

Lesser Slave Lake Territory

Métis Families Rooted in the Land



The history of the Lesser Slave Lake Territory is deeply rooted in Métis families whose lives shaped and sustained the region across generations. Early settlement patterns around Grouard and Sawridge (later Slave Lake) were closely tied to family networks engaged in the fur trade, transportation, and local economies, with many Métis families establishing long-standing communities that remain today.



Unidentified Metis Family Lesser Slave Lake late 1800's - Rita



Lesser Slave Lake Wood Camp 1909

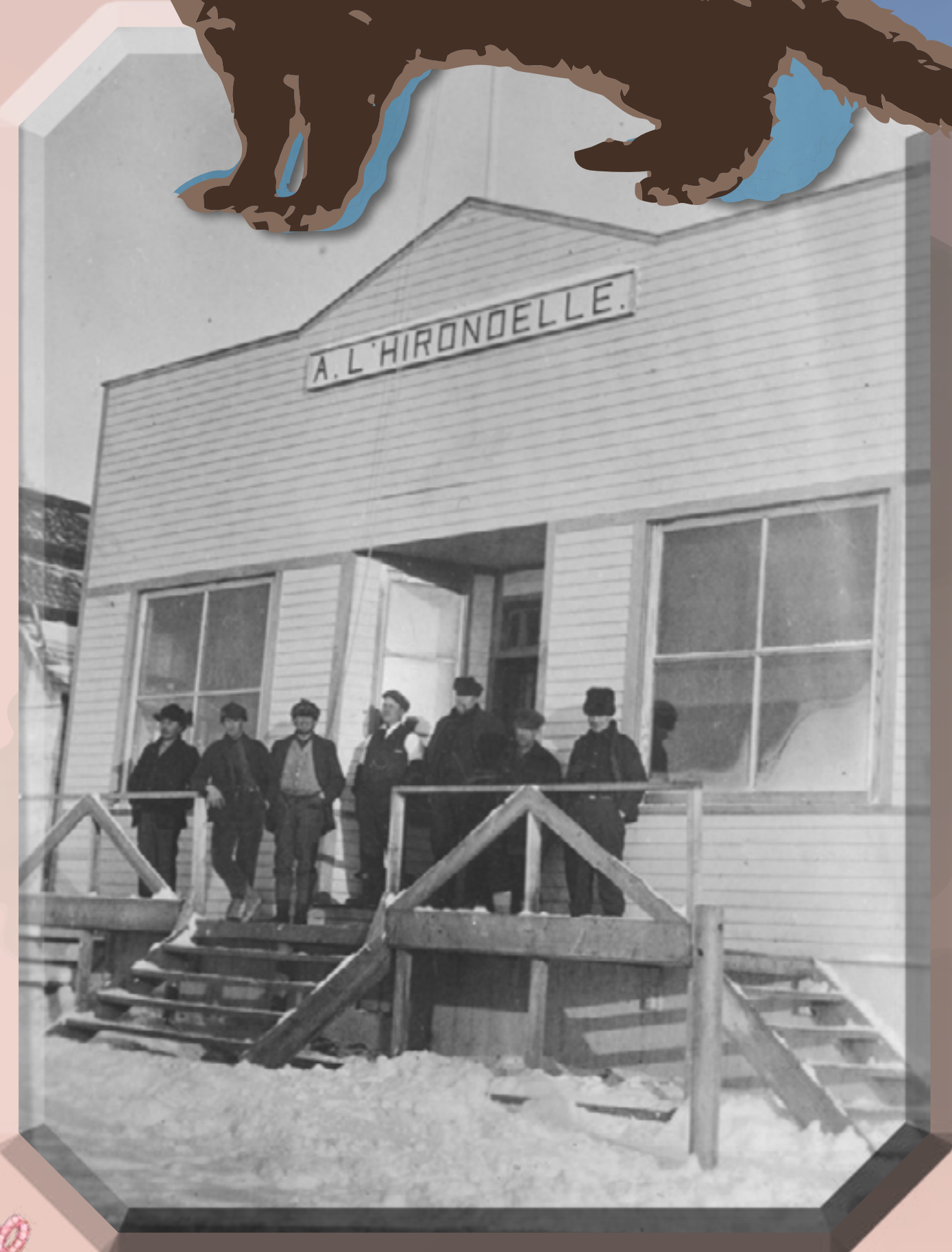
Bill Lafoy, raised in Slave Lake, recalls a childhood grounded in traditional practices and resourcefulness. His Métis mother, Marie Auger, connected him to extended family in Wabasca, where he spent summers traveling by horse and wagon. His memories of hauling water and living without modern amenities highlight the resilience and self-sufficiency of Métis families in the mid-20th century.



Wabasca - Trips between Slave Lake and Desmarais between 1944-49

Similarly, Rene Decoine's family reflects strong cultural inheritance. Raised in Wabasca, he grew up speaking Cree and learning traditional skills like hunting and trapping from his father and grandfather. His stories of accompanying his grandfather to the Hudson's Bay post and recognizing differences between wild and farmed mink (an industry that established on Slave Lake in the 1920s) demonstrate how knowledge was passed down through generations.

Across the territory, families such as the Cunninghams, L'Hirondelles, Beauchamps, Augers, and Decoines illustrate the enduring presence of Métis kinship networks. These families maintained cultural traditions, adapted to economic changes like the shift from fur trade to logging and oil, and preserved their deep connections to the land and each other.



Slave Lake À l'Hirondelle Store 1930's
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate



Otipemisiwak
Métis Government