



Office of the Treaty Commissioner

Year in Review 2023-2024

Cover Acknowledgement: Teaching the next generation at a powwow in Treaty 6 Territory.

Photo by Angela Hill

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Honouring the work of Treaty Commissioner Mary Musqua-Culbertson

In January 2024, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner celebrated the work of Commissioner Mary R. Musqua-Culbertson as she completed her term as the first female Indigenous Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan. Commissioner Musqua-Culbertson focused on increasing the understanding of the Treaties, not just historically, but what it means today.

Commissioner and OTC staff travelled to communities to meet with leaders, youth, and Elders to shape the discussion on the Spirit and Intent of Treaty. We sat as part of Treaty and national gatherings, conferences, and ceremony.

During her term the office celebrated the 30-year anniversary of OTC, with the unveiling of a new logo and a well-attended community round dance.

There were many new initiatives that were started over the past six-year term, that were designed to further understanding on the Spirit and Intent of Treaty. This included, the creation of the Vision for Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation (TRTI), the OTC Youth in Service project and the Library & Archives. It has recently been renamed the Mary R. Musqua-Culbertson Library & Archives in her honour.

During her tenure, the OTC began the Treaty Learning Journey (TLJ) - Let's Talk Truth, which took the popular Teaching Treaties in the Classroom and made it available to a wider audience beyond educators.

A partnership with the Province of Saskatchewan began in 2022 to mark Treaty boundaries annually, including signs in Indigenous languages erected on provincial highways.

The importance of traditional knowledge was upheld with the formation of the Treaty Elders Council, which includes 10 Elders and 2 youth members from all five Treaty areas in the province, as well as Cree and Dene interpreters.

With Commissioner Musqua-Culbertson, the OTC celebrated the successes of women leaders for their honours and appointments and called attention to the need to implement the recommendations of the Final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. She spoke at the House of Commons in the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs and was a constant advocate for the acceptance and implementation of UNDRIP. The OTC will continue to answer the Commissioner's call that we all must support the work of Treaty education, Treaty rights, and Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation.



Operations at the OTC

While 2023–2024 year succeeded many of our office goals, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner remains steadfast and dedicated to working across Saskatchewan within all of our Treaty territories and with Treaty partners. We are continually reminded of how far we have left to go. This work will continue as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow.

Our current Treaty Commissioner finished her term in January of 2024, after serving for six years.

By virtue of working at the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, we have all had the privilege of working alongside Treaty Commissioner Mary Musqua-Culbertson for the last few years. Her vision and leadership have inspired us to continue the legacy she left behind at the OTC which was to ensure that the true history of the Treaties is taught to every single youth, adult, Kokum, Moshum, and person in Saskatchewan.

OTC's departments of Treaty Education, Reconciliation and Community Partnerships, and Research and Archives are just as busy as ever. They work to promote respect, awareness, reconciliation, education and understanding of Treaties across the whole province. Our staff works tirelessly and their dedication in this area is second to none. Team members regularly travel to all corners of the province to promote this work, and share learning opportunities available with rural communities.

Our office has been able to reach thousands of people across the province and country with the Treaty Learning Journey (TLJ) workshops, online zoom/Microsoft teams' events and with hosting sessions with First Nations leadership, and conferences for the teachers and the public. Our team travelled to meet with leaders, survivors, youth, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers, to ensure they had access to the Treaty information they needed for their communities.

Several of our projects continue, including moving into our third year of a partnership with the Saskatchewan Government on the Treaty Highway boundary signs marking the different Treaty territories. In the 2023–24 year we celebrated signs being placed in four locations. Highway 39 near Estevan and the Trans-Canada Highway 1 near Moosomin to mark the Treaty 2–Treaty 4 Boundary, the Yellowhead Trans-Canada Highway 16 near Lanigan to mark the Treaty 4–Treaty 6 Boundary, and Highway 2/102 near La Ronge to mark the Treaty 6–Treaty 10 Boundary.



Operations at the OTC

The entire team continues the good and important work we do here at the OTC, ensuring everyone understands the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, the importance of Orange Shirt Day, the ongoing awareness campaign of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit people, and the steps required to work towards true reconciliation. In the following pages you will see a snapshot of the work that has been done and the work that needs to continue for the future.

There are different agencies, organizations, and businesses currently working with the OTC to develop truth and reconciliation action plans, using the OTC-developed Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation Growth Model. They are well on their way of a reconciliation journey.

The Research and Archives team stays very busy fielding daily calls and requests about Indian Residential School records and other documents, all the while continuing to do their workplans in their areas of research.

Treaty Education team takes people on the Treaty Learning Journey – Lets’s Talk Truth as well as support educators with teaching about Treaties in their classrooms, using the curriculum which became mandatory in 2008. The OTC speaker’s bureau continues to grow and our speakers are in demand, travelling across the province to educate schools, businesses, and other groups on the Treaties and many other topics such as Indian Act, Indian Residential Schools, 60’s Scoop, Elders/Knowledge Keepers protocols, land acknowledgements, Indigenous culture and worldview, and more.

We have continued to build our relationship with the Treaty Relations Commission in Manitoba meeting with the Commissioner and her team as part of our ongoing work.

We look forward to 2024-2025 with hope, optimism, and enthusiasm to continue the great work all of our departments do on a daily basis at the OTC.

Kinanâskomitinan (we thank you)



Treaty Education at the OTC

The 2023-24 year has been continuously busy for the Treaty Education department at OTC. The Treaty Learning Journey - Let's Talk Truth public education sessions continue to grow in popularity, the speaker's bureau continued to grow, and we co-hosted an inaugural Treaty Recognition Week in May.

To support the public's increasing interest in learning the history of Treaties, we continue to offer the Treaty Learning Journey - Let's Talk Truth. It walks people through history of Treaty in Saskatchewan. The two-day workshop starts with Before Treaty, which features sessions on Indigenous worldview and Indigeneity; moving on to At Treaty, with sessions on the Spirit and Intent of Treaties, Peace and Friendship Treaties, and the numbered Treaties; Breaches of Treaty, with sessions on the Indian Act, Indian Residential Schools and inter-generational trauma, and Today, including sessions on contemporary Treaty and Indigenous issues such as, the TRC Calls to Actions, UNDRIP, MMIWG2S. The Treaty Learning Journey - Let's Talk Truth is highly requested and has been offered to independent groups as well as online for the general public. The TLJ has educated 26 organizations in-person and online within the past year. The Treaty Education team also hosted a successful inaugural Treaty Learning Journey Conference - Let's Talk Truth in February, which was very well received by attendees.

The speakers' bureau continues to grow in an effort to keep up with demand. Not only are the speakers available for private events, they support public OTC events including for Indigenous Storytelling Month, Pride Month, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Orange Shirt Day, Treaty Learning Journey - Let's Talk Truth, and more. Our Speaker's Bureau has delivered 276 sessions in the past 2023-24 year.

The OTC continued fostering long-standing Strategic Alliances with government, business, and community groups, while creating and expanding new strategic partnerships. These partnerships bring more depth and long-term strategy to the knowledge sharing for these organizations, building their understanding of Treaty and Treaty relationships. The OTC is pleased to be able to support Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities with the information they need.

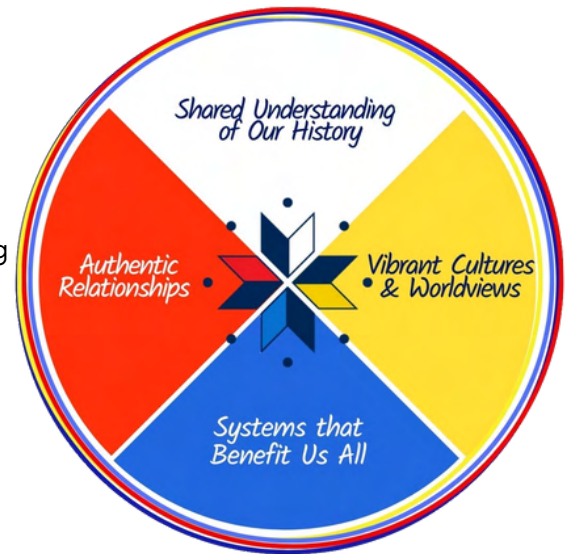
While the 2023-24 year was very active, we look forward to even more in the coming year including hosting our second Treaty Learning Journey - Let's Talk Truth Conference, a youth gathering on Treaty, and are currently working on updating the digital Treaty Binders from our Treaty Kits.



Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation

In 2023–24, the Reconciliation and Community Partnerships team at the Office of the Treaty Commissioner worked with many organizations to help them develop action plans for Truth and Reconciliation.

One of the highlights was the completion of a year-long process with the Saskatoon Police Service. The process allowed SPS to critically examine its history, and to identify recommendations, action steps, and timelines on moving truth and reconciliation forward. The action plan is a road map to a better police force in Saskatoon, one which contributes to a positive long-term impact for Indigenous people living in that city.



Also undergoing this reflection and planning process are the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, Federated Co-operative Ltd, Edwards School of Business (University of Saskatchewan), and Remail Modern Art Gallery. The organizations are using the Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation (TRTI) Growth Model to map their current efforts and create recommendations for action, and begin a process to put those steps into action, and measure progress.

Also in 2024, the OTC supported 36 organizations in the piloting of a “Do-it-Yourself” online version of the Action Planning process. This series of six workshops summarized the in-depth TRTI process and allowed organizations to do their own analysis and recommendation building.

This year saw the TRTI Vision and Growth Model translated into Plains and Woodland Cree, Denesuline, Michif, and French with plans to translate into Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota, ensuring it is accessible to all who desire to use it.

The OTC also continues its ongoing support for community-led Reconciliation Circles across the province. The OTC held three meetings of a newly-created Wisdom Circle, a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous older people from across the province who will be asked to provide guidance as the Saskatchewan reconciliation movement grows.

The OTC also assisted the communities of Melfort and Tisdale to begin their community reconciliation journeys with the creation of reconciliation circles. There are now 12 Reconciliation Circles across the Treaty territories in Saskatchewan. The Reconciliation and Community Partnership team regularly attend meetings of these reconciliation circles, providing assistance and promoting coordination among the groups.

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner Library & Archives has been officially named the Mary R. Musqua-Culbertson Library & Archives and the collection is very much in demand by researchers and community members.

These archives hold the largest Treaty related collection in Canada, including primary; published primary; secondary; and oral history sources. The collection is available to the public and access to our reading room can be booked here: otc.ca/pages/archives.html

Much of the research focus during the 2023-24 year was on planning for the 150th anniversary of Treaty Four -- Celebrating the Sesquicentennial (1874-2024). This includes research for a feature length documentary funded by Commemorate Canada and a Treaty Four Timeline funded by the Museums Assistance program (Heritage Canada).

Other prominent research projects include continuing the Treaty Highway Signs project with the Province of Saskatchewan. In the past year, we celebrated Treaty boundary signs for the Treaty 2/4 boundary near Estevan; the Treaty 2/4 boundary near Moosomin; the Treaty 4/6 boundary near Lanigan; and the Treaty 6/10 boundary near La Ronge.

The OTC is also continuing the digitization of historical Tuberculosis Sanatorium records in partnership with Sask Lung. The project aims to make these records available to the public in early 2025.

The OTC Treaty Timeline is very much in demand and has travelled the province to be present for events at Government House in Regina; Montreal Lake Cree Nation; Kinistin First Nation; and many others.

We have also added research support to three more Indian Residential School search committees to help identify missing children and unmarked graves. The OTC is now supporting research for seven Indian Residential School search committees in the province. Our focus is archival research and French translations with our partners from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina.

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner Elders and Youth Council was re-named and is now the Treaty kihtehayah Aḡnedhe Council. Last year the council, which includes 10 Elders; 2 interpreters; and 2 youth members met five times. The council advises on all research conducted by the OTC and also guides the work of the office as a whole. The Treaty kihtehayah Aḡnedhe Council is funded under the Council of Library and Information Resources. This group is developing Research Ethics and Protocols Guidelines to define how we share archival resources and Treaty Oral Histories. The Elders and youth selected by the Treaty Commissioner come from all Treaty territories and language groups of Saskatchewan.

We are very grateful for the support of the Treaty kihtehayah Aḥnedhe Council.

Seated left to right: Georgina Musqua; Amanda Louison; Jenny Spyglass; Jacob Bill; Gladys Wapass-Greyeyes; Mary-Anne Daywalker-Pelletier.

Standing left to right: Youth member Trey Poitras; Allan Adam; Freddie Throassie; Isidore Campbell; Sydney McKay; Tom Roberts.

Missing: Abel Charles; and youth member Jade Roberts.



In the News: OTC Library & Archives

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner is constantly growing knowledge and working to advance our library and archives.

The Owing History: Indigenous Histories and Records Access Conference in Winnipeg in April allows us to continue to do this good work.

"I asked many questions throughout the conference to help guide me through some of the obstacles that we face in our own archive," said Eli Worme, a member of the OTC archives team. He added that the positive responses he received "informed me that what we do at our office is relevant and important."

Talking with the Community

FACEBOOK

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner has 5,347 Followers on Facebook a growth of 10 per cent in the 2023-24 year, where we share news and information around Indigenous rights, Treaty implementation and Treaty Issues, and reconciliation. In a daily posting we share articles, upcoming events, and suggested ways for people to engage with their community. These posts had a reach of more than 1.85 million in the past year with more than 23,000 likes and 22,000 links clicked.

TWITTER

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner has 3,764 Followers on Twitter, growing by 118 followers during the 2023-24 year. The content that we shared was liked more than 2,000 times over the past year. We share the latest news and information on Indigenous, Treaty rights and reconciliation as well as event information from the OTC events calendar six-plus times per day.

INSTAGRAM

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner has 235 followers on Instagram, a newer social media outlet for OTC. We did two giveaways in the 2023-24 year - one in summer and one in winter - engaging a new audience in social media, and helping grow our numbers on this platform.

E-NEWSLETTER

Once a month the Office of the Treaty Commissioner shares upcoming events for reconciliation in our events email, and two weeks later we share information about the work of the office, remind about upcoming events, and show highlights from OTC social media. We reach just over 1,600 people with our emails monthly, with an open rate of more than 30 per cent.

OTC.CA

At otc.ca, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner shares the latest updates on the work of the office and the team, as well as stories of Reconciliation in Action. There is a form to have the Research team support with research requests and to request a speaker from our Speakers Bureau. We also have links to resource websites and to order resources and books.

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TREATIES

WE ARE ALL TREATY PEOPLE



Additional New Treaty Boundary Highway Signs

The Government of Saskatchewan and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner unveiled a series of new highway signs to be placed in the Estevan, Moosomin, Lanigan and La Ronge areas to highlight more Treaty boundaries across the province - and will be seen by thousands of motorists daily.

"I appreciate the ongoing collaboration of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and the Government of Saskatchewan in providing prominent highway signs that help bring attention to the importance of the Treaties," Lieutenant Governor Russ Mirasty said.

"These provincial highway signs are symbols of our government's continuing reconciliation journey and ongoing work to support Treaty education initiatives in Saskatchewan," Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs Don McMorris said. "We are proud to continue to work in partnership with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner on our ongoing path of reconciliation."

"These signs allow people to recognize and understand the Treaty territories that were here long before the creation of the province," Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan Mary Musqua-Culbertson said. "The highways cross these territories and it is important that it is acknowledged."

OTC at Treaties 1 to 11 Gathering

Members of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner team were able to spend a week in July 2023 in Manitoba for the Treaties 1 to 11 Gathering hosted by Treaty 1 and Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

We were pleased to be able to come together with around 1,200 leaders, elders, youth, and community members from the numbered Treaty First Nations. This event provides the opportunity to engage in critical discussions on various topics such as political, legal, international, and communications strategies.



Reconciliation Action Planning with SPS

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner's reconciliation team and facilitators were pleased to support the Saskatoon Police Service through the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation Action Plan designed to guide and measure work in reconciliation in the years ahead.

OTC facilitators met with a team from SPS 12 times over the course of the year, including trainings on Treaty, mapping out where the SPS is on their truth and reconciliation journey, and sessions on where they want to grow.

This report was presented to the Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners at a meeting in December.

"The feedback to the report was incredibly positive," said Rhett Sangster, OTC director reconciliation and community partnerships.

Comments included that the report was "refreshingly practical" and an "inspiring document."

The process allowed SPS to identify recommendations on moving truth and reconciliation forward. The report reflects SPS's desire to measure the impacts of their efforts, make a long-term commitment to Truth and Reconciliation through Treaty Implementation, have a deeper understanding of past wrongdoings, to publicly acknowledge past harms against Indigenous Peoples, and clearly communicate the work being done to address these issues in a meaningful way – as a way to rebuild trust and seek truth and reconciliation.

The action plan is a road map to a better police force in Saskatoon, one which contributes to a positive long-term impact for Indigenous people living in that city. This report outlines a plan to put the recommendations in place including timelines, leads, and indicators to measure progress.

The OTC knows this work is difficult and implantation is not easy, but that it is really important. It will require sustained action and resources to have real impact. Strong partnerships, particularly with Indigenous communities and organizations, are needed to be successful.

OTC at St. Michael's Indian Residential School Gathering

Members of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner team travelled to Duck Lake, Saskatchewan to attend the third St. Michael's Indian Residential School Gathering in early August 2023.

We were there to share information about the work of the office, including some of our work pertaining to Indian Residential School research, and to contact us for information to support research.

There were about 100 people at the event including Elders and residential school Survivors, who attended to hear speakers focused on trauma, healing, and recovery.

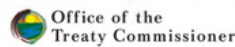
"It was important and necessary. Speeches were made about addiction, love from our parents who attended residential school and intergenerational trauma," said Morgan Esperance, with the OTC.

OTC Celebrates First Treaties Recognition Week

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner presents
Treaties Recognition Week
 May 21 - 27, 2023



Learn about Treaties and the Treaty Relationship



The Office of the Treaty Commissioner is excited to celebrate the first Treaties Recognition Week in Saskatchewan, running May 21-27 to commemorate the Treaties and the Treaty Relationship.

The initiative is an important way to advance and celebrate the Treaty Relationship, a key component of reconciliation. Having the provincially recognized week ensures the teachings of Treaty are given recognition and continue in the curriculum of our schools," said Treaty Commissioner Mary Musqua-Culbertson.

The initiative was introduced by students in the Grade 5 Class at École Lumsden Elementary and their teacher Justin Freitag as part of their diligent work on reconciliation and their drive to commemorate the Treaties and the Treaty Relationship.

"These students are the voices of the future of this province and their push for a Treaty Recognition Week is a commendable example of reconciliation. The OTC is also pleased to have the support of First Nation Communities from across the province support the initiative including from LLRIB Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, Sweetgrass Chief Lori Whitecalf and her Council by way of BCR, and Ocean Man Chief Connie Big Eagle."

School divisions Horizon School Division and Prairie Valley School Division have also come forward to support the initiative.

OTC shares Treaty Timeline at Government House

The OTC was thrilled to share the Treaty Timeline in partnership with the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, Russell Mirasty, at Government House in Regina in the 2023 summer.

Research started in 2018 for the Treaty Timeline, which was created to share the history of the territories from 1643 to 2022. The goal was to represent a chronological timeline through 711 entries focusing on Treaty events, including entries on the history of settlement in Saskatchewan.

"I am grateful to the Office of the Treaty Commissioner for sharing this educational Treaty timeline with Government House," said Lieutenant Governor Mirasty.



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