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1000-1700 (Volume I)

CHARITÉ, ESPÉRANCE, FOI (Charity, Hope, Faith), young Montagnais girls adopted by Samuel de Champlain in 1628.

Champlain had for a long time wished to adopt some young Indians, in order to have them educated in France. But the obstacle was the very strong attachment of the Indians for their children: some parents, he writes, had turned down tempting offers. But on 2 Feb. 1628 the Montagnais came and offered him three girls aged 11, 12, and 15 – one of them the daughter of Mécabou *dit* Martin. This move was an attempt to win back Champlain's friendship, which had been jeopardized the previous autumn by the murder of two Frenchmen. Champlain accepted the young Indian girls and named them Foi, Espérance, and Charité.

All three were apparently delighted at the idea of receiving a French education, but Foi soon went back to the woods. Espérance and Charité stayed at Fort Saint-Louis, where Champlain taught them "all that they were able to comprehend." He taught them "to use a needle, both for making clothes and for embroidering-; these tasks, Champlain notes enthusiastically, "they perform most neatly, and they are moreover highly civilized."

The war soon put an end to this family life and to the attempt at civilization. In July 1629, when Champlain was forced to surrender Quebec to the English, he asked LEWIS Kirke for permission to take his two Indian girls to France. Kirke reluctantly agreed. Finally Espérance and Charité sailed for Tadoussac on 24 July, "animated by an intense desire to go to France," but NICOLAS MARSOLET'S interference was to spoil everything. Because he wanted to seduce Champlain's wards, he wrote to DAVID Kirke that the Montagnais assembled at Trois-Rivières refused to let the two girls leave. Champlain argued that this was a mere lie, but Kirke, anxious to maintain his tactical position, was afraid of antagonizing the natives. Champlain insisted: he was ready to give them goods to the value of 1,000 *livres*. Kirke, at Marsolet's instigation, refused outright. Espérance and Charité were so upset that they refused to eat or drink.

One evening Kirke entertained the company at supper; his two brothers were there, with Champlain, the ships' captains, and Marsolet. Speaking to the latter, Espérance accused him of betraying the French, of importuning her with his indecent propositions, and of preventing herself and her companion from going to France "to learn to serve God there." And she added: "If you come near me in the future, I shall plunge a knife into your breast." Charité supported her: "If I had hold of your heart, I should eat it more readily and with greater spirit than I should eat any of the meats on that table." Marsolet "was shamefaced, and could give no reply other than that they were mad."

Nonetheless, Espérance and Charité stayed in the country. At the moment of parting, Champlain and his brother-in-law Eustache BOULLÉ gave each girl a rosary. Champlain urged GUILLAUME COUILLARD, who was not emigrating, to "let them remain with his wife as long as they wanted to." Couillard sailed for Quebec on 14 Sept. 1629, with the two Montagnais girls. Champlain does not seem to have seen his adopted daughters again: he makes no mention of them on his return in 1633. The woods must have reclaimed them.

By instructing these native children Champlain was creating a precedent. CHOMEDEY de Maisonneuve, the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, and especially the Ursulines of Quebec were to continue this policy of acculturation. However, as far as we know the only Indian girl who did not return to the life of the woods is Marie-Madeleine Chrestienne, who married Pierre Boucher* in 1649.

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Champlain, *Works* (Biggar), V, 248–53; VI, 60, 62, 70, 104–24, 144. Sagard, *Histoire du Canada* (Tross), IV, 829f., 908–11. Dionne, *Champlain*, II, 409–12. Marcel Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada français: histoire et conditions de l'esclavage* (Québec, 1960), 8f.

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