The words "as long as the sun shines, as long as the waters flow downhill, and as long as the grass grows green" can be found in many treaties after the 1613 treaty. It set a relationship of equity and peace.

— Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga Nation’s Turtle Clan

INTRODUCTION: TREATIES BETWEEN CANADA AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Beginning in the early 1600s, the British Crown (later the Government of Canada) entered into a series of treaties with Indigenous nations in Canada. The treaties were intended as formal agreements to encourage peaceful relations and to specify promises, obligations and benefits for both parties. Indigenous peoples wanted to protect their traditional lands, resources, and ways of life, while ensuring peace and friendship, and eventually receiving support as they shifted to a new reality in the mid-19th century. Today, everyone agrees that the First Nations peoples agreed to share some of their land and resources in return for material support. But the terms of this exchange would ultimately be understood differently by the parties involved.

This difference in interpretation is rooted in differing worldviews, with distinct concepts of land ownership. First Nations peoples had (and still have) a relationship with the land that informed their politics, spirituality and economy. Europeans, on the other hand, saw the land as purely productive and often as something to be exploited. Europeans began to impose artificial borders that do not line up with the traditional lands or jurisdictions of Indigenous peoples, which span territory that spreads across provincial lines and is located in both present-day Canada and the United States. Coupled with a language barrier and contrasting methods of knowledge transmission (oral versus written), misunderstandings multiplied. Many contemporary Indigenous peoples look to their elders as the highest authorities on the spirit and intent of the treaties because elders are schooled in the oral histories.

While the broad philosophy of treaties is generally similar (setting the terms for how to relate to each other), each treaty is a unique agreement with unique circumstances. Treaties were created to define the respective rights of Indigenous nations and colonial governments. Though many treaties pre-date Confederation, they are living documents (much like Canada’s Constitution) and their interpretation is continuously re-examined and debated by Canadian and Indigenous lawmakers to this day. In addition, treaties continue to be negotiated. In 1962, when the Constitution Act was passed, treaty rights were recognized and affirmed by Canada’s Constitution. The Aboriginal rights and title specified by the Constitution Act is the backdrop to the ongoing legal battles that result from treaties being unfinished business and, at the same time, the highest law in the land.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The activities included in this Guide have been developed in line with the Historical Thinking Concepts developed by Dr. Peter Seixas, including an examination of the ethical dimension. Students and historians are often required to make judgments when studying history, but it is important to consider historical context. This involves considering what society and attitudes were like in the past. When trying to understand people’s motivations or beliefs, historians and students of history must balance this awareness of past beliefs while working to avoid excusing people’s actions as resulting solely from their historical context.

MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

Activities and discussions related to Indigenous peoples’ history in Canada may evoke an emotional response from some students. The subject of treaties can bring out strong opinions and feelings, as it includes two worldviews. It is critical to acknowledge that Indigenous worldviews and understandings of relationships have continually been marginalized. This does not make them less valid, and students need to understand why different peoples in Canada might have different outlooks and interpretations of treaties. It is important that the classroom climate encourages students to relate to one another in a positive, respectful and supportive way.

Establish ground rules for class discussions that demonstrate respect of privacy, diversity, and for the expression of differing viewpoints. Should any concerns arise, inform an administrator or counsellor and ensure that students know where to go for help and support.

Finally, to avoid the problems of misrepresentation in past efforts to teach about Indigenous peoples, it is recommended that teachers augment the activities in this Guide with teaching resources written from the perspective of Indigenous peoples. We hope that education is a step toward reconciliation, and that the Guide will assist you in teaching this important subject in Canadian history.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

Accommodations for Special Education, ELL and ESL students are included under the appropriate sections, and identified as “modifications.”

THE ORAL TRADITION

Indigenous societies in North America have long trusted the oral transmission of stories, histories, lessons and other knowledge as a way of maintaining a historical record, documenting agreements, and sustaining cultures and identities. In some cases, oral transmission is supplemented by wampum belts, pictographs, petroglyphs, birch bark scrolls, and designs woven into clothing.

The oral tradition has demonstrated accuracy in some cases, when compared to written traditions. This has been illustrated in recent teamwork between Indigenous knowledge holders and Western scientists, such as during the discovery of the lost Franklin expedition.

Oral tradition has been central to Indigenous interpretations of treaties. Indigenous understandings of treaties are often based on a given document’s legal language, but on the spirit and intent of what was discussed—often in Indigenous languages—at the time of treaty negotiations. Western thought tends to value the written word in legal tradition, and until recently, oral societies were characterized as peoples without history because they were effectively erased by Western historians. Wampum belts were sometimes exchanged as a record of the treaty, and this was frequently accompanied by ceremonial customs, such as smoking sacred pipes (to symbolize the agreements), or exchanging gifts. It is the spirit and intent of treaty negotiations that create the binding and sacred nature of a treaty, not the written language.

(Adapted from http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/culture/oral-traditions.html and from the Canadian Encyclopedia.)
TIMELINE

PRE-CONTACT

INDIGENOUS TREATY MAKING

Treaties are made between diverse Indigenous nations long before the first settlers arrive. Some nations’ foundational treaties are with the land and the creatures we share the land with, such as the Haudenosaunee. Others (e.g., the Haudenosaunee) use treaties to bind nations in a confederacy.

1613 TWO ROW WAMPANN

This is among the first well-recorded treaties. The Haudenosaunee extend the Two Row Wampun to the Dutch. The treaty binds them together in respect for autonomy, peace and friendship.

1701 THE GREAT PEACE OF MONTREAL

Despite numerous treaties during early contact, conflict emerges. This agreement brings together 40 nations, including the Haudenosaunee and the French.

1725-1779 ATLANTIC PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATIES

This series of treaties between the English, Mi’kmaq and Maliseet peoples seeks to end long-term conflict. The treaties recognize Indigenous land rights, while providing the British with limited land access.

1850 ROBINSON-HURON AND ROBINSON-SUPERIOR TREATY SERIES

European settlers seek more land northwest of the Great Lakes by negotiating treaties.

1534-1600 EARLY TRADE RELATIONS

First Nations establish local trade relationships with Europeans through gift exchange systems.

1500 LATE 1600S COVENANT CHAIN

Expanding their influence among European powers, the Haudenosaunee bring the English into their alliance with a series of treaties collectively known as the Covenant Chain.

1763 THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION

England emerges as the dominant colonial power after France’s defeat in the Seven Years’ War. To encourage peace with surrounding nations, King George III recognizes their sovereignty west of the eastern British colonies and begins a new era of treaty making.

1775-1850 SERIES OF UNNAMED TREATIES

A series of unnamed (often times blank) treaties is created to secure land for settlement in Upper Canada, ultimately forcing First Nations to move west.

1850 THE DOUGLAS TREATIES

The Colony of Vancouver Island negotiates 14 treaties on the southern part of the island, permitting European settlement and offering support for the Songhees and Esquimalt bands, among others.

1870-1921 THE NUMBERED TREATIES

Immediately following Confederation, Canada embarks on a national treaty-making campaign to secure land in the West for settlement. Over a period of more than 50 years, 13 treaties are made in what is now Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, northern British Columbia and the southern Northwest Territories.

1923 WILLIAMS TREATIES

The Anishinaabeg of southern Ontario seek redress for a blank treaty signed in 1873, and Canada responds with a new deal. The Williams Treaties would arguably be the worst treaties ever negotiated in Canada.

1923 LEAGUE OF INDIANS OF CANADA

The narrow interpretation of treaties leads First Nations to establish the League of Indians of Canada to advocate for land rights.

1973 THE CALDER CASE

One of the first treaty rights court cases to reach the Supreme Court. Nisga’a Tribal Council President Frank Calder argues that if no treaty had been made, his nation should still have title to their land. Although the Nisga’a do not win their case, the Supreme Court acknowledges the existence of Aboriginal title.

1974 FIRST “MODERN TREATY”

In northern Quebec, the Cree and Innu are successful in using outstanding land claims to block the province’s efforts to exploit hydroelectric power. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is the first treaty in the modern era to include Indigenous self-government.

1900

1974-1990s TREATY RENEWAL

Treaties are renewed following 1873 and 1923. The federal government recognizes that treaties are based on a relationship of trust.

1974-1990s TREATY RENEWAL

Treaties are renewed following 1873 and 1923. The federal government recognizes that treaties are based on a relationship of trust.

1999-2000 TREATY RENEWAL

Treaties are renewed following 1873 and 1923. The federal government recognizes that treaties are based on a relationship of trust.

1999 NISGA’A FINAL AGREEMENT

After more than 20 years of negotiations, the legacy of Frank Calder is a treaty for the Nisga’a.

1999-2000 TREATY RENEWAL

Treaties are renewed following 1873 and 1923. The federal government recognizes that treaties are based on a relationship of trust.

2003 LAND CLAIMS AGREEMENT COLLABORATION OF CANADA

In response to implementation delays and failures, Indigenous signatories of every modern treaty form a lobby group to demand that Canada honour the agreements.

2004-2007 “THE DUTY TO CONSULT”

Indigenous title and rights cases continue to be heard in the Supreme Court. In a series of decisions, the Supreme Court rules that any time Indigenous rights will be affected by development, the community must be consulted and their concerns addressed.

2012 IDLE NO MORE MOVEMENT

A movement begins in response to federal legislation that activists fear will further erode treaty rights. Sustained national protests are held across the continent (and globally) to defend Indigenous lands. Today, the struggle to see treaties honoured continues.
### Historical Significance: Timeline Activity

1. Each of the events selected for the timeline is important for exploring the significance of treaties in Canada. Select 5 events from the timeline that you feel are central in representing the legacy of treaties in Canada.

2. Rank the events you selected, with the most significant event at the top. In your notes, create a chart like the one below to explain the significance and legacy of the top 5 events you selected.

3. Identify any changes on the timeline that are intended to improve the enduring legacy of Indigenous treaties. Look at the changes you identified. Which change do you feel is most significant? For whom?

4. Identify two perspectives or events that should be included on the timeline and justify your choices.

### Treaty Research Activity

1. Select a treaty (consider your local area if you live in a treaty territory). Working in a group, conduct some research and identify 3 people or events from the time of the treaty’s negotiation that might have had an impact on its creation.

2. What was the treaty’s impact? Use the research you did in Question 1 to think about what motivated your particular treaty. What was the process of making the treaty?

3. How significant was the treaty? Have a class discussion. Ask: How universal is this statement? What makes you a treaty person today? Who benefits from the treaty you are researching, and how?

### Modifications

Students can review the timeline, choose 5–10 difficult words, and write their own definitions. Next, have students pick 3 entries from the timeline and rewrite them in their own words. Ask them to explain why they think these events are important in the history of treaties.

### Primary Source Analysis: Wampum Belt

“The two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian people, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the non-Indigenous people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither will try to steer the other’s vessel.”

— Attributed to historian and Mohawk Elder Ray (Tehanetorens) Fadden

Indigenous versions of treaties are another primary source that can grant us insight into the thoughts and beliefs of people involved in treaty negotiations. Wampum are shell beads strung together and woven into belts. They were used as a visual record representing the agreements Indigenous peoples made with each other and with Europeans. They are traditionally made from clams of different colors, but other materials can also be used. Each pattern represented a different agreement and held different significance. The Two Row Wampum represented an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch. It was later extended to the British and the Anishinaabeg, and came to represent an ideal treaty relationship for Europeans and Indigenous peoples in general. Strings of wampum were traditionally used for storytelling, as ceremonial gifts, and for recording important events. Wampum belts are still made today for ceremonial, political, and personal reasons.

### Modifications

Assign the reading ahead of time, and ask students to identify 5–8 key words and create their own definitions.

Have students summarize the article using the 5Ws chart.

Students may work in pairs to complete these activities.

### Note to Educators

In helping students determine the historical significance of a given event, refer to the criteria provided by The Historical Thinking Project.

## Table: Event Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Estimated Number of People Affected</th>
<th>Depth of Impact</th>
<th>Duration of Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 1 1850</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 2 1871</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 3 1873</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 4 1874</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 5 1875</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>50 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 6 1889</td>
<td>175,000</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>60 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 7 1899</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>70 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 8 1906</td>
<td>225,000</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>80 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 9 1921</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>90 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty 10 1929</td>
<td>275,000</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>100 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 1763, King George III issued the Royal Proclamation, declaring British sovereignty in North America after France’s defeat in the Seven Years’ War. The proclamation established a colonial government in the lands France handed over to Britain, and declared British ownership of North American lands.

The document also outlined a model for Indigenous rights and title to the land. It established a framework for negotiating treaties with Indigenous peoples, and encouraged Indigenous groups who were formerly allied with the French — and those in the West — to accept British rule. It sought to earn this loyalty by recognizing that lands legally belonged to Indigenous peoples unless a treaty was created to transfer control to the British. The Proclamation became an important and controversial legal document, resulting in acceptance by some Indigenous nations, and renewed conflict among others.

With regards to Indigenous rights, the Proclamation states clearly that Indigenous people reserved all lands not ceded or purchased from them:

“And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to Our Interest, and the Security of Our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians, with whom We are connected, and who live under Our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to, or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds.”

Despite this recognition of Indigenous rights, King George also claimed ultimate control over the land, and declared the British Crown the supreme authority over future negotiations with Indigenous peoples in British North America.

Working in partners or groups of three, answer the following questions, then discuss as a class.

1. Why is this a valuable source to examine when considering the history of Indigenous treaties in Canada? Whose perspectives are included? Whose are left out? Why would people studying treaties be interested in this document? Why would they want to read it?

2. What are the key statements outlined in the Royal Proclamation stating what must happen or be done for Indigenous peoples?

3. Why is this a valuable source to examine when considering the history of Indigenous treaties in Canada? Whose perspectives are included? Whose are left out? Why would people studying history find a document like this useful in analyzing the past?

**TEACHER TIP** Because the text was written in 1763, the key points of the Royal Proclamation might be difficult for students to comprehend without additional information. The Canadian Encyclopedia offers an explanation of the provisions offered to Indigenous peoples. There are also a number of annotations available online which students can use to accompany their analysis of the document.

Primary source documents are often written in language that students may find inaccessible. You can facilitate understanding through creating a word wall or a mini-lesson exploring vocabulary. This may be beneficial to ESL/ELL students, students with lower literacy levels, and the class as a whole.
CASE STUDY: TREATY 9

Treaty 9 (or the James Bay Treaty) was signed between 1905 and 1906, with additional lands added in 1929–1930 to cover all of northern Ontario. For the first time, the Government of Ontario was a treaty signatory along with the federal government. In the Heritage Minute “Naskumituwin” (meaning an agreement between two people, or a treaty, in Cree), Rosary Spence recounts the making of Treaty 9 as it was told to her by her great-grandfather George Spence, a historical witness to the signing in Fort Albany.

Like many treaties, the historical record on Treaty 9 remains in dispute. For this exercise, work in pairs or small groups to explore two accounts of the treaty-making process: the Indigenous oral account and the written diary. Read the excerpts below from the Treaty 9 document, and the diary of treaty commissioner George MacMartin. Watch the Heritage Minute and listen to Rosary’s story. You can read more about Treaty 9 in The Canadian Encyclopedia.

EXCERPT FROM TREATY 9 DOCUMENT

“...and His Majesty the King hereby agrees with the said Indians that they shall have the right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered as heretofore described, subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the government of the country, acting under the authority of His Majesty, and saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes.”

EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF GEORGE MACMARTIN

July 25 [1905] “As promised them a feast was prepared and when all was in readiness at 7 p.m. every member of the Band served with currant bannocks, tea, pipes and tobacco, they announced that they had chosen— Wm [William] Whitehead as chief, Wm Coaster and Long Tom Ostesama as Councillors. Chief Whitehead then delivered an oration pointing up and down the river that they were being cornered by the white man and that they must accept what was offered from these who had given them presents and provided a feast for them.

When it was explained to them that they could hunt and fish wherever they pleased. They signified their assent.”

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Admonition: counsel, cautionary advice; a piece of advice that is also a warning to someone about their behavior

Oration: a formal public speech, particularly for a special occasion

Tract: a specified or limited area of land

Vocation: a job, an occupation for which a person is especially suited, trained, or qualified

CASE STUDY: TREATY 9 (CONTINUED)

1. Summarize each source (treaty document, MacMartin’s diary, Rosary Spence’s account as told in the Heritage Minute). What story does each one tell? Are they similar?
2. What evidence do these sources provide about the 1905 treaty-making process?
3. As a class, compare and contrast the perspectives offered by these stories.

IDLE NO MORE

The process of treaty making has built-in flaws, given the differing perspectives, intentions, and worldviews of those who sought to make treaties. Indigenous people in Canada have consistently tried to bring attention to the differences present during the treaty-making process. Discontent with consequences of the treaties has traditionally been expressed with a history of discussion, debate, and in some cases protest. In 1990, the Oka Crisis was triggered by the proposed expansion of a golf course onto traditional Mohawk burial grounds and resulted in a 78-day standoff between Mohawk protesters, Quebec police and the Canadian military. The Ipperwash Crisis of 1995 emerged after repeated requests from Kettle and Stony Point First Nation for the return of land in and around Ipperwash Provincial Park, which had been appropriated in 1942 by the federal government. A number of reserves have used the blockading of railroads and bridges to express their dissatisfaction during land disputes. And beginning in 2012, the Idle No More movement has called attention to First Nations’ treaty rights throughout Canada through a series of protests that spanned the nation.

Idle No More, originally a protest against the federal government’s introduction of Bill C-45, continues the spirit of resistance against unfair treaty terms and the imposition of laws that run counter to Indigenous rights and treaty terms. The proposed Jobs and Growth Act affected more than 60 Acts, including the Indian Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act (changed to the Navigation Protection Act), and the Environmental Assessment Act. Idle No More activists argued that the changes made it easier for the government and big business to push through projects such as oil pipelines without strict environmental assessment, while simultaneously diminishing the rights and authority of First Nations.

The idea that began with an exchange of emails quickly grew into a national — and even international — protest movement. In 2012 and 2013, the Idle No More movement grabbed media headlines as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people held rallies, teach-ins, round dances and protests across the country.
Think about how to tell your story from an original point of view. As an example, read the story The Walk by Robert McCue. The Walk takes a unique perspective and shows an imaginative interpretation of one Idle No More event. You can find it on the Aboriginal Arts & Stories website. Consider: how does the choice of narrator in this story add to its meaning and significance? Brainstorm some ideas for your movie’s point of view, taking inspiration from this story.

Develop your movie project. Here are some suggestions to help you develop your ideas:

1. Research the origins of Idle No More. Who were the people who started it? Why did they start it? Was there a specific event that was a trigger for the events that followed? In what ways do you think the legacy of treaties motivated or inspired the Idle No More movement?

2. Think about the point of view of your movie. Who will be telling the story? Who is the protagonist of your story? Will it be told from one point of view, or from several points of view?

3. Develop your movie project. Here are some suggestions to help you develop your ideas:
   a. What is the storyline of your movie? What will you include in the beginning, middle and end?
   b. What is the big idea, theme, or main message you want to get across in your movie?
   c. What is your point of view? Do you bring any biases to your movie making?
   d. Who is the audience for your movie?
   e. What are some relevant images and sounds you could include in the movie?
   f. How will your movie portray the historical significance of the Idle No More movement?
   g. What is the title of your movie?

4. Present your movie project to the class.

Here are some places to begin your research:

YouTube: search for videos taken during some of the protests and flash mobs
The Canadian Encyclopedia article: Idle No More
thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/idle-no-more

The Canadian Encyclopedia article:
The Journey of Nishiyuu (The Journey of the People)
thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-journey-of-the-people

Idle No More: idlenomore.ca

1. Idle No More protesters demonstrate in Toronto on January 16, 2013 (courtesy of The Canadian Press/Aaron Vincent Elkaim)
2. Idle No More demonstrators protest at the base of the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ontario, January 14, 2013 (courtesy of The Canadian Press/Geoff Robins)