

## **Anishinaabe Kinship: Learning from the Past to Build Our Future**

There's a burning question in Robinson Huron Treaty territory today: how much money am I going to get, and when?

As negotiations continue between Robinson Huron Treaty First Nations and the Governments of Canada and Ontario to resolve the annuities case, there has been public speculation about a settlement amount and confusion around how that money would be distributed to citizens.

Understandably, First Nation members want to know dollar figures and timelines. When there's potentially a lot of money at stake, people want to see the money, and they want to know when they'll see it.

But until an agreement is signed and publicized, any amounts and dates shared or discussed are just speculation. Everything is quite literally still on the negotiating table. So in the meantime, we want to ask everyone in our treaty area to be patient and to keep in mind our collective rights and intentions as Anishinaabek.

We are hopeful that a settlement will be reached in the same spirit of unity and kinship that our ancestors brought to those original treaty negotiations more than 170 years ago. Anishinaabe leaders of the time wanted to ensure that our collective rights to land, prosperity, and more were enshrined in the treaty itself for the benefit of generations to come, including all of us alive today.

Our leaders who signed the Robinson Huron Treaty in 1850 were informed by Anishinaabe laws and traditions based on respectful relationships and coming together with responsibilities to each other as community members. They advocated for our rights to our practices like hunting and fishing, to our inherent place in our homelands, and to the benefits outlined by the treaty itself, like annuity payments.

The Anishinaabe treaty signatories engaged in these nation-to-nation negotiations as our representatives with obligations not just to individual citizens, but to the overall collective of Anishinaabek throughout our homelands. They believed in a mutual responsibility shared by all leaders - including the Crown - in upholding respectful relations with one another.

In many ways, our ancestors saw treaty-making as a way to expand and strengthen kinship, keeping us together and alive in a radically transforming world. Although the settling of Canada divided our nation, our collective as Anishinaabek remained in tact with the treaty and the traditional knowledge behind its creation.

And once again, we are potentially faced with another radical transformation as our leaders work with Crown representatives to right the wrongs of treaty implementation. The ongoing negotiations could lead to a moment in history unlike any other.

As this new history begins to unfold, it's important to remember the principle of mutual care that was revered by our ancestors when they entered into the treaty-making process. They wanted us to prosper as individuals, but they also wanted to ensure we worked together - not just for us in the present, but for future generations.