

LAC DES MILLE LACS.

No report from Mr. R. H. Matthews, Indian Agent.

OTTAWA, 31st December, 1880.

To the Honorable
The Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs,
Ottawa.

SIR.—The report I had the honor of submitting to you on Indian affairs in the North-West Superintendency, dated January the 2nd, 1880, informed you of the position I found the Indians in when first I undertook the management of Indian affairs in the North-West, as well as the manner in which they received the information I gave them of the new policy that the Government intended to pursue towards them in assisting those who would settle and work on their reservations; I also informed you that provision had been made for them, in accordance with the recommendation made by the conference held at Battleford, in the month of August, 1879, to consider the Indian situation.

I now beg to report generally on Indian matters as I found them during the present season. I am glad to be able to state that I believe the new policy inaugurated by the Government in 1879 will be successful, and although the production of some of the farms will not be as large this year as I had hoped, on account of the late arrival of the farmers in the fall of 1879, which prevented their preparing their land for the spring sowing as early as is necessary in the North-West, the work performed by them, with the assistance of the Indians, has been most gratifying.

I am in hopes the food raised this coming year on our farms, and reserves, will go a great way towards feeding the Indians who by that time will have become settled.

I attach a return showing the number of acres broken (the bulk of which will be ready for seed as soon as the frost is out of the ground), the number of acres under crop this year, rails cut, acres fenced, hay cut and buildings erected.

The reserves in the neighborhood of Carlton have turned out fair crops, and the grain has been harvested in good shape by the Indians. As these were put in on old land they are finer than those on the reserve farms.

The Indians, I am glad to say, in this section are handing seed to the farmers to keep for them until next spring.

I instructed our farmers to try and bring this about, and the Indians appear to be willing to do it. Heretofore they have had no means of storing it excepting in their lodges, and when it was constantly in sight they could not refrain from giving it away or eating it. The Indians settled in the neighborhood of Battleford have also worked well.

On Red Pheasants' reserve, at Eagle Hills, some sixteen different fields were cultivated. A few families being interested together in the working and proceeds of these several fields, and it was found that where we have been able to arrange to give a few, and in some instances single families, a garden to be looked after by themselves, with the right to keep the produce raised on it, much more interest was manifested than when a large field had been worked in common.

On this reserve several Indians have been able to sell potatoes raised by themselves, after keeping enough for their own and their friends' consumption.

There are other reserves in this neighborhood that were settled for the first time last spring. They are occupied entirely by Plain Cree Indians, who never before grew a potato. They have worked well; and it convinces me that perseverance and good management will make them fair workers.

I propose in the future, where it is possible, to have small fields broken up for individual families, and have instructed the farmers to that effect.

In Treaties 4 and 6, there has been more or less agriculture carried on for several years by the Indians, and some of them have made very satisfactory progress, turning