

## Racism Timeline: *Events*

Canada has 6.8 million foreign-born residents (20.6% of the population).

A ten-year-old policy resurfaces which says that Sikh visa applicants with last names of “Singh” or “Kaur” do not qualify for immigration to Canada; officials say there are too many of them and that it is difficult to maintain the database. They do not seem to have similar problems with common Western surnames such as “Smith” or “Brown.”

Chinese people begin to immigrate to Canada to escape rural poverty and political upheaval caused by the First Opium War and the Hakka led T'ai P'ing Rebellion.

South Africa sends representatives to Canada to study the Canadian system for reserves for Indigenous people. Their findings were helpful in establishing the apartheid system in South Africa – that is, segregating their own Indigenous people into “townships” or “homelands.”

3,000 Black Loyalists who had been emancipated in the American colonies, in exchange for supporting the British, enter Canada as “free” persons. They encountered blatant discrimination and were exploited as a source of free labour. They were promised 100-acre lots (like White Loyalists) but either received no land at all or were given barren 1 acre lots on the fringe of White Loyalist townships. About 1,200 of the Black Loyalists resettled in Sierra Leone to escape these intolerable conditions.

Shawn Brant, a member of the Mohawk Nation is denied bail for the second time on charges related to the closure of the CN main line, a provincial highway, and the 401. He was protesting unresolved land claims, polluted drinking water, poverty and suicides in all First Nations communities. A similar campaign had been launched earlier by organized labour where the Labour Movement’s rotating and escalating city shut-downs far surpassed Brant’s efforts and yet no labour leader was ever jailed, or even charged.

Latin Americans immigrate to Canada to escape political upheaval.

80,000 Ukrainian Canadians are forced to register as “enemy aliens”; they were required to report to the police regularly and carry government-issued identity papers. 5,000 Canadian Ukrainians were forced into concentration camps where they endured horrible conditions. These individuals helped build well known landmarks such as Banff National Park.

Shanawdithit, the last Beothuk (Indigenous peoples of Newfoundland), dies of tuberculosis. Prior to her death, her people were hunted for sport and a bounty was set for their scalps; Beothuk numbers were so reduced that they could not survive as a people.

37,000 Hungarian refugees arrive in Canada following the collapse of the uprising against Soviet authority.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Report is issued. The report contained progressive and controversial ideas about the place of Indigenous peoples in a thoroughly revamped Canada.

Aisha Syed, an Indo-Canadian woman in her 20s, is fired for refusing to comply with Starbucks' "dress code" when she refuses to remove her nose stud while at work. Her manager's words are: "We can't control the colour of the skin we're born with but we can control what we put in our noses."

Sandra Lovelace (Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Tobique Nation) appeals to the UN Human Rights Committee for her loss of status as an Indian under the Indian Act for marriage to a non-Indigenous man. Lovelace got divorced and wanted to move back to her reserve with her children but was unable to get her own house as she had lost her status. She could not change the law in Canada because another woman had lost a similar case before the SCC. Lovelace took her case to the UN. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms section 15 passed in 1982 and in effect, in 1985, would not have permitted this. Further, the Indian Act was amended in 1980 even before the committee made its decision.

Under the Indian Act, the federal government banned the West Coast potlatch ceremony; the potlatch marked important occasions such as birth announcements, name giving, marriages, the mourning of losses as well as wealth distribution. Other Indigenous spiritual ceremonies (such as the sun dance) were made illegal in coming years.

The Canadian government signs the Redress Agreement with the National Association of Japanese Canadians, acknowledging that the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II violated their human rights.

Before European contact, First Nations and Inuit peoples live on Turtle Island (North America) as diverse peoples with over 50 language groups and complex, highly developed social, political and economic systems.

Until this time, it was illegal for Indigenous peoples to purchase liquor or enter establishments that sold it. This meant that after serving with distinction in two World Wars and in Korea, Indigenous veterans could not set foot in a Canadian legion.

The body of a three-year-old black girl is denied burial in St. Croix, a “whites only” cemetery in Nova Scotia.

The first wave of Japanese immigrants arrived in Canada. In 1908, Canada insisted that no more than 400 males migrated each year; this was called the Gentleman’s Agreement. In 1928, this number was lowered to 150 persons.

Until this time, Indigenous peoples had to pay for a pass to legally leave their reservation. Instituted in 1885, Indigenous peoples were arrested if found off reserve without a pass. Often farmers had to sell their crops to a middle man for a lower price because they could not leave their reservation to sell their crops themselves. This “Pass Law” was modified in the 1950s, but was not abolished until the mid 1960s.

The federal government apologizes for the sexual and physical abuse that Indigenous people suffered at Residential Schools. The apology came after years of lobbying, law suits and an inquiry.

The Chinese Immigration Act, known today as the Chinese Exclusion Act, bars all Chinese immigrants from entering into Canada. This virtually stopped immigration of Chinese until its repeal in 1947.

Ontario government introduces the The Common Schools Act, which allows for the segregation of African-Canadians. This policy was not eliminated until 1964.

National controversy over whether Sikhs should be allowed to wear turbans in the RCMP. The issue resulted in petitions tabled in the House of Commons carrying the names of as many as 250,000 Canadians who supported the proposition “that a handful of Sikhs wearing turbans would crack up the RCMP.” Racist pins and calendars depicting turban clad Mounties appeared across Canada.

The first wave of East Indians immigrates to Canada.

The Canadian government passes the Continuous Passage Law which stated that “all immigrants seeking entry must come to Canada by continuous journey and through tickets from the country of their birth of citizenship.” Immigrants from Japan and India were primarily affected as it was nearly impossible to find a direct route.

17 Canadian Muslims are arrested on “terrorism” charges; the Canadian press refers to them as “home-grown terrorists,” “brown-skinned” (which was never mentioned) and “Canadian-born” rather than Canadian.

Motivated by the Canadian government’s policy to accept refugees, Alexandre Bissonnette opens fire on worshippers in a Quebec City mosque, killing 6 and injuring 19. Although the government calls the shooting a terrorist attack, Bissonnette is not charged under the terrorism provision of the Criminal Code. Following this attack, hate crimes rise in Montreal.

The French begin attempting to establish settlements in Canada. Their first three settlements fail.

Canadian Parliament passed Bill C-31 which ended over 100 years of legislated sexual discrimination against Indigenous women. This bill amends the Indian Act in that Indigenous women regain full status, rights and identity.

Race riots in Vancouver are directed against Chinese, Japanese and East Indian immigrants.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is enshrined in the Canadian Constitution, guaranteeing equality under the law.



Under the Slavery Abolition Act, the British abolish slavery in all colonies, including Canada; this happens on a gradual basis over the next 6 years.

Albertan teacher, James Keegstra, is charged for willful promotion of hatred against Jewish people.

Halifax is the only major police force in Canada to accurately reflect its community's racial diversity. In Nunavut, 90% of the population is Indigenous, yet, only 12% of the police force is Indigenous. In Vancouver, 54% of the population are from minority groups but only 22% of its police force are from minority groups.

In this year, 133 hate crimes are reported in Calgary. Police suggest that this figure is just 10 of the actual hate crimes committed, the majority being race related and the next largest being gay and lesbian bashing.

907 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution aboard the SS St. Louis are denied entry into Cuba, the US and Canada. The ship was forced to return to Europe; historians estimate that a quarter of passengers were later killed in death camps. This was known as the “Voyage of the Dammed.”

The City of Windsor, Ontario de-segregates its public facilities.

The first wave of Ukrainians immigrates to Canada.

The Canadian government orders all Japanese Canadians to leave their homes, farms and businesses and to relocate to internment camps with horrible conditions. Some had the option to work on farms in the prairies. In 1943, all Japanese Canadian property was liquidated by the government.

The English establish their first permanent settlement in Canada.

Mississauga mayor, Hazel McCallion, expresses what is perceived as “anti-immigrant sentiments” in May of 2001. McCallion complained that Ottawa lets people slip into this country and ask for asylum stay while authorities determine whether they are genuine refugees. Many wind up on welfare and municipalities bear 20% of the cost of welfare.

Until this year, gay people were excluded from citizenship under Canada’s Immigration Act.

Under the Chinese Immigration Act, the Canadian government levies a head tax on Chinese males. The head tax increased from \$50 in 1888 to \$500 (2 years’ salary) by 1903. Chinese women and children were excluded from admission and had to be left behind. This was not lifted until 1923 but was replaced by the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The Vriend Case. The Supreme Court of Canada ordered that sexual orientation be read into Alberta's Human Rights legislation. Until 1969, it was a criminal offence to have private, consensual anal sex.

Viola Desmond, a black Canadian woman from Nova Scotia, is arrested for sitting in the white section of a movie theatre; she spent the night in jail and was fined. Her story is included in the NFB film "Journey to Justice."

45% of on-reserve First Nations dwellings are in need of major repairs. 17% of off-reserve dwellings are in need of major repairs.

Jewish people immigrate to Canada to escape poverty and discrimination in eastern Europe and Russia.

Indigenous peoples in Canada are given citizenship status and the right to vote in federal elections without losing their treaty status.

Earliest documented occurrence of slavery in Canada, although *The Colour of Democracy* tells us that the French introduced slavery into Canada as early as 1608.

Canadian government passes the “Indian Act” and makes Indigenous people wards of the state. The act promotes Indigenous assimilation into Anglo-Canadian society. This act is among the most inherently racist pieces of legislation passed at any time by any government.

The ban on practicing traditional spiritual ceremonies is lifted; some Indigenous peoples argue that this came too late given the assimilationist policies and institutions (such as Residential Schools) that already presented a challenge to these practices.

A survey of employment agencies in Toronto carried out by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association found that 11 out of 15 randomly selected agencies were willing to supply employers with white only workers. In 1991, the CCLA repeated the survey for the fourth time and of the 15 agencies surveyed in four cities in Ontario, only 3 declared their unwillingness to accept discriminatory job orders.

Vietnamese people immigrate to Canada to escape post-war hardships.

People of Chinese origin are denied the vote in British Columbia. They gain the vote in 1947 along with East Indians who were disenfranchised in 1907.

Irish immigrate to Canada to escape famine and disease. Upon arrival, they were quarantined on Grosse-Île in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. It is believed that 3,000 died on the island and 5,000 are buried in the cemetery.

Due to the economic and political crisis in Poland, 119,000 Polish people immigrate to Canada.

Canadian government forces Indigenous peoples' children to leave their families and communities to attend Residential Schools. The last of these schools closed in 1996. The Residential School system was an attempt by successive governments to appropriate and shape the future of Canada's Indigenous peoples by removing thousands of children from their homes and community and placing them in the care of strangers. The common wisdom of the day maintained that Indigenous children had to be rescued from their evil surroundings and prejudicial influences and isolated from parents, family and community so as to be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions.

Helen Betty Osborne, a Cree teenager, is kidnapped, brutally beaten, gang raped and murdered by a group of white youths in The Pas, Manitoba.

Mathieu Da Costa is the first documented African to arrive in Canada. He is said to have come from Azores and spoke multiple languages such as Dutch, French, English, Portuguese and possibly some Indigenous languages as he had ties to the Mi'kmaq people. Da Costa was not a slave; he accompanied explorer Samuel de Champlain as his interpreter.

Anti-Semitism on the rise in Canada; in this year, hate crimes against the Jewish population rose 24%.

Komagatu Maru incident in Vancouver harbor. Because of the Continuous Passage Law, a boat load of 400 would-be immigrants from India sailed directly from Calcutta, Indian. They were not allowed to dock in Vancouver. The boat sat in the harbor for nearly 3 months before it was forced out of the harbor by the navy. Many East Indians died as a result.

Alberta bill bans same-sex marriages.

The Canadian government announces that they will issue a formal apology in the House of Commons for turning away the 907 Jewish refugees aboard the SS St. Louis fleeing Nazi persecution during WWII.



The Canadian government formally apologizes for the head tax imposed on Chinese-Canadian immigrants. From 1885 to 1923, 81,000 paid the head tax, yet only the 20 surviving head tax payers and 200 living spouses received “symbolic payments” from the government. Children of head tax payers received no compensation despite its impact on them; the head tax separated families (some were never able to reunite) and caused many individuals and families to live in lifelong poverty to pay off the debt from the tax.

People of Japanese origin gain the right to vote in British Columbia.

Syrian refugees are pepper sprayed by a Canadian man at a welcome event in Vancouver.

The Canadian government launches the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Their mandate is to “examine and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQ individuals in Canada by looking at patterns and underlying factors.” Through this, their aim is to expose the devastating impacts of colonization, racism and sexism.

The federal government formally apologizes in the House of Commons for barring the 376 passengers aboard the Komagata Maru from entering Canada.

Establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) by the parties of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its aim was to acknowledge and document the history and impacts of the schools. In 2015, the TRC released its findings as well as 94 “calls to action.”

Winnipeg mayoral candidate Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Red Pheasant First Nation member, 18-year veteran in the Canadian Armed Forces, university professor, holder of a bachelor’s degree, two master’s degrees and a PHD) exposes the racism he faced during his campaign. He received hateful comments such as: “Go back to drinking. That’s where Indians belong.”

In response to one of the TRC’s “calls to action,” the Canadian government plans to announce a new federal holiday, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, to honour Residential School survivors and to acknowledge this history and its ongoing legacies. The specific day is to be selected in consultation with Indigenous peoples.

In Toronto, black males are three times more likely to be stopped and asked for identification by police.

In a Montreal courtroom, Judge Eliana Marengo refuses to hear the case of Rania El-Alloul unless she removes her hijab. El-Alloul explained to the judge: "I told her I'm a Muslim. And I think everybody knows that any Muslim lady, if she's wearing a hijab, she can't remove it outside her home." Marengo suspended the case indefinitely because of El-Alloul's refusal. The case sparked outrage and the Quebec Council of the Magistrature received dozens of complaints. 3 years later, a disciplinary investigation into Marengo's conduct began despite her attempts to halt the investigation.

In Canada, racialized women earn 56.6% of what white men earn.