

Sydney, Nova Scotia,
February 13, 1943.

C. Gillis, Esq., "P.,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ont.

Re: Removal of Cape Breton Indians
to Eskasoni

Dear Sir:

As secretary, of Sydney Indian Council, I am again instructed to communicate with you, in connection with the centralization of Cape Breton Indians at Eskasoni C.B. which is now in progress since early last year.

In your last letter you were good enough to furnish us with the necessary information as per your copy of lengthy memorandum from the Minister of Natural Resources and Mines, which was much appreciated.

I have read the memorandum with a great deal of interest and amusement.

I was very much interested to know the Government inauguration of new plan or system to improve the Indian neutrality, physically or socially, spiritually and otherwise, and the appointment of expert supervisors to carry out those plans.

But I was equally amused to read in the memorandum of my own imaginations and misconceptions, when I presented the Sydney Indian side of the question. I am aware of my many faults, but fortunately these faults do not bother my conscience very much, when I see a situation affecting my family's welfare. After all, I am civilized only a hundred years against the white man's thousand, and this, may also apply to the Honorable Minister's argument against Indians regarding drunkenness, lawlessness, and illegitimacy, and the idea of moving an Indian away from civilization will not help the situation very much, am afraid. However it is not the intention of the Sydney Indians to oppose the institution of a definite government policy for the betterment of Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia, in general. We are simply taking the same stand as other Cape Breton Indians reserves are taking against the selection of Eskasoni site, there must be some good reason for the united stand of Cape Breton Indians.

Cape Breton Indians have never agitated for the change, not even consulted when this plan was contemplated.

The intention of Sydney Indians at this time is to inform you, the recent development at Eskasoni, which may justify our stand. From our point of view, last year's expensive community plantation there has been a failure.

Construction of houses, are in the hands of a very incompetent appointee of the Department named

MacDonald there are no plans or specifications for the building of these houses not even assurance as to how these houses are to be furnished inside and out. No sanitation facilities, no proper source of water supply. The houses are far too small for decent living accommodations without proper foundations, and no basements. They are built to close side by side, and as many as five in a row, in a wide open space. Some of them are built on a swampy ground, others too near the brook. The lands are not subdivided, in fact, there is no lay out of any description. Favoritism has been very much in evidence and very little cooperation, if any, between this unpopular and incompetent appointee and Indians. The wage is small, and the Indians are required to work for relief, and cost of clothing.

There are no specific plans for re-establishment whereby the Indians would become self-supporting.

Transportation facilities are anything but good. Government plans of centralization are not properly explained to the Indians. Very little, if any, consideration to better class of Indian's that would encourage others in projects of this kind, on the contrary, punishment is offered in the way of Medical Attention, hospitalization, and so forth, for any Indian refusing to shift.

Supply of hardwood for fuel for all Cape Breton Indians to be established there is very questionable.

It is also doubtful if the recently acquired timber would last forever as estimated.

The present state of eel fishing amount to nothing and the deep water fishing is almost out of the question.

There are no opportunities there whereby Sydney Indians could follow their accustomed occupations.

Hunting in that part of the country would not contribute very much towards our support.

There are no provisions to better or clothe Indians during re-establishment.

It is doubtful if we could induce our sons and daughters to become farmers where so many better and well to do people have failed.

There are various other reasons why Eskasoni would not be a logical place for centralization.

For instance, as regards to drunkenness, lawlessness and illegitimacy our experience has been that Indians living in isolation are more inclined to be in that state of mind rather than those living within civilization.

Unless much better plans are decided upon Sydney Indian mode of life would be seriously affected at Eskasoni.

p.t.c.