

INVESTIGATION REPORT

On Indian Reserves And Indian Administration

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

W. S. ARNEIL

AUGUST 1941

MEMORANDUM:

Dr. McGill.

On receipt of your instructions to undertake an investigation of conditions on Indian Reserves and Indian administration generally in Nova Scotia, a visit of some five weeks duration was made in the Province interviewing the Part-time Agents, visiting reserves, schools and Indian homes, and discussing with the Indians themselves their various problems.

It will be recalled that the present Indian population of approximately 2,100 has remained practically stationary during the past 30 years, having increased by only 100 in that time, whereas the annual cost of administration, education, medical care and relief and welfare for the similar period has increased from \$26,533.55 in 1910-11 to \$163,872.39 in 1940-41.

The stationary condition of the population is, in my judgment, due to the emigration of Indians to the Eastern States, particularly the State of Maine where they remain more or less permanently. With increasing visits to Maine many Indians have secured permanent employment with the result they have not returned to Nova Scotia. The most significant and obvious conclusion resulting from this emigration, and one which has a direct bearing on the increasing yearly financial burden, is the fact that it is our most industrious and most ambitious Indians and those who are in good health who have been and who are migrating, leaving the less industrious and less healthy type in Nova Scotia. A number of personal interviews with aged Indians of the better type, both men and women, invariably resulted in a somewhat similar answer when questioned regarding the whereabouts of their families. A typical reply was, "I had seven children, two of them haven't been home for years, they are married and live in Maine. Of those at home one is a cripple with tuberculosis; two are dead."

Enlistments and better employment conditions in the Province in the last two years have arrested the migration of Indians to the United States. There seems little doubt, however, that this migration of population from the Province will return as conditions become more normal and particularly will this be so during periods of economic depression. One can conclude, therefore, that the Indian population of Nova Scotia will remain in the future as in the past, almost stationary.

An analysis

An analysis of the tremendous increase in the administration costs of Indian Affairs in Nova Scotia during the past 30 years prompts one to the conclusion that the general economic depression of the last decade was only in a very indirect sense responsible for these steadily mounting expenditures. These costs have climbed steadily during and since the war period of 1914-1918 and it is difficult to see how this upward tendency can be arrested under existing local administration. The existing unsatisfactory conditions are no doubt due in part to the employment of Part-time Agents. The remuneration received by these men is not in itself sufficient to warrant the Part-time officials' giving to the Indian service the time and attention necessary to promote the welfare and betterment of the groups of Indians committed to their care.

The Part-time Agent has little time to act in an advisory capacity to the Indians and still less time to act as the agent in securing part-time employment or assisting the Indians in the sale of their handicraft products.

Another factor standing in the way of any substantial reduction in annual expenditure is the existing system of medical care. This system despite its unreasonable costs appears to be wholly inadequate to maintain a reasonable standard of physical fitness amongst the Indian population. One might refer particularly to the ravages of tuberculosis, evidence of which was encountered periodically during the course of my inspection. Nor was I convinced that the attempts made by our medical officers to control venereal diseases have been wholly successful. I could not escape the conclusion that unsanitary home conditions -- one might refer to them as filthy conditions -- are in no small measure responsible for the origin and spread of disease which render hospitalization, with its resultant cost, necessary if not imperative.

The fact that the Indians live in comparatively small groups in a number of Counties has resulted in the employment of a medical officer by the Department for the care of a few Indians -- in one case seven -- yet the fee charged would appear to be equal to or greater than the fee charged in other communities for the medical care of such larger groups. Criticism expressed from time to time was that certain Indians had been hospitalized at considerable expense unnecessarily while others had been neglected at a time when proper medical attention would have prevented expensive hospitalization later.

A contributing factor to welfare costs and one which will be difficult to rectify while Indians continue to live in small groups close to white settlements is the cost imposed upon the Department for the support of illegitimate children.

One cannot expect from our Indians a moral code which would reduce illegitimacy to that of a white community, but one can expect, with supervision and spiritual care, a vast reduction in the number of illegitimate cases resulting from the cohabitation of very young girls with coloured labourers and transient whites, as well as women who, although married to Indians, have children with distinct negro features. I found on one reserve ten illegitimate children in two homes, the offspring of two young mothers. Four of these children appeared to be part negro and four part white. It will be readily appreciated that the annual expenditure necessary to give these unfortunate children any chance in life must be substantial.

One finds the problem of illegitimacy in evidence more or less on all the mainland reserves and the Sydney Agency, Cape Breton Island, with little or no attempt made by the Part-time Agent to correct this condition. One might be justified in stating that the young Indian girl is looked upon as legitimate prey by a section of the population. When I refer to a section of the population I have in mind particularly transients, negro and white, who periodically drift into the Province. It is gratifying to report, however, that one is not confronted with the problem of illegitimacy in three of the agencies in Cape Breton Island; Glendale, Iona, and Christmas Island. In these three agencies the average population is greater than that of the mainland agencies. These Indians, however, live on their reserves which are not close to urban centres. I am definitely of the opinion, after a careful investigation, that the standard of morals and decency reached by these Cape Breton Indians is due almost wholly to the supervision and influence of the Parish Priests. It is significant and worthy of note that in each of these agencies the Parish Priest is the Indian Agent. The last illegitimate child born at Glendale Agency was in 1933 and one would have to go back much further to find a case of illegitimacy on the Iona or Christmas Island Reserves. The fact that there appears to be less consumption of alcoholic liquor on these reserves can be attributed also to the wholesome and uplifting influence exercised by the agents.

One is forced to the conclusion that the progress of the Nova Scotia Indian at this stage in his development is likely to be determined by his willingness to accept the spiritual guidance extended to him by his Church. Indeed, one might say that the closest possible contact with the Church and his spiritual adviser is indispensable.

Indian relief supplies purchased by the Department last year amounted to \$75,948.43 and were purchased in all probability from 40 retail merchants. Many of these storekeepers are small operators and unable through lack of financial resources to make large purchases of

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commodities from wholesale houses. The purchase of Indian supplies from such merchants is in no sense economic. My investigations convince me that we are paying the highest possible retail prices for our supplies. Inspection as to quality of goods delivered, value for money received, etc., is, one might say, non-existent. An example, which should not be considered an isolated case, of the higher prices paid for supplies by the Department is furnished in the purchase of seed potatoes for one of the agencies. These potatoes were laid down by boat at 80 cents per bushel and were sold at this price in small and large quantities to white citizens. The Department, however, paid \$1.15 per bushel for the same potatoes. At many agencies substitutions are made by the storekeepers resulting in the distribution of supplies less nutritious than the regular supplies for which provision is made in the authorized relief schedules. In view of the fact that Cape Breton is recognized as the home of cooperative buying in Canada there appears to be on the Indian reserves of Nova Scotia an unusual opportunity to develop cooperative organizations for the purchase of essential supplies and the sale of Indian craft products.

The days when Indians could make a living by hunting, trapping, guiding, etc., appear to be gone forever and in recent years a large majority of able-bodied Indians have been unable to secure work such as lumbering, river driving or, in fact, any casual labour. This condition has existed despite the ability of the Indian to engage in this work to his own advantage and to the satisfaction of his employer. At the moment employment in Nova Scotia is plentiful due in the main to our war effort. The attitude of the local employer, it should be emphasized, is at times very prejudicial to the Indian seeking employment. This attitude was very much in evidence throughout the depression. The local employer, in his endeavour to keep down local unemployment costs, never hesitated to give the preference to the white man. The claims of the Indian for employment, the Indian being a ward of the Federal Government, he could afford to ignore. It is my opinion that the average employer will not hesitate to display the same attitude should unemployment become prevalent in the future.

It will be noted from the attached reports covering inspections of the 19 Nova Scotia agencies that many of the Indians have abandoned their reserves and sought to establish themselves on privately owned land convenient to urban centres. In a few cases one finds Indian families who have never lived on a reserve, and in these cases it is usually because of a white wife or of an Indian with considerable white blood. This type has no intention of ever living on a reserve and a number of them has no desire or intention to even mix with the Indians. They are quite content to remain as at present, receiving all medical care, relief when

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necessary, and the education of their children. The following is a typical family which create a definite problem in our present administration. The father, an Indian close to seventy years of age, was left a house in the town of Bridgewater by his father. Some years ago he married a young white woman. She is now thirty-seven years of age, and they have ten children, the youngest being less than one month of age at time of visit. The oldest daughter is married to a white man, the second is a domestic, the third a part-time waitress in a restaurant in town, the remaining children are at home. The younger children do not in any way resemble Indians. This family's medical costs have been exceedingly heavy and are likely to continue so for some years. They are at present receiving \$10.00 per month relief. This type of family would not change their residence for any reason and are treated in their community as white. The old Indian goes into the bush at different periods but often comes home and looks after a good garden. This family is quoted not as an isolated case, but to bring out in a general way our future administrative problem. These young boys at present being cared for are, under the terms of the Indian Act, Indians. The fact that they are white and known as white and have lived their lives with whites, forces one to the conclusion that they should be enfranchised and the responsibility for their future placed with the Province where, in my opinion, it rightly belongs. It will not be many years till these boys become married when enfranchisement will surely be forced. Our administration costs would be greatly reduced if action were taken to enfranchise such families.

It is true, of course, that a number of Indian families are and have been self-supporting. These Indians are law abiding individuals, live in clean homes and are proud of their surroundings. The members of such families seem to regret that their less fortunate Indian neighbours appear unable to reach this standard of living. It is significant that the better class Indian is convinced that the issuance of relief by the Department tends not to help but rather to demoralize their unfortunate neighbours. The self-supporting Indian, I should add, would not be willing to return to life on the reserve. He has long since outgrown the characteristics usually in evidence on an Indian reserve, and it is difficult for me to convince myself that the full rights of Canadian citizenship should be withheld from such Indians.

The majority of Indian reserves on the mainland are not suitable for farming. Detailed descriptions of these reserves and their approximate present day value have been given in Agency inspection reports.

I have referred to the need for more constant and intimate supervision. It is difficult to see how the welfare of the Indian can be improved under the existing administrative setup. I am rather disposed to think that

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the character of the Indian in Nova Scotia will gradually deteriorate unless resources sufficient to maintain him are provided by the Department. I have in mind, of course, resources that would respond to Indian labour. I am convinced that with adequate resources this Indian problem, while in many respects discouraging, is by no means hopeless.

The merging of Indian reserves in Nova Scotia, the centralization of Indian administration, has been discussed from time to time. Dr. Robertson, in his report of an inspection undertaken in 1937, favoured such a plan. Dr. Robertson seems to favour the reorganization of the Indian population into 3 distinct and separate groups. Others, equally anxious to solve the problem, have advocated the retention of the present agencies but with a full-time Inspector or full-time Agents in control. It is too much to expect unanimity of opinions, confronted as we are with a human problem, and a human problem that has many ramifications. Present conditions, however, as I have observed them, indicate that an immediate change of policy is imperative.

My first recommendation is that that portion of the Indian population, the majority I should state, now in receipt of Departmental assistance should be established on one of two comparatively large reserves, one on Cape Breton Island and the other on the mainland, and that the existing reserves be sold. I recommend also that the remaining portion of the population who are not at this date in receipt of relief and who contend that they are capable of providing for themselves be permitted to retain their present holdings. The members of this group should, in my judgment, be encouraged to assume the full duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship by seeking enfranchisement. If these changes are to be effected at any time in the immediate future it is scarcely necessary to add that the Department will have to secure the sympathetic cooperation of the Chiefs and the Church.

The most suitable reserve in Cape Breton appears to be Eskasoni on the north shore of the East Bay of the Bras D'Or Lakes. This reserve is capable of enlargement to an extent sufficient to accommodate the Indian population of Cape Breton Island, at least that portion of the population that would be prepared to favour a policy of centralization. Description of this reserve can be noted from my inspection report of the Christmas Island Agency dated July 8, 1941. This reserve contains 2,200 acres. In addition to this acreage there are large tracts of Crown land north of the reserve. In addition to this acreage 1,500 to 2,000 acres should be secured from adjoining properties.

Two reserves might prove suitable should it be decided to centralize the Indian population of the mainland. These reserves differ widely from a standpoint of agricultural land, timber resources, etc. Wildcat reserve of 1,150 acres is described in my Queens County report. The only residents on this reserve are two Indian families.

This reserve would

This reserve would not lend itself to agricultural development; the land would be difficult to clear and rock out-croppings are very much in evidence. This reserve is conveniently located, however, near South Brookfield, 9 miles from the town of Caledonia. The district appears to be thickly wooded and the residents depend upon lumbering for their main source of revenue. Rock Maple, Beech, Birch and some Pine are available in fairly large quantities on the reserve. The existence of these trees would guarantee a perpetual firewood supply. There is a Church convenient to this reserve. An additional 360 acres of Crown land is available close to the reserve. Employment in the lumbering industry is available in this district.

The other reserve which might prove suitable is the Shubenacadie Indian Brook Reserve. This reserve, with an acreage of 1,790 acres is well located and served by a good road. I have described this reserve fully in my Hants County report. At least two thirds of the area of this reserve is suitable for agriculture. The Indian population at this date is 155. There are at least 5,000,000 feet of marketable timber, Spruce, Fir and Pine, on this land. The location of the reserve is very convenient; it is near the main highway midway between Truro and Halifax.

I have selected these two reserves for the reason that they appear to me to have definite possibilities of development and appear to be suitable for the adoption of a centralized policy. The group of Indians we are seeking to rehabilitate have until now displayed little interest in farming. A number of them have, however, engaged from time to time in bush work, lumbering, etc. In view of this fact a reserve with agricultural lands on the one hand and lumber possibilities on the other would, in my judgment, prove to be the most suitable.

If a policy aimed in the direction of centralization is adopted by the Department I would recommend as an initial step the appointment of two local advisory committees. Each committee might consist of a clergyman nominated by the Halifax Diocese Roman Catholic Church as chairman, a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a local medical officer, and a representative nominated by this Branch who later might assume the duties and responsibilities ordinarily assumed by a full-time Indian agent on one of our larger Indian reserves in Ontario or in the West. This committee, in my judgment should act in an advisory capacity in the transition period and later in an advisory capacity to the agent in charge of administration.

There may be those who will contend that a policy of centralization as outlined in this report will tend to retard assimilation which should be our ultimate goal. My reply to this contention is that on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, with a population of approximately 6,000, and on the Tyendinaga Reserve with a population of 1,500, a larger number of young Indians proceed with high school courses of study and take up responsible positions in white communities and do this to a far greater extent than Indians living in comparatively small groups.

I consider the following advantages would be gained by the centralization of our Indian population into two reserves and I do recommend:

Administration

Administration

The elimination of 19 Part-time agents who do not at present receive sufficient remuneration to justify their spending the time necessary to promote a worthwhile welfare programme. The Indian problem encountered by me in the Province is sufficiently challenging to justify the employment of a full-time Indian Agent, and an Indian agent of outstanding ability.

Medical

As a layman it would appear to me an utter impossibility to provide an adequate health programme for Indians in the Province while these Indians continue to live in approximately 30 distinct and separate groups. These groups are likely to become, if they have not already done so, centres of infection, and as an outsider I was amazed at the complacency of the white population to the existence of centres that appeared to me to present real health and moral hazards. A full-time medical health officer, adequate hospital facilities and a health programme designed to meet the peculiar needs of the Indian population all come within the realm of practical accomplishment with centralized operation and control.

Cooperative Buying of Supplies

We are spending annually approximately \$75,000.00 in the purchase of the relief necessary to maintain the Indian population of Nova Scotia. I have already intimated that these supplies are purchased at retail prices from local storekeepers. By bulk purchasing a saving of at least 30% might be effected. Our relief vouchers are, as you know, made out in triplicate and accounts are paid by the Head Office at Ottawa monthly. It is difficult to even estimate the savings that could be effected in checking accounts and in clerical work generally by bulk purchases. I was astonished to learn from an official of the Welfare Division that three times more vouchers reach the Department from Nova Scotia with an Indian population of 2,165 than reach the Department from the Prairie Provinces with an Indian population of 40,000. The explanation is discovered in the fact that relief supplies for the West are purchased by the Department from wholesale houses and shipped in bulk.

Schools

By centralizing the Indian population an opportunity would be afforded to establish graded and consolidated schools, enabling the teaching of native crafts and agriculture. At present few of the Indian children acquire an education higher than the early grades.

Establishment of Industries ...

Establishment of Industries

By the installation of a portable saw mill to provide building material and a small factory where builders' supplies could be made, our building material purchases could be reduced to a minimum and a surplus of lumber sold. The production and marketing of pick handles for the Coal Mining companies and axe handles for general use could be organized. The making of butter tubs, potato and fishing baskets for the Maritime trade, the production of fancy baskets and the cutting of railroad ties, pit props and pulpwood could also be organized and developed, the latter to a considerable extent by organizing and cutting on leased lands.

Social Advantages

When I speak of social advantages I have in mind the creation of a wholesome atmosphere at these proposed centres. I have in mind also an aroused and enlightened public opinion. The Church with its greater opportunities for service at such centres, and well organized schools should, in my judgment, be in a position to bring about this result. The Indian must be taught to care for his body and to use his hands, and education aimed at this objective will be most effective if closely allied with religious instruction and spiritual guidance. It is just possible that in the past we have attempted to do too much for the Indian and failed to emphasize the importance of encouraging him to do something for himself. These considerations, in my judgment, far outweigh what one might term the economies that must of necessity accrue from the establishment of these reserves. There are, however, economic considerations that must not be overlooked. I have referred to two unmarried girls with 10 illegitimate children. It is difficult to even estimate the burden imposed upon the State by these children. In this connection one naturally thinks of the Duke family, residents of the State of New York. This family, descending from two transient prostitutes, cost the State in less than 75 years the sum of \$1,300,000.00.

I am submitting this report fully conscious that there is no immediate solution for what I have referred to as the Indian problem in Nova Scotia. Certainly no solution, if we mean by solution an arrangement whereby the Indians can be immediately established on a self-supporting basis. Even centralization will not bring about this result. Centralization is not submitted as a panacea, it is submitted merely as a step in the direction of a solution that in my judgment could be worked out over a period of years. Present conditions are, in many respects, intolerable. Neglect and faulty administration are very much in evidence. The few well kept homes, however, that I visited during the course of my survey suggested to me an Indian population

and Indian centres

and Indian centres where these homes would be the standard and not the rare exception. If centralization is rejected I can think of no alternative policy worthy of submission or indeed worthy of serious consideration.

May I embrace this opportunity to thank the Premier of Nova Scotia and his officials, the Indian Agents and the Church authorities for their unfailing courtesy to me during the time of my visit.

Respectfully submitted,

W.S. Arneil,
Inspector of Indian Agencies.

August 23, 1941.

Statement indicating the Indian population of the
 Maritime Provinces and the annual expenditure
 for Administration, Education, Medical Care and
 Relief and Welfare, during the fiscal years
 1910-11 to 1939-40, inclusive.

| <u>CENSUS</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Number of Indians</u> |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| | 1911 | 4,120 |
| | 1916 | 4,295 |
| | 1924 | 3,748 |
| | 1929 | 3,828 |
| | 1934 | 4,051 |
| | 1939 | - |

YEARLY EXPENDITURE SINCE 1911

| | | | |
|-------------|---------|---------|------------|
| Fiscal Year | 1910-11 |\$ | 54,779.26 |
| | 1911-12 | ..... | 57,766.73 |
| | 1912-13 | ..... | 65,861.64 |
| | 1913-14 | ..... | 75,535.46 |
| | 1914-15 | ..... | 72,867.03 |
| | 1915-16 | ..... | 70,303.56 |
| | 1916-17 | ..... | 70,621.88 |
| | 1917-18 | ..... | 69,587.48 |
| | 1918-19 | ..... | 72,556.24 |
| | 1919-20 | ..... | 81,384.25 |
| | 1920-21 | ..... | 102,249.53 |
| | 1921-22 | ..... | 113,237.26 |
| | 1922-23 | ..... | 113,995.02 |
| | 1923-24 | ..... | 150,638.30 |
| | 1924-25 | ..... | 149,102.17 |
| | 1925-26 | ..... | 177,674.24 |
| | 1926-27 | ..... | 205,045.02 |
| | 1927-28 | ..... | 228,714.24 |
| | 1928-29 | ..... | 367,654.52 |
| | 1929-30 | ..... | 345,515.50 |
| | 1930-31 | ..... | 313,091.39 |
| | 1931-32 | ..... | 297,563.94 |
| | 1932-33 | ..... | 296,269.61 |
| | 1933-34 | ..... | 272,522.45 |
| | 1934-35 | ..... | 252,067.23 |
| | 1935-36 | ..... | 271,736.22 |
| | 1936-37 | ..... | 284,332.95 |
| | 1937-38 | ..... | 270,368.83 |
| | 1938-39 | ..... | 274,950.00 |
| | 1939-40 | ..... | 323,352.10 |