

**Date Reviewed**

February 2023

**Course**

[Social Studies 5](#)

**Topic**

Treaties in British Columbia

**Big Idea**

Natural resources continue to shape the economy and identity of different regions of Canada.

**Essential Question**

How fair has BC's treaty process been?

**Learning Standards****Content**

*Students are expected to know the following:*

- First Peoples land ownership and use
  - o Treaties

**Curricular Competencies**

*Students are expected to be able to do the following:*

- Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments, or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values, and motivations (perspective)

**Core Competencies**

[Communication](#) – I can explain what a treaty is and why nations sign treaties.

[Thinking](#) – I can consider the impact of the fact that BC has very few treaties.

[Personal and Social](#) – I can reflect on the importance of treaty negotiations to First Nations and British Columbia as a whole

**First People's Principles of Learning**

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

## Introduction

- Write the word “treaty” on the board. Explain that treaty is another word for an agreement between nations. Treaties between First Nations were spoken (oral). Written treaties were created between First Nations and Britain and later with Canada.
- Introduce the concept of treaties by showing the Heritage Minute video [Naskumituwin \(Treaty\)](#) (1:00) which depicts the making of Treaty 9 from the perspective of an 18-year-old Cree hunter.
- Use a [Think Pair Share](#) strategy to discuss:
  - o Why did the Cree sign Treaty 9?
  - o Why were treaties necessary for the creation of Canada?
  - o What problems can result when an agreement isn’t followed?

## Pre-Assessment

- Have students respond in their journals:
  - o Why would the Canadian government want to sign treaties with First Nations?
  - o Why would First Nations agree to sign treaties with the government?

## Interactive Learning Activities

### Part 1: Treaties in BC

- Explain that most treaties in Canada were signed more than 100 years ago. In BC, only two treaties were signed over 100 years ago. While there are 203 First Nations in BC, there are very few treaties.
- Help students find out the name(s) of the First Nation(s) territory that their community is located on by using the website [Native Land](#).
- Ask students whether they know if their community is on treaty land or if it is on territory where no treaty was signed. Explain that if no treaty exists, the land is unceded which means that the land has not been surrendered.
- Have each student write a personal land acknowledgement for their community using the handout “Land Acknowledgement”.

### Part 2: Historical Treaties in BC

- Explain that the first treaties in what is now BC were on Vancouver Island. Between 1850 and 1854, fourteen small treaties were made on Vancouver Island between several First Nations and James Douglas, governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island. At that time, Vancouver Island was a British colony and Britain wanted the land for settlers. The First Nations agreed to share part of their territories with the settlers. In exchange, Governor Douglas provided them with a small amount of money, clothing, and blankets.
- Provide students with the handout “Vancouver Island Treaties”. Have them work in small groups to read the excerpt from the treaties and to answer the questions.
- Explain that the only other treaty signed over 100 years ago that included part of BC was Treaty 8. In 1899, a large treaty was made between the Government of Canada and First Nations in the Peace River region of northeastern BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Northwest Territories.
- Use a [jigsaw strategy](#) to have students cooperatively research Treaty 8. Divide students into five groups and assign each group one of the questions from the handout “Treaty 8”. Provide

students with access to [Canadian Encyclopedia](#) and the Government of Canada's [Treaty Research Report](#) in order to conduct their research.

- Once groups have completed their research have them share their findings with the class so that all students will have answers to each of the questions.

### Part 3: Modern Treaties in BC

- Explain that except for the Vancouver Island treaties and Treaty 8, the land rights of First Nations in BC were ignored or denied by governments for over 100 years. Most of BC has no treaties which means that the First Nations never gave up their claim to the land.
- Show the short BC Treaty Commission video [BC Treaty 101](#) (3:49) about the treaty negotiation process in BC.
- Model how to use the [BC Treaty Commission website](#) to find out whether any of the First Nations in your region are currently taking part in the treaty process. If so, what stage of negotiations are they at?

### Post-Assessment

- Why are treaty negotiations important for First Nations?
- Why are treaty negotiations important for all people in BC?
- How fair has BC's treaty process been in the past?
- How fair is BC's treaty process today?

### Extension Activities

- Not all First Nations choose to negotiate treaties. Explain that one alternative to the BC Treaty Process is for First Nations to go to court to have their Indigenous Rights and Title legally affirmed.
- Have students use the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia's site to research the [2014 Tsilhqot'in Decision](#). Students can summarize the decision using the handout "Tsilhqot'in Decision".
- Have students brainstorm reasons that a First Nation would object to the province allowing a private company to log their traditional territory.
- Show the CBC video [Tsilhqot'in First Nation granted BC title claim in Supreme Court ruling](#) (3:57)

### Additional References

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## Materials and Resources

## Land Acknowledgement

*Create a land acknowledgement for you school or community.*

What nation's land is your school or community located on? There may be more than one.

Is there a treaty for this land? If yes, name the treaty.

If no treaty been signed, note that the land is unceded territory.

What is an important thing about the history of this territory?

What is your relationship to this territory? Where did your family come from before they came to this territory?

I live, learn, and play on the traditional (unceded?) land of the

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(nation names)

This is \_\_\_\_\_ land.  
(name the treaty or say that it is unceded)

This territory \_\_\_\_\_  
(write one thing to remember about the history of this territory)

My relationship to this territory is \_\_\_\_\_  
(you may want to say that you are a settler and where your family has come from)

## Vancouver Island Treaties

Canada and the First Nations that made treaties had different understandings about what they were signing. They spoke different languages. They had different histories, worldviews and values. They also had very different ideas of land ownership. First Nations believed they were agreeing to share the land. Canada believed First Nations were giving away or selling the land.

The following text is included in each of the Vancouver Island treaties:

*The condition of our understanding of this sale is this, that our village sites and enclosed fields are to be kept for our own use, for the use of our children, and for those who may follow after us; and the land shall be properly surveyed hereafter. It is understood, however, that the land itself, with these small exceptions, becomes the entire property of the white people for ever; it is also understood that we are at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands, and to carry on our fisheries as formerly.*

What did the First Nations give up?

What did the First Nations keep?

How did different views of land ownership affect each group's understanding of the treaty?

## Vancouver Island Treaties Answer Key

Canada and the First Nations that made treaties had different understandings about what they were signing. They spoke different languages. They had different histories, worldviews and values. They also had very different ideas of land ownership. First Nations believed they were agreeing to share the land. Canada believed First Nations were giving away or selling the land.

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What did the First Nations give up?

- *Ownership of most of the land.*

What did the First Nations keep?

- *Village sites and fields for continued use*
- *Hunting and fishing rights*

How did different views of land ownership affect each group's understanding of the treaty?

- *The Indigenous people did not think of land as something that could be privately owned.*
- *The government felt that it had bought the land.*

*\*Note that these treaties have been successfully relied upon in several modern-day court proceedings regarding hunting and fishing rights, and provide the basis of ongoing legal action regarding a village site in the Victoria area.*

## Treaty 8

1. Why was a treaty required in this time and place?
2. What First Nations were included in this treaty?
3. What did the First Nations want from the treaty process?
4. What did the government want from the treaty process?
5. What were the main terms of the treaty?



## **Treaty 8 Answer Key**

1. Why was a treaty required in this time and place?
  - Klondike Gold Rush brought many Europeans north into the area where many Indigenous People already lived
  - Some settlers and prospectors did not treat the First Peoples fairly and there was conflict
2. What First Nations were included in this treaty?
  - the Cree, Chipewyan, Beaver and others
3. What did the First Nations want from the treaty process?
  - hunting, fishing, and trapping rights on the land
4. What did the government want from the treaty process?
  - to control the land
  - to open the region to trade, travel, immigration, mining and lumbering
  - enable the North West Mounted Police to protect the region
5. What were the main terms of the treaty?
  - Land--transferred from First Nations to Canada
  - Reserves--one square mile for every five people
  - Lifestyle--Aboriginal rights to hunt and fish would be regulated by the government. Provided equipment and animals to encourage farming.
  - Money—lump sum payment plus annual payments to First Peoples in exchange for land.

## Tsilhqot'in Decision

*The Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin) decision by the Supreme Court of Canada on June 26, 2014, granted the declaration of Indigenous title to more than 1,700 square kilometres of land in British Columbia to the Tsilhqot'in Nation, the first time in Canada that Indigenous title had been confirmed. The ruling ended a complex legal journey which began in 1998, when the Tsilhqot'in Nation objected to British Columbia issuing private logging authorizations in their traditional territory.*

Who made the decision?	
When did they make the decision?	
What was the decision?	
Why was the decision important?	

## Tsilhqot'in Decision Answer Key

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Who made the decision?	Supreme Court of Canada
When did they make the decision?	June 26, 2014
What was the decision?	Title over more than 1,700 square kilometres of land to <i>Tsilhqot'in Nation</i>
Why was the decision important?	First time Indigenous title of land in Canada was recognized