joint Indian Reserve Commission & Sproat

Indian Reserve Commission.

New Westminster
1 Feby 1879

Taxing Indians.

Sir,

The Indian 'Timothy' of the Skiammon village (near Grief Point) states that the policeman at Nanaimo made him pay wood taxes for 2 years, under threat of imprisonment, and that the same has been done to other Indians. Timothy formerly worked at Nanaimo. He gave me the enclosed receipt (No 29 4 April 1872) for $5. I said I would send it to you. He has lost the other receipt.

Captain Wake

has written a note to me. I enclose copy of my reply. I do not understand his statement, but I fear, from what Mohun tells me, that Mr Green has not surveyed Capt Wake's lots. If not, the work must be done over again. To survey Wake's lots was what Green was sent there for. The north line of the reserve cannot be otherwise defined.

Mohun has not finished the plotting, so I am not yet certain about this matter. I have instructed him to leave Nanaimo and work here.

I suppose if Valdez Island reserve has to be resurveyed we shall have to telegraph for authority from the Surv.r Genl.

Yours &c.
Gt Sproat

Col.s Powell
Victoria

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Indian Res. Commission

New Westr Febr 19. 1879

Sir.

I annex for your information copy of my letter & reply to the address of the settlers in your neighbourhood.

Kindly tell Mr Corry that Mr Duncans milk be removed, and it depends on the particular action which the Govt may decide on taking, whether he milk not be subjected to penalties.

I will advise progress generally to you from time to time, thanking you for your kind attentions

I am, Sir, &c &c

Barrington Price Esq
Chemainus

, Sd. G M Sproat Comr

Indian Res: Comn

New Westr 19 Febr 1879

Sir,

In reference to the question of reserves for the Skiammos Klaloose and Homalko Indians which is partly examined, I see enough to prove the urgent need of begging you not to permit, for a time until my work is closed, lands to be acquired at Harewood, Savary and Hernando Islands.

It was successful in arranging Thane Cortes Island left free from Indian claims except as to a small herring fishing settlement at Squirrel Cove. Cortes Island is large and has harbours and will by and by be used for cattle, no doubt. Harewood & Savary are without even decent boat harbours. Hernando has a harbour, but the island seems of small value. Possibly it may not be wanted.

There are

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a number of small fishing and hunting settlements in Toba, Seymbowrough, Bute Inlet and their neighbourhood, but there was so much sickness that the Indians could not come with me to point them out. These places of course cannot be recorded in a settled manner.

The above three tribes propose to unite together opposite Harwood Islands, and have a settlement on it.

The great disappointment which these Indians have experienced as to timber land induces me to request that you will do your best to prevent anything further of the same kind occurring, until I am permitted to complete my examination of their requirements.

I am Sir &c &c
Sd G M Sproat Com.r

J.C. Hughes Esq.
Govt. Agent. New Westr

Ind. Res. Commission

New Westr Feby 19. 1879.

Sir,

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 11th.

I have referred to the Minutes of the Decision of the Commr. and find that you were not to be disturbed in the land you had applied for – namely, pre-emption of 160 acres and 160 acres Naval Grant – though the Indians much pressed that you should be removed.

You will get your 160 acres at the north end of the Island and will have to take it as it is – rocks and all – as the survey line shows – that is to say provided the land does not extend so far south as to include the previously existing Indian cultivations at Skwuck creek.

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Indian Reserve Commission
On board Schooner "Thornton"
Off Nanaimo BC
Aug. 21st. 1879

Sir/

I promised to send Challoo the Lytton Indians a copy of the Resolutions, and rules and regulations passed by the meeting and Council respectively, on the 17th July 1879 — held at Lytton.

I enclose a copy of the documents herewith, and shall feel obliged if you will deliver them to Challoo and explain them.

Yours Truly
Gig. M. Sproat
Comr.

Wm. McIntyre
Lytton BC

Indian Res Com.
Br Columbia

In camp Malaspina
Inlet
29 August 1879

Sir.

I beg to enclose a tracing which shows the locality I shall work from, and those Indian places, marked with a red cross, which can be conveniently visited in succession, numbering, I think, about 5000 people. I would hope to complete the assignment of Reserves for all those before the snow comes if the winter is not early and I have reasonable chances. This will be a large step forward with the work in the Province in general and will satisfy the urgent wishes of many Indian tribes who have had no reserves assigned to them.

The history of the land matters of the people I am among will be

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instructions in view of the statement of the Provincial Government that your instructions to me are calculated to do more harm than good.

The Reserve Commission in 1877 touched these people's lands but had no time to examine them. They consist of three main tribes – the Sliammon, mon, the Klahoose, and the Homalchis, whose country is around Malaspina Inlet, Toba Inlet and Bute Inlet (see tracing). They are excellent Indians who, at the instance of the Roman Catholic Church, have joined in a similar village on the mainland opposite Harwood Id. and have there built a Church for themselves.

The country is rocky and poor and it will be quite a problem how to furnish them with opportunities for advancement.

Their great wish was to have a piece of timber land from which they could sell saw logs. They are able to follow the industry of "hand logging"

The village was built where it is, partly in the view of their getting a share of its only good timber land near it.

The Reserve Comm[r] so long ago as 1877 mentioned these Indians to the Prov[l] Govt of that day, and hoped some attention would be given to the case of a group of Indians worthy of attention, and who, I should have stated, are among those who have had no land whatever assigned to them, but I am sorry to say this expectation was defeated.

The Commission received several messages from these Indians

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and communicates them to the Prov: Govt.

Last year the present Govt, without mentioning their intention to the Indians sold several thousand acres including all the good timber land, and coming close up to the village. This became known to the Indians and they were so distressed about it that last January I went to see what their grievance was, and found it was as above.

They at that time expressed great alarm lest not only the timber land they hoped for but their potatoe lands would be taken from them. It is difficult to find cultivable land to any extent in their district except at considerable distances.

I told the Indians I could not pay them an official visit but I would do what I could for them. I accordingly wrote an official letter to the Asst Land Comr of the New West district asking him to refuse pre-emptions or purchases until he communicated with me, but that gentleman informed me a fortnight ago that he had not been authorised by the Land Office to attend to my request.

I therefore determined to lose no time in formally assigning the reserves for these Indians, and am now engaged in doing so, and how such humane, necessary work can be called "impolitic" I am not able to understand.

It appears to me not to be creditable, that a number of hard working, well behaved Indians who pay their way so well, that many of them get credit at shops, should have been left for 20 years without any land at all, and notwithstanding repeated explanations of their

position be denied reasonable protection until
my actual visit for the purpose of assigning land
for their use if I can find any land.
The proximity of the
locality of these Indians to Butte Inlet and
Texada Island which are connected respectively
with railway and iron speculations make me
additionally anxious that their fair moderate
requirements should no longer be disregarded.
I am Sir &c &c
Sd G M Sproat Com.r

The Hon.r
The Sup.t Gen.l of
Indian Affairs Ottawa

British Columbia
Indian Res.e Com.n

Nanaimo Sep.t 1879

Sir

Having obtained in the newspapers & gazette
notices of the intentions of certain persons to apply
for permission to purchase land at Port Simpson
Skidigate & Telegraph passage, I respectfully beg
leave to remind you that no assignments of lands
for the Indians have been made in those places,
and that it is consequently undesirable that
land should be sold or pre-empted in those
and other places on the coast now awaiting the
adjustment of the Indian land question.

I am Sir
Your obt Servt
Sd G M Sproat Com.r

The Hon.
The Chief Com.r
Lands & Works
Victoria