

government, aboriginal people know that they have had an unqualified right to vote in federal elections for a mere thirty years and that self-government has, more often than not, been denied them. While Canadians like to remember that the opportunity to settle in North America has allowed people from all over the world to escape religious and other forms of persecution, aboriginal people remember the legislative prohibitions against practising traditional spiritual ceremonies and other significant cultural practises. While many Canadians recall the opportunity to acquire free homestead lands, indigenous people recall that until the 1950's, statutory provisions barred them from doing so and from collecting funds for the purposes of aboriginal rights litigation.

While discrimination against aboriginal people today less frequently takes such obvious forms, it still exists and the socio-economic consequences of discrimination, past and present, are clearly evident. It is significant that after 500 years, some of the indigenous people of this country are still referred to as "Indians", a term many find inappropriate, in part because it has led many Canadians to believe that all "Indians" share the same culture and language. Many aboriginal people insist on the use of the term "First Nations" as a generic reference to the many distinct aboriginal cultures of this country. Others prefer the term "aboriginal" and still others, the word "indigenous". The lack of knowledge Canadians generally have concerning the culture, history and aspirations of aboriginal people is an indication of the extent of the work that remains to be done. The circle of Confederation will not be complete until the social, economic and political marginalization of Canada's aboriginal people is reversed.