

583

578
9
January 4th, 1910.

Sir,

I beg to acknowledge your report of the 23rd. ultimo, forwarding copies of extracts from letters addressed to you by Mr. Horan, in regard to the barricades which it appears were built by the Indians in the River flowing out of Fraser Lake, and I observe your opinion that it may be necessary to make a similar arrangement with the Indians there to that which was made with the Babine Indians some years ago, to induce them to give up the pernicious method of barricading the Babine River.

The great objection, as you are no doubt aware, to barricading by the Indians is that not only are all the fish prevented from ascending the River during the time that the Indians are capturing them in quantities to suit their own needs; but in nearly every instance the Indians carelessly leave the barricades after their fishing is completed, and as a consequence Salmon during the whole season are prevented from getting beyond it in any numbers.

If arrangements can be made through the Indian Agency with Father Coccola or the Indians directly to stop barricading, it is eminently desirable


C. B. Sword, Esq.

Inspector of Fisheries,

New Westminster, B. C.

577

desirable that such should be done ; but the Indians must be given to understand that the pernicious practice of barricading streams frequented by spawning Salmon will under no circumstances be allowed to be continued.

It is not desirable to extend the practice of allowing even a limited amount of netting by the Indians in these upper waters, such as was done in the Babine River under the extraordinary conditions existing there, if there is any way of avoiding such contingency.

As the season is now over no trouble will be experienced until next year, and it appears from Mr. Horan's letter of the 1st. November last that he anticipates being able to get into touch with the Indian authorities early in the coming season, when some arrangement may be made to prevent the continuance of the practice.

It is eminently necessary that the matter should be carefully followed and you will please keep it clearly in mind, in order that it may be taken up with the least possible delay in the Spring.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W A Pound

For Superintendent of Fisheries.

600

RE BARRICADING THE STUART AND FRASER RIVERS BY THE
STUART LAKE, FRASER LAKE AND STONEY CREEK INDIAN

583

BANDS

A few years ago the Department established a fish hatchery at Stuart Lake, which is the source of the Fraser River ; but it has continually found great difficulty in obtaining a sufficient quota of eggs to fill the hatchery, and it has been necessary to largely draw from Babine Lake, across the water shed, which is one of the sources of the Babine River, a tributary of the Skeena.

On looking for the reasons for so few fish finding their way up to Stuart Lake, though it was known that they had ascended far up the Fraser, it was found that the practice which some years ago was followed by the Babine Indians in the Babine River, is being and has, for generations, been practiced by the Bands of Indians above mentioned, not only in the Stuart River but in the Lower Nechacco River, which flows out of Fraser Lake, and into which River the Stuart River empties.

This most nefarious method of fishing is exceedingly difficult to stop, as the Indians in these remote portions of the country have never practiced any other, and on account of the comparatively little work involved after the barricades are erected, they are not anxious to avail themselves of more modern methods.

The barricades , which are usually made of willows or other small trees, are built right across the River at a place where it is shallow, usually not deeper than three feet, and here and there in such barricades there are openings which lead through a kind of funnel to receptacles, called baskets , but which are really traps, which hold variously from 5,000 to 10,000 Salmon, and as the Salmon find their way into these baskets the Indians take them out by means of a spear, at their leisure.

In cases where the fish are in great numbers the quantity which the Indians require for their food would not matter so much if they could be depended upon to carry on the fishing in a sane way ; but owing to their indolent habits when they catch sufficient fish for their own purposes they simply stop fishing, sometimes removing the baskets, which are more difficult to make than the barricades, so that they may save them for another year ; but they leave the barricades themselves, which block the fish and prevent them from reaching their spawning grounds. A glance at the map will show what this involves so far as the Fraser River is concerned.

*See letter to
Indian Affairs
B.H. 7
May 1/11*

60d

Salmon, from their instincts, when they leave the sea for spawning purposes, do not rest until they find the gravelly beds of the head waters of the different streams, and a great number of them succumb in the endeavour to reach such areas and before they have spawned, as they do not feed after entering the River and the conditions of the country are such that the Rivers have rapids and falls to be overcome which tax the fish to their limit, so that only the strongest eventually reach the head waters, and if these are not allowed to spawn the extermination of the Salmon fishery must necessarily be only a matter of time, and therefore the method is clearly not in the permanent interests of the Indians themselves, as the result will be that in the course of time they will have to find some other means of obtaining supplies of food.

The Minister will remember that a similar difficulty ; but more serious in its appearance, as the Indians had taken on a belligerent attitude, was experienced in 1906 with the Babine Indians, when the Department undertook to prevent them from barricading the Babine River, and thus preventing the ascending Salmon from reaching their spawning grounds in Babine Lake.

At that time representatives of the Indians, accompanied by Father Caccola, who is the Missionary amongst these Indians, came to Ottawa, and after conferences with the Minister and Honourable Mr. Oliver, an agreement was reached, whereby this Department agreed to waive the provision of the Fisheries Act prohibiting the taking of Salmon above tidal waters, and to allow the Babine Indians to take such fish as they might require and as they had been accustomed to take, with nets, which were to be freely supplied them by the Department of Indian Affairs. They were also to be supplied with mending twine for their nets and with new nets from time to time as they were needed, and this Department undertook to instruct them in the fishing of the nets through the ice in the winter, if such were engaged in. There were some other arrangements in the way of supplying them with additional land to enable them to carry on farming operations ; but such was entirely between the Indians and the Department of Indian Affairs.

The result of this arrangement has been pre-eminently satisfactory, as not only have the Indians each year succeeded in obtaining a sufficient supply of Salmon for their needs ; but the spawning beds in the Skeena River have been amply seeded, and it is generally admitted by the canners in that district that there was last year a substantial increase in the run of Salmon to the Skeena River, which the canners attribute to the Salmon having four years ago, for the first time, been enabled to reach their spawning grounds in the Babine Lake.

It

650

It is, of course, well established, that
Sookeys come back as mature Salmon four years
from the time of hatching.

When the barricading was found to obtain
in the Stuart and the Nechacco Rivers, the De-
partment knowing the necessity for approaching
the matter with the greatest caution, instructed
the Inspector of Fisheries to have the Local
Guardian visit the locality and fully discuss the
matter with the Indians and Father Caccola, and see
if it would not be possible to amicably arrange
for them to remove the barricades.

This has been done ; but the Indians
have taken a very determined stand, and agree to
do away with barricades on the following condi-
tions :-

1. That the Government will consent to open
and provide a boarding school for their children,
boys and girls, where at least their offspring would
be free from starvation, and let parents free to
to their trappings as far as game can be found,
which they could not do if all the family had to
be packed or follow.

2. That nets of 1st. class quality, 250'
long, 9' wide, and twine enough for mending same,
would be handed to each family, or to each person
alone providing for himself, these nets to be
renewed at reasonable intervals.

3. Fishing with nets in a rocky and rough
bed or bottom being very uncertain, three fishing
stations should be secured by the Department for
them. The first station to be on the Pelgha small
lake, northwest of Tachi-Rha Lake, north of Pinche
Village, and the third on Nehom li lake on the
McLeod's trail, about seven miles from Stuart Lake.

4. Farm implements of all description and
seeds to be given to all those who like to make
serious use of them.

If the yearly decline in the Salmon
fishery of the Fraser River is to be stopped and
is to be changed to an increase, it is abundantly
clear that not only must the hatcheries be
assured of a full quota of eggs each season ; but
that the Salmon that do succeed in passing beyond
the nets in the tidal portions of the Rivers have
a free run to their spawning areas, and if this is
done, with reasonable regulation of the fisher-
ies in the tidal waters, it should be quite fea-
sible to increase the Salmon run to this River
system.

Under all the circumstances, while the
undersigned looks with a great deal of apprehension
on even net fishing in the head waters it would

seen

599

seem only reasonable that the Department should be agreeable to the same course as was followed in the Babine system, and it of course cannot accept any responsibility in connection with the other conditions submitted by the Indians ; but if the Minister will agree to allowing the Indians to use nets to an extent sufficient to supply their needs, such nets to be furnished them by the Indian Department, the whole question will be immediately taken up with that Department, and as it is essential that the matter should be settled with the Indians before the end of next month, the necessity for reaching a decision with that Department as soon as possible, will be appreciated.

Wm. G. ...

Ottawa,

April 26th., 1911.

W.G.
29.4.11
L.P.B.

Population of Indian Villages affected by agreement.

Stella	90
Stoney Creek	170
Fraser Lake	74
Pinche	39
Tacha	42
Nakazla	90)
Mission	81)
Grand Rapids	9
Yaouche	38
Tromblay Lake	28
Grand total	<u>661</u>