

Understanding the Treaties in Saskatchewan and the Role They Play in Tourism

By Lyndon Linklater

Treaties in Saskatchewan are living agreements between First Nations and the Crown that continue to shape relationships, land use and cultural understanding today. For tourism operators, understanding treaties helps support

respectful visitor experiences, strengthen partnerships with Indigenous communities and ensure stories, places and cultural content are shared appropriately.

What are Treaties (in the Saskatchewan context)?

Treaties in Saskatchewan (Numbered Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10) are agreements between First Nations and the Crown that set out ongoing rights and responsibilities. They are not just historical events; they continue to shape relationships today. Many First Nations understand the treaties as nation-to-nation commitments to share the land and live together peacefully, while written treaty texts focus on specific Crown obligations and the creation of reserves.

Why Treaties Matter for tourism

Tourism happens on treaty territory. Understanding treaties supports respectful visitor experiences, strengthens partnerships with First Nations and Métis communities, and helps operators avoid harm (for example, misrepresenting history, using cultural content without permission, or ignoring community protocols). Treaties also connect directly to land, mobility, harvesting, and cultural continuity issues that may affect access, interpretation, guiding, events, and the way stories are told at tourism sites.

Practical Ways to Apply Treaty Understanding in Tourism

- **Start with “where you are”:** know the treaty area(s) your operation is in and learn which First Nations and Métis communities are local to that place.
- **Use accurate language:** distinguish First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; avoid pan-Indigenous wording;

- name the Nation/community when appropriate.
- **Partner early (not at the end):** if you want to include Indigenous stories, languages, place names, art, songs, or cultural demonstrations, co-design the experience and agree on permissions, payments, and how content can be used.
- **Support Indigenous-led tourism:** refer business to Indigenous operators; offer joint packages; hire local Indigenous guides, interpreters, and knowledge keepers (with fair compensation).
- **Train staff:** include treaty education and local cultural protocols in onboarding—especially for front-line staff who answer visitor questions.
- **Land acknowledgements with substance:** if you use a land acknowledgement, connect it to actions (who you partner with, how you share benefits, how you correct misinformation).
- **Engage with Knowledge Keepers:** collaborate with local Elders and Knowledge Keepers to bring authenticity to stories of the land, cultural practices etc. place.

Build Relationships

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Tokenism:** adding a land acknowledgement or a single image/phrase without relationships, learning, or benefit-sharing.
- **Using cultural content without permission:** stories, designs, songs, and ceremonies may have specific rules about who can share them and when.

- **One-size-fits-all interpretation:** each Nation and community has its own histories, laws, and expectations.
- **Only relying on written treaty text:** many teachings are held and shared orally; make space for community perspectives. without relationships, learning, or benefit-sharing.
- **Framing treaties as “past”:** avoid language that suggests treaties are finished; they are living agreements and relationships.

Saskatchewan Treaty areas (quick reference)

Saskatchewan includes Treaty 2 (east-central), Treaty 4 (southern), Treaty 5 (northeast), Treaty 6 (central), Treaty 8 (northwest), and Treaty 10 (north-central/northeast). Treaty boundaries can overlap with tourism regions and municipal boundaries, so confirm local Nations and communities for the specific place(s) you operate.

Recommended Resources (Saskatchewan-focused)

- **Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC), Saskatchewan:** treaty education resources and background on numbered treaties and reconciliation.
- **Government of Saskatchewan:** t“Treaty land and entitlements” information (overview of treaty areas, TLE, and related agreements).
- **University of Saskatchewan – Indigenous Saskatchewan Encyclopedia:** short articles on Treaty 4 and other Saskatchewan treaty topics.
- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls to Action:** useful for aligning tourism practices with reconciliation commitments (education, respectful representation, and partnerships).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lyndon J Linklater

Is a traditional knowledge keeper and storyteller. He has an educational background in Indigenous Social Work, Indigenous Studies and some law. He is a citizen of the Thunderchild First Nation (Plains Cree) in Treaty 6 and has roots in Couchiching First Nation (Fort Francis, Ontario) in Treaty 3.

Presently, Lyndon shares work with the Remai Modern Art Museum in Saskatoon as their Indigenous Relations Advisor providing advice to their board and staff and delivering cultural programming to the public and assists many other organizations on their journeys towards truth and reconciliation.

He is the longest serving member of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner’s Speakers’ Bureau, since he was appointed in 2000. Over the years, he has spoken to tens of thousands of people, delivering awareness and enlightenment on Treaty and First Nation worldview.