

## **Indigenous History Timeline**

This timeline draft has been produced by combining the historic research of the Indigenous Perspectives Project Committee (Fort la Reine Museum) and the nationally recognized “Key Moments in Indigenous History Timeline” from Historica Canada.

It is our goal to include the histories told from the perspective of our local Indigenous communities within the Portage la Prairie Region. While we cannot include every aspect of everyone’s history, we will include as many key historic elements as possible.

Should you wish for your history to be included in the timeline, please submit your edits and/or inclusions to the Fort la Reine Museum as soon as possible. Once the histories are submitted, the Museum will produce a large permanent timeline to be displayed inside the Trading Post at the Museum.

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## **PRE-CONTACT ERA**

- 18,000-10,000 BCE
  - Irrefutable archeological evidence of human occupation in the northern half of North America, including in the Tanana River Valley (Alaska), Haida Gwaii (British Columbia), Vermilion Lakes (Alberta), and Debert (Nova Scotia).
- 10,000-200 BCE
  - Settlements and communities are present almost everywhere in what will become Canada. From coast to coast to coast, Indigenous peoples adapt to their surroundings and establish complex religious, artistic, and literary practices as well as economic, social, and political structures. Agriculture is introduced and Indigenous groups on the west coast establish sedentary living, hierarchical chiefdoms, and stratified communities. All have recognizable governments, intellectual traditions, and unique spiritual and educational practices.
- C. 500
  - Developed communities on the Plains employ treaties to share territory with humans and nonhuman beings.

## **EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACT**

- C. 1000
  - Norse explorers meet “Skraelings” (possibly Dorset, Inuit, Thule, or Beothuk) on what will be called Baffin Island and Newfoundland and Labrador. They exchange goods, but there is no lasting Norse settlement.

- 1450
  - The Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Iroquois League), organized by Dekanahwideh (the Peacemaker) and Hiawatha, tries to provide a peaceful and equitable means to resolve disputes among member nations in the lower Great Lakes region.
- 1493
  - The papal bull Inter Caetera — the “Doctrine of Discovery” — is decreed a year after Christopher Columbus’ first voyage to America. Made without consulting Indigenous populations nor with any recognition of their rights, it is the means by which Europeans claim legal title to the “new world.”
- 1500
  - Indigenous population in what would become Canada is officially estimated to range from 200,000 to 500,000 people, though some suggest it was as high as 2.5 million, with between 300 and 450 languages spoken.
  - Contact between European fishermen and Indigenous peoples on the Atlantic coast begins.

## **EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT AND CONTINUED CONTACT**

- 1600s
  - Indigenous technology and knowledge of hunting, trapping, guiding, food, and disease prove crucial to the survival of Europeans and early colonial economy and society, particularly in the supply of beaver pelts and other furs. The establishment of alliances gives Indigenous peoples access to European weaponry and other goods.
  - European exploration Westward exposes more Indigenous populations to European contact. Foreign diseases are introduced to Indigenous peoples as a result, devastating their populations.
- 1613
  - The Two-Row Wampum (Kaswentha) establishes the Covenant Chain, a series of agreements between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and European representatives. They agree to work toward peace as well as economic, political, and cultural sovereignty; gift exchanges honour promises and renew alliances. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy existed as a clan system (including Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora) with deferred responsibilities to benefit different communities. This system influenced the Founding Fathers of the United States.
- 1615
  - The first European missionaries (Récollets and later Jesuits) arrive to attempt conversion of Indigenous populations to Catholicism.
- 1670
  - The Hudson’s Bay Company is established by English Royal Charter, forming a monopoly and increasing the volume of goods in the fur trade.
- 1701

- Three dozen Indigenous groups and the French colonial government sign the Great Peace of Montréal, forging peaceful relations that end nearly a century of war between the Haudenosaunee and the French (and their Indigenous allies).
- 1738
  - French explorer Pierre la Vérendrye established forts in the Plains (notably Fort la Reine in what will become the Portage la Prairie Region). Trade partnerships are created between Dakota and Settlers.
- 1754-1763
  - The Seven Years War begins in North America. Hostilities between the French and English centred in Europe (beginning in 1756), but the fight for control of North America, with Indigenous allies on both sides, starts in 1754.
- 1763
  - Pontiac's Resistance provides a strong show of Indigenous unity. Under the leadership of Ottawa chief Obwandiyag (Pontiac), an Indigenous alliance tries to resist European occupation by ridding the lower Great Lakes region of English settlers and soldiers
  - King George III of Britain declares dominion over North America east of the Appalachian Mountains. His "Royal Proclamation" gives limited recognition of title to Indigenous communities and provides guidelines for negotiating treaties on a nation-to-nation basis. Land is set aside for Indigenous use only.
- 1773-1776
  - The British attempt to keep control of the American Colonies during the American Revolution with assistance from Indigenous groups.
- 1774-1783
  - The Quebec Act (1774) and Treaty of Paris (1783) made by the British Crown effectively takes away portions of land from Indigenous groups.
- 1783
  - The "Haldimand Proclamation" grants land, negotiated nine years earlier by Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant), to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in return for helping Britain during the American Revolution.
- 1791
  - Haida chief Koyah organizes the first of many attacks on the British, who had begun coastal explorations in an emergent west coast fur trade.
- 1812-1814
  - The War of 1812 sees tens of thousands of Indigenous people fight for their land, independence, and culture, as allies of either Great Britain or the United States. In British North America, the Western Confederacy, led by Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, plays a crucial role in protecting Upper and Lower Canada from American invasion. By the end of hostilities, almost 10,000 Indigenous people had died from wounds or disease. The Treaty of Ghent, which is supposed to return lands and "all possessions, rights and privileges" to Indigenous peoples affected by the war, is ignored.

## **RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE**

- 1828
  - The Mohawk Institute opens in Brantford, Upper Canada (Ontario), as a day school for children from the Six Nations Reserve. In 1831, it begins to operate as a Residential School with the goal of removing Indigenous culture from children. It is the dark precursor to the more elaborate system of Residential Schools.
- 1842-1844
  - The Bagot Commission, led by then Governor-General of the Province of Canada Sir Robert Bagot, proposed that the separation of children from their parents would be the best way to achieve “Indian” assimilation to Euro-Canadian culture.
- 1850-1854
  - Fallout from the War of 1812 removes “Indian Territory”, which influences the establishment of the Robinson Treaty, Douglas Treaties, and Saugeen Treaty to resecure land for Indigenous communities in North America. . The controversial agreements allow for the Settler exploitation of natural resources on vast swaths of land in return for annual cash payments.
- 1857
  - The “British North American Act / Constitution Act” is established, allowing government jurisdiction over reserved land for Indigenous nations. Indigenous men over 21 and “sufficiently advanced” in their education can be enfranchised and given 50 acres of land. Few take the offer, in part because it means losing their treaty rights.
- 1860s-1900s
  - Inuit across the Arctic suffer greatly from malnutrition and starvation as marine mammals, on which they rely for food, plummet under pressure from European whalers, who also introduce many diseases.
- 1867
  - The “British North America Act” creates the Dominion of Canada. Colonial responsibility for Indigenous peoples and lands is transferred to the new federal government, under the Department of the Interior.
- 1869-1870
  - The Red River Resistance sees the Métis and First Nations allies defend the Red River Colony from the federal government’s attempt to transfer Rupert’s Land to Canada without consultation. Fearing a deluge of settlers and trying to safeguard their lands and culture, the Métis (led by Louis Riel) establish a Provisional Government to coordinate the resistance and lead an uprising. In the wake of the armed conflict, Riel flees to the United States. White settlement continues to expand westward. Promises to protect Métis rights are ignored.
- 1871-1921
  - The 11 Numbered Treaties are signed by the Canadian government and status Indigenous nations. These treaties, still controversial and contested today, make vast areas of traditional Indigenous territory available for white settlement and development in

exchange for a system of reserves (treaty lands), cash payments, access to agricultural tools, and hunting and fishing rights. Elders note that the initial spirit and intent of the treaties have been disregarded.

## **INDIAN ACT AND CONTINUED FORCED ASSIMILATION**

- 1876
  - The Indian Act is passed by the Government of Canada on the premise that economic, social, and political regulation of First Nations peoples (and lands) would facilitate assimilation. Many amendments further restrict their rights and freedoms. Changes include banning hereditary chiefdoms and other forms of governance; expropriating reserve lands for public purposes; requiring permission to be off-reserve in some provinces; prohibiting the potlatch and sun dances; requiring attendance at Residential School; revoking Indian status when enfranchised; and requiring the consent of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs before hiring lawyers to initiate land claims in the courts.
- 1880
  - An amendment to the Indian Act formally disenfranchises and disempowers Indigenous women by declaring they “cease to be an Indian in any respect” if they marry “any other than an Indian, or a non-treaty Indian.”
- 1883
  - Prime Minister John A. Macdonald authorizes the creation of Residential Schools, run by Christian churches, to force Indigenous children to assimilate to Euro-Canadian culture and practices.
- 1885
  - The Métis and their First Nations allies lead the five-month Northwest Resistance against the federal government in what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta. Anxious about white settlers and government encroachment on their lands, the Métis form a second provisional government in the region, again led by Louis Riel. The Métis Bill of Rights demands improved treatment for all residents of the region, including land rights, political representation, and better education. As calls go unheeded, the Métis, led by Gabriel Dumont, take military action, but federal troops prevail. Riel is hanged for treason and Cree chiefs Mistahimaskwa (Big Bear) and Pitikwahanapiwiyin (Poundmaker) are imprisoned.

## **20th CENTURY**

- 1914-1918
  - Between 4,000 and 6,000 Indigenous people serve in the Canadian military during the First World War. They are denied veterans’ benefits on their return, despite many winning military awards.
- 1919
  - The “League of Indians” is formed to advocate for improved living conditions and the

protection of Indigenous rights and practices. Though its effectiveness is weakened by government harassment, police surveillance, and disunity among Indigenous groups, it forms the basis for Indigenous political organizing in the future.

- 1923
  - Cayuga Chief Deskaheh (Levi General) campaigns to have the League of Nations recognize the Six Nations of Grand River as a sovereign nation.
- 1939-1945
  - Between 5,000 and 8,000 Indigenous soldiers fight for Canada in the Second World War, serving in all major battles and campaigns. Most do not receive the same support or compensation as other veterans upon returning home.
- 1945
  - 130 residential schools are active. Aggressive Euro-Canadian assimilation strategies are implemented in the North.
- 1951
  - Indigenous lobbying leads to Indian Act amendments that give elected band councils more powers, award women the right to vote in band elections, and lift the ban on the potlatch and sun dances. Compulsory attendance of residential schools ends. Some soldiers who fought alongside Indigenous men and women support the change.
- 1953
  - In the High Arctic Relocation, the federal government forcefully moves 87 Inuit from Inukjuak in northern Québec to Ellesmere and Cornwallis Islands. The relocation is part of the government's effort to secure northern territorial sovereignty during the Cold War. Adequate support for the communities does not follow.
- 1954
  - Elsie Marie Knott becomes the first female chief of a First Nation in Canada when she is elected to lead the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) Curve Lake First Nation near Peterborough, Ontario. She holds the position for 16 years.
- 1960
  - Status Indians receive the right to vote in federal elections, no longer losing their status or treaty rights in the process.
- 1960s-1980s
  - Thousands of Indigenous children are taken from their families and communities by provincial and federal social workers and placed in foster or adoption homes, often with non-Indigenous families. The number taken from their birth families in the "Sixties Scoop" varies by province, but the practice occurs often on the Prairies. The process is emotionally traumatic for parents and leaves many children with a lost sense of cultural identity.
- 1969
  - A federal White Paper on Indian Affairs proposes abolishing the Indian Act, Indian status, and reserves, and transferring responsibility for Indian affairs to the provinces. In response, Cree Chief Harold Cardinal writes the Red Paper, calling for recognition of Indigenous peoples as "Citizens Plus." The government later withdraws the proposal after

considerable opposition from Indigenous organizations.

- 1971
  - The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, renamed Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami in 2001, is formed as a national organization advocating for self government, social, economic, environmental, health, and political welfare of Inuit in Canada, and preservation of language and history.
- 1973
  - The Supreme Court of Canada agrees that Indigenous peoples held title to land before European colonization, that this title existed in law, and that it continues unless specifically extinguished. Named for Nisga'a chief Frank Calder, the Calder Case forces the government to adopt new policies to negotiate land claims with Indigenous peoples not covered by treaties.
- 1974
  - The Native Women's Association of Canada is established to advocate for the social, political, and economic welfare of Indigenous women and girls. It promotes education, challenges discriminatory policies, and works to reduce inequality.
- 1982
  - The Assembly of First Nations is formed out of the National Indian Brotherhood to promote the interests of First Nations in the realm of self-government, respect for treaty rights, education, health, land, and resources
- 1985
  - The Indian Act is amended to address discrimination faced by First Nations women who face the loss of their Indian status if they marry non-status Indians.
- 1996
  - The closure of Gordon Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan, finally marks the end of the Residential School system in Canada.
  - The final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is published. It recommends a public inquiry into the effects of Residential Schools and calls for improved relations between governments, Indigenous peoples, and nonIndigenous Canadians.