"YOU DON'T SUPPOSE THE DOMINION GOVERNMENT WANTS TO CHEAT THE INDIANS?":[1]

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and the Fort George Reserve, 1908–12

David Vogt and David Alexander Gamble

In 1911, after a year of disjointed negotiations, the Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) Railway acquired the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation's 500-hectare (1,366 acres)Fort George Reserve No. 1 at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako rivers in present-day Prince George. The Lheidli T'enneh, then known to the Canadian government as the Fort George Indian Band, attempted several means to delay the surrender and raise the price of purchase. Ultimately, they agreed to surrender the reserve and move permanently to a second reserve, at Shelley, in exchange for $125,000. This was up from an initial offer of $68,300 and included $25,000 in construction funds and a pledge to preserve the village's original cemetery (thereafter designated Reserve No. 1A). A specific history of the reserve surrender has not yet been published. Several historians have discussed the implications of the surrender in the context of the GTP's relations with other "white … institutions," including rival developers and the Roman Catholic Church, but they have generally given inadequate attention to the Lheidli T'enneh themselves. Intriguingly, and in contrast, the admittedly racist GTP-sponsored travel writer Frank Talbot alleged that responsibility for delays lay with the "cunning of the red man," not with white institutions.[2]

[1] Quotation from Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, "Meeting with the Fort George Tribe," 22–23, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG 10, file AH12, vol. 11025. The authors would like to thank Ted Binnema of the University of Northern British Columbia and two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback on earlier drafts of this article.

[2] Talbot, quoted by Frank Leonard, *A Thousand Blunders: The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and Northern British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 165. Margaret Whitehead, ed., *Memoirs of Father Nicolas Coccola* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), 49–50; Bev Christensen, *Prince George: Rivers, Railways and Timber* (Burlington: Windsor, 1989), 35–36; and F.E. Runnalls, *A History of Prince George* (Vancouver: Wrigley, 1946), 115, are all concerned predominantly with interactions between the GTP and Catholic missionary Nicolas Coccola. Frank Leonard is

The surrender of the Fort George Reserve was not an isolated local event but, rather, a representative case of a comparatively under-studied phenomenon: the surrender of Aboriginal reserve land to western Canada's burgeoning national railways.[3] Patricia K. Wood has observed that reserve land "dispossessions," in general, were "crucial points of exchange between governments, local residents and First Nations." The belief that oversized reserve lands were "vacant and idle" barriers to development possessed considerable political traction during the early twentieth century, including within the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), where some officials argued that the alienation of reserve lands and the resulting relocation of Aboriginal populations could protect the latter from the supposedly harmful influences of white settlement as well as encourage farming. Sarah Carter and Steve Roe identify similar positions taken by the DIA with respect to the transfer of reserve lands to veterans and developers after both world wars.[4]

Examining the politics of reserve allocation in British Columbia, R. Cole Harris, in *Making Native Space*, argues that the small size of BC reserves, along with measures taken to reduce or alienate these reserves, reflected perceptions that bands without recognized agriculture had little use for large tracts of land. While assimilationist Indian policy aimed to introduce such practices, by the late nineteenth century the principal effect was conflict and, ultimately, marginalization. Aboriginal people, Harris writes, "confronted … complexes of power against which they were relatively defenceless and which, whatever they tried to do, had the capacity to marginalize them quickly."[5]

One source of confrontation was the intersection between railway construction and Aboriginal territory. Nadine Schuurman has demonstrated that the Canadian Pacific Railway moved through Nlha7pamux and Stl'atl'imax territory during the 1880s. Reserve land was also alienated

concerned with GTP internal affairs but claims that groups like the Lheidli T'enneh did not pose "a serious obstacle to GTP goals" (see Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 165-66, 177).

[3] Two exceptions are Jack Funk, *Outside, the Women Cried: The Story of the Surrender by Chief Thunderchild's Band of their Reserve Near Delmas, Saskatchewan, 1908* (New York: iUniverse, 2007), a history of the Thunderchild surrender in Saskatchewan; and James A. McDonald, "Bleeding Day and Night: The Construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway across Tsimshian Reserve Lands," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 10, 1 (1990): 33-69.

[4] Patricia K. Wood, "Pressured from All Sides: The February 1913 Surrender of the Northeast Corner of the Tsuu T'ina First Nation," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004), 114; Sarah Carter, "'An Infamous Proposal': Prairie Indian Reserve Land and Soldier Settlement after World War I," *Manitoba History* 37 (1999): esp. 9-10; and Steve Roe and Students of Northern Lights College, "'If the Story Could be Heard': Colonial Discourse and the Surrender of Indian Reserve 172," *BC Studies* 138/39 (2003): 115-36.

[5] R. Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 189-90, 206.

by the Canadian Northern Pacific and Pacific Great Eastern railways. The GTP, for its part, alienated all or part of some twenty-five BC reserves, including the Fort George reserve.[6] The specific political and social points of exchange surrounding these surrenders and, in some cases, relocations remain under-studied by historians. Schuurman's work is principally concerned with how the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, which reviewed BC reserves between 1912 and 1916, retrospectively legitimized alienation of reserve land by railways. Frank Leonard, in his *A Thousand Blunders: The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and Northern British Columbia*, argues that the GTP's acquisition of reserve lands was broadly unhindered by "Native opposition"; rather, the "greater obstacles" were poor internal management and confrontations with governments and "rival development concerns."[7]

Both Frank Leonard and James McDonald argue that the most significant – indeed, perhaps the only – case of serious Aboriginal rather than white resistance to railway development occurred with the GTP's acquisition of Kitsumkalum Tsimshian land in the Skeena Valley between 1908 and 1911. In that case, the band and the GTP were unable to agree on compensation for gravel and timber removal or for the relocation of a graveyard. After the band rejected the railway company's offer outright, the DIA's provincial superintendent, Arthur Vowell, ordered the remains removed in exchange for $1,450 and threatened to allow the company to move ahead and damage graves if his ultimatum was refused. Reconstructing these events, McDonald argues that Aboriginal groups faced "the combined forces of God, the Law and Business."[8]

Contrasting the surrender at Fort George to the Tsimshian case, McDonald argues that it was accomplished with "a minimum of trouble." Leonard, too, claims that only in the Skeena Valley was the GTP obligated to "devote most of its energies to overcoming Native resistance." Other BC historians, such as F.E. Runnalls and Margaret Whitehead, have lionized a Stuart Lake Mission priest, Nicolas Coccola, whose influence over the Lheidli T'enneh was supposedly crucial to negotiating a fair settlement.[9] Did the Fort George surrender really involve "a minimum of trouble," and can this be explained, in the con-

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[6] Nadine Schuurman, "Constructing and Deconstructing the Railway through Reserves in British Columbia," *Native Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (2000): 19-39; and J.A. Lower, "The Construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in British Columbia," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 4 (1930): 163-81.

[7] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 165-66.

[8] McDonald, "Bleeding Day and Night," 33-69; and Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 178-82.

[9] McDonald, "Bleeding Day and Night," 38; Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 183-84; and Runnalls, *History of Prince George*, 115. See also Christensen, *Prince George*; and Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 49-50.

tinued absence of a comprehensive account of the band's own actions, simply by alluding to an effective alliance between "God, the Law and Business"?

Scattered discussion of the surrender in the archives of the GTP, the DIA, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), and local newspapers, as well as Coccola's memoirs, reveals different economic interests and the paternalistic perceptions of government, religious, and business institutions in the surrender. These were at times complementary but at others inconsistent and conflicting. Significantly, these sources also reveal that the Aboriginal community actively resisted the demand to surrender: the band sent its own representative to Ottawa with a significantly higher counter-proposal; accepted an unauthorized (and ultimately invalidated) proposal brokered by Coccola; and, finally, negotiated with the DIA and the GTP for the preservation of the cemetery and for a higher surrender price. Both Coccola and the DIA's representative, John McDougall, played some role in pressuring the Lheidli T'enneh to agree to a surrender, but Coccola did not become involved in the process until well after the DIA approached the band and they had attempted to approach the DIA themselves. In other words, the Aboriginal community attempted (albeit with limited success) to protect its interests by exploiting the different, if not incompatible, positions of its religious contacts, the DIA, and the GTP.

PRESSURE AND RESISTANCE, 1909 TO EARLY 1911

In 1909, two rival townsites claimed the name "Fort George." South Fort George, established by a business consortium, bordered the Lheidli T'enneh reserve to the south; Central Fort George, developed by the Natural Resources Security Company (NRS), was located just to the south. The towns' newspapers – the *Fort George Herald* and the *Fort George Tribune*, respectively – waged a lively editorial battle. The NRS feared that a new railway-sponsored settlement would devastate its own exaggerated claims to a future as the "Chicago of western Canada,"[10] and its *Tribune* newspaper staunchly opposed the surrender. In contrast, South Fort George welcomed the coming railway, believing it would bring settlers and prosperity. The towns were preceded in the area by an HBC trading post, which subsisted on a declining fur trade with the Lheidli T'enneh and also served Nechako and Fraser river traffic.

[10] Rhys Alan Pugh, "The Newspaper Wars in Prince George, BC, 1909-1918" (MA thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 2004); Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 187; and Runnalls, *History of Prince George*, 130.

The HBC's journals are an important source for the early period; after June 1911, they consist largely of terse weather reports.[11]

The HBC post was adjacent to the older, permanent Lheidli T'enneh village on Fort George Reserve No. 1 at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako rivers. This reserve, along with three others possessed by the same band, had been laid out in 1892 by Peter O'Reilly and subsequently surveyed by F.A. Devereux; the latter judged the majority of the land "worthless" for agricultural purposes, while O'Reilly felt it was sufficiently remote so as not to "interfere with the ultimate progress of the country."[12] In the 1890s, according to DIA annual reports, the village had 124 residents living in twenty-nine houses and possessing various livestock. The band depended heavily upon hunting, trapping, and fishing, though as returns from the fur trade declined, they had turned to agriculture, cultivating potatoes and hay upon what the DIA referred to as "garden patches." Some men worked in pack trains and on river boats. The Lheidli T'enneh had converted to Roman Catholicism and received regular visits from Oblate missionaries from the Stewart Lake mission, to the north.[13]

The GTP first identified the Fort George Reserve as an ideal station site in April 1908, when Vice-President Frank W. Morse approved of a plan by chief engineer B.B. Kelliher to "acquire the property" for a terminal. Kelliher described the land as "vacant, with the exception

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[11] Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), B.280/a/9, Fort George post journal.

[12] Department of Indian Affairs (hereafter DIA), *Dominion of Canada Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1892* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1893; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=8336&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 265-66; and F.A. Devereux, "Fort George Indian Reserves," Report BC314, Canada Lands Survey System (Internet: http://clss-satc.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/plan-eng.php?id=FBBC314%20CLSR%20BC), 18.

[13] DIA, *Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1897* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1898; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=11040&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 77; *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1898* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=11671&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 211-12; *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1901* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1901; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=14242&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 221; *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1902* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1902; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=15140&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 216; *Annual Report for the Year Ended June 30th 1910* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1910; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=21858&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 251; E.K. Beeston, Inspection Report, September 1900, HBCA, file B.280/e/3.

of a very small portion … occupied by Indians for dwellings."[14] The company's assistant solicitor, D'Arcy Tate, initially hoped that his company could avoid negotiating with the reserve's inhabitants by persuading the Board of Railway Commissioners that all 1,366 acres were required "for railway purposes."[15] Conveniently, a board certificate "would render unnecessary … any surrender from the Indians." Kelliher, though, doubted that "plans for a division terminal that would occupy 1,366 acres" would withstand "any reasonable criticism." Tate was forced to approach Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Frank Pedley to request the purchase of the reserve for a townsite.[16]

Pedley initially rejected Tate's application due to an ongoing federal-provincial dispute over reserve lands in British Columbia, but he ultimately allowed him to negotiate directly with the province for its reversionary interest, settling at a price of $3,415 for the land on the reserve.[17] Although this outcome required a year of correspondence and the intervention of GTP vice-president William Wainwright and GTP president E.J. Chamberlin, the DIA generally accommodated the GTP's desire to acquire reserve land, particularly by quietly turning aside three alternative bids received between 1908 and 1910.[18] One of these, from BC Express manager Charles Millar, would have preserved the "burying ground" and covered the costs of "rebuilding the church." A second and more generous would-be purchaser, identified in DIA records as J.A. Cosgrave, who was likely a Central Fort George businessman, proposed annual payments of $500 to each resident for the remainder of her or his life.[19] These proposals were rejected by the DIA on the grounds that the reversionary interest dispute remained unresolved.

[14] College of New Caledonia copy of Kelliher to Morse, 1 April 1908, Morse to Ryley, 7 April 1908 (both in LAC, RG 30, file 426).

[15] Tate to Kelliher, 25 April 1908, LAC, RG 30, file 426.

[16] Tate to Morse, 25 April 1908, Kelliher to Tate, 8 May 1908, and Tate to Pedley, 9 May 1908 (all in LAC, RG 30, file 426).

[17] In 1907, the provincial government attempted to block the GTP's purchase of Tsimshian land at Kaien Island, Port Simpson, and Metlakatla, arguing that land alienated from a reserve reverted to provincial ownership. The federal government authorized the sale unilaterally, and British Columbia retaliated by refusing to approve new reserve lands while it sought a judicial ruling. The dispute was unresolved during the Fort George negotiations. See Pedley to Tate, 13 May 1908, and Tate to Morse, 14 May 1908 (both in LAC, RG 30, file 426).

[18] Pedley to Tate, 13 May 1908, Tate to Morse, 14 May 1908, Tate to Pedley, 9 June 1908, Pedley to Tate, 16 June 1908, Tate to Pedley, 1 December 1908, Pedley to unknown, 4 December 1908, Pedley to Tate, 28 December 1908, Tate to Morse, 29 December 1908, Tate to Pedley, 29 December 1908, Tate to Morse, 18 January 1909, Tate to Ryley, 6 November 1908, Ryley to Tate, 22 February 1909, Chamberlin to Tate, 5 August 1909, and Tate to Chamberlin, 17 August 1909 (all in LAC, RG 30, file 426).

[19] Moore to Ryley, 21 November 1908, LAC, RG 30 file 426; Millar to DIA Secretary, 17 August 1910, and Cosgrave to the Ministry of the Interior, 7 September 1910 (both in LAC, RG 10,

The DIA's commitment to the railway was tested, however, when Millar offered – as had the GTP – to "deal with" the BC government. A review of the outstanding applications by chief surveyor Samuel Bray tentatively revived the Tate strategy of acquiring a board certificate to begin construction "without the consent of the Indians," and it rejected Cosgrave's application both on the grounds that the offered price was too high – it would exceed $1 million – and because "no provision [was] made for the posterity of the Indians."[20] Formally, the DIA told Cosgrave and Millar that their claims had been dismissed due to the reversionary interest dispute.[21]

The DIA's concerns about the "posterity of the Indians" reflected not only support for railway development but also for its vision for the Lheidli T'enneh's future. In 1904, Indian Agent Richard Loring wrote optimistically that the band was "prepared to meet … a movement of settlers." By the time this "movement" began to arrive, however, the DIA's agents were less optimistic. The annual reports between 1910 and 1912 worried that "avaricious white men" were supplying liquor and that "civilization has overtaken them too rapidly."[22]

The DIA's appointed negotiator, Methodist minister John McDougall, held a different perspective. McDougall had participated in the Treaty 7 negotiations as well as several Prairie surrenders in 1906 and 1907, at which time he warned Pedley: "the Indians … have learned the value of land and the Department must expect to make altogether new concessions." After two years in British Columbia, he concluded that reserves should be abolished and their inhabitants enfranchised since the reserves trapped promising individuals "far below … [the] most

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vol. 4038, file 325,224-1). Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 49, refers in passing to Cosgrave as "a local entrepreneur." If he was, he likely lived in Central Fort George because it was the centre of most business activity.

20 Stewart to Millar, 19 August 1910, Millar to Secretary, DIA, 22 August 1910, and Bray, Memorandum for Deputy Minister, 16 September 1910 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

21 McLean to Superintendent General, 16 September 1910, and McLean to Cosgrave, 18 November 1910 (both in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

22 DIA, *Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30th 1904* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1905; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=16944&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 218. Compare with later reports: DIA, *Annual Report for the Year Ended June 30th 1910,* 251; DIA, *Annual Report for the Year Ended June 30th 1911* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1911; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=22734&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 261-62; and *Annual Report for the Year Ended 31st March 1912* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1912; Internet: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indianaffairs/001074-119.02-e.php?page_id_nbr=23686&PHPSESSID=kciljsmgm7773tnne9lt6mfkl2), 260, 263.

degenerate of the white people."[23] McDougall eventually persuaded some of the band to surrender the reserve, though the process he initiated proved to be seriously flawed.

McDougall made his first trip to Fort George in July 1910 and found that the reserve's inhabitants were "strongly attached to this Place." Chief Louis explained to McDougall: "[F]or more than 200 years …. we live here, we die here, we bury here, we fish and hunt and trap here, by and by we make gardens here, we like this place. All our people no like to sell this place." Overcoming such resistance, McDougall concluded, would require "Land, Cash, and farm equipment." Before leaving Fort George, however, he offered an ultimatum that could have seemed threatening, given the previous events at Kitsumkalum: "none of their lands could or would be sold without their Consent unless They [sic] absolutely refused a right of way to a Railroad or the Genl. Public." McDougall's report impressed upon Bray that the band was "very averse to making a surrender." Nevertheless, in November, Assistant Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs J.D. McLean ordered McDougall back to Fort George for further negotiations, optimistically supplying a blank surrender form.[24]

McDougall's subsequent negotiations in Fort George can be partially reconstructed from newspaper coverage and his own reports. On 3 December 1910 he offered the band fifty dollars per acre for their reserve, for a total of $68,300, as well as a one thousand-acre expansion of Reserve No. 2. Apparently on his own initiative, McDougall offered an additional $10,000 to cover the cost of relocation and promised that the "Department would if so desired maintain as sacred this old grave-yard." McDougall believed the attendees of the meeting were "divided in opinion," but Louis told him that "they could not in their present mind surrender this reserve." In a second meeting two days later, McDougall, claiming that he believed there was "a full attendance of the legitimate owners," held a vote. Those eligible – men over twenty-one years old – approved the surrender twelve to eleven, with Louis and another influential member, Joseph Quah, opposed. Afterwards, Louis took McDougall aside to request "time … to talk about it with [his] people."[25]

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[23] Wood, "Pressured from all Sides," 121; and Harris, *Making Native Space*, 225.

[24] McDougall to Secretary, 25 July 1910, Bray, Memorandum for Deputy Minister, 16 September 1910, and McLean to McDougall, 14 November 1910 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

[25] McDougall to Secretary, DIA, 20 December 1910, LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1.

Although the majority of the men present had voted in favour of surrender, they did not seem to regard the vote as final. Louis assured McDougall: "after a while we will have made up our minds." Technically, McDougall wrote, he had achieved a "majority for surrender," but he added ambiguously that "some more money and also the arrangement of some more land" would be necessary.[26] The *Herald* and *Tribune* both reported that McDougall would "return before spring with another proposition." Aside from the ambiguous result, another flaw was that there had not been "a full attendance": several days after McDougall left, at least eight men returned from hunting. Roughly one year later, thirty-six men would vote during the final negotiations in November 1911.[27] In his final report, however, McDougall downplayed his earlier ambiguity as he described the terms "to which … 12 out of 23 gave assent." At the DIA, McLean seized upon this new clarity to reassure the GTP that "a majority of those present at the meeting [had] signified their willingness to surrender the lands."[28]

While officials in Ottawa apparently convinced themselves that the matter was largely settled, opposition on the reserve was strengthening. A new vote was held in McDougall's absence, which the *Tribune* reported was "more decisive than the first, the late arrivals voting solidly against the proposition." The pro-railway *Herald* reported that the band was demanding "a figure in excess of that offered them." The *Herald*'s editor did not attend the deliberations but professed shock at rumours of an "incredible" demand, such as $100 per acre. Significantly, he added, the band had appointed an Oblate missionary, E.C. Bellot, as its emissary to Ottawa, instructing him to "say before the Indian department … the price at which they [were] willing to part with their land."[29]

The band's motivations in surrendering the reserve are unknown. Economic and food difficulties were increasing; two years before, Nicolas Coccola, an Oblate priest at Fort St. James, to the north, had lamented the sharp decline in "game and fur animals" resulting from white settlement and over-hunting, and several chiefs had made similar

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[26] Ibid.

[27] "Indians Understand Subdivision Plans," *Vancouver World*, 23 December 1910; *Fort George Herald*, 21 January 1911 and 18 November 1911; and Ramsden to McLean, 4 December 1911, LAC, RG 10, 325,224-1.

[28] McDougall to Secretary, DIA, 9 January 1911, and McLean to Renwick, 23 December 1910 (both in LAC RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1); and McLean to Wainwright, 11 January 1911, LAC, RG 30, file 426.

[29] "Indians Understand Subdivision Plans," *Vancouver World*, 23 December 1910 (reprint of an article in the *Fort George Tribune*); *Fort George Herald*, 21 January 1911.

protests to the Stuart Lake Agency.[30] McDougall's coercive implication that consent would not be required if "they absolutely refused" to surrender may also have played some role. At the same time, appointing a representative and demanding a much higher price may have been seen as an effective means of delaying or even avoiding the surrender.

Bellot travelled to Ottawa at the DIA's expense, arriving in late February for a meeting between himself and the GTP's Wainwright. At the meeting, Bellot initially demanded $1,000 per acre. He evidently was not particularly attached to this figure as he immediately accepted McDougall's original terms with the slight amendment that, in lieu of the expansion of Reserve No. 2, $5,000 would be provided for "machinery and stock." Residents would be given until 31 December 1911 to relocate. The DIA directed the inspector of Indian agencies in Vernon, K.C. MacDonald, to accompany Bellot back to Fort George to arrange the surrender.[31]

Bellot, however, was in no hurry to inform the band of the "agreement" he had reached on its behalf. MacDonald complained on 24 March that Bellot wanted to go to Fort George alone to "get the Indians to-gether." Bellot was overruled, and the two men travelled together, arriving in early April. Frustrated that the majority of men were again hunting, MacDonald introduced the new terms to those present, only to be informed that there could be no discussions without "all the members of the band." In a second meeting on 28 April, once the hunters had returned, twenty-eight men voted unanimously against surrender. Louis and Joseph Quah told MacDonald that "they had set a price of $1,000.00 per acre … and would not consider any less." MacDonald looked to Bellot for assistance, but the priest merely told him that "the Department was aware of the price asked by the Indians."[32]

MacDonald, apparently unaware of Bellot's original instructions, believed that the NRS Company of Central Fort George had used a "banquet" to influence "certain members of the band" to oppose the railway.[33] The *Herald*, too, accused the NRS of being "unscrupulous four-flushers" who had misled "the red men" regarding the value of their reserve. This report is discredited by its further claim that the NRS had "made an offer to the Indians – through Father Bellot … – of $300 an

[30] Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 45.

[31] Bellot to Pedley, 14 January 1911, Pedley to Bellot, 16 January 1911, Pedley to Oliver, 21 February 1911, Memorandum signed by Bellot and Wainwright, 22 February 1911, and Pedley to McDonald, 23 February 1911 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1); and Wainwright to Hays, 22 February 1911, LAC, RG 30, vol. 12704, file 29, cited by Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 172.

[32] MacDonald to Secretary, DIA, 18 April 1911, LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1.

[33] Ibid.

acre."[34] No other record of this offer exists, and it seems unlikely that the NRS could have engaged Bellot while he was simultaneously carrying the band's offer to Ottawa. In addition, the Lheidli T'enneh proposal of $1,000 per acre, whatever its origins, was hardly irrational: the DIA had received (but rejected) a comparably large proposal from Cosgrave, and the GTP netted over $1 million from its sale of lots on the former reserve in 1913.[35] Bellot hastily withdrew from the negotiations; several months later, embroiled in a dispute over exorbitant travel expense claims, he unsympathetically wrote to McLean that he was "sorry the deal failed through [sic], but … wasn't surprised."[36]

MOUNTING COERCION, 1911

Despite Bellot's failure, the DIA held out hope that his superior, Nicolas Coccola, could intervene. Coccola, a Corsican Oblate priest, entered British Columbia in 1880 and worked there until his death in 1943.[37] Lizette Hall, in her history of the Stuart Lake Carrier, calls Coccola a "just and fair minded" priest of "resolute character."[38] At the time, MacDonald believed that Coccola held "more influence … than anyone else" over the Lheidli T'enneh, while GTP solicitor H. Hansard wrote that Coccola "sw[ung] a mighty influence" and "had the absolute confidence of the Indians." In August, McLean wrote to Stuart Lake Indian agent William McAllan, instructing him to "get in touch with the Rev. Father Coccola."[39]

Perhaps unwittingly, the *Herald* admirably captured Coccola's potential conflict of interest in August 1911: "in his capacity as missionary, [Coccola] is negotiating the matter for the railway company, but at the same time is attending to the Indian's [sic] interest."[40] Coccola, feeling that "our Indians … cannot stand civilization," had for some time hoped to relocate the band to a safe haven where its members could be

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[34] *Fort George Herald*, 3 June 1911.

[35] MacDonald, "Bleeding Day and Night," 38.

[36] Scott, Memorandum to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 24 February 1911, Assistant Deputy to Bellot, 24 February 1911, and Bellot to McLean, 10 August 1911 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

[37] Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 3, 25, 90; and Runnalls, *History of Prince George*, 70-71.

[38] Lizette Hall, *The Carrier, My People* (Quesnel: Hall, 1992), 109-10; and Runnalls, *History of Prince George*, 70.

[39] McDonald to Secretary, DIA, 18 April 1911, and McLean to McAllen, 2 August 1911 (both in LAC, RG 10, file 325,224-1); Hansard to Biggar, 18 June 1915, LAC, RG 30, file 426; and HBC Fort George journal, 4-7 September 1907, HBCA B.280/a/9. McAllan's surname is often misspelled "McAllen" in departmental correspondence.

[40] *Fort George Herald*, 26 August 1911.

schooled in agriculture and religion. On 1 September 1911, Coccola told the *Herald*: "[T]he Indians … [are] children to all intents and purposes. It is my duty to protect their interests all the time."[41] Coccola's concern went beyond the interests of the band, however. The priest saw in Fort George an opportunity to "give some prestige to the Catholics in this Protestant country." "Something had to be done for the Whites," he explained, as they were "too busy with temporal affairs." (That the Lheidli T'enneh were already Catholic appears to have been irrelevant.) He also hoped that the railway, once completed, would supply his mission at Stuart Lake.[42]

Despite his proclaimed dedication to the Lheidli T'enneh, Coccola's support, like that of McDougall, was conditional. Early in the summer, he warned the band that if it tolerated "intoxicating liquor and moral disorders," he would be "the first to insist to have them removed." When he visited in late August and found that "drinking was going on," Coccola later claimed, he obtained the agreement of the "chiefs and watchmen" that the band should "go to another reserve."[43] Though Coccola's memoirs paint this meeting as an amiable affair, the *Herald* quoted him as "advis[ing]" the band that, "in the event of their deciding against the sale[,] he would have used his influence to move the tribe" anyway.[44] His earlier threat also bears some resemblance to McDougall's warning that the DIA would not protect the Lheidli T'enneh if they refused to surrender their reserve.

Coccola quickly involved himself, arranging, on 28 August 1911, a surrender to J.G.D. Durnford for $100,000, plus $40,000 to cover relocation to Reserve No. 2. The deal also committed $1,000 to relocate the cemetery. Willis West, in his early history of the BC Express Company, stated that Durnford was acting for Charles Millar of the BC Express Company and one of Millar's financiers, James Carruthers.[45] However, it is not known how and when Durnford was so appointed. According to the *Herald* and the HBC post records, at the time of the negotiations, Durnford had already been living at the post for several weeks, ostensibly investigating mining opportunities.[46] He evidently did

[41] Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 158, 160; Denys Nelson, "The Life and Times of the Rev. Father Coccola OMI" (manuscript written in Vancouver, August 1924, copy held in Prince George Public Library), 84; and *Fort George Herald*, 2 September 1911.

[42] Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 150, 158, 161.

[43] Ibid., 163-64; and Nelson, "Live and Times," 83.

[44] *Fort George Herald*, 2 September 1911.

[45] Willis West, "The 'BX' and the Rush to Fort Gorge," *BC Historical Quarterly* 13 (1949): 126. Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 170, 212, also accepts this claim.

[46] *Fort George Herald*, 2 September 1911; and HBC Fort George post journal, 19 and 30 August 1911, HBCA B.280/a/9.

not divulge his connection to Millar during this time since the editor of the *Herald* believed that Durnford was an agent of the GTP who had been put forward as a "nominal purchaser" in order to avoid setting "a bad precedent." This belief may explain the normally pro-GTP *Herald*'s cautious support for the sale. Later, after the deal failed, the *Herald* quickly reversed its position, claiming that Durnford's "frame-up" had been worked out "in collusion" with an unnamed "slick gentleman in Vancouver" – probably Charles Millar of the BC Express Company.[47]

If the local business community was unaware of Durnford's true allegiances, it seems reasonable to speculate that the Aboriginal community would have been as well. The *Herald* and the HBC post, covering the negotiations more closely than they did either McDougall's previous visit or the subsequent surrender to the GTP, noted that the band now seemed to favour surrender but that "two cliques" had emerged during the negotiations. Chief Louis now favoured immediate surrender, but Joseph Quah still wanted a higher price – although the post suspected he would acquiesce within a few days.[48] This may reflect Louis's resignation in the face of mounting pressure to surrender the reserve as well as disagreement between the two leaders over the benefit of further resistance. However, it may also confirm that Quah had more to lose from the surrender. Louis derived his personal income mainly from trading furs; Quah and his sons, in contrast, owned a disproportionate share of the crops and livestock maintained on the reserve, from which one DIA official believed they were "ma[king] big money."[49]

There were more serious problems, however. Durnford's transaction had not received formal authority from the DIA, though Coccola, possibly spuriously, claimed otherwise.[50] Indian Agent McAllan concluded that Coccola had "acted independently," and he voided the surrender.[51] Years later, Coccola attributed this rejection to cynical political manipulation by the GTP, which "influence[d] the Department to cancel the deal."[52]

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[47] *Fort George Herald*, 26 August 1911 and 28 October 1911.

[48] *Fort George Herald*, 26 August and 2 September 1911; and HBC *Journal of Occurrences*, 28 and 29 August 1911, HBCA B.280/a/9.

[49] Ramsden to McLean, 4 December 1911, LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1; Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, "Meeting with the Fort George Tribe, Reserve No. 3," LAC, RG 10, vol. 11025, file AH12. The Quah family also worked extensively in river freight traffic between Fort George and Quesnel, which had been decimated by steamboats the year before the GTP's interest in the reserve became known (see, for example, HBC Fort George post journal, 20 November 1907, 20 December 1908, and 25-26 July 1909 [all in HBCA B.280/a/9]).

[50] Nelson, "Life and Times," 84.

[51] McLean to Coccola, 2 October 1911, and telegram, McAllen to McLean, 13 September 1911, LAC, RG 10, file 325,224-1.

[52] Nelson, "Life and Times," 84; and Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 164.

The documentary evidence does not support Coccola's claim; rather, the DIA seems to have been genuinely surprised by Durnford's appearance.

Nevertheless, the Durnford deal, despite its swift rejection, proved significant for two reasons. First, its monetary terms – $100,000 for the reserve plus additional funds for building a new village on Reserve No. 2 – are very similar to the eventual surrender negotiated by the GTP. Second, it represents the first and only substantial involvement by Coccola, who had earlier warned the Aboriginals that he would not support them if their young men consumed alcohol and now made good on his ultimatum by promptly negotiating a deal with Durnford. The relocation rather than preservation of the reserve's cemetery probably reflects Coccola's influence and his preference for relocation.

Although Durnford's transaction had fallen through, the GTP's vice-president, Wainwright, shortly thereafter claimed that the railway had been approached by an unnamed third party offering to sell the reserve. Alarmed, he demanded that the DIA expedite the surrender and offered to send a company representative to open new negotiations. At the same time, McAllan warned that the band was unlikely to settle for McDougall's offer after agreeing to a higher price with Durnford, although he thought that "the Indians [might] be in a frame of mind to do legitimate business" once they realized that "no money [was] forthcoming." McAllan, like Coccola, hoped removal from Fort George would isolate the band from "liquor and … general demoralization."[53] Pedley thus authorized the chief inspector of Indian agencies, Joseph George Ramsden, to travel to Fort George with a GTP representative, T.W. McRae. Ramsden would again present the terms reached by McDougall, but McRae was authorized to negotiate amendments to the terms.[54]

Once again, the DIA hoped to enlist Coccola. Tactlessly, McLean sent a letter requesting the priest's assistance on the same date he sent Coccola another letter declaring the first sale – to Durnford – null and void. On this occasion, however, Coccola refused to assist.[55] His 1924 oral history claims, plausibly, that he "was so much displeased at what had been done before, that he said that he would have nothing more to do with it." This recollection is corroborated by a report by McAllan,

[53] Wainwright to Pedley, 23 September 1911, McAllan to McLean, September 1911 (original date obscure), and McAllan to McLean, 14 February 1911 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

[54] DSGIA to Ramsden, 30 September 1911, LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1.

[55] McLean to Coccola, 2 October 1911, LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1.

who met with him personally and "found him unwilling to cooperate in any way to bring about a sale on the proposed terms as he considered them unsatisfactory." Allegedly, Coccola responded by wiring Fort George and telling the Lheidli T'enneh not to agree to a price less than $150,000 and, preferably, "on the same conditions as had been arranged previously."[56] Beyond this action, however, he would play no further part in the final surrender of the reserve.

Instead, without Coccola present, Ramsden and McRae finally reached Fort George and obtained a new surrender vote from the band on 18 November 1911. The revised agreement committed the GTP to pay $100,000 for the reserve and $25,000 to construct new buildings on Reserve No. 2 and Reserve No. 3.[57] One-quarter of the principal sum was to be paid immediately, another one-quarter the following year, and the remainder held in trust by the DIA. The agreement also preserved the burial ground and committed the band to relocate by June 1912. This time, thirty-six men voted; the division was thirty-two in favour and one against, with three abstentions.[58]

Still, the Lheidli T'enneh struggled to hold the government and the railway to the terms of the agreement. The new buildings on Reserve No. 2 should have been constructed prior to relocation and the scheduled second payment in June 1912. However, after the government experienced substantial delays in tendering contracts, the band elected to plant potatoes and hay on Reserve No. 1 while it awaited the construction of the new village. In retaliation, the DIA, over Chief Louis's protests, withheld the June payment.[59] Coccola appears to have been of little assistance to the band; having found members "feasting" on the first proceeds of the surrender, he allegedly required them "to submit to the penance and fines imposed before they were admitted to the Sacraments."[60]

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[56] Nelson, "Life and Times," 84; Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 164-65; McAllan to McLean, 14 September 1911, and McClean to Coccola (two separate letters), 2 October 1911 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

[57] Rogers to Corey, 20 October 1911, Stewart to Ramsden, 28 October 1911, Corey to Rogers, 28 October 1911, Wainwright to Pedley, 30 October 1911, and McLaughlin to Rogers, 2 November 1911 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

[58] Ramsden to Scott, 18 November 1911, and Order by the Governor-General in Council, signed by Rogers, 2 December 1911 (both in LAC, RG 10, file 325,224-1); T.W. McRae, 18 November 1911, LAC, RG 30, file 426; Fort George post journal, 18 November 1911, HBCA, file B.280/a/9; and *Fort George Herald*, 18 November 1911.

[59] ADSGIA to Wainwright, 23 April 1912, Wainwright to McLean, 24 April 1912, McLean to McAllan, 28 April 1912, Assistant Deputy and Secretary to McAllan, 25 June 1912, and Louis to Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, 13 June 1912 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

[60] Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 164-65.

In September, Chief Louis pointed out that the surrender agreement had specified only that the second payment was due in June – not that it was contingent upon relocation. Moreover, the situation was growing urgent: "the winter is approaching & depending on this payment as promised by you … we have not provided to live through it. We can not [sic] see how it is possible for you to build this fall now & we cannot see how you can ask us to wait until the villages are built." To make matters worse, the Fraser River salmon run did not reach Fort George in 1912, and bear hunting had been closed, which left the band "with no recourse of sustenance." This time, the chief's protests reached chief accountant Duncan Campbell Scott, who was more sympathetic: since the band could not move "because [the DIA] had not been able to erect their houses," Scott argued, "the spirit of the surrender" demanded prompt payment of the second installment, which was made on 9 November.[61] The *Herald*, in a rare moment of solidarity against distant government, blamed the delays on "red-taped Ottawa officials."[62]

The new village was finally completed in 1913, and the band relocated in September. Coccola, touring the reserve, worried that "the lumber … [might] be cold in winter," but he was cheered by the size of the new church. He reported that a final coercive measure was then employed: "the old camp was entirely destroyed to force the Indians away."[63] An oddly giddy *Herald* reported on the same act of destruction: "the torch of the white men will be thrust into the remaining houses and the village will disappear quietly in a cloud of smoke."[64]

Other lingering disputes surfaced when the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission, established in 1912 to review and adjust the size of BC reserves, held a hearing on Reserve No. 2 in 1914.[65] On behalf of his people, Chief Louis argued that the DIA had violated the surrender agreement by deducting $4,000 from the $100,000 general payment to cover construction overruns. The chairman was sharply dismissive: "an agreement was made … You don't suppose the Dominion Government wants to cheat the Indians, do you?" Any deficit, he added, must have resulted because: "you spent the money you got foolishly."[66] The construction contracts in question had been arranged by the DIA,

[61] Louis to Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, 9 September 1912, Chief Accountant to Pedley, 2 October 1912, Chief Accountant to Deputy Superintendent General, 7 November 1912, and McLean to McAllan, 9 November 1912 (all in LAC, RG 10, vol. 4038, file 325,224-1).

[62] *Fort George Herald*, 9 November 1912.

[63] Whitehead, *Memoirs*, 168-69; and *Fort George Herald*, 6 September 1913.

[64] *Fort George Herald*, 6 September 1913.

[65] The best history of this commission can be found in Harris, *Making Native Space*, 218, 228-59.

[66] Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, "Meeting with the Fort George Tribe," 22-23.

not the band, although the commissioner's opinion here paralleled Coccola's earlier, similarly paternalistic judgment that the band had been irresponsible in its use of the surrender payments.

The status of the graveyard on the former Reserve No. 1 was also cause for consternation. A mysterious petition had been submitted to McAllan, seemingly from the band, asking that the burial ground be "transferred to the Church" – an unlikely demand, given the band's previous dedication to keeping the site intact. Joseph Quah, in his testimony to the commission, accused Coccola of forging the petition, claiming that "the Priest … was after that piece of land lots of times." Quah claimed that Coccola had appeared on the reserve that spring with a paper, which he falsely claimed was a petition "so that the white men [wouldn't] take the graveyard away."[67] Ultimately, the petition was rejected and the graveyard preserved. Other doubts about Coccola surfaced in 1915 following rumours that, in exchange for his assistance, he had been promised cash and land in Fort George to build a church.[68]

CONCLUSION

In some senses Coccola and sympathetic DIA officials, such as McAllan, accomplished their objective of separating the Lheidli T'enneh from white settlement in the interior of the province. The new permanent settlement on Reserve No. 2 was much farther from the Fort George settlements, and, while railway construction work was available for a time, sources of employment dried up when the completed line reduced the need for rowing cargo upriver.[69] McAllan suggested they could profitably farm the land, though the area was not particularly fertile.[70] As Harris asserts in *Making Native Space*, Aboriginal resistance was often relatively ineffective against "complexes of power … [that] had the capacity to marginalize them quickly."[71] Nevertheless, while their relocation left them geographically and economically marginalized from the growing settlement at Fort George, the band had experienced some

[67] Hansard to Donaldson, 14 June 1913, LAC, RG 30, file 426; and Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, "Meeting with the Fort George Tribe," 7-8, 16-17, 27-28.

[68] Hansard to Biggar, 8 June 1915, Tate to Hansard, 12 June 1915, Rivet to Hansard, 16 June 1915, and Hansard to Biggar, 18 June 1915 (all in LAC, RG 30, file 426).

[69] As one witness complained to the McKenna-McBride Commission regarding Reserve No. 2, "the Indians had formerly worked for the white men for wages, but since the advent of the railroad there had been no work" (see Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, "Meeting with the Fort George Tribe," 4).

[70] Robert N. Diaz, "Reshaping the Land: An Environmental History of Prince George, British Columbia" (MA thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 1996).

[71] Harris, *Making Native Space*, 206.

success in challenging the GTP and DIA through its Catholic missionary representatives. Confronted by the GTP, and responding to mildly coercive statements by Coccola and the DIA's initial representative, Reverend McDougall, the Lheidli T'enneh attempted to strengthen their position through the influence of the Catholic priests Bellot and Coccola. The effectiveness of this strategy was limited: Bellot proved unreliable, and Coccola's assistance – though it may have helped secure a higher price for the reserve – was contingent upon agreement to move, at some price, and did not include protection of the cemetery.

The surrender of Fort George Reserve No. 1 in 1911 was one instance in a general pattern of Aboriginal dispossession in British Columbia, the purpose of which was to make way for national development programs. This was legitimized, in part, by arguments – advanced here by Catholic missionaries as well as DIA officials – that relocation away from white settlements would permit the DIA and missionary groups to isolate and shelter Aboriginal groups. More particularly, the case illustrates the processes and influences present in a particular form of this dispossession, involving land acquisition for railway purposes. This involved several influential white institutions, including the railway, the DIA, and the Roman Catholic Church; however, as revealed here, the outcome was shaped (if only to a limited degree) by the actions the Lheidli T'enneh Aboriginal community took to resist and to engage with these institutions on its own terms.