

Special Topics

Name: _____

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Red and White Paper

1969-1970

Upon signing the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in December 1948, Canada's government was forced to re-examine its treatment of [Aboriginals](#) for the first time

White and Red Papers, 1969 - 1970

The year following Prime Minister [Pierre Trudeau](#)'s rise to power in 1968, his government issued a [White Paper](#) on Aboriginal policy that argued that Canada shouldn't negotiate any further treaties with the Native peoples. Trudeau believed treaties were something only signed between sovereign nations. His government also did not agree with Aboriginal [land right](#) claims, either, because they were too broad and unspecific. Aboriginals feared this stance would undermine their special rights and status within Canadian society.

Aboriginals responded with their own document, named Citizens Plus, in 1970. This became more commonly known as the [Red Paper](#). The Red Paper countered all of the proposals of the White Paper. An Aboriginal delegation, backed by other Canadian citizens, met with the government and successfully convinced it to radically change its policies and positions.

Any document that brings out a new policy for the Canadian government is called a 'white paper'.

In 1969, a white paper was introduced to address issues relevant to natives. It had the official name "The Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy". It has been known in perpetuity as the white paper.

At the time, the Minister of Indian Affairs was a man named J an Chretien. He invited the National Indian Brotherhood (now called the Assembly of First Nations) to hear his announcement on the white paper

In 1969, prior to the white paper proposal, a report was done for the ministry of Indian affairs by an independent scholar named H.B. Hawthorn. He stated that assimilation and integration were not reasonable avenues for improving the well being of the Canada's native peoples. He stated that native people should be regarded as 'citizens plus' because they are the original inhabitants of the land.

First Nations protests were held across the country. Many provincial leaders were against the white paper as well, citing no new resources to implement their new responsibilities. The White Paper was viewed as an attempt at acculturation. The First Nations were concerned that they would lose their cultural sovereignty and ultimately their land.

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The Red Paper was written about land claims and the economic policies of the government. The Red Paper was sent to Pierre Trudeau in 1970, and a petition was sent to the Queen claiming that the Canadian Government was taking away something granted by the Crown. Trudeau, in a famous statement, claimed that native rights could not be recognized because "no society can be built on historical might-have-beens". Responding to the Red Paper, Trudeau said "We'll keep them in the ghetto as long as they want".

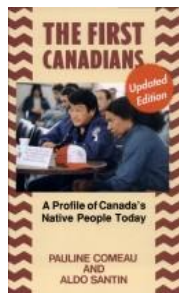
In 1970, the white paper was officially withdrawn, citing widespread protest. Many Natives and scholars who study the issue consider the spirit of the white paper to be alive and well, operating behind-the-scenes in the Canadian government.

In 1982, Brian Mulrooney created the Meech Lake Accord, in which a new constitution was proposed that all but ignored the Natives

The Native people began to realize that they would have to make their claims to an international court. In 1973, the Nishga band of BC took the first comprehensive land claim to the Canadian supreme court. Six of the seven judges said that the Nishga specifically did not have the right to the land, with the caveat that Native groups in general do have a legitimate claim to the land. While seemingly a defeat, this was in fact a major ideological victory for all Natives.

In 1981, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed that existing native treaties would be respected

In the second attempt for Constitutional amendment at the Charlottetown accord it was turned down by Elijah Harpter partly because the Indians were not consulted due to the closed door policy.



In the midst of this chaos, Prime Minister Trudeau made the now-famous statement that aboriginal rights could not be recognized "because no society can be built on historical 'might have beens,' " as well as other less-than-sympathetic words of wisdom. In a television interview in March 1970, Trudeau left little doubt as to how he felt history would unfold if Indians rejected the White Paper. "We are not forcing anyone to do anything," he said. "We'll keep them in the ghetto as long as they want." The words reflected Trudeau's belief at the time that Indians had no claim to aboriginal rights. He expanded on these points and offered several rather prophetic warnings in that November letter to Chrétien.

Although Trudeau suggested a flexible approach with Indians, he felt a more forceful one was needed with the provinces. The prime minister wanted to move quickly before provincial leaders united behind Alberta and British Columbia, the two early dissenters. "A common front of the provincial governments and the Indian communities would make negotiations very difficult," wrote Trudeau. "In the same manner, the participation of the Indians in the negotiating meetings of the two levels of government concerning the transfer of services, seems to me to pose serious difficulties. If the Indians are present in a capacity other than as technical advisors of their respective governments, they would, by that fact, acquire a status at par with the status of the government." (This is, of course, the very status native leaders were seeking.)

http://www.canadiana.org/citm/themes/aboriginals/aboriginals12_e.html
<http://www.out-of-order.ca/wordpress/high-school/the-white-paper-1969/>
Pauline Comeau and Aldo Santin, The First Canadians pg. ` 1995. Pg 10

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The White Paper, 1969

Document Summary:

A government document meant to form the basis of legislation dealing with Aboriginal rights. This never became a bill, due to its unpopularity among Aboriginals. (See [Red Paper](#)).

Key Points:

- The legislative and constitutional basis of discrimination based on the [Indian Act](#) should be removed.
- There should be a positive recognition of Aboriginal culture and its uniqueness on Canadian life.
- Aboriginal services should come through the same channels and government agencies used for all Canadians.
- The furthest behind should be helped the most.
- Lawful obligations should be recognized.
- Land control should be transferred to the Aboriginal peoples.
- The government is prepared to repeal the Indian Act, so Aboriginals can acquire titles to and control over Aboriginal lands.
- The government is prepared to make funds available for Aboriginal economic development as an interim measure.
- The government is prepared to drop the words "Indian Affairs" from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Government responsibilities dealing with Aboriginals would be transferred to other appropriate federal departments.
- The government is prepared to appoint a [Royal Commission](#) to consult with the Aboriginals. The commission would study and recommend adequate procedures for land claims adjudication.

Key Ideas

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Citizens Plus, also known as The Red Paper, 1970 Document Summary:

This is the Aboriginal response to the federal government's [White Paper](#), 1969.

Key Points:

- The legislature and constitutional basis of [Indian](#) status and rights should be maintained until Aboriginals are prepared and willing to renegotiate them.
- The only way to maintain Indian culture is remain as Indians.
- Aboriginals already have access to the same services as other Canadians, plus additional rights and privileges that were established by the [British North America Act](#), various treaties and governmental legislation.
- Only Aboriginals and Aboriginal organizations should be given the resources and responsibility to determine their own priorities and future development lines. The federal government has a distorted view of treaty rights and is not to be trusted on this issue.
- The government wrongly thinks that the Crown owns reserve lands. The Crown merely "holds" such lands, though they belong to Aboriginals. The government also thinks that Aboriginals only can own land in the Old World, European sense of land ownership. Therefore, the Aboriginal peoples should be allowed to control land in a way that respects both their historical and legal rights.
- The [Indian Act](#) should be reviewed, but not repealed. It should only be reviewed when treaty rights issues are settled and if there is a consensus among Aboriginal peoples on such changes regarding their historical and legal rights.
- The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs should cease to exist in its archaic and paternalistic form. A similar federal agency should be established to look more closely at and be more attuned to the needs of the Aboriginal peoples - particularly when it comes to ensuring that treaty and land rights promises are kept.
- Aboriginals reject the appointment of a sole commissioner in a [Royal Commission](#), because he will be appointed by the government itself to protect its interests without Aboriginal consultation. The government, instead, should call an "independent, unbiased, unprejudiced" commission that should have the power to bring any witnesses or documents that it or the Aboriginals wish to present. Its judgments should be legally binding.

Key Ideas