

The Indian Act provides a measure of self-government on reserves through Band councils chosen according to tribal custom or under an elective system of secret ballot. The various expenditures of Band funds with few exception require the consent of the Band council, comprising a chief and councillors. The right to vote in Band elections and other votes is extended to all members of a Band, men and women, who have reached the age of twenty-one years. A number of Indian women have been elected to office since the new Act came into force. Secrecy of voting has been provided under election regulations. The powers of Band councils to make by-laws correspond in a general way with those exercised by councils in a rural municipality.

Indians who are veterans of World Wars I or II and their wives may vote in federal elections. Indians who live off the reserve, under certain circumstances, also have the right to vote while Indians who live on the reserve may vote if they waive exemption to taxation on personal property such as earnings or other incomes received on the reserve. Indians may sue and be sued subject to provisions of the Indian Act which exempts from seizure real and personal property held on the reserve.

Enfranchisement, the removal of all legal distinction between Indians and other members of the community, is provided for under the Indian Act. An enfranchised Indian is no longer subject to the provisions of the Act. In order to facilitate enfranchisement of Indian Bands agreements may be entered into with provincial or municipal authorities to provide financial assistance to indigent, infirm, or aged members of the enfranchised Band.

The nomadic existence followed by Bands of Indian hunters is gradually giving way to a more stable way of life. Many Indians are profitably engaged in the fishing industry on the British Columbia coast; Indians across Canada are being encouraged to engage in agricultural pursuits and are prominent in many other trades and occupations. For example the reputation of the Indians from the Caughnawaga Reserve, near Montreal, as skilful structural steel workers is known throughout North America.

The Indian Affairs Branch takes a census of the Indian population under its jurisdiction at five-year intervals. The figures for the 1955 Census are given in Tables 24 and 25.

24.—Indian Population classified by Age Group and Sex by Province, Departmental Census 1955

Province or Territory	Under 7 Years		7 Years and Under 16		16 Years and Under 21		21 Years and Under 65		65 Years or Over		Totals	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
P.E. Island.....	21	19	30	31	13	16	67	58	10	7	141	131
Nova Scotia.....	310	308	326	311	181	185	642	608	74	57	1,533	1,469
New Brunswick.....	305	294	284	285	141	136	591	486	55	52	1,376	1,253
Quebec.....	1,784	1,743	1,833	1,853	931	967	4,014	3,478	499	472	9,061	8,513
Ontario.....	3,487	3,499	3,833	4,030	2,193	2,055	8,271	7,570	1,250	1,067	19,034	18,221
Manitoba.....	2,377	2,397	2,282	2,303	972	930	4,061	3,440	465	457	10,157	9,527
Saskatchewan.....	2,180	2,142	2,204	2,221	912	962	3,799	3,536	412	382	9,507	9,243
Alberta.....	1,912	1,996	1,809	1,864	794	788	3,090	2,805	346	311	7,951	7,764
British Columbia.....	3,614	3,587	3,534	3,642	1,488	1,494	6,581	5,652	780	714	15,997	15,089
Yukon Territory.....	144	170	176	190	81	78	327	310	49	43	777	791
N.W.T.....	442	400	420	404	179	175	932	835	119	117	2,092	1,931
Totals.....	16,576	16,555	16,731	17,134	7,885	7,786	32,375	28,778	4,059	3,679	77,626	73,932