

Church and Cemetery on Whonnock IR 1

An “Ancestry” information exchange in December 2011 showed some confusion about Whonnock's First Nations cemetery and the church that stood on the Whonnock reserve.

Valerie: “There is a small “First Nations” graveyard on the side of the highway at a place just East of Maple Ridge called Whonnock”

Roree: “.... this is indeed the Whonnock area. My cousins and I are descended from these people and this church and this graveyard contain some of the older records that are difficult for us to find since it requires some travel....One of my cousins a very astute genealogist found this church and the graveyard some years ago, but sadly had run out of time to record any of the information from the church or the graveyard.”

There are two First Nations cemeteries in this eastern part of Maple Ridge. The one Valerie Walton mentions is on the south side of Lougheed Highway and on Langley Indian Reserve No. 5. The other one is on Whonnock Indian Reserve No. 1 and that is the one Roree refers to. There are no plans of either cemetery.

There was a Roman Catholic Church on Whonnock IR 1 built by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) around 1860 (?). It was demolished more than half a century ago. It is unlikely that there were any records kept at that church. The OMI fathers at Mission kept the records of baptism, marriage and death of all in their care in the area, including the Whonnock IR. Those researching First Nations/Kanaka roots are familiar with those records.

The little First Nations cemetery on Whonnock Reserve No. 1 is just east of the municipal Whonnock cemetery. In 1997, when I recorded the grave markers, I found a few iron so-called “OMI” crosses. They had been removed from the graves where they

stood originally and are now no longer at the cemetery. These crosses were marked "Cathrine Feb 1888," "Patrick Feb 1889," Alick Mar 1892."

There are remnants of some wooden crosses without any wording left.

The only surviving markers were the following:

- Willie D. / Cheer / Born / June 15, 1879 / Died / Oct. 30 1908 / Rest in piece [up- right column, text on east side]
- Roxley H. Cheer / Born May 21, 1907 / Died Aug. 9, 1912 / Gone but not forgotten [stone cross, information on base]
- In loving memory of / Johnny Louie / Died June 23, 1937 / Aged 13 years / Save in the arms of Jesus [marble cross. broken from base]

Reference: [Whonnock Notes No. 2 – Cemeteries in Whonnock](#)