

# “This Spurious Philanthropy”

Indian Policy, Food and Canada’s North-West  
As discussed in the Senate of Canada in 1886

Transcribed and Curated by Chris Willmore  
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## Table of Contents

<i>"This Spurious Philanthropy"</i> .....	1
<b>TESTIMONY OF PROFESSOR ROBERT BELL</b> .....	<b>4</b>
THE WILD TURNIP .....	4
BUFFALO .....	4
CARIBOU .....	5
THE EXTERMINATION OF THE BUFFALO .....	7
BELL'S OPINIONS ON INDIANS, EDUCATION AND WORK .....	9
PEMMICAN .....	10
MORE OPINIONS ON INDIAN CHARACTER .....	11
<b>ALEXANDER NEISSON ON WILD RICE</b> .....	<b>12</b>
LETTER FROM ALEXANDER NEISSON TO HONORABLE MR. SCHULTZ .....	12
<b>TESTIMONY OF AMADÉE E. FORGET</b> .....	<b>14</b>
TURNIPS AND MUSHROOMS .....	14
THE SASKATOON BERRY .....	15
FORGET'S OPINIONS ON INDIANS AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY .....	15
RABBITS .....	17
FORGET ON STARVATION AND THE INDIAN APPETITE .....	18
FARMING, LAND AND RESERVES .....	20
RATIONS AND THE SALE OF FOOD SURPLUSES .....	22
<b>TESTIMONY OF MR. BEDSON, PENITENTIARY WARDEN</b> .....	<b>23</b>
PEMMICAN AND SALT MEAT .....	23
INDIAN PRISONERS IN 1885 .....	24
ON BEETS .....	26
<b>TESTIMONY OF DONALD W. DAVIS, M.P. FOR ALBERTA</b> .....	<b>26</b>
THE CAMAS LILY .....	26
THE INDIAN TURNIP OR CARROT .....	27
BERRIES .....	28
BACON .....	28
<b>WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF WALTER ROBERT BROWN</b> .....	<b>29</b>
WILD RICE .....	29
BUFFALO .....	29
FISH PEMMICAN .....	30
<b>HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY TARIFFS IN THE 1850s</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>TESTIMONY OF NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN</b> .....	<b>32</b>
RESERVES AND FARMING .....	32
SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION .....	36
RATIONS .....	37
GOPHERS AS A FOOD SOURCE .....	37
<b>FROM THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN TILTON</b> .....	<b>38</b>
FISH AND CONSERVATION .....	38
<b>A LETTER FROM JAMES SETTEE</b> .....	<b>39</b>
THE NORTH COUNTRY v. THE PLAINS .....	39
THE GROUND TURNIP .....	40
DESTRUCTIVE HUNTING .....	40
THE SUGAR TREE .....	40

FOOD AND RATIONS .....	40
<b>TESTIMONY OF THOMAS McKAY .....</b>	<b>41</b>
RABBITS .....	41
OPINIONS ON RATIONS AND INDIAN HABITS .....	42
THE END OF THE BUFFALO .....	42
MORE OPINIONS ON INDIAN HABITS .....	43
MORE ON THE BUFFALO .....	43
OPINIONS ON TREATIES AND ASSISTANCE .....	45
OPINIONS ON INDIAN EDUCATION .....	46
OPINIONS ON THE SIOUX .....	46
BEANS .....	47
<b>TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM J. MACDONALD .....</b>	<b>47</b>
THE CAMAS LILY .....	47
FISH, CANNED AND DRIED .....	48
<b>DONALD CHISHOLM ON THE CAMAS LILY .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>FROM A LETTER BY JOHN GUNN .....</b>	<b>50</b>
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY RATIONS .....	50
THE FOOD OF THE INDIANS .....	50
<b>TESTIMONY OF J. MOBERLY .....</b>	<b>51</b>
THE FOOD OF THE INDIANS .....	51
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY RATIONS .....	51
<b><i>Appendix</i> .....</b>	<b>52</b>
"Starving the Indians" (1886) .....	52
Chief Poundmaker (1886) .....	55
Donald Chisholm (1890) .....	56
Memories of Pemmican (1902) .....	58
CONCERNING PEMMICAN .....	58
Anecdotes of Red River Pemmican in the late 1850s (1860) .....	61
I. RED RIVER EXPLORING EXPEDITION .....	61
II. PREPARING FOR TRAVEL .....	61
III. FORT ELLICE .....	62
IV. "BUNGAYS" .....	62
V. PREPARING TO CROSS THE VALLEY .....	63
VI. MIS-TICK-OOS, OR "SHORTSTICK" .....	64
VII. FISH PEMMICAN .....	65

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In 1886, a “select committee of the Senate on the existing natural food products of the North-West Territories, and the best means of conserving and increasing them”<sup>1</sup> was formed. The evidence provided to this commission provides an interesting record of thoughts by the government and (mostly non-Indigenous, male) experts about food, Indigenous people and the Canadian North-West ten years after the near-extinction of the buffalo.

## TESTIMONY OF PROFESSOR ROBERT BELL

Professor Robert Bell<sup>2</sup>, called and examined. [...]

### THE WILD TURNIP

*By the Honorable Mr. Sutherland:*<sup>3</sup>

Q. Have you ever come across a black skinned root called in the North-West the wild turnip?<sup>4</sup>

A. I have. In the western prairies it grows on dry ground. It is a very poor substitute for potatoes.

Q. I understand that the Indians have always used it for food rather in place of meal than to supply the place of potatoes.

A. Yes, to make soup principally. They gathered it in considerable quantities, and even occasionally sold it to the Hudson’s Bay Company as an article of trade.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*<sup>5</sup>

Q. Is it the Camas of British Columbia?

A. No, it is not the same.

Q. It has been used by the Indians of the North-West for food from time immemorial?

A. Yes. [...]

### BUFFALO

*By the Honorable Dr. Schultz:* [...]

Q. Can you suggest to the Committee any means of retaining [the buffalo] – any measures that could be adopted to prevent them from being exterminated?

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<sup>1</sup> *Appendix to the twenty-first volume of the journal of the Senate of Canada.* (1887). Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co.

<sup>2</sup> “Dr. Bell was one of the foundation fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. In 1857 he joined the geological survey of Canada and since that time has made very extensive topographical and geological surveys in nearly all parts of the Dominion. The bell river, or west branch of the Nottaway is officially named for him.” DR. ROBERT BELL, GEOLOGIST, DEAD. (1917, June 20). *Vancouver World*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> John Sutherland (1837 – 1922), then Senator for Kildonan, Manitoba.

<sup>4</sup> “Those who have been ploughing on new prairie will sometimes have noticed a root, somewhat larger than a radish, cut off by the plough. This is the celebrated wild turnip of the prairie, so much valued by the Indians of the plains. In the Tiger Hill country the plant is very plentiful and the pointed sticks, used by the Indians in digging, are found everywhere on the prairie. Those who once taste the root will soon learn to gather all which they discover. The taste is much like that of a cocoanut, and if improved by cultivation the plant would most assuredly develop into a most valuable and delicious vegetable.” WESTERN WHISPERS. (1884, August 20). *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> William John Macdonald (1832 – 1916), then Senator for Victoria, British Columbia.

A. The buffalo still exists in the wooded regions of the Athabasca district and they are likely to remain there, because they are scattered among the woods and cannot be killed by hunters on horseback, as they can on the prairies. A few are killed every year by the Indians.<sup>6</sup> The Indians have not been treated with as yet in that country, and probably we have no means of coercing them into obeying any laws that might be enacted by Parliament to protect the buffalo there. It might be a valuable resource if the buffalo should be exterminated everywhere else to be able to get a stock from this wooded country in the future.

Q. Have you any idea of the numbers of those animals which still exist?

A. In the aggregate they must be very numerous, since they roam over a very large tract of country. One or two hundred are perhaps killed every year by the Indians, and the skins are brought to Fort Chipewyan for sale. [...]

Q. Is there any other manner relating to [re-stocking animal populations?]

A. If the law is in force I think the weak point is in not having a paid officer to see it executed. No one likes to inform against his neighbors or against Indians who may be starving, more particularly as they have special exemptions, but no one finds fault with an officer who it is known makes his living by informing, and the first step to secure efficiency in this matter is to appoint a paid officer to travel about and see that the game laws are enforced and, perhaps, make the Indian conform to them as well as the white man. The Indians are so improvident that they do not see the effect of the destruction of the game and fish as we would. They are fond of destroying life when they can make no use of the game. I have known them, when they could not eat the eggs of partridges and ducks, when they found them, to deliberately jump upon them and destroy them. They also destroy young gelatinous birds, with the down on them, which they have no occasion to eat and would not eat. When they come across a covey of young birds they hunt them about until they destroy them, never thinking that if they left them alone until the fall they might have a good dinner from the same birds. I think there would be no hardship in compelling them to comply with the laws which are beneficial for white men and would be equally s for themselves. [...] The buffalo would be a most important animal to preserve for the Indians. [...]

#### CARIBOU

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*<sup>7</sup> [...]

Q. You have traveled around Hudson's Bay?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the caribou abundant there?

A. It is.

Q. Do the Indians live on antelope meat?

A. Yes.

Q. I read in an old history that those caribou could at one time be found in that country in vast herds?

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<sup>6</sup> This sentence and the one before it are taken from a slightly earlier part of the transcript. I've inserted them here to provide context to Bell's mention of 'that country'.

<sup>7</sup> Marc-Amable Girard (1822 – 1892), then Senator for St. Boniface, Manitoba. He served as Premier of Manitoba in the early 1870s.

A. Yes, and they are abundant yet. There are two kinds of caribou, the woodland and the barren-ground varieties. The latter roam about in herds of many thousands, traveling in various directions. They are somewhat migratory.

Q. Is it difficult to reach them?

A. No. The great trouble is the uncertainty of their migrations. I have known Indians to go from the woodland regions to hunt for them in the barren grounds, and if the caribou did not follow their usual migrations, the Indians have been obliged to go for a long time without food. The Indians have been known, in some of those hunting expeditions, to miss the caribou and to starve to death in considerable numbers. Then, after they were dead, the caribou have come into the vicinity in countless numbers. If the Indians had the means of waiting for the caribou until they did come, they could have an abundant supply of excellent food. The caribou is very easily killed. The [Inuit] shoot them with bows and arrows. They waylay them and shoot them from behind rocks with arrows tipped with iron or with flint. [...]

Q. Is the deer the same animal as the caribou?

A. The caribou is the same species as the reindeer of Europe – that is the caribou of the barren-grounds – and the caribou of the woods is the same species as the barren-ground caribou – it is merely a variety.

Q. Do you know that deer tongues and deer meat are preserved by the Indians?

A. The tongues are dried by the Indians and by the [Inuit], and exported in large numbers. Thousands of them are sent by the Hudson's Bay Company's posts in the north every year to London, where they are sold. They are considered quite a delicacy.

Q. I suppose buffalo tongues and pemmican would be considered good food for white people as well as for Indians?

A. Yes, and pemmican keeps for a long time. I have some pemmican in my possession that I have had for years, and it is quite good yet. The tallow of the reindeer is very hard – so hard that you can knock it together and it strikes like stones. When the meat is pemmicanized it keeps a very long time.

Q. That is reindeer pemmican?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know any part of the country where that meat can be prepared so as to be transferred from one place to another? Do you know any place where it can be obtained in a quantity sufficient for preparing it for export?

A. If you could preserve it just when animals come in large numbers it would afford immense quantities of food. The Indians and [Inuit] are too improvident to do anything of the sort. They use what they can eat, and the rest they allow to spoil.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. In your expeditions in the North-West have you supplied your men with this food prepared by the Indians?

A. It is brought to Fort Chipewyan in considerable quantities.

Q. Did you use any of it?

A. Yes.

Q. What quantity would furnish a meal for a voyageur?

A. Half a pound would be equal probably to a pound and a half or two pounds of fresh meat, it is so concentrated.

Q. Half a pound would furnish a meal?

A. Yes.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*<sup>8</sup>

Q. How many pounds of fresh meat would an Indian use for his dinner?

A. Three or four pounds. There is no end to what an Indian will eat; it is simply what he can hold. He has no sense of being satisfied, and will eat until he can hold no more.

*By the Honorable Mr. Kaulback:*<sup>9</sup>

Q. They eat enough at a meal to last them a week, do they not?

A. Yes. They do not suffer hunger as we do. If they are once well fed they can go without food for some days after.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. I suppose the preparation of that meat would not involve any considerable expense?

A. No.

Q. Do you know how it is prepared?

A. Exactly the same way as the buffalo pemmican. The meat is dried and partially roasted and then mixed with the hot fat. It is sifted to get out the sinews and coarser portions and then it is all put in a trough and mixed. The Indians sometimes tramp it with their feet. Then it is put into bags or any receptacle. They mix it with sugar if they have it, and dried berries to make the finer kinds.

Q. It is what is called pemmican of extra quality when it is prepared with sugar and fruit?

A. Yes.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. What was the cost of what you purchased from the Indians?

A. I got mine second hand, from the Hudson's Bay Company.

Q. Do you recollect what it cost?

A. I do not recollect, but in the country where I got it – Fort Chipewyan – it would be worth fully one shilling sterling a pound.

Q. Can you tell us the ration of buffalo pemmican that is allowed by the Hudson's Bay Company to their men?

A. No, I do not remember that. [...]

#### THE EXTERMINATION OF THE BUFFALO

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Do you think the Indians can live as well now in the North-West without being fed as they are now by the Government?

A. Certainly not in the prairie country. They had no trouble at all formerly to live when the buffalo were abundant. The buffalo furnished their principal food – they thought of nothing else.

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<sup>8</sup> William Johnston Almon (1816 – 1901), then Senator for Halifax, Nova Scotia.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Adolphus Newman Kaulback (1830 – 1896), then Senator for Lunenburg, Nova Scotia.

Q. But the settlers in the North-West have driven out the buffalo, it is said – is that so?

A. The buffalo are completely exterminated on the plains.

Q. But that is not because the white settlers have gone in there?

A. To a great extent, and also because the Indians and half-breeds slaughtered them without restriction. Formerly before the white men went in there, the Indian tribes were obliged to leave the buffalo alone, because they made war on each other. The theoretical reason of their frequent tribal fights was that they tried to exterminate each other in their rivalry for the buffalo.

*By the Honorable Mr. Allan:*

Q. Has not the improvement of late years in firearms been the principal cause of the extermination of the buffalo? Formerly the buffalo were shot with muzzle-loading guns, which the Indians necessarily loaded more slowly than breech-loaders. With cartridges and breech-loading rifles the half-breeds and Indians have been able to exterminate the buffalo?

A. I believe that the extermination of the buffalo is due to the fact that the Indians no longer being occupied in fighting with each other, were let loose on the buffalo, and of course the slaughter was greater than it had ever been before. No doubt the improved arms contributed to the destruction, but they could kill buffalo nearly as well with the old weapons as with the new.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Suppose the country were in the same condition now as it was twenty-five years ago, when it was in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company, would the Indians be able to live without sustenance from the Government?

A. If nothing had been done with the country, these Indians could live now as well as they lived before.

*By the Honorable Mr. Allan:*

Q. I can scarcely believe that the white people who have gone in there have killed off the buffalo. The thing had been pretty effectually settled before the settlers went to the North-West in any considerable numbers. The slaughter began some fifteen years ago?

A. Fifteen years ago, just after the first rebellion, there were buffalo enough left to have supported the Indians, and they would have remained permanently in the country, if they had been left alone. I have seen them myself in such numbers that they covered the land for miles and miles. I have hunted buffalo with the Indians myself on horseback, and I have seen them, from the tops of the hills in those western plains so numerous that you could not see the ends of the herds. The great herds at a distance looked like shadows of clouds on a summer's day – there were probably millions in them, and they covered the ground so close that you could not see it. Where they were in herds large enough to cover the extent of a township or two, you could see them also dotting the intervening landscape like beetles as far as they eye could reach.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. When was that?



A. In 1873. In those days, after killing all that you wanted, you could pass through the herd without the buffalo apparently being afraid of you.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. And now you do not see them at all?

A. No. The Indians will not believe that the buffalo are all exterminated, but that herds will come back again.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. I suppose you have met the Indians in bands on their reserves or on the trail sometimes?

A. Yes; I have met them both on the reserves and on their travels.

Q. Have you been able to ascertain how they were getting their food or in what way they were living?

A. At the time I speak of they were living on the buffalo. They lived on what they killed of the buffalo, but now they are living on the bounty they get from the Government, or anything they can find. They are shooting ducks, prairie chickens, muskrats, and even gophers – killing these and roasting and eating them, or if they found a dead horse they would have a grand feast.

#### BELL'S OPINIONS ON INDIANS, EDUCATION AND WORK

Q. But from what you know of that country you could not indicate the best way to maintain – or the proper way to feed the Indians, or could not suggest what you should advise them to do to get their food?

A. You cannot make an Indian work. The generation which has been unaccustomed to work will not work. The bush Indians will work because they have been obliged to paddle their canoes; they have been obliged to make their canoes, and axe handles, and everything like that, but the plain Indian cannot do anything of the kind. His hands are soft like a woman's, and he cannot work. I have asked them: "Can you put a handle in that axe?" And have been told: "No, I never made an axe handle in my life. I am not able to do it and will not try to do it." They will not cultivate the ground.

Q. Can they not do it?

A. No, it is not that, but they think it is beneath their dignity to work. They have not been accustomed to it, and they say it has never been done by their forefathers. I have lectured them on the subject, but they have told me: "It is according to the traditions of your forefathers, but we have never done anything of the kind, and our forefathers have never worked." For an Indian to interfere with the ways of the Great Spirit by growing plants, seems something that they cannot comprehend – they say they cannot do it – they will not grow potatoes. I have known Indians to enquire of neighboring Indians before they would believe that it was possible to grow potatoes. After giving them a lecture on this subject one time, they told me that they had no seed. I said: "I will give you some of the beans that I eat with my pork, and if you keep them until next spring you can use them for seed." They took them and promised to keep them for seed, but the very same evening they boiled the whole of them and ate them.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald.*

Q. Are they as fond of spirits as the Indians of the British Columbia coast?

A. They are extremely fond of spirits. The bush and plain Indians are the same in that respect – they will sell anything they have for whiskey. They will pray to you as to a god, to give it to them. An Indian who has drunk whiskey is looked upon as a great man among them. I had an Indian from Collingwood, who traveled with me through the wooded North-West. We came to a band of Indians who had never seen a pure-blooded white man before – who had never seen any human beings but Indians and half-breeds. They said: “Although you are an Indian you may have tasted whiskey.” He said, “I have been drunk many a time.” They looked upon him as a great Indian after that.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. They thought he had made the acquaintance of a great spirit?

A. No; they supposed that he had experienced a new sensation.

Q. Are there not instructors appointed and paid by the Government to teach agriculture to the Indians in that country?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been able to ascertain what they have done in the interest of the Indians?

A. As far as I have seen them they have been doing a good work. I visited their places principally in the North Saskatchewan country, and the example they were setting of industry to the Indians was good as far as I could see.

*By the Honorable Mr. Allan:*

Q. Did you see the Indian school at Qu’Appelle and the Indian farm there at the furthest end of the lake?

A. I have been at their places in the Touchwood Hills – at Muskowequan’s reserve and Poor-man’s. This farm is under the auspices of the Government and there is a large number of Indian boys upon it. When I was there they were digging potatoes like white children of similar age and seemed to take to the work very well. The only way we shall succeed in doing anything with them is to catch them young.

*By the Honorable Mr. Bolduc:*

Q. Do they seem inclined to work?

A. The young people when they see white men working will probably fall into it. Until this present generation, they have never seen white men cultivating the ground. They cannot believe such a thing is possible until they see it tried. [...]

#### PEMMICAN

*By the Chairman:*

Q. How long will pemmican keep?

A. There is no limit that I know of for the time pemmican will keep. I had a specimen for a number of years, and there was no perceptible change in it. The dried meat is so effectually preserved by the hard reindeer or buffalo tallow that it will keep for a great number of years. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. Sutherland:*

Q. Do you think that the pemmican made in the summer is the best for keeping?

A. Yes.

Q. It will keep longer than the pemmican made in the autumn?

A. Yes; the pemmican made in the summer is completely pemmicanized by the time the cold weather comes on, and it will keep without change in the winter, and would keep over the next summer I should think.

Q. My impression of it was that it did not depend so much on the season as on the drying of the meat.

A. Yes; the complete drying of the meat.

Q. I understood that the drying of the meat was the principal cause of its keeping better?

A. Yes; in the Hudson's Bay Company's trade the pemmican was made in bags weighing 100 pounds or upwards, and it would keep an unlimited time in a dry, cool place. If it got wet it was liable to become mouldy, but even that did not spoil it completely, because after it was cooked it lost the mouldy appearance and taste. Even what appeared to be completely mouldy was good enough to eat when cooked.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. In those days, what was the price of pemmican?

A. It was very cheap, threepence to sixpence per pound. It was bought at threepence and sold at sixpence. Of late it has been selling in the north for a shilling sterling per pound, and as compared with pork or beef, it was well worth that price. [...]

#### MORE OPINIONS ON INDIAN CHARACTER

*By the Chairman:* [...]

Q. [...] What food can most economically and healthfully be supplied to the Indians of the North-West in times of scarcity, and from what districts and at what cost can such food be supplied?

A. In connection with the latter part of the question, it seems to me that the very teaching of the Indians' habits of providing for themselves and for others would be beneficial to them. If they are employed to preserve food for other Indians, they will certainly learn to preserve and keep it for themselves. The great cause of the frequent starvation amongst the Indians is their total want of care for the future. They will work for anybody who will direct them. There is no difficulty in hiring an Indian to catch up and put up fish for you, but he will not do it for himself. He will do it if directed to, but he will not do it for himself. The Indians are not wanting in industry, if employed in congenial work such as this.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. But they need direction?

A. They need direction and instruction. They do not seem to think of the future. They have no means of storing food for themselves, their wandering life is against it. They have no idea of keeping more than enough for a meal or two, and they are impatient if asked to lay up provisions for the future.

Q. At the village of Metlakatla, in the northern part of British Columbia, the Indians canned over \$40,000 worth of fish last year, and they were the best preserved

fish put upon the coast. The Indians are very improvident however; they sell their produce to white men or to other Indians, then they buy again at a higher price.

A. Yes, with the winter coming on they will sell their last bushel of potatoes or corn for money, and no sooner do they begin to get hungry than they want to get it back again, like children. I have known them to sell cheaply the last morsel of food.

Q. To buy a pocket handkerchief.

A. Yes; in order to get money to buy some trifle. I know a case of a very old Indian at Norway House, a man who was probably a hundred years old, who had no means of support, and who was too feeble to look after himself. He was sent for by Mr. Roderick Ross, the Hudson's Bay Company's agent there, who wanted to make arrangements for his future support, as he had grown up sons. He called the old Indian's sons together and said he wished to assess them so much, say five pounds each, that he would pay five pounds himself and the Hudson's Bay Company would give five pounds, and amongst them they would make up the annuity that would support him during the rest of his life. The old Indian replied: "Bother the annuities; give me a pound of pemmican and let me go back to my wigwam." He had not the patience to think of the future. They cannot and will not think of the future. [...]

## ALEXANDER NEISSON ON WILD RICE

### LETTER FROM ALEXANDER NEISSON<sup>10</sup> TO HONORABLE MR. SCHULTZ

Dear Sir – In reply to yours of the 18th February, I would say that I can only give you information in regard to the wild rice fields in the neighborhood of Lake Winnipeg. [...] The Lake Winnipeg rice fields are found in the vicinity of Bad Throat River, Hole River, and Blood Vein River, and they also extend as far north as Poplar River in the interior, especially on the head waters of Berens river. [...] I have never met with any case of the Indians planting the rice for themselves, and it is not to be expected that they should do so when nature has been so very bountiful in her supplies, and as it is a very hardy plant nothing in the ordinary run of life would be capable of destroying a rice field, and its position in the water and porous aqueous nature renders it safe from fire. That it requires but little care for its cultivation is evident because careless handling of the rice by the Indians when unloading their canoes at the rice gathering camps has sown it all around these spots. [...]

Ducks and geese frequent these wild rice fields in thousands and grow exceedingly fat, especially the common wild duck or mallard, and the green-winged teal. Mice and squirrels are the only animals that to my knowledge use the grain for food, though muskrats eat it when it shoots above the water in June. Innumerable small birds frequent the fields and large flocks of starlings and yellow cardinal birds.

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<sup>10</sup> Listed as 'Alexander Neisson' in the front matter to the *Appendix*, but credited as 'Mr. Adrien Nelson' within, and signed 'Adrian Nelson'. Neisson (or Nelson) lived near Bad Throat River at the time of writing.

When it is gathered and drying the Indian dogs are very greedy for it, and sometimes a bear will come upon an Indian's cache and devour the whole of it. [...]

The yield of wild rice is very great, but I cannot say exactly what might be the quantity per acre. Approximately, I would say nothing less than 35 bushels per acre in favorable places and 15 bushels as an average for a field planted by nature. Its head is very prolific, containing from 14 to 20 grains, and it stands much thicker than grain in a first class field. Often I have taken a bushel out of my canoe which has been thrown into it by the action of my paddle in the distance of half a mile of travel through a rice field. As the Indians do not clear any given spot but push the canoe haphazardly through the grain when gathering, it is impossible to do more than approximate the yield. [...]

The Indian mode of gathering and harvesting is very simple. Two women go in a canoe (the men are usually hunting deer about this time) each provided with a stick about two feet long in each hand. With these they gently bend the rice into the centre of the canoe and with a slight motion of the wrist strike the grain off into the canoe. When the canoe is loaded they go ashore and pile up the rice on a clean clear rock to harden and dry, often turning it over to prevent it heating and spoiling. When it is nearly dry enough they place it on a stage made by dividing four sticks into the ground and then tying by the four corners a piece of rough woven canvas such as used for oat bags to the sticks. This forms a platform and on it the rice is placed about one inch thick. A small fire is kept burning underneath, the heat from which dries and thoroughly smokes the grain while the constant stirring and shaking necessary cleans and loosens off the husks. This is a slow and troublesome process. It is winnowed by throwing it in the air on a suitable day. This process produces the common rice in use by the Indians.

Early in the season a small quantity is made as follows, and it makes a better food and is much preferred by the Indians. No doubt all the crop would be prepared in this manner if the Indians had suitable means and implements to do it. The grain after being gathered is put into a cast iron pot over a slow fire and kept constantly stirred to prevent it burning. This is continued until the husk loosens and the grains swell somewhat like parched corn. It is then put into a bag which is put into a round smooth hole made in a sandy spot in the ground. A pounder is made and the rice is gently but briskly pounded, which cleans the husk completely off the kernel. This is winnowed as before and leaves a first class article of food. This is called green rice and the former kind smoked rice. Sometimes when pressed for time the Indians simply gather the grain and prepare it at leisure by the latter method during the winter months. [...]

I send you per sample post specimens of the green and smoked rice.

I am, Sir, yours very faithfully,

(Sgd.) ADRIAN NELSON.

## TESTIMONY OF AMADÉE E. FORGET

Amedée E. Forget<sup>11</sup>, of Regina, Clerk of the North-West Council, called and examined.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Will you give a list to the Committee, of the plants, animals, birds and fishes suitable for food with which you are acquainted, and the districts in which they are chiefly to be found? [...] Perhaps you could mention a few prominent ones?

A. Do you mean by plants those which are indigenous to the country and which are fit for food?

Q. Yes.

### TURNIPS AND MUSHROOMS

A. The only one I remember now is the wild turnip. This grows extensively throughout the whole of the North-West Territories. It is fit for food in the spring – in May and the first part of June – up to about the 15th of June. I have eaten some of them myself. I do not particularly fancy the taste of them, but still I found there was nourishment in them, and the Indians make extensive use of this root whenever they have nothing else to eat. We have also mushrooms growing in large numbers everywhere almost. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Do the Indians use them?

A. They do not. I have had personal experience with them on the subject of mushrooms and it was very unsuccessful; that was in 1878. I was in Battleford at the time and there were in the vicinity of two thousand Indians near the place. They were almost starving for want of food. The mushrooms were plentiful around their tents. Not only were the Indians in want of food, but we were ourselves in almost a starving condition. It was in the spring and communications with Winnipeg were difficult. It was 650 miles distant by the trail and the first provisions had not arrived, so the whole settlement were almost in a state of starvation more or less and we had very few animals.

Finding the mushrooms plentiful at the time, we collected and ate them. I remarked how curiously the Indians looked at me when I was gathering them, and that they were laughing, apparently, wondering what use I could possibly make of them. I brought one of the Indian chiefs to my place and got an interpreter and explained to him as they were starving – as we were all starving – it was fortunate that we had those mushrooms so plentiful around us, because if nothing else remained we could live on those any way. I told him they were very good eating, and to prove it I would prepare a dish for myself and family, which he would be invited to taste. While the cooking was going on the kitchen had to be left a minute or so and the man disappeared. At that time I did not know that the puff ball could also be eaten without danger, and I had been telling him that some of those mushrooms were poisonous and that great care should be taken in collecting them. I suppose this

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<sup>11</sup> Amedée Emmanuel Marie Forget (1847 – 1923). He would later be Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories (1898 – 1905)

frightened him. He thought perhaps I might have gathered some of the poisonous ones, so he suddenly quitted the place and I could not get him to try the mushrooms at all. Up to the present day I do not know that a single Indian has eaten a mushroom. However, they might be induced to eat them if they can get nothing else. [...]

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Can you think of any other plants or fruits?

#### THE SASKATOON BERRY

A. We have a fruit called the saskatoon. It grows on trees alongside most of the rivers all through the country – the Saskatchewan, the Battle and the Qu'Appelle Rivers – alongside of streams everywhere. They are very plentiful. It is a fruit resembling blueberries very much in appearance. It is not quite as blue; it is darker than the blueberry, but in shape it is very much the same. In taste it differs in this respect – it is much sweeter. You can eat a great deal of it, and I have seen Indians living entirely on those berries for days running with nothing else. They collect them during the ripening season in August, and dry them, and use the berries in winter with their meat.

*By the Honorable Mr. Ogilvie:*

Q. Do they not mix them with pemmican?

A. They used to when pemmican was plentiful. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. You have been living for some time in the North-West Territories, have you not?

A. I have been living there for eleven years, since 1876.

Q. Can you safely rely on the natural products of the North-West country to maintain its population?

A. Yes, I believe so. [...]

Q. Do the Indians try to make use of those natural products?

#### FORGET'S OPINIONS ON INDIANS AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

A. They do. On a number of reserves they have been very successful, too. On the South Saskatchewan River there is a reserve near Prince Albert where they are good farmers and they are endeavouring to cultivate the land. They certainly have been as successful as their white neighbors.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Is it possible that they can ever become self-supporting?

A. If care is taken of them I believe they will – not the majority of them, and a good portion of the Indians are certainly inclined to work.

Q. They can grow potatoes, and I suppose there is plenty of fish and game in the country?

A. They can grow anything that the white man can grow.

*By the Honorable Mr. Kaulbach:*

Q. Do cabbages grow there to any great size?

A. Yes, to an enormous size.

*By the Honorable Mr. Ogilvie:*

Q. Have not the Stony Indians in the Rocky Mountains been actually supporting themselves for some years?

A. I do not know that personally, but I have heard it frequently stated, and I have no reason to disbelieve the report. I lived at Battleford five years, and had more intercourse with the Indians there than I have had since. I am speaking now of the years from 1877 to 1880. I saw them then more frequently, and they were about to commence to cultivate the land. In all cases where an Indian started a garden he seemed to be giving more care to it than we did ourselves. At any time during the summer you could hardly detect one blade of grass growing between their vegetables. Their gardens were kept clean. I am speaking now of seven or eight years ago. I have not seen them since, but I believe they must have improved.

At Qu'Appelle we have several reserves along the Qu'Appelle River and the Indians are doing well in that line. Last year the crops were a failure in our part of the country, so they were not very successful in that respect any more than we ourselves were, and to show the endeavours they made to work for their own support, I may mention that they turned their attention to cutting hay. It so happened that on their reserves and in the vicinity of them there were good hay marshes and they cut a large quantity of hay which they sold to the North-West Mounted Police during the winter. On my visit to the North-West Mounted Police I do not remember a day passing without meeting on the way some loads of hay coming in, brought in by the Indians; and their cattle were kept in good condition too.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. How did they spend their money that they got in that way? Did they spend it foolishly in trinkets, or did they purchase food?

A. So far as I am aware they spent their money wisely.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. Is there any expectation that the amount of public money to supply the Indians with food, will be diminished before long?

A. I cannot speak about that.

Q. You have seen how they are managing to maintain themselves?

A. Of courses the Indians, as well as the white men, will have to contend with the difficulties in the way of cultivating the country. Of course it will prove worse for them than for us if the difficulties are serious. When the Indian sows seed and does not get a return he is discouraged and does not want to try again. It will take some years before the appropriation for the support of the Indians is diminished.

*By The Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Do you think the Indians are increasing?

A. I do not think they are. I think they have rather diminished in number than increased.

Q. The reports of the Government show that in sixteen years the Treaty Indians have increased by ten thousand.

A. This may be accounted for in this way: I suppose the Indians are counted on the pay list. They say there are so many Indians because they have paid money to so many. For a number of years there were Indians outside of the treaty, but every year



brought more of them in so that they appeared to increase every year in the statistics of the Indian Department. That is accounted for in this way: There was an increase in the number of Indians paid, and that is due to the fact that new Indians were coming into the treaty. I believe they are all in now.

Q. Do you think they committed fraud by representing their families to be larger than they were?

A. No, I do not think they committed fraud. That has been tried three or four times without success. The first case of the kind occurred three or four years ago. Before that it never occurred to an Indian to attempt anything of the kind. When an Indian was questioned as to his family he generally gave the exact number. It was only later on that they tried to play this trick. At first there was no attempt at deception. So far as my knowledge goes all the Indians of the North-West Territories have taken treaty at present so that by following up the statement made before the House every year you will be in a position to see whether the population is increasing or not. [...]

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Will you please give us some information now regarding the animals and fish?

A. In the line of animals we used to have the buffalo. It is extinct now.

Q. Wholly extinct?

A. Yes. We have moose and a variety of deer. [...] We have bears [...] and wolves and dogs. Dogs are considered a great feast with the Indians. We have also the beaver.

*By the Honorable Mr. Carvell:*

Q. And frogs?

A. Yes, and frogs. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:*

Q. Have you plenty of frogs in the North-West Territories?

A. Yes, they are very plentiful.

Q. Do the Indians eat the frogs?

A. I am not aware of it.

Q. Not even when they are in a starving condition?

A. No; I have never heard of an Indian eating a frog. They eat what we call the gopher. They were very numerous last year, and the Indians at them. [...]

## RABBITS

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Have you the rabbit?

A. Yes; I was forgetting the rabbit. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:* [...]

Q. Are the rabbits found in very large numbers?

A. Yes; they are not so numerous just now. There is a peculiarity about them – every seventh year, according to tradition existing among the Indians, and half-breeds and old countrymen – they disappear, or nearly entirely disappear, and immediately after every year they increase in numbers until they become almost a

pest – they become very numerous – and then at the height, as it were, of their numbers, a disease overtakes them, and you find them dead everywhere.

Q. How do they become a pest?

A. They are not actually a pest, because the country is so large and they disappear in the way I have described, and do not destroy anything. At least they have nothing yet to destroy. The last time they were numerous was the winter of 1883. If I am not mistaken this is the last year in which they were so numerous, so we have three years more to run.

Q. And to your knowledge they increase each year in numbers?

A. Yes, undoubtedly. The year before last they were hardly to be seen anywhere. Last year more of them were brought in, and I have no doubt this year more still will be brought in.

Q. Have they destroyed any of the gardens there?

A. No, not yet, that is why I withdraw the word pest.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Are they a prominent article of the Indians' food?

A. Yes, the Indians use them largely. [...]

#### FORGET ON STARVATION AND THE INDIAN APPETITE

*By the Chairman:* [...]

Q. What is considered a ration for an Indian in time of scarcity?

A. They have a capacity for consuming food that most white people cannot understand. The quantity in their case is somewhat different from what you would supply to a white man. I believe they must have at least thirty ounces of solid food a day. They might live with less, certainly: they frequently live with less than that, but when they come across food they consume a much larger quantity than white men would.

I have had an Indian at my own place – I might give his name since he is dead now, Poundmaker<sup>12</sup> – I had him at my own table in Battleford. His reserve is about twenty-five miles from there, and whenever he came into Battleford I always invited him to take dinner at my house. He was as clean as most people, but he took more than any white man would, and the first time that he took a meal at my place he ate as much as three men would.

I dare say that this extraordinary appetite on the part of the Indians may be accounted for in this way. Since the extinction of the buffalo they are always more or less in a state of want. With all the good will in the world, the Indian Department cannot be expected to feed them fully all the time. They give them sufficient food to keep them alive, and they are expected to work and besides to earn something else by the chase and otherwise. Sometimes there is a scarcity of game, so that they have to depend entirely on what the Indian Department gives them, which is not, perhaps, quite sufficient to satisfy them altogether, and the consequence is that there is a natural craving for more, and when they come across a good meal that is why they consume so much at a time.

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<sup>12</sup> Pihtokahanapiwiyyin (1842 – 1886), Cree chief and founder of the Poundmaker Cree First Nation.

*By the Honorable Mr. Carvell:*

Q. I suppose if Poundmaker had the good fortune to be a guest of Mr. Forget's for three weeks continuously, probably he would eat no more at the end of that than a white man?

A. I had a Sarcee Indian at my place for two months, a young man of twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. He lived at my place altogether for that two months, and his appetite at first was tremendous. It greatly decreased, and towards the end of the time he spent with us his appetite was about the same as ours.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. Have you met any fat men among the Indians?

A. They are scarce; I never saw one of your size.

Hon. Mr. Sandford: – A contractor who was doing some work for me told me that he had a number of Indians in his employ, and that they were very satisfactory workmen. He found them to be a most valuable class of men. His rule was to give them all the bread, pork, beans and molasses that they could eat after coming on the work, and they were invariably used up and sick, and on the third day wanted to leave. He said, "No: I will take care of you," and he physicked them and let them rest and smoke for a couple of days, and he found that they moderated in the amount of food they consumed, and after that were good men to work anyway.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. As this inquiry is in the interest of the Indians and in the public interest, what disposition do the Indians show in the different parts that you have visited to work for themselves? If you do anything do you think that they would try to take advantage of it?

A. It is my firm conviction that there is a good disposition on the part of the Indians to work, and if their work had been rewarded as it deserved to have been – that is, if the crops had been equal to their anticipations – I have not the slightest doubt that to-day the Indians would be in a position to sustain themselves, if not wholly, in a great measure.

*By the Honorable Mr. Sutherland:*

Q. Before leaving this subject I would ask, do you know whether the Indians are as fond of mutton as of beef?

A. I believe so. I believe they are fond of anything in the shape of meat.

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:*

Q. But it must be fresh?

A. Not necessarily. After the visit of the Marquis of Lorne<sup>13</sup> at Battleford, a number of horses which had been used by the party, were left there broken down. These horses had been bought in a hurry and perhaps were not very sound at the start, but a number of them were used up, very poor, and some cases of glanders [were found] among them. As soon as it was discovered that the horses were diseased they were killed and thrown out on the prairie some distance from the barracks near the river, late in the fall, and the Indians actually cut up those carcasses and ate them.

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<sup>13</sup> John George Edward Henry Douglas Sutherland Campbell (1845 – 1914) was Governor General of Canada from 1878 to 1883.

The horses were as poor as could be, hardly any flesh on them, and they were used as food though they were affected by the glanders.

Q. They did not salt any of the meat down?

A. No, they did not salt any of it; they cut it up and [ate] it there. I had a mare in my own stable that took sick one evening of inflammation of the bowels; [the] next day at ten she was dead, and at four o'clock the Indian women had done away with the carcass altogether. I just sent word to an Indian encampment in the vicinity that there was a dead horse in my stable and that they were welcome to it if they wished to take it. Some Indian women came down and in a few minutes the whole carcass was carried away, and it could be seen hanging in pieces to the poles of their tepees.

Q. Did they smoke the meat?

A. No; it was in the fall of the year and it kept well. The Indians are also fond of the meat of dogs, especially white dogs. There is a tribe of Indians, the Sioux, who have a feast of dogs at certain seasons of the year. Whether it is because of being particularly fond of flesh or because of some superstition connected with it I do not know, but I had a splendid terrier that fell a victim to one of those last summer.

Q. Are the Indians cannibals – do they eat human flesh?

A. I never heard of it.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: – In British Columbia, on the coast there used to be cannibals in our Province some years ago. At their feast they used to kill slaves and eat a portion of the body.

#### FARMING, LAND AND RESERVES

*By the Hon. Mr. Girard:*

Q. As far as you know, if the Indians were encouraged to work, would they be willing to work? How do they ordinarily occupy their time on the reserve?

A. We got to Battleford in the fall of 1877, and the first real attempt made by the Indians to cultivate the soil was in the following spring and they went to work with good heart. Mr. Laird, who was then Lieutenant Governor, was on the spot, and was very anxious that one reserve at least should start agriculture. He made it a point to visit the Indians frequently in the spring, and Red Pheasant, the chief of the band, who was certainly superior to the ordinary class of Indians, readily understood the argument of the Indian Commissioner, and through his influence a number of the band started gardens and ploughed for the next year and sowed some cereals, barley and oats, and seemed to enjoy the work.

Q. Had they any crop from it?

A. There was a pretty fair crop of vegetables and a quite large yield of cereals that year. Those that worked seemed to enjoy it. Those who would not work of course stood around laughing, but we have not the slightest doubt if the crops had been good every year, to-day the Indians would be as good farmers as any others. Sometimes they met with reverses the same as white men, but a reverse in their case has a worse effect than it has on the white man. They were new to the work and the occupation is considered by them all as beneath the dignity of the Indian, so that the bad crops which they had certainly discouraged them. I account for the reluctance of a large number of Indians to work by the fact of the failure of the crops more than anything

else. Wherever they have succeeded on any reserve – take the Qu’Appelle River Reserve for instance – they are all good workers, and there is no complaint. Of course I do not belong to the Indian Department there, but our buildings are close to the reserve and I see the Indians frequently there, and if there were any complaints going I would hear of them.

Q. Do you think if a certain allowance of land was made for each family for purposes of agriculture, so that they could have it for themselves and [their] children, it would be better than forcing them to live in bands on a reserve?

A. I think so. I think if they were made the owners of a portion of the reserve and could look on that particular portion as their own and everything that they should grow on it as their own, they would feel more encouraged to work it. This is allowed by the Indian Department. Any Indian can obtain a portion of the reserve and put up a house, and he can obtain leave from the Indian Department to sell it to whoever he pleases. This permission is given to all those who apply for it. It is not made obligatory on the part of the Indians, but it is done individually. [...] <sup>14</sup>

Q. Does the Indian get a patent for such land?

A. Of course they have no patents. The Government would not sell it.

Q. The Government would not allow the Indian to sell that property?

A. No, it does not become the property of the Indian that he can dispose of.

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:*

Q. They cannot sell that privilege to any person but an Indian?

A. No, they cannot sell it to a white man.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: – The American Government are going to adopt that system to break up the reserves and give each Indian a piece of land separately, and give them the franchise, putting them almost on the same footing as citizens of this country. I suppose they would not have the power to sell that land, but would have the right to hold it individually, which would be a great advantage to the Indian and his children.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. Do the Indians on their reserves cultivate gardens near their dwellings and raise vegetables?

A. Yes, they cultivate all kinds of vegetables, and the products of their gardens were exhibited at the exhibition at Regina last year, and certainly were equal to any vegetables grown by the white man. They carried off prizes <sup>15</sup> for their garden stuff.

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<sup>14</sup> All that’s omitted here is a redundant reference to Mr. Girard.

<sup>15</sup> The following list of winners of “PRIZES ONLY OPEN TO INDIANS OF THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES” was published in the *Regina Leader* on October 22, 1885. The prizes were awarded at the Assiniboia Agricultural Show, Regina. “Best half bushel of wheat sown and cultivated by an Indian, and grown on Indian Reserve, 1st Ant Slayer; 2nd Geo Asham. Best half bushel barley, same conditions as above, 1st Three Bulls, (Blackfeet); 2nd O Soup (Little Child’s) Best half bushel potatoes, 1st The Louise (Blackfeet); 2nd Essr. [sic.] (Pasqua’s Band). Best variety of vegetables, 1st The-Man-Who-Took-The-Coat; 2nd Rabbit Skin. Best 5 lbs butter, made by pure Indian woman, 1st Nocotoos, (File Hills Reserve.) Bes[t] loaf home-made bread, 1st O S[ol]up; 2nd Mary Cecil; 3rd Sugar. Best pair home made woolen mitts or socks, 1st O Soup; 2nd Mrs. Mosney.” THE AGRICULTURAL SHOW. (1885, October 22). *Regina Leader*, p. 4.

Q. In what departments were they?

A. Vegetables principally. I have not the list of prizes which they took, but they could easily be obtained on reference to the Regina *Leader* which published the names of the prize winners. Ultimately, there is no doubt that the Government will have to enfranchise the Indians and give them lands individually. Of course, the question to-day is whether a plan of that kind would be premature or not on account of the large number still amongst them who have no particular ambition. With what success it would be attended, I do not know, but with a greater number of them it could be done now. A few of them could be enfranchised and given land separately from the others, and perhaps the example might have a beneficial effect on the others and gradually you would have them all enfranchised.

Q. Have you visited Ermine Skin's reserve?

A. Yes, it is on the trail from Calgary to Edmonton in the vicinity of Peace Hills. I passed through in the spring of 1885 during the rebellion.

Q. He has considerable stock, has he not?

A. Yes; it is a very good reserve, and apparently it must have been well cultivated the year before, because there were a number of fields ploughed and fenced in, and pretty fair houses built in various parts of the reserve. They appear to be a well-to-do band of Indians. Of course, that year the excitement attending what was going on at Batoche prevented them from going extensively into agriculture, and they did not reap anything that year.

Q. Ermine Skin had horses and horned cattle?

A. Yes. I understand that Ermine Skin is no longer an Indian: that he has been admitted to take scrip as a half-breed. I do not know personally that is the fact.

*By the Chairman:* [...]

#### RATIONS AND THE SALE OF FOOD SURPLUSES

Q. What is the food actually supplied to the Indians by the Department?

A. [...] In the south-west they are generally given beef, for the simple reason that the beef is there and it is the most economical food that can be procured for the Indians. In the north they are generally given bacon; at first they were given bacon exclusively; now occasionally they receive rations of beef also, more in the way of change than from economy. It has been ascertained that when the Indians are fed exclusively on bacon it produces diseases among them, and after some years of experience the Indian Department have decided on making an occasional distribution of beef to counteract the effect of the continuous use of bacon. With regard to vegetables, they are not supplied by the Indian Department as food. So far, I believe, the Indians have grown sufficient for their own consumption, and in some cases have had enough for sale to outside parties.

Q. When they have more than enough for themselves does the Indian Department become a purchaser?

A. I do not know whether transactions of that kind take place. I believe not. I think that in all cases where an Indian has more produce than his family can consume he is permitted to sell the balance. That permission allows him to sell wherever he likes, and as he can in almost all cases obtain a better price from the white man than

from his Indian neighbors he generally goes to the white man and sells for cash. At the Black Foot Crossing I understand they had a large quantity of potatoes last year, and they sold quite a quantity of them.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Does the Government forbid the sale of food by the Indians?

A. They can only sell with the permission of the Department. Of course, anything they have produced with the implements and seeds given them by the Department they require permission to sell, but they can sell any game that they secure without permission. I think this restriction is quite proper, but it has created a great deal of discontent amongst the Indians. However, I think it is a wise provision, because otherwise, if facilities were offered to sell to the white men, they would take advantage of it and buy from the Indian for almost nothing; and if the Indian had the privilege of selling as he pleased, although he might not have enough for himself and his family, in order to get money he would sell what was absolutely necessary for his own support. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. At the time you were there, what was the usual food used by the Indians – the first time you were in the country?

A. I believe up to 1876 buffalo meat was the exclusive food of the Indians. Then the buffaloes began to disappear in the summer of 1877. Of course they began to disappear before that, but not to any appreciable extent. It was in 1877 that we perceived the fact that they were gone. Up to that time the herds in the country were sufficient to supply the Indians with food.

Q. Is there not an occasional buffalo killed now in the North-West?

A. I have seen it stated in the papers, but I believe the last buffalo killed south of the Saskatchewan, and north of the Red Deer River, was one killed in 1880, when the Marquis of Lorne went down there, by himself or by his party. I think that was the last buffalo killed in that district.

*By the Honorable Mr. Kaulbach:*

Q. I saw three old stags that had been recently killed at Medicine Hat.

A. Yes, but that is not in the district I mentioned.

## **TESTIMONY OF MR. BEDSON, PENITENTIARY WARDEN**

Mr. Bedson, Warden of the Penitentiary at Stony Mountain, Manitoba, appeared and was examined as follows:- [...]

### **PEMMICAN AND SALT MEAT**

*By the Chairman:* [...]

Q. It would be interesting for the Committee to know what the proper method of making pemmican is – that is supposing an experimental farm were stocked with a large number of hybrid animals, and pemmican was required by the Government for Arctic expeditions or other purposes.

A. I think it could be started down by St. Peter's where labor is cheap, and a great many of the inhabitants are accustomed to cutting beef into thin strips and

smoking it as they used to do with buffalo meat, when they have more than they require for present use. As an article of military commissariat, beef done in that way is more easily transported than in any other shape, and every bit of it can be used. Even the hides in which it is packaged can be cut into strips and used for mending harness, or cut into whips, or lashings for locking the gun wheels, and many other purposes. The pemmican itself, packed in skins, would afford a very efficient means of defence, if necessary, by throwing up an entrenchment with earth and pemmican bags.

Q. Is the meat more likely to retain its flavor and purity than other meats supplied to soldiers?

A. My experience of the canned meats supplied in the North-West is, a great many of them were spoiled, the canning being poorly done and the soldering not been as perfect as it should be. In my experience I found a great many canned meats totally unfit for use.

Q. What relation would pemmican bear in nutritive qualities to bacon or salt pork?

A. Ration of bacon could be about one and a quarter pounds, and of pemmican one pound would be sufficient. The latter is more nutritive than bacon. Then pemmican can be used in such a variety of ways. Delicious soups can be made with it, it can be stewed with potatoes, or boiled with vegetables, or made into curries for the officers' men. Then above all it could be used as a ration, men taking it in their haversacks in a raw state, and using it without cooking at all. By that you would save the necessity of making fires when men are on outpost duty.

Q. Could you give the Committee an idea of the comparative cost to the Government on the line of railway a pound and a quarter of bacon as against one pound of pemmican?

A. On a line of railway, I suppose bacon could be laid down for 12 cents a pound – about 15 cents for a ration.

Q. What was the price of pemmican in the old days of plenty?

A. Pemmican was bought at from five to eight cents a pound, and I have paid as high as fifteen to twenty cents for it.

Q. Which ration would Indians prefer in time of scarcity – bacon or pemmican?

A. Pemmican, certainly.

Q. Have you any reason to believe that it is a more nutritious and more healthful food than bacon?

A. You can live on pemmican much longer than you can on bacon. I know that from my own experience. I have heard Hudson's Bay [Company] officers say that they would rather have pemmican than any other meat except fresh beef, and that they preferred pemmican when traveling to any other food. [...]

#### INDIAN PRISONERS IN 1885

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. Could you give us some information with reference to certain prisoners that you had in your charge in 1885? I think you had then the custody of some Indian



chiefs, amongst whom were Poundmaker, Big Bear and some others, who were involved in the rebellion at the time?

A. Yes.

Q. How were they fed?

A. They had their regular ration; in fact, Poundmaker had a ration better than the ordinary prison ration.

Q. How did they appreciate the rations they received? Had they enough to feed on?

A. They had more than enough.

Q. What was their appearance amongst other prisoners? Were they worse, or did they look as civilized as the others?

A. I never saw any change in their appearance from the time they were handed over to me until they were released.

Q. I mean in their disposition. Were they worse than the other prisoners?

A. No, I think not.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. Were they more difficult to manage?

A. No, not at all difficult to manage – quite the reverse.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. You kept some of them working in the garden there?

A. Yes.

Q. What work were you able to obtain from them?

A. Just the ordinary work that we have in the garden – seeding, planting, weeding, hoeing, making beds, &c. The older Indians were employed principally in weeding and keeping the garden clean.

Q. By what you saw of them, are you of the opinion that they can be instructed in gardening and cultivating the ground?

A. Yes, I am sure they can because they expressed their willingness and their desire to take plants and seeds home with them to make gardens for themselves. After they left I took the trouble to send them seeds and plants.

Q. You never heard any of them expressing regret that they were deprived of some of their natural foods of the lakes and prairies, in their place of confinement?

A. No.

Q. What are the products in your garden there – is it cultivated as a vegetable garden?

A. All kinds of garden vegetables, from asparagus up to white turnips, strawberries and currants. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:*

Q. A little while ago you were describing the good behavior of the Indians while in the penitentiary at Stony Mountain. What was the effect on their health of the close confinement?

A. I saw no effect upon those who were healthy when they came there; but there are a number of Indians who are not healthy – they are scrofulous.

Q. Does scrofula and consumption develop there among Indian prisoners?

A. Yes.

Q. Are those cases more numerous among Indian prisoners than amongst the white prisoners?

A. Yes, they come in suffering, and of course they continue to suffer while they are there.

Q. What is the greatest length of time that you have had Indians confined in the penitentiary?

A. Seven years.

Q. And they survived?

A. Oh, yes.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. I may say to the Committee that any Indian who has not some inherent disease is not likely to contract it in the penitentiary, for Mr. Bedson is as careful of their health as he is of the health of the best subject of Her Majesty. [...]

#### ON BEETS

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:* [...]

Q. [...] Of roots, I should think, potatoes, turnips and carrots would be the best varieties for Indians to grow. [...] And beets?

A. You cannot get an Indian to eat a beet. You have to educate him to it. I know that in the prison we cannot get them to eat it; they have a prejudice against the color.

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:*

Q. What objection have they to eating beets?

A. I think it is the color. They will not eat onions either.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. What is the objection to the onion?

A. They hate the smell of it.

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:*

Q. No matter whether they are cooked or not?

A. Of course they get them cooked. We never give them in a raw state.

### TESTIMONY OF DONALD W. DAVIS, M.P. FOR ALBERTA

Donald W. Davis<sup>16</sup>, M. P. for Alberta, called and examined.

*By the Chairman:* [...]

Q. Will you give a list to the committee of the plants, animals, birds and fishes with which you are acquainted and the districts in which they are chiefly to be found?

#### THE CAMAS LILY

A. As to plants, [...] there is on the eastern slope, close to the [Rocky] mountains, what the Indians call camus. It is a species of wild onion, I should call it. It grows very abundantly on the eastern slope near the foot of the mountain. Our Indians, that is, the Blackfoot nation do not use it so much as the Kootenay Indians.

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<sup>16</sup> Donald Watson Davis (1849 – 1906).

They live on it to a good extent. It has a small root, and it grows very much in the shape of what we call the potato onion.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. The Indians bake those roots?

A. The Indians bake them in pits and iron pots, and when the vegetable comes out it looks very like licorice and tastes sweet.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Is it found in large quantities?

A. Along the slope of the mountains it is found in large quantities.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. Cultivated or wild?

A. It grows wild. On the western slope of the mountains in the Kootenay district they call it Camass prairie.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. I suppose it is so-called from the abundance of the vegetable which they gather?

A. I presume so.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. Is it the same thing as the vegetable which grows on the other side of the mountain?

A. Yes.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Has nobody had the curiosity to see if it could be improved by cultivation?

A. I have never heard of anyone trying to improve it by cultivation.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. Did you ever eat any of it?

A. Yes, I have eaten it. It is very pleasant to the taste and very nourishing. I believe no man would starve to death on half a pound a day of it.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. It would alone preserve life?

A. Yes.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. Have you heard of the white man using it as an article of food?

A. No; only out of curiosity. Then there is another species of plant that grows abundantly all over the prairies, which our Indians dig and eat raw or baked. It tastes something like the sweet potato.

#### THE INDIAN TURNIP OR CARROT

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Is that what is called the Indian carrot?

A. Yes; it is called the Indian carrot. It grows from two to five inches in length.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. Can they be dug in the winter season?

A. No, they are only dug in the summer.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. How early in the summer is it possible to obtain them for food?

A. This Indian turnip or carrot is one of the first vegetables they get in the spring. The Indians commence to dig them out of the ground as soon as the frost is out. [...]

### BERRIES

Q. Have you plenty of berries throughout the North-West?

A. There is any quantity of what they call the serviceberry, a species of huckleberry. They grow on a higher bush than the huckleberry. They grow very large and are very sweet.

Q. Are they nutritious?

A. They are gathered in large quantities by the Indians who dry them and save them for winter use. [...]

### BACON

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. And bacon? [...] The Indians will not eat bacon?

*By the Chairman:*

Q. What seems to be the Indians' objection to bacon?

A. I do not know what the objection is, but the Indians do not like it, and no one can live on bacon alone. If you eat it three times a day, and nothing with it for one week, you get sick of it.

Q. Is it not apt to become deteriorated by careless handling after giving it to the Indians? So much is served out to the families, and they themselves are careless in handling all kinds of provisions, and does not the bacon in this way become rancid?

A. Yes. They like a little bacon occasionally for the sake of the grease they get from it, but beef is the only meat they would ask for and require. They would live on beef without anything else. [...] As to the grains and grasses, they have never been tried by the Indians very much. Wheat will grow under their tillage and does very well. I have seen Indians raise as good wheat as you would wish to see anywhere.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. What do they do with it?

A. They have no use for it; they just sow it for chicken feed. They have no mills to grind it. I believe myself if they can buy flour they should not be advised to raise grain at all. [...]

Q. Do you say the Indians eat salt beef?

A. It has never been tried. I expect they would, but they prefer fresh meat altogether.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. Do they boil it or roast it?

A. Yes.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. How much would you allow an Indian for his dinner if you asked him to dine with you?

A. It would depend upon how long since he had a meal before. I would allow about ten pounds, although I believe that the ration they are allowed at the present

time is a pound and a quarter, which is allowed to every man, woman and child, is sufficient. Of course that means for a baby only one day old a pound and a quarter the same as for a man. That would, I suppose, give to a grown man probably two pounds or three pounds a day. I do not see any of them looking very thin either. [...]

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF WALTER ROBERT BROWN

Sir – I have to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of inst., covering a list of questions which you require the answers to in writing. In giving these answers the Committee will please bear in mind that they relate to the food products of five year ago, since which time I have been mainly absent from the North-West. [...]

### WILD RICE

I should think the encouragement of the cultivation of the Canadian wild rice would be of great assistance to the Government in helping to provide for the Indians, as well as finding employment for them. In rice producing waters it will produce from 30 to 60 bushels per acre, and two pounds per day is the average used per head where the inhabitants live solely upon it. It can, and will, grow in any sluggish stream or lake with a muddy bottom and the water not too deep. The water fowl are very fond of it and fatten quickly on it, and I am told the domestic like it also. The Wood and River Indians all think highly of it, and gather, clean it, and stow it away in rogons (baskets made of bark) for their winter use, and sell to the trader any extra supply for the use of their men trading amongst them. In the northern districts where I traded, I used to feed my men mostly upon it in the following manner: Taking a three or four gallon kettle and allowing one-third of a quart of rice to each man for a meal, with one-third of the two ounces of fat allowed each man a day, instead of fish and rabbits when provisions were scarce, with a sufficient quantity of water. This was allowed to boil for a few hours, and when sufficiently boiled, it used to make a very palatable soup, and when some game was added to it, such as bear, lynx, rat, beaver, deer, goose, duck, or chicken, it was food “fit for any one.” I have known some families [to] gather some forty or fifty bushels in a season for their own use and for sale to the trader. [...]

### BUFFALO

At the time of the transfer of that country in Canada, the food of the Indians everywhere between the boundary line on the south, the Red River on the east, the Rocky Mountains on the west and the Main Saskatchewan on the north, was the buffalo. When I first went to that country, twenty-three years ago, its flesh in every form was used by white and Indian alike. The fall hunters returned with carts heavily laden with what was termed “green meat,” this being the choicest portions of the animal with all the inferior portions cast away. The hump was a special tid bit, the unused muscle alternating with layers of fat, which constituted a dish, if either boiled, fried or roasted, fit for a king. The tongue was scarcely less dainty, while the rump steak fried in the marrow of the animal, made a dish which makes my mouth water even now to think of. This meat was sold to the Red River settlers at twopence

sterling per pound. These carts were otherwise loaded with dried meat that, being from the fattest cows killed before it was cold enough to preserve the green meat, [had] the choicest portions cut into thin layers dried in the sun and afterwards slightly smoked. Meat in this shape would keep a year and command a price of 2½d. per pound. The large portion, however, of the freighting of these carts was made up of pemmican bags. These varied in weight from fifty pounds to two hundred pounds. This pemmican has been so much spoken of and well-known that I need not give a description of its making, and may only state that it varied in price from twopence to threepence halfpenny sterling per pound according as it was made from the choicest portions of a young cow, having marrow fat mixed with the tallow that preserved it and having carefully mixed through it, the saskatoon and buffalo berries, this latter being held an especial delicacy. This pemmican has been known to keep for five years. The ration allowed by the Hudson's Bay Company and other traders in the buffalo country was one pound pemmican per day, or one and a-half pounds dried meat per day, or in the case of green meat (*i.e.* fresh buffalo meat) all they could eat.

This state of comparative plenty of these forms of food lasted for ten years, and then the results, which might have been anticipated, in the enormous destruction of the animals themselves by causes which need not be recapitulated began to be apparent. For instance, travelers for sport in passing through the country killed large numbers with their breech-loading rifles and navy revolvers, only to take the tongue and hump of the animal for food, and sometimes the horns as a trophy.

In addition to these civilized destructors the next perhaps and second only in point of destruction were the prairie and sometimes the wood wolf, who fiercely chasing the bands of the buffalo not only quickly dispatched the calves and those injured by the mass of other buffaloes in the attempt to get away, but in the mad rush of thousands of these animals to escape their dread pursuers, hundreds were killed by the foremost of the herd being pushed over precipices into deep streams or into morasses from which there was no escape. So that for the past fifteen years they have been steadily decreasing, and I believe with the exception of about a hundred, no buffalo remains north of the boundary line. [...]

#### FISH PEMMICAN

[Fish] are dried, smoked, sliced and frozen constantly as a means of preservation, and in some districts the Indians put them through the part of the processes which are used in the pemmicanizing, that is, the fish are sliced, dried slightly, smoked, and then beaten into a coarse powder in the same manner as the flesh of the buffalo and other animals pass through in the process of being made into pemmican, the flesh of many of the existing wild animals being treated in the same manner. Moose, deer, elk, bear, all make excellent pemmican, because they have fat enough to complete the process, and some of the pemmican prepared in this way will keep for years. The less fatty animals, as the rabbit, may be and are extensively dried and smoked for after use, and they might be with equal facility pemmicanized if the Indians or others had sufficient beef tallow to supply the natural want of fat. As regards birds, the only kinds which I have known to be preserved by this process are the swan, goose, duck, prairie chicken and partridge. Some of these, in the Hudson's

Bay [Company] service, preserved by drying and salting in that state, will keep a year and form part of the rations of their men at some of their posts. The Indians, however, who generally dislike much salt, preserve that by drying and partially smoking them, and, if in that state boiled for an extra length of time and adding wild rice to the soup thus made, forms a very palatable and I believe health-giving food. [...]

Trusting that I have not taken up too much space in answering these questions, I am, Sir, yours very truly,

Walter Robert Bown<sup>17</sup>

## HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY TARIFFS IN THE 1850s

I<sup>18</sup> herewith append as showing the animals dealt in and the prices paid for them 30 years ago, an Indian and Esquimalt tariff in the Hudson's Bay [Company] district of East Main. It will be remembered, in connection with the list, that money, being wholly unused, prime beaver, technically termed "made beaver," was the basis of exchange, all rates of goods supplied being so many beaver, and all furs taken on in the same basis. For instance, a badger was counted as half a beaver and a prime black bear as three beavers, &c., and goods were counted in the same way, one awl being one-eighth of a beaver, and a string of agate two beavers, and a large blanket eight beavers, and so on.

Tariff of furs and provisions.			Tariff of goods.		
Badgers	½	beaver.	Awls	⅛	beaver.
Bears, large black	3		Beads, large	2	
Beavers, large	1		Bells, dog	½	
Beavers, small	½		Belts, worsted	2	
Blubber, 96 lbs.	1		Biscuits, per lb.	⅙	
Castor rum, per lb.	1		Bonnets, Glengarry	2	
Cats, wild	1		Boxes, tobacco	2	
Feathers, per 10 lbs.	1		Blankets, large	8	
Fat skunks	⅛		Blankets, small	4	
Fox, blue and white	½		Capotes, blanket	6	
Fox, cross	2		Capotes, small	3	
Fox, red	1		Cloth, per yd.	4	
Fox, silver	3		Combs, ivory	1	
Hares, Arctic	⅛		Flour, per lb.	⅙	

<sup>17</sup> Walter Robert Bown (1828 – 1903). "Walter Robert Bown was one of the real old-timers of the Red River Settlement, being prominently and favorably known in the early days. In the [18]50's and 60's he practiced the calling of dentist over this district[...] [...] The year after Confederation he acquired the Norwester, the pioneer paper of the settlement, [...] his management of which in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Co. brought him into prominence in rebellion times." DEATH OF DR. BOWN. (1903, March 12). *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Probably "J. G. A. Creighton, Esq., Law Clerk of the Senate, Ottawa," but Creighton may have been appending information provided by W. R. Bown.

Ivory, per 3 lbs.	1	Flannel, per yd.	1
Lines for harpoons	½	Handkerchiefs, large	1
Lines for sealskins, dried	¼	Handkerchiefs, small	½
Loons, skin	⅛	Guns, single barrelled	10
Martens, large	1	Guns, double barrelled	20
Martens, small	½	Flints, per doz.	½
Muskrats	1½	Kettles, copper, per lb.	2
Oil, seal and whale, per gal.	⅛	Tin, 12 galls.	7
Otters, large	2	Tin, 1 gall.	2
Otters, small	1	Knives, pocket	1
Quills, per 100 lbs.	¼	Knives, scalping	½
Rabbits	½ <sub>20</sub>	Crooked	2
Swan skins	½	Oatmeal, per lb.	⅛
Skins, dressed deer	3	Pork, per lb.	½
Skins, small	½	Tea, per lb.	4
Skins, seal	1	Tobacco, per lb.	1½
Skins, porpoise	¾	Sugar, per lb.	¼
Skins, wolf	1	Vermillion, per lb.	16
Wolverine	1	Cotton fancy print, per yd.	1
Ducks, per doz.	⅕	Gunpowder, per lb.	1
Deer tongues	⅙	Molasses, per gall.	4
Geese	⅙	Rings, gilt	2
Partridge	⅙ <sub>80</sub>	Rings, fine	½
Rabbits	⅙ <sub>15</sub>	Saws	½
Venison, dried, per lb.	⅙ <sub>0</sub>	Scissors, per pair	1
Venison, pounded, per lb.	⅙ <sub>0</sub>	Ribbon, silk, per yd.	⅙ <sub>8</sub> <sup>19</sup>
Venison, green, per lb.	⅙ <sub>20</sub>	Snuff, per lb.	4

## TESTIMONY OF NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN

Nicholas Flood Davin<sup>20</sup>, M. P., of Regina, N.W.T., called and examined.[...]

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

### RESERVES AND FARMING

Q. Are there any Indian reserves in the part of the country you are talking about now?

A. Yes, there are Indian reserves about 40 miles from Regina.

Q. Are there any reserves in which they cultivate the soil for themselves? Do the Indians farm for their own particular benefit?

<sup>19</sup> My source is unclear in this entry. It could possibly be 1/6, instead of 1/8.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Flood Davin (1840 – 1901) played a crucial role in the development of the residential school system, via his report on Indigenous education in the United States. He was a member of Parliament for Assiniboia West from 1887 to 1900.



A. Yes, they are farming on their reserve; on the reserve for instance over which Col. Macdonald presides. When I heard those absurd statements that were made about the management of the Indians I naturally felt that if such a thing were going on it ought to be exposed; that it was in the interest of the public and in the interest of the Government that it should be exposed, and I went down myself and traveled over the reserves, and I may say *en passant* that the statements made about the food given to the Indians were not correct, in my opinion. However, I had an opportunity of observing the way things were managed, and I went over the farms of the Indians. Of course they are like children. In farming some of them show a good deal of care and industry and have raised splendid crops. Each one has his own farm and oxen and carts and so on, and I saw four or five instances of thrift and industry and forecast, as it seemed to me, on the part of those Indians. Some of them seemed to be very industrious. Of course the greater number of them are not educated to toil. You must remember that nearly every Indian that you are trying to make a farmer of has been only a few years ago a hunter.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. Do they get their farms measured out for themselves, each Indian his own farm?

A. Yes.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Don't you think the band system or tribal system is injurious to the progress of the Indian? You say they are hunters. Do they not sit and talk over their former hunting expeditions and wars and events of the past instead of working?

A. The tribal system does not prevent apparently scope being given to individual activity and ambition, and I know instances, on Mus-cow-pe-tung's reserve, of Indians having their own oxen individually, cutting their own hay, bringing it into town, selling it at Regina, and taking home the proceeds.

Q. But the old members of the tribes, who do not branch off in that way, but keep to the tribal system, they do not progress like those individuals you speak of?

A. These are members of the band on the reserve. These would still be members of the band, but they take the money themselves. The tribal system does not exist to the extent that they would have to give up their produce or money received for it to the chief.

Q. They live in the same wigwam or tent together?

A. No; here is a reserve for instance, they have got the choicest portions of the North-West. You go into the reserve and one of the first things probably you will see is the house of the agency. You will drive some distance and you see a house or maybe a tent, but the chances are it is a house. You ask who lives there and you find it is an Indian living there with his s—. You drive up to the farm, and if it is in the spring time you will see the s— working very hard about the farm. You proceed some distance further and you find another lot of Indians huddled together. As I told you on this reserve of Col. Macdonald's, and also on Mos-cow-pe-tung's reserve, it is a singular thing that they manage to raise (but you must remember that theirs is the

best part of the country) excellent crops – even last year, which was a bad one for other settlers.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. The first one you came to: has he got many acres of land that he can call his own?

A. He would have as many acres as would be allotted to him. I am not sure of the amount, but I think he would have 160 acres.

Q. That belongs to his family for all time to come, however, he would have no power to sell it?

A. He has no power to sell it, but it belongs to himself. The whole reserve belongs to that tribe of Indians, and whenever they are fit to take up their liberty that reserve would be divided by the number of heads of families in the tribe, and would be given to them. That reserve has been set apart for that band, but at the present the sense of ownership is cultivated, and that sense of proprietorship is being developed in them. It is, however, a very slow process.

Q. It is pretty much on the same basis that we have out at Oneida or Tuscarora. The land is in the tribe, but each individual has got his own portion, which is his to all intent and purposes, only he cannot sell it.

A. Yes. I am not sure that the bands there are, in a strict sense, tribes such as the Blackfeet. Pi-a-pot's band, for instance, is eclectic; he has collected it together. It has not grown there.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Are they progressing in farming?

A. They are. If you consider that only five years ago they were hunters, it seems to me that they are getting on pretty well. They are very shrewd about a bargain. They drive a hard bargain, and they will come round with wood and sell. They know the value of it. They are not so savage that they will take anything that is offered to them. They know the value of the articles they sell.

Q. Within a reasonable time this band may be self-supporting and will not require this ration of beef?

A. I think the bands in the reserve, in a reasonable time, ought to become self-supporting. Of course our party system throws a great deal of difficulty in the way of educating the Indian. I am not speaking as a politician or as a party man, but as a citizen of Canada, and the same thing would happen no matter what party is in power. Pi-a-pot has the paper read to him regularly. He cannot read it himself, but he has a person to read the newspapers to him, and when he hears of these ridiculous speeches, because ridiculous<sup>21</sup> they are, that were made about the starving Indians, of course he pricks up his ears and says: "Hallo, we want more, and if we don't get it we will give some trouble." If you feed an Indian well, give him three good meals a day, you cannot get any work out of him. I have watched a young b——<sup>22</sup> Indian with all the energy of twenty or twenty-two years of age, which you would think would make it impossible for him to remain idle, and he will sit, if he is dressed up, as he

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<sup>21</sup> For a rebuttal, see 'Starving Indians' in the Appendix.

<sup>22</sup> The dashes replace an offensive term for young male Indigenous person.

thinks, in good style, at the station utterly motionless, without moving any more than a statue, for five or six consecutive hours. As you have asked me this question, I say great difficulty has been thrown in the way of educating the Indian in consequence of this spurious philanthropy. The Indian should be fed well and should be cared for well. He is our ward. In my opinion the Indians are cared for well. If you were to give a white man the chances that the Indians have he would make a fortune.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Do you think the policy of the country is to encourage above everything, individual industry and the breaking up of the tribal system?

A. My opinion is that they should be encouraged in industry. Are you going to treat them in a different way from the white man? Supposing a white man has a son – put it in the strongest possible way – a son, who, to his great chagrin, will not work, who will not do anything that is of use to himself or his family, but will insist on idling, on being fed and clothed, and what would any father say to such a son?

A. Kick him out?

Q. He would say “son of mine though you are a hundred times, you shall not stop in my house and lead this idle life.” Surely if you take a young Indian of 26 or 27 years of age, full limbed and healthy, and you find that he will not do any work, and you are giving him good rations to make him fat and strong, surely the proper thing under those circumstances is to put the only penalty on him which will at all touch the Indian, and say: “Now, if you will not work we will not give you full rations.” Is there anything unjust, unreasonable or unrighteous about that? No, it is common sense. But if that is done, your philanthropic gentleman comes along and meets this young Indian and asks him: “What are your rations?” The Indian replies they are so and so. The philanthropic gentleman says that is not enough to support a man.

Q. I suppose you have heard of the Rev. Mr. Duncan at Metlakatlah, who is the greatest Indian teacher in the whole of North America?

A. Yes, I have heard of him.

Q. He will not give an Indian anything unless he works for it, except in the case of a sick man or an old person who cannot work. His principle is to make the Indians work for everything they get. The consequence is that to-day they are self-supporting and get nothing from the Government, and last year they exported \$40,000 worth of salmon alone.

A. What can you do when you find [that] a man partly animated by love of God and partly by love of party, comes along and tells an Indian that he is not getting enough to eat, and then rushes to his hotel and writes an article for the newspaper on the terrible state of the Indians without inquiring into the antecedents circumstances of the case? The newspaper publishes it, and every other party paper of the country takes it up and there is a tremendous outcry as to the wrongs done to the country’s wards and all that sort of stuff. Those things come back and are known to the Indians, and this spurious philanthropy is striking a deadly blow at the moral progress and welfare of the Indians, and everything like progress towards that which my honorable friend would aim, namely, having those people self-supporting and ceasing to be a burden on the country.

I may say, while on this subject, that not a man who ever made one of those exaggerated statements about the Indian being so badly treated, has come to Regina and spoken there on the subject. Even at public meetings one syllable in the place where everything is known, never fell from their lips. I may say to the Committee we are there in the midst of those things. We are people of the same heart and blood as yourselves. Do you suppose we would for one minute stand by and see anything like such disgusting wrongs dealt out to those poor helpless people as has been described? However, I must not go into that subject on this strain.

#### SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

*By the Chairman.*

Q. Speaking of the Indians, I would like to have some information as to the progress by the industrial schools there. Have you visited any of the Indian schools?

A. Yes; I have been to the school at Qu'Appelle.

Q. What I want to ascertain is, has education had any effect on them in making them better and more prepared to take advantage of the natural products of the country?

A. I have visited the schools – and not only visited the school at Qu'Appelle, but I have visited, in 1879, the school at Prince's Reserve, in Manitoba. I visited the school in 1879, and the schools in the United States, and I made a report on the best way of dealing with the industrial education of the Indian. I made this report to the Government, and it is a thing that I have gone into, and all I can tell you is this: that the Indian child is, apparently, up to a certain age – whether after that it stops, I don't know – but up to a certain age the Indian child at school, when kept away from the wigwam and subjected to the same training as one of your own boys, would be just as intelligent, just as quick, and just as apt as a white boy. To show that it does not stop there, this year at the Manitoba University a pure Indian has taken a high position in his class. This shows that there is no period where the expansion of intellect stops. What destroys the good of the education is this: the mother hankers for her child, and the child being allowed to go back to the wigwam the home influences are altogether antagonistic to the influences of the school, and of course when he goes back away to the wigwam too young all the impressions of the school are gradually wiped away.

At the Qu'Appelle school, where Rev. Père Hugonnard<sup>23</sup> presides – it is one of the best conducted establishments of the kind probably on the continent of America – the children are taught various kinds of industries. There is quite a number of them there; I cannot say the exact number. They are full of intelligence and apt to learn. You examine them in their lessons and you find them just as quick and just as clever as white children. They sing songs and hymns and read, and altogether it is one of the most pleasant and encouraging sights which one can see in connection with the Indian question.

Q. Is the school open to both sexes?

A. Yes; I forget the number in attendance.

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Hugonnard, or Hugonnard (1848 – 1917).

Q. Some 50 or 60?

A. Yes, I should like to say at least that.

Hon. Mr. Turner – If we are not taken away from the subject of our investigation I should like to say a few words with reference to St. Albert school on the same subject. I visited St. Albert in 1883, and the children there were entirely children that have been left without parents.

The Chairman – That is a mixed population. They are Indians and half-breeds.

Hon. Mr. Turner – Yes, Indians and half-breeds. Bishop Grandin told me that their plan of procedure was something like this. They educated the children up to a certain time of life, and then they let them go away to their families. As soon as they were through with their education they were given \$200 and were let go to do whatever they liked, and it was found that they invariably went back to their Indian modes of living. They adopted a new plan later on, and made it a rule that no Indian should leave the mission until he was married or until she was married. He said they were not obliged to marry in that particular school, but they must marry before leaving the school, and since that it has been a wonderful success. The church then had a hold over them, and by that means they got on very much better than they did before; those people were settling down to farming and the church had some control over them.

## RATIONS

*By the Chairman:* [...]

Q. The Committee have been informed that in some of the treaties, whether it has been put there or not, it is incumbent upon the Government to feed the Indians in times of scarcity, and the Committee are anxious to know what foods indigenous to the country will be best to supply the Indians, to save the importation of foreign foods. [...] The Committee have been given to understand that up to the time the buffalo had decreased so as to be practically extinct, that they supplied abundance of food. Since that time they have had the native foods – berries, fruits &c.

A. The best food for them is a ration of fresh meat or bacon and bread. I think that in all cases the agents should be urged, or made in fact, to teach the Indians how to make bread. If they do not make the bread properly – if they just mix the flour with the water, as they frequently do, they make a kind of stuff that no mortal entrails could digest, in fact not even what Horace calls the “guts of reapers,” and so they ought to be taught to make the bread with those additions, which enable it to be dealt with by the gastric juice.

## GOPHERS AS A FOOD SOURCE

Q. They could be taught the use of the native hop?

A. Yes. I have thought – it sounds like a joke, but I do not intend it as a joke – that really they might have a small reward offered them by agents for catching gophers, and these gophers, white people have lived on them. The Indians themselves eat them. They string them up with their geese and ducks and what not, and they make a pretty good food. I think a small reward might be given to them for killing as large a quantity of gophers as possible, and a sort of pemmican might be made of the gopher flesh.

In regard to that, some sentimental philanthropists would get into a state of fury and dithyrambic madness from this, and the head of the Government might be stayed; but in my opinion this would be a good thing to do, for in the scarce years the gopher would be plentiful.

Q. How do you account for that?

A. Because [the gopher] would be one of the causes of the scarcity. For instance, last year, one of the causes of the destruction, if the simoon<sup>24</sup> had left it to come to anything, the gopher would have destroyed what the simoon had left, because with the gopher himself it was [a] hard time, and although it is not usual, he actually went to the wheat stem and chewed the stalks and sucked out the juice for want of moisture.

*By the Honorable Mr. Reesor:*

Q. In confirmation of what Mr. Davin has stated, I may state that in southern Manitoba, about the Pembina Mountains, the farmers through their municipal authorities have offered rewards to the people for killing gophers, as they are so destructive to their crops; and it certainly would have a good effect, as it would prevent the destruction of the Indians' crops also, so that there would be two advantages gained if the Indians could destroy the gopher.

A. They would be swept out of the country, and those killed, their flesh could be made into pemmican. [...]

## FROM THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN TILTON

Mr. John Tilton, Deputy Minister of Fisheries, appeared and was examined by the Committee. [...]

### FISH AND CONSERVATION

While my own observation has been in the direction that a great deal can be done in restocking depleted waters, I am strongly of the opinion that very much more can be done if natural spawning grounds of fish are vigorously protected during the spawning season. We have met already in the two years that the department has been pursuing its operations in Manitoba and the North-West with great difficulty in that respect. The first is that the Indian Department demanded of us, and which demand the Minister, after conference with the Right. Hon. Sir John Macdonald, acceded to, to allow the Indians to fish during the close season for food. We suggested the restriction that they should not be allowed to fish for purposes of sale or barter, and that their fishing should be limited to one net per family and for food purposes only. But even that is a great pity, because the female fish that they kill during the close season, every one of them is full of spawn, and the Indians are just destroying the supplies. The Indian Department urged upon us, on the other hand, that if the Indians were not allowed to fish during the close season the Government would have to provide food for them in another direction.

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<sup>24</sup> A hot, dry wind.

## A LETTER FROM JAMES SETTEE

St. Peter's Indian Reserve, 6th June, 1887.

The Secretary of the Native Food Committee of the Senate.

Sir – In reading over the newspapers I noticed a subject which you introduced in the House of Commons of the Dominion.

You are advocating for the most beneficial and indispensable requirements of the country. That of enquiring into the natural food products of Manitoba.

### THE NORTH COUNTRY v. THE PLAINS

Before I answer the questions of the Committee, I will give you my opinion on the present method and action of our Government in providing for our race. We read of the vast sums of money expended on our behalf, in feeding or supplying us with means of living or bettering ourselves; but these vast sums of money fail to supply the wants of the Indians. These Indians located on the bare and barren plains, will never be self-supporting, but will die out with starvation, cold and disease; they were hunters from their infancy and they have not the prospect of helping themselves by hunting fish or game, because they live upon a plain, where there are no lakes and forests or full of game and fisheries, that part of the country lying north which abounds in numerous lakes, rivers and vast forests, and those lakes swarm with fish of every variety. The rivers and forests abound in abundance of game, such as moose, deer, beavers, lynx, otters and every other species of animals; and rabbits and deer migrate over all parts of the north country. The numerous inland lakes are in summer time full of fowls of all kinds. The gulls and wild geese there could be raised for domestic purposes. The fowl exist in every description, which the natives kill and consume and sell the feathers [of]. If the poor Indians of the plains were removed down to these parts, it would be the most advantageous method of furnishing them the means of becoming self-supporting; it would give him spirit and kindle that desire of bettering himself, with hunting game and furs to clothe himself and his family; but to be left on a barren desolate plain, where a few groves of poplar and ponds of water exists. On their wretched reservations they will be ten times taught to be indolent and doze away their existence till they die out and after having incurred a vast expenditure on the Government, no good shall be reaped, but by only those persons whose interests it is to keep them on the spots on which they are located, as to enable them to keep their positions and salaries. It matters not much to themselves as long as they fatten on their salaries where and how the native Indian exists.

I have seen the country from the Saskatchewan down to Lake Superior and have sketched a good few reservations *en route* on the Dawson road, and never saw so poor and desolate places; and I know the reserves on the plain. Some of the Indian Reserves are deserted. We heard so from Charles Pratt, of Touchwood Hills; several chiefs wrote to my father on this subject. If [only] the Indians of the plains were to be removed or were going to be removed to these fishery lakes and north country. The Indians living at present at these parts are few, and being of the same race could have no prejudice, I am certain. It is a known fact that all the swampy Cree tribe are a law-abiding race and are nearly all Christianized. [...]

### THE GROUND TURNIP

The plant or root [most] eatable and fit for food is the ground turnip which grows in the plain; there is some of it found on the plain out back of Winnipeg City, near the Stony Mountain; but it grows plentiful on the plains of Fort Ellice, Qu'Appelle Lake and Touchwood Hills and thence onward to the Saskatchewan. The Crees have it as one of the most principal foods; they beat it into powder like; it looks like flour, and makes delicious soup with meat or berries. [...] The wild potato grows in abundance in the black-looking soil in the various parts of this Province. Though eaten by some Indians, it is only fit for hogs. [...]

### DESTRUCTIVE HUNTING

I find from my own observation that all the denuded districts where formerly all kind of fish and game abounded, should be spared from the destructive hunters, and that part of the district would soon increase in fish and animals: for instance, if the beaver was left alone on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and the deer, they would soon increase in abundance; and if the [muskrats] were allowed to breed, they would soon furnish the natives with food and fur; and if the rabbits were allowed to roam, they would increase; the skunk and badger, if spared on the plains, would furnish food also to the Cree Indians. [...]

### THE SUGAR TREE

The maple sugar tree, wild plum tree, stoneberry tree, and blueberry tree [...] furnish food to the Indian, and they grow all throughout the Province. [...] Other parts are plentiful of the sugar tree, and the natives make quite a quantity of sugar every spring. [...]

### FOOD AND RATIONS

The cheapest food in my opinion is the fish, wild rice and vegetables, such as potatoes and turnips, which the Indians cultivate themselves on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. If the Indian is supplied with twine for fishing, he can supply himself with food and Indian corn too. If the Indian was placed in the lower country where fish and game abound, there would be no need of furnishing him with beef and pork, but as long as they are kept on the plain, the Government will have to feed them with beef, flour, pork, and tea, so as to keep them alive, and he will have to be fed three times a day, and not half fed either. [...]

Before the transfer of this country to Canada, the food of the plain Cree Indian was buffalo meat, pemmican, the fruit kind, stone berries and blue (Saskatoon), ground turnip also. This was the common food of all the plain tribes; the Indians had Indian corn also. The lower or north Indians and Saulteaux lived upon moose, deer and beaver, and upon other game, fish being the principal food. The Hudson's Bay Company gave out rations to their servants according to the produce of that part of the country. If situate don the plain, they gave every man so many pounds of pemmican or dried meat, [and] so much flour; and if the post was situated down in the north, the servant received so much moose meat and the produce of the place, such as potatoes, and they allowed their men some flour, but the men had to pay for their flour, tea and sugar – 1½ pounds of flour, 1½ pounds of dried meat and some potatoes for each man each day. [...]



I think the whitefish can be preserved by pemmicanizing them and putting it into light barrels, specimens of which I have seen out at Fairford and the Little Saskatchewan where the Indians dry the whitefish by the fire and then pound it to pieces and then put it into birch rogons, to keep for the winter use as food. They mix the cranberries with it which grow in abundance on the muskegs all over the country on each side of Lake Winnipeg and all over the north country, and this fruit makes the best jam next to the low bush berries which also grow in abundance on the eastern shores of Lake Winnipeg, and all throughout that country lying towards east to Lake Superior. [...]

I took this liberty of writing to you as I was always acquainted with, whilst you were in this country.

Yours respectfully,  
James Settee<sup>25</sup>.

## TESTIMONY OF THOMAS MCKAY

Thomas McKay, of Prince Albert, N. W. T., Farmer, examined.

### RABBITS

*By the Chairman:* [...]

Q. In season of great plenty is there any economic use that you can make of [rabbits]?

A. They are a source of food to the people wherever they are found. They are used largely by the Indians and the whites as well.

Q. Could they be preserved in any way?

A. They kill them and dry the meat, but of course the flesh of the rabbit is very insipid. [...]

*By the Chairman:*

Q. You mentioned that the flesh of the rabbit can be preserved by drying?

A. Yes.

Q. And the objection to it as an article of food is its dryness – the absence of fat?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the Indians could preserve it if a certain proportion of fat were added to it?

A. Yes. When rabbits are plentiful the Indians require very little assistance. You give them pork and bacon. The last few years the principal food supplied to the Indians has been bacon. It is very good and they have a large supply of rabbits.

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<sup>25</sup> James Settee (1809 – 1902) was an Anglican priest of Cree descent. “He was born at Hay River, now known as Nelson River, and entered St. John’s college when he was only eight years of age. There he was educated, and upon being ordained he commenced the good work [missionary work] in the Church of England Mission Society and for a number of years he labored incessantly throughout the province and Territories. His widow, Sarah Cook, was the daughter of a Hudson’s Bay [Company] official, and she, with six children, survive him.” OBITUARY. (1902, March 21). *Winnipeg Daily Tribune*, p. 7.

## OPINIONS ON RATIONS AND INDIAN HABITS

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Are the rations graded according to the condition of the country?

A. Yes; lessened or increased as required. The southern Indians have to be fed pretty much all the year round, summer and winter. In fact the Blackfeet I believe get a daily ration, but with the northern Indians it is different.

Q. If the Indians were removed to the part of the country where there is hunting and fishing they could live better?

A. The Indians should be moved to the northern part of the country where there are large sections or territories still vacant and they are in the neighborhood of the fishing lakes and hunting grounds.

Q. I suppose they do not like to be removed?

A. No. As long as they are left to themselves they are indolent, and they are perfectly aware that as long as they remain where they are at present the Government must feed them. Take the Indians north of the Saskatchewan and around Lake Winnipeg; they require very little assistance in the way of food; in fact, in the summer time they get nothing at all only when they are getting their annuities, then for two or three days they are fed by the Department.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. If the Hudson's Bay Company had the country now, as they had it before, would the Indians be better off than they are?

A. No; they would be worse off than they are to-day, because I do not believe the Hudson's Bay Company or any private company would aid them to the extent that the Government assists them.

## THE END OF THE BUFFALO

Q. Do you think the disappearance of the buffalo is the result of the settlement of the country?

A. No; the scarcity of the buffalo began before the country passed out of the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Q. To what is it to be attributed then?

A. To the traffic in robes. The slaughter had been going on from year to year. I have seen people go out and kill hundreds of buffalo just for the fun of doing it. I have seen hundreds of buffalo slaughtered just for the tongues and tallow in the summer time. It was the custom of the Indians to make bounds and enclosures for the buffalo in the winter months. Of course in those days the Indians had to keep in large parties. The different tribes were at war with one another, and of course, for self-protection, they had to live in large parties. They would make these bounds and enclosures and drive hundreds of buffalo at a time into them, and it was their policy to kill everything that came in, calves or anything else, because they reasoned – and very naturally, too – that if these animals got out, and they had occasion to drive them in again, they would know what was up and lead the others astray, and they thought it better to kill everything that came in so that they would not profit by the experience.

*By the Honorable Mr. Allan:*

Q. Is not the disappearance of the buffalo largely due to the improved firearms?

A. Of course the improved firearms had something to do with it.

Q. Repeating rifles, for instance?

A. Yes; but it was really the traffic in robes that led to the extermination of the buffalo. Of course a man with a repeating rifle could do a great deal more execution than a man with the old-fashioned firearms. The robes were valuable, and the buffalo killed to obtain them.

Q. In fact, they killed the goose that laid the golden eggs?

A. Yes.

*By the Honorable Mr. Reesor:*

Q. How early in the season do the robes become valuable?

A. In October. The most valuable robes were those obtained in November.

Q. After the weather was fully cold?

A. Yes. [...]

#### MORE OPINIONS ON INDIAN HABITS

*By the Honorable Mr. Kaulbach:*

Q. Is there any marked difference in the character and habit of the prairie Indian as compared with the Indian of the wooded districts?

A. Yes.

Q. Can the prairie Indian thrive in the locality inhabited by the others?

A. Yes; but the habits of the two are very different. The wood Indian is much more industrious than the prairie Indian, and is more careful of anything he gets. His habits are entirely different. Even in the old days when game was plentiful, the hunting of the wood Indian was not different from that of the prairie Indian. He had to get up before daylight as a rule and start out with his snowshoes and tramp around all day, which is hard work and requires a great deal of patience and perseverance. It is the same with hunting beaver; it is hard work chopping at frozen earth, three or four feet deep, or cutting ice on a lake or river, so that they actually became more industrious, and they appreciated anything they got, because they had to work harder for it. Now, all the plain Indian had to do was to get his horse and mount him, and it was only pleasure hunting the buffalo. I have had some experience of it and know what it is – it is something like fox hunting. All that the Indian of the plain had to do was to get his horse out and kill as many buffalo as he required and leave the rest of the work to the [women]. They did all the work of cutting up the meat and curing it, and all that the Indian did after hunting was to go to his tent and lounge in the most comfortable part and relate his exploits. The mode of life is quite different.

*By the Honorable Mr. Ressor:*

Q. Do they differ in stature or development?

A. No, there is no difference in that way.

#### MORE ON THE BUFFALO

*By the Honorable Mr. Allan:*

Q. What can the plain Indian do now? His hunting was done on horseback, was it not?

A. Yes, they used to run the buffalo on horseback. There is very little snow in winter, and they had three ways of killing the buffalo, hunting, pounding, and stalking.

*By the Honorable Mr. Reesor:*

Q. They would stop the buffalo from going south?

A. No, they would generally stop them from coming north. The buffalo would go south in summer and north in winter.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. Is there any wood buffalo?

A. There are a few in the Mackenzie River district.

Q. Are they the same class of animals as the prairie buffalo?

A. Yes, only they grow larger.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Are they also disappearing?

A. Yes, they are disappearing very fast.

*By the Honorable Mr. Carvell:*

Q. I understood the witnesses to say that the extermination of the buffalo is not due to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

A. No; the extermination of the buffalo was going on for years while the country was in the possession of the Hudson's Bay Company.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Why do the buffalo go north in winter and south in summer?

A. They go north in winter for shelter. Formerly when the buffalo were plentiful they were found in great numbers north of the Saskatchewan. There is a prairie there that is well sheltered by timber and the buffalo naturally take to shelter especially in severe weather. [...]

*By the Chairman:*

Q. You stated to the Committee the existence of some bands of wood buffalo; can you suggest to the Committee any means of preserving the race by protection in any way?

A. The wood buffalo are only to be found in the Mackenzie River country now. The only way to preserve them is to enforce the game laws. [...] The extermination of the buffalo is largely due to the fact that it was hunted all the year round. The herds had not an opportunity for breeding. For years and years before the total extinction took place it was very rare to see a calf or a young animal among the herd. They had no rest – they were hunted in all directions.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Where were the hunters from, generally, that did this work?

A. They were hunted by the half-breeds and Indians, as well as by the whites.

Q. And by the Americans?

A. Yes; the Americans went into the buffalo robe trade very largely, and in fact in 1879-80 I think there were some 300,000 buffalo robes sent down to American territory. Two or three years afterwards there were only three or four thousand. [...]

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. Is the beaver to be found in any quantity?

A. Yes, in the wood part of the country they are found in large numbers.

Q. Do the Indians use them for food?

A. Yes, they eat the beaver. Of course the pelt is very valuable.

#### OPINIONS ON TREATIES AND ASSISTANCE

Q. With prudence and by taking care of the game they kill do you think the Indians could maintain themselves there?

A. The northern Indians in fact get no assistance at all – the non-treaty Indians. They catch fish in the winter time and kill game and fowl in the summer.

Q. Do not a good many of those Indians receive every year from the Government rations over and above what they are entitled to receive from the Government?

A. Of course the Department has been obliged to ignore the treaty entirely. If they merely stuck to the provisions of the treaty, the Indians would die out.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. In the case of which treaties has that been done?

A. All the treaties. They have been obliged to ignore the treaty.

*By the Honorable Mr. Macdonald:*

Q. Do these non-treaty Indians claim a portion of the country?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they allow whites to settle within their territory?

A. Yes. There are very few white settlers going into that part of the North-West. Of course the Indians in the agricultural part of the country have been treated with.

Q. What have they to gain by holding out?

A. Nothing. In fact, they have never been asked to come in – they have never been asked to be put in the same position as the other Indians. The territorial districts have been increased in area and now extend beyond the ceded territory, and the Indians living in that district have asked the Government, now we have extended their territorial districts, to put them in the same position as the other Indians.

Q. I suppose they could hold out from some ideas of freedom?

A. They hold out because they were never asked to come in.

Q. Have any Indians been asked to come in and declined to do so?

A. A few, perhaps, in all the different treaties have kept out. They think it is more advantageous to them to keep out of the treaty.

Q. Do they object to the settlement of their country?

A. They do not, except in isolated cases. The more advanced Indians prefer to take the same chances as white men. When the first treaties were made, a large number of the half-breeds participated in the treaty. Since then they have participated in the treaty. Since then they have been discharged – they asked for their discharge and they got it.

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. Are there many Indians to-day who can read and write?

A. Yes, a great many all through the country. Some can read English and French, and others in syllabic characters.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. You have stated that the Indians of the wood districts find provisions enough in the natural resources of the country: there would in some cases be an overplus, more fish than they could use?

A. Of course during the fishing season they can get large quantities, but they are very careless and never look ahead.

Q. If they were offered a price for those which they have in excess, could these foods that are now used by the wood Indians be supplied to the prairie Indians?

A. The transportation, I am afraid, would be so expensive that it would make it very costly food. There are no railways. Now you can get beef and pork pretty cheap all through the country wherever it is required.

Q. What is the price live weight?

A. They generally buy it dressed for 7 or 8 cents to 12 cents per pound. It depends upon the locality. [...]

#### OPINIONS ON INDIAN EDUCATION

*By the Honorable Mr. Girard:*

Q. I wish to ascertain the condition of the Indians as to education; are those of them who are educated better Indians than those who are uneducated? Are they more provident?

A. Yes, they are much better men in every way. They are more industrious, and they make better citizens in every way. They are law-abiding, industrious, and very much more provident than the uneducated Indian.

Q. You can observe a difference between those better educated and those who have not received an education?

A. Yes; that is, the Indians placed in the same circumstances as the uneducated Indians. Of course our northern Indians are superior in every way to the southern Indians.

#### OPINIONS ON THE SIOUX

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. Have you many of the Sioux up there?

A. Yes, a good many.

Q. They are first class Indians, are they not?

A. They are much more industrious and better in many ways than our other Indians. They work well, make very good servants and are very intelligent and careful.

Q. And are trustworthy?

A. No, we cannot trust them. Most of the Sioux that are over there are the refugees who participated in the massacre in Minnesota in 1863. They found their way to Portage la Prairie and Fort Ellice, and in 1877-78 made their first appearance in the Saskatchewan country. We always thought that we could trust them. They appeared to be very friendly and affectionate and thankful for the kindness shown

them, but when we had trouble in Saskatchewan country in 1885, we found a great many of them left the settlements and joined the insurgents – White Cap and others.

*By the Honorable Mr. Turner:*

Q. They cannot be trusted when they smell blood?

A. No, not when they smell blood. [...]

#### BEANS

*By the Honorable Mr. Carvell:*

Q. It was stated by one gentleman examined before us on one occasion (I think it was one of the reserves) he thought he had interested the natives and the chief in the growth of beans. He was induced to leave them some of the ordinary small white beans with [the] object of having them planted. He afterwards learned that immediately after he left these beans were cooked and eaten by the Indians. What I want to know is, whether that is a characteristic of the Indians of the north or of the south.

A. No, it is not.

Q. That would be an exceptional case?

A. Yes. Perhaps the bean was supplied too late in the season.

### TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM J. MACDONALD

Hon. William J. Macdonald<sup>26</sup>, Senator, of the city of Victoria, examined.

#### THE CAMAS LILY

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Over what portions of Canada west of Lake Superior have you traveled, and what other portions of that region are you familiar with from the reports of reliable persons?

A. [...] My information is mostly about the sea coast of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. With regard to [...] edible plants, the only wild plant we have is the camass. It is a root about the size of an average sized onion.

Q. In what parts of British Columbia does it grow?

A. In different parts, and where the land is pretty clear and amongst the fern land.

Q. Is the edible part of it the root?

A. Yes, the root. It has a pretty blue flower in summer time. It used to be the chief article of vegetable food before the introduction of the potato. It was made up in spring and kept in pots and sacks for winter use.

Q. How early in the spring? Was it available before potatoes ripened?

A. Yes, they got it before potatoes ripened, but as the country gets fenced and settled, the root is very little used. Lots of potatoes are grown and they find it easier to grow them and get better food. [...]

Q. Are there many of your indigenous food products, fish, flesh or fowl, that could be used for the food of Indians in the Rocky Mountains?

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<sup>26</sup> William John Macdonald (1832 – 1916).

A. Yes, our salmon could be used. There is a large quantity of salmon dried every year.

Q. What is the cost of it?

A. It is very cheap indeed; I could not say what the cost is. It is used chiefly for Indian food. However, it is very insipid. The Indians soak it in oil, and use it with berries and oil, but the canned salmon would be very marketable, and I suppose a cheap food in the North-West.

Q. Is it your impression that this dried salmon could be furnished to the Indians as cheaply or more cheaply than the food that is now supplied to them?

A. I should think so – cheaper.

#### FISH, CANNED AND DRIED

Q. And canned salmon?

A. At one village in British Columbia the Indians last year cured \$40,000 worth of canned salmon alone, and those Indians produced a great number of skins, probably \$20,000 worth – that is the civilized village that the Government is now crushing out of existence.

Q. You mean Metlakatla village?

A. Yes.

Q. Could you give the Committee the average price of canned salmon?

A. Yes, about \$1 to \$1.25 per dozen one pound tins. [...]

Q. Can you give any idea of the methods used by the British Columbia Indians for the preservation of fish, flesh or game?

A. The principal means is drying in the sun. They dry all their fish and meat in the sun.

Q. How long will that preserve them?

A. For a long time. They cut halibut in very thin slices and put it on slakes and dry it in the sun. There is a wonderful fish that we have in British Columbia known as the oolachan, or candle fish. It will burn like a candle. This fish is caught and an oil is taken from it, and the Indians come and buy this oil, exchanging furs and fish for it. The natives themselves mix the oil with berries of different kinds, such as the blueberry, and make a palatable food.

*By the Honorable Mr. McInnes:*

Q. Is not the oil of the oolachan also used for medicinal purposes, and found vastly superior to cod liver oil, inasmuch as it is not adulterated the same as the cod liver oil in use?

A. Yes; the doctors prefer it to cod liver oil. The oolachan makes a fine sardine. It salts very well and is a very sweet fish when salted. [...]

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Have you oysters?

A. Yes, we have oysters; small, but sweet and very nice.

Q. Are there any other kinds of shell fish?

A. We have mussels, limpets, periwinkles and clams. One of the chief staples of Indian food is the clam. They get clams and dry them in the sun on stocks, and pack them away for winter use.



*By the Honorable Mr. Carvell:*

Q. Speaking of their mode of drying halibut, is that their whole story – that they got fresh halibut, cut it in thin slices and dry it in the sun?

A. Yes, that is the whole process.

Q. I should think it would rot?

A. No, they cut it in very thin slices. They slice it off horizontally, not cut it across. It keeps a long time.

Q. Will it keep the year out?

A. Yes, it will keep a year. [...] I might mention that the Indians of British Columbia are never very badly off for food. They have abundance of food of all kinds, especially fish and shell fish. They trade and get sugar, flour and biscuits. They are very fond of what the Americans call crackers. [...] The salmon go up the coast for hundreds of miles, and the Indians catch them and put up supplies for winter use.

Q. They are more provident than the eastern Indians?

A. Yes; although the winter is not severe there, they lay up a good stock for the winter supply. [...]

*By the Chairman:*

Q. Have you our lake salmon trout?

A. I do not know. We have a salt water salmon trout.

Q. Do you catch the salmon trout as we do here at the mouth of a river, as well as up the river?

A. We commence to catch them out in the sea with nets. The Indians troll for them with spoons [sic.] and catch them more or less all the year round. We get beautiful salmon in the winter, weighing about thirty pounds. I have from my door seen the Indians trolling for them. I have seen an Indian catch four or five in the morning trolling. They go on catching them all day until the salmon get three or four hundred miles up the river. When [the salmon] get that far, they are completely spent, their noses are worn off, and their flesh is soft and flabby.

Q. Are they unfit for food?

A. No, they are the best that the people can get there. The Indians dry them and use them. [...]

Q. Have different rivers different colored salmon?

A. No, but different seasons have different colored fish. The richest colored salmon come in July. Some come among those of a very inferior kind, with a crooked back and a crooked nose and very poor flesh. It is not fit for food; even the Indians will not eat it. [...]

## DONALD CHISHOLM ON THE CAMAS LILY

Donald Chisholm<sup>27</sup>, Esq., M.P. [wrote to the Committee:]

The kamass plant is found in British Columbia about twelve miles from Lytton between the Thompson River and Hat Creek, and in the United States in Eastern Washington Territory between the Spokane and Columbia Rivers in large quantities, and in many parts of Oregon. It grows on low land often on the border of lakes; it somewhat resembles an onion, and is buried in the ground about six inches deep. It has a long slender stem about eighteen inches with a bluish flower. [...] It grows in large quantities in some places and has been one of the principal sources of food for the native Indians. It contains about the same amount of nutriment as the potato. [...] There have been no efforts made to cultivate it, as far as I know. [...] The prairies on which it formerly grew in large quantities are now cultivated and no attention has been paid to it by the white settlers.

### FROM A LETTER BY JOHN GUNN

#### HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY RATIONS

In the Red River settlement the usual rations allocated by the Hudson's Bay Company and other traders to their employees was one and one-half pounds of beef or pork or pemmican, one pound of flour and some potatoes, say one-half pound per day. At the outlying posts in the Province I<sup>28</sup> believe the rations were the same; in the North-West Territories the rations allowed were variable according to their success in fishing and hunting, and consisted chiefly of fruit, fish and fowl with some potatoes, and a very small quantity of flour. In that portion of the Province east of Lake Winnipeg the rations consisted of rice, tallow, fish, potatoes and flour. [...]

#### THE FOOD OF THE INDIANS

The food of the Indians varied according to the locality they lived in. In the west they lived chiefly on buffalo meat, fish and flesh of smaller game such as wolves, foxes, rabbits, badgers, gophers, skunk or any animal they might be fortunate enough to kill, also all such fowl as they could get, and berries. In the north-west part they live on the moose, deer, bears, wolves, foxes, beavers, and such other animals as live in that part, as well as fish and fowl. In the eastern part the chief food was fish and rice, with bear, beaver, musk-rat, lynx, fisher, badger, skunk and gophers, and plums, berries, turnips and wild potatoes or artichokes, and anything else they could get. [...] I may mention that the Indians never experienced any difficulty in preserving all the food they could get their hands on; the only trouble with the poor people has been, and I am afraid still is, the getting enough food.

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<sup>27</sup> Donald Chisholm (1822 – 1890). He served as Member of Parliament for New Westminster from 1887 to 1890. (He is presumably referred to as an M.P. in the *Appendix* because, although the evidence contained in it was obtained in 1886, it was published in 1887.) He had a colorful life, some events of which are recounted in an article included in the appendix below.

<sup>28</sup> John Gunn (1825 – 1898), in a letter dated June 17, 1887, from Gonov, Manitoba.

## TESTIMONY OF J. MOBERLY

I<sup>29</sup> think, as a general rule, a great mistake has been made with regard to the feeding of Indians in the ceded parts of the country, and where game has failed. Too much stress has been laid on the teaching of farming as a commencement, and the Indians cannot settle down at once from a roaming life and become farmers in a few years. [...] Where they are only farmers they are dissatisfied, have to be fed at an enormous cost and always starve. [...]

### THE FOOD OF THE INDIANS

At the time of the transfer of the country to Canada the food of the Indians varied according to the part of the country they lived in. In the Saskatchewan it was buffalo meat entirely, on the plains; in the woods it was buffalo meat, moose meat and in some places fish at times; in the Rocky Mountains and along the eastern slope from the Saskatchewan to Peace River it was moose, deer, bear, and, in a few places, fish; in the Cumberland, Isle à la Crosse and English River districts it was principally fish,, with meat at times.

### HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY RATIONS

The rations allowed by the Hudson's Bay Company to their employees was:

Per man	Per woman	Per child
6 lbs. fresh meat	2 lbs.	2 lbs.
3 lbs. dried meat	1½ lbs.	¾ lbs.
2½ lbs. pemmican	1½ lbs.	¾ lbs.
3 or 4 whitefish, according to size	2	1
2 or 3 trout, according to size	2	1
4 suckers, according to size	2	1
2 lbs. flour, ¾ lb. bacon	1 lb. flour, ½ lb. bacon	1 lb. flour

And where potatoes were raised, from ½ to 1 bushel were given weekly with the above rations. Where provision was plentiful 8 lbs. of fresh meat were given per man and woman, and children in proportion.

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<sup>29</sup> Probably Henry John Moberly (1835 – 1931), born in Penetanguishene, Ontario. According to Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) records, after a brief stint working in St. Petersburg, Russia (1851 – 1853), he worked in the Lake Huron, Saskatchewan and Athabasca districts until his retirement in 1894. He started his HBC career as an Apprentice Clerk, and ended it with the rank of Chief Trader.

## Appendix

### “Starving the Indians”<sup>30</sup> (1886)

The Norquay organ<sup>31</sup> has labored long and industriously to show that the Indians in the Northwest have ever been treated by the Dominion Government “as a good loving father would treat his children” – to use Mr. Chapleau’s words at London.

A few of its utterances are worth looking at for just the fun of the thing. Sometime ago it said:-

“Sir John,” says the Globe, “argued that as the pork is very good food for white people it should be good for Indians, although his own official (Mr. Herchmer, if we are not mistaken) reported to him that to the Indian, pork is disease and death.” The Globe is “mistaken.” Neither Mr. Herchmer nor any other sane man ever reported that “to the Indian, pork is disease and death.”

As a matter of fact, in his report Mr. Herchmer says:-

“A great deal of sickness has visited them lately, owing to the want of fresh meat. The Indians under treaty received in 1884-5 \$15,290.92 worth of pork and \$1,288.45 worth of beef, although it is known that beef is life to the Indian, while salt pork is disease and death to him.”

He also says:-

“At Oak River, 11 men have died out of 88 heads of families, and 17 children under three years old. This is very distressing and is hard to account for – the change of diet, owing to the failure of the hunting, and scrofula, being probably the cause.”

Speaking of the Sioux he says:-

“A great deal of sickness has visited them lately, owing to the want of fresh meat.”

The Norquay organ reasons out the matter to its own satisfaction as follows:-

“The Indian” has a congenital weakness for “dead dog,” etc. Is “the Indian” so differently constituted from the white man that he can eat garbage of that kind while “pork is disease and death to him?”

No doubt the Norquay Solons think that this is reasoning, but Agent McDonald in his letter from Indian head, dated 20th February 1884, thought differently when he said:-

“The want of fresh meat has reduced them to a semi-state of starvation; while in their weak state they are unable to eat bacon. \* \* \* Little Blanket, head man, knows he is dying. He knows it is not through starvation, but thinks if he had a little fresh meat, tea and sugar, he would last longer. \* \* \* Long Lodge informed me that it was not [...] the want of food in the first place that has laid prostrate several of our Indians; it was sickness, but had fresh meat, tea and sugar been issued to them while

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<sup>30</sup> From STARVING THE INDIANS. (1886, November 4). *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> A rival newspaper. By using this nickname the *Free Press* was accusing it of being a propaganda arm of John Norquay’s Conservative government. John Norquay (1841 – 1889) was Premier of Manitoba from 1878 to 1887.

ill they would not be so low. They would have been well before this, and going about. Those who are sick are not able to eat bacon. Rabbits we cannot get, as we have no ammunition.”

The Norquay organ continues:

“Does the Globe expect any one but senseless Grits to believe its driveling mendacity?”

We don’t know about that, but we do know that agent McDonald in the same letter continues as follows:-

“A young man from the chief’s hut looks as if he was starving. I got them to take off his clothes. I must confess he looked like a skeleton, and I would have supposed the cause was the want of food had I not seen bacon and bannocks in the hut and the father and mother in very healthy condition. I had a piece of bannock sliced and roasted in front of the fire and a little bacon grease spread over it. The poor lad seemed to relish it. \* \* \* The chief \* \* \* cannot say what the Indians who have horses will do in the spring, if not better fed than at present, and particularly when spring work commences. He fears many will move off to live on game. \* \* \* From inquiries, and what I have seen, I am of the opinion that the present miserable state of some of the Indians at the Indian Head Reserve is, in the first place, through the neglect of relatives and friends, their not being properly nursed when they first fell ill; and, secondly, from the want of more nourishing or palatable food than bacon.”

Bound to convince itself if no one else can be made to believe, the Norquay organ continues:-

“Are Indians any better than respectable and hard-working white men, the Northwest over, that he should live in idleness and yet refuse to eat pork when it is provided for him at the public expense?”

Let the reader picture to himself the frightful perversity of the Indian who will “refuse to eat pork” when the condition of his stomach makes it absolutely impossible for him to do so; when as Mr. Herchmer reported it was “disease and death” to him. But this is not the full measure of the red man’s iniquity; he not only refused to eat pork, but he refused to eat it when it was “provided for him at the public expense.” No wonder the Norquay organ cannot comprehend this. Catch any Norquayite refusing to eat anything “provided for him at the public expense.” Not much!

The organ closes its intelligent and highly truthful<sup>32</sup> contributions to Indian literature as follows:-

“But as a matter of fact, the Indians of the Territories are furnished with the best of fresh beef, where fresh beef is obtainable, as everybody who knows anything about the matter is aware.”

“As a matter of fact” the facts are entirely otherwise. For years the Indians have been systematically starved and ill-treated. To prove this we will give a number of extracts from the papers produced in the Dominion House last session, and it may be noted that the extracts to which we refer are all taken from the correspondence of Government officials with the Indian department – they are not the allegations of so-

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<sup>32</sup> A modern writer may have included a ‘s’ here, to indicate sarcasm.

called “ignorant or prejudiced clericals.” These statements were referred to by Mr. Blake in his Galt speech the other day in the following order:

W. Anderson, Indian agent, writes from Edmonton, April 29th, 1882:

“From Victoria I shipped relief supplies to Whitefish Lake and Lac la Biche, as Mr. Hardisty had a few days previously reported that the Indians at these places were starving.”

Commissioner Irvine writes from Fort Walsh on 23rd September, 1882:

“I have also to inform you that on my return from Qu’Appelle I found some 2,000 Indians here. They are all in a starving and wretched condition for want of clothing. In the present starving condition of the Indians I fear, if no food is given to them, that they may hereafter commit depredations which will bring them into collision with the force”.

Inspector Norma writes from Fort Walsh on 2nd Oct., 1882:

“There are at present 300 lodges of Cree Indians encamped here. These lodges average about eight souls, making a total of about 2,400 souls. They are in a state of utter destitution, and are merely existing in a semi-state of starvation.”

Comptroller White telegraphs under date of Oct. 19th, 1882:

“Over 2,000 Indians here almost naked and on verge of starvation. Weather cold and snow on ground. Have been among them for two days. Am satisfied many will perish unless early assistance is rendered.”

Inspector Norman wrote on 1st Feb., 1885:

“I have informed Surgeon Miller that it is not in my power to increase the quantity of food to the Indians, as my instructions from the Indian Commissioner are to keep the Indians at Fort Walsh on ‘starvation allowance.’”

W. Pocklington, speaking of the Stoney Indians, says:-

“During last winter there was a great deal of distress among them for want of clothing, many of them not having a blanket to cover their nakedness.”

Commissioner McLeod says:-

“I have experienced great difficulty with the distress and suffering, applications for relief being constantly made to me by the starving bands of Indians.”

Again the Commissioner says:-

“A Stoney Mountain Indian and his family has been without food for many days.”

Superintendent Walsh, in his report says:-

“Hunger and suffering prevailed. In some places persons became so reduced as to be unable to help themselves. The want of food followed by disease caused an epidemic, which marked its results by the many graves now to be seen in Wood Mountain.”

Mr. Herchmer says in his report:-

“During the winter I visited the Pas reserves a number of times, and witnessed the actual condition of the Indians. For three months from January to March – many of those in the Pas Birch River and Pas Mountains suffered keenly. It was impossible to supply food as it was actually needed, for there was not sufficient in the district.”

Mr. Pocklington, in his report, says:-

“In January, while visiting the Piegan reserve, I received a letter from Lieut.-Colonel McLeod that 75 Stonies were in Pincher Creek in a starving condition. I started for their camp at once and found them in reality starving, except for assistance given them by Col. McLeod and other residents.”

Mr. Wadsworth, the Superintendent says:-

“The flour and bacon received as supplies were bad, and the flour received by the Indians at Battleford had become lumpy.”

Mr. Wadsworth, speaking of the Indians of Sekaskoots, says:-

“I could get no account of the supplies sent in by the contractors or the Government.”

He further says:-

“The flour received by those Indians only averaged 93 pounds per sack.”

Again speaking of Poundmaker’s band, he says:-

“The flour was inferior and of light weight.”

As the sapient Norquay organ has “reasoned” itself into the belief that the Indians have been treated “as a good loving father would treat his children,” it is useless to deal with it; we produce these statements for the benefit of those who, having ears, will hear, and we call particular attention to the statement of Inspector Norman above quoted:

“I have informed Surgeon Miller that it is not in my power to increase the quantity of food to the Indians, as my instructions from the Indian Commissioner are to keep the Indians at Fort Walsh on ‘starvation allowance.’”

### Chief Poundmaker<sup>33</sup> (1886)

A dispatch from Gleichen, the headquarters of the Blackfeet Indians, says that Chief Poundmaker died suddenly at Crowfoot Camp yesterday from the bursting of a blood-vessel. The old Chief has languished since his release from the penitentiary, where he was confined nearly a year for his connection with the Riel rebellion.

Poundmaker was one of the Cree chiefs and was beyond comparison the ablest Indian in the Northwest. He was a particularly fine-looking specimen of his race, being considerably over six feet high, of rather slight build, and singularly erect. He had an intelligent and rather refined-looking face, a high, prominent forehead, and a nose of the purely Grecian type, while there was nothing coarse or sensual about the lower portion of his face. His hands were small and delicate in appearance, his fingers being long and faultlessly tapered.

Though a pagan, he had more than once betrayed a strong inclination to embrace Catholicism. His father was a Cree and his mother a half-sister to the great Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot. His grandmother, on the side of his mother, is said to have been a Stoney, and this was corroborated by the great Chief’s peculiar cast of countenance.

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<sup>33</sup> From Chief Poundmaker. (1886, July 6). *Chicago Tribune*, p. 1.

Poundmaker's career was in many respects a remarkable one. It was he who accomplished peace between the Blackfeet and Crees, hitherto hereditary enemies. There was not an Indian in the Northwest who knew the country better than Poundmaker. In 1881, when Lord Lorne went across the plains, Poundmaker joined the party for the purpose of interpreting the language of the Blackfeet into Cree, as the Cree interpreter accompanying the party did not understand Blackfeet. Johnny Saskatchewan was taken along to act as guide, but between Battleford and the crossing of the Red Deer the half-breed lost himself, and for the last two days Poundmaker was "guiding the guide." After crossing the Red Deer Poundmaker took the lead and traveled in almost an air-line to Blackfoot Crossing, though there was no trail, and, what was even more remarkable, arranged his "timetable" so that he hit the best grass and water to be had just about camping-time on every occasion.

During the campaign against Riel, Col. Otter, commanding a flying column composed of a detachment of the Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto, attacked Poundmaker and his braves at Cut-Knife Creek. The Chief was tried at Regina, convicted of making war against the Queen, and sentenced to three years in the penitentiary. The Chief, when he heard the sentence, asked that he be hanged right away rather than be imprisoned. Before sentence was passed on him he said:

"I was good all summer. People told lies. I saved a lot of bloodshed. I can't understand how it is that after saving so many lives I am brought here. I could have been on the prairies still if I would."

Then, waving his arms majestically, he said, with a smile:

"I am a man. Do as you like. I am in your power. I gave myself up. You did not catch me."

### Donald Chisholm<sup>34</sup> (1890)

Mr. Donald Chisholm, M. P., died Saturday morning at 2:30 o'clock at his residence on Mary street, New Westminster. By daylight the news had spread to all parts of the town, and [on] every flagstaff in the City flags were set at half-mast. The career of the deceased gentleman is one of peculiar interest to British Columbians, as he has lived and worked here since the colony came into being.

The parents of Mr. Donald Chisholm came from Invernesshire, Scotland, about the beginning of the present century, and settled on the Lower South River of the Antigonish, Nova Scotia. At that place Mr. Chisholm was born in 1822. After having received a good education Mr. Chisholm began life as a teacher, but very soon abandoned this profession. In 1849 he left his native place and started for the California gold fields with a party of twenty-three prospectors, of which Mr. W. R. Lewis, of New Westminster, was a member. While there he helped to frame the mining laws which still exist in the Golden State. He met with indifferent success in California, and after a few years he returned to Canada and settled in Ontario, where he engaged in the wheat trade. He speculated largely during the Crimean war, and

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<sup>34</sup> From DEATH OF DONALD CHISHOLM, M.P. (1890, April 9). *The Weekly News-Advertiser*, p. 5.



with the proclamation of peace he was left with thousands of bushels on his hands. The proclamation came three weeks too soon, or he would have gained great wealth by his venture.

After this experience Mr. Chisholm came out to British Columbia in 1858, and there is scarcely a prominent line of business peculiar to this country which he has not since engaged in. He first settled in Hope, and in the year 1860 was elected by the people of that district as a delegate to a convention held in New Westminster to frame and present to the Imperial Government a petition praying for the establishment of a measure of government for the Mainland of British Columbia which was then an outlying territory under Governor Douglas, of Vancouver Island. This convention in New Westminster was his first appearance as a public man.

In the year 1860 Mr. Chisholm was one of the party who went to the Big Bend of the Columbia River prospecting for gold and other minerals. During that trip he nearly lost his life. In crossing the McCullough Creek on a snow bridge when the melting of the mountain snow formed a torrent, the bridge gave way and he was let down into the torrent and carried by the current half a mile in the ice cold water, and was rescued by a small party of miners in an unconscious condition.

He went to Cariboo in 1862, where he mined for some time. Afterwards in the Kootenay District, he was for years engaged both in the lumbering and mining industries. For some time he was foreman of the famous Cherry Creek silver mine. It was Donald Chisholm who took Major-General Selby Smith and staff through the mountains to Hope on his pack train, when that distinguished officer first visited British Columbia.

In the year 1874 he came to New Westminster, and from that time onward has resided on the Coast, where his honor and wealth increased with his years. Shortly after settling at the Royal City he invested in the property and business belonging to Mr. Fred Woodcock, and established a wholesale and retail liquor business and a flour and feed business in connection therewith on Front street. He also purchased property at Ladner's Landing, and started the hotel and store now owned and conducted by Mr. Thos. McNeely. He also became a partner in the Delta Canning Company, whose history is well known. He afterwards invested, in company with Mr. Brewer, in a large tract of land in what is now the City of Vancouver, above where the smelter is located, and also in an estate at Hastings, and in the blocks of property which are now in the centre of the city of New Westminster.

The Government early showed its confidence in Mr. Chisholm by appointing him a special constable during the trouble at Yale and Hill's Bar, in the early mining days on the Fraser River. While mining in California Mr. Chisholm also practiced medicine, and many a miner owed his life to "Doc" Chisholm's therapeutic skill. He also practiced during the cholera epidemic in connection with Fitz-Stubbs. Mr. Chisholm brought the Price brothers to Westminster to be tried for the wanton murder of an Indian, through whole bands of hostile [Indigenous people], and surrounded by almost insuperable difficulties and frightful dangers. In partnership with Mr. Daniel Mills he owned some of the most beautiful farms on Salt Spring Island, if not in the Province.

Physically, Donald Chisholm was a magnificent specimen of the British Columbia pioneer; he was possessed of herculean strength, and had the reputation of being the strongest man in the Province – no light thing when the population was almost entirely composed of strong, able-bodied men. He stood six feet four and a half inches in his stockings, and in energy, strength and courage was truly a modern Ajax Talamon.

For several years Mr. Chisholm was president of the New Westminster Board of Trade. He was first returned to Parliament at the general election of 1887 as a supporter of Sir John Macdonald. Mr. Chisholm was never married.

### Memories of Pemmican<sup>35</sup> (1902)

“Then on pemmican they feasted.”  
-Longfellow, *Hiawatha*.

“A wooden bowl was soon set before us filled with the nutritious preparation of dried meat called pemmican by the northern voyagers and wasna by the Dahcotah.”  
-Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, Chap. XV. (1846)

“As the trip extended over six or eight weeks, it was necessary to be well provided with food. The fare was simple but substantial. Flour, strong black tea and sugar were the staples, and the well-known pemmican. Pemmican is now a thing of the past, but was the sheet anchor of the Red River voyageur. Obtained by the buffalo hunters on their buffalo hunts, the flesh of the buffalo was cut up into slices, dried and beaten or flattened into powder; it was then packed in bags of raw hide, into which hot boiling fat and marrow of the buffalo carcass was poured. Thus it became air proof, and without salt or any preservative, the bag closely sewed up, could be thus kept for years. A finer sort of this article, called ‘berry pemmican,’ was made by mixing the flesh with the berries of the abundant saskatoon or service berry (*Amelanchier Canadensis*). This was considered a delicacy. While some, like the late Bishop McLean, did not appreciate pemmican, he having declared before an audience of notables in London that eating pemmican was to him like chewing a tallow candle, yet this important staple, worth thousands of pounds a year to the prairie travelers, was so important that the Hudson’s Bay Company could not have carried on its wide and extensive enterprise without it.”

-Fonseca, *On the St. Paul Trail in the Sixties*.

### CONCERNING PEMMICAN

In the days, not yet two score years ago, when supplies were brought in from Hudson’s Bay to the little Red River settlement where the city of Winnipeg now

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<sup>35</sup> From PEMMICAN MADE AT FORT MCPHERSON, A HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY’S POST SIXTY-FIVE MILES WITHIN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE AND TWO THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHT MILES NORTHWEST OF WINNIPET. (1902) Manitoba Free Press. Canada: Winnipeg.

stands, the stock of pemmican was the first indispensable provided for the long journey of the hardy voyageurs; who by way of river, portage and lake traversed the distance from York Factory, where the Hudson's Bay Company's ships ended their annual voyages from England. And when the trains of Red River carts started out on the trail to St. Paul [Minnesota] laden with furs, to come back carrying supplies, pemmican was in like manner the first indispensable to be provided for the journey. In those days the buffalo in his countless herds was still in the land. He is vanished now, and his vast grazing grounds are being turned to the service of man. The days of the voyageurs and of the Red River cart are vanished with him into the irrevocable past. They belong to a historic yesterday, which is already a remote epoch. The Red River region that knew them has become a land of history and romance.

The last herd of buffalo east of the Red River was seen by Sir John Schultz in 1860, then a young man of nineteen on his first journey to this Western country, in whose history he was destined to play such a conspicuous part. Hargrave, the Red River historian, writing in 1869, says:

“The serious decrease in the number of buffalo which has been perceptible of late years is producing a very disastrous effect on the provision trade of the country. Pemmican, which formerly cost three-pence a pound, can now be procured with difficulty for a shilling, and dried meat which formerly cost two-pence now costs eight-pence. This is a circumstance which threatens the transport business of the Company with most alarming complications.”

In an earlier chapter of his book, Hargrave writes of the buffalo hunts as follows:

“Conspicuous in importance amongst the annual events in the Red River colony are the journeys made to the Plains by the Buffalo hunters at different periods of the year. The parties belonging to the summer hunt start about the beginning of June, and remain on the Plains until the beginning of August. They then return for a short time to the settlement for the purpose of trading their pemmican and dried meat. The autumn hunters start during the month of August, and remain on the prairie until the end of October, or early in November, when they usually return bringing the fresh or ‘green meat,’ preserved at that late season by the extreme cold. Those hunters, of whom there are many who remain on the Plains during the whole winter, employ themselves in trapping the fur-bearing animals, and hunting the buffalo for their robes.

“The pemmican, which forms the staple article of produce from the summer hunt, is a species of food peculiar to Rupert's Land. It is composed of buffalo meat, dried and pounded fine, and mixed with an amount of tallow or buffalo fat equal to itself in bulk. The tallow, having been boiled, is poured hot from the cauldron into an oblong bag manufactured from buffalo hide, into which the pounded meat has previously been placed. The contents are then stirred together until they have been thoroughly well mixed. When full, the bag is sewed up and laid in store. Each bag when full weighs one hundred pounds. It is calculated that, on an average the carcass of each buffalo will yield enough pemmican to fill one bag. This species of food is invaluable as a traveling provision. There is no risk of spoiling it as, if ordinary care

is taken to keep the bags dry and free from mould, there is no assignable limit to the time the pemmican will keep. It is the traveling provision used throughout the North, where, in addition to the already specified qualifications, its great facility of transportation renders it exceedingly useful.”

With the disappearance of the buffalo, the making of pemmican was transferred to the far northern posts of the Hudson’s Bay Company, deer’s meat being used in place of buffalo meat, and the total quantity made yearly amounting to little, in comparison with the great stores of pemmican made in the days of the buffalo hunts as described by Hargrave. Pemmican is still made every year at those Hudson’s Bay Company’s posts for use by trappers and voyageurs who penetrate beyond the Arctic Circle. [...]

As for the palatableness of pemmican, whether eaten just as is, or cooked, [...] pemmican is a thing to which the Latin proverb about hunger being the best sauce has a pre-eminent application. Of many testimonies that might be cited, take this from Fonseca’s “On the St. Paul Trail in the Sixties”:

“After some hours of steady traveling, as the sun stood high in the sky, the welcome stop took place . . . The kettle was soon simmering. While this was occurring the Red River bannock was in course of preparation. It was simply flour, water and salt. The dough was kneaded on a bag spread out on a buffalo skin, the cakes were flattened and baked in a frying pan over the fire, and were soon ready. When the water had boiled in the kettle, the pemmican bag was broached, a quantity of it was stirred into the boiling water, flour and salt were added, and thus resulted the celebrated ‘rubaboo,’ as it was called. When the mixture was thickened it then was called ‘rowschow,’ but for the journey the former was preferable. Hot bannocks and piping hot ‘rubaboo’ were served around, the latter in cups, and the tea in in cups soon began to disappear among the hungry company. The appetite, stimulated by fresh air and exercise, was surprising, and a dyspeptic being looking on at such a meal would turn green with envy.”

Let us turn over a few pages of Fonseca’s interesting narrative, and read again:

“The afternoon journey was usually continued for about twelve miles, when the cheerful word, both to man and beast, was given to halt for the night. The cuisine was again put into operation, though the menu was somewhat changed. Instead of ‘rubaboo,’ ‘re-chaud’ was served, commonly corrupted ‘row-schow,’ from the Latin ‘re’ and the French ‘chaud,’ [or] heated over. Pemmican cooked in a frying pan, a little grease, pepper, salt, with a trace of onions and potatoes added, constituted this a dish to set before a king. If the night was clear, and the moon flooded the prairie with her silver light, robes were spread. The sound of the fiddle invited the dance. The Red River jig was struck up, and one after another exercised himself to his heart’s content, as the shouts of the audience stimulated him.”

## Anecdotes of Red River Pemmican in the late 1850s<sup>36</sup> (1860)

### I. RED RIVER EXPLORING EXPEDITION

The vast prairies of Red River and the Assiniboine, clothed with a rich profusion of most nutritious grasses, offer unrivaled advantages for rearing stock. The introduction of mowing machines would enable the settlers to lay in any required quantity of hay for winter consumption. Few of the better class of farmers keep more than thirty or forty head of cattle, in consequence of the want of a market for beef, tallow, hides, &c. The answer I received on all hands to the question, "Why do you not raise more cattle?" Was always the same in substance; "Find us a market for beef, tallow, and hides, and we will soon furnish any quantity of cattle you may require."

There does not appear to be any good reason why sheep and cattle should not supply the place of the buffalo; the experience of many years shows that no physical impediments arising from climate or soil exist to prevent the prairies of Red River from becoming one of the best grazing countries in the world.

Two reasons for the neglect of this important branch of industry are soon apparent, even to a stranger at Red River. Buffalo meat, pemmican made from buffalo meat and fat, together with the robes and sinews, are always a cash article at the Hon. [Hudson's Bay] Company's stores; whereas beef, mutton, hides, tallow, and wool, are a mere drug in the market; again, the habits of the half-breeds, who have long been trained to the hunt, are opposed to the quiet monotony of a pastoral life.

### II. PREPARING FOR TRAVEL

On the morning of the 14th June, the half-breeds engaged for the expedition into the prairie country west of Red River, assembled at our temporary quarters and began to load five Red River carts and a wagon of American manufacture, with two canoes, camp equipage, instruments, and provisions for a three months' journey. At noon the start was made, and the train proceeded to Fort Garry, a distance of eight miles, to take in a supply of flour and pemmican. We camped about half a mile from the fort and took an inventory of our baggage, and made such regulations and arrangements as are considered necessary at the commencement of a long journey through a country partly inhabited by hostile tribes of Indians, and not always affording a supply of food even to skilled hunters.

The party was composed of [assorted travelers,] six Cree half-breeds, a native of Red River of Scotch descent, one Blackfoot half-breed, one Ojibway half-breed, and one French Canadian. Our provisions consisted of one thousand pounds of flour, four hundred pounds of pemmican, one thousand rations of Crimean vegetables, a sheep, three hams, and a supply of tea for three months, with a few luxuries, such as pickles, chocolate, a gallon of port wine, and a gallon of brandy. Each cart was loaded with

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<sup>36</sup> These are selections from Hind, H. Y. (1860). *Canadian Red River and Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Expeditions*, Vol. I. London: Spottiswoode & Co. Written by Henry Youle Hind (1823 – 1908).

about 450 lbs. and the wagon with double that amount. The birch bark canoes were 18 feet long, and weighed 150 lbs. each.

At the White Horse Plain, twenty-two miles from Fort Garry, I procured an additional cart, and purchased an ox to serve as a *dernier resort* in case we should not meet with buffalo; and at Prairie Portage, the last settlement on the Assiniboine, I engaged the services of an old hunter of Cree origin, who had been from his youth familiar with Indian habits and stratagems. This addition increased the party and equipment, before we left the last settlement, to fifteen men, fifteen horses, six Red River carts, one wagon, and one ox.

### III. FORT ELLICE

Fort Ellice was at one period a post of considerable importance, being the depot of supplies for the Swan River District, now removed to Fort Pelly. The buildings are of wood, surrounded by a high picket enclosure. Mr. McKay, one of the sub-officers, was in charge at the time of our arrival. Some twenty years ago, before the smallpox and constant wars had reduced the Plain Crees to a sixth or eighth of their former numbers, this post was often the scene of exciting Indian display. Formerly Fort Ellice used to be visited by the Crees alone, now it numbers many Ojibways among the Indians trading with it. The Ojibways have been driven from the woods by the scarcity of game, the large animals, such as moose, deer, and bear, having greatly diminished in numbers. Many of the wood Indians now keep horses, and enjoy the advantage of making the prairie and the forest tributary to their wants.

On the 11th July, a number of hunters attached to Fort Ellice came in with provisions, such as pemmican and dried buffalo meat, which they had prepared in the prairies a few days before, about thirty miles from the post, where the buffalo were numerous.

Fort Ellice, the Qu'Appelle post, and the establishment on the Touchwood Hills being situated on the borders of the great Buffalo Plains, are provision trading posts. The Hudson's Bay Company obtain from the Plain Crees, the Assiniboines, and the Ojibways, pemmican and dried meat to supply the brigades of boats in their expeditions to York Factory on Hudson's Bay, and throughout the northern interior.

Pemmican is made by pounding or chopping buffalo meat into small pieces and then mixing it with an equal quantity of fat. It is packed in bags made of the hide of the animal, in quantities of about ninety pounds each. Dried meat is the flesh of the buffalo cut into long, broad, and thin pieces about two feet by fifteen inches, which are smoked over a slow fire for a few minutes and then packed into a bale of six pounds. We had many opportunities of seeing the Cree Women on the Qu'Appelle, cut, prepare, and pack dried meat.

### IV. "BUNGAYS"

Soon after sunset our camp received an unexpected addition of six "Bungays,"<sup>37</sup> who were on their way to Fort Ellice with dried buffalo meat and pemmican.

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<sup>37</sup> Crees and Ojibways of mixed origin. [Footnote in the original.]

They had been hunting between the two branches of the Saskatchewan, and represented the season as very dry and the buffalo scarce. We passed a quiet and friendly night with them and on the following morning made them a small present and pursued our way to Grand Forks.

I happened to be about 100 yards in advance of the carts, after we had traveled for about a quarter of an hour, when hearing a loud clatter of horses' feet behind me, I looked round and saw the six Indians approaching at a gallop. One of them, who had represented himself as a chief, seized my bridle, drew the horse's head round, and motioned me to dismount. I replied by jerking my bridle out of the Indian's hand. My people came up at this moment and asked in Cree what this interference meant.

"We wanted to have a little more talk," said the chief: "we are anxious to know why you are traveling through our country."

It runed out after a little more "talk" that they wished to establish a sort of toll of tobacco and tea for permission to pass through their country, threatening that if it were not given they would gather their friends in advance of us, and stop us by force. We knew that we should have to pass through about 100 tents, so there was some little meaning in this threat. The old hunter, however, knowing Indian habits and diplomacy well, at once remarked that we were taking a large present to the chief of the Sandy Hills, and we did not intend to distribute any tobacco or tea until we had seen him, according to Indian custom.

They tried a few more threats, but I closed the parley by unslinging a double-barreled gun from the cart, and instructing the men to show quietly that they had theirs in readiness. Wishing the rascals good day, we rode on; they sat on the ground, silently watching us, but made no sign. In the evening one of them passed near us at full gallop, towards some tents which we saw in the distance as we ascended the hill at the Grand Forks.

One rather significant statement they made proved to be correct, namely, that the Plain Crees, in council assembled, had last year "determined that in consequence of promises often made and broken by the white men and half-breeds, and the rapid destruction by them of the buffalo they fed on, they would not permit either white men or half-breeds to hunt in their country or travel through it, except for the purpose of trading for their dried meat, pemmican, skins, and robes."

## V. PREPARING TO CROSS THE VALLEY

Making an early start in search of wood, we came suddenly upon four Cree tents, whose inmates were still fast asleep; about three hundred yards west of them we found ten more tents, with over fifty or sixty Indians in all. They were preparing to cross the valley in the direction of the Grand Cocteau, following the buffalo. Their provisions for trade, such as dried meat and pemmican, were drawn by dogs, each bag of pemmican being supported upon two long poles, which are shaft, body and wheels in one.

## VI. MIS-TICK-OOS, OR "SHORTSTICK"

Mis-tick-oos, or "Shortstick," is about fifty years old, of low stature, but very powerfully built. His arms and breasts were deeply marked with scars and gashes, records of grief and mourning for departed friends. His son's body was painted with blue bars across the chest and arms. The only clothing they wore consisted of a robe of dressed elk or buffalo hide, and the breech cloth; the robe was often cast off the shoulders and drawn over the knees when in a sitting posture; they wore no covering on the head; their long hair was plaited or tied in knots, or hung loose over their shoulders and back.

I inquired the age of an extremely old fellow who asked me for medicine to cure a pain in his chest; he replied he was a strong man when the two Companies (the Hudson's Bay and the North West) were trading with his tribe very many summers ago. He remembers the time "when his people were as numerous as the buffalo are now, and the buffalo thick as trees in the forest." The half-breeds thought he was more than 100 years old.

When Mis-tick-oos was ready to receive me, I proceeded to the spot where he was sitting surrounded by the elders of his tribe, and as a preliminary, rarely known to fail in its good effect upon Indians, I instructed one of my men to hand him a basin of tea and a dish of preserved vegetables, biscuit, and fresh buffalo steaks. He had not eaten since an early hour in the morning, and evidently enjoyed his dinner. Hunger, that great enemy to charity and comfort, being appeased, I presented him with a pipe and a canister of tobacco, begging him to help himself and hand the remainder to the Indians around us.

The presents were then brought and laid at his feet. They consisted of tea, tobacco, bullets, powder, and blankets, all of which he examined and accepted with marked satisfaction. After a while he expressed a wish to know the object of our visit; and having at my request adjourned the meeting to my tent in order to avoid sitting in the hots un, we had a "talk," during which mis-tick-oos expressed himself freely on various subjects, and listened with the utmost attention and apparent respect to the speeches of the Indians he had summoned to attend the "Council."

All speakers objected strongly to the half-breeds' hunting buffalo during the winter in the Plain Cree country. They had no objection to trade with them or with white people, but they insisted that all strangers should purchase dried meat or pemmican, and not hunt for themselves.

They urged strong objections against the Hudson's bay Company encroaching upon the prairies and driving away the buffalo. They would be glad to see them establish as many posts as they chose on the edge of the prairie country, but they did not like to see the prairies and plains invaded.

During the existence of the two companies, all went well with the Indians, they obtained excellent pay, and could always sell their meat, skins, robes, and pemmican. Since the union of the companies they had not fared half so well, had received bad pay for their provisions, and were growing poorer, weaker, and more miserable year by year. The buffalo were fast disappearing before the encroachments of white men, and although they acknowledged the value of fire-arms, they thought they were



better off in olden times, when they had only bows and spears, and wild animals were numerous. They generally commenced with the creation, giving a short history of that event in most general terms, and after a few flourishes about equality of origin, descended suddenly to buffalo, half-breeds, the Hudson's Bay Company, tobacco, and rum.

I asked Mis-tick-oos to name the articles he would wish me to bring if I came into his country again. He asked for tea, a horse of English breed, a cart, a gun, a supply of powder and ball, knives, tobacco, a medal with a chain, a flag, a suit of fine clothes, and rum.

## VII. FISH PEMMICAN

On the morning of the 5th [of September,] just before we started, an Indian and family from the Dog's Head came to us. They had been windbound for seven days on an island not far from where we were. They said they never saw such a continuous succession of winds and storms on the lake before. [...] After bartering with this Indian for a small "rogan" of fish pemmican (dried fish pounded and mixed with sturgeon oil), we proceeded on our journey, glad to get away from the dreary spot. Although there was still a heavy retarding ground-swell on the lake, we paddled many miles before halting. On stopping to cook breakfast, we were greatly disappointed to find the fish pemmican which we were so thankful to get, was nearly all rotten, there being only a small portion on the top that could be eaten. The remainder had to be thrown away.