

Section 17.—The Indians and Eskimos of Canada

The Indians.*—There are more than 155,000 native Indians in Canada today and it is noteworthy that their rate of increase is higher than that of any other segment of the population. They live on more than 2,200 tracts of land which have been reserved for their use and benefit. These reserves are located in every province with the exception of Newfoundland where the provincial government has a responsibility for Indians on the Island and the Coast of Labrador. Elsewhere in Canada, the Indian Affairs Branch of the Federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration is responsible for the administration of the Indian Act and matters affecting the welfare of Indians.

30.—Indian Land in Reserves and Number of Bands by Province, Year Ended Mar. 31, 1957

Province or Territory	Reserves		Bands	Province or Territory	Reserves		Bands
	No.	Area			No.	Area	
		acres	No.			acres	No.
Prince Edward Island.....	4	2,741	1	Saskatchewan.....	120	1,204,489	67
Nova Scotia.....	40	19,492	2	Alberta.....	90	1,535,061	44
New Brunswick.....	23	37,671	16	British Columbia.....	1,627	820,489	204
Quebec.....	23	178,571	42	Northwest Territories...	10	1,924	14
Ontario.....	166	1,560,489	118	Yukon Territory.....	15	3,535	18
Manitoba.....	107	524,490	51	Canada.....	2,225	5,888,955¹	577

¹ Not exact addition of individual items because of rounding of figures.

Administration.—The primary function of the Indian Affairs Branch, under the Indian Act, is to administer the affairs of Canadian Indians in a manner which will enable them to become increasingly self-supporting and independent members of the community. Among the important matters that come within the purview of Canadian Indian administration are: the management of Indian reserves and surrendered lands; tribal or band funds; education; welfare projects; relief; family allowances; rehabilitation of Indian veterans on reserves; descent of property; Indian treaty obligations; and enfranchisement of Indians.

The present Indian Act, proclaimed Sept. 4, 1951, was drawn up after a lengthy inquiry of a Special Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, and after taking into account the views of the Indians themselves expressed at a conference held for that purpose. The overriding consideration which shaped the present Act was the desire to promote the integration of Indians into Canadian social and economic life.

As a means of achieving this, the Act makes provision for the election of Band councils whose authority extends over a number of areas of immediate concern to Indians resident on the reserve, including such matters as health, regulation of traffic, control of livestock, and management of fish, game and fur. Bands that have achieved an advanced stage of development may enact by-laws having to do with the raising, appropriation and expenditure of money.

While most Band councils are elected for a two-year term as provided in the Indian Act, some continue to adhere to appointment by tribal custom. All Bands however are given the opportunity to decide whether they wish to take advantage of the elective provisions of the Indian Act or to adhere to tribal custom.

The Indian Affairs Branch takes a census of the Indian population under its jurisdiction at five-year intervals. The figures for the 1954 Census are given in Tables 31 and 32.

* Prepared in the Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa.