

*Columbus*

# CANADA'S COLONIAL LEGACY

**"THEY WOULD JUST START BEATING YOU AND LOSE CONTROL AND HURL YOU AGAINST THE WALL, THROW YOU ON THE FLOOR, KICK YOU, PUNCH YOU."**

## The Legacy of Indigenous Colonization Continues On

The treatment of the Indigenous community by the Canadian government is fraught with betrayal, broken promises, and policies that encourage "extermination by assimilation". Canada's entire history is a tale of Indigenous colonization. The ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples and their culture has evolved

significantly over time. We have shifted from more overt forms of violence to structural and systemic abuse, such as: chronic underfunding of social services, extremely disproportionate rates of incarceration and confiscation of children by the foster care system, and 3 times the national average of deaths by suicide, according to Stats Canada. The legacy of intergenerational trauma that has been perpetrated onto Indigenous communities by the Canada government is a daily experience for many.

With the last residential school closing down in just 1996, the effects of these horrifying institutions have devastated families, communities, and individuals. A total of 52% of all living students from residential schools filed claims of sexual and physical abuse at their residential school having been perpetrated by a teacher or administrator, in a 2005 settlement with the Canadian government.

The intergenerational trauma from residential schools as well as an ongoing legacy of Canadian colonization of Indigenous peoples and their cultures has left a mark that will take a long time – and consistent, thorough effort – to resolve. Establishing true reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada requires understanding the context that underlies the current struggles for Indigenous sovereignty, land rights, water rights, and treaty rights. There are 7 key events to the modern history of Indigenous colonization and counter-resistance in Canada from the last 60 years. These events include: The Sixties Scoop (1950s-60s), Residential Schools (1880s-1996), the White and Red Paper (1969), Patriation of the Constitution (1982), Grassy Narrows Water Crisis (1967-Current), Indian Summer (including the Oka Crisis) (1990), Idle No More (2013), and the Millennium Scoop (1980s-Current). ➔

# Key Events

## The “Sixties Scoop”

The term “Sixties Scoop” was coined by Patrick Johnston in 1983 and refers to an epidemic of Indigenous child apprehensions by the Canadian state via social workers from the provincial child welfare systems. A 1951 amendment to provincial services led to provinces being able to extend care to Indigenous peoples where there was no directive before, including the “protection” of children. The number of Indigenous children in state care moved from a total of 1% of all children in care in 1951 to approximately 34% of all children in care in 1964. It became common practice to ‘scoop’ new-born children from Indigenous mothers, especially those who gave birth on reserves – and this continues to this day as “The Millennium Scoop”.

## Residential Schools

The term “Residential Schools” refers to the systematic abduction and separation of Indigenous children from their families for the purpose of being educated with Catholic, Anglo-Saxon traditions, the English language, and to reject Indigenous culture and traditions – also known as, “kill the Indian in the child”. Living conditions at the residential schools were appalling. While it is hard to track due to

a vast number of deaths going unrecorded, approximately 25% of all students died while in residential schools and between 47 to 75% died shortly after arriving home, according to government medical inspector P.H. Bryce. One student, Geraldine Bob, describes horrific instances of physical abuse she and her classmates experienced at her Kamloops residential school. “They would just start beating you and lose control and hurl you against the wall, throw you on the floor, kick you, punch you.” Residential schools increasingly became used as orphanages, with approximately 50% of all children at residential schools by 1960 being there for child-welfare reasons. The evolution of residential schools becomes defined by the “Sixties Scoop” and, today, the “Millennium Scoop”.

## The White Paper and Red Paper

In 1969, Pierre Trudeau and current Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien, introduced a policy that would dismantle the Indian Act and remove the functional legal relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state of Canada. It was a large-scale effort to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian society through removing Indigenous sovereignty on a federal level as well as eliminate some individual’s ‘Indian’ status. This decision was met with significant resistance by the Indigenous community and led to the introduction of their own policy legislature, Citizens Plus (aka ‘The Red Paper’). The Red Paper’s purpose was to reject the “extermination through assimilation” policies, stated by Harold Cardinal, introduced by the white paper and mobilize Indigenous resistance nationally.

## Patriation of the Constitution

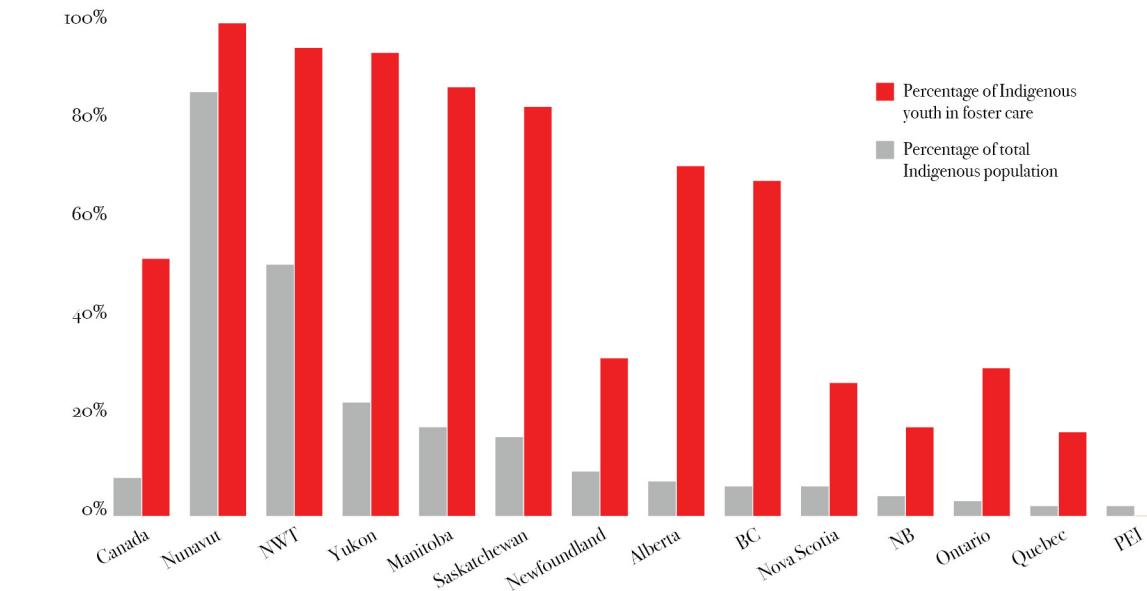
In 1982, Canada patriated the constitution through a process that transferred the legislative authority of the British Parliament, based in the British North America Act, over to Canada’s federal and provincial legislatures and introduced a new Canadian charter of rights. This event is highly significant to Indigenous resistance because treaty and Indigenous rights were not included in the new charter of rights. Indigenous communities fiercely mobilized against the patriation of Canada unless it specifically included respect of treaty and land rights. The mobilization captured national and international media attention and ultimately was successful in making Indigenous rights included in the patriation.

## Oka Crisis and The Indian Summer

The Indian Summer refers to the Oka Crisis of 1990 and the Maple Beech Accord, which are two events of significant Indigenous counter-mobilization. Developers, with help from the local town of Oka, attempted to build an 18-hole golf course on Indigenous treaty land, specifically a sacred burial site belonging to the Mohawk tribe. Mohawk residents barricaded the entrances to the land, put up barbed wire perimeters, and brought in Mohawk warriors armed with automatic rifles to defend the land. This led to a violent and widely-publicized standoff between the Canadian military and the Mohawk tribes as well as other Indigenous individuals and non-Indigenous activists. This event galvanized support for Indigenous rights within the Canadian public by showing the inhumane treatment of Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government.

**Figure 1:** The percentage of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children in foster care and the total percentage of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Children in the total population of Canada and its provinces.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

**Images, left to right:** Canadian soldier and Anishinaabe warrior in a stand-off during the Oka Crisis. Shaney Komulainen, *The Canadian Press*, 1990. Nun overlooking a group of students at Cross Lake Indian Residential School. Library and Archives Canada & Reuters, 1940. Asubpeeschoseewagong Elder at *Grassy Narrows River Run* 2019. Allan Lissner, *Grassy Narrows River Run* 2019, 2019.



## Idle No More

This movement was started by a group of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan, partially as a response to Bill C-45. Bill C-45 is a federal policy that removed protections against water pollution and introduced a fraudulent process to lend out First Nations territories in the interest of developing the Northern Gateway pipeline. The event was also started in response to the ongoing genocide and epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. The movement used the hashtag '#idlemonore' to publicize the issue and mobilize Indigenous resistance, awareness, and community through social media. The movement sparked hundreds of rallies, protests, and teach-ins across Turtle Island (also known as ‘Canada’).

## The “Millennium Scoop”

The “Millennium Scoop” refers to the period of evolving child welfare legislations from the early 1980s to now and its contribution to the epidemic of apprehending Indigenous youth into state care. In 2016, 52.2% of all youth in the child welfare system were Indigenous, even though Indigenous youth account for only 7.7% of the total population. Provincially, Indigenous youth are horrifically overrepresented in the foster care system. Manitoba is in a significant crisis with Indigenous youth making up 18% of the total population yet accounting for 8% of all children in the child welfare system. This process furthers the ethnocide of Indigenous peoples because most children are placed in non-Indigenous homes, many of which are connected to the catholic church.

