

Henry Green (interpreter) read address on behalf of the Skidegate Indians
Exhibit D23).

Chairman:

The Commission is very much obliged to you for this address. It gives us very great pleasure at visit this village as well as to have had the opportunity of visiting the village of the members of your tribe residing on the Northern part of the Islands. It is with pleasure we notice the progress you have made both here and at the other village to which I have referred, but it is no more than what was to be expected of the people and ancestors from whom you have descended. We are especially pleased with the appearance of your village. We have found wherever we went, a very much improved and advanced condition of things where there has been a resident missionary of the Christian faith among the Indians. You have expressed a great desire to advance, and have introduced among you the customs and ideas of the white man. That simply means a desire to advance in civilization. I think you have taken the best means of advancing in civilization, when you have had at your doors a Church ~~xxxxxx~~ belonging to some Christian denomination. Perhaps the very best means of bringing about true civilization has been the Christian religion. Christianity and Western Civilization have always gone hand in hand. Now the best way to follow that up is by individual effort that is, by the effort of each man in the tribe. Another great aid to civilization is Commercial enterprise, and that again is never going to be got by lying down on your back and expecting the plums to fall into your mouth. There never has been a white nation yet which has got ahead in that way. They have got there by working hard. Each man working for himself and his own ends. If you have claims against the Government or anyone else it is fair and right that you should have an opportunity of putting them forward and nobody objects to you putting them forward. No objection can be taken, so far as I have seen, to the way in which you put forward any claims which you have had. I hardly know how to express what I mean because I can hardly get a word that you will understand, which will express it. What I wish to say - and I think those who understand English, will understand me - is that your endeavour to rise to a higher plane must largely depend upon individual effort. If you want to reach out, reach out independent of the Government if you can. I know that at present must from time to time receive some aid from the Government. I am only going to mention one thing, contained in that address, and that is with respect to the question of what is called "INDIAN TITLE". All we can say with respect to that is, that it is not within our powers to deal with and we have therefore nothing whatever to do with it.

I want to congratulate you upon what seems to be under the circumstances, the conditions in which you are living. We all hope, whatever your claims may be, if they are right claims, that justice will be done to you. We are much obliged to you for your wish expressed here, that we ~~wish~~ should enjoy a pleasant time in your village here, which we expect to have and to which your very excellent band of music and the other members of your tribe will contribute.

formal address

refers to Indian title

Response

You are advancing 1

We cannot deal with Indian title

Harda 1915

September 13th, 1915 (cont.) Skidegate.

p.34 ~~Alno~~ Russ(?), member of Skidegate Indian Council:

We are glad that you people from Ottasa and the other lawx makers are here, and we are here to put before you our troubles. The troubles which we have experienced during past years. As far back as ever we can remember, without any doubt at all, the Queen Charlotte Islands practically belong to the Indians. It came about ~~after~~ a little while that the Islands were called the Queen Charlotte Islands, but we don't know who gave them that name. As far as we can remember we can claim that the Islands fairly belong to us, and as ~~far~~ far back as we can rremember there was never any treaty with respect to this land, between the Government and the Indians. We have never had a fight for the ~~XXXXX~~ Islands. No ~~XXXXXX~~ nation ever came and fought us for them and won them from us. We don't know why the Government took them from us. If we had had a Treaty with the Government we would not claim the Islands. When the first Missionaries arrived here, the three principal points they taught us, were these: Don't take things that belong to others. They taught us "Love one another" and don't kill anybody. Those are the three points they taught us. These things they taught us out of the bible. We are glad that we kept the teachings of the missionaries who taught us these things, and as years have past on and on we have seen and know, that the Government has come in and sold our lands. What can we do?

We have kept the teachings of the missionaries: "Don't do any harm to others", "Love one another", and we are keeping these teachings yet. This will tell you that we have a good feeling and not hard feelings against anyone. We laid our case in the hands of the lawyers and the Privy Council of England is taking up the Case, which I don't doubt that you people know. We are glad that we can say that we have seen people come in and take up land among us and we have never had any trouble the same as the white people have. For instance, the ~~XXXX~~ and the English fought over their land troubles. We have not fought because we have kept what the missionaries taught us, and what

is isomore, it doesn't look manly to fight. Up at the North end of the Island, there used to be villages and villages, right from North Island to the present village of Masset, these villages stood side by side, but at present there is only one village there, namely ~~XXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ Masset. North Island was so named by the Indians, and now the Government have called it (Langers). I ~~XXXX~~ can say that myself, if I took a piece of land and claimed it without any title to it, I would naturally call it another name and that is the case with North Island. At this end of the Island as far down as the Island extends, there were villages and villages side by side right to the furthest point and at the present time there ~~is~~ only one village and that is Skidegate. We see day by day that the Government is selling land far down this coast and also down the west coast of the island. We know for a fact that the government is selling this land and yet we can say that the Queen Charlotte Islands are ours. You can see right around the Islands there are villages and billages and you can see our Totem poles which are the ~~XXXX~~ same to us as the whitemans' (pro-? ption) (stakes) are to them.

p.35 We cannot take a step further in the question until we hear what L. ~~XXXX~~ (2) Clark has to say to us. We cannot put any trouble before you people but we will hear and know later what to do. We congratulate you gentlemen that you have taken the time and the trouble to visit our villages, for which we thank you gentlemen very much. I cannot call myself a gentleman before others, but this I know and claim, that I am a Christian Gentleman. This is all I have to say.

(Chairman instructs the Interpreter to ascertain if ^{Russ} ~~he~~ spoke on behalf of all the Indians there when he said, "We cannot take a step further in the question until we hear what Lawyer ~~(?)~~ Clark has to say.")

Amos Russ:

It is some 50 years ago since the surveyor came to lay out the Indian Reserves. He stated that the Indian Reserves were sure and no one could touch them. At the present day we come to find out that the Government has practically located us here temporarily. Therefore we laid our claims before Lawyer Clark and left the matter in his hands, and he will take it before the Privy Council in England.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Chairman who has been a lawyer for more than 60(?) years states surprise because ^{is} "there ~~is~~ nothing in that stage, which could get it before the Privy Council... Somebody ~~is~~ misleading you or you have ~~xxxx~~ misunderstood something." Chairman says to Interpreter: "~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ to tell them that "there is no necessity for taking further statements in view of what Councillor Russ has stated." and asks if anyone wishes to give testimony with respect to the character of the reserves, "as to whether they are fit for cultivation or gardening of any sort, or as to any cattle or stock..(etc.)"

p.36

Councillor James Sterling:

I know that the Dominion Government are ~~on~~ the look-out to see that no one interferes with the Indians. I know for a fact that the Provincial government at the present time is practically working right against the Indians. If it had not been for the late Queen ~~(?)~~ who had supported and looked after our interests through the Dominion Government, we would now have been in even greater trouble. We are somewhat nervous we feel just as though we cannot say what we want to say, because we do not know who is to represent the Indians, of the five who are present at the meeting, and we have got this idea that the two Governments, Provincial and Dominion are fighting over our lands, and therefore we are afraid to put the question before these gentlemen. I know what the Indian Reserves are all right, but although they are reserves set aside for the use of the Indians we are not allowed to do as we like in our own reserves. We have been ~~somewhat~~ crushed up and we cannot move round as we want to. You gentlemen have asked us not to say anything about the Privy ~~Council~~ Council or Lawyer Clark.

Chairman: (misled, misunderstanding, was all that was said)

Sterling: "Who ~~owns~~ the Queen Charlotte Islands and these reserves belong to?"

Chairman:

As to the Ownership of the Queen Charlotte Islands, the Indians claim to own them whole of the Islands. The Dominion Government and the British Columbia Governments claim that both or one of them own the indian reserves on these Islands, and the British Columbia Government claims to own the whole of the lands on the Queen Charlotte Islands outside of the reserves, except those places which they have granted to private individuals. The Dominion Government don't claim any of the land on the Islands outside of the Indian Reserves, but the Indian reserves they claim for the Indians.

