

support that view. The sterile character of the soil in most of the reserves inhabited by the Indians to whom fish are of the greatest importance forbids the thought that they can ever become so successful as agriculturists as to be able to wholly sustain life on the fruits of their labor as such.

It would be almost a hopeless task for skilled proficients in that occupation to undertake, and much more so is it for Indians, who, as a rule, have a natural aversion to farming, and who, as in the case of these Indians, have received no instructions therein. The latter are essentially fishermen and hunters, have always procured their living from the water and from the forest, and should these fail them there will be nothing left for them but to starve, or be fed and clothed at the expense of the country.

The only reserve in the Lake Winnipeg country which is adapted for successful cultivation is that at Fisher River; and notwithstanding that the Indians resident thereon have done remarkably well in the cultivation of root crops, the greater portion even of their earnings is derived from other occupations. It, moreover, should be stated that the Indians of Fisher River Reserve consist of the most enterprising and energetic Indians on Lake Winnipeg, who collected there with the intention of doing their utmost to cultivate the soil, having specially selected that tract at the date the treaty was made with them on account of the well known fertility of the soil, and on the understanding that they should be permitted to remove thereto from Norway House, as the soil in the vicinity of the latter point was not so good.

But there are few Indians in that region possessed of the energy and perseverance of those at Fisher River.

The number of Indians who are mainly dependent on fishing in the north-eastern part of Manitoba, in Keewatin, the east part of the North-West Territories, and in the western portion of Ontario, is 6,570 souls, and the number in Manitoba dependent to a large extent, but not mainly, on fish, is 2,391.

The great majority of the Indians in the Territory included in what is known as Treaty No. 5 which may be roughly described as extending from the foot of Lake Winnipeg to Norway House, and westward from the Grand Rapids of the Saskatchewan to Cumberland House, are professedly christians. The Methodist Church and Church of England have for a number of years had missions among them. They number 3,036, being an increase of 59 over their population in 1888.

Fur-bearing animals in both agencies are reported to have been scarce last season, but the prices obtained for the pelts the Indians were able to secure were high; nevertheless the receipts of the Indians from this source and from others were considerably short of those of the year 1887-88, and the Department had to render more assistance last winter than it is called on usually to do, especially to the Indians of the eastern portion of the Saskatchewan District. The efforts of the few who attempted farming or rather gardening on the Lake Winnipeg reserves were in most cases not rewarded with success; on two or three of the reserves where the soil was somewhat better than on the others some of the Indians did fairly. In the eastern part of the Saskatchewan, with the exception of the reserve at the Pas, and perhaps those at the Pas Mountain, there would appear to be no prospect of the Indians ever being successful in gardening, not to speak of farming; the soil on their reserves is unsuitable, and they are indisposed