

Chapter 3

ASSIMILATION: NOT A HIDDEN OBJECTIVE

For the average individual, it is difficult to understand how a particular category of citizens can be governed exclusively by the federal government. Is this a historical anomaly or an attack on the equality of all citizens? The answer is not obvious, and to find it the historical facts must be consulted.

THE INDIANS: EXCLUSIVELY UNDER FEDERAL JURISDICTION

To begin at the beginning, First Nations peoples ("Indians") and lands reserved for them are *governed exclusively by the federal government*, which is not the case for other citizens. This is one of the characteristics of the special status of First Nations peoples. First Nations peoples are distinct citizens and have been distinct citizens ever since the French regime. However, the federal government has governed their lives by means of a special act, the *Indian Act*, since 1876. As we will see further on, this law of exception does not apply to all Aboriginal peoples.

The federal government's exclusive responsibility for the First Nations peoples is derived from the *Proclamation of 1763*, that famous document in which the Crown affirmed its responsibility to provide "protection" for the "several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected," in the words of the king.

However, in reality, the *Indian Act* distorted this responsibility of protection by transforming the nations and tribes to be protected into *minors* under the *guardianship of the federal government*. In the name of protection, the government would decide what was in their best interests.



A group of Amerindians at a lacrosse tournament in 1869 (an engraving of a photograph by Inglis)

The Canadian Illustrated News, collection of Pierre Lepage



Inuit setting out on the spring hunt (photographed during a 1911 expedition by Captain Bernier)

Archives nationales du Québec, Quebec City

FROM PROTECTION TO COERCION

We have seen that, in the struggle that the great colonial powers carried on to ensure their hegemony on the North American continent, war and commerce were indissociable and the Amerindians were needed for both of them. Up to about 1820, the fur trade ranked first among the components in Canada's foreign trade and was of the utmost

importance to the very existence of the colony (Bilodeau and Morin 1974, 6). However, things changed in 1814, after the American revolution and the end of the hostilities between the Americans and the British, because the Amerindians were no longer needed to wage war. Moreover, the fur trade was in decline. The Amerindian nations lost their position as strategic allies; but although they were no longer needed for war or commerce, their lands were still indispensable.

Against this backdrop, an extensive assimilation plan was developed. As pointed out by the anthropologists Savard and Proulx, starting in the 1840s, government authorities would in effect endeavour [TRANSLATION] “to acquire the powers necessary to accelerate Indian territorial dispossession and to decrease the number of Indians by way of assimilation into the white man’s way of life. Such objectives required that the government claim the right to determine who was an Indian and, especially, at what time this status would expire” (Savard and Proulx 1982, 86–87). The two authors indicate that the plan to progressively extinguish

IN 1869, REPUDIATING ONE’S ABORIGINAL NAME WAS A CONDITION OF ENFRANCHISEMENT

In 1869, section 16 of the *Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians, the better management of Indian Affairs, and to extend the provisions of the Act* set out the following duties of First Nations peoples with respect to their enfranchisement:

“Every such Indian shall, before the issue of the letters patent mentioned in the thirtieth section of this Act, declare to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, the name and surname by which he wishes to be enfranchised and thereafter known, and on his receiving such letters patent, in such name and surname, he shall be held to be also enfranchised, and he shall thereafter be known by such name and surname, and his wife and minor unmarried children, shall be held to be enfranchised; and from the date of such letters patent, the provisions of any Act or law making any distinction between the legal rights and liabilities of Indians and those of Her Majesty’s other subjects shall cease to apply to any Indian, his wife or minor children as aforesaid, so declared to be enfranchised, who shall no longer be deemed Indians within the meaning of the laws relating to Indians...”

(Act assented to by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, on June 22 1869)

the First Nations population of Canada was developed between 1840 and 1867 and that it met cost-reduction objectives. The plan also gave rise to the establishment of special vocabulary, of which we can still find vestiges today in words such as *enfranchisement*, *registered Indian*, *non-status Indian*, *Métis*, and *treaty Indian*.

An “Indian affairs” administrative framework was thus established as Aboriginal-occupied lands were progressively appropriated. When the Canadian Confederation was formed in 1867, the First Nations peoples were neither present nor even consulted. Unknown to them, an even more significant shift had occurred in the administration of their affairs: in discussions on power-sharing between the federal and provincial governments, the federal government obtained exclusive jurisdiction over the affairs of First Nations peoples. In so doing, it acquired the power to enact legislation on “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians” (section 91(24) of the *British North America Act*). From “protection,” the door was open to coercion.

The exclusive responsibility of the federal government was set out in the *Indian Act* of

1876, a law enacted by the Parliament of Canada that conferred the status of *minors* on Indians, as pointed out above. In fact, the law enshrined the legal incapacity of First Nations peoples in virtually all areas and completely undermined their autonomy.

THE REAL NATURE OF THE INDIAN ACT

In the beginning, Indian status was seen as temporary and for the ultimate purpose of full integration and assimilation into Canadian society. In fact, the Aboriginal populations were in decline

in the middle of the last century and expected to disappear, particularly in the face of the pressures of colonization and development. The *Indian Act* was intended to facilitate this transition toward assimilation.

Until very recently, the notion of enfranchisement was the very essence of the Indian Act. The central provision of the act was expressed as follows:

Section 109: "On the report of the Minister that an Indian has applied for enfranchisement and that in his opinion the Indian (a) is of the full age of twenty-one years, (b) is capable of assuming the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, and (c) when enfranchised, will be capable of supporting himself and his dependents, the Governor in Council may by order declare that the Indian and his wife and minor unmarried children are enfranchised."



Crees making snowshoes at Grand Lac Mistassini, 1950

Photo: M. G. Bédard,
Archives nationales du Québec, Quebec City

Enfranchisement was therefore the method endorsed by the *Indian Act* for eliminating legal Indian status and acquiring all the attributes of citizenship. In Quebec, however, the Civil Code has established the age of majority at 18 years since 1971. As can be seen in this extract from the Act, 18 was not the age of majority for First

Nations persons. Until 1985, First Nations persons were required to have attained the full age of 21 before applying for enfranchisement. And although for the majority of people the acquisition of citizenship was automatic and unconditional from birth, First Nations persons were subject to different requirements. The Minister of Indian Affairs, as guardian, had to be of the opinion that the First Nations person concerned was capable of assuming the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. The Minister also had to believe that the First Nations person was capable of supporting himself and his dependents. In addition, until 1985 the *Indian Act* went much further by providing that an entire community could apply for enfranchisement:

Section 112: "Where the Minister reports that a band has applied for enfranchisement, and has submitted a plan for the disposal or diversion of the funds of the band and the lands in the reserve, and in his opinion the band is capable of managing its own affairs as a municipality or part of a municipality, the Governor in Council may by order approve the plan, declare that all the members of the band are enfranchised, wither as of the date of the order, and may make regulations for carrying the plan and the provisions of this section into effect."

From the standpoint of human rights and at a time when equal rights are being promoted, such measures appear to be rooted in another century. However, as mentioned previously, and as incredible as it may seem, this outdated enfranchisement provision was not abolished until 1985. In fact, the only choices



A group on Amerindians at Fort George, 1869. Note the curved shape of the Cree-built bark canoe.

Photo: A. P. Low, Courtesy of the Geological Survey of Canada



Some forty canoes gathered at Grand Lac Victoria, about 1930

Postcard, collection of Pierre Lepage

open to First Nations peoples have always been the following: permanent guardianship or assimilation. Amerindian populations that wished to maintain their identities and survive as communities had no choice at all: maintaining collective identity meant living under guardianship. However, most non-Aboriginal citizens were kept in the dark regarding these regressive dimensions of the *Indian Act*, believing that the Act conferred special status and numerous privileges on First Nations peoples.

PATERNALISM, LOSS OF AUTONOMY, AND DEPENDENCE

The paternalism of the *Indian Act* can be measured by a few historical events. The initial laws pertaining to the First Nations populations gave the government very extensive powers to control First Nations peoples living on reserves.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE ASSIMILATION POLICY

The assimilation policy was founded on four hypothetical (and incorrect) dehumanizing assumptions regarding Aboriginal peoples and their cultures:

- They were inferior peoples.
- They were unable to govern themselves, and colonial authorities were in the best position to know how to protect their interests and well-being.
- The special relationship based on respect and sharing enshrined by treaties was a historical anomaly that was no longer valid.
- European ideas of progress and development were obviously correct and could be imposed on Aboriginal peoples without taking into account the other values, opinions or rights they may have.

(Reported in Canada, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* 1996a)

First of all, the Amerindian communities lost the political ability to determine who their members were. The government decided that only Indians entered in the register of the Department of Indian Affairs would be legally considered as Indians. Because the federal government established the rules determining who was and was not an



Indian, the categories “status Indians” (or registered Indians) and “non-status Indians” (or non-registered Indians) assumed enormous importance.

Moreover, we have seen that the ultimate objective of the Act was enfranchisement, or rather the loss of status through enfranchisement. Different measures were proposed at different times to achieve this objective. Very early on, it was discrimination based on sex. Any First Nations woman who married a non-First Nations man automatically lost her status as an Indian. Consequently, she had to leave the community and was denied participation in

A Naskapi with a 3-metre-long toboggan at Fort Mackenzie, 1941

Archives nationales du Québec, Québec City, Fonds Paul Provencher

its political life and even the right to be buried among her own people. In addition, she was de-

prived of another fundamental human right—the right to maintain and pursue her own cultural life with the other members of her group. This exclusion applied to her and her

descendants, but did not apply to First Nations men who married non-First Nations women, who became Indians. It is often said that the *Indian Act* constituted a “denial of identity” for thousands of persons and their descendants (Jamieson 1978). As previously

HOW INDIAN STATUS WAS ELIMINATED			ENFRANCHISEMENT FROM 1955 TO 1975		
Period	Voluntary Enfranchisement (Adult Indians enfranchised upon their application, along with their unmarried minor children)		Involuntary Enfranchisement (Indian women enfranchised following their marriage to non-Indians, along with their unmarried children)		Total (Enfranchised Indians)
	Adults	Children	Women	Children	
1955–1965	1 313	963	4 274	1 175	7 725
1965–1975	263	127	4 263	772	5 425
Subtotal	1 576	1 090	8 537	1 947	
Total	2 666		10 484		13 150

seen, it was not until 1985—following relentless battles by Aboriginal women’s associations and a decision of the UN Human Rights Committee—that Canada was required to terminate this discrimination based on sex.

Certain loss-of-status provisions were shocking. In 1880, for example, an amendment to the Act decreed that First Nations persons who obtained university degrees would be automatically enfranchised. From that point on they, their families, and their descendants would no longer be considered Indians. A 1933 amendment went even further, empowering the Governor in Council to enfranchise First Nations persons without their consent, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Compulsory enfranchisement, although little used, remained in the Act until 1951, despite protests by First Nations peoples.

TOTAL ENFRANCHISEMENTS FROM 1876 TO 1974

Period	Total
From 1876 to 1918	102
From 1918 to 1948	4 000
Fiscal years 1948 to 1968	13 670
Fiscal years 1968 – 1969	785
Fiscal years 1969 – 1970	714
Fiscal years 1970 – 1971	652
Fiscal years 1971 – 1972	304
Fiscal years 1972 – 1973	7
Fiscal years 1973 – 1974	460
Total	20 694

(Source: Jamieson 1978)

INDIAN PARENTS LOSE RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATING THEIR CHILDREN

“Recent amendments gave control to Indian Affairs and withdrew from Indian parents the responsibility for the care and education of their children, and the best interests of Indian children were promoted and fully protected.”

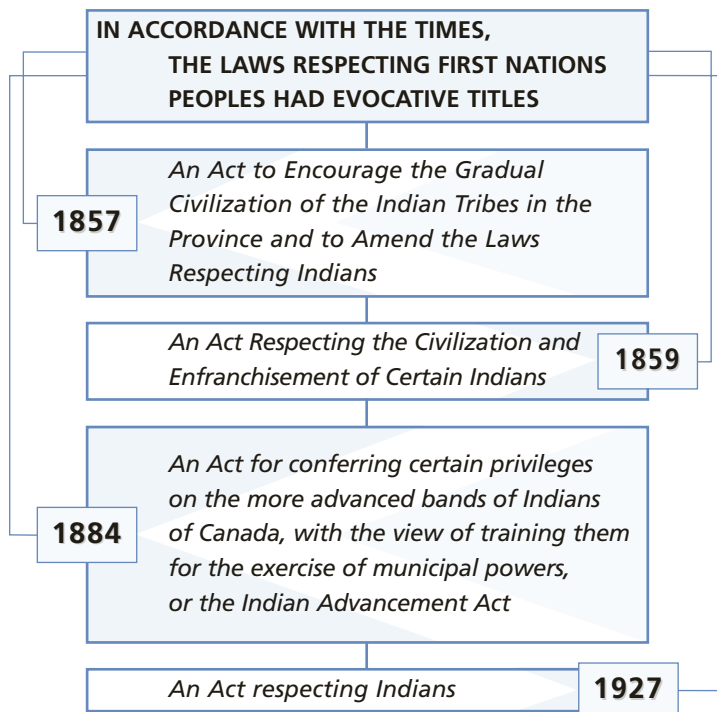
(Reported in the 1921 Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs and in Goodwill and Sluman 1984, 134)

The interior of a tent during the summer gathering at the post at Grand Lac Mistassini, 1950

Photo: G. Bédard, Archives nationales du Québec, Quebec City



Assimilation was far from being a hidden objective. In the 1920 House of Commons debates on the expediency of enacting compulsory enfranchisement, the



great proponent of the procedure, Duncan Campbell Scott, expressed himself unequivocally:

“Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic of Canada and there is no more Indian question. That is the whole purpose of our legislation.” (PAC, R.G. 10, 1920).

ABUSES OF POWER

The various First Nations had their own political structures. The federal government quickly took charge of dictating the changes it wanted. The first laws contemplating the gradual enfranchisement of Indians provided for the replacement of traditional political systems by

IN 1923–24, CHIEF DESKAHEH CALLS UPON THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS



Chief Deskaheh of the Cayuga Six Nations reserve in Ontario, photographed while in Geneva in 1923–24

Bibliothèque publique et universitaire, Genève. Photograph by F. Martin

The Canadian Government Counter-Attacks and Imposes Elections

In 1923–24, Cayuga Chief Deskaheh, of the Six Nations reserve, in Ontario, spent a whole year in Geneva in hopes of having the case of his small nation heard before the League of Nations and the International Court of Justice. His objective was to have his nation acknowledged as a sovereign entity. At the outset, a dispute arose between the Six Nations and the Canadian Government concerning the Indian nation’s independence under Canadian law, in particular the *Indian Act*, which the federal government was endeavouring to impose.

Although Deskaheh obtained some diplomatic success in Geneva among certain member countries of the LON, the Canadian government’s reply was implacable. Not only were the diplomats of certain countries called to order, but the Canadian government also destabilized the Six Nations by backing a dissident faction in the community. The faction concerned had demanded for a number of years that political chiefs be elected, as set out in the *Indian Act*, which the federal government was seeking to impose. Thus, on the strength of an investigation concerning the political situation on the Six Nations reserve, entrusted to one Colonel Thompson—an investigation that made reference to a group of agitators advocating separation—the government ordered that elections be held. These took place on October 21, 1924 by Order in Council and under the supervision of Lieutenant-Colonel Morgan and Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers. Holding these elections made it possible to declare Deskaheh incapable of representing his nation and without authority to be its spokesman. For many,

this interference by the Canadian government constituted the worst injustice ever perpetrated against this community. It would certainly serve as an example for other communities.

elected systems modelled on town councils. The title of *the Indian Advancement Act* of 1884, adopted for the benefit of the “more advanced bands,” conveys a great deal about the government’s attitude toward political life within these communities. Optional at first, the elected-system provisions were gradually imposed. In at least two cases, the Akwesasne reserve in Quebec in 1899 (Confederation 1983, 10; Richardson 1987, 37) and the Six Nations reserve in Ontario in 1924 (Akwesasne 1978; Weaver 1978, 533), the changes were forcibly imposed by the police.

Social and cultural celebrations and rituals were prohibited, as set out in the *Indian Advancement Act* of 1884:

“Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the “Potlach” or in the Indian dance known as the “Tawanawas” is guilty of misdemeanour, and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than six months nor less than two months in any gaol or other place of confinement; and any Indian or other person who encourages, either directly or indirectly, an Indian or Indians to get up such a festival or dance, or to celebrate the same is guilty of a like offence, and shall be liable to the same punishment.” (Statutes of Canada 1884, 47 Victoria, ch. 27, s. 3)

These prohibitions were abolished in 1951, apparently following pressures exerted by a lobby group made up of Calgary Stampede organizers, who relied on First Nations dances to enhance the prestige of their annual fair.

However, it was the Department of Indian Affairs agent system that symbolized the Department’s real control over the internal life of the communities. Up to the 1960s, agents present on each of the reserves exercised quasi-absolute power over these communities, regulating virtually every aspect of daily life and going even to the extent of issuing permits authorizing residents to leave the reserves, even temporarily (Canada, Indian Affairs 1986). The system and administrative framework set out in the Act really undermined any form of autonomy in favour of a paternalistic approach. The government decided what was in the best interest of First Nations peoples.

KINGS AND MASTERS ON THE RESERVE

Up to the 1960s, Indian Affairs agents, present on each of the reserves, exercised a quasi-absolute power in these communities. They regulated virtually every aspect of daily life, going as far as to issue passes authorizing the Indians to leave the reserve, even temporarily.

(Reported in Canada, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1986: *The Canadian Indian*)

UNDUE CONTROL OF POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

We now know that on several occasions Indian Affairs and its local agents did not hesitate to intervene directly to prematurely destroy any First Nations political movement whose orientations might be different from those of the Department or constitute a threat to its power. This was notably the case in the 1920s. An Amerindian by the name of Fred O. Loft established the Indian League of Canada and endeavoured to make it a Canada-wide association (Goodwill and Sluman 1984, 124–136). He immediately ran up against the systematic opposition of the Department. At this point, Loft was threatened with automatic loss of his Indian status, among myriad other things, if he didn’t abandon his efforts. The leader was discredited and treated as an agitator; meetings were monitored. Loft raised funds to support the organization. After this, by means of an

OBTAINING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Quebec was the last province to grant voting rights to First Nations peoples. At the federal level, partial voting rights had been granted in 1885 and withdrawn in 1896. Hence, the First Nations peoples of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes were eligible to vote in the 1887, 1891, and 1896 general elections. The right to vote was withdrawn because it was deemed incompatible with the status of guardianship. Persons under guardianship, such as First Nations persons, were not

Nova Scotia	Always	Saskatchewan	1960
Newfoundland	Always	Yukon	1960
Northwest Territories	Always	Nouveau Brunswick	1963
British Columbia	1949	Prince Edward Island	1963
Manitoba	1952	Alberta	1965
Ontario	1954	Quebec	1969
<hr/>			
Canada	1960		

(Source: Hawthorn and Tremblay 1966, I; Canada 1980, 101)

R i g h t t o V o t e X

considered to be subjects by right (nor were women). Consequently, they were not entitled to the responsibility of voting (Jamieson 1978; see also Hawthorn and Tremblay 1966, I: chap. XIII).

However, the exercise of the voting right was a controversial subject even in Aboriginal communities. Several communities considered that voting constituted an acceptance of Canadian citizenship

and a renunciation of their right to be sovereign, independent peoples. For example, in 1963, a circular distributed in Saint-Régis (Akwasasne) regarding an Ontario provincial election clearly illustrated the significance of refusing the right to vote. It stated that if Indians voted, they would no longer constitute a sovereign nation, since they would become Canadian and British subjects by that very fact. Moreover, the "Redskin" was morally bound not to vote in federal or provincial elections. Finally, the circular stated that a band of irresponsible Redskins, suffering from a racial inferiority complex, reported to the polling booths and unfortunately *forever renounced their national sovereignty and identity!* (Hawthorn and Tremblay 1966, I:291).

Even today, several nations still deliberately do not exercise their voting rights in federal and provincial elections.

amendment to the *Indian Act*, any attempt to raise funds on reserves without the written authorization of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs was prohibited.

At the same time, in reaction to the land claims in British Columbia, the federal government amended the *Indian Act* (Daugherty 1982, 16) so that, from 1927 to 1951, any fundraising destined for land-claims proceedings constituted an offence. The Indian communities were trapped, deprived of any legal recourse.

In 1945, Indians who attempted to affirm their sovereignty and their desire for self-government faced just as strong opposition. The North American Indian Nation Government was founded; when the federal government undertook a revision of the *Indian Act*, this organization passed its own *Indian Act*. But this affirmation of autonomy would have its price.

THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN NATION GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHED IN 1945

In 1945, the North American Indian Nation Government was established on the initiative of Jules Sioui, a Huron from Lorette. During World War II, Jules Sioui rebelled against the federal government's goal of subjecting First Nations peoples to compulsory enlistment. First Nations peoples did not have the right to vote because they were not considered to have the attributes of citizenship. During the war of 1914–1918, the Indians had been expressly excluded from conscription. Nonetheless, a large number of them volunteered. The same scenario occurred in 1939, but Sioui considered that if First Nations peoples chose to fight in the armed forces, it should be in full freedom and as the king's allies, not as His Majesty's subjects.

The campaign led by Jules Sioui for the independence of his nation led to the proclamation of the North American Indian Nation Government in 1945. An Algonquin, William Commanda, was appointed its supreme head. During the second session of this government, in 1947, the delegates adopted their own *Indian Act*, a real snub to the *Indian Act* that the government was preparing to revise.

It is interesting to note that a passage of the Proclamation of the North American Indian Nation Government, published in 1959, referred explicitly to the Charter of the United Nations Organization, stating that the human rights recognized in the International Charter by the United Nations General Assembly pertain to all humanity, without exception. This meant that First Nations peoples enjoyed the same rights as any other nation and should stand united in order to be recognized as an authentic nation.

This political movement—bold for the times—even provided for the creation of a national First Nations bank. Moreover, every First Nations person was invited to obtain a registration or membership card. This card, which numerous Amerindians still have today, was signed by the secretary–treasurer of the period, Jules Sioui. The back of the card indicated that the cardholder had certain rights and privileges, including the freedom to circulate between Canada and the United States, exemption from military service, exemption from any tax imposed by a provincial or federal government, the right to hunt and fish on all North American lands, and the right to set up camps at any location whatsoever, taking care not to cause damage to the occupants.

But this affirmation of self-government would have its price. Jules Sioui was arrested and, along with four other members of the organization, accused of [TRANSLATION] “having conspired for the purpose of sowing discontent and hatred among the subjects of His Majesty, the Indians of Canada, by leading them to believe that he had instituted a special status for North American Indians, who no longer need comply with the laws of the land.” Jules Sioui, as well as Chief Michel Vachon of Betsiamites, Michel Vachon of Sept-Îles, John Chabot of Maniwaki, and Gabriel (last name omitted in the source text) of Sturgeon Falls were found guilty of seditious conspiracy and sentenced to two years' imprisonment (*Sioui c. Le Roi* 1949).

Even though this judgement was quashed on appeal, the government brought the case before the Supreme Court, at which time Jules Sioui began a hunger strike that lasted 72 days. Finally, the government abandoned its proceedings (Tsiewei 1994, 17).



William Commanda (centre), Supreme Chief of the North American Indian Nation Government. This photograph appeared on the text of the government's proclamation.

Photo: Terry Kennedy, Courtesy of Mr. Johnny Vachon of Mallotenam



A North American Indian Nation Government registration card

Photo: Terry Kennedy, Courtesy of Mr. Johnny Vachon of Mallotenam

The initiator of the movement, Jules Sioui, a Huron from Lorette, and a few other leaders would be sentenced to two years in prison for seditious conspiracy (*Sioui c. Le Roi* 1949).

These few historical events are essential to a better understanding of the real nature of the *Indian Act* and federal guardianship. Unfortunately, these sombre moments in a still-recent history have remained unknown. Public opinion has hardly been stirred. In the

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS: AN INDISPENSABLE TOOL FOR ASSIMILATION

During an education conference, Marcelline Kanapé, now principal of Uashkaikan Secondary School in Betsiamites, summarized the essence of the Indian residential-school system, which remained in force until the 1970s, by stating that First Nations children were taught that everything “Indian” was bad.



Amerindian students at the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery residential school, near Amos, in the 1950s

Société d'histoire d'Amos, Fonds H. Dudemaine

The Indian residential school system was officially established in Canada in 1892. It was the result of agreements entered into between the Government of Canada and the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. The government terminated these agreements in 1969 (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 1999, 7).

The purpose of these establishments was simple: the evangelization and progressive assimilation of Aboriginal peoples. At the end of their education in residential schools, children, after being resocialized and steeped in the values of European culture, would be prototypes of a magnificent metamorphosis: the now-civilized “savages” would be prepared to accept their privileges and responsibilities as citizens (Royal Commission 1996b, 1).

In 1931, there were eighty residential schools in Canada, located primarily in the Northwest and in the western provinces. For reasons that are not well understood, the system was established only later in Quebec. Two Indian residential schools, one Catholic and the other Protestant, were established in Fort George before World War II. Four others were created after the war: Saint-Marc-de-Figuery, near Amos, Pointe-Bleue at Lac Saint-Jean, Maliotenam, near Sept-Îles, and La Tuque in Haute-Mauricie (*ibid.*).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples qualified the residential-school episode as tragic. Moreover, since 1986, one by one the churches responsible for the residential schools have made public apologies. For decades, generations of children were knowingly removed from their parents and their villages, subjected to rigid discipline, and even prohibited from speaking their own languages under pain of punishment. During a televised interview about Indian residential schools, the former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, Antonio Lamer, talked about kidnapping: [TRANSLATION] “For all practical purposes, we incarcerated them in schools. I am not very proud of that” (Réseau Historia May 2001). The history of residential schools is also marked by countless tales of negligence, abuse, and physical and sexual violence. Although we should not assume that every school was the same, the findings are nevertheless serious. In 1998, the Government of Canada agreed to contribute \$350 million to support community-healing initiatives for members of the Aboriginal peoples who were affected by the physical and sexual abuse suffered in residential schools. This fund is currently administered by the independent Aboriginal Healing Foundation (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 1999).

next chapter, "Dealing With Different Rights," we will see that the *Indian Act* is still in force and that it has been wrongly perceived as a regime of privileges that exists to the detriment of the general public. Although, at first glance, guardianship appears to be advantageous, it has many serious drawbacks.

THE TUBERCULOSIS EPIDEMIC OF THE MID-50S

One Inuk Out of Seven in Southern Hospitals

In the mid-50s, tuberculosis ravaged northern communities. These two photographs were taken in December 1956 at Immigration Hospital (today Christ-Roi Hospital), near Quebec City. This hospital was used because Indian Affairs and Northern Development was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration between 1949 and 1965. In the photograph above, a group of Inuit women and children; below right, in front of the Christmas tree, is a group of young Amerindians from the Sept-Îles region.

In his book *A History of the Original Peoples of Northern Canada* (1974), Keith Crowe states that in 1950, one Inuk out of five had tuberculosis; in 1956, one Inuk out of seven was hospitalized in the South and someone in practically every First Nations family had to be evacuated to the South for months or years.

Crowe reports that every year medical teams went to the North, taking advantage of treaty gatherings, or on board supply vessels or river barges. They visited remote camps, taking X-rays and giving vaccines, and a steady stream of patients was sent to the South as a result.

In particular, the author evokes this sad period when children and parents were evacuated to Southern hospitals, and how this upset so many families. Tuberculosis victims returned home handicapped and could no longer hunt. Patients were "lost" for years because of administrative errors. Children forgot their mother tongue and were unable to communicate with their peers on their return. Finally, patients had difficulty reintegrating into communities after spending years in overheated hospitals, virtually without exercise, in incessant cleanliness, and eating pre-prepared food (Crowe, 1974).



Photo: Louise Roy, collection of Pierre Lepage



Photo: Louise Roy, collection of Pierre Lepage

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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A poster announcing the elections on the Six Nations reserve in Ontario, October 1924

Photo: National Archives of Canada, C 33642



During a demonstration in March 1959, traditional chiefs Joe Logan Sr. and Dave Thomas show their opposition to the elected band council system that the federal government imposed in 1924.

Photo: Toronto Star, National Archives of Canada, PA 123905