

Peterson Family

Michal Peterson (Piotrowski)

- Michal Piotrowski (later Anglicized to Peterson) was born on November 13th, 1900 in the town of Rzepince, parish of Jazlowiec, province of Buczacz, Poland, near the city of Lwow.
- At the time of Michal's birth, Rzepince was part of Ukraine in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it is today again part of Ukraine.
- His parents were Magdalena (nee Szuszezak) and Ignatius Piotrowski (son of Jozef), and they had a farm near Rzepince.
- Michal was the eldest child.
- He left home at age 22 and travelled from Jazlowiec, Poland, to France, where he was a factory labourer for two years.
- His passport shows that during these two years, he travelled back to Poland, and also to Czechoslovakia, Germany, and London, England. It also listed him as being five feet, three inches tall, and noted that he had blue eyes and brown hair.
- Michal decided to immigrate to Canada and left Europe on June 27th, 1925 from Cherbourg, France, on the Canadian Pacific Line ship, the *S.S. Empress of Scotland*. As he had limited means, he came to Canada as a "third class passenger."
- Michal arrived in Quebec City on July 4th, 1925 and took the train to Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- Under the Canadian Pacific Labour Service Scheme, he worked as a farm labourer for Nicolas Ostfijczuk at Birds Hill, Manitoba.
- When his ship passage had been repaid, Michal was free to find other employment.
- Attracted by all the activity in wake of the Red Lake gold rush, Michal ventured to the fledgling mining camp of Red Lake, Ontario, in 1927.
- He eventually returned to Manitoba to marry his wife Caroline. They came back to Red Lake together in 1932.
- Shortly after arrival in Red Lake, Michal was hired by the Howey Gold Mines, Limited, as a master carpenter. He was employed there until its closure in 1941.
- Unlike so many Eastern European (and other) surnames, Michal's was never Anglicized by any officials. He himself changed his surname from Piotrowski to Peterson, as indicated by a legal document dated August 31st, 1933.
- Michal became a Canadian Citizen on December 4, 1951.
- Michal continued his carpentry trade at the McKenzie Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited.
- When the mine closed in 1965, Michal took the opportunity to retire.
- Michal had not been well and on the morning of January 18th, 1978, without warning, he died from heart failure in front of Carrie at their home on McKenzie Island.
- The Red Lake District Medical Centre was in the planning stages at the time, so donations in Michal's memory were made to its building fund.

Caroline (Carrie) Grzegocki (Gregory)

- Caroline (Carrie) was born near Gimli, Manitoba on November 2nd, 1911.
- Her parents were Anastasia (nee Kulasowska) and Adam Grzegocki. They were married on October 1st, 1910 in Gimli.
- Her father had come to Canada from Europe in 1880 when he was about 18-20.
- After her marriage to Michal in 1932, she moved with him to Red Lake.
- Carrie soon found work as a housekeeper for Beatrice Kingston, the mother of six daughters, and the wife of David Kingston, who was chief electrician of the Howey Gold Mines. Mrs. Kingston died in 1935, after the birth of her seventh daughter.
- Carrie was subsequently employed at Mychajlo (Mike) Kressall's general store in Red Lake.
- At the time, expectant mothers were advised by Red Lake's first resident physician, Dr. Thomas Goodison, to leave Red Lake several weeks before their due dates, so Carrie flew to Winnipeg, Manitoba approximately one month before her daughter Janet was to be born. Janet was born on March 3rd, 1934.

- To return home with her infant daughter, Carrie travelled by train to Sioux Lookout and then by aircraft to Red Lake. Accompanying Carrie and the baby on the flight were John Mork of McKenzie Island, and James Kirk.
- Carrie got a good scare on the plane when the weather, which had been favourable when they took off, became progressively worse and resulted in a snow storm. The pilot became disoriented and was forced to land on a lake. Carrie was very alarmed, prayed feverishly, and worried greatly about the welfare of her infant daughter. The pilot was extremely apologetic, but little could quell Carrie's understandable feelings of dread. He covered Carrie and Janet with his coat and, taking advantage of the heat which emanated from the aircraft engine, warmed a bottle of milk for Janet. The radio call for emergency assistance was eventually answered. Another aircraft came to their rescue, and Carrie's pilot followed it into Red Lake.
- A devout Roman Catholic, Carrie became a member of the local branch of the Catholic Women's League in 1954, an association which lasted for the following 34 years.
- After Michal's death in 1978, Carrie lived for several more years at her home on McKenzie Island until moving to the Legion Villa in Red Lake in 1988.
- Her latter years were spent very happily enjoying her three great-grandsons, or knitting and crocheting.
- Carrie died in her 79th year on October 1st, 1990 from peritonitis at the Red Lake Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital.

The Couple

- Michal and Caroline were married on September 3rd, 1932 at St. John Cantius Roman Catholic Church in Winnipeg.
- Exactly one month later, they set off for Red Lake, traveling first by train to Hudson, Ontario.
- According to the original October 3rd, 1932 passenger ticket (still in the possession of the family), they boarded The Northern Transportation Company's passenger boat, the *Miss Winnipeg*, for the approximately 12-hour journey to Gold Pines (Ear Falls). From there, it was many more hours before the couple reached Red Lake.
- Carrie remembered that Captain McLean was very kind to the newlyweds.
- The total price for their transportation to married life in the north was \$36.
- For the first six months in Red Lake, Michal and Carrie lived at the home of Wladyslaw (Bill) Slobodzian.
- The Petersons then moved into a small room above Mychajlo (Mike) Kressall's general store, where Caroline was working.
- Their next residence was in half of a log home—the other half was occupied by a couple named Doherty, who later moved to Toronto. The house was later sold to John Gazankas.
- Michal then set to work clearing land and building a large house along what became Gold Shore Road in Red Lake. It had six rooms, including three bedrooms and a washroom. Michal had cleared a tremendous amount of forest from the area and it later saved their home from a forest fire. The back yard also had a large storage shed and a bountiful garden. The Tapics family lived next door.
- Since they had an extra room, Carrie rented it to carefully-chosen female boarders, some of whom included Mary Kopansky and Marie Ouellette.
- Their only child, Janet June, was born on March 3rd, 1934 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- The Petersons moved to McKenzie Island the year after the closure of the Howey Gold Mines.
- Both Michal and Carrie were buried in Woodland Cemetery in Balmertown.

Children

Janet June Duncan (nee Peterson)

- Janet was born on March 3rd, 1934 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- Janet spent her early years in Red Lake, where she began elementary school.
- She received grades nine through twelve at the Red Lake Continuation School (high school), which was located next to the Red Lake Public School.

- Like other McKenzie Island students, Janet remained in Red Lake for freeze-up and break-up.
- She remembers living with the McDougall family during one of these periods.
- Janet remembers break-up and freeze-up as "fun time for weeks. This period was so long because we usually travelled by boat from the Island to Red Lake, and it was the whole lake that had to freeze sufficiently before it was safe to travel by van or Bombardier. In the spring we were in the Bombardier with no doors and the upper hatch removed – "just in case" – as well travelled on the ice prior to break-up. This was exciting, but then the road was made from Red Lake to Cochenour and then we had only to walk the channel [Bruce Channel] at freeze-up and break-up."
- "Although we lived on an island, there were always many things to do: swimming, boating, tennis, fishing, walking in the forest, berry and mushroom picking, skiing, skating, and curling. We were always busy and having fun," says Janet.
- Janet remembers that her history and English teacher was Thomas Miller, the high school principal, while his wife, Genevieve, taught French.
- "It was while we were in the Continuation School that we, along with grade 11, devised for the new Red Lake District High School, the school crest, colours and motto. The school crest is of a mine headframe (Red Lake) superimposed with a maple leaf (Canada) and the lamp of learning (education). We chose the school colours of red and gold, red for Red Lake and gold for the reason of Red Lake's existence. The school motto, "*doctor fieri studeo*," was found in the back of a Black's dictionary (we were so serious!). It means "we study to become more learned," Janet remembered.
- Janet and her friend, Adele Roluf, were the only two first Red Lake graduates of grade 13 in 1953. They both became teachers, Janet of English, and Adele of French.
- Janet then attended the University of Western Ontario (Brescia College), where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1956 and a Bachelor of Library Science in 1966.
- She met George Morley Duncan one spring break-up when she was boarding at the Tingley home in Red Lake. He was born in Tisdale, Saskatchewan and came to Red Lake as a truck driver for Motorways.
- Janet and George were married on July 11th, 1959 at St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church in Balmertown.
- They had a daughter, Teresa, and a son, David. When she married Dennis VanDusen, Teresa wore her mother's wedding dress.
- After a few years, Janet returned to teaching at Red Lake District High School where she remained until her retirement in June 1992.
- For many years, George Duncan operated the J & M Service station at the junction of Highway 105 and Howey Street in Red Lake. He held a pilot's license, and was a long-time member of the Red Lake Fire Department. Duncan was also a member of the Knights of Columbus. George died at Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg at age 56 on August 30th, 1988. He was buried in Woodland Cemetery in Balmertown.
- One of Janet's interests is travel and she has journeyed as far away as Tibet and Nepal.
- After a long and distinguished teaching career, Janet is happy to devote herself to her family, her church, volunteering, her cats, reading, and her garden.