

# A Deal's a Deal

## A VANTAGE POINTS FLASHBACK

November, 1887

Dear Mother, Father. It seems to always be raining in Montreal, unlike back home.

Well, I'm no longer the country hick I was last year. Before moving here, I had hardly seen Brandon. Now, here I am at McGill. Second year. Eyebrow deep in books. I do attend 'whooperups' occasionally but please know, Mother, my friends think I'm a library rat.

Father, I'm no longer upset you sent me here. Although I miss the farm, my brothers will be the better farmers.

I'm writing about my worries, and to explain my line of research – looking into Treaties made with First Nations. Sound dull? Hardly. My professor is encouraging me.

Do you know how the Treaties of the 1870s came about? I didn't learn this in school. I learned here that our farm is under Treaty # 2. The border between Treaties 1 and 2 runs from Wakopa, just east of Ninga up to Brandon. Might help if there were trail markers, eh?



**Treaty 2 to the west.**

Early explorers I see, reported that most of southern Manitoba was Nakota or Assiniboine land. Unbeknownst to the Assiniboine though,

the British decided they owned the land and put Hudson's Bay Company in charge - who recently sold it to Canada. Thinking legally, this seems indefensible and doesn't square well with our Sunday school teachings. If I declare the neighbour's horse as mine, can I gift it to you, or sell it to my brother?

It's said that "Indigenous Nations lost the war, so Canada can do as it pleases". Actually, neither Canada nor Britain wanted wars. To avoid them, they negotiated Treaties. I'm learning how First Nations' chiefs negotiated skillfully for rights to education, medicines and agriculture. They knew big changes were afoot but didn't consider themselves defeated.

The Nakota moved west due to smallpox - so didn't sign Treaty 2. The Metis – who took over as regional commanders – didn't sign either. It was signed by Anishinaabe, or Ojibwe.

Do you see why I'm worried? Did Canada, on our behalf, invite leaders they knew to be friendly?

I expect Indigenous Nations will demand a reckoning. I see history being corrected, eventually told from the Indigenous point of view. My professor says Canada feels justified in shrugging off obligations under the treaties. Their focus is on settling folks who will grow wheat for export.

I saw him cringe as he spoke. At our human core we know what's right.

Please, dear family, be assured I'll remain civil enough to graduate. Who will hire me then? Hard to say.

Thank you for bringing us up to be honest and hard working. You're my anchor through this. I trust the firewood is stacked and the ice well is full. I pray daily for your health and safety.

David Neufeld adapted 'A Deal's a Deal' from a story written for Vantage Points 3.