

# 10 FACTS OF ABOUT TREATY 6

## 1. What is a Treaty?

On a basic level, a treaty is an agreement between at least two entities, with each side agreeing to roles and responsibilities. On a political level, a treaty is an international contract between sovereign nations. And on a cultural level for Indigenous Peoples, a Treaty is a sacred covenant that carries solemn duties.

## 2. What is Treaty 6?

Signed in August and September 1876 by John A MacDonal'd's colonial government and various Indigenous Chiefs, Treaty 6 is one of eleven Numbered Treaties that the MacDonal'd government imposed on Indigenous Peoples north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as one strategy to secure vast tracts of land for Canadian settlement. Covering a vast territory and stretching east of the Rocky Mountains, Treaty 6 covers central portions of Saskatchewan and Alberta north and south of the North Saskatchewan River.

## 3. Who Signed Treaty 6?

Treaty 6 was negotiated and signed by Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris (the Queen's Representative) and Chiefs Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop of the Plains Cree and other Chiefs of the Cree, Ojibwe, and Assiniboine peoples.

## 4. What are Treaty Rights?

Treaty Rights: Rights specified in a treaty. Rights to hunt and fish in traditional territory and to use and occupy reserves are typical treaty rights. This concept can have different meanings depending on the context and perspective of the user. Treaty rights are constitutionally recognized and affirmed; the terms of treaties take precedence over the other laws and policies in Canada (Joseph 114).

## 5. What other treaties have been negotiated in Canada?

There have been five distinct phases of treaty-making between Indigenous Peoples and colonial governments:

- i. Peace and Friendship Treaties 1725-1779
- ii. Robinson Treaties 1850
- iii. Douglas Treaties 1850-1854
- iv. Numbered Treaties 1-11 1871-1921
- v. Modern Treaties 1975 Forward

## 6. Why Was Treaty Six Signed?

Colonial governments signed treaties to secure land for settlement and agriculture. Indigenous peoples signed treaties for various reasons: some Plains Indigenous groups were starving and were coerced; some wanted to avert war; some wanted to transition from hunting a food source to agriculture because the buffalo had been hunted to near-extinction.

## 7. What is unique about Treaty 6?

Unique to Treaty 6, Chiefs brought three extra demands to the Treaty Commissioner: the storage of a medicine chest at the Indian Agent's house, more agricultural implements than had been negotiated in previous treaties, and a "famine and pestilence" clause to protect Indigenous peoples during these crises.

#### 8. Do All Indigenous People Get Free Medicine and Education?

No. First, Treaty Rights are only entitled to First Nations peoples whose ancestors signed treaties with the federal government. Second, treaty entitlements really depend on the circumstances of each First Nation. Contrary to popular belief, only some First Nations peoples receive free medicine and education, and even then, it depends on what resources are available to the First Nations. Some First Nations have more resources than others.

#### 9. Are Treaties Still Relevant Today?

Yes, treaties are a "forever" agreement. In fact, from Treaty 6 these words express that sentiment, in Plains Cree (*nêhiyawêwin*) first, then in English.

*hâw, êkos êkwa, êwak ôma k-ês-âsotamâtakok, ka-- kâkikê, iskoyikohk pîsim ka-pimohtêt, iskoyikohk sîpiy ka-pimiciwahk, iskoyikohk maskosiya kê-sâkikihi, êkospî isko ka-pimohtêmakan ôma k-ês-âsotamâtân*

*Indeed, thus now the promises which I have made to you, forever, as long as the sun shall cross the sky, so long as the rivers shall run, so long as the grass shall grow, that is how long these promises I have made to you will last;*

#### 10. What is the Royal Proclamation and Why is It Important?

Justice Murray Sinclair, also Senator and Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission says that the King of England with the Royal Proclamation of 1763 declared the sovereignty and self-governing rights of Indigenous peoples within their territories. The Crown declared that "nobody, no colonial entity, no private individual, nobody could interfere with the Indian Nations within their territories" (*The Canadian Encyclopedia*). Unfortunately, Justice Sinclair has come to hate the *Royal Proclamation* because history has shown us that "it defended us against nothing." Nonetheless, the *Royal Proclamation* continues to play a critical role in all treaties negotiated within Canada's borders because it recognizes the sovereignty of Indigenous nations.

#### **REFERENCES:**

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*The Canadian Encyclopedia:*

<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/royal-proclamation-of-1763-plain-languagesummary> Accessed 30 January 2022

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