

The *Indian Act*, Symbol of a Changed Relationship

BLM
2.3.2

Even as the numbered treaties were being negotiated (Treaties 1-7, 1871-1877), the federal government enacted the Indian Act (1876) unilaterally (with no input from First Nations).

In a small group, read this excerpt from the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, discuss the following questions and record your answers in your learning log.

1. How did the *Indian Act* signal a change from the nation-to-nation relationship affirmed by the *Royal Proclamation* of 1763 and continued in the treaty-making processes between First Nations and colonial and Canadian governments
2. What is your response to the Canadian government's imposition of the *Indian Act* on First Nations? What is revealed by the passing of this legislation in the midst of the Numbered Treaty negotiations?

"In keeping with the clear policy of assimilation, the *Indian Act* made no reference to the treaties already in existence or to those being negotiated at the time it was passed. The absence of any significant mention of the treaty relationship continues in the current version of the *Indian Act*.... The omission is curious and speaks volumes about official intentions with regard to Indian autonomy [independence] after 1876. In short, it may give rise to an inference that Canadian officials did not attach great importance to the nation-to-nation nature of the treaty relationship."

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sq/sq24_e.html