them. He was betrayed by Miles. I am not sure but that he was betrayed by Crook, though some think not. But I know that he was lied to by Miles. That man did not do what he promised. Geronimo was a really great fighting man, and Miles was a coward. Everything he needed for his troops was provided for him and them, but Geronimo had to obtain food for his men, and for their women and children. When they were hungry, Geronimo got food. When they were cold he provided blankets and clothing. When they were afoot, he stole horses. When they had no bullets, he got ammunition. He was a good man. I think that you have desperados among you White Eyes today that are much worse men and are more cruel than Geronimo.

ESSAYS

Raymond J. DeMallie, a professor of anthropology at Indiana University at Bloomington, and the director of that university’s Institute for Indian Studies, is a leading ethnologist of Plains Indian life. In the first essay, he demonstrates that one potential source for Indian perspectives and values is the deliberations over treaties. Even with the forced nature of the discussions and the inevitable problems over interpretation, native representatives often negotiated eloquently and fiercely for their people. Robert M. Utley, a retired historian for the National Park Service and the author of the second selection, is the most eminent scholar of the U.S. Army’s actions in Indian country during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This excerpt from his widely praised overview of the Indian frontier provides several examples of the dramatic conflicts of the time. Again, it is important to consider what choices were available to different Indian individuals and groups; how leadership is defined; and what resulted from a generation of warfare.

Touching the Pen: Plains Indian Treaty Councils in Ethnographic Perspective

RAYMOND J. DEMALLIE

When Europeans met American Indians in the New World, the clash of human populations resulted in epidemics of disease; social, economic, and political pressures; religious conflict; and sometimes war. All such intercultural conflict takes place in two very different contexts, that of each of the cultures involved. Each culture constitutes a separate and distinctive idea system symbolizing the world, everything in it, and the relationship of all the parts. Culture as a symbol system provides the framework in which human behavior is motivated, perceived, and understood. Abstractly, the clash of two peoples may be viewed as the clash of two idea systems.

But culture contact is not abstract; it is in reality acted out through individual human beings. The historical record documents their behavior and motives and
draws out of the accumulation of many individuals’ actions a general understanding of larger events. It is rarely possible to separate human behavior from the motivating ideas of the cultures in which the behavior occurs. The clash of ideas cannot be observed as easily or in the same manner as conflict between individuals. However, an understanding of the fundamental conflicting ideas is essential to illuminate historians’ accounts of the past by placing individual action within the ideological context out of which it arose.

The large body of transcripts of formal council proceedings between representatives of the United States government and representatives of American Indian tribes provides a unique opportunity to observe the clash of idea systems. Reduced to rhetoric, physical weapons laid aside, the opponents faced each other as representatives of their own societies and cultures and attempted to win tactical battles by the manipulation of concepts. Both white Americans and Indians alike attempted to use all of their intellectual skills, as well as the oratorical and persuasive devices of their cultures, to sway the council in their own interest. The verbatim records of the proceedings are therefore primary sources for analyzing cultural concepts self-consciously utilized to gain diplomatic advantage. They are primary documents for the ethnologist, whose research combines historical methodology with the comparative and theoretical insights of anthropology.

One objection to the use of this material for historical or anthropological study is that it was inadequately or falsely interpreted from the original Indian languages. However, this is a futile objection. The interpreters were almost always named in the documents; most were mixed-bloods or non-Indian men married into an Indian tribe. They were the only interpreters the Indians had and their translations are as accurate as any ever obtained at that time. Significantly, after reading through a good number of the transcripts it is possible to pick out Indian idioms that are difficult to translate and that were therefore expressed in various ways in English, as well as standard words and phrases that were consistently translated in the same way but whose English glosses obviously did not accurately express the original idea in the Indian language. In many of these cases it is possible to postulate with a fair degree of certainty what the actual words were in the Indian original. Such difficulties in translation do not make the task of reconstructing ideological systems impossible; in fact, they make it easier, for it is in these areas where translation was difficult that differences in ideological systems are most clearly pointed out.

Solemn councils between representatives of both sides were the only acceptable means recognized by both Indians and whites for establishing formal relations between two peoples. For the Indians the council was the traditional way of making peace or negotiating with another people. For the white Americans it had been the custom, since the days of Jamestown, to counsel with the Indians. Under United States law, written treaties, signed by representatives of both sides, were the only legal means for dealing with Indian tribes, and councils evolved as the forum where treaties were presented to Indians and they were persuaded to sign them.

But if the council as a diplomatic forum was commonly understood by both whites and Indians, the concept of the treaty was not. For plains Indians, the council was an end in itself. What was important was the coming together in peace,
smoking the pipe in common to pledge the truthfulness of all statements made, and the exchange of opinions. Plains Indian political systems did not use voting as the mechanism for settling issues; consensus politics was the rule. Issues had to be discussed from all points of view until a clear consensus was reached. Until that occurred, no decision was made, and once it was reached, no vote was necessary. Thus, from the Indians’ point of view, the council was the agreement.

For white Americans, the council with its associated feasts and gift giving was only a preliminary to the real agreement, which was embodied in written form. The success of the council depended not on what was said, but on whether or not the necessary leaders, or later, the requisite percentage of the male population, could be induced to sign the document.

“Touching the pen,” the action of the Indian in touching the end of the pen while the scribe marked an X after his name, was frequently objected to by Indian leaders. They did not understand the process, were suspicious of it, and felt it unnecessary. Whites, on the other hand, considered it to be essential. For individual Indian leaders, touching the pen apparently signified that they were validating all they had said at a council; in many cases the record of the treaty proceedings makes it clear that the Indian leaders did not realize their signatures committed them to only those statements written in the treaty. Sometimes, it is equally clear, treaty commissioners played on this to trick Indians into signing documents containing provisions to which they had not agreed.

The predominant historical view of treaty making is that Indians were taken advantage of by whites, who usually presented them with documents prepared in advance which they were persuaded, bribed, or threatened into signing. There is a great deal of truth to this view, but it ignores an important aspect. American Indian leaders were not mere pawns of the U.S. government. They did use political strategies to combat whites on their own ground and sometimes they were able to gain important concessions. They were at other times unsuccessful, and frequently their techniques were too subtle even to be understood by the commissioners. But analysis of some of these means provides important insights into plains Indian diplomacy and opens new dimensions for understanding the fundamental conflicts between Indians and whites on the western frontier.

This paper draws upon examples of treaty making among the Sioux, Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes from 1851 to 1892. First the 1851 Fort Laramie treaty council is examined as representative of plains treaty councils and as illustrating the symbolic perspective in ethnohistory. Then various examples of Indian diplomacy are presented to illustrate the range of strategies that can be abstracted from the verbatim proceedings and to demonstrate the value of this approach.

The 1851 Treaty Council

The 1851 treaty council held near Fort Laramie may be taken as a model of plains treaty councils. It was on a larger scale than most since an estimated ten thousand Indians were present representing ten bands of Sioux as well as Cheyennes, Assiniboins, Shoshones, Arikaras, Gros Ventres (Hidatsas), Mandans, Arapahoes, and Crows. The encampment lasted nearly three weeks, from September 1 to September 21. During this period the commissioners met the Indians in council only about eight days. The rest of the time was occupied with the Indians counseling among themselves while the commissioners drew up a map of tribal territories, in Sunday recesses, and in waiting for the wagon train that was bringing the presents to be distributed after the treaty was signed.

Three general features of the council suggest a minimal model for plains treaty councils. The first is the ritual aspects, as practiced by both Indians and whites; the second is the recitation of both sides’ demands and requests; and the third is the distribution of presents.

Ritual Aspects. The ritual aspects of this council are fairly well recorded and are extremely significant for reconstructing the event in its fullest context. The Sioux and Cheyennes made the first gesture by erecting a large council lodge composed of several tipsis to form a kind of amphitheater. This was the usual form for the council lodge when various bands came together and so was the culturally prescribed stage for serious deliberations. The U.S. commissioners took the next step by erecting a large tripod on which to hoist the American flag.

Preparations for the council were completed on a Saturday, but the commissioners announced that since the next day was “the white man’s Medicine Day,” no business could be transacted. The council began on Monday. Only headmen were allowed to enter the council lodge, and the order of their seating, by tribe, was arbitrarily decided by the commissioners. The council was called to order each day by the firing of the cannon and raising of the flag. The council began and ended with the smoking of the pipe by all the Indians and the commissioners. Colonel D. D. Mitchell, the chief commissioner, made an opening speech to set the moral tone of the meetings:

I am sent here to transact business with you. Before commencing that I propose to smoke all around with you. The ceremony of smoking I regard as an important and solemn one, and I believe you all so regard it. When white men meet to transact important business, and they desire to test their truth and sincerity, they lay their hands on the Bible, the Book of the Great Spirit—their Great Medicine—and take an oath. When the red man intends to tell the truth, and faithfully fulfill his promises, he takes an oath by smoking to the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit sees it all and knows it. Now I do not wish any Indian to smoke with me that has any deceit or lies in his heart—or has two hearts—or whose ears are not bored to hear what his Great Father at Washington has to propose, and perform whatever is agreed upon. All such will let the pipe pass. I don’t want them to touch it.

At least three important points about this speech should be noted. First, the commissioner attempted to speak to the Indians in terms they would understand. The reporter who covered the council remarked on this aspect as follows: “His [Mitchell’s] expressions were short, in simple language, such as they could readily understand, in many cases adopting various forms, and employing their own hyperbolical mode of thought. Between sentences he paused to see that the interpreters understood him correctly, and to allow time for them to communicate it to their respective tribes.” Second, the commissioner made it clear that he considered the Indian form of oath by smoking the pipe to be a legitimate one, comparable to the white man’s swearing on the Bible. Third, the use of the term Great
Father at Washington must be considered to have been at least ambivalent. To some Indians it may have seemed a white man's claim that the Great Spirit lived in Washington, a boast that the whites enjoyed a closer relationship to God than did the Indians.

The smoking of the pipe by the commissioners was a self-conscious bow to Indian custom. In return the commissioners demanded at the end of the council that the Indians defer to the white man's custom of touching the pen to the treaty paper. Since they had already sworn themselves to truth, signing the treaty was redundant for the Indians, but they clearly understood it as an important ritual for the white men.

The other impressive bit of ceremony on the part of the whites was the celebration on the second Sunday of a Roman Catholic mass. In a large tipi in the half-breed camp, Father P. J. De Smet said mass and preached to the assembly in French. The pomp and ceremony of the event was as impressive to the St Louis newspaper reporter who accompanied the treaty commission as it was to the Indians. Of De Smet the newspaper man wrote: “The Indians regard him as a Great Medicine man, and always regard him with marked respect and kindness.”

Throughout the council the Indians reciprocated rituals by holding dog feasts, warrior society dances, and displays of horsemanship.

Demands and Requests. The second aspect of the council, the exchange of demands and requests, was done in the usual formal manner. On the first day Colonel Mitchell delivered a speech outlining the commission's intentions in visiting the Indians and enumerating the points of the proposed treaty. On ensuing days the Indian chiefs were allowed to give their responses. These were spontaneous speeches, but were developed out of council meetings in the various tribal camps, and were essentially tribal or band position statements. Toward the end of the meeting the commissioners read the treaty, article by article, and the Indians were asked to sign. The only contribution that the Indians had been allowed to make to the actual content of the document was in terms of tribal boundaries. At this treaty council there was no real negotiation, in part because the Indians were not being asked to give up any land.

The Arapaho and Sioux responses to the 1851 treaty council are representative of two distinct strategies used by plains tribes to attempt to win favor and gain concessions from the United States. The Arapaho attitude may be characterized as conciliatory and the Sioux attitude as defiant. It must be clearly understood that these are descriptive of diplomatic strategies, not of individual emotions.

The Arapaho chiefs decided to go along with the whites in their various demands. They expressed particular gratitude that there would be an end to all warfare. Addressing Mitchell, Cut Nose, an Arapaho chief, stated: “You, Grandfather, are doing well for your children in coming so far and taking so much trouble about them. I think you will do us all much good; I will go home satisfied. I will sleep sound, and not have to watch my horses in the night, or be afraid for my squaws and children.”

The oldest of the Arapaho chiefs, Authon-ish-ah, in a speech addressed to the Arapahoes themselves, seemed to take the tack that the chiefs alone could no longer take full care of the people, and that they would have to rely on the whites. He said: “Fathers and children, we give you all up to our white brethren, and now we shall have peace, the pleasantest thing in the world. The whites are friends to us, and they will be good to us if we don't lie to them. . . The whites want to be good to us; let us not be fools, and refuse what they ask.”

The Arapahoes agreed to appoint Little Owl as head chief of the tribe, and through him to transact all business with the whites. Cut Nose addressed Mitchell as follows: “We have chosen our chief as you requested us to do, Father. Whatever he does, we will support him in it, and we expect, Father, that the whites will support him.” The Arapahoes clearly pointed out the reciprocal nature of the agreement as they understood it. Cut Nose requested that the whites pick out a country for themselves to live in, and not trespass into Arapaho hunting grounds. He also suggested that the whites “should give us game for what they drive off.”

The Arapaho position, then, established rigid reciprocity between whites and Indians, the Arapahoes symbolically acknowledging the white men’s power and binding them through the treaty to support the Indians. From the Arapaho viewpoint, the treaty worked to their advantage.

The Sioux attitude was very different. From the beginning they refused to cooperate in the matter of choosing a head chief. Blue Earth, the old布鲁 chief, told Mitchell: “We have decided differently from you, Father, about this chief for the Nation. We want a chief for each band, and if you will make one or two chiefs for each band, it will be much better for you and the whites. Then we will make soldiers of our young men, and we will make them good men to the whites and other Indians. But Father, we can't make one chief.”

However, Mitchell was unyielding. He demanded that the Sioux bands all come together and unite as a single nation. Regarding bands he said, “Your Great Father will not recognize any such divisions.” In the end Mitchell had to select representatives from each of the ten bands to be chiefs, and then select one of them to be head chief. His candidate, Frightening Bear, was then duly elected to the office by all of the band chiefs. The new head chief was not eager for the position. He said, “Father, I am a young man and have no experience. I do not desire to be chief of the Dacottahs. . . . If you, Father, and our Great Father, require that I shall be chief, I will take this office.” It is very clear that the whites had imposed a new political office on Sioux society, one unlike any they had ever had before. Since it potentially entailed great power, Frightening Bear publicly spoke of his worry that he would be assassinated out of jealousy. Certainly the Sioux did not accept the idea of having a head chief.

The Sioux also objected strenuously to drawing boundaries around tribal territories. Blue Earth said, “We claim half of all the country; but we don’t care for that, for we can hunt anywhere.” Black Hawk, an Oglala, told the council:

You have split the country and I don’t like it. What we live upon we hunt for, and we hunt from the Platte to the Arkansas, and from here up to the Red Buttle and the Sweet Water. . . . These lands once belonged to the Kiowas and Crows, but we [the Oglalas, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes] whipped these nations out of them, and in this we do what the white men do when they want the lands of the Indians.”
Mitchell explained that the boundaries were not intended to limit the tribes in any way, so long as they remained at peace. Nonetheless, the Sioux never accepted the boundaries.

The Sioux presented the council with a number of demands of their own. Big Yankton asked for horses, cattle, and fowl to make reparation for damages done to the Indians. A chief of the Blackfoot Sioux asked for a hundred wagonloads of goods each year, and asked that they be sent more buffalo as well. The latter request may have represented a challenge to the white men’s claim to have been sent to the Sioux by the “Great Father.”

Painted Bear, a Yankton Sioux, may well have summarized the dominant Sioux attitude of the time in the following words: “Father, this is the third time I have met the whites. We don’t understand their manners, nor their words. We know it is all very good, and for our own good, but we don’t understand it all. We suppose the half breeds understand it, and we leave them to speak for us.”

Many of the Sioux did not want to have any dealings with the United States. Their chiefs continually expressed their inability to understand the whites as well as their reliance on the mixed-bloods for advice. Unlike the Arapahoes, they refused to put trust in the whites and continued to pressure them for specific demands and concessions.

Distribution of Presents. The third aspect of the council was the distribution of presents. Token presents were given in advance to the headmen of each tribe to redistribute to their followers. This served to validate their status in the tribe by giving tangible proof of the esteem in which they were held by the whites. At the end of the council, after the treaty was signed, the wagon train came up and the bulk of the presents were distributed. This was the most significant part of the council for most of the Indians present. The event is memorialized in Sioux winter counts as “The winter of the big distribution.” The whites at the council correctly understood the importance of the gift-giving aspects of the event. The reporter wrote: “It is a standing rule with all Indians, that whenever they meet, especially upon occasions of this character, they must have presents of some kind or other. Without these no man living—not even the President of the United States—would have any influence with them, nor could he get them into council, or keep them together a day.”

Plains Indian Diplomacy

This general model of treaty making—ritual, counseling, and gift giving—holds from the earliest Plains treaties councils with the Lewis and Clark expedition down through the various commissions that negotiated with the tribes beginning in the 1880s for the breakup of reservations by agreeing to the allotment of lands in severality and the sale of “surplus” land for white settlement. The elaborateness of gift giving and ritual decreased, on the whole, through time, and the extent of negotiation somewhat increased, but the treaty council remained a relatively stable institution throughout the period.

Perhaps the single most frustrating aspect of the entire history of treaty mak-

ing was the inability of the two sides to communicate with one another meaning-

fully. Both whites and Indians used the councils to deliver speeches composed in advance. Specific objections or questions by Indians were rarely answered when they were raised, but were answered a day or more later in the course of lengthy speeches. Many questions went unanswered, and many objections were simply ignored. Treaty commissioners frequently excused this practice by saying that the Indians’ speeches were being recorded to be taken back to Washington. The commis-

sioners told the Sioux in 1865, “We will take back all your words, and the Great Father will read all you have said.” But in reality neither the Great Father nor anyone else ever read them. Most remain unpublished or generally unavailable.

Examination of these documents solely from the perspective of reconstructing chronological history is quite disappointing. Usable historical data often seem to be altogether lacking in the speeches, replaced instead by rhetorical devices. Rarely do the speeches, white or Indian, rely on logic. These are not intellectual debates about matters that can easily be discussed. They are the records of more dramatic conflict between mutually exclusive ways of life.

Study of Indian diplomatic techniques provides a wealth of data on tribal cultures. Some trends may be seen over time that are suggestive of deeper changes in Indian cultures. Such trends involve the expressed attitude toward land. At the 1851 treaty council there seems to have been, from the white man’s point of view, a rather practical attitude put forward by the Indians. They were capable and eager to discuss boundary issues. In the quote from Black Hawk given earlier, the idea of landownership by right of conquest is clearly articulated.

Later, when the whites returned to ask the Sioux for more land for roads, they refused. At an 1865 council Lame Deer, a Miniconjou chief, stripped off his clothes and said to the commissioners: “I stand here naked and this is my condition. Why will you trouble me for my land, my brothers? You told me you would not ask me for anything.” Other leaders tried other strategies. Some claimed the land because they were born on it, because the bones of their forefathers lay in it, or because it had been given to them by God. One that killed the White Buffalo Cow, a Lower Brulé chief, told the commissioners in 1865: “Who does all this country here belong to? It is ours. It belonged to our fathers and our fathers’ fathers.” Yet at the same time, Iron Nation, another Lower Brulé chief, said of his people, “The older ones came from Minnesota. There we were born.”

The council proceedings suggest that Indians thought about land according to its utility: it was not measured or conceived of in the white man’s way. When the 1865 commission asked Lone Horn, the Miniconjou chief, if he would like to live on the Missouri River, he answered simply, “When the buffalo comes close to the river, we come close to it. When the buffalo go off, we go off after them.” The same commission asked the Indians where Frob, the Lower Brulé chief, lived. Iron Nation answered, “Everywhere; where he is.” The attitude expressed seems to suggest that land was not seen as the constant—people and animals were the constant features. Hence the justification for Indian ownership of land tended to be expressed in terms of people and buffalo.

Later, when the Indians’ land base was already severely eroded and tribes became more specifically tied to land in the form of reservations, purely religious
reasons tended to be adduced to argue for retaining that land which was left. A typical example is the statement of Iseo, a Kiowa leader, in 1892: “Mother earth is something that we Indians love... We do not know what to do about selling our mother to the government.” Another example is this statement by Spotted Horse, a Cheyenne, in 1890: “We look upon this land as a home and as our mother and we don’t expect to sell it.” Old Crow, another Cheyenne, told the same commission: “The Great Spirit gave the Indians all this country and never tell them that they should sell it... If you have had any such word from the Great Spirit that gave them this land I would like to hear it.”

The point here is to suggest that detailed study of the treaty council proceedings may provide more data than might at first glance be expected on such complex and abstract issues as changing attitudes toward land.

Tactics

A survey of Indian diplomatic tactics that repeatedly occur in treaty council records reveals an interesting variety as well as significant differences among tribes. A few examples will be discussed here to illustrate the variety and nature of these tactics, as well as the value of such data to an understanding of Indian cultures.

Sometimes religious and moral justifications were presented by Indian orators to treaty commissioners in order to explain the Indians’ perspective on the white man. An excellent example of this type of diplomacy is provided by a council in November 1866, held in Kansas at the Big Bend of the Arkansas River. Commissioners were investigating the Indian situation on the southern plains and preparing for a great council that would be held the following year at Medicine Lodge Creek. The commissioners counseled with Lone Wolf, head chief of the Kiowas, and a delegation of headmen in order to discover information about past hostilities and to impress on the Indians the necessity of peace.

Colonel J. H. Leavenworth told the Kiowas: “The Great Chief at Washington has heard some bad news about you and he has sent out two of his chiefs to see if they are true... The names of those that have acted badly we have put on a piece of paper, and we shall tell the Great Chief what we know about them and he will decide whether they live or die. If any of your people go to Texas or Old Mexico and commit depredations the Great Chief will not forget it, but he will send an army of his men and exterminate you.

These threats were not well received by the Kiowas. They had long heard whites boast of the power of the Great Chief or the Great Father in Washington, but they had never experienced it themselves. They were skeptical and they were angered to be ordered not to raid the whites to the south since it was economically important to them and also provided them with the regular means by which young men gained status to raise themselves in the social hierarchy.

Rather than take a stance blatantly antagonistic to that of the commissioners, Lone Wolf allowed White Bird, an old medicine man, to make the first speech in reply to the whites. The record of the proceedings reads as follows:

The Indians then laid two circular pieces of paper on the floor; one blue and one white. Otank or White-bird, an old Indian then went through a form of prayer and spoke as follows to Lone Wolf in Kiowa, who repeated it to the Interpreter in Comanche.

Lone Wolf—That piece of paper (pointing to the white) represents the earth. There is a big water all around the earth. The circular blue paper is the sky. The sun goes around the earth. The sun is our father. All the red men in this country, all the Buffalo are all his (old man’s). Our Great Father the sun told us that the white man would kill all of them, there is no place for us to hide because the water is all around the earth. When my time comes to die I intend to die and not wait to be killed by the white men. I want you to write to the Great Chief and tell him that I understand my Great Father the sun, that my Great Father the sun sent me a message, that I went around the prairie poor and crying and the Great Father the sun sent me a message that I can read. A long time ago when I was little I began to study medicine and when we make a treaty with the white man I see it and know whether it is good or not. I am the man that makes it rain, I talk to the Great Father. If I have any difficulty with anyone and wish them to perish with thirst I stop the rain and if I wish them well I cause it to rain so that the corn can grow. My Great Father the sun told me that fire and water were alike, that we cannot live without either of them. This is all the old man’s talk, he wishes to go to Washington.

He (Lone Wolf) then said that he wished to talk for himself. I do not know what the Great Chief at Washington will think of the old man’s talk.

Capt. Bogey—We have similar men among us who converse with the Great Spirit.

White Bird’s speech is significant in several ways. It lays out an entire cosmology and belief system which is in direct contradiction to that of the whites. It puts the Great Chief in Washington into perspective under the power of the true Great Father, the sun. White Bird claims an especially close relationship to the sun, manifested in his power to control rain. Implied in his speech is his own belief that he is closer to the Great Spirit than is the white man’s Great Chief. His desire to go to Washington was very likely motivated by a feeling that if he could but meet this Great Chief face to face he could best him with his power, matching him trick for trick.

Diplomatically, this speech was a good choice because it led into the refusal by the Kiowas, at least for the moment, to commit themselves to follow the will of the president, and provided moral and ethical grounds on which to do so. Unfortunately, it was probably ineffective. Bogey’s comment relays the speech to mere mysticism. Doubtless the commissioners simply missed the point. But the speech provides a good model of the Kiowa world as they presented it to oppose the view of the world propounded by the whites.

The use of kinship terms was another diplomatic tactic manipulated by Indians and whites alike. The 1865 treaty commissioners told the Miniconjou Sioux: “Your Great Father, the President, has selected us to come out to this country to visit his red children, the Dahcotahe... The President, your Great Father, has not sent us to make peace because he is weak... On the contrary, he pities his red children.”

Lone Horn, the Miniconjou head chief, seems to have felt the need to maneuver around the father-child relationship established by the commissioners, clearly
Treaty council proceedings are valuable documents for reconstructing the symbolic expressions of Indian cultures as Indian orators attempted to use their skill to best the white man at diplomacy. These documents are major resources for the study of plains Indians, reflecting cultural changes through time. The publication of treaty council proceedings and thorough studies of them will vastly enrich our understanding of native American cultures on the plains and allow some reconstruction of the Indians’ points of view as they were threatened with cultural extinction in the face of white American expansion.

Wars of the Peace Policy, 1869–1886

ROBERT M. UTLEY

... The Peace Policy aimed at placing all Indians on reservations, where they could be kept away from the settlements and travel routes and where ultimately they could be civilized. The Indians often had other ideas—if not at first, then after they had sampled the reality of life on the reservation. Virtually every major war of the two decades after Appomattox was fought to force Indians onto newly created reservations or to make them go back to reservations from which they had fled. From such perspective, it is not surprising that warfare characterized the Peace Policy.

As the years passed, moreover, the Peace Policy ceased to command the wide support it had at first. The army, in particular, grew more openly critical. Except for an occasional Lieutenant [Charles] Drew or Colonel [Benjamin] Grierson [known for their humane approaches to Indians], officers scoffed at the notion of conquest by kindness, and they had little use for the idealistic yet often corrupt people and purposes of the Indian Bureau. As General Sheridan remarked simplistically in 1869, “If a white man commits murder or robs, we hang him or send him to the penitentiary; if an Indian does the same, we have been in the habit of giving him more blankets.” And as Lieutenant Schuyler observed at the Camp Verde [Arizona] Reservation, the Indians “can be governed for the present only with a hand of iron, which is a manner of governing totally unknown to the agents of the Indian Bureau, most of whom are afraid of the Indians and are willing to do anything to conciliate them.” Western sentiment, always militant, encouraged the army in its view of the Peace Policy. “Let sniveling quakers give place to bluff soldiers,” ran a typical editorial comment.

Who is friendly and who is not? military officers not unreasonably asked the civilian authorities. Those on the reservation were friendly and the exclusive responsibility of the Indian Bureau, came the answer; those off the reservation were hostile and the responsibility of the army. Superficially, it seemed a logical solution to a chronic dilemma. It drew a line that no one, including the Indians, could mistake. But as the record of the Fort Sill [Oklahoma] “city of refuge” demonstrated, a reservation could harbor a great many Indians of unfriendly disposition.