

LW Herchmer here, former Divisional Indian Agent. I'm 73 now – remembering some interesting times - as Canada took over the west. In 1882, for example, I was asked by Sir John A himself to investigate a complaint around the Turtle Mountain Indian Reserve - IR60.

The Sioux Indians from Turtle Mountains in the North-west Territories, waited upon Governor Morris on Monday last for the purpose of obtaining information with regard to the Reserve granted them by the Dominion Government, near the junction of the Saschatchewan and Assiniboine rivers. They seemed to be very well satisfied with their treatment, and the chiefs are preparing to go to the reserve immediately.

It turned out that not all the Turtle Mtn. Dakota wanted to leave the area.

July 13, 1874 - The Nor'Wester

I was stationed in Birtle, supervising Indian Agents on 13 reserves. What's an Indian Agent? He's a federal government appointed boss – for a reserve – always a non-indigenous man who controls most everything on the reserve. They hand out Treaty tokens - and - importantly, make sure reserve residents show their pass when leaving and returning - so as to know at all times how they interact with new settlers.

That's why I was sent to Turtle Mountain. Sir John received a letter from 47 new settlers who expressed discomfort with a tiny reserve being established near old Deloraine. The Prime Minister (who knew my father by the way) wanted a report on the fuss down there.

The settlers complained that the Sioux threatened them while gathering wood from the mountain – that their wives were fearful – with no police, army or Indian Agent there. They wanted the reserve moved.

My investigation found the Turtle Mountain reserve was doing very well under the

leadership of H'damani – having broken 35 acres with one yoke of oxen. They were building excellent houses and were keen to get along with their settler-neighbours. The mountain offered them excellent hunting and fishing, so, other than a little seed and some flour, they received no government assistance. I emphasized in my report that many settlers do get on well with the Dakota.

In my report, I made it clear that the Sioux are generally very well disposed towards the settlers, and wherever trouble has arisen it has, on all occasions, been directly attributable to the settlers. Settlers in general have been spooked by events across the border and, to be honest, dislike to see Indians in possession of desirable locations. The Prime Minister replied saying the Turtle Mountain Dakota should not be disturbed.

But, even so, the reserve only lasted 30 years before it was “surrendered” - in quotation marks. The reserve was too small (one square mile with 13 families) to warrant their own Indian Agent. And so government bureaucrats couldn't control the assimilation process of H'damani's people. Eventually the government paid IR60 residents \$200 each to leave. Some went to Pipestone and some to Oak Lake.

By 1909 only H'damani and his grandson remained. The government tried to auction the land, but no bids were offered. After a few years – with the tacit understanding that H'damani and his grandson could come and go as they pleased - it was finally sold. But not forgotten.

'Turtle Mountain Reserve', was adapted from a story in Vantage Points 1.