



Chief Dan Minde

**Cree Name: Ka Mahihkani Pimohtew or “Walking Wolf”
1883 - 1959**

By Pam Cooke, Maskwacis, AB., Dec 2024

Chief Dan Minde is my husband’s great grandfather. Dan’s son was Joe Minde, his granddaughter was Theresa (nee Minde) Wildcat, and his great grandson is Brian Wildcat (my husband). Brian’s family frequently talked about Dan Minde, the last traditional chief of Ermineskin Cree Nation, as well as his mother Mamitoneyihcikan, also known as Maggie Minde. Dan Minde was born in present day Saskatchewan circa 1883. His mother along with family members, who were followers of Lucky Man, (who was a follower of Big Bear) fled the 1885 Rebellion, walking across the plains to reach Hobbema. Mamitoneyihcikan, his mother’s Cree name means mind in English. There were stories of great hardship and fear of starvation during that journey. They survived by eating prairie gophers, and horse meat when their horse died. They carried their meagre belongings in pails and bags tied to their dogs’ backs. **Source:** *Family Oral History*.

There is a death certificate for a Maggy Mind, aged 65 (b.1843) who died of consumption in Hobbema in 1908, but it is unconfirmed if this is Mamitoneyihcikan. Emma Minde, wife of Joe Minde also mentions in her book, “Their Example Showed Me the Way”, p. 109, that Mamitoneyihcikan was still alive and lived with her other son Sam Minde when he was first married in 1907. **Source:** *Ermineskin Transfer & Adherents 1886-1950*.

Dan’s first wife was Celina Yeyekastos (Saddleback) from Samson Band #9. They were married circa 1902 and had 3 children together, Sophie, Julie and Joe. Celina died circa 1909. He married his second wife Mary Jane Louis, from Samson Band #32 in 1912. They had two children, Paul (who died in infancy) and Justine. Mary Jane also known as Jean died in 1971. Dan Minde is recorded as Ermineskin #42 in the band records. **Source:** *Ermineskin Transfer & Adherents 1886-1950*.



Dan Minde with wife Mary Jane Minde & children Sophie, Julie, Joe and Justine. Photo Circa 1918

Census information gives us more of a snapshot of Dan Minde. He is listed as a farmer in 1906, 1916, 1921 and 1931. His birthplace changes from Alberta to Saskatchewan in the later censuses. In 1931, he lives in a frame house with four rooms valued at \$1400. It is of note that he could not read or write but believed strongly in formal education, with grandson Wilton Littlechild becoming the first lawyer from Maskwacis and granddaughter Theresa Minde becoming the first teacher from Maskwacis. Another grandson Maurice Wolfe served on Ermineskin Council for over 30 years. Dan Minde was also involved with the Indian Association of Alberta from its formation in 1939.

Ermineskin Chief Buried At Hobbema

HOBHEMA, ALTA. — Daniel Minde, chief of the Ermineskin Indians until two years ago when he was hospitalized, was buried at the Hobbema Roman Catholic cemetery recently.

Representatives of the Indian Agency, R.C.M.P. and members of the tribe attended the service in the chapel.

Seventy-five years of age, Daniel Minde was a man who worked hard in his lifetime to better the lot of his fellow-Indians. His interest in reserve activities was one which greatly aided many improvements. His greatest interest was in the expansion of the school catering to the Indians of the district.

He was also a strong supporter of the Roman Catholic Mission.

He was elected a councillor first in 1929 and held that position until he was chosen chief of the tribe in 1943.

He relinquished his position as chieftain two years ago when he became hospitalized following an illness. His Indian name, Ka Mahigan Pimuttet, means "Walking Wolf." He is survived by his wife, and three children, Mr. J. Minde, Mrs. P. Wolf and Mrs. M. Smith; and scores of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

At the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Daniel Minde was awarded a Coronation Medal for his work.

The service was conducted by Father G. M. Latour, O.M.I., Father M. Landry, O.M.I., Father G. E. Rheaune, O.M.I. and Father A. Paradis, O.M.I., who delivered an address in both Cree and English.

Dan Minde was the last traditional chief of Ermineskin from 1943-1959, and a band councillor or headman from 1926-1943. Dan died on Feb 6, 1959, at the Hobbema Indian Hospital, age 75 and is buried at the Ermineskin Cemetery.

Source: Province Of Alberta Registration of Death.

Source: Indian Record Vol XX11, No. 4, Winnipeg, Canada, April 1959. Some of the information in this obituary is inaccurate.

Dan Minde was chief until his death and his Cree name is properly spelled in the title.

Chief Dan Minde circa 1955. This is probably the outfit that his wife Jean made for him. ➡

There is an interesting story about Dan Minde's beaded outfit, seen in the attached picture. It was sewn by his wife Jean and completed in 1955. After Dan died in 1959 it was entrusted to Father Latour OMI, principal at the Ermineskin Residential School. Family members did not know what happened to the outfit, until 1993 when it was found at the Provincial Archives. It had been held at the Oblate Museum until 1968 when it was transferred to the Archives. It was said to have been on loan. This outfit was eventually returned to the Littlechild family in care of grandson, Wilton Littlechild. When Wilton was made an honorary chief, he received Dan Minde's Cree name, Walking Wolf and a headdress. Wilton's headdress was later bestowed upon Pope Francis at Maskwacis in July 2022, where the pope delivered an apology for the abuse at residential schools in Canada. It was given to the Pope with the blessing and support of elders and the organizing committees, by Chief Littlechild.



When Wilton was inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, he loaned Dan Minde's outfit and a replica of his headdress to honour him. Both are still there on display.

We learn more about Dan through stories from his family. His leadership continues to influence future generations. His grandson, Chief (Dr.) Wilton Littlechild who became a lawyer, Member of Parliament and Commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, along with many other achievements, recalls his grandparents' influence.

“He is honoured to have been raised by his grandparents, Chief Dan Minde and Mary Jane Minde and his philosophy for life can be accredited to them. His grandfather taught him from a cultural and traditional perspective, while his grandmother instructed him to pursue a formal education.” **Source:** *Alberta Order of Excellence Recipient, Inducted 2014*

Our grandparents reared us with a belief that you should always work for and give back to your community. My grandfather, Chief Dan Minde, a leader for 33 years, said to us: “You will be given your community in a certain condition. While it is in your hands, do everything that you can to make it better and then proudly give it to your children — the future.” **Source:** *Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, 2006 Distinguished Service Award – Wilton Littlechild*

Chief Wilton Littlechild expands upon this philosophy as Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner in the final TRC report:

“When you work for our community, you must do every- thing you can to make it better, then pass it to the next one...” These were my late grandfather's (Chief Dan Minde) words to me in Cree as a twelve-year-old. I was and had been a residential school student for six years already. The true meaning of this instruction really took on full significance for me during these past six years. **Source:** *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939 p. XIII*

His granddaughter, Theresa C. Wildcat (nee Minde), became the first teacher from Maskwacis in 1952. Both received a Queen Elizabeth II medal. Dan, along with other Alberta chiefs received the Queen's Coronation medal in 1953 and Theresa received the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal in 2002. Theresa set an example of sixty years of dedicated service with a sincere and deep interest for the betterment of her people, the advancement of First Nations education and the preservation of Cree language and history. The new Theresa C. Wildcat Early Learning Centre opened on Ermineskin Cree Nation in 2023 and was named in her honour.

“From an early age, Theresa heard her grandfather Chief Dan Minde tell his grandchildren, that formal education and traditional knowledge is what will make our people strong. She always told us, it was her grandfather who taught her about her culture and her traditions, but most of all he taught her to be proud of who she was, to be Cree and to love your people. He had a strong and positive influence on who she became. Dan Minde was the last Traditional Chief of the Ermineskin Cree Nation.” **Source:** *Knowing Ourselves, Our Culture and Our Language: The History of Indian Education in Alberta, Written by great granddaughter, Clara Wildcat 2014*

“Theresa Wildcat attended Ermineskin Indian Residential School in the 1930's and 1940's. The school didn't go past grade 7. After completing Grade 7 at Ermineskin Residential school, Theresa was enrolled at St. Joseph's Convent in Red Deer, but her parents Joe and Emma Minde were responsible for paying for her school fees. In a story Theresa often shared, her family was prepared to support her education, but her Mosom (Grandfather) Dan Minde paid a visit to the Indian Agent to discuss his granddaughter's enrollment at St. Joseph's Convent. After Dan Minde's visit, the arrangements were made for Indian Affairs to cover the costs of Kokum attending high school.”

“My [attainment of my] PhD is an 80-year journey of my family advocating for access to sites of education and taking on the responsibility to build sites of Indigenous education” he says. * **Source:** *Dr. Matthew Wildcat (great-great grandson) 2023 medium.com RIBBONS blog.*

*It is of note that Dan Minde addressed the Catholic Indian League of Canada in 1955 with a proposition to establish an Indian high school at the Ermineskin Residential School. His belief in formal education and this experience with ensuring his granddaughter received a high school education would have informed his advocacy. His influence across multiple generations and over time is still present.

Traditional knowledge and ceremony were also part of Dan Minde's life. He was a tremendous horseman, and his tipi painted with horses was a familiar site at the Ponoka Stampede and the Calgary Stampede. His tipi drew many visitors & was also the site of many poker games! I hope to find a photograph of his teepee one day.

Theresa recalls more memories of her grandfather. Dan Minde [my grandfather] did the sundance but he also went to the church. That time the chiefs were powerful. I respected my grandfather a lot, his beliefs... The sundance was a very powerful thing. I respected it because my grandfather was in it. My grandfather went every year to the sundance. The people would wait for the children to be out of residential school and then they would head to the sundance at the end of June or in July. **Source:** *Conversation with Theresa C. Wildcat 2011*

Granddaughter Agnes Littlechild also wrote a story about the summer of 1953:

“Early in the morning we got our two horses, Shorty and Frank, harnessed them, packed our tent, blankets and our grub box and headed off to Riverside. When we arrived we looked for Kokum and Mosom’s tipi. It was easy to find. Chief Dan Minde always had a Canadian flag on a pole in front of his tipi. His tipi was the one with horses drawn around it: very colourful.

That particular sundance was the last time I had partially witnessed a horse dance. It happened right in front of Dan Minde’s tipi. I remember two cars came to give lighting to where the drummers were. Mom said one car was Sam Minde’s and the other was from the States. Dan Minde was a participant. He had on his chief’s outfit. I remember his horse wearing some fancy pieces of beadwork on the halter and neck. I don’t remember the ending part of that ceremony.” **Source:** *Short Story: The Summer of 53 and Mom* by Agnes Littlechild. Also published in *Roots & Branches* April 2017

Researching our ancestors helps us to realize their influences and the legacy that they endow us with. Chief Dan Minde, a faithful Chief and leader, believed in the power of formal education, traditional Cree knowledge and that leadership is about service to your community. His influence is seen in his many descendants and their work in a variety of ways to make Maskwacis a better place. They continue his leadership today.

Artist George Littlechild painted this portrait of Dan Minde from the 1918 family photo seen below. It was given as a graduation gift to our son Nigel Wildcat in 2015.



Thanks to my husband Brian for editing and formatting this story.