

The seven treaties of 1871 to 1877 were, however, much more momentous in their significance in Canadian History. They involved the surrender of the great fertile belt extending from the height of land west of Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains.

The terms of the treaties were substantially uniform. Provision was made for reserves, and it was agreed that, except upon occupied lands, hunting privileges were not to be abridged, unless by regulations for the protection of game. Each chief was to receive an annuity of twenty-five dollars, each of his head men fifteen dollars, and each other member of his band five dollars. Provision was also made for the supply of agricultural implements and other necessary tools, and for the establishment of schools upon the reserves. By these and other means, it was hoped by the Indians themselves, and by the Dominion authorities, that the red wards of the government would be gradually introduced to the arts of peace and civilization, and enabled to take their place in the new order of things that was being established in the Great West.

The necessity for these treaties is obvious; and, in most instances, the Indians themselves were most anxious to bring them about. In the United States, the contract of the advance guard of white pioneers with the aborigines had been marked everywhere by bloody excesses. Through these terrible lessons Canada learned that she could guarantee security through the West only by treaties well understood and faithfully observed. Under the old regime, the Hudson's Bay Company had been, upon the whole notably hostile among themselves, generally maintained friendly relations with the great trading corporation representative of white civilization. When, however, the sway of the Hudson's Bay Company was brought to a close, the minds of the aborigines were filled with perplexity as to how their relations with the whites were thenceforth to be guided. This natural perturbation was accentuated by the unfortunate rising of 1870 in the Red River settlement. Moreover, settlers were, for the