

Canada is a country that is seen as a very diverse, multicultural, and fair place to live. However, there are some parts of our country's history that don't paint such a nice picture. Below you will find a very brief overview of some of Canada's past discriminatory policies and actions. This is not meant to make you feel badly about the country you call home, but to make you aware of a darker past. What can you do to change the future for the better?

Indian Act

- Applies to First Nations peoples, not to the Metis or Inuit.
- Intended to eradicate First Nations culture in favour of assimilation into Euro-Canadian society (make the First Nations people more like the Europeans)
- Many treaties and amendments have been made to this act
- It has enabled trauma, human rights violations, and social and cultural disruption for generations of First Nations peoples.
- It outlines the governmental obligations to First Nations people, and determines "status", which affords certain rights to First Nations people, but also limits them in many other ways
- Allows for First Nations people to be treated differently than everyone else in Canada in bad ways (fewer rights)

Residential Schools

- Residential Schools were government sponsored and church led schools that had the goal of assimilating First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children into Euro-Canadian culture.
- Students were removed from their homes by force and were separated from their brothers and sisters while at residential schools.
- Students were banned from speaking their own language and from participating in any cultural or traditional activities.
- The residential schools were overcrowded with too many children. The children were also undernourished and underfed. This led to epidemics of disease such as tuberculosis and influenza.
- At least 3200 students died while attending residential schools.
- Many children were abused at residential schools and excessive punishment was normal for children who attended residential schools.
- The last residential school in Canada did not close until 1996.

The SS Komagata Maru

- A ship with 376 British subjects who wanted to immigrate to Canada was not allowed to dock.
- It was a Japanese ship filled with people from India, mostly Sikhs, and some Muslims and Hindus.
- The ship was sent back to India where most were arrested and kept in prison for the rest of WWI, though many were also killed.

Head Tax on Chinese immigrants

- Intended to restrict and regulate Chinese immigration because the white population feared the Chinese immigrant workers would take away their jobs and settle in Canada permanently
- Required current and future Chinese immigrants to pay money for migrating to Canada.
- It started at \$10/head in 1885 then increased over the years

- 1896 - \$50
- 1901 - \$100
- 1903 - \$500 (equivalent to approximately \$14,000 today)

Ethnic minorities denied the right to vote

- Early on, only men over the age of 21 who owned property were allowed to vote. Women, Asians, and Indigenous people were not allowed to and have fought hard over the years for this right.
- **1900:** You can only vote in a federal election if you are eligible to vote in a provincial election, and provinces denied this right to many people.
- **1916:** Women win the right to vote provincially in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.
- **1917:** Women win the right to vote provincially in BC and Ontario.
- **1948:** The right to vote is extended to Canadians of Asian origin.
- **1949:** Japanese people are allowed to vote in BC.
- **1953:** Inuit and Doukhobours are given the right to vote in federal elections and BC.
- **1955:** Doukhobours are given the right to vote in federal elections.
- **1960:** Indigenous people are granted the right to vote in federal elections.
- **1970:** Canada Elections Act lowers the voting age to 18.
- **1982:** The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms embeds into the Constitution the right of all citizens to vote.