

Feast of the White Dog, is held at Fort Frances, and, at such times, the gravity and terrible earnestness of their demeanor, would do no discredit to more civilized congregations.

In appearance, these Indians are tall and well formed and, in bearing, independent; sometimes, even a little saucy, but, in their intercourse with strangers, they are hospitable and kind. Their morality is said to be of a high order, as compared to that of the Indians of the Plains.

They are, in general, keen traders, and seem to know the value of what they get and give, as well as any people in the world. Some of those who assemble at Rainy River for the sturgeon fishing, in summer, come from Red Lake, in the neighboring State of Minnesota, where they possess hunting grounds; and, among these latter, are some who have been parties to treaties with the United States for relinquishing certain tracts for settlement, for which they are now in the receipt of annual payments. The experience they have thus gained, has rendered them expert diplomatists, as compared to Indians who have never had such advantages, and they have not failed to impress on their kindred and tribe, on Rainy River, the value of the lands which they hold on the line of route to Red River.

Any one who, in negotiating with these Indians, should suppose he had mere children to deal with, would find himself mistaken. In their manner of expressing themselves, indeed, they make use of a great deal of allegory, and their illustrations may at times appear childish enough, but, in their actual dealings, they are shrewd and sufficiently awake to their own interests, and, if the matter should be one of importance, affecting the general interests of the tribe, they neither reply to a proposition, nor make one themselves, until it is fully discussed and deliberated upon in Council by all the Chiefs.

The Chiefs are fond of asking any travellers, whom they believe to be of any importance, to attend a Grand Council, as it affords them an opportunity of making speeches, which are meant quite as much to swell their importance in the eyes of their own people, as to impress the stranger; and, with their people, these meetings are popular, as it affords them an excuse for making a holiday, and coming out in all the varieties of colour, which paint, unsparingly applied, can produce.

At these gatherings it is necessary to observe extreme caution in what is said, as, though they have no means of writing, there are always those present, who are charged to keep every word in mind. As an instance of the manner in which the records are in this way kept, without writing, I may mention that, on one occasion, at Fort Frances, the principal Chief of the tribe commenced an oration, by repeating, almost verbatim, what I had said to him two years previously.

All this goes to show a certain stability of character, and a degree of importance attached to what they say, on such occasions, themselves, as well as to what they hear from others. The word of the Chiefs once passed, too, seems to be quite reliable, and this augurs well for the observance of any treaty that may be made with them.

For my own part, I would have the fullest reliance as to these Indians observing a treaty and adhering most strictly to all its provisions, if, in the first place, it were concluded *after full discussion and after all its provisions were thoroughly understood by the Indians*, and if, in the next, it were never infringed upon by the whites, who are generally the first to break through Indian treaties.

The Treaty.

From what I have said, I trust it will be seen that some sort of a treaty should be arrived at with the Indians. They are as I have stated, desirous of seeing the communication opened, believing that it will conduce to their advantage, and I think a treaty with them should, in the first instance, be confined to this one point, namely, **RIGHT OF WAY**. This they expressed their willingness to accord many years ago, but the question of relinquishing land for settlement was always taken by them *en delibere*. In this latter respect, what they are afraid of is, that settlers would interfere with the fisheries, from which they derive their chief means of subsistence, and I think it would, in the first instance, be imprudent to introduce settlement in the particular section which they occupy. The first great point is to get the communication opened, and the first treaty should be confined, as I have said, simply to *right of way*. By combining it with the land question, surveys of townships for settlement, reserves for the Indians, and so forth, complications might arise which would prove embarrassing.

There is but one point more, in relation to this subject, to which I would invite attention. It is the necessity of adopting the most rigorous and strict measures to prevent the conveyance