

1879

Report of the Agent of the Penobscot Tribe of Indians

Samuel W. Hoskins
Indian Agent, State of Maine

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REPORT OF THE AGENT

OF THE

PENOBSCOT TRIBE OF INDIANS,

FOR THE YEAR

1879.



AUGUSTA:

SPRAGUE & SON, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1880.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN COUNCIL, February 24, 1880.

On motion of Mr. BARKER of Penobscot,

Ordered, That the usual number of copies be printed.

Attest:

S. J. CHADBOURNE,

Secretary of State.

REPORT.

To the Governor and Council of Maine:

As required by law, I herewith submit my yearly report as Agent for the Penobscot Indians, together with an account of receipts and expenditures for the year 1879:

APPROPRIATIONS.

Chap. 125, Page 100, Resolves 1879.

Amount interest, Indian Trust Fund	\$4,429 70
“ for annual annuity, per treaty	1,400 00
“ agriculture	700 00
“ bounty on crops	450 00
“ salary of agent	200 00
“ “ superintendent of farming	100 00
“ schools	385 00
“ stove and repairs of school-house, Mattanawcook ..	30 00
“ salary of Priest	100 00
“ “ Governor of Tribe	50 00
“ “ Lieut. Governor of Tribe	30 00
“ repairs of church	150 00
Total	\$8,024 70

Shore Rent Fund for 1878.

RECEIPTS.		
1879.		
March 8. By warrant	\$4,361 25	
G. F. Dillingham, balance 1877	5 91	
		\$4,367 16
DE.		
To paid members of the Tribe as per account annexed marked “A”	\$4,220 50	
To balance to credit of shore rent fund, 1879	146 66	
		\$4,367 16

PENOBSCOT INDIANS.

RECEIPTS.

1879.			
April.....	By warrant, Treasury.....	\$2,000 00	
July.....	“ “	2,000 00	
September...	“ “	2,000 00	
November...	“ “	550 10	
December...	“ “	833 50	
			\$7,383 60
	By F. Gilman, rent 5 islands.....	15 00	
	W. H. Chesley, rent Brown islands	16 00	31 00
			7,414 60
	By amount balance shore rent fund of 1878..		146 66
	Total receipts.....		\$7,561 26

EXPENDITURES.

1879.		
For agriculture.....		\$700 00
bounty on crops.....		450 00
annuity		1,574 00
schools.....		385 00
stove, and repairs of schoolhouse on Mattanawcook island.....		30 00
salary of superintendent of farming		100 00
salary of agent.....		200 00
salary of priest.....		100 00
salary of Governor of tribe.....		50 00
salary of Lt. Governor of tribe.....		30 00
repairs of church (not expended).		-
annual spring dividend		704 00
support of poor and sick		1,638 59
medicines and medical service		299 15
funeral expenses, 18 persons.....		121 72
wood for tribe		682 61
agricultural, in excess of appropriation.....		271 19
bounty on crops, in excess of appropriation.....		64 50
surveying land.....		122 00
advertising sale of shores		10 00
attorney fees.....		21 50
Total expenditures.....		\$7,554 26
Balance to credit Indian fund, 1880.....		7 00
		\$7,561 26

The census of the tribe as taken by the Superintending School Committee of Oldtown in January, shows their number to be four hundred and forty-six.

The annual election of the tribe was held 1879, and Sockbeson Swassian was chosen Governor and Francis Sockalexis Lieut. Governor of the tribe. Lolar Coly was elected delegate to the Legislature for 1880.

SCHOOLS.

Public schools have been taught through the year at Oldtown, Olamon and Mattanawcook islands, and the money fully expended.

The school on Indian Oldtown island, of 35 weeks, has been in charge of Sister M. F. Borgia, a member of the Community of Sisters of Mercy, aided by her sisters and the zealous co-operation of Father O'Brien, the Parish Priest.

The school will compare favorably with any primary school in the State. Its excellence illustrates a fact, viz: that superior culture, when it can be obtained, (as in this instance), is perhaps of more advantage to mankind, when employed in teaching young children, than in schools of higher grade.

The Sisters of Mercy have won the confidence and love of parents and children, and the result is, more desire to attend than the house will hold.

An addition should be made to the present schoolhouse, doubling its capacity. I respectfully recommend that it be done early this present season.

The school on Olamon Island has been taught by Miss Ward. It is a small school. I am informed, by the superintending school committee of Greenbush, that good progress has been made by the scholars, and that the money has been well expended.

The same may be said of the school at Mattanawcook Island, near Lincoln. The repairs on the school-house have been made, and a stove purchased, under the direction of O. H. Chesley, Esq., of Lincoln.

In many respects the social condition of the tribe is improving. The influence of good schools, and the increased interest in education which Father O'Brien and the Sisters of Mercy have aroused in the tribe, are very apparent, and if continued cannot fail, in a time not remote, to place them on an equality with the whites in education and intelligence.

Intoxicating liquors are used by the Indians nearly as common as among our own people, and with like disastrous effects. A long acquaintance with nearly every adult Indian in the tribe, warrants me in saying that their habits in regard to the use of liquor have much improved, especially during the last few years.

The number of deaths during the year has been (18) eighteen.

The number of births (18) eighteen.

There has been a marked change in the sources from which the Indians obtain their livelihood during the last twenty years. In years past large numbers of them, being supplied by our merchants, repaired to the forests, in the fall and winter, to hunt, returning in the spring with furs and skins often to the value of \$500. It is not so now; the game has disappeared, and with it the inclination and the skill to hunt. The tanning of moose, deer and caribou skins, and their manufacture into snow-shoes and moccasins, has gone into other hands.

Many men and women go to places of summer resort during the season, and have heretofore found a large and remunerative sale for their basket work. They inform me that last season was a failure, that in many cases they made nothing, hardly paying expenses.

Outside of their funds now, the only dependence of the Indians is farming and basket making. Many of the young and active are good river drivers, getting good wages and from 40 to 100 days' labor in the season. Last season, however, this resource was nearly a failure, the drives in most cases being short and the wages small. The result has been

that many families hitherto self-supporting have received aid from the Indian fund.

The young and active Indians will work river-driving, yet very few, if any, ever hire for the woods to use an axe, or to assist in any other way in a lumber operation.

FARMING.

I have furnished seed and plowing to eighty-eight families, as will appear by schedule of crops raised which accompanies this report :

PRODUCTION.		Bounty.
Wheat.....	115 bushels.	\$23 00
Oats.....	1,020 “	102 00
Buckwheat.....	25 “	2 50
Corn (no bounty).....	97 “	—
Potatoes.....	6,670 “	333 50
Beans.....	300 “	30 00
Peas.....	66 “	6 60
Vegetables.....	338 “	16 90
Total bounty paid.....		\$514 50

Mr. Joseph Nicolar, a member of the tribe, was appointed by me as superintendent of farming. I herewith append his report as written out by himself, as a part of this my report.

REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF FARMING.

OLDTOWN, Maine, Dec. 22, 1879.

To S. W. HOSKINS, *Agent Penobscot Indians*:

Having attended the duty of Assistant Farmer, to which I was employed by you for the season just closed, I herewith submit the following Report :

Upon my first visit in the spring, among all of the families living on different islands between Oldtown and Lincoln, I was informed by the inhabitants occupying the farms on those islands, that the system adopted and pursued for the past twelve years by those that had this duty to perform "as an Assistant Farmer," has been to cause nothing only the exhausted lands to be plowed; employing only such teams that have no more strength than the land itself had, and much complaint was made by all that such a system was very unprofitable to the progress of their agricultural pursuits. Added to this hindrance was the system of furnishing them with fertilizers at a cost to be a great profit to those that deal in the article. They had also the misfortune of seeing their lands growing small every year, instead of larger as they ought to have been. They say that the practice of the plowman has been to leave a strip on the outer edges of their lands, making it one furrow small every year, because it was too hard for the team to plow. I was shown by them some very fertile lands which have been suffering for want of plowing. I at once concluded that in working those exhausted lands was only wasting money, labor and hope. Acting upon this conclusion, I got some of them to assist me in procuring teams which they knew themselves were suitable to perform the labor, and those teams were employed to plow such lands that will bear good crops, and distributed among them the fertilizers at a wholesale cost, thus carrying out fully the system you suggested. In adopting this new system, it may cause the expenses to be greater than by

pursuing the former ; yet the people have the happiness of realizing a greater return as the result.

It is well known everywhere that the farmer had two enemies this past season to contend with : the "Potato Bug" and the "Potato Rot," yet the harvest in store among the members of the tribe is much greater this year than any of the last twelve years. Seeing their crops looking so promising in the first start, caused them to be more attentive to them, and good care has been taken of them, with very few exceptions. I find that the management has been a great success and satisfaction, and looked upon as an opening to a light in the future, which makes the Red Man think that there is something in the land for him as well as for others, and causes him to look forward with a new hope and courage. They express a great desire to have some of their land plowed in the fall, and want you to urge the Governor and Council to authorize you to do so. My desire in this particular is with theirs. I also find that on Oldtown Island there have been erected the past season, seven houses and one barn, and seven more had new additions, such as clapboarding, shingling, lathing, plastering and painting. Never before was so much done in any one year.

Respectfully,

JOSEPH NICOLAR,

Supt. of Farming.

It is plain that the future of the Penobscot Indians must depend on their lands. They have 146 islands in the Penobscot river, above Oldtown, containing 4,482 acres. Three-fourths of this land is suitable for cultivation. It is the most fertile and best farming land in this State. Its estimated value in 1835 was \$64,247.64. It is to be presumed that the value at that time was in the timber growing thereon. This has now disappeared, and they have a value only for farming purposes and for rent of shores for hitching logs. This latter value is fast decreasing.

If possible, something should be done to induce the Indians to live on and cultivate this fertile land, to build barns and keep stock.

I think there are no more than six oxen, six cows and five horses owned by the whole tribe. A few hogs are kept. I have never seen hens, turkeys, geese, or fowls of any kind at their houses. An appropriation for farming purposes should, I respectfully suggest, be coupled with conditions that would gradually compel them to keep stock and fowls. Farming without manure has been followed quite long enough.

The Indians—not unlike many of their white neighbors—are enthusiastic to plant in the spring, a little less so to hoe and cultivate in midsummer, and when harvesting arrives, especially if crops are poor, in many cases the enthusiasm has vanished, the crops are sold or poorly cared for. There are quite a number of farmers, however, who care for their crops well throughout the season, and these Indians and their families are very seldom seen at the agency. About all those Indians who live on their farms up river are self reliant, and have comfortable homes.

FUEL.

All wood of much value for fuel has been cut from the Island near Indian Oldtown Village. Formerly fuel was furnished only to the old and helpless. The wood being near, all others found means to supply themselves. I have purchased dry wood from the cars, for the widows and the old, and those otherwise helpless. For the able bodied I have furnished the hauling, they cutting and fitting it for the sled. In all cases I have employed Indians who own horses or oxen to do this work, when they were able to do it. With some notable exceptions, their houses are not warm and a large amount of fuel is called for. There has been and is now much sickness among them.

SHORES.

Such leases of shores as had expired, were advertised and re-leased by auction last May, to the highest responsible bidders.

Owing to the great change in the prospects for lumber business on this river during the last five years, the total loss of our mills on Oldtown Falls and other reasons which will readily recur, the use of shores could not be sold for a sum equal to half the rents of five years ago. The revenue of the tribe is thereby greatly decreased. The leases made last May are duly deposited in the State Treasury at Augusta.

In making the various appropriations for 1880, the undersigned trusts that this decrease in their resources will be taken into consideration, and the tribe favorably regarded.

SAMPL W. HOSKINS,

Indian Agent for 1879.