

Treaty 4 Story



The Original Fort as a Museum today

On September 8th, 1874 near Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan the First Nations groups of the Cree and Saulteaux set up camp. They came to talk with the Canadian government to make Treaty 4. The main leader of the First Nations was Chief Kakiishiwah of the Cree. He wanted all the First Nations people to work together to make a treaty. He wanted them to get a fair deal with the government. Alexander Morris spoke for the government. He came to the Fort with 105 soldiers, two helpers, and an interpreter named Charles Pratt.



Alexander Morris



Chief Thunderchild

On the first day the First Nations talked together planning what they wanted to say. They told Alexander Morris that they were not ready to meet. They were unhappy that Morris was not camping with them.



A Cree Camp

On the second day, the Saulteaux told Morris that they were not happy. They felt that Morris should camp with them in order to talk about a treaty in a good way. The First Nations again said they needed more time to talk and plan before making the treaty.

On the third day, the Saulteaux asked Morris to move his camp to the First Nations camp. Morris said no. The First Nations groups kept talking together to plan how to talk with Morris. Later in the day, Alexander Morris came to their camp and spoke to the First Nations. Charles Pratt helped the First Nations people understand what Morris said. He then helped Morris understand what the First Nations said. Morris said the government would be generous in the treaty. He said the government would give land reserves, farming equipment and farming lessons, schools for children, and payment of money every year. Morris promised the Chiefs that the treaty would last “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and water flows.” That means forever. At the end of his talk Morris said that he could not stay long and that this offer would not last if the First Nations did not sign the treaty soon.



Artist's Imagining of the Scene

On the fourth day the Sauteaux again asked Morris to move the government camp to the First Nations Camp, which he finally did. Then they began to talk, but it was not about the treaty it was about the Fort and the Hudson Bay Company. They said the Fort was built on Sauteaux land and so it couldn't just be sold to the government of Canada. The Hudson Bay Company had no right to sell land it did not own. The Sauteaux and Cree were not happy that the Hudson Bay Company still stayed on their land. The First Nations were unhappy because they had had poor dealings with the Hudson Bay Company for a long time. Alexander Morris told the Chiefs that he did not have the power to deal with the company. All he could do was talk with them to make a treaty.

On the fifth day there was a lot of talking and arguing. Things did not look very good. Then Chief Kakiishiwah stood up and asked all the chiefs to keep talking together. The other chiefs agreed to stay another day. But again Morris said that time was running out. He was trying to put pressure on them to sign the treaty.



Day six

On the sixth day Chief Kakiishway asked all the chiefs to keep working together. He said that signing the treaty would be good for them forever. Then they talked some more. At the end of the day 13 chiefs signed Treaty 4 on September 15th, 1874.

What did this mean?

Treaty 4 Elders say that their ancestors agreed to share the land ‘to the depth of the plow’. They also agreed that non-First Nations people (settlers) would be allowed to settle on land that had been the traditional territory of the Salteaux, Cree and Assiniboine people. In exchange, land would be set aside for First Nations people (this land was called reserves). New tools would be given to help with farming. Help would be given for the education of First Nations children. Money would be paid each year to every Cree and Saulteaux member and chiefs would receive flags, medals, and new suits.



Treaty Medal