

1934 The Department of National Defence applies for and is granted 4 acres.

1942 Indian Affairs leases 41.74 acres to the Department of Defence for the duration of World War II.

1947-1965 The reserve is broken into parcels and sold.

1977 The Squamish Nation launches legal efforts to reclaim portions of reserve; the Musqueam Indian Band and Tsleil-Waututh Nation launch counterclaims to interests in former reserve land.

2002 The Squamish Nation is victorious in reclaiming one small portion of its former reserve.⁶

This is one example of how the government manipulated the *Indian Act* to suit its needs.

6 Renamed Individuals with European names

1880 TO UNDETERMINED TIME
(FOR THE PURPOSE OF REGISTERING INDIANS)

As early as 1850, the colonial government in British North America began to keep and maintain records to identify individual Indians and the bands to which they belonged. These records helped agents of the Crown to determine which people were eligible for treaty and interest benefits under specific treaties... In 1951, changes to the *Indian Act* included a change to create an Indian Register.

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA,

*"The Indian Register"*⁷

The federal government's *Indian Act* policies during the 19th century were primarily concerned with assimilation. One aspect of the assimilation process was the renaming of the entire population for the purpose of registering Indians; this was partly to extinguish traditional ties and partly because Euro-Canadians found many of the names confusing and difficult to pronounce. Traditional names went against the government's assimilation objectives; the government feared that leaving Indigenous people with their traditional names would take away their motivation to assimilate.

Traditionally, Indians had neither a Christian name nor a surname. They had hereditary names, spirit names, family names, clan names, animal names, or nicknames. Hereditary names, in some cultures, are considered intangible wealth and carry great responsibility and certain rights. Hereditary names have been described as being analogous to royal titles such as Duke of Edinburgh. In many cultures, the birth name was just for that one stage of life, and additional names were given to mark milestones, acts of bravery, or feats of strength. None of the great heritage, symbolism, or tradition associated with names was recorded, recognized, or respected during the renaming process.

Traditional naming practices did not make sense to the Indian agents, who were charged with recording the names of all people living on reserves. The diversity of names and naming practices also made record keeping difficult. While there was not a uniform approach adopted by all Indian agents for the renaming process, generally the agents assigned each man a Christian name and, more

often than not, a non-Indigenous surname. Women were given Christian names and assigned the surname of their fathers or husbands.

The Indian agents on the west coast of Canada often used biblical names from different religious denominations, repeating them as they worked their way through their jurisdiction, which explains the frequency of unrelated families that share common last names. Or they used their own names. As all agents were male, very few, if any, female names were used. As I have written in other publications, this is how the process would have unfolded: An Indian agent would ask me my name, I would say “Yacksum nakwala”, and they would write down “Bob Joseph.” Often I am asked if I am related to the Josephs from the Squamish First Nation, to which I usually reply, “No, but I’m sure we had the same Indian agent.” Once the Indian agent wrote down my name, I became a status Indian because my name was on a band list.⁸

It’s ironic that Indigenous Peoples in Canada have surnames that date back only a few generations. It is certainly not the case for ancestral names, which date back to creation.

7 Created a permit system to control Indians’ ability to sell products from farms

1881 TO 2014

No Band or irregular Band of Indians, and no Indian of any Band or irregular Band in the North-West Territories may, without the consent in writing of the

Indian Agent for the locality, sell, barter, exchange, or give to any person or persons whomsoever, any grain, or root crops, or other produce grown on any Indian Reserve in the North-West Territories, or any part of such Reserve; and any such sale, barter, exchange or gift shall be absolutely null and void.

Order-in-Council, August 9, 1888⁹

Agriculture was one objective chosen as the path for Indians to follow to become “civilized.” But many reserves were located in areas that were unsuitable for agriculture. Government agencies later used the low success rate of some Indian farmers as reason to reduce the size of reserves.

Indian agents and farm instructors worked with Indians to teach them how to farm, although growing crops such as corn or rice was not new to some cultures. In Saskatchewan, in particular, some of the Indian farmers were very successful and grew crops and produce that were as good as or better than that produced by the settlers, and were in a position to compete with the settlers on a commercial basis. Settlers objected, claiming the Indians were being mollycoddled and receiving unfair advantages. The government responded with the permit-to-sell system. Indian farmers were then placed in the position of requiring a permit to leave their reserve and a permit to sell farm products (see #11 “Restricted Indians from leaving their reserve without permission from an Indian Agent”). To solidify the effectiveness of the permit system, settlers were prohibited from purchasing goods and services from Indian farmers.