

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WILLIAMS TREATIES

Territory of the Anishinaabeg Nation including the Mississauga, Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa & Pottawatomi Peoples

1763

THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION

The Royal Proclamation recognized and affirmed Indigenous title to the land, and established a constitutional structure for negotiating treaties.

PRE-CONTACT

In the beginning, the Mississauga, Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa & Pottawatomi Peoples lived in the land stretching from Georgian Bay to the Ottawa River, from the north shores of Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe, and over the rivers and waterways of the Lake Ontario watershed. They lived in harmony with Mother Earth, obtaining all they needed by hunting, fishing, and harvesting plant materials.

1923

THE WILLIAMS COMMISSION & THE WILLIAMS TREATIES

By the early 1900s, a good part of Ontario was subject to treaties -- but not all of it. And Ontario's government was using unceded land for settlement. Following an investigation, the Williams Commission affirmed Indigenous title to large tracts of land in central and southern Ontario. The Commission then negotiated the Williams Treaties, which extinguished Indigenous title to the land.

1700S - 1800S

TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

As settlers began to encroach on Indigenous territory in what is now Ontario, the Crown began to negotiate a series of treaties and land purchase agreements. Indigenous people were typically given a one-time payment and sometimes hunting and fishing rights over the land.

Treaties negotiated in this period include the Robinson Treaties and Treaties 3,5 and 9 of the Numbered Treaties.

1992-2018

THE ALDERVILLE LAWSUIT & A NEW SETTLEMENT

In 2018, after a lengthy legal battle and a few years of negotiations, the seven Nations that had signed the Williams Treaties reached a new settlement with the governments of Ontario and Canada.

The settlement provided for financial compensation, the opportunity to purchase additional land for reserves, and protection of treaty harvesting rights. The federal and provincial governments both formally apologized to the Williams Treaties First Nations .

1994

R. V. HOWARD,
[1994] 2 S.C.R. 299

The Supreme Court of Canada found that the 1923 Williams Treaties extinguished the rights of the Hiawatha People to hunt and to fish in the Otonabee River area.

The Court upheld a broad interpretation of the Treaty, finding that the terms that provided for the surrender of hunting and fishing rights were unambiguous and would have been understood by the Hiawatha signatories.