



H'damani and the Dakota at Turtle Mountain

Dear Prime Minister Mackenzie and Minister David Mills. As your servant, I offer this report under my new title - Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba. It's October 1877. I, Alexander Morris, have had a most compelling meeting with a delegation of Dakota-Sioux led by Chief H'damani. They came insisting on being granted a reserve on Turtle Mountain – as they have lived there in peace since returning to Canada in 1862. I am inclined to grant their request. They impressed us with their resolute, dignified presentation.

I realize - a reserve on Turtle Mountain departs from our preference to NOT establish a Dakota reserve so close to the U.S. border. I suggest

H'damani was not involved in last year's battle with General Custer at Little Big Horn. He and his people arrived 14 years earlier - following conflicts in Minnesota – where he says they had been treated most unjustly. I assure you and U.S. President Hayes that H'damani's people pose no threat to American citizens.

The second concern is that farmers from Ontario will be arriving soon to take up freehold land in southwest Manitoba. How will H'damani manage his people if there are conflicts over hunting and firewood access?

It's been asserted that H'damani can simply move north to join reserves at Pipestone or Oak Lake. I did mention it. He rejects this and will not budge from the mountain. May I point out that we've seen disruption when we mix two bands under one Indian Agent.

And, may I remind you of Canada's desire to avoid the mass eviction of people as happened in the U.S. We prefer to place our Indians interspersed with farmland so as to integrate them and have them absorbed within our grand vision for Canada. H'damani has proven himself a strong leader who can keep the peace between his people and new settlers.

we differentiate H'damani and his 35 lodges from bands of Dakota-Sioux that returned more recently

Further, let me remind you that the Dakota have been unwavering allies of Britain – during the American war of Independence, then through the 1812 troubles and to the present. This is how they wish to be repaid.

H'damani is quite insistent, that Canada and Britain owe his people respect; that he and his people should not starve, homeless, as Canada enjoys the wealth gained from this land. He asserts that until the demise of the buffalo, the Dakota deftly formed political alliances throughout the great plains and have lived and hunted as far north as Prince Albert. They consider themselves very much historically Canadian.

Let me be clear that H'damani has proven himself a strong leader and his people resourceful in their transition to farming.

With your blessing, I will declare the Turtle Mountain Indian Reserve #60 near old Deloraine.

I remain yours faithfully and look forward to your affirming response.

'The Dakota-Sioux' was inspired by stories in Vantage Points 2, 3 and 4.