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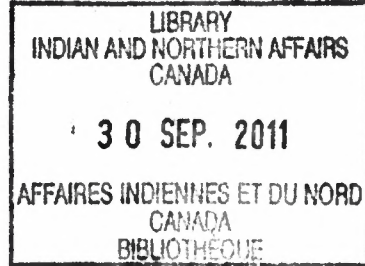
DEPARTMENT OF
CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

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INDIAN NOTES
BRITISH COLUMBIA



In the latter part of the eighteenth century a dispute arose between Britain and Spain as to the ownership of the Pacific coast of America lying between California and the Russian trading posts in the north, which was settled in favour of Britain by the Nootka Convention of 1790.

This district was, at that time, valued only for its furs and the natives were needed as hunters by the Hudson's Bay Company.

By an Imperial Charter of 1849 the Hudson's Bay Company was vested with the administration of the government of Vancouver Island.

Sir James Douglas, who was for many years a Chief Factor of the Company on the Pacific Coast, was the second Governor of the Island and acted as such for some fourteen years. He was also the originator of the Indian policy practiced during that period.

Between the years 1850 and 1854 the Indians of the Island ceded their lands to the Company for a consideration, retaining as reserves their villages, fishing stations, and cultivated lands. A few years later the Island was erected into a Crown Colony and in 1867 the Company was paid £57,500 in full settlement of its claim to the lands and they reverted to the Crown as from the 1st of January 1862.

British Columbia, formerly New Caledonia, was erected into a Crown Colony by an Imperial Act of 1858 and was united with Vancouver Island by another Imperial Act of 1866.

During its existence as a Crown Colony the power of reserving lands for Indian tribes was vested solely in the Governor.

By an Imperial Order in Council of 1871, the Crown Colony of British Columbia (including Vancouver Island) was admitted to the Union as a province of the Dominion of Canada and by the British North America Act all Indian Affairs were placed under the administration of the Dominion Government.

It was found difficult for the Province and the Dominion to come to an understanding regarding the allotment of Indian reserves and the extent of land to be allowed to each family but finally an agreement was arrived at in 1876 to appoint a Commission for the allotment of reserves.

Shortly after this the Indians commenced to express dissatisfaction with their treatment and claimed aboriginal title to all lands in British Columbia and after much negotiation between the two governments a Royal Commission was appointed in 1913 to deal with the matter and made its report in 1916 and a Commission was appointed to revise this report in 1921.

In 1929 an Agreement was reached between the Dominion and the Province regarding Indian interests in reserves in the Railway Belt and the Peace River Block and in riparian rights and Indian disabilities in proprietary rights in their reserves.

The Indians of British Columbia are not paid an annuity, like those of the Prairie Provinces, where annuities formed part of the stipulations of treaties, because no treaties were made with them, except those of Vancouver Island in which no annuities were involved.

To compensate for this discrepancy the Dominion Government passed an Act in 1927 making an annual grant of \$100,000. in lieu of annuity, to be expended on technical education, provision for hospitals and medical attendance and in the promotion of agriculture, stock raising and fruit culture and in the development of irrigation projects.

The Indians of the Bella Coola, Cowichan, Kamloops, Lytton, New Westminster, Vancouver and Okanagan agencies belong to the Salish tribe. The name "Salish" was originally applied to a large tribe in Western Montana popularly known as Flatheads thence it was finally extended to cover all those speaking the same language.

The Kootenay tribe is located in the agency of the same name. The legends and traditions of the Kootenay (or Kutenai) indicate that they originally dwelt east of the Rocky Mountains - probably in Montana - whence they were driven westward by the Siksika (or Blackfeet), their hereditary enemies. The two tribes have for many years lived on amicable terms and some intermarriage has taken place. Before the buffalo disappeared from the plains, they often had joint hunting expeditions.

The Wakashan family is composed of the Kwakiutl and Nootka tribes and are located in the Kwawkewlth and West Coast agencies. Their name is derived from "Waukash" meaning "good" which Cook heard at Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound and supposed it to be the name of the tribe. Head flattening was practised by the tribes of Vancouver Island and the potlatch was one of the cardinal institutions around which centred a large part of the social and religious interests of the people.

The Haidas are located on the Queen Charlotte Islands; the Tlingits in the Stikine; and the Tsimshians in the Skeena agency. The Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian Indians seem to show greater adaptability to civilization and to display less religious conservatism than many of the tribes further south. They are generally regarded as a superior group and have evinced their superiority in war and in arts. The Haida were the best carvers, painters and canoe and house builders. Canoes were to the people of the Coast what the horse became to the Indians of the Plains.

The Indians of the Babine, Stuart Lake and Williams Lake agencies belong to the Athapascan race which is mostly confined to the area covered by the Mackenzie River drainage system.

From an early date the Indians of British Columbia have been engaged in hunting and trapping and in the north east section of the province they depend almost entirely upon it for a living. Individual Indian families have had trap lines on which they claimed exclusive rights and of late years have complained of their invasion by non-Indians.

Since 1927 the British Columbia Government has adopted a trap-line system for which licenses are issued to the individual Indian trapper.

Satisfactory negotiations have been had with the provincial authorities with a view to conserving the Indian interests and, under the British Columbia Game Act, Indians may now register trap-lines, free of cost, but it is necessary for them to take out a license for trapping.

From the early days of the province, as far back as 1877, the government of British Columbia has regarded the need of the Indians to fish for food for themselves and the fishing regulations permit them to do so but to engage in commercial fishing they must obtain a license.

The Indians of the Pacific Coast are good fishermen and have been employed by the canneries for more than fifty years. The Chinese are also employed but the Indians are considered more expert both as boatmen and fishermen.

They seem to have a natural aptitude for boat building. In 1879 the Bella Bella Indians made a war canoe capable of carrying 100 men. It was dug out of a cedar tree and measured 100 feet long, 8 feet 4 inches in the beam and 4 feet 6 inches deep.

As a general rule the Indians of the Coast are hardy and industrious and some of them well to do. Besides fishing, they engage in hop picking, lumbering and stock raising and from these industries they obtain a considerable revenue.

These people, particularly the Tsimpshians of the North West Coast and the Haidas of the Queen Charlotte Islands possess

considerable inventive genius and quickly acquire a knowledge of the mechanical trades. They have motor boats for fishing and logging machinery for their lumber operations as well as agricultural implements.

There existed with the Tsimpshian, as with the Queen Charlotte Islanders, an aristocracy and a system of heraldry which had been customary with them from time immemorial. The whole population was divided under different and specific crests and no infringement was permitted by intermarriage of those belonging to any particular division. Thus one Tsimpshian might not be related by ties of blood to another. If they both possessed the same crest their marriage would be revolting and against the laws and regulations of the tribe. A Wolf might not unite with a Wolf, nor a Bear with a Bear but the Bear could wed an Eagle or the Wolf a Whale.

The Chiefs prided themselves on the rank which they inherited for generations before the advent of the missionaries. The reverence and respect with which one was regarded depended much upon the actual and legendary history of his family.

The veneration with which one regarded a crest was evinced by the beautiful carving and labour expended upon a pole which a proud scion of native nobility erected in front of his house in a Haida or Tsimpshian village. But all this has passed out with the last generation for the younger people have, to a great extent, adopted the habits and customs of non-Indians.

The Tsimpshian and the Haida Indians are a well built, tall, fine looking intelligent people and differ greatly from those of southern British Columbia, who are shorter in stature, though possessing well knit frames, more swarthy in appearance and slower in cultural advancement.

In the earlier days the Indians of the Fraser River district lived largely in unhealthy "Keekwilly houses" built under ground but with the advancement of civilization these were abandoned in favour of more sanitary cottages.

The Potlatch (considered as a bond of union between the tribes) is a ceremonial of the Coast Indians of British Columbia. It is derived from the Nootka word "patshatl" - "giving" or "a gift".

As the name implies it was mainly marked by the giving away of quantities of goods, commonly blankets. The giver sometimes went so far as to strip himself of nearly every possession except his house but he obtained an abundant reward, in his own estimation, in the respect with which his fellowmen afterwards regarded him.

During the festival, houses and carved poles were raised, chiefs' children were initiated into the secret societies and "Coppers" valued as high as \$1800, but of little intrinsic worth, were given away as presents.

In 1884 an amendment was made to the Indian Act with a view to the suppression of the potlatch, but a recent revision of the Act places no restrictions on the potlatch.

The Roman Catholic Church was the first in the mission field of British Columbia, commencing its work among the Indians in 1839 at Cowlitz, with visiting stations along the shores of Puget Sound. Father Demers made a tour of the upper Columbia river as far as Okanagan and in 1841 he preached to the tribes of the lower Fraser river. In the following year he visited the remote northern posts and Father John Nobili penetrated as far as lake Babine in 1845-47. This mission work was abandoned for a while but taken up again in 1860.

The Hudson's Bay Company established a trading post at Fort Simpson in 1832 and subsequently the Tsimshian Indians of Metlakahtla abandoned their village and moved 17 miles to houses clustered around the fort.

The Church Missionary Society of England sent Wm. Duncan as a lay missionary to these Indians and, at the time of his arrival at Fort Simpson in the fall of 1857, they numbered about 2300.

In the following year the first gold rush added drunkenness and debauchery to heathenism and its kindred vices among the natives.

Mr. Duncan was persuaded that, to make a success of the mission, they would have to leave Fort Simpson, and the old Indian village of Metlakahtla was selected as the site of the new mission. Accordingly the move was made, starting with a little band of 50 souls, in May 1862. In 13 years they numbered 750, and were considered the healthiest community on the coast.

At first they had a small corps of native constables and a council of 12 older men selected (irrespective of rank) for their good character, who deliberated upon all matters affecting the welfare of the settlement. These had a badge of office but no pay. The constables in addition to a simple uniform received a small remuneration, when on duty.

Later all the males of the community were divided into ten companies, each company having an equal number of constables and councilmen and then a fire brigade was organized.

A village store was opened up by Mr. Duncan and the profits went to the public works of the settlement. A schooner was purchased to carry on trade with Victoria but was sold when the Hudson's Bay Company offered to carry their freight.

The first trade profits were spent in building a Market House and a Court House and later a saw mill, a blacksmith shop, and a carpenter's shop, besides roadwork was provided for from the same source. Then a church capable of holding 1200 people and a large school house were built by Indian labour, and a massive sea-wall was constructed to protect the village.

The idea was conceived of tearing down the old houses, surveying the village into lots and building more modern dwellings, thus creating a model settlement, and a government grant of \$1000. was made in 1881 to assist in this undertaking.

Unfortunately, a difference of an ecclesiastical nature between the Bishop of Columbia and the Rev. Mr. Cridge began to arise in 1881 and Mr. Duncan who took an active part against the Bishop was dismissed by the Church Missionary Society in October 1882. For the next five years much trouble was made by the Metlakahtla Indians who,

on the advice of Mr. Duncan, refused to recognize the authority of either the Church or the Government.

They destroyed a great deal of public property, repelled Government officials sent to the reserve and tried to spread their rebellion along the North West Coast.

In 1836 a gun boat was sent to Metlakahtla to maintain order and the ringleaders of the trouble were arrested and convicted.

After the destruction of more property Mr. Duncan and his Indians left for Alaska, settling at a place which they called "New Metlakahtla".

By an Order in Council of the 7th of April, 1874, government grants were first made for Indian day schools in British Columbia and there were several boarding schools established by missionary effort.

In 1836 the Indian Superintendent, I. W. Powell, advised the institution of industrial schools at various points throughout the province and his suggestion was followed. Now the boarding schools and industrial schools are classed as "residential schools" and there are now 12 of them in operation in the province in addition to 71 day schools.

The provincial government is responsible for the maintenance of peace and order on the Indian reserves and receives the fines imposed for infractions of the law.

The Cowichan Indians, as well as some of the bands on the North West Coast, came under the Indian Advancement Act about 1884, and some of the lands on the reserves are held by individual Indians under location tickets since that time.

In 1831 six Indian Agents were appointed to attend to Indian Affairs in British Columbia, a duty which had previously been discharged by two Superintendents. Now there are eighteen Indian Agents as well as one Agency Inspector and a School Inspector under the supervision of an Indian Commissioner, whose headquarters are at Vancouver.

The Indian population of the province is now 27,936 (1949 census).