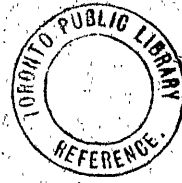


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REPORTS ON INDIAN SETTLEMENTS, &c.

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No. 1.

EXTRACTS FROM MR. PERLEY'S FIRST REPORT RESPECTING THE INDIANS ON THE SAINT JOHN.

Dated 12th August, 1841.

Mr. PERLEY having been appointed to visit the Indian Settlements, arrived at their Village on the 5th of July, where he found a large number of the Melicete Tribe assembled in expectation of his visit, and a Council being formed, he delivered to them a Speech, explaining to them his object in coming among them, to which they returned the following answer:—

After considerable discussion, the Council agreed upon their answer, which was delivered by Noel Nicholas, a Senior of the Tribe. He said, that they thanked their Mother the Queen for her good wishes toward them, and also their Father the Governor for the interest he took in their behalf. That they rejoiced very much to hear that lands were to be secured to them, and they promised to live on them, and cultivate them, if they were allowed to acquire some individual rights in the land, as well as to have a general interest in the residue.

That their children should attend the Schools, as they wished them to learn to read and write. That if more lands were acquired at the Village, many families that were now wandering about, would settle there and lead regular lives.

That their head Chief at Caughnawagh had sent them his words by a Wampum Belt, and told them never to part with one inch of their land, and by that they wished to abide.

That it was their wish that any lands set apart for them, might be secured to them by Deed or Grant, and that some person should be appointed Agent to look after such lands, and manage their affairs.

There is at the Village a Chapel in a very dilapidated condition. It is 54 feet long and 34 feet wide. The Indians are preparing to erect a new one, also 54 feet long but 46 feet wide. The frame Timber for the new Chapel is all on the spot, (except the Sills) and they have fourteen thousand feet of boards, but no shingles or siding. The Treasurers of the Tribe have in hand £15 15s. collected by subscription, and they have been informed that it will take three hundred pounds, besides what money and materials they now have, to finish the intended Chapel. They begged me to solicit aid in their behalf toward the new building.

They stated that the Priest visited them occasionally, but since there has been two Priests in Fredericton, they have been visited much oftener than before. They have not, nor ever had, a School among them, and none of the children can either read or write.

The Village Lot contains about 320 acres, which has been purchased for them, and they have several very respectable dwellings built upon it. The house of Louis Bear is 26 by 36 feet, two stories in height with a stone basement. The house of Vassall LaConte is 15 by 18 feet, a story and a half in height. There are seven other framed houses occupied, and one now building, with eleven large standing wigwams. The land is good for tillage, and most of the residents cultivate Indian Corn and Potatoes, for which purpose each family has a certain portion of ground set apart. There is considerable meadow, the grass on which they sell standing, and divide the proceeds among them. They own two horses, four hogs and about 150 fowls. The constant cropping of the land without compost, must in a few years render it almost valueless for Agricultural purposes, and unless a different system is adopted, their attempts at cultivation will, after a time, cease entirely.

I found the most intelligent of the Indians at the Village exceedingly desirous that their children should have the benefit of Education, as they said they felt the want of it daily and hourly themselves, in transactions with their white neighbors. Some of the Seniors stated that if a School were established, they would go to it themselves, as they longed to know how to read and write.

It appeared to be the general wish that the Village Lot should be increased by the purchase of one or more of the adjoining farms. I ascertained that the farms by which the Village Lot is bounded are for sale, and that they have on them respectable dwellings, and substantial barns and out-buildings. The farm to the northward belongs to Mr. Close, and that to the southward to Mr. Murray; the asking price of each is one thousand pounds Currency.

From the Village I proceeded up the River Saint John, accompanied by two Canoe-men and an Interpreter, and next visited a small Settlement at Meductic Point, about eight miles below Woodstock. I found here only twenty nine souls.*

The Point occupied by the Indians is very beautifully situated; the land is alluvial, of the finest and richest description, but shamefully neglected, and almost a public common. It was stated to me that they had at first 113 rods in front on the River, and that their land run back three miles continuing the same breadth. That they had a writing stating the boundaries, signed by Governor Carleton, which, some years ago was left at the Crown Lands' Office, and they have not seen it since. That latterly one Peter Watson has taken possession of a considerable portion of their land by virtue of a Grant or Licence, as he alleges, and they have now scarcely a half of the Lot assigned them by Governor Carleton, the boundaries of which were set up and marked, during his administration, by Mr. Bedell, a Crown Surveyor.

This Meductic Point is not mentioned among the lands reserved for the Indians in the return made by the Surveyor General to His Excellency, but I beg to state that both by history and tradition, it would seem to be one of the most ancient Indian Settlements on the Saint John. While there, the remains of an old Indian Fort were pointed out to me, within which the bones of several hundred men reposed, apparently in one common grave. It is said that the Indians built here a very strong Fort of earth and timber, to repel the French; that several desperate battles were fought on this spot, as also on the opposite side of the River, where many skeletons have likewise been found, and that these are the bones of the slain. The grave at this Fort has several times been opened by the curious, and numerous ancient Indian Spears and implements of Stone, have been carried off.

There is now in possession of His Honor the Chief Justice, the certified copy of a Grant of this very place from the Crown of France to René D'Amour, Sieur de Clignancourt, bearing date the 20th September, 1634. A Seigneurie to be called "Clignancourt," is described in this Grant, commencing at "Meductic" and extending down to the Meductic Falls, with a depth of two leagues on each side the River.

The Baron de la Montan, in his letters from Canada, (written in 1690,) mentions the Sieurs d'Amour of Quebec, as having a great Trading Establishment on the Saint John at that time; and it is to be presumed that the battles with the Indians occurred prior to such establishment, as the slain are found with stone weapons only, those of metal not being discovered, and it is well known that such were introduced and became common immediately after the French Traders obtained a footing among the Indians.

These circumstances are mentioned to show the long continued possession of the Indians at this place—a possession—maintained by the blood of their Fathers, and of which it is to be hoped the Tribe will never be deprived.

From this place, I next proceeded to the River Tobique, where the Indians have a reserve of 16,000 acres, extending eight miles in front on the River Saint John, and running back the same breadth four miles.

On the right bank of the Tobique, at its confluence with the Saint John, stands an Indian Village, consisting of thirty families, comprising 123 souls.

There are here, eleven framed houses, and twelve large standing wigwams. They have some land under crop (chiefly potatoes,) but much cleared land which appears to have been formerly culti-

* There is some doubt whether the Land at Meductic Point has not been Granted