Stage 2

"Contact and Cooperation"

Two Governments dealt with each other as relative equals, as sovereign nations. There existed understanding that each could help each other.
THE TWO ROW WAMPUM AND THE SILVER COVENANT CHAIN

Wampum served as a device to chronicle terms of an agreement or treaty between nations. The meanings revealed in the wampum were painstakingly guarded and upheld as sacred in the minds and hearts of First Nations and their treaty partners. Great ceremonies were held to renew these agreements. The Wampum belts were read in inter-tribal councils. Wampum was a vital part of First Nations diplomacy. It is said that wampum was so highly regarded that visibly carrying wampum practically provided diplomatic immunity in enemy territory. The French, Dutch and British soon caught on to the importance of wampum in securing agreements and could pretty well be assured of failure without it. The wampum, strings or belts, were usually accompanied with pipes of peace. The importance of wampum was so recognized that even fur traders used it in their dealings. (adapted from Alan Corbiere, http://www.mchigeeng.net/kinoomaadoog/articles/wampum_belts.htm)

The Haudinsaunee (Iroquois) made a “Two Row Wampum” Treaty with the Dutch in the early 1600’s. On the “Two Row Wampum” Belt, the TWO ROWS symbolise vessels, travelling down the same river together. According to Elder Royanni Thomas the Gus-weh-tah (Two Row Wampum Belt) consists of two parallel rows of purple wampum beads on a white background. The three rows of white beads stand for peace, friendship, and respect, elements which keep the peoples at a distance and which also bind them together.

The purple rows represent the Original People, their laws, their customs; the other for the European people, their laws, their customs. The understanding was “We will each travel the river together, but each in our own boat. And neither will try to steer the other’s vessel.” The Two Row Wampum was later reinforced by the metaphor of the Silver Covenant Chain, which must be polished regularly or else it will become tarnished and lose its lustre. The chain is to represent relations of mutual friendship and protection. A chain allows links to be added and is substantial in terms of durability.

With the 1764 Treaty of Niagara, Anishnaabe and other nations (24 First Nations and 2000 Chiefs and Headmen) joined the Haudinsaunee in the recognition of this agreement as an extension of the Two Row Wampum and the Silver Covenant Chain. Hence the Two Row Wampum and Silver Covenant Chain became the grandfather of all treaties and any treaty hereafter is considered to be an extension of such.

This Silver Covenant is today, still referred to in when First Nations converse about government negotiations – the two rows were not meant to impede on one or the other.
THE TREATIES AND THE INDIAN ACT.

From time immemorial, First Nation and Inuit people lived autonomously within their own religious, social, cultural, medical, economic, and political values and activities. These lifestyles changed dramatically with the introduction of new cultures and commercialization. Relationships between the first peoples, new settlers and even those among original people themselves became strained. Eventually, the land of the people of Turtle Island became a huge focus of the developing new federal government. This led to the government initiatives of 'solving' the problem through "treaties".

However, First Nations and the federal government differed in their views of "treaties". While First Nations see Treaties as covenants establishing land 'sharing' agreements, the government sees them first as contracts confirming land surrender. Written text to First Nations were not as meaningful as the 'spirit' of an agreement and an oral commitment.

The treaties were divisive within the First Nation communities since the federal government only viewed Aboriginal people or 'Indians' as those members of bands or First Nations who signed treaties. This lead to many ramifications under the Indian Act of 1876 which ruled that the federal government had jurisdiction over all matters related to 'Indian' life.

Canada's Aboriginal peoples are a diverse group. Even with many similarities throughout various groups, the Indian Act has created diverse situations particularly in the definition of 'status', living on 'reserve', rights, privileges and general government of 'Indians.'

The Indian Act is administered by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

For more information: www.sicc.sk.ca/saskindian/
link to article in 1975, july 15 by Verna J Kirkness

http://www.otc.ca
link to 'what is a treaty' - FAQ'S
**The Métis**

The Métis are a separate and distinct people with ancestry from traditional Métis catchment areas (not reserves) and have Métis rights that are not derivative of Aboriginal rights. Métis people are as different from First Nations people as the Inuit are. Prior to Canada’s crystallization as a nation, the Métis people emerged out of the relations of Indian women and European men in west central North America. While the initial offspring of these unions were individuals who possessed mixed ancestry, the gradual establishment of distinct Métis communities, outside of Indian and European cultures and settlements, as well as the subsequent between Métis women and Métis men, resulted in the genesis of new Aboriginal peoples – the Métis.

The Métis people constitute a distinct Aboriginal nation largely based in western Canada. The Métis Nation grounds its assertion of Aboriginal nationhood on well recognized international principles. It has a shared history, common culture (song, dance, national symbols, etc.), unique language (Michif with various regional dialects), extensive kinship connections from Ontario westward, distinct way of life, traditional territory and collective consciousness. In March 1983, the Métis Nation separated from the Native Council of Canada to form the Métis National Council – its own Métis-specific representative body. The Métis National Council represents the Métis nation nationally and internationally. It receives its mandate and direction from the democratically elected leadership of the Métis Nation’s governments from Ontario Westward (Métis Nation of Ontario, Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation – British Columbia.

Within Ontario, historic Métis communities arose along various watersheds throughout the province and have distinct histories and characteristics. In contemporary times, the Métis Nation has identified that there are approximately 12 historic Métis communities (catchment areas) that continue to exist. Sometimes they are within larger non-aboriginal communities. Métis people live throughout Ontario in urban, rural or remote areas, including Thunder Bay.

The rights of the Métis people have been a topic for debate since the events of Red River and Batoche. The Métis Nation, as a young Aboriginal nation indigenous to North America, possessed the rights held by all other Aboriginal nations. In practice however, the 1870 government of Canada dealt with the Métis Nation differently. Following the transfer of Rupert’s Land to Canada, the federal government dispatched Commissioners to the West to settle legal ownership of the land with the Aboriginal inhabitants. The Commissioners collected signatures on two kinds of documents: Collective treaties for Indian bands, and Scrips for Métis individuals.

In the 1930’s, The Métis Nation reawakened with 1.25 million acres in northern Alberta. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Métis movement took shape, in part empowered with many elements of course: the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960), the Civil Rights movement, and the AIM movements all played a part in the growing consciousness of the Métis, non-status Indians. This movement peaked during the Constitutional talks of 1981 and 1982.
Most Métis live in western Canada, both in remote and urban communities and in Métis-only and mixed communities. There are over 300 Métis communities; most are English-speaking with some northern communities using Cree or Michif. Before the establishment of the mounted police in the west, the Métis organized themselves in a military style that proved useful in the creation of border patrols that discouraged invasion by both the American Fenians and the Sioux.

The Métis have never received the benefits governments grant to Status Indians and Inuit. In its final report the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated "it is unjust and unreasonable to withhold from Métis people the services and opportunities available to other Aboriginal peoples".
The Métis (continued)

Examples of Contributions of the Métis Community

The York Boat

The York boat was invented by the Métis for use on larger bodies of water and to carry more freight than the freighter canoes. It also required less maintenance and had a sail. The Métis were responsible for the development of the versatile Red River cart used to transport goods over both land and water.

The RCMP Musical Ride

The RCMP Musical Ride may have been inspired by the Métis practice of exercising their horses to the music of the jig and square dance. In the evenings after buffalo hunts, the Métis exercised their horses to music in the fashion of a square dance while the fiddler played quadrilles (a square dance still performed by Métis dancers).

The Métis Flag

The figure in the centre of a blue field represents the joining of two cultures and as an infinity symbol, represents the immortality of a nation. As the Métis were strongly associated with the North West Company, a fur trading entity in competition with the HBC, they often fought for NWC causes. As part of a gift giving ceremony in 1814, NWC partner Alexander MacDonnell presented the Métis with this flag, which would soon become a trademark for the nation. Today, the Métis flag is still used and carried as a symbol of continuity and pride.

Fiddle Music

The sash has acquired new significance in the 20th century, now symbolizing pride and identification for Métis people. Manitoba and Saskatchewan have both created "The Order of the Sash" which is bestowed upon members of the Métis community who have made cultural, political or social contributions to their people. The fiddle has figured prominently in the lifestyle of the Métis people for hundreds of years. It is the main instrument used in the Métis jigs. The famous 'Red River Jig' has become the centrepiece of Métis music. Since this European instrument was exceedingly expensive in early Canada, especially for the grassroots Métis communities, many craftsmen learned how to make their own. Today, the fiddle is still used in celebrations and is a symbol of Métis early beginnings and the joyful spirit in which they have lived and grew. Communities hold fiddle and jigging contests and give the instrument as a symbolic gesture of nationhood and pride.
The Métis Sash

Of all the symbols associated with the Métis culture, the sash is perhaps the most widely recognized and best known. Wrapped about the midsection, it was used by Voyageurs to carry their belongings during their transportation duties. As the Métis took tremendous pride in their clothing, the sash, being an attractive piece was highly valued for its aesthetic presence. Often, a decorative beaded pipe bag was added to the Voyageur's outfit, being suspended from his sash. As well, it was valued for its practicality and versatility. It was warm in the colder seasons and could be used as a rope when none was available. The art of weaving the sash was brought to the western regions via Voyageurs who had encountered the bright 'scarves' through contact with French Canadians. The finger-weaving technique used to make the sash was firmly established in eastern woodland Indian traditions. The technique created tumplines, garters and other useful household articles and items of clothing. Plant fibres were used prior to the introduction of wool. Europeans introduced wool and the sash, as an article of clothing, to the eastern woodland peoples. The Six Nations Confederacy, Potawatomi, and other Indian nations of the area blended the two traditions into the finger-woven sash. The Métis share the sash with two other groups who also claim it as a symbol of nationhood and cultural distinction. It was worn by eastern woodland peoples as a sign of office in the 19th century, and French Canadians wore it during the Lower Canada Rebellion in 1837. It is still considered to be an important part of traditional dress for both these groups.

(Source: wwwmetisnation.org)

More information available at:

Aboriginal Peoples and Their Heritage; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/hrtg/index_e.html
Culture - Jigging; Métis Nation of Ontario; http://wwwmetisnation.org/culture/culture_links/jigging.html
Traditional Métis Music and Dance; http://wwwmetisresourcecentre.mb.ca/history/music.htm
Resources
Aboriginal Innovations in Arts, Science and Technology http://www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/handbook/index-e.html