

Module 1 – Indigenous Peoples & Treaty 8

Content Warning

The Truth and Reconciliation Challenge features content that is sensitive and may be distressing to some. Please take care.

If you find yourself experiencing distress, please reach out for support.

- AHS Mental Health Helpline 1-877-303-2642
- Provincial Line - 811
- Crisis Text Line – Text Connect to 741741
- National Indian Residential School Crisis Line – 1-866-925-4419
- Hope for Wellness Helpline is available 24/7 to all Indigenous People across Canada. Chat online or call 1-855-242-3310.

Indigenous Groups in Canada

There are **three distinct groups** of Indigenous peoples in Canada – **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit**.

Indigenous peoples prefer to be identified by their specific Nation; it is best practice to ask an Indigenous person which Nation they belong to.

Except in legal and historical contexts, 'Indian' is no longer an acceptable term for referring to Indigenous people and is considered derogatory.

First Nations

First Nations people are the first people of the land we call Canada.

Within the boundaries of the RMWB we have 6 First Nations Communities. There are over 630 First Nations communities in Canada, which represent more than 50 Nations and 50 Indigenous languages.

Inuit

Inuit are Indigenous people of the Arctic. The word Inuit means "the people" in the Inuit language of Inuktitut. The singular form of Inuit is Inuk.

Métis

The Métis are a distinct Indigenous group in Canada with a rich and complex cultural identity.

They are descendants of unions between Indigenous peoples and European settlers, primarily French and Scottish fur traders.

Within the boundary of the RMWB we have six Métis communities.

What is a Treaty?

A treaty is a Nation-to-Nation agreement between the Government of Canada, and First Nations within the provinces and territories that define ongoing rights and responsibilities between the two parties.

Wood Buffalo is within the boundaries of Treaty 8 territory, which encompasses areas of Northern Alberta, Northwestern Saskatchewan, Northeastern British Columbia, and the Southwest portion of the Northwest Territories.

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Above: The Numbered Treaties (1 – 11)

About Treaty 8

On June 21, 1899, an adhesion to Treaty 8 (an add-on to the original) between the First Nations of North America and the Queen of England was signed at the Snye in Fort McMurray.

Treaty 8 was the most comprehensive treaty, encompassing a land mass of approximately 840,000 kilometers, and is home to 41 First Nation communities.

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.

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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.”



Treaty Rights

- Treaty rights and Aboriginal rights, commonly referred to as Indigenous rights, are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

- They are also a key part of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the Government of Canada has committed to implement in partnership with Indigenous peoples.
- Treaties were signed by First Nations peoples without completely understanding the Treaty, leading to loss of inherent rights. From Treaty signing to current day, Canada continues to fail in upholding and actioning Treaty promises.

Multimedia (for later viewing)

Video – Treaty Promises – Interpreting and Understanding Treaties

[Watch the video series Treaty Promises](#) to help deepen your understanding of Treaties (5 episodes - 37 minutes total).

Helpful Resources (links also available via e-newsletter):

Treaty 8 First Nations

[About Us - Treaty 8 First Nations](#)

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