

# Treatment of Indians

Letter to the Editor (News-Chronicle), Port Arthur, Dec. 19, 1918

Editor News-Chronicle: I wish to draw attention of veterans of the 52nd that their old comrade, Pte. Alex. Chief, is dying from tuberculosis at McDougall's Mill P.O. (C.G.Ry.) Ont. I feel sure that he would appreciate receiving Christmas greeting cards from his old comrades in arms. To the people of the district in general I would say that Alex. Chief – an Indian – was in physique, disposition and general ability one of the finest soldiers in the 52nd battalion. He was one of the first party of district Indians to don the King's uniform, a uniform that he filled with credit from the time he reached France until he was carried off the hospital ship at Halifax covered with wounds and a victim of the great white plague. After being wounded the last time he wrote from an English hospital as follows:

“Well, here I am in the hospital again. This makes four times. I got it in the leg this time but not bad enough to get back to dear old Canada. There are twelve wounds on my body now but he cannot get me yet.”

This is true 52nd spirit and was typical of the Indian soldiers in general. Of the Indians who went across with the original 52nd two were awarded medals, seven were killed in action and every one of the others were wounded. Some many times.

These boys had nothing to fight for. Indians had no vote and could not hold land. Their people, however, have a treaty with the government of Upper Canada made at the Sault in 1850 by which they agreed to give up all their right, title and interest in the lands from Batchawanang Bay to Pigeon River, excepting to a few reserves on which they agreed to live. The government on their part agreed to pay each Indian a small annuity - \$4.00 each – and to allow the Indians the free and full right to hunt and fish over the lands then ceded and the waters thereof. The Indians kept their part of treaty. The Dominion government pas the annuity of \$4.00 per head but the Ontario government does not recognize the Indians hunting and fishing rights. As a result the Indian is at the mercy of provincial constables, game wardens and magistrates, if she shoots a moose, traps a beaver out of season or sells a fish without a license. Some of the officials will not molest the Indians but others do not hesitate to prosecute.

During the past three years aged Indians from this district have been fined and imprisoned for having moose meat in their camps. Among these was an old man whose two sons left with the 52nd, one being killed and the other twice severely wounded.

Surely, Mr. Editor, the Canadian clubs of New Ontario or some other organizations should take up the matter and not allow this treaty with our own Lake Superior Indians to be treated as a scrap of paper.

“FAIRPLAY.”

Note – Since the above was put into type, word has been received of the death of Alex. Chief.

