

Scroll 1: Our land

As the *Nisga'a* and *Tsimshian*, we don't like what the Government is saying: that we will give you this much land. How can they give it when it is our own? We cannot understand it. They never bought it from us or our forefathers. They never fought and conquered our people and took the land that way. How can they say now that they will give us so much land—our land?

Scroll 1

Scroll 2: Terra Nullius (*TER-ah NOO-lee-us*)

The idea of *Terra Nullius* means “land belonging to no one.” European countries took this to mean they could send out explorers to find new lands and claim them for their country IF they were not being used. In Turtle Island, these were the lands used by us, the Indigenous peoples.

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Scroll 3: The *BNA* (*British North America*) Act

The *BNA Act*, also known as the *Constitution Act*, 1867, created the country of Canada. It put “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians” under the control of the Canadian government. When this happened, it meant we as Indigenous peoples lost our rights and control over our own lands.

Scroll 3

Scroll 4: The *Indian Act*

In 1876 all the laws dealing with Indigenous peoples were gathered together and put into the *Indian Act*. The *Indian Act* completely changed our lives. As long as our cultures were strong it was difficult for the government to take our lands. So, the government used the *Indian Act* to attack who we were as peoples. Hunting and fishing were now limited and our spiritual ceremonies like the potlatch, pow-wow and sundance were now against the law. This didn't change until the 1950s.

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Scroll 5: They decide

“ You can’t hunt deer except when the townsfolk are in the bush, during what they decide is the right time to hunt. You can’t bring down a bird to feed yourself when you’re trapping. You can only fish four days a week, and they choose the days... Now they only want us to eat what we buy in their stores or grow with their tools. ”

—*Dick Andrew,
George Manuel’s grandfather,
Shuswap*

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Scroll 6: Being treated equally

“ I know what the government did in the past; they said where we had to live. I know that we’re not treated equally now, because I can feel it. We’re all Canadians and we should all be treated equally. ”

—*Cassie, from a Mi’kmaq community in Nova Scotia*

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Scroll 7:
Enfranchisement
(en-fran-CHISE-ment)

This means that all those First Nations people who became doctors, teachers, lawyers, soldiers or who went to university were no longer considered to be First Nations people by the government. This was called being granted “enfranchisement.”

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Scroll 8: Assimilation

The government thought the “Indian problem” would solve itself as more and more Indigenous people died from diseases and others became part of the larger Canadian society.

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Scroll 9: Residential Schools

From the mid-1800s until the 1990s, the federal government took First Nations, Inuit and Métis children from our homes and communities and put them in boarding schools that were run by churches. As parents we didn't have a choice about this, and neither did you. Sometimes the police arrived to take you away. These schools were often very far from your homes and you had to stay at them all or most of the year. Mostly you were not allowed to speak your own language and you were punished if you did. Often children weren't given enough food.

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Scroll 10: The Letter

Dear Mr. Indian Agent,

Please help us to get the school started as early as you can as we have twenty-one children here old enough to go to school and a lot more small children will go to school as they get old enough to. I'm sending you a list of names of children on a separate sheet as you will see for yourself what to do. Please come down and see our school house, let us know when you can come or write to me and I will explain to Chief James and his people. Hoping to hear from you at an early date.

Yours Truly,

Patrick Charley

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Scroll 11: The List

Walter Johnson

Helda Johnson

Maggie Johnny

Gladys Johnny

Francisco Johnny

Aleck Mack

Martin Mack

Scroll 11

Scroll 12: The Kamloops Indian Residential School Christmas holiday letter

“ It will be your privilege this year to have your children spend Christmas at home with you. This is a privilege which is being granted if you observe the following regulations of the Indian Department. ... If the children are not returned to School on time they will not be allowed to go home for Christmas next year. ”

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Scroll 13: Resilience

We are healing ourselves and our communities. Out on the land, skills are being passed on to our youth. Mothers and grandmothers are bringing back ceremonies that honour women. Our leaders are using the courts to have our rights recognized and many of our nations are growing. We are strong, having survived hundreds of years of efforts to make us disappear. We have some amazing young Indigenous leaders like Wab Kinew, a Canadian politician, musician, broadcaster and university administrator, Kevin Loring, a Nlaka'pamux actor and writer, Ta'Kaiya Blaney, a young singer/songwriter and environmental activist, and Khelsilem, a Squamish (*Skwomesh*) language leader to name a few.

Scroll 13

Scroll 14: Moving forward as friends

“If we move forward together as friends, then anything that you need I will help you to achieve it and anything I need you will help me to achieve it... Moving forward, if we are going to live together in this land, it is about forming friendships.”

*—Honourable Justice
Murray Sinclair, Chair of
the Truth and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada*

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