



In the early years of European contact, there were many examples of mutual cooperation, nation-to-nation, between First Peoples and the European explorers, fur traders, and settlers. Some Europeans learned the languages and customs of the First Peoples, negotiated agreements and alliances with them, respected their rights to freely choose their trading partners and to preserve their traditional territories and governance. Others imposed European culture and religion, which they considered to be superior, on Aboriginal peoples, ignoring traditional territories and governance.

In the same way, the government of early Canada in some instances respected Aboriginal rights to land, independence, and self-governance, while in other instances it did not. Many of the treaties or agreements between the government and First Peoples of pre-Confederation times were known as the **Peace and Friendship Treaties**.

However, in the Confederation period, the purpose of most treaties with First Peoples was to obtain more land for European expansion at the cheapest cost possible. Some of the terms of these agreements were not respected by the government, and the lands set aside for First Nations became smaller and more restricted. The First Indian Act, passed in 1879, made the First Peoples subjects of Britain. This Act established the authority of the federal government in matters related to lands, identity, citizenship, rights, governance, and education of First Peoples. The Indian Act has been subject to many changes over the years and debates still go on about how to improve the Act, or to do away with it altogether.

Using your knowledge of pre-Confederation history, as well as print and Internet sources,

- Find and record examples of intercultural contact where First Peoples were treated as independent and self-governing equals.
- Find and record examples of where First Peoples were treated as inferiors and dependents.
- Answer this question: "How did Confederation and western expansion and settlement affect European views of First Peoples?"