

For most of the years since the first Indian Act was passed in 1876, being Aboriginal or "Indian" was perceived to be incompatible with being a Canadian citizen.



When the option of enfranchisement, trading Indian status for voting rights, failed to attract individuals, more coercive measures were enacted, enfranchising Indians if they lived away from their reserves, joined the military, obtained higher education, or, in the case of women, if they married a non-Indian.

The object of policy, baldly stated in 1920 by Duncan Campbell Scott, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, was "to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question and no Indian Department."

The same object was reflected in the 1969 White Paper which proposed, in the language of democracy, to make Indians "citizens like any other." The response of Aboriginal peoples to all these attempts to "break them into pieces" has been consistent resistance...

... I have argued that a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and others in Canada is urgently needed, that it will bring benefit to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners, that it is consistent with Canadian law and social values...

We have the capacity to imagine a better future and we have the tools at hand to realize it. Let us decide now to pursue our common goals together, to achieve long life, health and wisdom for all, good relations and peace between peoples and respect for the earth that supports us.

- Georges Erasmus, in the Baldwin-Lafontaine Lecture, The Fairmont Hotel, Vancouver, BC, March 8, 2002, as cited on the Operation Dialogue website:
<http://www.operation-dialogue.com/lafontaine-baldwin/e/2002_speech_2.html>

Soon it will be too late to know my culture, for integration is upon us and soon we will have no values but yours. Already many of our young people have forgotten the old ways. And many have been shamed of their Indian ways by scorn and ridicule. My culture is like a wounded deer that has crawled away into the forest to bleed and die alone.



- Chief Dan George, 1975, as cited in *Who Speaks for Canada*, eds. D. Morton and M. Weinfeld (p. 309)

In 1987, closed-door negotiations among Canada's provincial and territorial governments and the prime minister resulted in a proposal to amend the Canadian Constitution... The gatherings clearly showed that little had changed since European settlers first came to our land. There was still not representation by or consultation with aboriginal peoples.



... Building the future is more than saying no to that which is wrong. It is also saying yes to that which is fair and just...

Most important, we must gain control over our future. We must take back what we never gave up. We must become fully self-governing again.

- Elijah Harper, as cited in *Who Speaks for Canada*, eds. D. Morton and M. Weinfeld (pp. 322-323).