

SPEAKING OF INDIAN AFFAIRS



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Indian and Northern
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Affaires indiennes
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ALBERTA REGION

Canada



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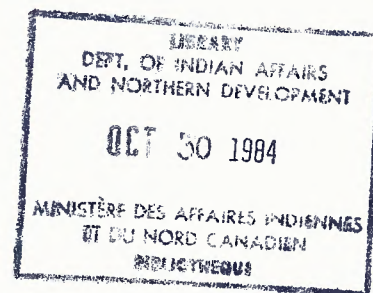


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Speaking of Indian affairs





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INTRODUCTION

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is the Department of the Government of Canada responsible for assisting Canada's Indian people in the achievement of their economic, social, and cultural objectives. The Department's Alberta Region provides services to status Indian people living in Alberta.

The Regional headquarters are in Edmonton, with district offices in High Level, Fort McMurray, St. Paul and Calgary. The latter has a service-office in Lethbridge.

This brochure provides some general information about the Department, about Alberta Indians and the operations of the Department in Alberta. It is designed to assist all those having dealings with the Department or needing information about its activities. Many other publications giving further information about specific subjects and programs are available by contacting Regional Communication Services.

The Indian

Over one million Canadians, (almost five percent of the population), can trace at least part of their ancestry to Canada's first inhabitants, the Indians. Legally, these fall into two groups. Many have a formal legal relationship with the Government of Canada, based on treaties signed between the Government and the tribe. These are known as status, or registered, Indians. Others are without any such formal relationship, and are known as non status Indians, or (if of mixed blood) as Metis. There are about 325,000 status Indians in Canada, and some 700,000 non-status Indians and Metis.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has a formal responsibility for status Indians to protect the special rights accorded to them through treaties and the Indian Act. The rest of this brochure discusses only status Indians.

Today, there are 576 separate Indian groups, known as 'bands' in Canada. These bands occupy 2,284 reserves ranging in size from one hectare to 140,000 hectares and totalling 2,485,000 hectares. Only 700 of these reserves are at present inhabited. The Indian population is composed of a number of tribes or basic linguistic groups that are sub-divided into language groups with many local dialects.

Alberta's Indian population is about 43,000 people, slightly less than 2% of the total Alberta population of 2.3 million. However, Indian people living in Alberta form a large percentage (about 13%) of Canada's total Indian population of 325,000.

Approximately 71% of the Indian population live on the 92 reserves in the province; each of which is owned by one of the 41 bands. There are 10 reserves in the southern plains; 51 in the central parklands; and 31 in the northern forest. Reserves range from the largest in



The Indian Act

Canada to among the smallest, with populations ranging from 6,000 members to as few as 45. Some reserves are located near our largest cities, while others are found in remote locations readily accessible only by plane. Natural resources, (especially oil and gas), have made several of the bands the most wealthy in Canada, while others have no marketable natural resources. Unemployment rates thus vary from virtually non-existent to over 80%.

Alberta's status Indians signed treaties with the federal government in 1876, 1877 and 1899. Most Alberta status Indians live within the boundaries of Treaty areas six, seven or eight.

In recent years, some bands have joined together into regional organizations called tribal councils, which assist in the delivery of programs and services to their members. They are:

1. The Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council;
2. The Four Band Council;
3. The Yellowhead Tribal Council; and
4. The Tribal Chiefs Association of Northeastern Alberta.

These organizations, together with the Indian bands, deliver over 55% of the programs and services in the Alberta region.

Indian people have the distinction of being the only group specifically mentioned in the British North America Act, the basis of confederation in 1867.

The Indian Act, drawn up nine years later in 1876, is the expression by Parliament of its legislative authority with respect to Indians and their lands. It also provided the foundation for the administration of Indian Affairs in Canada.

The act has been revised periodically to bring it into line with the evolution of Indian and Canadian Society, and by 1951 it had reached its present form. Recent decades have seen much change, and some of the sections of the act are currently regarded by the Indian people as unacceptable. The government acknowledged this and in December 1982 established an all party committee to study the "status, development and responsibility of band governments on reserve, as well as the financial relationship between the Government of Canada and Indian bands".

The committee, presented its final report in October 1983. Its first recommendation was "that the federal government establish a new relationship with Indian First Nations and that an essential element of this relationship be recognition of Indian self-government". The new constitution which replaced the BNA Act guarantees continued discussion with Indian First Nations.

History of Indian Affairs

The Indian and Inuit Affairs program is the oldest continuously operating arm of the Federal Government. Some notable dates give a historical perspective on the Department and its Alberta operations.

- 1850** First of a series of treaties between Indians and the Crown.
- 1867** Confederation. Indian affairs became the responsibility of the Secretary of State.
- 1870** Ruperts Land becomes part of Canada
- 1873** Indian affairs became a branch of the Department of the Interior.
- 1876** The Indian Act was passed. Indian Treaty No. 6 signed.
- 1877** Treaty No. 7 signed.
- 1880** A separate Department of Indian Affairs was established.
- 1899** Treaty No. 8 signed.
- 1905** Province of Alberta established
- 1936** Indian Affairs became a branch of the Department of Mines.
- 1950** The department of Citizenship and Immigration assumed responsibility for Indian Affairs.
- 1951** The Indian Act was revised.
- 1966** Indian Affairs was incorporated into a new department which included northern development.
- 1969** A government 'white paper' proposing changes to the Indian Act was rejected by the Indian people. The government subsequently agreed that provisions of the Indian Act would not be amended without consultation.
- 1975** The government announced its intention to redefine its relationship with status Indians so native people could maintain their identities within Canadian Society and to safeguard their unique constitutional rights.
- 1983** An all-party report recommended a greater thrust toward Indian self-government should be adopted.



Indian and Inuit Affairs Alberta Region Program,

The Alberta region works in co-operation with Indian people. Its main objective is to work to support and encourage co-ordinated activities whereby the Indians of Alberta may achieve their cultural, economic and social aspirations within Canadian society.

Some of the activities involved are:

- to ensure that treaty and other obligations are met.
- to provide financial support and advice to assist Indian communities to become self reliant.
- to help Indians achieve equality of opportunity and self-fulfillment, and advance their cultural aspirations, through provision of educational facilities and services.
- to assist Indian communities to create employment and income from use of their resources, in their own way.
- to assist in the improvement of housing and related physical amenities.
- to provide adequate social services in the Indian Communities.

INAC's regional and district offices encourage Alberta's Indians to actively seek control of their own affairs. In 1983, for example, the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council signed a tripartite agreement with the federal and provincial governments. This greatly increased the Indian role in the administration of cases involving the welfare of status Indian children.

Each of the Department's branches has a role in assisting bands to achieve their goals and objectives, and these are described in the remaining pages.



Long Range Planning and Liaison

Indians in the Alberta region are increasingly managing their own affairs. The Long Range Planning and Liaison Directorate provides band councils with funds and planning support. Projects range from small scale community planning to such mega-projects as the Esso-Cold lake development, the Syncrude expansion, or the proposed Slave River Hydro dam.

The Planning Unit also helps Indians to locate resources of other federal or provincial departments. Project-related advice is provided to councils, and where desirable liaison is set up with appropriate federal and provincial government agencies.

The Directorate also co-ordinates all internal departmental planning activities, including the operational and work planning exercises, and facilitates planning undertaken by all program managers.

Finance and Administration

This Directorate provides financial and administrative services for the Region and the Alberta Indian community. It advises senior staff on financial and administrative matters, provides data for planning, and co-ordinates financial input for budget submissions. It also provides the mechanism for accounting and controlling public funds. Administration services support regional operations by contracting and purchasing, and controlling inventories and assets. The Directorate also accounts for funds held in trust, provides financial advice and audit services to Indian Bands.

Communication Services

The Communication Services Directorate provides the media and the public with information about the Alberta Region, through news releases, brochures, and ACCENT, a newsletter serving the Region's offices and band councils. Articles are also supplied to the department's national journal, INTERCOM.

The Directorate answers many enquiries from the media, band councils, other agencies, and the public for information about the various programs administered by the Region; maintains a reference library; and distributes regional and national materials printed by or for the department.

Personnel

The Personnel Services Directorate provides personnel services for the Region, including human resource planning, classification, staff relations, employee counselling, staffing, training and pay and employee benefits.

Under-represented groups are a special concern. An emphasis is placed on native employment, with several recruitment, training and development programs available, which have led to over 200 of the region's employees being Indian or other native status. Employment opportunities are also provided for women, francophones and the handicapped.

On request, the Directorate works closely with band councils developing their own personnel policies and practices.

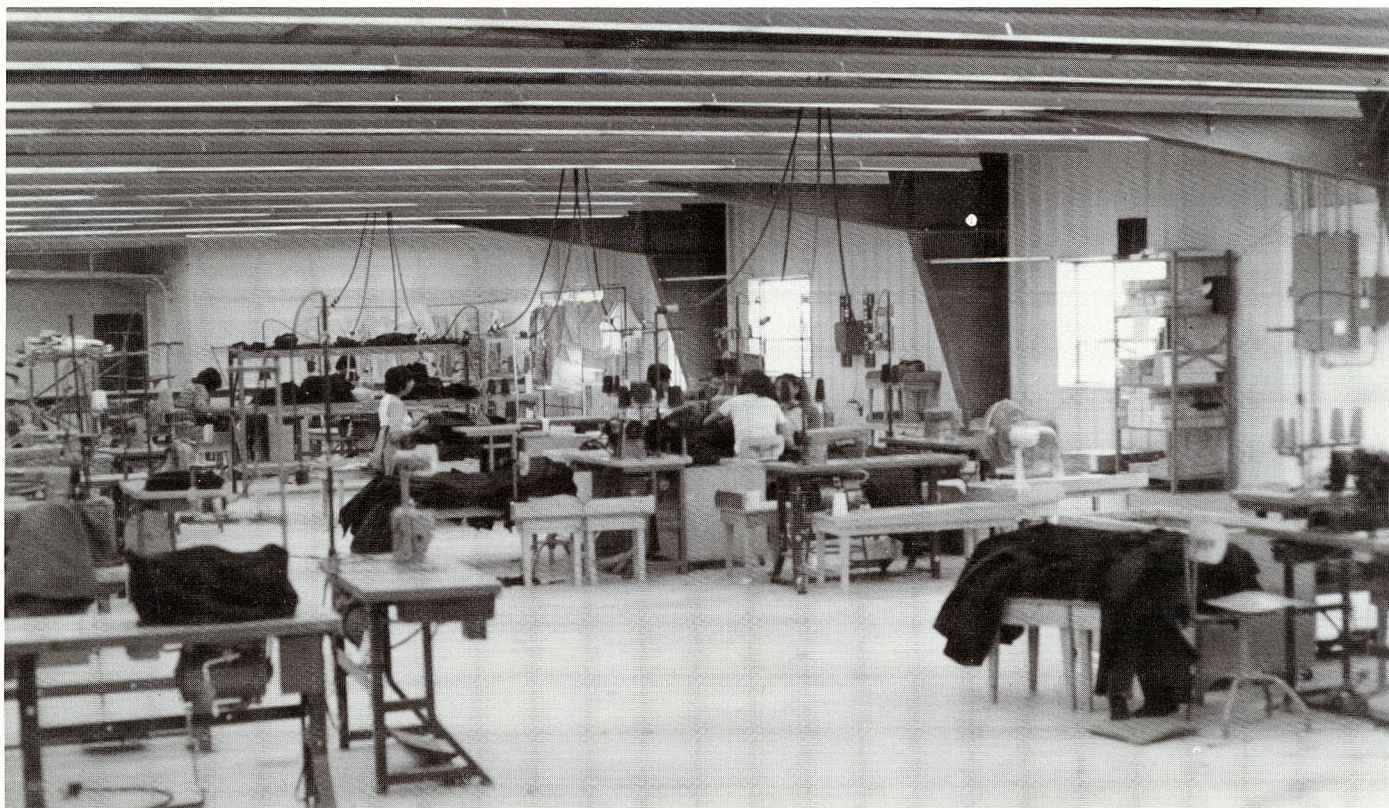
Economic and Employment Development

The Economic and Employment Development Directorate helps Indians to obtain a greater degree of economic self-reliance through development of their own economic and human potential, both on and off reserve. This not only includes aid to such traditional enterprises as trapping and fishing, but controlled utilization of forest resources, improved agricultural practices, enhanced yields, and orderly marketing.

The Directorate provides funds for a variety of business activities and other initiatives. Past examples include upgrading protection against forest fires, establishing a credit union, and installing efficient business

accounting systems. A loan pool is also available to the bands for economic development.

New jobs are expected to develop from such department and band sponsored projects, so heavy emphasis is placed on training programs. Band members are learning new skills from occupational training sessions, training on the job, and student summer employment. Mobility assistance helps individuals get to jobs, and bands are helped to set up training advisory services.



Social Development

The Alberta region provides many programs to assist individuals, families and communities. These include social assistance, child welfare, adult care, preventive social services, and rehabilitation support.

Some welfare recipients qualify for pre-employment training, and life skills training if assistance is not available from other sources. Social assistance supplies individuals and families according to need with food, shelter, clothing and fuel.

Child welfare, (assigned to the provinces under the British North America Act), is augmented on the reserves by the Social Development Directorate. A diversity of services aim at nurturing wholesome development in neglected, orphaned, or delinquent Indian children. The department also finances care for the aged, and assistance for the physically, mentally, and socially handicapped adult.

Increasingly, bands are assuming greater responsibility in management of these programs. Bands are also initiating special projects, aimed at helping individuals and families to cope with the problems of day to day living. These include rehabilitation services, group homes, counselling, drop-in and day care centres, and adult education in such subjects as home economics and family life.

Education

Education holds great promise for the future of Alberta's Indian people, and at present over 12,000 Indian students, (30% of the regional Indian population) are enrolled in kindergarten through post-secondary schools. This importance is reflected in allocation of one-third of the total regional budget to that program, and in programs encouraging band participation in education.

Eleven band councils presently operate their own school programs, and many more are likely to do so as program transfers continue. More than a quarter of the teachers in the Region's Indian schools are band members, and this proportion will increase as universities turn out more native graduates from their faculties of education. Band council participation is increasing in school boards off reserves that educate status Indian students, increasing input into tuition and capital funding agreements, and curriculum decisions.

The Region and bands are co-operating in curriculum development, increasing the relevance of subject matter to the native way of life, history, and culture, and making studies more meaningful to Indian students.



Reserves and Trusts

The Reserves and Trusts Directorate of the Alberta Region is responsible for managing Indian reserves as crown land, and a number of other functions required by the Indian Act. It is divided into two units; Lands, and Statutory Requirements.

Indian reserves are legally Crown land set apart for the use and benefit of Indian Bands and are therefore under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada. The Lands unit ensures that reserves are managed in accordance with band wishes and the requirements of law, and assists the bands to assume more responsibility for management of their reserves. The unit is currently developing a land records management system which can be readily handed over to the bands, and providing an educational training program that will prepare the bands for an orderly takeover of land management.

The Statutory Requirements unit has the responsibility for administering band membership, by-laws and elections, trusteeship of wills, estates, the funds of minors, disbursements of treaty payments, and processing applications for expenditures of band funds. Gas, oil, and other mineral deposits on reserves are managed by the Indian Mineral (West) Office in Calgary.

Capital Management and Band Support

This Directorate manages capital expenditures and assists in the development of band Governments. It includes separate units for Housing and Capital Management, Band Support and Indian Management Development.

The on-reserve housing program subsidizes the construction and management of housing for reserve residents. The off-reserve housing program allows qualified lower income band members living off-reserve to apply for a second mortgage that is forgivable over ten years.

The Capital Management unit co-ordinates the development of community facilities on reserves. Criteria of health, safety and education are used to prioritize band needs for capital projects such as: water and sewer systems, roads, band buildings, and education facilities on reserves.

The Band Support unit provides advice and funds to maintain band administration and develop local governments, and also co-ordinates the reserve band constable program.

The Indian Management Development Unit assists the Indian people to manage their own administration. The Department encourages reserves to develop and maintain management skills, and ensures that its resources are applied responsibly in pursuit of program objectives. The program stimulates the growing interest in management development, and helps the bands determine their needs, and assemble band management development plans. These serve as a basis for the allocation of funds, through direct contributions to bands, individual support for training off the reserve, workshops which are offered to band members, and advisory support funds which are available for professional services associated with management development.

Engineering and Architecture

The Engineering and Architecture Directorate is a support service responsible for providing technical assistance and advice to Indian band councils and regional program managers. Department staff, private consultants and band staff collaborate in a variety of activities.

The capital program is developed and implemented through technical planning, facility design, project and construction management, quality control, and evaluation.

Capital assets are inventoried, and physical assets operated and maintained. Fire prevention and construction safety programs are developed and operated.

Band staff are given technical training in a variety of specialties. Aerial photography and mapping services are also provided. The Directorate also implements such national policies as the energy conservation and off-oil programs, and retrofitting of buildings.



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