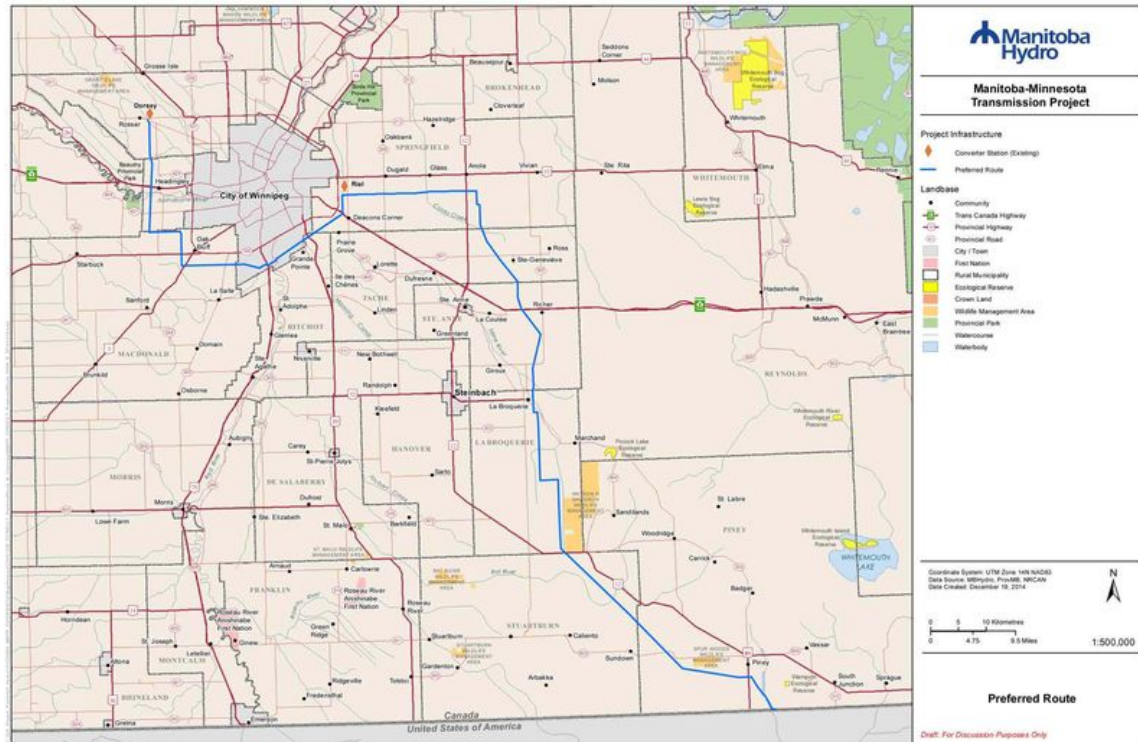


## **Historical Use and Occupancy of Peguis First Nation in area occupied by proposed Manitoba/Minnesota Transmission Project Brief**

### **Overview**

1. This brief chronicles an archival and text-based research study of the historical use and occupancy of Peguis First Nation (formerly St. Peter's Indian Settlement) in the area to be occupied by the proposed Manitoba/Minnesota Transmission Project by Manitoba Hydro (fig. 1).



(fig. 1 credit: [https://www.hydro.mb.ca/projects/mb\\_mn\\_transmission/index.shtml](https://www.hydro.mb.ca/projects/mb_mn_transmission/index.shtml))

### **Textual Limitations and Scope of Textual Research**

2. To date, there have only been a small handful of works devoted exclusively to the St. Peter's Indian Settlement and later Peguis First Nation, and many of these remain unpublished reports or theses. These include: Michael P. Czuboka's 1960 University of Manitoba MA thesis "St. Peter's: A Historical Study With Anthropological Observations on the Christian Aborigines of Red River (1811-1876)"; Angela D. Jeske's 1990 University of Alberta MA thesis "St. Peter's Indian Settlement: A House Indian Community at Red River, 1833-1856"; Carolyn Podruchny's 1992 University of Toronto MA thesis "Indians and Missionaries in Encounter: The Peguis Band and the Church Missionary Society at the Red River, 1820-1838"; Benita E. Cohen 1994 University of Manitoba MSc thesis "The Development of Health Services in Peguis First Nation"; George Van Der Goes Ladd's 1986 book *Shall We Gather at the River?* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada); Donna Sutherland's 2003 book *Peguis: A Noble Friend* (St. Andrew's, Manitoba: Chief Peguis Heritage Park); Chief Albert Edward Thompson's

1973 book *Chief Peguis and His Descendents* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers Limited); Laura Peers' 1994 book *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1994); Sarah Carter's article in *Manitoba History* No. 18 (Autumn 1989) "St. Peter's and the Interpretation of the Agriculture of Manitoba's Aboriginal People"; and Tyler, Wright & Daniel Limited 1979 and 1983 pamphlets "The Illegal Surrender of the St. Peter's Reserve" (Winnipeg: T.A.R.R. Centre of Manitoba). The bulk of this writing has focused on the life and times of Peguis himself, or otherwise primarily confined itself to a pre-twentieth-century periodization. Simply put, much more archival, historical, and cultural research must be done.

### **History of Peguis First Nation**

3. Members of what would later become Peguis First Nation occupied a territory north of what is now Selkirk, MB for time immemorial. The community was primarily made up of collection of community members from the northern Norway House First Nation (who referred to the area in Cree as "The Landing Place"), northeastern communities like Brokenhead First Nation and Manigotogan First Nation, and the southern Roseau River First Nation. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century an Anishinaabe leader from Bawaating (Sault Ste. Marie) named Peguis (also known as Be-gou-ais/ Be-gwa-is/ Pegeois/ Pegouisse/ Pegowis/ Pegqas/ Pigewis/ Pigwys/ Picöis) migrated to the area and established a collective and permanent community at the area now known as Netley Creek (approximately in 1792). In modern day terms, the area that became the St. Peter's "Indian settlement" was an area broadly construed from the area of Lockport and Lower Fort Garry in the south to Netley Creek and the southern edge of Lake Winnipeg.

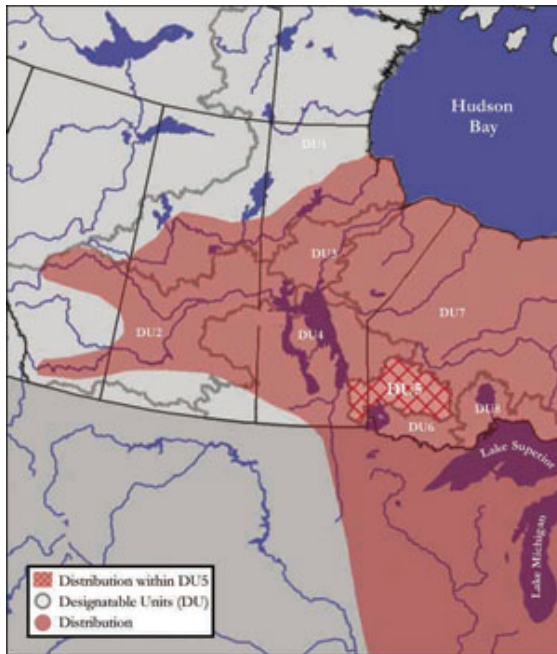
4. According to the nineteenth-century Ojibway historian William Warren in his book *History of the Ojibway Nation*, a "great Ke-nis-te-no [Cree] town" at what is now called Netley Creek was completely wiped out in 1781-82, leading to this important tributary of the Red River being re-named *Ne-bo-se-be* (the Dead River). Chief Peguis and other Ojibway had been utilizing this territory for years beforehand though, trading with Cree and other communities in the area for centuries. According to Liz Bryan's 2005 book *The Buffalo People: Pre-Contact Archaeology on the Canadian Plains* (Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing) and D.W. Moodie & Barry Kaye's 1969 article in *Geographical Review* 59 "The Northern Limit of Indian Agriculture in North America," the area had been a site of indigenous agriculture for at least 400 years *before* the arrival of the Selkirk settlers of 1812. Chief Peguis and his allies were already familiar with the cultivation of crops such as corn, potatoes, and pumpkins. Not only was it a territory close to key rivers and waterways for regional travel, but it was also rich in game, marshlands for waterfowl, close to major fishing sites (for the abundant whitefish and sturgeon), and had some of the best soil and agricultural potential. Upon establishing the community in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the borders of this community was recognized by other First Nations and was evident to early settlers (fig. 2).





- Sturgeon (160)
- Bison (160)
- Moose (82)
- Deer (82)

This illustrates how crucial the surrounding area around the original St. Peter's settlement was and how deeply access to food and resources were to life there. For instance, see the original map showing the availability of sturgeon in North America (fig. 4):



(fig. 4 credit: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/species-especes/sturgeon5-esturgeon-eng.htm>)

10. In other words, access to aquatic areas as far south as the Mississippi River was crucial to the cultural livelihood of Peguis, areas that clearly cross the proposed MMTP planned route.

11. Chief Peguis and his community have been critical political and economical players along the Red River and active contributors in the early history of Winnipeg and Manitoba – particularly in their role as agricultural pioneers, their pivotal assistance to the early Selkirk settlers, and their decision to ally themselves to the HBC and Britain. Had Peguis and the Saulteaux allied themselves with the Métis of Cuthbert Grant, or later Louis Riel, instead of the HBC and British colonial interests, the history of the region would have been fundamentally different.

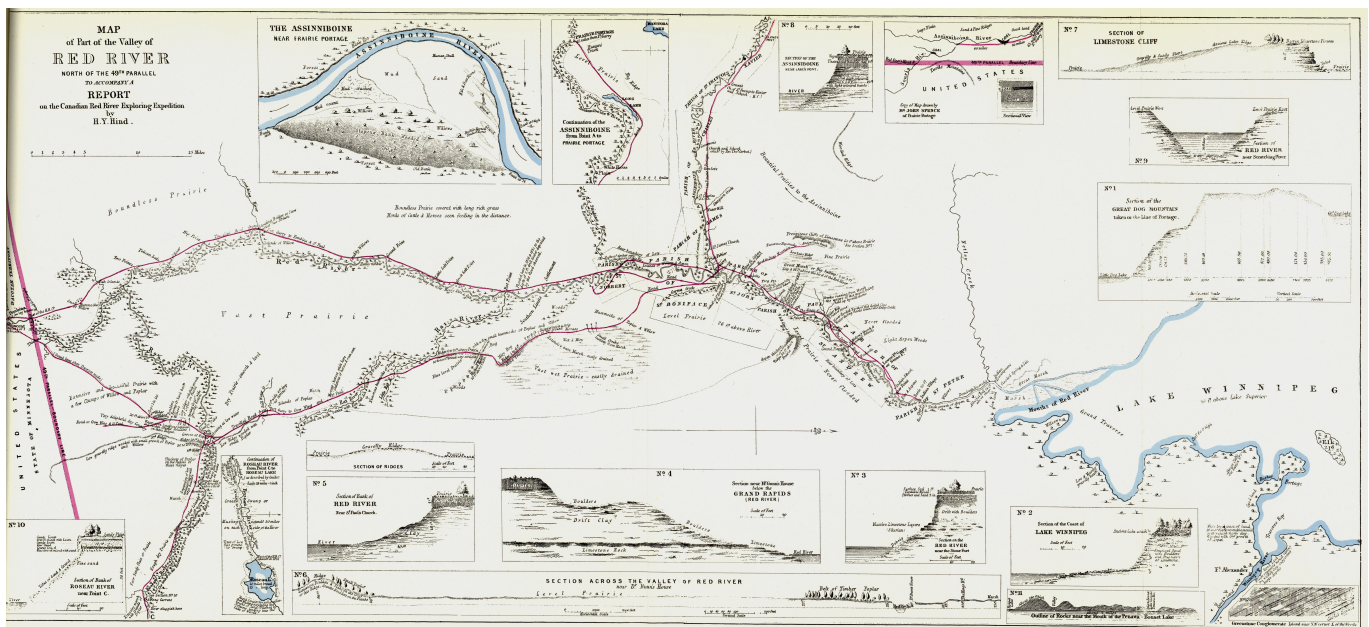
12. Furthermore, Chief Peguis and his community played a central role in the treaties of 1817 and 1871, which were the earliest formal negotiations on the prairies between Europeans and native peoples over how to share the land (and critical to the formation of the proposed MMTP project). These treaties were, among other things, pre-requisites for the growth and stability of European settler-colonialism in the Canadian west. They were critical participants and contributors to the economic development of the “fur trade” and

April 22, 2015  
FINAL DRAFT

later as independent producers or wage-labourers in diverse industries such as freighting and steamboats, fishing and hunting, agriculture, stock-raising, berry and sugar harvesting, railways, and logging and lumber mills.

13. In addition, Peguis regularly travelled for diplomatic and political reasons across southern Manitoba and evidence of this exists throughout the historical record. One of the best resources is the life writings of John Tanner found in *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner* (originally G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830).

14. Peguis was a frequent traveler to Ft. Pembina throughout his life. One such event was John Tanner's first encounter with Peguis in 1807 (150-155), where Peguis lost part of his nose in an altercation with the Sioux. For this journey, and subsequent ones, Peguis would have travelled one of three paths. One, he would have canoed down the Red River from the St. Peter's settlement (likely for diplomatic and political trips). Two, he would have travelled by foot (or later horse) on the southeastern trail (fig. 5). Three, he would have travelled the southwestern trail (fig. 5). All cross the proposed MMTP project line.



(fig. 5 credit: *Papers Relative to the Exploration of the Country Between Lake Superior and the Red Rivers Settlement*. London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1859)

15. This brief report highlights some of the many ways the members of Peguis First Nation carry a historical use and occupancy of the proposed MMTP project area in multiple ways and at multiple sites. For further information please contact historian for this project, Dr. Niigaanwewidam Sinclair, Associate Professor, Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba at (204) 474-9686 or [niigaan.sinclair@umanitoba.ca](mailto:niigaan.sinclair@umanitoba.ca).