

Images of Treaty Negotiations, Annuity Payments and Treaty Days – Treaties 1 to 10

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The following plates are treaty photographs collected by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) in Saskatoon. During the first two years of its mandate the OTC has collected over one hundred treaty photographs from archival collections across Canada. Each photograph tells a story and adds a new dimension to the history of treaties in Saskatchewan.

The original OTC was established by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and the government of Canada in 1989. This office played a vital role in laying the foundation for the negotiation of treaty land entitlement agreements between 28 First Nations and the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan. When the original mandate expired in March 1996 the parties renewed the office, appointing Judge David Arnot treaty commissioner beginning 1 January 1997. The OTC is an independent and impartial office with a mandate to facilitate discussions and build common understanding on treaty rights and/or jurisdiction in the areas of child welfare; education; shelter; health; justice; annuities; hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering; and lands and resources.

In order to fulfill the mandate the OTC must attempt to understand the nature of the treaty relationship. This concept is difficult to grasp, but the office has relied upon the knowledge of treaty elders in Saskatchewan, as well as historians and anthropologists, and the expertise of the FSIN and the government of Canada. Within these teachings a number of important themes have evolved that help people understand the nature of the treaty relationship. Many of these themes are captured in the photographs that follow.

The treaty photographs are labelled Plates 1–12, and have been divided into three groups. The first group (Plates 1–4) are of treaty negotiations from 1871 to 1899. The second group (Plates 5–8) are of treaty annuity payments, and the third group (Plates 9–12) are of treaty days, and deal with post-treaty issues.

The first group of photographs emphasize themes based on the relationship between the Government of Canada, and First Nations. Plate 1, "Conference with the Indian Chiefs during the Manitoba Indian Treaty,

1871," is an illustration of the Treaty 1 negotiations at Winnipeg. The OTC focuses mainly on treaties in Saskatchewan, but has also learned that early treaties, including the peace and friendship treaties from the east coast of Canada, the Ontario treaties, and even the American treaties,¹ all set precedents that were incorporated into the treaties in Saskatchewan. It is interesting to note that Plate 1 also includes more images of European settlers than First Nations peoples. The early settlers in the west were keenly aware of the importance of treaties, as successful negotiations ensured peaceful relations between the two groups.² Thus, the settlers had a vested interest in the treaty discussions, which is reflected by their presence at the Treaty 1 discussions.

Plate 2 is of the Treaty 6 negotiations that took place near Fort Carlton in 1876. This image has been published extensively, but is rarely discussed, even though it emphasizes a number of important themes. The relationship between the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) and the treaty commissioners is emphasized by the two divisions of policemen that flank the negotiations. Through the presence of the NWMP, the commissioners promised to bring law and order to the west, with an equal set of justice for both First Nations and the settlers. Also evident in the photograph are the tents and tipis that represent the First Nations delegations. John Andrew Kerr, a witness to Treaty 6, counted over 250 tipis,³ which emphasizes the importance placed on the negotiations by First Nations peoples.

Plates 3 and 4 are from the Treaty 8 negotiations at Fond du Lac in 1899. Plate 3 continues the theme of the importance of treaties by showing groups of people waiting at Fond du Lac for the treaty commissioner's boat. This importance is also emphasized by the treaty commissioner's entourage, which travelled extensively throughout northern Alberta and Saskatchewan to negotiate treaty with the Cree and Dene peoples. Plate 4 is a photograph of the Treaty 8 party at Fond du Lac. As shown in the faces of the negotiators, the Treaty 8 discussions were protracted and difficult. The Dene leaders focused on protecting hunting fishing and trapping rights, and the Canadian government focused on affirming its sovereignty in the north.

The next four photographs are from treaty payments and emphasize the ceremony of treaties, or what Harold Cardinal has termed the solemn undertaking of treaty.⁴ A Union Jack always flies at the treaty payments, and in Plate 5 a Union Jack is also draped over the treaty commissioners' table. Solemnity is also emphasized in the treaty suits worn by the chiefs and councillors. Similar to the NWMP uniforms, the treaty suit symbolized authority and respect. Each chief and councillor in these photographs

embodies the respect and authority of the treaty suit.

Plate 9, "Cree Indians at Bull's House, northern Saskatchewan," emphasizes the importance of women and children to the treaty negotiations. Most treaty photographs are of the chiefs and commissioners, but it is important to remember that First Nations women played a large part in the discussions leading up to the treaty negotiations. At almost every treaty negotiation there were long delays while the First Nations met amongst themselves to discuss the terms of treaty. These discussions are not well documented in the written accounts of treaties, but they are certainly a large part of treaty history.

Plate 10 is a photograph of John la Rivière making bannock at Churchill River during the Treaty 10 payments. Non-treaty people played a vital role in support of Canada's treaty delegations. The elders have reminded the OTC that it takes two nations to make a treaty.⁵ Both First Nations and non-Native peoples are equal partners in the treaty relationship. The treaties cannot exist without the participation of both groups.

The treaties continue to exist today through the payment of annuities, through treaty celebrations and through the discussions at the OTC. Plate 11, "Sketch of Council of Indians," reflects the theme of continued treaty discussions by illustrating a meeting between Treaty 6 peoples and the Marquis of Lorne in 1881. Treaty First Nations meet every year to receive annuities, and also celebrate anniversaries of treaty, the most recent being the 125th anniversary of Treaty 4. This photograph also emphasizes the theme of the treaty as a relationship between nations by the presence of numerous flags, including a combination Union Jack and a Saulteaux flag at the centre.

The final photograph, Plate 12, "Sakamatayenow, son and grandson of Poundmaker," embodies the most important theme of the treaty relationship, the theme of future generations. During the Treaty 6 negotiations, Chief Mistawasis said, "What we speak of and do now will last as long as the sun shines and the river runs, we are looking forward to our children's children, for we are old and have but a few days to live."⁶ Many of the chiefs, as well as Treaty Commissioner Alexander Morris, viewed the treaties as lasting agreements that would protect future generations of First Nations peoples, and all Canadians, well into the future.

The different themes reflected in Plates 1 through 12 – the importance of the early treaties, the relationship between the NWMP and the government of Canada, the importance of First Nations women, the solemnity of the treaties, looking forward to future generations, and non-Aboriginal peoples as treaty partners – all help us understand the nature of the treaty relationship.

Treaty history is incredibly complex, spanning hundreds of years. It is embodied in both the oral history of First Nations and the written history of Europeans and Canadians. The challenge for the OTC is to use these teachings and themes to understand the nature of the treaty relationship and build positive future relations between First Nations and all other Canadians.

Notes

- 1 See Raymond J. DeMallie, "Touching the Pen: Plains Indian Treaty Councils in Ethnohistorical Perspective" and "American Indian Treaty Making: Motives and Meanings," *American Indian Journal* 3, no. 1 (1977).
- 2 For an example of the importance of the treaties to settlers, see early newspaper coverage of the negotiations, especially reports from *The Manitoban* on Treaties 1 to 4 from 1871 to 1874.
- 3 John Andrew Kerr, "The Indian Treaties of 1876," *The Dalhousie Review* 17 (1937-38).
- 6 Harold Cardinal, speech to the Assembly of First Nations Treaties and Governance Conference, Victoria, B.C., 26 February 1999.
- 7 See Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Our Dream - That We Will One Day be Truly Recognized as First Nations* (in press).
- 8 Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, Including the Negotiations on Which They Were Based* (Toronto: Belfords and Clarke and Co., 1880).

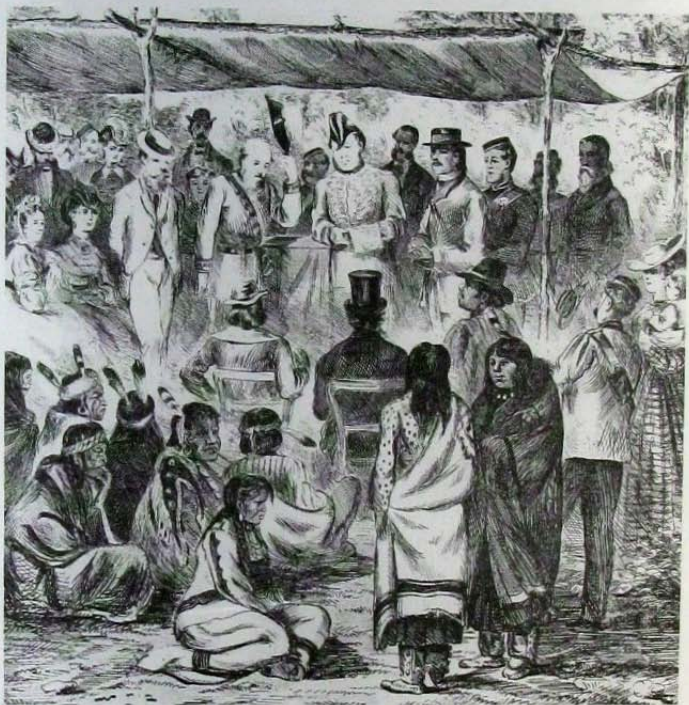


Plate 1. Conference with the Indian Chiefs during the Manitoba Indian Treaty, 1871. Engraving courtesy the *Canadian Illustrated News*. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-1406-72.



Plate 2. Treaty 6 negotiations at Fort Carlton, 1876. From a sketch by M. Bastien. Saskatchewan Archives, R-B3404.



Plate 3. View of Fond du Lac, 1899. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-949-64.



Plate 4. Treaty party, Fond du Lac, Saskatchewan, Treaty 8. Seargeant Fitzgerald of the North West Mounted Police is on the extreme left. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-2617-37.



Plate 5. Chipewyan Indians receiving treaty payment, Portage la Loche, Saskatchewan, Treaty 10. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-2137-19.



Plate 6. Pointed Cap, a Cree, receiving head chief's suit, File Hills Reserve, Saskatchewan, circa 1920s. Mustatik, at left, interprets for Jim Moore, in white shirt. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-3454-45.



Plate 7. Chief John Bell of the La Ronge band and two councillors at 1917 treaty day. Saskatchewan Archives, RA-6956.



Plate 8. Chief Thunderchild, 1910. Saskatchewan Archives, RA-17,725.



Plate 9. Cree Indians at Bull's House, northern Saskatchewan, circa 1911. View taken by a NWMP officer while on Treaty 10 payment party. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-2137-29.



Plate 10. John la Rivière, a canoe man, making bannock, in the Churchill River area, northern Saskatchewan, circa 1911. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-2137-24.

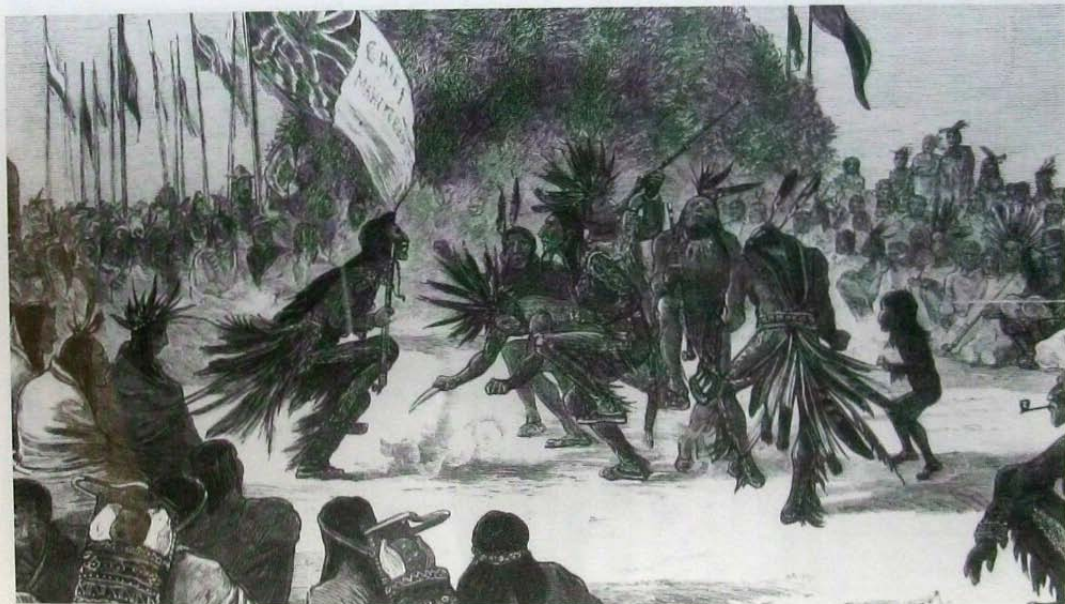


Plate 11. Sketch by S. Hall of the Council of Indians at Fort Carlton, with Governor General the Marquis of Lorne. Saskatchewan Archives, RD-1389(3).

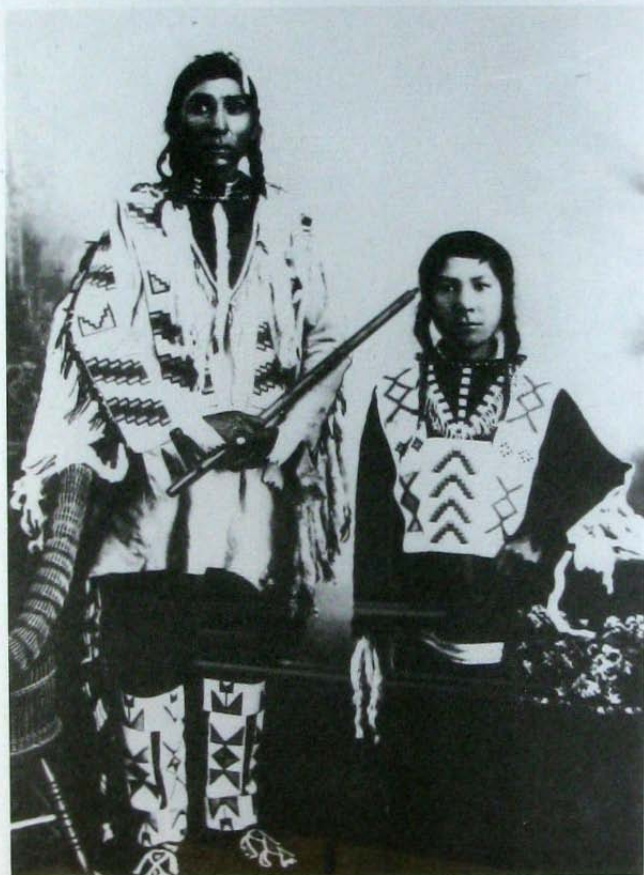


Plate 12. Sakamatayenow, son and grandson of Poundmaker, Cree Indians. From *New Breed*, Métis Society of Saskatchewan. Glenbow-Alberta Archives, NA-4418-1.