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Memoranda of Oka Indians 1878?
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To His Excellency the Right Honorable the Earl of Dufferin, K.P., K.C.B., &c., &c.,
Governor General of the Dominion of Canada, in Council.

The memorial of the undersigned Iroquois and Algonquin Indians residing in the Village of Oka in the Seigniorie of the Lake of Two Mountains, and others, citizens of the City of Montreal and elsewhere, in the Province of Quebec

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:

That for a number of years past, difficulties of a very painful and dangerous nature have existed at the said Village of Oka, between the Indians there located, and the Seminary of St. Sulpice of Montreal, as to the respective rights of the said Indians and Seminary, in the enjoyment of certain lands and forests in said Seigniorie.

That a large majority of said Indians having withdrawn from the Church of Rome, a building was erected to serve them as a Chapel and School-house, for the purpose of religious worship and education.

That this building was destroyed by the said Seminary, on the 7th of December 1875, under circumstances which will be hereinafter mentioned, and since that time the said Indians have been deprived of a suitable building for religious worship, or for the education of their children.

That on or about the 15th of June 1877, the Roman Catholic Church and parsonage which had existed at Oka for a great many years, were destroyed by fire and accusations of incendiarism have since been made, respecting different and opposing classes and parties.

That the said fire occurred while the whole village was in a state of great excitement, over the arrest and conveyance to jail under circumstances of excessive aggravation and cruelty of eight of these Protestant Indians, and the news that nearly forty others were to be arrested, and driven from their homes for acts which were done in the exercise of a legal right in the opinion of the said Indians and of the undersigned as will hereinafter be shewn.

That these arrests were made by the employees of the Seminary, aided by a body of the Provincial Police who had been brought to Oka with arms and ammunition as for a bloody conflict; seeing which a large number of the Indians took up arms, and prepared violently to resist the execution of these warrants which they believed to have issued in abuse of the process of law. That there consequently existed for a number of days, two camps of armed men who might at any moment have come to collision.

That the facts above disclosed, in the opinion of your memorialists, make it the duty of your Excellency's Government on whom devolves the care of these Indians, to adopt immediate and effective measures to settle finally, and in conformity with law and justice these troubles which from their religious aspect threaten to spread among Her Majesty's subjects all over the Dominion, the most dangerous elements of discord and even bloodshed.

That in order to enable your Excellency's Government fully to understand the facts bearing upon these disputes, your Memorialists beg to state the respective contentions of the Seminary and the Indians.

The Ecclesiastics of the Seminary, contend that they are absolute proprietors of the Seigniorie of the Lake of Two Mountains, and in a document signed by their legal representatives and produced on the 24th of August 1876, in a suit now pending in the Superior Court, Montreal, under the number 1310, they base their rights upon the following averments:—

“Que par brevet de concession octroyé à Québec, le 17 Octobre, 1717, par Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, alors Gouverneur de la Nouvelle France et Michel Begon, Intendant de Justice Police et Finances, en la dite Nouvelle France, en vertu du pouvoir à eux conjointement donné par sa Majesté le Roi de France, les dits Gouverneur et Intendant ont donné et concédé aux dits Ecclesiastiques un terrain formant partie de la dite Seigneurie des Deux Montagnes pour y transporter la Mission des Sauvages qui existait alors au Sault-au-Recollet et qui était desservie par les dits Ecclesiastiques, pour par ces derniers en jouir à perpétuité, quand même la dite Mission en serait otée, en pleine propriété à titre de Fief et Seigneurie, avec droit de haute, moyenne et basse justice, droit de chasse.

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