

The *Indian Act*: Assimilating First Nations

BLM
2.3.1

The original *Indian Act* (1876) was amended several times over the years including the amendments listed below. Read the following list of restrictive amendments with a partner and answer the following question:

How would each of these measures contribute to the government's goal of assimilating First Nations? Record your responses in your learning log.

1. The Potlatch, the Sundance and other spiritual practices are banned.
2. The government gives itself the power to lease reserve lands without Band consent.
3. The government gives itself the power to enfranchise individuals without their consent.
4. First Nation members who obtain a university degree are automatically enfranchised and lose their Status and treaty rights.
5. First Nations women who marry non-Status men lose their Status, as do their children.
6. First Nations individuals may not leave their reserve without a pass from the Indian agent. **Note:** Although similar to the many amendments to the *Indian Act* that restricted First Nations rights, the pass system was not a provision of the *Indian Act*. Rather it was an unlegislated policy that was followed in the west for about two decades after the 1885 Northwest Resistance.
7. The wearing of traditional clothing is banned.
8. Traditional First Nations methods of choosing leaders are replaced by a process of European, municipal-style elections.
9. Women are not eligible to vote or run for Band Council or Chief.
10. Meetings of three or more First Nations members to discuss a grievance against the government are banned.