

call you my children; will send warmth (presents) to your country; and your families shall never be in want. Look towards the rising sun. My Nation is as brilliant as it is, and its word cannot be violated.' Father, your words were true—all you promised came to pass. On giving us a Belt of Peace, you said—'If you should ever require my assistance, send this Belt, and my hand will be immediately stretched forth to assist you.' Here the speaker laid down the Belt.³⁷

Over the years, Indigenous leaders involved in Treaty negotiations not only used wampum belts to recount the Treaty of Niagara, but also presented original copies of the Royal Proclamation to government officials. In 1847, a colonial official reported,

The subsequent proclamation of His Majesty George Third, issued in 1763, furnished them with a fresh guarantee for the possession of their hunting grounds and the protection of the crown. This document the Indians look upon as their charter. They have preserved a copy of it to the present time, and have referred to it on several occasions in the representations to government.³⁸

On October 7, 2013, Canada marked the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The governor general of Canada, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, spoke about the proclamation's importance.

This extraordinary document is part of the legal foundation of Canada. It is enshrined in the Constitution Act of 1982, and it sets out a framework of values or principles that have given us a navigational map over the course of the past two-and-a-half centuries.... Its guiding principles—of peace, fairness and respect—established the tradition of treaty-making, laid the basis for the recognition of First Nations rights, and defined the relationship between First Nations peoples and the Crown.... All history reverberates through the ages, but the Royal Proclamation is uniquely alive in the present-day. Not only is it a living constitutional document, its principles are of great relevance to our situation today, in 2013, and to our shared future.... Without a doubt, we have faced, and are facing challenges, and we have much hard work to do on the road to reconciliation, but it is a road we must travel together. In modern time, the successful conclusion of comprehensive land claims agreements are an example of the principles of the Royal Proclamation in action.³⁹

Across the country, Indigenous peoples also commemorated the anniversary, calling on Canadians to honour the spirit and intent of the Royal Proclamation. In British Columbia, where very few Treaties were signed, the First Nations Summit leaders issued a statement reminding Canadians that the principles set out in the proclamation were still relevant in present-day Canada. They said,

With Confederation, the First Nations–Crown relationship has regrettably been guided by federal control under the constraints of the *Indian Act*, not by the principles articulated in the Proclamation.... The time has arrived for all Canadians to move into an era of recognition and reconciliation between First Nations and the Crown. Although there is general recognition of Aboriginal title and rights, far