

# Canada: The Indian Nation

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The purpose of this mini-essay is to present Canadian Indians as an internal colony and to indicate some aspects of a strategy for sovereignty.

An internal colony is a people subject to colonial rule within an imperialist settler-state. Possibly, six internal colonies exist: American Indians, Canadian Indians, Aborigines, Maoris and, by way of slavery and annexation, African-Americans and Mexican-Americans. These peoples are colonized within four imperialist settler-states: the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Geographically, each internal colony is composed of many communities or territories that are distributed throughout an imperialist settler-state. Demographically, with the exception of the African-Americans and Mexican-Americans, internal colonies have small populations. Due to expropriation, the members of an internal colony are also members of the working class of an imperialist settler-state.

The concept of a Native internal colony is diametrically opposed to the new Canadian concept of First Nations. The concept of First Nations is a product of Canada's ongoing effort to make circumscribed treaties with Indian tribes and bands that will, ultimately, de-legislate the existence of a colonized people and, formally, incorporate them into Canada. Treaties are, by definition, made between nations. For the purpose of piecemeal treaty-making the federal government has designated Indian tribes and bands to be nations, i.e., First Nations.

The federal government is intent upon treaties as opposed to other types of agreements because the matter on which Canada wants resolution concerns the relationship between two peoples and, therefore, two nations. The "new relationship" that Canada wants to establish is, simply, one in which Indians no longer exist. Canada's present Indian policy is tantamount to bureaucratic ethnic cleansing and forced annexation.

In the federal government's comprehensive treaty process Indians are required, tribe by tribe or band by band, to (1) renounce their nationality by agreeing to remove themselves from the jurisdiction of the Indian Act and (2) cede their right to self-determination by formally incorporating into Canada. These requirements of the treaty process contravene Article 15 of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights and Article 1 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that state, respectively, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality" and "All peoples have the right of self-determination." Insofar as the treaty process is a bottleneck for receiving government funds and having Indian rights recognized, it is coercive.

The federal government's present Indian policy was, for a short time, proposed as the Government White Paper Policy on Indians (1969). The White Paper proposed to unilaterally abolish the Indian Act, the Department of Indian Affairs, Indian reserve land, old treaty rights, and aboriginal rights and title. This proposal was actively opposed by all Native people. The federal government began immediately to create a Native leadership that is dependent upon government funding and that can be depended upon to carry out government policy. In 1973, the federal government reaffirmed the objectives of the White Paper in its Comprehensive Land Claims Settlement Policy and, along with its captive Native leadership, proceeded to effect the objectives of the White Paper, bilaterally.

To date, Natives on 40 percent of Canada's land area (all of the North including northern Quebec) have signed treaties, and many tribes and bands in the South have entered the treaty process or have signed treaties.

Some Indian people accept the First Nations designation in that it appears to be a recognition of nationhood. It is true that the early treaties signed between the Indian tribes and Great Britain were made on a bona fide nation-to-nation basis. However, when the remaining British colonies in North America became the independent Dominion of Canada (1867), an imperialist settler-state came into being and within it was established an internal colony of Canadian Indians. The term "Canadian Indians" refers to the national entity created by internal colonialism, composed of the formerly independent tribal peoples, and, subjected to direct rule by Canada.

Furthermore, national entities exist in the contemporary world not only because of their moral entitlement but also because of their individual and allied power. Tribes were defeated at contact precisely because they were national entities on the level of tribes pitted, separately, against developing world empires. In the twentieth century, nations have demonstrated that, militarily, they can defeat imperialism in the Global South.

The situation and condition of the internal colonies ally them to the two great social movements of modern history - the national liberation movements in the Global South and the socialist movements in the imperialist countries. The national liberation movements are the principal and determining conflicts of our time. The victorious growth of these movements can only strengthen and help to define the internal colonies.

In the early twentieth century, the revolutionary movements in the imperialist countries were subverted by reforms conceded to the domestic working classes based on imperialist superprofits derived from the colonies.

The national liberation movements, inevitably, will weaken imperialism and preclude reformism in the imperialist countries. This will reawaken class struggles in the imperialist countries. The members of the internal colonies can be a part of these struggles, can demand support therein for the right of all oppressed nations to genuine self-determination, and can negotiate therein the terms of native self-determination.

The type of self-determination achieved by the internal colonies will be a product of national liberation in the majority world, choice in the internal colonies, and negotiation with worker's power in the imperialist settler-states. It may be that the settler-states and the internal colonies are so closely interrelated that complete separation is not possible. Sovereignty for the internal colonies may require economies that are integrated with those of the former settler-states and rights of dual citizenship for those resident on the land of the other. While sovereignty cannot be the answer to all the world's problems, unity and peace are unlikely to be achieved without the prior liberation of the oppressed nations.

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