

Apartheid in

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The views expressed herein are those of the author; they by no means represent those of the *Brunswickian* or the larger University community.

Anyone embarking on a discussion of native-Indian/White relations in Canada is faced, from the outset, with a virtually insoluble dilemma. Since every man is the product of the culture into which he is born, and in which he is nurtured and educated, of necessity his thinking will follow certain well-defined lines. To change one's direction of thinking is as difficult as changing the colour of one's skin.

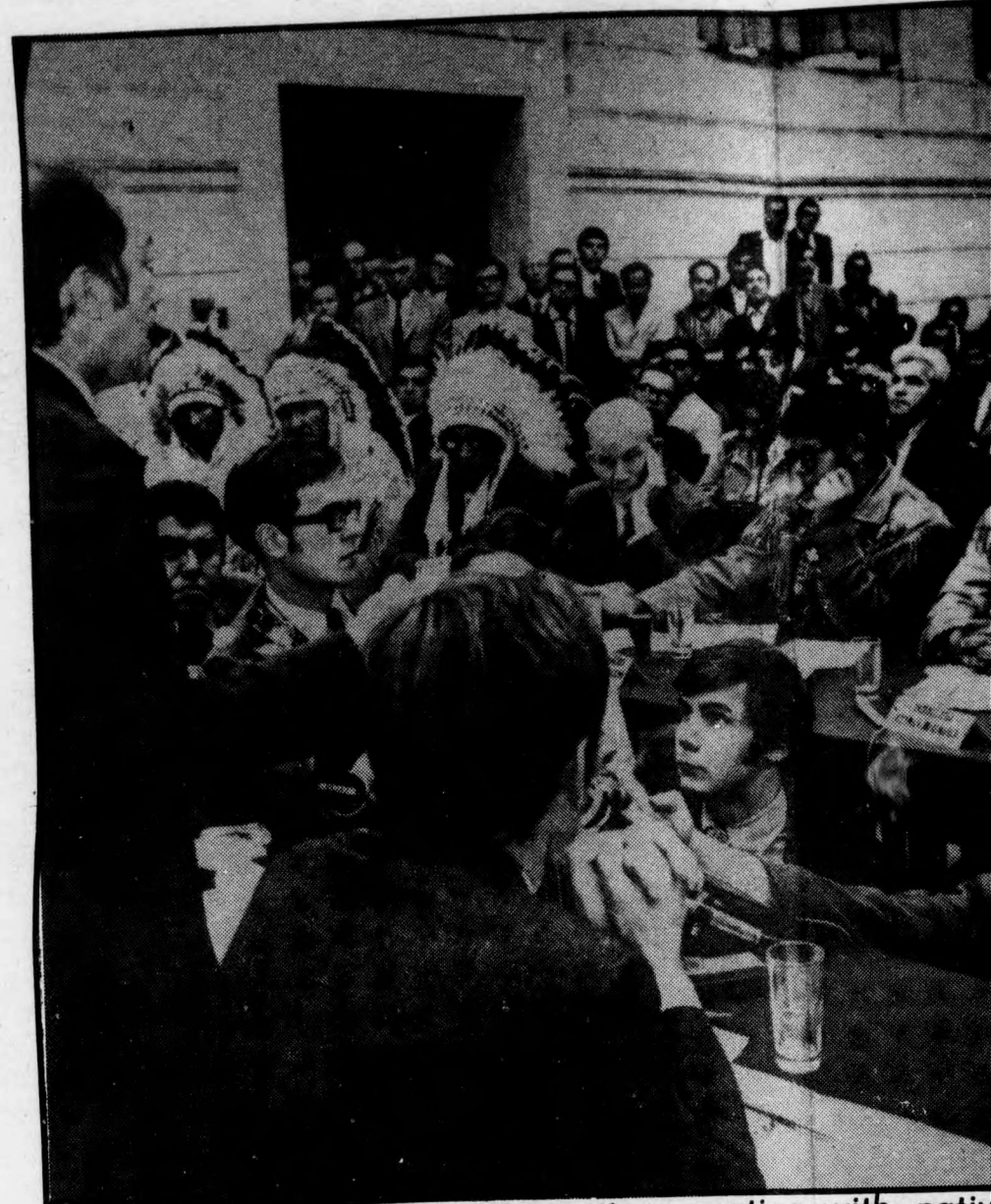
In Canada, we practice a policy not totally unlike Apartheid in South Africa. Although very few would readily admit to this, the facts are beyond dispute. Let us look at the history of our relations with Canada's aboriginal peoples and the paradoxical situation that arose early in our history.

Protection, civilization, and assimilation have always been the goals of Canada's Indian policy. These goals were established by white government which believed that Indians were incapable of dealing with persons of European ancestry without being exploited. Therefore, the government of Canada had to "protect" the person and property of the Indian from exploitation by the European, which meant that the Indian was to have a special status in the political and social structure of Canada through Sec 91, Sub-section 24 of the B.N.A. Act of 1867. This Act gave the government exclusive jurisdiction over "Indians and Indian Land." However, the legislation by which the governments of Canada sought to fulfill their responsibility always had as its ultimate purpose the *elimination* of the Indians' special status and the means to achieve this goal was by training—that is to say, *civilizing*—the Indian in European values, to make him capable of looking after his own interests.

Eventually through this training, the Indian identity and culture would be eradicated, and the Indian would be *assimilated* and no longer in need of special status. However, rather than furthering the ultimate goal of assimilation, such legislation has only served to thwart it.

Let us go even further back and see what George F. Stanley has to say about early contact with Indians in New Brunswick:

"The New Brunswick story is not a cheerful one. Inertia seems to have been the rule in all matters relating to Indian affairs. Unauthorized settlers occupied Indian lands; others stole Indian timber. Occasionally members of the executive council uttered bleats of protest but did nothing. Nor could they do anything in the face of the pro-settler anti-Indian lobby and the inadequate funds provided by the government for Indian Affairs. When by mid-century the provincial authorities did get



Pierre Trudeau at a consultation meeting with natives

around to dealing with Indian problems, they found it convenient to conclude that since natives were a dying race, Indian lands might as well be put up for auction to the highest White bidder. On 12, April, 1847, the assembly agreed that 'in all cases where portions of the Indian reserves in any parts of the province may be advantageously sold, they should be disposed of for actual settlement as soon as practical.' In 1867 the Federal government took over responsibility, maybe too late."

Sb, we can be proud of our New Brunswick heritage! I can assure you that such facts were not part of our Bicentennial celebrations. The real truth of our relations with natives remains clouded by "white" history books and "white" journalists who perceive these facts as "necessary"; ie. racism to settle Canada with civilized people rather than red "heathens" and "barbarians."

The historical evolution of our relations is not much better. We still have the goal of assimilation, and we are still bent on the destruction of traditional Indian values, culture and lifestyle. We want them to be "white" men in everything but colour.

How truly different is our blatant racism from that of "white" South Africa? Agreed, Indians are allowed on our buses and in our stores but they suffer discrimination at every corner. They are still treated like second-class citizens and are continually bombarded with our values, our traditions and mores as being the only ones acceptable or proper. How promptly we forget what it is we hate so much about South Africa, when our own backyard is filled with examples of racial hatred, discrimination and crimes of humanity, no less criminal than "Apartheid."