

General Introduction

Treaty Six territory is a vast landscape of prairies, rolling hills, rivers, and wide open skies. It is home to many cultures and people that share in this bountiful land. The land base of treaty six territory covers 313,390 square kilometers (or 121,000 square miles). Since the signing of Treaty Six in 1876, the growth of cities, vast industrial developments, and increasing populations have transformed Treaty Six lands into what we know as part of present day Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The First Nations people who occupied these lands prior to signing Treaty Six found that with the newcomers arrival, the disappearance of the buffalo, diseases, starvation, and encroachment on their lands, the pressure to sign Treaty with the Dominion of Canada on behalf of the Crown was the best alternative to their survival and future.

First Nations believed that the terms of the Treaty would provide them with the tools to survive in the fast changing landscape while never extinguishing their aboriginal and treaty rights. In turn the Crown received access and settlement of lands for the settlers coming to Canada and building the railway west connecting western Canada to the East. It was the beginning of the formation of Canada as we know it. It was understood by the terms of the treaty that there would be a peaceful co-existence with one another.

The treaty is a living agreement between the First Nations and the Crown for the benefit to all people whom live in treaty territory. All residents in Alberta, whether your ancestors immigrated here or you are new to Alberta, including all First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, are treaty people.

Treaty 6 Basics

1. Treaties are formal agreements negotiated between two or more sovereign Nations.
2. Treaty 6 was signed on August 23, 1876 at Fort Carlton and at Fort Pitt on September 9, 1876. Some First Nations bands were not present at the Treaty negotiations and therefore signed an adhesion to Treaty at later dates. Adhesions had the same effect as Treaty were originally signed.

The main groups of peoples involved in the signing of the Treaty 6 were Plains Cree, although there were also groups of Woodland Cree, Nakoda (Assiniboine or Stoney), Saulteaux (Plains Ojibwa) and Chipewyan (Dene).

There are 17 First Nations represented within Treaty 6 in present day Alberta. They are: Alexander First Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Cold Lake First Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Ermineskin First Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, Goodfish/Whitefish First Nation, Heart Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, Montana First Nation, O'Chiese First Nation, (*Onion Lake First Nation*), Paul First Nation, Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Samson Cree First Nation, Sunchild First Nation.

Treaties were signed between the above mentioned sovereign nations, and the Dominion of Canada on behalf of the Queen of Great Britain.



Image credit: <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100020670/1100100020675>

3. **What benefits did First Nations believe they were to receive in signing Treaty Six?**

First Nations understood they would receive assistance to the transition of a new lifestyle, maintenance of their cultural and spiritual rights, right to hunt, trap, and fish, education, medical assistance, reserve land, agricultural tools and support, and peaceful co-existence with the newcomers. The text of the Treaty states:

- Reserve land in the amount of one square mile per family of five;
- An annual cash payment at a rate of \$25 per Chief, \$15 per headman and \$5 for all other band members, and a one time present of \$12 for each member of the band who agreed to the Treaty;
- Twine and ammunition at a value of \$1500 per year;
- For each band and family certain agricultural implements such as hoes, spades, livestock, horse, and wagon;
- A school once the people settled on a reserve;
- The right to pursue hunting, trapping, and fishing;
- A medicine chest to be kept at the house of the Indian agent on each reserve;
- Rations were to be given in times of pestilence and famine;
- During the first three years after Treaty was taken, First nations who had settled on reserves and were farming were to receive \$1000 in agricultural provisions.
- Medicine Chest (medical care) and;
- Relief in times of famine and pestilence.

4. **What benefits did the Newcomers receive through Treaty Six?**

Newcomers would receive a peaceful co-existence with First Nations people, access to lands for settlement, farming, railways, and future industrial development.

5. **Who are beneficiaries of Treaty 6?**

All people living within the treaty territory of Treaty 6 are beneficiaries.

6. **How long do Treaties last?**

The spirit, intent, and provisions of the Treaties last forever, as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow.

References:

http://wayback.archive-it.org/2217/20101208160655/http://www.albertasource.ca/treaty6/making_of_treaty6/making_of_treaty_6.html

<https://treaty6education.lskysd.ca/treaty6basics>

Why we acknowledge territory

(Treaty 6 and the homeland of the Métis Nations of Alberta)

To acknowledge traditional territory is to recognize its longer history, reaching beyond colonization and the establishment of European colonies, as well as its significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived and continue to live upon this territory and whose practices and spiritualities were tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the land and its other inhabitants today. Acknowledgement statements also aim to recognize the diversity of First Nations who have, at one time, lived across the territory, as well as the presence of the Métis Nation. To acknowledge that this territory is traditionally that of the Cree, Métis, and other First Nations is to participate in establishing a respectful nation-to-nation relationship with them.

1. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.
2. Acknowledging the territory where we gather and the people who have traditionally called it home for thousands of years is an **act of respect and reconciliation**. Such acknowledgement supports the calls to action of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (Government of Canada, 2015).
3. Treaties are beneficial to all people in Alberta. They are considered mutually beneficial arrangements that guarantee a co-existence between the treaty parties. Newcomers and their descendents benefit from the wealth generated from the land and the foundational rights provided in the treaties. They built their society in this new land where some were looking for political and religious freedoms. Today, there are misconceptions that only First Nations peoples are part of the treaties, but in reality, both parties are part of treaty. All people in Alberta are treaty people.

Video clips to use:

<https://vimeo.com/85540034> (1:01 - 2:58)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HbAr5PC4pY> (whole video - 2:24)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABDUeSDnsJk> (whole video)