

AN INTERACTIVE TIMELINE OF FIRST NATION STATUS IN CANADA

1857 GRADUAL CIVILIZATION ACT

The act sought to encourage enfranchisement, the integration of "Indian" people into Canadian settler society. This marked the first of many attempts to promote enfranchisement, a policy of First Nation integration that led to severe economic and cultural restrictions in an effort to promote British ideas of civilization.

1869 GRADUAL ENFRANCHISEMENT ACT

The act established the band council system and granted the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs control over status Indians.
[Read the act](#)

1884 POTLATCH LAW

One of many amendments to the Indian Act that prohibited First Nation culture and prosperity. The act banned the Potlatch, a very important cultural ceremony to coastal First Nations, making it a misdemeanor offence punishable with 2-6 months of jail time.
[Read the amendment.](#)

1885 THE PASS SYSTEM

Initially a temporary response to the Northwest Rebellion, a pass system was initiated to control the movement of First Nation people. A status Indian could not leave a reserve without obtaining a pass from the Indian agent. Failure to comply led to being returned to the reserve or incarceration. It remained in effect for 60 years

1763 THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION

Following the Seven Years War King George III claims British territory in North America and explicitly states the right of Aboriginal land title. The document designates the Crown as the only agent authorized to purchase First Nation land. This document has never been rescinded and is often considered still valid.

1867 BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT

Created federal government to serve the interests of the of the British Empire and to make provision "...for the eventual Admission into the Union of other Parts of British North America". Section 1(24) grants authority of "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians."
[Read the act.](#)

1876 THE INDIAN ACT

This act consolidated and confirmed Indian status in Canada for First Nation people. Although it has been heavily modified over the last 144 years it provides a legal framework that is still in place today.
[Read the act.](#)

1884 RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Attendance in residential schools becomes mandatory for all status Indians until they turn 16. The residential school system did catastrophic harm to Native families and communities for up to 7 generations. Children were forced away from their families, language and culture to be raised in Catholic and Protestant based schools. The residential school system created a multi-generational legacy of abuse and neglect.

1930 AGRICULTURAL BAN

A ban on the sale of agricultural products grown on reserves without permission was extended from a view regions to all First Nations in Canada. This and similar prohibitive restrictions amplified economic and cultural hardship on First Nations.

A SHAMEFUL LEGACY

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1969 WHITE PAPER POLICY

The white paper policy by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau argued repealing Indian Act legislation. The policy would have removed the Department of Indian Affairs, Indian status. Although these issues still cause difficulty, Aboriginal groups overwhelmingly rejected the policy. They felt it removing legal status would not achieve equality. [source](#)

1985 GENDER EQUALITY

Bill C-31 removes some legal restrictions of women passing on Indian status to their children when married to a non-status person. It is a step towards gender equality between men and women in the Indian status framework.

2011 FURTHERING GENDER EQUALITY

Amendments made to the Indian act brought about to enhance gender equality by improving the legal ability of women to pass on Indian status..

2015 TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The first phase of the truth and reconciliation commission finishes. It aims to witness and acknowledge the impact of residential schools on former students, families and communities.

2019 B.C. DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

British Columbia becomes the first major government in Canada to enshrine the rights of indigenous peoples into law.

1951 RESPONSE TO U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS

Following world war II and the establishment of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights an amendment was made to the Indian Act legislation to remove many prohibitive regulations including the ban on ceremonies like the Potlatch. [Read the act.](#)

1982 CANADIAN CONSTITUTION ACT

The Canadian Constitution Act legally separates Canada from the Crown and enshrines the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 35 of the Act recognizes Aboriginal rights but does not create them. This affirms but does not clarify the what those rights include [Read the act.](#)

1990 MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Elijah Harper, a Cree member of the Manitoba parliament stood alone to block the passage of the Meech Lake accord. The accord was designed to clarify constitutional conflict between Quebec, the other provinces and the federal government. Mr. Harper stood in opposition as the accord did not guarantee rights to aboriginal people.

2016 DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Canada pledges full support for the 2007 resolution on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The voluntary international agreement sets a framework for the rights of indigenous people throughout the world. Many of Canada's existing laws like the Indian Act are not in compliance with the document. [Read the document](#)

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER TO CORRECT WRONGS OF THE PAST