Lesson Plan 2: Treaties and Cultural Change (as based on Provide an Aboriginal Perspective to Social Studies: Edmonton Public Schools)

Generalization
Treaties are considered sacred to First Nations people in their pursuit of self-determination

Rationale
Students must be able to recognize the importance of treaties and self-determination to Aboriginal cultures within Canada. The subject of the intent and spirit of treaties, subsequent land claim disputes, and the quest for self-determination and self-government are all important aspects that are intricately linked with Aboriginal peoples identity.

Objectives
Knowledge
• Develop an understanding that Aboriginal people view the treaties as sacred agreements between two sovereign nations
• Recognize that treaties are important catalyst in the pursuit of self-determination
• Define self-determination, self government, treaties
• Identify the treaties that were signed in Alberta and how the intent for each signing was similar or different
• Compare and contrast treaty negotiations

Skills
• Research and report on Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10
• Identify similarities and differences amongst the treaties
• Examine individuals who were influential in the treaty negotiation and sign processes
• Compare and contrast the different view points in regards to treaty

Attitude

Teacher Information
The treaties signed in the prairie provinces differ significantly from other signed in Canada as well as differing amongst themselves. Treaty provisions in Manitoba only allowed for 160 acres per family of five compared to 640 acres per family of five in subsequent treaties. Five treaties were signed in Alberta:

1. Treaty 4 1874
2. Treaty 6 1876
3. Treaty 7 1877
4. Treaty 8 1899
5. Treaty 10 1906

Each of the treaties signed in Alberta was signed with different Aboriginal groups and often with different reasons behind them. Between 1871 and 1877, Treaties 1 to 7 were secured, with the First Nations people agreeing to surrender their lands in return for protection and assistance from the government. Both the Canadian government and the First Nations people were suffering from starvation, dealing with trespassers, and they now sought an ongoing relationship with the government. Land surrenders were accomplished in return for compensation in goods and annuities, and later treaties also included reserves for exclusive use by First Nations people.

Treaties 1 and 2 were signed in southern Manitoba, Treaty 3 in western Ontario and east of the Red River and 4 and 5 in central and southern Saskatchewan. Treaty Number 4 was signed in 1874. It was the first treaty to affect an area in what is now known as Alberta.

The Cree people of Saskatchewan and Alberta signed Treaty 6 in 1876. Treaty Number 6 covered most of central Alberta and Saskatchewan, between the North and South Saskatchewan rivers. It was first signed at Fort Carlton, which is located north of Saskatoon, in 1876, and the main group who agreed to this treaty were the Plains Cree. Although, there were some other groups of Woods Cree and others who signed as well. The Cree were reluctant to sign a treaty, and the negotiations were extremely difficult. When they were promised 640 acres of land per family, Poundmaker, one of the leaders of the Plains Cree at the time, stated quite bluntly: "This is our land, it isn’t a piece of pemmican to be cut off and given back in little pieces to us. It’s ours and we’ll take what we want."

The Cree then left and met on their own for two days. While there were those, like Poundmaker, who were opposed to making treaty, there were others who supported it. Buffalo herds were declining, white settlers were moving into their territories to farm, and they saw making treaty as a possible way out of their problems.

One of the leaders who was interested in the possibility of signing the treaty was a guy by the name of Star Blanket. He suggested the treaty offered perhaps a new way for his people to make a living, and according to accounts of the treaty that were written down at the time, he made the case that, "Surely we Indians can learn the ways of living that made the white man strong."
When the Cree returned from their retreat, they demanded better terms. These were agreed to, and most of the leaders signed Treaty Number 6. Poundmaker, and another chief named Big Bear, were still opposed.

The Blackfoot, among others, of southern and central Alberta began to actively seek a treaty for themselves. In 1873, the Cabinet had decided to proceed with treaties only as the territory was required for settlement, and while this policy worked well for the government, the First Nations bands that were left without agreements were disturbed about their future. With food sources in short supply, Sioux refugees from the United States streaming into the Blackfoot territory, and a need for agricultural tools and support, the native people wanted a treaty. But the government refused to claim responsibility for any native affairs until their land was required for settlement. Treaty No. 7 was completed by 1877, but it would be more than twenty years before Treaty 8 was negotiated.

Treaty Number 7, which covers most of southern Alberta, was signed with the Blackfoot Confederacy in 1877. The meeting took place at Blackfoot Crossing, near Gleichen and involved members of the treaty party. There were missionaries there, members of the North West Mounted Police. It included some members of people who were known at the time as the Mountain-Assiniboine, or Stoney. But the main participants, really, were members of what was known as the Blackfoot Confederacy: so the people we refer to now as the Peigans, the Bloods or Kainai, the Blackfoot proper, or Siksika, and the Tsuu T'ina or Sarcee, as they were then called.

The life, culture and economy of these people revolved around the buffalo. But with the arrival of the Europeans, that was changing. And so, Treaty Number 7 was negotiated at a very critical time for the Aboriginal people of southern Alberta. Buffalo had been disappearing from the Canadian plains for many years, and in the years 1875 to 1877, the buffalo hunt had actually failed completely. These were proud and independent people, but that in many ways, their circumstances were pretty desperate in 1877.

Many would consider the signing of Treaty 7 a tribute, in fact, to the peoples of southern Alberta, that they didn’t just sign what was given to them but, in fact, they tried to consider what their best interests were and how this treaty in fact could help them and their communities survive. The negotiations over Treaty Number 7 included the most powerful and respected leaders of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The leading figures in the negotiations were Crowfoot, from the Blackfoot, and Red Crow of the Bloods. Other Aboriginal leaders who were involved in the signing were Sitting on Eagle Tailfeathers, of the Peigan, a chief by the name of Bullhead, of the Tsuu T'ina, and Bears Paw, of the Stoney. Crowfoot was known as a peacemaker and Red Crow was admired for his
shrewdness of mind. It was the discussion between these two chiefs that determined whether treaty would be made at Blackfoot Crossing.

The government saw the First Nations people as an unrefined people who needed to be assimilated, and eventually extinguished. They were thought to be pagans and their language, ceremonies and culture, believed to be outpourings of these pagan beliefs, were to be taken away. Most bands of First Nations people believed the treaties would help them to adjust to a new way of living as times changed, and that they would continue to live on their land as though the treaties had never been signed. This was not to be the case.

These treaties consisted of much negotiation, and even then there was often confusion about what each was entitled to, especially on the part of the First Nations people. Much confusion stemmed from the fact that different "settlements" were offered: the native people were to choose between land in common, land in severalty, or scrip. Often, what the people got and what they thought they were getting were two different things.

Introductory Activity

Invite a knowledgeable Aboriginal Elder or person from the community to speak to the students about Treaties and what they mean to Aboriginal people.

Or

Place the Treaty Areas Map and Treaty 6,7,8 Reserves Map on an overhead projector. Over top (layer) place the Aboriginal Groups Map so that students can visualize what groups signed what treaties and to conceptualize where these groups reside in the province.

Main Lesson

Distribute the following worksheet to students. Answers can be retrieved using the Culture and Its Meaning Edukit or by creating a teacher handout or using the information from the Teacher Information as dictated notes/class discussion.

**Alberta Treaties and Cultural Change**

1. Define treaties:
2. Define self-determination:
3. Define self-government:
4. List the treaties signed in Alberta and the year they were signed:
5. List at least one major group involved in the signing of all four treaties in Alberta.
6. What was the primary intent on the Governments behalf of negotiation treaty with the Aboriginal people?
7. Why did Aboriginal people sign treaty?
8. Did the government and Aboriginal people both have the same views on what the negotiation and signing of treaty meant? Why or why not? Give examples.
9. Do you think current Aboriginal leaders would sign treaty today?
10. Why do you think some Aboriginal people chose to take scrip instead of treaty?

Discuss the answers with students using them as a springboard for a class discussion. Break students into five groups assigning each group a specific treaty. In their groups students will research who was involved in the signing of treaty (what Aboriginal groups, who were the negotiators or government representatives, who translated etc), where did the negotiations take place, what was the catalyst for the signing of the treaty, what were some of the treaty provisions, why did the Aboriginal people accept the treaty, what area does the treaty cover, what year was it signed, how long did the negotiations take, and what are current realities? Once students have gathered all of this information they will present it using a role playing format. Students will assign roles and will act out what they feel to be an important aspect of the treaty negotiation. They will want to share as much possible information with their classmates as possible through their role play. The students must also develop a ‘script’ that will be handed in and evaluated.

This exercise will most likely require a number of class periods to be affective but it is an activity that allows students to take responsibility for their own learning in a creative and fun manner. Students should also be required to take notes during the role playing or receive a copy of the ‘scripts’.

The lesson should also allow students to realize the differences between the treaties signed in Alberta.

Supplementary Lesson
Using the information collected during the role playing exercises students will fill out a chart to compare and contrast the five different treaties in Alberta.

Worksheets (next page)