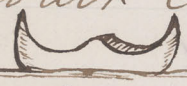


I fear I cannot give any important
value in answer to Mr Howley.
The deer skin on back of bow
doubtless = sinew & frequently used
to increase elasticity. The Chippewa
Canoes of S. Superior & J. Woods are
like the shape shown in letter.
Some one told me the Canoes on
the Restaganche are shaped somewhat
like Howley's drawing. You may know

St John's
Newfoundland
Feb'y - 4th 1881

My Dear Sir

If it be within your province, and your many arduous duties will permit, I would feel greatly obliged could you furnish me with any information connected with the Aboriginal Red Indians or Beothicks of this island. I have been told that a skeleton found on our southern coast, together with its accompanying implements &c, was placed in your hands some years ago for study. I would like to learn the particulars connected with these remains, and obtain a description of the implements &c. There are also several other points upon which you could perhaps enlighten me; appertaining to the manners and customs of this strange tribe. The following are a few of the most important: Unlike their continental neighbors they decapitated their ^{victims,} ~~enemies~~ instead of merely taking the scalp as a trophy. Their canoes, so far as I am aware, were quite different in shape from any other canoes I have ever heard of. In their ^{transverse} longitudinal section they were shaped like the letter V, but somewhat more rounded at bottom, while the stems, and middle of the


of the sides were much higher than is usual in birch bark canoes. They were shaped somewhat thus; . Being ballasted with stones or sand to make them stand upright in the water. Such a vessel as this would appear very ill adapted to the shallow rocky rivers of Newfoundland, and I can hardly conceive how the bottoms could escape being torn to pieces. I have been informed that a strip of deer skin was sewn along the bottom, which might save it to some extent; nevertheless, my own experience of canoeing, in this country, makes me entertain some doubts about this peculiarity in the shape of their canoes, although it has been attested by several very reliable authorities.

A strip of deer skin was also stretched along the convex side of their bows, for what purpose does not appear very clear. —

Their wigwams, or Mametecks, were as usual circular, and covered either with birch bark or skins; but it appears they also sometimes created square, oblong, and even octagonal shaped dwellings, while their store & smoke houses were always oblong. Inside the circular wigwams they raised a wall of stones, clay & sods, some three or four feet ^{high}, which walls, are all that now remain to mark the sight of their encampments. They slept in the hollows thus formed, probably in a sitting posture, while the

A fire was made upon the ground in the centre, which was not disturbed in excavating the circular trench.

The Boethick language, so far as we can judge from the few words preserved was unlike any of the continental dialects. I have compared it with the Micmac, and cannot find the slightest resemblance between them; except in the termination *jeesh*, *Micmac*, & *jeesh*, *Boethick*, meaning little; as *Sibbojeesh* a little Brook, *Shoewanyjeesh* a little Cup.

Though generally supposed not to have had any religious belief, I have lately ascertained they possessed a mythology peculiar to themselves. Some of their mythological emblems, as represented in a drawing by one of themselves are quite unintelligible, but two of these figures are plain enough. One represents a half moon, *Kuis*. The other is the figure of a Whales tail  which animal is said to have been considered the greatest prize by the hunter, because it furnished them such an abundance of food, oil &c.

There are many minor characteristics of this peculiar tribe, which I shall not weary you with now. My object in writing you being principally to ascertain whether, any of the supposed peculiarities I have mentioned are really such, and whether, you know of any similar, amongst other tribes on the main land. I have ^{since} heard, the Chippewa canoe

has the stems considerably turned up, but is quite round on the bottom. I should like to see a drawing of one?

I am aware that the Beothicks ^{were} ~~are~~ a branch of the great Algonkin family, & I notice in your ^{Supplement to the 2nd edition} ~~third~~ edition, of the Acadian geology, a reference to a tradition of the Micmaes, relative to the occupation of Nova Scotia by a tribe allied to our Red Indians; whom the Micmaes drove out, or exterminated. I think this tradition a very probable one, and that the Red Indians then sought retirement here in Newfoundland, which they must have enjoyed for a long time. Finally, however, their old relentless enemy found them out, & aided by the whitemen within our own time, have now certainly exterminated them.

I intend, if I can procure sufficient data, to work up, to write a short history of the Beothicks, and will certainly give you full credit for any information you may be able to furnish me with.

But I fear as a perfect stranger, I am trespassing too much upon your valuable time. If however, you could direct me to any one else who may do me the favour; or to any works upon such a subject, which would be likely to afford me the information I am seeking; I should deem it a great favour.

Believe me

J. W. Dawson M.A. LL.D. F.R.S. &c Yours very truly
Principal of McGill University
Montreal

James P. Howley
Asst. Geologist
St. Johns N.B.