

Breakout Session 1D: Modern Treaty Education

February 25, 2025

1:15 PM – 2:45 PM

Moderator: Selma Ford— Program Director, The Gordon Foundation

Speakers:

- Robin Bradasch — Regional General Director, CIRNAC/Kluane First Nation
- Frank Dragon — Senior Advisor, Ka:'yu:'k't'h/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations Legislative Chief and Vice Chief and to the Administration of the Ka:'yu:'k't'h/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations/Gwich'in/Ehdiitat Gwichin'in Council
- Emily White – Manager, Treaty Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs, Tla'amin First Nation, Elected Councilor for Klahoose First Nation/Tla'amin Nation
- Breyze Blake – 7th National Treaty Simulation Participant, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

Treaty Simulation Model:

- The simulation is a two-day event involving First Nations and Inuit. A fictional scenario that can be based in reality. There will be a faux mandate letter from the parties that says what should be negotiated or what things might not be bent on.
- Teams are given different points. Sometimes things can happen like the government walking away from the table.
- The simulation closes off with a sharing circle so participants can provide impressions of the simulation and what they got out of the event.
- Negotiations can take decades – sometimes even 40 years. Simulations show just a blip in comparison.

Frank Dragon

- It's imperative that the next generation of leaders are involved in Treaty work. They need to work with Elders and other Knowledge Holders.
- Knowledge transfer is a desire to pass on important knowledge. Young leaders must cultivate this desire to pass on knowledge as well.
 - Passing on knowledge is a multi-generational endeavour. This requires finding new and existing ways to pass on knowledge – e.g., through coaching and mentorship for successor planning.
 - Signing a Treaty takes decades. There are many lessons through the transfer of knowledge that can be learned.
 - Elders play an important role. It's imperative that we hear the stories of Elders.
 - Knowledge that doesn't get passed on can be lost—it must be transferred to

future generations.

- Word of mouth to spread the event. Create youth councils.
- If youth don't know what's in a Treaty, there won't be anyone left around to defend it. Young people need to be the next leaders.

Robin Bradasch

- We're at an interesting time in Treaty making/negotiations. Indigenous peoples need to instill ideas of implementation in the younger generations. They grew up with agreements so some of what it takes to build agreements is lost on them. The Gordon Foundation has helped with this.
 - First Nations have spearheaded the Modern Treaty implementation movement.
 - Young people need to learn these skills to continue this movement.

Emily White

- Emily was a Treaty simulation participant in 2023. After 2 years it was brought to Tla'amin. Frank Dragon was also present for that. Focus on the staff level and not just youth.
 - The Treaty Simulation was really well received—having actual negotiators and their knowledge was a gift.
 - There was a need in Tla'amin to understand Treaties. Many residents couldn't find or didn't know how to find the Treaty information. A lot of staff that participated do Treaty negotiations all the time, but the simulation was a way to practice skills to apply to their day-to-day work. Diverse teams showed up, like the fisheries team. There would also be a benefit in including non-Indigenous persons in the simulations too, if there's space.

Breyze Blake

- Gwich'in from Whitehorse, here in Ottawa for the first time.
- Grew up hearing about Treaties but never had any experience with them. The Simulation provided valuable experience and information.
 - Really enjoyed the research aspect of the Simulation. Had to plan for and consider what other groups might say and engage in debate.
 - It's important to stay on topic within negotiations and to keep in mind what is being fought for and attempt to find common ground.
 - Treaty simulation helped build public speaking skills.
 - Being more involved is helpful for youth, especially since Treaties are so present in Indigenous culture.
 - It's hard for young adults to be involved in Indigenous governance so

increased opportunities would be appreciated.

Q&A:

- **Q: What is the importance of simulations for youth?**
 - **A:** Simulations aren't just a trip to Ottawa. Youth want to know about their Treaties and the beginnings of them. The simulation is one way to begin that understanding.
- **Q: What should be included in the simulations?**
 - **A:** We have entire generations without Treaty implementation knowledge. We need to make a place for youth voices to be heard. Grassroots voices need to be heard. Agreements are forever and they need to stay in the consciousness of Indigenous peoples. It's important to know how Canada approaches agreements and it isn't only about negotiations. There are many potential opportunities to participate in agreement making.
- **Q: Asking the youth on the panel (and in the audience) to give their thoughts on the previous question.**
 - **A:** There can sometimes be less opportunities for youth to gain access to knowledge about Treaties.
 - Need to understand that treaties aren't the only option, but they are important nonetheless. Tla'amin is young in its Treaty journey but there are more governance opportunities coming.
 - It was cool to see how much knowledge Elders and advisors have been involved with Treaty implementation work.
- **Q: What are the challenges experienced with doing the simulation with the Tla'amin Nation? Will there be possibilities to bring the Gordon Foundation through federal or other types of funding? What might make a difference next time around?**
 - **A:** Tla'amin almost did two simulations – 1 with staff and 1 with youth. But youth were in school so that was a challenge to do. We need to come up with ways to recruit youth, even those living off-reserve.
 - **A:** We also have to consider that staff have to take time off work.
 - **A:** In terms of challenges, some people had to step out due to other commitments.

Discussion on the Ottawa Treaty Simulation Experience (preceding the Conference):

Audience experience:

- Audience member was born after their Nation's Treaty was signed. It's good that youth can participate in conferences like these so that knowledge from Elders is maintained.

It's important that simulations be brought to communities. Learned a lot of things that he didn't think he would ever learn. An acknowledgement that knowledge gained from simulations should be brought back to communities. Simulations can also help give youth direction for the future. It's an empowerment exercise that keeps Elders' knowledge alive.

Audience experience:

- Selected to participate in the simulation, which was good for a sense of direction. But it was also hard to engage with Tłıchq Government knowledge due to a lack of personal knowledge. Being away from community for school means losing cultural ways of life – living in an urban city means being removed from grandparents, parents, and other meaningful people in the community.
 - Learning Tłıchq is important for identity. Rely on community for understanding.
 - Elders being present at Simulations is useful for understanding how hard past generations fought for their Nation(s). Simulations are good for youth to understand they are not alone, and they can be successful.

Audience experience:

- Naskapi left the nomadic lifestyle in 1956, and we are still feeling the effects of settlement. We're still learning from the Agreement signed in 1978. The Simulation brought a wealth of knowledge from the advisors.
- Looking forward to working with consultants to bring simulations for Naskapi youth. Doing so at the staff level would also be useful for Naskapi because adults also lack knowledge on the Nation.

Audience Questions:

- **Q:** We don't get youth coming out to our Nation's meetings. What was the hook that brought youth to participate in the simulations?
 - **A:** The threat of loss of identity. Learning language as empowerment. Simulations and youth events provide a light.
 - **A:** Word of mouth—talk about it at university. Was told about simulations by an Auntie. Not really focussing on social media or the internal workings of Bands.
 - **A:** A focus on community – even though a person might not work for the Nation the community works for each other.
 - **A:** Reaching out to people who you might not even think be interested.
 - **A:** Having forums where you can regularly get people to talk about upcoming events. Holding spaces for people and event notifications.
 - **A:** An idea of being called home—mentorship and a place for young people.