

Early Indian administration



Treaties and reserves

Britain gained control of most of North America in 1760 and three years later issued the Royal Proclamation, which, among other things, reserved lands for Indians and prescribed that only governments could deal with Indians on land matters. Purchase or settlement of this territory was strictly forbidden without special leave and licence obtained from the Crown. The Crown began entering into a series of land-cession treaties under which Indians gave up their claims to specified tracts of land in return for lump sum cash payments and other benefits. Treaties were used by the Crown to clear lands of aboriginal title so that settlement or resource development could proceed. Treaty-making continued in northern Ontario and the western provinces until 1923.

Starting in 1830, in parts of what is now eastern Canada, settlement on reserves began under government guardianship and Indians effectively became wards of the state.

Post-Confederation period

With the birth of the Canadian nation in 1867, the new federal government was given legislative authority over "Indians and lands reserved for Indians." This resulted in a special relationship between the federal government and Indians which continues to today.

In 1876, the first *Indian Act* was passed, giving the federal government great powers over Indians living on reserves. Although the *Indian Act* has been revised several times in the past century, many of the restrictive provisions of the original legislation remain in place.