

# Treaties



## Overview

### Treaties Overview and Key Learning Experiences

#### General Summary

The content in the Treaties Learning Experiences (LEs) allows learners to explore and to understand basic information about the treaty relationship between the Mi'kmaq and the British as well as how that relationship changed through the 19th and 20th centuries. The LEs in the Treaties level draw on content from Foundations as they explore the history and nature of the treaty relationship. An initial section called What is a Treaty? emphasizes both the importance of treaties as diplomatic tools that continue to the present day, and that Canada still uses in its nation-to-nation relationships across the world. The section on Treaty-Making is at the heart of Treaty Education and gives learners content that will support them through the remaining sections. Learning Experiences that delve into the 200-year

Treaty Denial period (c.1785 to 1985) follow the first two sections. This content is difficult, and essential to moving into the last level of the volume, Renewal and Reconciliation. As part of the Treaty Education commitment to asking how Nova Scotians will reconcile a shared history and ensure justice and equity, the last section tackles the concept of equity.

#### What is a Treaty?

These introductory Learning Experiences provide the most general context of a treaty. What is it? Who uses them? What are they for? Does Canada still make them? Learners will grasp what a treaty is ("a formal agreement between two or more nations") as well as some primary vocabulary they will need in the sections and LEs that follow. They will also be asked to think about the advantages and disadvantages of war and peace—something the Mi'kmaq and British considered very carefully when making treaty agreements.

#### Treaty-Making

This section holds one of the most important Learning Experiences in this level, if not the entire resource: a readers' theatre called "The Ratification" (LE T4). This script conveys the core promises that define the treaty relationship and that can be found in every Peace and Friendship treaty.

It is important that learners grasp that treaties were not about land: they were diplomatic agreements made to secure peace and end hostilities that were frequent in the 18th century.

The logic of the Peace and Friendship Treaties was born out of *msit no'kmaq*.

#### Key Learning Experiences

*Can't do them all?* Here are the key Learning Experiences in the **Treaties** level:

- Dialoguing Treaty Words (T1)
- The Ratification: A Readers' Theatre (T4)
- A Pictorial Timeline (T5)
- Honouring Netukulimk: A Poster Project (T7)
- IRS Gallery Walk (T9)
- *R v. Sylliboy*: A Persuasive Poster (T10)
- What is Equity? A Readers' Theatre (T13)

## Treaty Denial

The Learning Experiences that constitute the Treaty Denial section connect the Treaty-Making period of the 18th century with the era of reconciliation that Canadians are living through today. If learners do not grasp the severity and duration of this era (at an age appropriate level), it will be difficult for them to understand why Canada is engaging in a national reconciliation process today. These LEs address land loss, habitat destruction, residential schools, centralization and other challenges. They also share how Mi'kmaw leaders and communities moved through these difficult experiences into the Treaty Renewal period, beginning the 1980s.

## What is Equity?

Many people see equity and equality as the same thing. The Learning Experiences in this section push learners to decouple these two ideas and to understand that equity is achieved when everyone can participate and determine their own futures. The historical experiences of the Treaty Denial period have left very different legacies for Mi'kmaw communities today. These legacies impact health, education, economic development, cultural identity and much more. The LEs in this section are anchored by another readers' theatre, one that emphasizes the historical roots of inequity for Mi'kmaw communities today.

## Vocabulary for Treaties Learning Experiences

Vocabulary 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 items. 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 to ensure balance in the treaty relationship.

**Responsibilities** are what is required by a nation to uphold an 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 to ensure balance in the treaty relationship.

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.