

## Teacher's Guide

### First Peoples in Canada: An Overview of Significant Events & Dates

**1760:** English abolish the annual 'gift' distributions to First Peoples that had been established by the French. Reserves that had been established to missionize First Peoples during the French regime were confirmed by the English.

**1763:** English Proclamation partially acknowledged territorial rights of First Peoples, and in 1764 land–cession treaties began to be signed at Upper Canada (now Ontario).

**1867:** Constitution Act assigned to Parliament legislative jurisdiction over 'Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians.' Parliament was to continue to make treaties where needed.

**1876:** First Indian Act passed. Its fundamental purpose was to assimilate First Peoples who were defined as 'Status' – 'treaty Indians who were members of groups who at some time took part in an agreement with the Crown to surrender their land rights for specified benefits', plus 'registered Indians outside treaty areas' and 'non–Status Indians' who through inter–marriage had lost their legal status as 'Indians.'

**1884:** The feast of the North–west Coast First Peoples, known as 'potlatch' were banned along with dances associated with religious rituals.

**1895:** 'Sun dances' (thirst dances) of the Plains First Peoples were banned because the government authorities did not consider their ceremonial endurance features acceptable.

**1912:** Canada produced its first Calgary Stampede, a rodeo and Wild West show in which First Peoples participated because they could handle horses well and had adapted themselves to the ranching economy. It was an Aboriginal person and the only Canadian that got the top awards in 1912! However, the government and tourist authorities wanted to present a history in which the West had been empty before the arrival of settlers such as the cowboys, fur traders, and the North–west Mounted Police.

**1914:** Amendments to the Indian Act made any First Person participation in dances, rodeos, and public exhibitions off reserves in the Western provinces and territories subject to the approval of local Indian agents of the Canadian government.

**1920:** Government declared 'compulsory enfranchisement' when a First Person relinquished his Indian status and attended school to age 15. More than ever, children were taken from their communities and families at age six or earlier and placed

hundreds of kilometres away in residential schools. There they were not allowed to speak 'Indian' and of course had no opportunity to hear and learn their traditional rituals including music and dance.

**1939–45:** More First Peoples enlisted for service during the Second World War proportionately than any other segment of Canadian population even though they were not considered citizens.

**1951:** Indian Act allowed a measure of self-control in managing reserve lands and band funds. Anti-potlatch and anti-dance measures were quietly shelved.

**1960:** First Peoples were granted suffrage by the Canadian government without compromising their special status.

**1969:** National Indian Council sets up committee to study Indian Act.

**1970:** Blue Quills School, Alberta, becomes first school controlled by an Amerindian band.

**1988:** Last federal residential school for Natives closed.

---

**Recommended Sources:**

- **An Overview of Aboriginal History in Canada**  
[http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/0201200110\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/0201200110_e.html)
- **Olive Patricia Dickason's *Canada's First Nations*. 1992. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.**