

The chiefs were in agreement that it was better to bring about an understanding among their own people before meeting with the Commissioner.

Whether the treaty was actually misunderstood or deliberately misconstrued I know not, but the meeting was hardly underway when Big Child motioned me to disprove any wrong statement by those opposed to the agreement.

There were immediate objections to my taking part in the council but Star Blanket got up and spoke most emphatically. "Mista-wa-sis and I fetched this man here at a great deal of trouble to ourselves because we were told that Peter Erasmus was learned in the language the Governor speaks. You all heard and saw the other men fail to interpret what he tried to say. He, Peter Erasmus, is the people's hired man. He is here to open our eyes and ears to the words that you and I cannot understand. Mista-wa-sis and I have asked him here to keep us right on what was offered in the treaty terms."

Ah-tuk-a-kup's words had the immediate effect of silencing any further attempts to confuse treaty terms. There was then no further need to dispute any statement intended to be misleading by those opposed or trying for better promises under the agreements.

The talks went on all day, only adjourned for a short noon-hour meal. Indian eloquence had full play that day. Many of the council men spoke in addition to the chiefs. There was a Chipewyan Indian present² who argued considerable time away and was supported by Poundmaker and The Badger until a council man rose and objected to his interference.

"This man is not a chief and has no authority to speak for his band. Why should he be allowed to interrupt the council and waste so much of our time?"

There was loud assent from many voices and that silenced the voluble Chipewyan, whom I judged to be the main troublemaker.

Poundmaker and The Badger led the faction who were strong in their objections and refused to grant the possibility of existing by agricultural pursuits. These men had most of their support from those with less than thirty lodges to their count. Late that afternoon, I thought there was little hope of reaching an agreement. I was getting tired and about to ask permission to retire when I saw Ah-tuk-a-kup nod to Big Child.

Mista-wa-sis rose to his feet. All afternoon he had sat without taking part in the speeches. All those who were taking part in the previous arguments sat down. There was silence as the man stood and waited for every person to be seated.

"I have heard my brothers speak, complaining of the