

Stepping Stones



NUMBERED TREATIES WITHIN ALBERTA: TREATY 7

Planning your learning journey

What are treaties and who are the signatories of Treaty 7?



Adapted from AADNC
www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/htoc_1100100032308_eng.pdf

*Note: This map shows the approximate area of treaty land as there is no consensus between rightsholders and stakeholders about exact treaty boundaries.

FIRST STEPS



“The Government of Canada and the courts understand treaties between the Crown and Aboriginal people to be solemn agreements that set out promises, obligations and benefits for both parties.”¹

From the perspective of First Nations, treaties are built on respectful, cooperative and nation-to-nation relationships between First Nations and the Crown on behalf of present and future generations. Treaties outline the rights, obligations and benefits of the signing parties to each other. The intention of the Crown was to gain title to the lands for their own claim. First Nations had other beliefs surrounding the negotiations of the treaty. To the First Nations these treaties are about sharing the land and resources and not extinguishment of title. The intent and provisions of the treaties do not end. This was acknowledged through a ceremonial and sacred agreement that incorporated the spirit and intent for treaties to last, “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and rivers flow.”²





Treaty 7 elders have always maintained that what was included in the written treaty did not include all that was discussed and agreed to.

Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, 1996⁵



GLENBOW ARCHIVES NA-13-1

Blackfoot chiefs, 1884. Front row, L–R: Crowfoot, Sitting on an Eagle Tail, Three Bulls. Back row, L–R: Jean L’Heureux, Red Crow, Sergeant W Piercy.

There are 11 numbered treaties across Canada, with Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 residing in Alberta. The First Nations in the territory now known as Alberta were concerned with the alarming spread of diseases, such as smallpox and the decimation of the buffalo due to overhunting. As a result, they felt the signing of the treaty would ensure the survival of their people.

How did Treaty 7 come to be?

Treaty 7 was signed on September 22, 1877, at [Blackfoot Crossing](#)³ between the Crown and five bands in southern Alberta: the Kainai (Blood), Siksika (Blackfoot), Piikani (Peigan), Nakoda (Stoney) and Tsuu T’ina (Sarcee). From the First Nations’ perspective, Treaty 7 signatories understood the treaty to be a peaceful agreement of sharing of land and resources. To the Crown, however, the treaty included surrendering traditional lands replaced with small parcels of reservation land. During this time, major changes were happening, such as the disappearance of the buffalo, disease, settlement and building of the railway to the west coast.⁴

What obligations, rights and benefits are included in Treaty 7?

[Treaty 7](#)⁶ differs from other Numbered Treaties. The previously signed treaties

had provisions for a number of agricultural implements; however, the Treaty 7 signatories wished to concentrate their agricultural efforts on ranching. With this in mind, the treaty commissioners agreed to reduce the amount of agricultural implements and seed in exchange for an increased number of cattle, making exceptions for some bands who wanted to focus on farming.

Additional benefits are as follows:

- Every man, woman and child would receive five dollars annually.
- Salaries would be paid for teachers to instruct the children.
- Each chief and councillor would get ten axes, five handsaws, five augers, one grindstone, and files and whetstones.⁷

In exchange, the Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan, Sarcee and Stoney First Nations were expected to “cede, release, surrender, and yield up to the Government of Canada” all rights, titles and privileges to their hunting grounds. They also had to promise to live at peace with other “Indians, Métis, and whites, and to obey the Queen’s law.”⁸ It is worth noting that Treaty 7 Indian reservation land was and remains to this day Crown land. Treaty First Nations cannot buy, sell or donate reserve land as the legal title remains with the Crown.⁹

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF TREATY 7 IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA?

At the Treaty 7 signing, the government attempted to assign one large reservation to two of the three Blackfoot-speaking tribes and the Tsuu T'ina. However, only Siksika remained at the originally assigned reserve location. Kainai, who were to have shared a reservation with Siksika and Tsuu T'ina, chose a reserve close to their traditional wintering grounds and the sacred Mookawansin (Belly Buttes) and Ninastako (Chief Mountain). Tsuu T'ina moved west and settled close to Fort Calgary (now the city of Calgary). Piikani chose their traditional area close to the Porcupine Hills, between what is now Pincher Creek and Fort Macleod, as the site of their reserve.¹⁰

The Blackfoot Confederacy

Blackfoot traditional territory stretched from the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta and Saskatchewan, to the Yellowstone River in the state of Montana, from the Continental Divide in the west, to the Great Sand Hills in the province now known as Saskatchewan. The creation of the United States–Canada border split the Piikani into the Amsskaapipiikani in Montana and the Apatohsippiikani in southern Alberta.¹¹ Today, member Nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy include Kainai, Piikani, Siksika and the Blackfeet in the state of Montana.

People of the Blackfoot Nations refer to themselves as Niitsitapi,

meaning “real people,” or Siksikaitsitapi, meaning “Blackfoot-speaking real people.” Each Blackfoot Nation is a distinct group with its own Blackfoot language dialect, traditions, stories, ceremonies and history.

Kainai (Blood)¹²

Population: 12,500 members
Language: Blackfoot
Member of Blackfoot Confederacy

Piikani (Peigan)¹³

Population: 3,600 members
Language: Blackfoot
Member of Blackfoot Confederacy

Siksika (Blackfoot)¹⁴

Population: 6,000 members
Language: Blackfoot
Member of Blackfoot Confederacy

Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee)¹⁵

Today the Tsuu T'ina reserve adjoins the southwestern city limits of Calgary and has about 2,500 members. *Tsuu T'ina* is the term used by the Athabaskan (Dene) meaning “many people.” Tsuu T'ina people strongly believe that education is a universal right that fosters the well-being of the individual and the community.¹⁶

Stoney-Nakoda¹⁷

Stoney-Nakoda Nation has a combined population of 5,500 members and includes the Bearspaw, Chiniquay and Wesley First Nations. The Stoney people are the original “people of the mountains” known in their Nakoda language as the Iyarhe Nakoda. The Stoney people are the only Indigenous people in Canada that, after signing a treaty, were assigned a single land allocation for three individual groups. Today, they are known as the Iyethka, “pure people.”¹⁸

NEXT STEPS

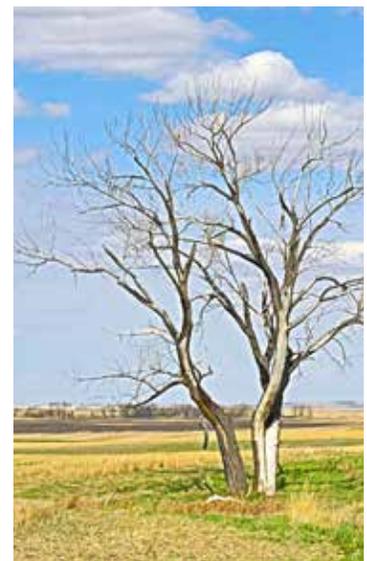


Treaties are the basic building blocks of the relationship between First Nations and the rest of Canada.

—Office of the Treaty Commissioner, Saskatchewan

Reconciliation is about understanding the past and working together to build a new future. “We are all treaty people” means that we all have rights and obligations with respect to this land and each other.

Many schools are on their journey towards understanding that “We are all treaty people” and choose to acknowledge the treaty territory on which they reside. Also, schools are fostering and developing relationships with Indigenous people and communities, which is an essential component on the path towards reconciliation.



Continuing Your Learning Journey

What does the phrase, “We are all treaty people” mean? Do all people of Treaty 7 benefit equally?

How do differing world views impact the interpretation of treaty provisions in modern times?



HALI HEAVY SHIELD

The big rock near Okotoks is the Okotoks Erratic¹⁹ and was formed from beds of silt, sand and pebbles deposited over 520 million years ago. The Blackfoot story reveals not only how the rock was split but also why bats have squashed-looking faces. The Blackfoot word Ohkhohtok means rock.

NOTES

1. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), “Treaties with Aboriginal People in Canada,” www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032291/1100100032292 (accessed October 17, 2017).
2. Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories: Including the Negotiations on Which They Were Based, and Other Information Relating Thereto* (Toronto: Willing & Williamson, 1880).
3. For more information go to www.blackfootcrossing.ca/.
4. Hugh H Dempsey, “Treaty Research Report—Treaty Seven (1877)” (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], 1987), www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028789/1100100028791 (accessed October 17, 2017).
5. Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt, Dorothy First Rider and Sarah Carter, *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7* (Kingston, Ont: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), 330.
6. INAC, “Treaty Texts—Treaty and Supplementary Treaty No 7,” www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028793/1100100028803 (accessed October 17, 2017).
7. INAC, “The Numbered Treaties (1871–1921),” www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1360948312708 (accessed October 17, 2017).
8. Hugh H Dempsey, “Treaty Research Report—Treaty Seven (1877)” (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], 1987), www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028789/1100100028791 (accessed October 17, 2017).
9. INAC, “Land Management,” “Reserve Land” www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100034737/1100100034738 (accessed October 17, 2017).
10. Alberta Teachers’ Association, *Education Is Our Buffalo*, [www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollection/Documents/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20\(PD-80-7\).pdf](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollection/Documents/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20(PD-80-7).pdf) (accessed October 17, 2017).
11. Glenbow Museum, “Niitsitapiisini Teacher Toolkit,” www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/teacher_toolkit/english/culture/socialOrganization.html (accessed October 17, 2017).
12. For more information go to <http://bloodtribe.org/>.
13. For more information go to <http://piikanation.wixsite.com/piikanation>.
14. For more information go to <http://siksikanation.com/wp/>.
15. For more information go to <http://tsuutinanation.com/>.
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17. For more information go to www.stoneynation.com/.
18. Stoney Education Authority. “History.” www.stoneyeducation.ca/History.php (accessed October 17, 2017).
19. For more information go to www.history.alberta.ca/okotoks/.

Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones is a publication of the Alberta Teachers’ Association **Walking Together Project** intended to support certificated teachers on their learning journey to meet the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Foundational Knowledge competency in the Teaching Quality Standard.

Walking Together would like to acknowledge the contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit community members within Alberta in developing these resources.

For additional resources and information on Walking Together, visit www.teachers.ab.ca.

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Walking Together

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

