

REPORT  
OF  
GEORGE BURDEN, ESQ.,  
COMMISSIONER,  
ON THE  
WESTERN PART OF THE DISPUTED TERRITORY  
BELONGING TO THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.

---

TORONTO, 10th February, 1883.

*To the Honourable the Provincial Secretary of Ontario, Toronto :*

SIR,—In obedience to instructions, I have prepared and herewith submit a record of occurrences within that part of the disputed territory in which, notwithstanding the Award of the Arbitrators, the Dominion and Manitoba Governments have, since 1879, pretended to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction ; also a statement of such other incidental facts and circumstances as have come under my own observation or in respect of which I have obtained information since, in August last, I proceeded to Rat Portage.

With the exception of a few persons connected with the Hudson Bay Post, Rat Portage, originally called Keewatin, had no population until, in 1879, it was made the headquarters of the contractors for Section B of the Canada Pacific Railway. But three miles farther west, on Section A of that road, was springing up, at Rat Portage proper, now called Keewatin, a flourishing village in connection with large saw mills established by the owners of timber limits on the Lake of the Woods, leased under the provisional boundary agreement of 1874.

Rat Portage on becoming the distributing point for the firm of Manning, Macdonald, McLaren & Co., railway contractors, speedily acquired importance. Gradually, population flowed in, general stores and taverns were established, lumbering and mining parties made it their point of departure for locations on the lake, a large hotel was erected, and, generally, the place assumed a character for enterprise and activity.

In 1879, the Dominion Government proclaimed the Public Works Act in force from English River to Cross Lake. Under this Act an illicit liquor seller was liable to a fine of \$20 for a first offence ; \$40 for a second offence ; and for a third offence, \$40 and six months' imprisonment—the informer getting no portion of the fines. A Commissioner