

APPENDIX D.

Mr. Duncan to the Hon. G. A. Walkem.

VICTORIA, 6th July, 1875.

SIR,—Having read over the correspondence between the Provincial Government and the Indian Department, in reference to the question of Land Reserves for the Indians, I have now the honor to submit to you, for the consideration of the Government, the following remarks which contain my views on the subject.

Of the urgency and importance of the Land question, and its vital bearing on the peace and prosperity of the Province there can be no doubt. The Provincial Government will, I feel sure, readily endorse all that appears in the correspondence on these points.

The questions to settle appear to be:—

1. *Who* among the Indians shall be entitled to land?
2. What *number of acres* shall be granted to each Indian so entitled?
3. What is to be done with *existing Reserves*?

Taking the first question:—

The mode approved by the Government appears to be, that *each family of five* is to receive certain lands, while some of their correspondents urge rather to regard *every male adult* as eligible. With the latter idea I fully concur, as it seems to me the only workable course to pursue.

I should pity the officer appointed to carry out the arrangement about families; nothing but complication and annoyance would ensue, and ultimately (in my opinion) the plan would be thrown aside as untenable.

As to the 2nd question.—The Dominion Government ask for eighty (80) acres for each family of five persons, while the Provincial Government offer only twenty (20) acres for such family.

I cannot believe the great difference between the demand in the one case, and the offer on the other, denotes the comparative respect for the Indians' welfare as held by the two Governments. No, I am persuaded that the whole difference springs from the fact that no definite information is before the Provincial Government as to the number and pursuits of the Indians in respective localities or the kind of land to be reserved for their use.

I can fully understand that the Provincial Government are reluctant to impede the progress of the Province by handing over to the Indians what might in some localities prove to be the whole of the cultivable lands, without their having much prospect or any guarantee that such lands will be utilized; hence I beg to make the following suggestions:—

1st. That no basis of acreage for Reserves be fixed for the Province as a whole, but rather that each nation of Indians be dealt with separately on their respective claims.

2nd. That for the proper adjustment of such claims let the Dominion and the Provincial Governments each provide an agent to visit the Indians and report fully as to the number and pursuits of each nation and the kind of country they severally occupy.

3rd. That the Provincial Government deal as liberally with the Indians as other Provincial Governments in the Dominion. My opinion is that a liberal policy will prove the cheapest in the end; but I hold it will not be necessary in the interests of the Indians to grant them only cultivable lands; rather I would recommend that a large proportion of their Reserves should be wild and forest lands, and hence may be very extensive without impoverishing the Province, and at the same time so satisfactory to the Indians as to allay all irritation and jealousy towards the whites.

4th. I think the Provincial Government might reasonably insist upon this with the Dominion Government,—that no Indian shall be allowed to alienate any part of a Reserve, and in case of a Reserve being abandoned, or the Indians on it decreasing, so that its extent is disproportioned to the number of occupants, that such Reserve or part of a Reserve might revert to the Provincial Government.

*As to the 3rd question:—*The existing Reserves are shown to be by the correspondence both irregular in quantity and misplaced as to locality by following tribal divisions, which is no doubt a mistake and fraught with bad consequences.

My advice would be in the meantime simply to ignore them, as it certainly would not be wise to regard them as a precedent, and it would be impolitic to have two systems of Reserves in the Province,—one tribal and the other national.

My opinion is that if the Dominion Government will establish sub-agents for each language or nation of Indians, and place and employ those agents as I have recommended, that the Indians will without any outside pressure be drawn and gradually gather round such agency and ultimately be willing to abandon the small and petty Reserves they now occupy, and especially so, if the Provincial Government offer to compensate them for the improvements or clearing of any lands they are willing to resign.

I enclose you a copy of part of a letter I have lately had the honor to present to the Indian Department, at Ottawa, on Indian affairs. I have, &c.,

(Signed)

WILLIAM DUNCAN.