

*When referencing contents of the *Indian Act*, Indian is correct terminology.

What do you already know about The Indian Act?

Residential schools no potlatch
medical no languages
Reservations no traditions
Status
women losing status
protects Indigenous rights

The Indian Act 1876




The *Indian Act* is a Canadian act of Parliament that concerns “registered Indians,” their bands, and the system of Indian reserves.



First passed in 1876 and still in force with **amendments**.



It is the primary document defining how the Government of Canada interacts with the 614 First Nation bands and their members.



Throughout its long history, the Act has been a subject of controversy and has been interpreted in different ways by both Indigenous Canadians and non-Indigenous Canadians.

The legislation has been amended many times, including "over five major changes" made in 2020.

The Act is very wide-ranging in scope, covering governance, land use, healthcare, education, and more on Indian reserves.

10 Laws the *Indian Act* imposed on Indigenous peoples in Canada

1. Denied women status
2. Introduced residential schools
3. Introduced reserves
4. Banned Indigenous people from forming political organizations
5. Imposed the band council system
6. Banned Indigenous people from speaking their languages
7. Banned Indigenous people from practicing their traditional religion
8. Declared potlatch ceremonies illegal
9. Denied Indigenous people the right to vote
10. Denied Indigenous people the right to sell products from farms.

5 Major Changes to the Indian Act

(as finalized in 2020)

[\[sac-isc.gc.ca\]](https://sac-isc.gc.ca)

- **Removal of the “1951 cut-off”:** This eliminated the rule that limited status transmission for many women and their descendants.
- **Elimination of remaining sex-based inequities:** Matrilineal and patrilineal lines are now treated equally in determining status.
- **Restoration of status to descendants back to 1869:** Families affected by past discriminatory rules (such as women losing status upon marriage) can now regain eligibility.
- **Large expansion of status eligibility:** An estimated 270,000–450,000 people are now newly entitled to registration.
- **Administrative improvements:** The federal government committed to reducing delays, improving processing, and addressing remaining registration inequities.

THE INDIAN ACT



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUPUHidHxRQ>

Reflection

Which part of the video stood out to you the most?

What made it important or memorable?



What do you already
know about
**Land Rights and Title
Rights?**

Land Rights and Title Rights

- Indigenous Peoples lived on and governed the land long before Canada existed.
- Land rights often refer to how land can be used — for hunting, fishing, gathering, and cultural practices.
- Title rights focus on who owns the land and has authority to make decisions about it.
- The Indian Act limited Indigenous control over land and placed reserves under federal oversight.
- Many Indigenous Nations never signed treaties or surrendered their land, leading to ongoing legal challenges.

Landmark Cases

A Landmark ruling is a court decision that changes how the law is interpreted and applied going forward.

- **Delgamuukw v. BC (1997)**: Confirmed Aboriginal title exists and that oral histories are valid evidence.
- **Haida v. BC (2004)**: Established the duty to consult Indigenous Nations before decisions affecting their land.
- **Cowichan Tribes v. BC (2025)**: Recognized Cowichan Aboriginal title to part of their traditional territory and affirmed their fishing rights.

Video: A court ruled Aboriginal title over private land



Video: A court ruled Aboriginal title over private land

1. What evidence did the Cowichan Nation use to prove their land and title?
2. Why is this court decision controversial?
3. Why do some Nations disagree with the decision?