1960 Status Indians given the right to vote in Canadian elections without losing status.
1966 The Department of Indian Affairs becomes the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND).
1967 July 1 Canada celebrates 100 years as an independent country.
1967 Nov The play The Ecstasy of Rita Joe by George Ryga is produced in Vancouver, the first Canadian play to deal realistically with difficulties facing some Aboriginal people.
1969 April 1 Federal government takes direct control over Indian residential schools.
1969 June The federal government releases a White Paper which outlines sweeping changes for Indian policy, the end of the Indian Act and dissolution of the Department of Indian Affairs.
1969 June Apollo 11 space mission lands people on the moon.
1969 Nov The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) forms as 144 chiefs and delegates from all over BC meet to discuss the White Paper and its effects on Indian people in BC.

Backgrounder

The 1960s saw great changes in social values. A newfound freedom was expressed by youth with the emergence of “the pill,” hippies, the Beatles, and student protests over wars and racial discrimination.

For First Nations, change, though still slow, was beginning to happen. In 1960, Status Indians were finally given the right to vote federally without losing status.

In 1967 Canada celebrated its Centennial – 100 years as a country. For many Aboriginal people, however, it was a time for highlighting the injustices they had suffered over that 100 years.

In 1968 the newly elected government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau brought in many social changes. These included major changes to Indian Affairs. In 1969 Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien put forward a new policy paper, “The Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy.”

The government generally calls such policy papers “White Papers” but in this case the White Paper on Indian Policy took on a different meaning.

The policy was intended to “lead to the full, free and non-discriminatory participation of the Indian people in Canadian society.” However, the steps to achieving this would have meant extinguishment of Aboriginal Rights and Title, and devolving most Aboriginal issues to the provincial level.

There was swift reaction against the White Paper. The First Nations communities around the province were united in opposition to it, with the resulting formation of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.
Text Panels in the Indians of Canada Pavilion, Expo 67, Montreal

The Indians of Canada bid you welcome.
Walk in our moccasins the trail from our past,
Live with us in the here and now.
Talk with us by the fire of the days to come.

You have stolen our native land, our culture, our soul...
The white men fought each other for our land,
and we were embroiled in the white men's war...
The Indian on his reserve was a conquered enemy..
The welfare of the Indians was regarded as proper work for retired soldiers, many of whom were kindly and well-intentioned, but treated their charges like amiable backward children...
Give us the right to manage our own affairs...
The early missionaries thought us pagans, they imposed on us their own stories of God, of heaven and hell, of sin and salvation...
But we spoke with God – the great spirit – in our own way. We lived with each other in love and honored the Holy Spirit in all living things...
The white man's school, an alien land for an Indian child...
An Indian child begins school by learning a foreign tongue.
Dick and Jane in the storybook are strangers to an Indian boy...
The sun and the moon mark passing time in the Indian home. At school, minutes are important and we jump to the bell.
At the end of the tour, at a campfire:
And now, my brother, sit down by the fire. Let us talk about the times which are coming. You have traveled over the long footpaths along which your forefathers trudged ... In a moment we shall take to the trail again. But during this stop, let us search in the flames for visions of the future.
LAMENT

(Following the publication in our April edition of “Soliloquy” by Chief Dan George, the Native Voice has been asked to reprint “A Lament for Confederation” which he delivered at Empire Stadium when the crowd of over 32,000 was silenced by the moving, and bitter soliloquy. He repeated it by request at the Vancouver Indian Centre before the presentation of a Talking Stick to Eartha Kitt during her visit to Vancouver. The chief willingly granted permission for its reprinting. Story on the presentation ceremony on Page 1. — The Editor.)

How long have I known you, Oh Canada? A hundred years? Yes, a hundred years. And many many thousands more. And today, when you celebrate your hundred years, oh Canada, I am sad for all the Indian people throughout the land.

For I have known you when your forests were mine; when they gave me my meat and my clothing. I have known you in your streams and rivers where your fish flashed and danced in the sun, where the waters said come, come and eat of my abundance. I have known you in the freedom of your winds. And my spirit, like the winds, once roamed your good lands.

 Freedom Disappears

But in the long hundred years since the white man came, I have seen my freedom disappear like the salmon going mysteriously out to sea. The white man’s strange custom which I could not understand, pressed down upon me until I could no longer breathe.

When I fought to protect my land and my home, I was called a savage. When I neither understood nor welcomed this way of life, I was called lazy. When I tried to rule my people, I was stripped of my authority.

And I Forgot

My nation was ignored. In the history and native textbooks — they were little more important in the history of Canada than the buffalo that ranged the plains. I was ridiculed in your plays and motion pictures, and when I drank your fire-water, I got drunk — very, very drunk. And I forgot.

Oh Canada, how can I celebrate with you this Centenary, this hundred year? Shall I thank you for the reserves that are left to me of my beautiful heritage? For the canned fish of my rivers? For the loss of my pride and authority, even among my own people? For the loss of my will to fight back? No! I must forget what’s past and beginning.

Oh, God in Heaven! Give me back the courage of the olden chiefs. Let me wrestle with my surroundings. Let me again, as in the days of old, dominate my environment. Let me humbly accept this new culture and through it rise up and go on.

I Shall Rise Again

Oh God! Like the Thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man’s success — his education, his skills, and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society. Before I follow the great Chiefs who have gone before us, oh Canada, I shall see these things come to pass.

I shall see our young braves and our chiefs sitting in the houses of law and government, ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedom of our great land. So shall we shatter the barriers of our isolation. So shall the next hundred years be the greatest in the proud history of our tribes and nations.

(Copyright)
MEN DON'T UNDERSTAND

Indian Women Call For Prompt Action

By TERRY FRENCH

Indian women from reserves all over B.C. rallied at Sardis recently and “struck out for independence” from the Department of Indian Affairs.

Indian Homemakers Clubs, a cross-Canada group originated on reserves by the Department to foster knitting and sewing, now wish to be recognized as a pressure group.

Under chairmanship of Mrs. Albert Douglas, wife of Chief Douglas of Chilcotin band, Rosedale, they met, decided to change their constitution, be registered under the Canadian Co-operatives Act and hold a tax day to raise money. The money will be used to provide emergency funds, to carry out their plans to better the lot of the Indian.

LESS HATRED

Editor, Native Voice

I would be more in favor of the ‘Native Voice’ if its attitude were a little more one of good will, with a little less hatred and bitterness. If we nurture hatreds because of the past which nobody can change now, consider how hopeless is the whole situation after two great wars. The quicker we forget certain things, the better.

Do Indians still believe that anybody can lay claim to large areas of the earth, merely because their ancestors lived there? Do they not recognize that nobody can make binding and lasting agreements for generations yet unborn, for the simple reason that the unborn generation may not agree and living men always win arguments over dead ones?

As an instrument of goodwill and liaison, the Native Voice can perform a vast service for all Canadians — nothing can be gained for anybody by keeping ill-will alive. Why not get with all the progressive Indians who have made good, who hate nobody in particular, who ask for their people — particularly the younger ones — a chance to succeed without discrimination, and who make no such wild claims as owning all British Columbia?

There are many Native people who are reasonable and progressive, a credit to their race and to mankind. Very often the haters, it would seem, want concessions of oil and negotiable assets that they may squander these in drunken debauchery on Reserves where even their daughters are unsafe. In so many cases, the Indian not the white man has been his own worst enemy. If Indian culture is so superior, why have Indians adopted Whitman’s views more readily than any other part of his culture, generally? Best Wishes, Native Voice, for another look!

Eldred Miller
Nanaimo Pastoral
Charge of United Church of Canada.
Indians reject plan

Four B.C. Indian groups voted Sunday to reject the federal government's proposal to repeal the Indian Act and turn over responsibility for Indian matters to the provinces.

More than 100 delegates from the Native Brotherhood of B.C., the Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation, the Confederation of Native Indians and B.C. Indian Home makers' Association voted "almost unanimously" to reject the proposal, said spokesman Ben Paul.

Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chretien, who had asked a meeting with 25 delegates at the regional office in Vancouver today, will be invited to meet with the groups at the Musqueam Hall instead, said Paul.

Questions of legal guarantees in land, and hereditary, aboriginal, educational, health and welfare, offshore and reclaimed land rights must be settled, said Paul.

He said the Indian delegates were concerned that the machinery was already in motion to implement the policy over five years, without consultation with the Indians concerned.

"As far as these groups are concerned the Indians here have never been conquered, and we want to be compensated for all the lands in B.C. which belonged to the Indians."

Paul said the Indian groups want to draw up their own policy under their own terms of reference to protect these rights.

Chretien called for equal rights for Indians and proposed repeal of the Indian Act. The provinces would take over services to Indians and the Indian Affairs department would be wiped out in five years.

Paul claimed Chretien already had sent a letter to Indian Affairs personnel saying the policy will be implemented as soon as possible.

Vancouver Province, July 7 1969
B.C. Indian chiefs vote for united front

Special to The Province

KAMLOOPS — B.C.'s Indian chiefs voted unanimously Thursday to establish a united front to deal with problems common to B.C. Indians.

The resolution introduced by Heber Maitland of Kitimat and seconded by Nick Prince of Port St. James asked the chiefs' conference here to reaffirm its adherence to the principle of a united body dealing with problems common "to all our people in B.C."

Maitland said it is in the best interests of Indians if they speak with one voice on questions of Indian status, land claims based on aboriginal titles, administration of reserve lands and other issues such as those arising from the federal government's new policy proposals.

The conference did not give any indication what the organization's structure will be.

Guy Williams, president of the Indian Brotherhood of B.C., said Indians have never attained unity but throughout the years they have never lost sight of it.

"We have to strive for unity to create a better way of life for our people. We have all lived in hopes that one day there will be unity among the B.C. Indians. You're very close to that now," said Williams.

He said that adopting the resolution was a simple task but "in passing it you must shoulder the responsibility that will be yours to keep and support the organization that will be spawned on the trust that is being put before you."

Other appeals for unity were made by James Stelkia of Oliver, Chief John George of North Vancouver, Mrs. Evelyn Paul of the Indian Homekakers Association, Richmond, and Chief James Gosnell of New Aiyansh.

Chief Gosnell said even the weakest band should be part of the united organization.

"Some people like me are speaking for 1,100 people but other delegates are speaking here for six people," he said.

"It is the six that we have to concerned about and consider. They are not unified by strength of numbers."

Chief Harvey Jules of Chase appealed to delegates to consider the future generations "who will come after we can be united and walk forward together, shoulder to shoulder, and that is the only way we can survive and pave the road for our future people."

Chief Earl Tatooosh of Port Alberni and Chief Cecil Mack of Ucluelet urged unity but called for the rejection of the federal government's White Paper on Indian policy.

"We want a strong, united front to tackle the White Paper," said Mack urging chiefs to watch what the federal government is doing.

Chief Wilson Bob of Wellington said he would not join with other chiefs and delegates "to have my picture taken under false pretenses."

He said that if the chiefs were to be photographed together they must first decide on unity.

When conference chairman Gus Gottfriedsen of Kamloops called for the vote it was given unanimous approval and was followed by one minute of applause and table-thumping.

Vancouver Province Nov 21, 1969
Meeting ends in city today

The first annual B.C. Indian chiefs conference, which closes this afternoon after six days of sessions, struck an interim committee yesterday to bring in recommendations on the organizational structure of the united front.

The chiefs had earlier agreed to present a united front to discuss problems facing the Indian people.

The committee is made up of Dennis Alphonse of Cowichan; Gus Gottfriedsen, Kamloops band councillor; Heber Maillard of Kitimat; Joe Mathias of North Vancouver; Mrs. Ben Paul of the Indian Homemakers’ Association and a resident of Richmond; and Phillip Paul of Qualicum Beach.

Counter proposals

"Be it further resolved that the federal government be requested to discontinue all negotiations with the Indian people of the province of B.C. with respect to its policy of British Columbia until such time as the counter proposals are presented."

The resolution also called for the report on the white paper prepared by former Kamloops MP Davie Fulton to be used as a guideline.

After a shuffling of guest speakers and possible guest speakers coupled with poor airline connections, Guy Williams, president of the Native Brotherhood of B.C., was a guest speaker at last night’s banquet attended by 250.

Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chrétien was first slated to appear at the banquet but said Wednesday he couldn’t make it because of an important debate that was in the House Friday.

It was then thought that Bill Mussell, a Vancouver Island Indian and special assistant to Mr. Chrétien would attend the banquet.

The banquet was delayed more than an hour waiting its arrival and the PWA Stampeders flight from Calgary was also delayed but Mr. Mussell failed to make plane connections in Calgary.

Mr. Williams, who was slated to introduce Mr. Mussell, then assumed the job as guest speaker.

He said the Native Brotherhood is the oldest Indian organization in B.C. as it was founded in May 1917.

Indian peoples’ future which is now at stake

It is a great pity that Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chrétien was unable to keep his commitment to speak tonight at the Indian Chiefs’ Conference in Kamloops.

The minister informed the conference two days ago of his inability to attend because of other pressing business—presumably in the House—but it is difficult to imagine business any more important than the opportunity to meet all the Indian leaders of one province, to explain the federal government’s white paper policy proposals for Indians and, most important, to hear what the Indians themselves have to say about those proposals. Here was a hand-made opportunity for a free exchange of views on a most controversial issue: policy proposals which the Hon. Davie Fulton has stated could mean the end of the Indians as a people, and for which Alberta Indian leader Harold Cardinal has called complete rejection.

These are proposals which the Indian people have stated were formulated unilaterally and without consultation of those to be affected. These are proposals which would make the provinces responsible for Indian affairs with the provincial governments assuming the costs. But as Mr. Fulton pointed out in his appraisal of the white paper proposals, “It is doubtful that the provinces would agree in any event and this would seem to be an attempt by the federal government to evade or abandon its constitutional authority.”

So here we have a people—the first Canadians—faced with the dilemma that no level of government apparently wants to assist them to attain equal status with non-Indians, and to receive the same treatment and benefits as non-Indians. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the 154 chiefs who have been meeting here this week have produced wide divergences of opinion on how to deal with the situation.

To Mr. Chrétien a particular piece of House business may be more important, but to the Indians of this nation nothing is more important than their future as a people. Mr. Chrétien’s absence is, to say the least, unfortunate.