

MRS. REEVES: "Morning students! Today Mr. LaRaviere is here for History class. He'll answer questions about this land we're settling. A few years ago, in 1879, Mr. LaRaviere chose this as a town site. He invited farmers from Ontario to live in and around Wakopa.

Mr LaRaviere....."

MR. LARIVIERE: "Thank you Mrs. Reeves. It's a pleasure and thank-you for being our very first teacher - in this wonderful school we just built. Okay, let's start. I hear Mrs Reeves asked you to write down your questions. Yes, Billy."

BILLY: "Mr. LaRaviere, I'm finding arrow heads. Who left them here?"

MR. LARIVIERE: "When I was a young lad I worked for a fur trader across the border. I got to learn some Dakota and some Nakota. These are related languages. Like English and German are related. The Nakota and Dakota have hunted and lived in this area for hundreds of years. They speak of there being mound builder people here even before them. As I understand, a few hundred years ago the Dakota and Nakota had a disagreement. The Nakota (also called the Assiniboine) moved north and formed an alliance with the Cree Nation and settled in to live and hunt buffalo right here. Therefore, the arrowheads."

"Yes, Dora."

DORA: "Mr LaRaviere, some of us are scared living here. There's no police - or army. Are the Assiniboine friendly?"

MR. LARIVIERE: "All Indigenous people I've met are generous and friendly. What makes them unfriendly is when governments make treaties, don't keep their promises and take all the land for themselves. So, yes, we hear scary stories from the States because that's what's happened over there. Hopefully Canada will do better. Over the past two hundred years the Assiniboine were very friendly with explorers and fur traders. They enjoyed the benefits they got from trading. They're a proud people.

They're also skilled negotiators and expect people to be honest. So, it's important, if we want peace, to be respectful and honest in return."

"Esther?"

ESTHER: "I'm wondering, Mr. LaRaviere, why we don't see more Nakota people here – if this is their home?"

MR. LARIVIERE: "Because they were friendly with newcomers, they were vulnerable to diseases explorers brought. 100 years ago, smallpox killed more than half of their people – and then forty years later measles and whooping cough killed half again. These are diseases Europeans are immune to but were new to this land. The other thing was that the buffalo were in serious decline due, to reckless hunting in both USA and Canada – and so the economy the Nakota depended on was disappearing. Most of the Nakota moved further west to rebuild their communities. I hear they signed treaties with Canada over there."

"Thank you, children. Please, when you have questions, come find me. Mrs. Reeves. I better go. Nights are getting colder. We're going to the mountain today to get firewood for the school."

The Nakota/Assiniboine was inspired by a story in Vantage Points 2.



A Nakota camp on the prairie (Archives of Manitoba)