

your own meaning. What I did say was that when we settle on the ground to work the land, that is when we will need help and that is the only way a poor Indian can get along.”⁷

The speech that McKay had made was not interpreted into English but Morris could see that it had made a bad impression on the people by the angry stir that prevailed. I interpreted all Indian replies and said, “Let McKay, the Honourable James, explain his own speech.” However, I noticed the Governor did not take the trouble to inquire into the contents of McKay’s speech that had so roused the Indians.⁸

“You will remember the promise that I have already made,” he said instead. “You will get the seed and you need not concern yourselves about what your children will eat. They will be taught and be able to look after themselves.”

Big Child spoke, “It is well known that if we have plenty in our gardens and crops we would not insist on getting more provisions, but it is only in the case of extremity and from the ignorance of Indians in commencing to work the land that we speak. We are in the dark. This is no trivial matter with us.”⁹

“The things we have talked over in our Council, we think are for our good,” said Star Blanket. “I believe that the good councillors of the Queen Mother and her commissioners know what is best for them. I was told that the Governor was a good man and now that I have seen him and listened to him talk, I know I heard right. He has removed some of the obstacles to our understanding and I hope he will remove them all.”¹⁰

Star Blanket paused in his discourse as Big Child rose to his feet and demanded silence from the back where the Chipewyan was again causing a disturbance.

Star Blanket continued, “We want food in the spring, when we begin to farm; according as the Indian settles on the land and as he advances, his needs will increase. I would now ask the Governor to give us time to consider all the things that he has told us today.”

This was granted, with a warning from the Commissioner that he could not spend too much time with them as he had other tribes to treat with that would be waiting for him. He further stated that he had heard that the buffalo were near and they would want to be on their way to get their winter provisions. “Food, my friends, is getting scarce in camp.”

The Governor now turned to the Chipewyan who had been making a disturbance in the crowd. “You are only one of those people you claim to represent. You are no wiser than your tribe who have already accepted treaty terms with the Government. If you have anything to say, I will speak to your people after I have finished with the Crees.”