

require public and private organizations under federal jurisdiction to prepare action programs that will ensure fair employment opportunities for women, visible minorities, aboriginal peoples and the disabled.

A new Multiculturalism Act gives full recognition to Canada's racial and cultural diversity and provides the basis for a comprehensive race-relations strategy. This strategy is designed to encourage cross-racial understanding and public participation in overcoming prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.

A new Official Languages Act contains detailed provisions to give effect to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this field and to guide federal institutions in implementing them. In particular, it deals with the use of French and English in federal courts, with the obligations of federal institutions regarding services to the public, and with the language of work. It also sets out the government's commitments in the area of equitable participation of English- and French-speaking Canadians in federal institutions.

Recognizing the role of every Canadian in working for social change, the government maintains an active public education program focused on human rights. It provides technical, financial and professional assistance for community groups engaged in promoting an understanding of human rights across the country, through workshops, seminars, publications and other initiatives.

### Aboriginal Rights

Canada's aboriginal peoples — Indians, Inuit and Métis — hold a special place in Canadian society which is acknowledged in the Constitution. Part II, Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms their existing aboriginal and treaty rights. In addi-

tion a specific provision in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that other provisions in the charter cannot be used in a way that will interfere with any special rights aboriginal peoples may have.

In 1987, the Canadian government proposed a constitutional amendment that would have recognized the right of self-government for Canada's aboriginal peoples. While that proposal was not adopted, the federal government remains committed to achieving a more complete constitutional recognition of their rights. It is currently funding aboriginal groups to enable them to canvass provincial support for constitutional change in this area. In addition, quite apart from any constitutional amendments, the government is actively supporting the efforts of individual aboriginal communities to gain greater control over their own affairs

through policies such as the community-based self-government negotiations.

Provincial governments are also supporting these efforts. For example, in 1987 British Columbia passed legislation permitting the Sechelt Indians to establish a municipal-style government, following a federal act transferring federally owned lands to the Sechelt Band.

### A Refuge for the Persecuted

Canada has provided a new home, and new hope for the future, for thousands of refugees. And individual Canadians have welcomed these people into their communities from around the world. In 1986, the United Nations awarded Canada the Nansen Medal for its major and sustained contribution towards resolution of the world refugee problem. This was the first time the medal was awarded to a country, rather than an individual or group — a symbolic recognition of the compassion Canadian people have shown to those less fortunate.



Aboriginal people of Canada proclaim their own rights within Canadian society.

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