

The Indian Act 1876 | Research

Driving Question Ideas

- How did the Indian Act affect the identity of Indigenous Peoples in Canada?

The Canadian Encyclopedia

www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-act

- Introduced in 1876
- Number of colonial laws created to eliminate Indigenous culture in favour of assimilation into Euro-Canadian Society
- Enabled trauma, human rights violations, culture and social disruption
- Affected several generations of Indigenous Peoples
- Made practice of religious ceremonies and culture gatherings illegal for Indigenous Peoples including:
 - dancing of any kind
 - Potlatch
 - Any ceremonies or festivals
 - Powwows
- 1927 - illegal for Indigenous Peoples to hire lawyers or present land claims without government consent
- Indigenous children required to attend residential 'schools'
 - Affected Indigenous people all across Canada and intergenerationally
- Pass system restricted movement of Indigenous Peoples off reserve
- Permit system regulated sale of goods off reserves
- Defined an Indian as "any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band" and also applied to "any child of such person"
- Indian Status was lost if a person graduated university, married non-status person (if they were a woman), became a Christian minister, doctor or lawyer
- Administration of status was tool of assimilation and cultural destruction

Wikipedia

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Act

- Status Indian woman who married a non-status person became non-status as well
- Non-status women unable to participate in ceremonies and rituals
- Indigenous children between 7 and 16 years of age required to attend residential 'schools'

- Residential 'schools' subjected children to forced conversation, sickness and sexual, emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural abuse.
- Genocide
- Residential 'School' system severed family ties and the transmission of traditional culture
- Attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples into broader Canadian society
- Potlatch, Sun Dance and other celebrations, rituals and dances banned
- Indigenous peoples denied access to materials used for prayer
- retaining a lawyer for purpose of making a claim against Canada or raising money to retain said lawyer banned (punishment of imprisonment)

YouTube: Canadians have been breaking their promises to Indigenous Peoples. CBC Docs.
youtu.be/IUHnKUaDYjs

- Colonizers started killing off buffalo
- Tricked into signing off land
- Edgar Dewdney: Indian Affairs Commissioner. Assistant: Hayter Reed.
- Used hunger as a weapon
- Thomas Quinn: cruel Indian Agent
 - Refused rations
- John Delaney forced women to trade bodies for food (for their hungry children)
- 1885: Cree warriors led by Wandering Spirit pushed back
 - Killed 9 oppressors
 - Including Thomas Quinn
- Government sent troops to find and punish Big Bear and Wandering Spirit, his warrior chief
- Colonel William Otter decided to attack Poundmaker's camp
 - Poundmaker brought warriors from little pine to his camp
 - Though large number of worthy men would convince Otter to turn back
 - Otter attacked, firing into the Cree camp without negotiating
 - Warriors protected people, defeated Otter's troops
- Big Bear, Poundmaker & Wandering Spirit turn themselves in to ensure safety for their people
 - Sent to prison
 - November 2, 1885: eight warriors, including Wandering Spirit, tried without legal representation and sentenced to death
 - Government forced people from nearby reserves and children from the Battleford Residential 'School' to come witness the hanging
 - To teach them what happens if they stood up for themselves
- Indian Act took away a traditional governance structure
 - Imposed a chief and council system
- Indian Act criminalized ceremonies
 - Which was a way of criminalizing who they [the Indigenous People] are
- Pass System: Confined to reserves, unless they had permission from Indian Agent
- Indian Act doesn't allow the Indigenous People to hire lawyers

- Gathering in groups of any kind outlawed
- RCMP enforced all, arresting anyone who resisted

Facing History & Ourselves

www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/indian-act

- Original Indian Act combined the Gradual Enfranchisement Act (1851) and the Gradual Civilization Act
- Purpose was to assimilate Indigenous People
- Tried to remove them from the land
- Restricted culture practices that the Indigenous People used to define who they are
- Indian Act always a tool of assimilation
- Government saw the Indigenous People as in the way of agriculture, railway building and building a country
- Removed Indigenous Peoples ability to name themselves and giving some people status and not others
- Indian Act interfered in traditional governance, naming and ceremonies by regulating was and was not officially part of their community
- Status (which it still does today) divided communities and families
- Status always through male line
- No Status = no rights for living on the land like: hunting or fishing
- Potlatch outlawed 1884
- 1884 other ceremonial events outlawed
- Government afraid if too many people gathered they could fight against the government
- Imposed elections on bands and communities
- Missionaries worked with government to establish Residential 'School' system
- 1894 Indian Act made Residential 'School' attendance required
- Residential 'Schools' federally funded and church administered
- Some Residential 'Schools' run only by missions and churches
- Indian Act and Department of Indian Affairs paid Residential 'Schools' for taking in Indigenous Students
- Each child worth an amount of money
 - Best interests of the missionaries and churches to keep the 'Schools' full as possible

YouTube: Namwayut: we are all one. Truth and reconciliation in Canada. CBC.

youtu.be/2zuRQmwaREY

- 150,000 Children sent to Residential Schools
- "Canada, you have committed cultural genocide" - Justice Murray Sinclair
- Boys and Girls segregated
- Punishments for even waving at a sibling (especially of opposite gender)