices had to be made and survival, rather than a revival of culture, won out.

In 1888, just 21 years after reinstatement, our reservation in Indian Territory was allotted. Within the Treaty of 1867 there was a stipulation that we purchase 20,000 acres from the Seneca. The government paid the Seneca \$1.00 per acre. Good trade? Interesting statistic, in 1842, just 46 years earlier, we ceded the 109,144 acres of our Grand Reserve in Ohio... now we have in Indian Territory 20,000 acres. Again, good trade? Looking at the map showing the allotments, there were 251 Wyandotte that received land, with the minimum grant being 40 acres. With 20,000 acres spread across 251 allottees, we were spread rather thin or hardly given any land however you wish to define it. The average grant was 1 allottee per 80 acres. Please note there were other family members within each household. But still, 122 years ago when one allottee was granted 80 acres with a 40 acre parcel on the north side of the reservation, and another 40 acres located three miles away, it was hard to Stand! and defend your land. Hence, much of our reservation was lost the minute it was allotted, which added to the difficulties of us remaining Indian.

Official tribal censuses as preserved within our Family Services Department show 379 tribal citizens in 1907. By 1913 there were only 437 individuals, and 522 in 1929. The tribal role of 1937, by which tribal membership is based upon today, accounted for 783 that called themselves Wyandotte. At the end of the day Saturday after the new tribal members are officially added to our roles we will have 4,958 tribal citizens, more than at any other time in our glorious history. But still by today's standards we are a small tribe, whereas, the Cherokee have over 325,000 tribal citizens.

**9. The Human element.** Today it is much easier to Stand! And be counted a Wyandotte. Is it not? There are benefits and a sense of identity that can be easily claimed. It's hard for us to imagine that our great grandparents and grandparents questioned their need to be Wyandotte, and realistically speaking, what would it have benefited them 100 years ago? The tribe had come full circle. Clan, family and then tribe had been distilled to families, maybe the tribe fit into the families somewhere, but there were definitely no clans. What happened? Could it ever happen again? When we get together today how do we introduce ourselves? Hi my mane is Lloyd and I'm a member of the porcupine clan. No. Hi my name is Lloyd and I am from the Bland and Armstrong families. Interesting assessment, both of the names, Bland and Armstrong, happen to come from white men. But be look at them as being Indian - Wyandotte. Why? I and no one else doubt that they were Wyandotte.

In a recent email conversation with Cindy Hawkins who was contracted to do genealogical

research for tribal member Constance Coggins, some of the difficulties we have today in Standing! And being counted a Wyandotte was eloquently illustrated. Cindy retraced Constance's lineage from Squire John M. Greyeyes (1793-1858) to Elizabeth Betsy Greyeyes, Lizzie Guyami, Jessie Pooler, Rosa Tussinger, Rosalie McCord, Tessie Davis and finally Constance. She admitted to difficulties untying the genealogical knots due to the difficulties of being Wyandotte early in the last century, at least the difficulties as endured by this particular family. I asked if any of Constance's relatives were in Oklahoma and received an allotment. Her response follows:

*"Lizzie Guyami or Gyami is listed on the 1888 map in the lower right hand corner. You will see her daughter Jessie listed right below her in the adjacent plot. I listed Jessie on my note to you as "Jessie Pooler" because her father was Joe Pooler. It was very difficult for me to sort through all of these but I was fortunate to have very meticulous notes from Lizzie's great granddaughter Rosalie McCord Davis. Rosalie only used first names but it turns out all of her oral history notes were pretty much spot-on. (so far I've only found 2 discrepancies: the turtle clan reference was one; and the other is that she has written that Squire Greyeyes grandfather, Tsoon-Dow-E-No was fathered by a British Army officer, Macomb, and I think she has mistaken this with the Macomb who was a merchant at Gross Ile) Rosalie McCord knew her great grandmother quite well. Rosalie was 26 when her great grandmother Lizzie died, and Rosalie had written down much of the history told her by Lizzie.*

*Lizzie was a real puzzle for me at first, but then I pulled out my Nancy Drew hat and figured it out. She married 4 men or at least had children by 4 men. And each time she switched men, she switched all of her children's names. So, each year on the Indian census schedules they may all be listed as Gyami or Pooler or Buzzard or Tussinger or Brumbaugh or some odd combination. At first I thought I was dealing with different and distinct individuals but then realized they are the same. So, Jessie is listed as Gyami on the 1888 land map but the Gyami surname is actually her grandfather's.*

*Lizzie is also the mother of Marcus "Mack" Tussinger who married Suzie Bearskin. And the Tussinger name also bears explanation. According to Rosalie's notes (again, oral history but now corroborated through records) Lizzie met her husband Thomas Franklin Tussinger but he said he also had a brother who needed a wife so she gave her oldest child, Jessie to the brother. Jessie was just 14. So, mother and daughter married brothers and then both had children by the brothers. So, for instance Mack Tussinger was both an uncle and a cousin to Rosa Belle Tussinger."*

Do any of you have similar family histories that made Standing! And being counted a Wyandotte difficult?