

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom

Jurisdiction: Saskatchewan

Contact: Lori Whiteman

Level: K - 12

Theme: Curriculum/materials

Description of Practice:

In 2001, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner engaged several writers from the educational community in Saskatchewan, along with a network of Treaty Elders in writing a *Treaty Resource Guide*, called *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom*. Currently, this guide is available for Grades 7-12, and contains both broad and specific learning objectives, teacher background information, maps, and related resources. The OTC places a strong emphasis on teacher support and Professional Development. Since the development of this resource, teachers from across Saskatchewan at both provincial and band schools have taken advantage of workshops and presentations on Treaties in Saskatchewan, and about how to bring the curriculum to life in the classroom. A catalyst group of teachers, known as the Treaty Teacher Network, has grown to over 100 members and works alongside Elders to provide ongoing support for teachers in the classroom. A Treaty Resource Guide for K-6 is in development.

Background:

The Treaties in Saskatchewan are living documents. Signed in the late 1800s between the British Crown and the First Nations of Saskatchewan, these agreements forged mutual responsibilities and rights for the people of the Saskatchewan, "as long as the sun shines and the grass grows, and the rivers flow." The Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) was established in 1990. The OTC's mandate focuses on the nature of the Treaty relationship, and includes a strong educational component. Through its efforts, the OTC continues to build bridges to the future, which honours the spirit and intent of the Treaty agreements.

Development:

The *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom Treaty Resource Guide* is part of a larger *Treaty Information Kit* that was developed for use in Saskatchewan schools. The Kit includes specific materials, including locally produced videos, Elder's testimonials, books, articles and copies of historical text. A Speaker's Bureau (with over 30 members) complements and supports both the Professional Development for teachers, and the information contained within The Kit. The Kit was initiated by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). Current partners that support the ongoing development of the Kit

include the federal government, Saskatchewan Learning, First Nations University of Canada, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre.

Many of the resource materials are available on the OTC website, or on CD-rom, DVD, making the materials more accessible. www.otc.ca

Evidence:

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner also believes that a significant part of its contribution is not just the materials and services provided to schools, but is also the systemic improvement created by building a capacity for the future in the educational and First Nations community. On October 22, 2005 the Office of the Treaty Commissioner received the Canadian Race Relations Foundation Award of Excellence in the Public/Government Sector.

The *Treaty Information Kit* and *Grade 7-12 Treaty Resource Guide* has been distributed to all schools in Saskatchewan. To date, over 100 teachers are part of the Treaty Teacher Network. This Network has received intensive training with the Kit, and with the Treaty Elders and Elders' Helpers. These catalyst teachers provide workshops to teachers and administrators in the field. Over 1000 events and workshops have been held across Saskatchewan, and more than 2,500 teachers across Saskatchewan have received in-service training. Currently, the OTC is collecting data to ensure the effectiveness of the materials, and to determine needs for future development. The development of the *K-6 Treaty Resource Guide* has been prompted by requests from Elders and schools across Saskatchewan. Elders and teachers in the Treaty Teacher Network have developed a set of "Treaty Essential Learnings", which are a comprehensive set of treaty topics and expectations to assist with the actualization of materials in all schools.

Adaptability:

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom is flexible and highly adaptable for integration into curricular areas, including Social Studies, Native Studies, History and Language Arts. The materials and Professional Development workshops are designed to build teachers' confidence when teaching about Treaties.

Further Information:

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