

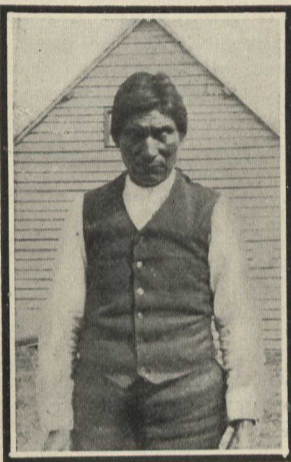
Atawapiscat Indians at Fort Albany meeting for the Election of Councillors.



The Inspector of Indian Agencies and his Pay Table at the mouth of the English River.

In and About James Bay

By J. G. RAMSDEN



Our Guide "Anaway."

MANY people fail to distinguish between Hudson and James Bay, yet the physical and geographical conditions, if one may so speak, are quite different. James Bay is decidedly shallow and therefore offers fewer opportunities for navigation, except to light-draft boats. This shallowness affects it in many ways, the chief being that the ice is formed more quickly and King Frost meets with little resistance from wind and wave.

The writer has spent two seasons in and about James Bay, and has had exceptional opportunities for observing the people, the climate, and the various characteristics of that portion of Canada. He has had experiences grave and gay, has heard tales that were humorous and tales that were tragic. Some of these may be found interesting.

Access to this location from Montreal and Toronto is usually overland straight north. The Ontario Government railway is pushing its iron arm farther and farther north, and soon the trip will present fewer difficulties. The writer and party have also entered this district from a point on the Canadian Pacific Railway, a little more than half way between Port Arthur and Kenora. Those going to James Bay through this new country can, of course, take in few supplies. Those living in and about the Bay must have their wants supplied in another way. Fort Albany is the distributing point for all those living along the Albany, the Atawapiscat and the English Rivers. The provisions supplied the red men of this district are brought in from England and landed at Charlton Island, nearly 100 miles out in James Bay, by the "Discoverer,"

the only boat up to the present year that is bringing supplies into this country from England. These supplies are transhipped at Charlton Island and brought to the different distributing points, such as Moose Factory, Fort Albany, and Fort George, by a small tug, which draws only about seven or eight feet of water. When the supplies arrive at Fort Albany they are then loaded into York boats, tracked and poled up the Albany River by the Indians. One of these boats will hold 100 bags of flour.

It seems strange that flour made from wheat grown a few hundred miles west should be taken by rail to Montreal, thence by boat to Great Britain and back again to James Bay. In other words, instead of being carried a few hundred miles across the country, it is carried thousands of miles by train and steamboat. When it arrives at points along the Albany River the flour is worth from \$20 to \$25 a barrel. Furthermore, only one boat load of supplies arrives each year and if the people run short of anything they must wait patiently until the boat comes back the following year.

In traversing this country there are a great many hardships to be met and great difficulties to be encountered. On this account it is necessary to be supplied with the best and most expert guides that the country affords. The Indian is a very careful guide. They invariably know nothing whatever of the art of swimming and on this account take far less chances than the ordinary traveller or explorer in that country. Anaway, an Indian between 65 and 70 years of age, is probably the best guide from Sandy Lake, a short distance on from Dinorwic on the Canadian Pacific line, to Fort Hope, a Hudson Bay post, a distance of 400 or 500 miles from the railroad line. From that point on other guides have to be selected at intervals of about 200 miles, as that seems to be about the distance that any one of them knows the country well. They have no idea of distance whatever, and can only give you an idea of your travels by telling you how many times they sleep between places. For instance, we asked our head guide, who was conducting us from Fort Hope to Marten's Falls, how far we had

proceeded on our journey. He informed us that we were just half way, but the other half was a good deal the longest.

The Indians in this district have heard but little of our modern inventions. Our interpreter on this occasion was above the average, and had a fairly good idea of the English language. We asked him to tell the Indians, who were grouped around, that at home we had an automobile, a carriage that needed neither horses nor oxen, but simply "went by itself," and that it would travel fifty or sixty miles in an hour, a distance that would take them a day to cover with a canoe. What did they think of that? This was a little hard; they had lived in the wilds all their lives and never heard of the wonders of civilisation, seen an electric street car, or even a railway train. However, they hastily formed an opinion and the interpreter turned to us with the message, "Don't believe." We then told him to explain to them that we had an electric cable running under the Atlantic Ocean, a body of water much larger than any of their lakes thereabouts or all put together, and by this we could send a message to a friend away across this water and get an answer back in as short a time almost as it takes to tell. John repeated this to them, and returned to us with the statement that "it was a darn lie." We then told him to tell them about the telephone system. How, if they had this arrangement, they could speak with their cousins (they are all cousins) who were many miles away, hear their cousins' own voices, and hold a regular conversation with them. The interpreter stood still and did not make a move towards imparting this information to his kinsmen. We urged and insisted, and then he said: "Me think that darn lie."

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One of the pictures shows a tribe of Indians assembled for the purpose of electing a councillor at Fort Albany. This band is composed of the Atawapiscat and Fort Albany Indians, their hunting-ground being in the district of the Atawapiscat River and the shores of James Bay. They have just turned to have their picture taken after the Inspector has addressed them on their duty to King and



Poling up the Albany River in a York Boat.



The yearly visit of the Discoverer to Charlton Island, in James Bay, one hundred miles from Moose Factory.