



Indian Act

The *Indian Act* was established in **1876**. It covers three main areas: **land, membership** and **local government**. The *Indian Act*:

- combined all previous Indian legislation
- defined Indian status
- gave the Superintendent General control of Indian Affairs.

The *Indian Act* has been changed over the years, often to restrict what Aboriginal peoples could and could not do. For example:

- **in 1884**, the *Indian Act* was changed to outlaw cultural and religious ceremonies, such as the potlatch
- **in 1927**, the Canadian Parliament changed the *Indian Act* to make it illegal for Aboriginal peoples to pay lawyers to prosecute a claim without the consent of the government.

Finally, on **June 28, 1985**, the Canadian Parliament passed **Bill C-31**, an amendment to the *Indian Act*. This bill gave Aboriginal peoples the same rights and freedoms as other Canadians, as described in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The bill brought about four major changes:

- removal of discrimination
- restoration of status and membership rights
- more control for Indian bands over their own affairs
- status to Indian women and their minor children who had married non-Indians.

