

Wabashaw (Sioux)

“A few knives and blankets?”

1815

Background: After the War of 1812 and the Treaty of Ghent in 1815, in which the British failed to make provisions for their Native American allies, Wabashaw addressed the commanding officer of the British post on Drummond Island.

My father: What is this I see before me? A few knives and blankets? Is this all you promised us at the beginning of the war?

Where is the fulfilment of those high speeches of promise you made us at Michilimackinac and sent to our villages on the Mississippi? You told us you would never let fall the hatchet till the Americans were driven beyond the Alleghanies! You said we should again be put in possession of our ancient hunting-grounds! You said that our British fathers would never make peace without consulting his Red Children! Has this come to pass?

We never knew of the peace! We are told it was made by our Great Father beyond the big waters, without the knowledge of his officers and generals here. We are told it is your duty to obey his orders. What is this to us? Will these paltry presents pay for the men we have lost in battle and on the road? Will they soothe the feelings of our friends? Will they make good your promises?

For myself, I am an old man! I have lived long and always found the means of support! And I can do so still! Perhaps my young men may pick up the presents you have laid before us! I do not want them!

Speech Questions

Directions: If this is digital for you, click below the questions and add your responses. If you are doing this in your notebook, copy the question to your notes and then write your response.

1. What were the promises Wabashaw and the Sioux were promised?
2. Who is Wabashaw referencing when he says “My father,” “British fathers,” and “Great Father”?
3. Based on what you read, how is Wabashaw feeling about “a few knives and blankets” and how these events happened?