

WHAT IS A TREATY?



Getting Acquainted

This theme provides basic content for learners who have no familiarity with treaties. The learning experiences are intended to place the eighteenth century Peace and Friendship treaties between the Mi'kmaq and the British in a wider historical and political context. Treaties—agreements among nations, have been made since time immemorial across every continent and country in the world.

It will help learners to see themselves as treaty people if they understand that Canada has entered many treaties with many countries for many reasons throughout the last 150 years. Canada continues to enter into treaties and international partnerships, such as the Trans Pacific Partnership (2016).

The theme starts with a learning experience that strengthens primary treaty vocabulary (much of it shown to the box on the right). These terms will be revisited throughout the other Treaties themes: both Treaty-Making and Treaty Denial.

Treaties come about as a tool when any nation seeks peace. The alternative to peace is, of course, war. One of the Learning Experiences (T2) helps students consider why any nation might choose war. Many nations chose war during World War II as the only recourse to fight Nazi Germany and the facism of the 20th Century. Similarly, both the British and Mi'kmaq chose conflict at times in the 18th century.

The last learning expereince in this (short) theme is a puzzle that is a fun activity for learners to absorb and further play with broader treaty concepts.

Peace and Friendship Treaties: Distinctions

The eighteenth century Peace and Friendship treaties differ from most modern treaties in that they were agreed to in perpetuity. The 1752 and 1760-61 treaties were agreed to on behalf of the British and Mi'kmaw “heirs and the heirs of their heirs forever...”. Modern treaties have timelines requiring renewal.

Treaties with the British became treaties with Canada when the Constitution was repatriated to Federal and Provincial legislatures in 1982. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms was amended to the Constitution at this same time.

Learners and educators will see that the learning experi-

ences emphasize that the Peace and Friendship treaties are not about land. This repetition is intended as a way to counter this pervasive misconception.

VOCABULARY FOR TREATIES LEARNING EXPERIENCES

This vocabulary is used throughout the themes:

A **treaty** is an official agreement among two or more nations.

Ratification is a process that makes a treaty official; each nation has their own internal steps they must take to make treaties valid.

Wampum are shell (quahog) beads that the Mi'kmaq strung into belts and other forms. Wampum was used to record agreements, such as treaties as well as to communicate intention and commitment to other nations.

Rights are what nations guarantee to each other within a treaty agreement. Learners may think about rights as ‘what benefits a Nation gets’ through a treaty agreement. Rights are often paired with responsibilities as a way of thinking about the ‘give and take’ of treaties.

Responsibilities are what is required by a nation to uphold the agreement. Learners may think about responsibilities as ‘what nations agree to do’ as part of a treaty. Responsibilities are often paired with rights as a way of thinking about the ‘give and take’ of treaties.

An **alliance** is a long-standing partnership among nations. Learners can think about it as a ‘friendship among nations.’ Generally, alliances are not official and do not require ratification.

Signatories are those nations who are officially taking part in a treaty. Each signatory represents a sovereign political unit. Mi'kmaw treaties involved many signatories because each extended family group is its own nation, led by the Saqmaq for that group.