

Indigenous Peoples and the Reconciliation Agenda: Funding, Accountability, and Risk

Chapter Summary

This chapter addresses the many complex challenges and interpretations regarding the definition, funding relationship, capacity building of communities, and accountability mechanisms in place for the reconciliation agenda. The term “Indigenous people of Canada” includes the following three constitutional groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. This chapter offers a historical review of the major changes in funding relationships from the origins of the *Indian Act* and the evolving revisions in accountability and funding to present day.

The *Indian Act* was proclaimed in 1876 in Canada. Since that time, through funding agreements that outline the rights and responsibilities for both the federal government and the Indigenous communities, funding authorities voted on by Parliament have guided spending for specific programs over a specific time period. In 1951, a new *Indian Act* introduced the concept of self-government as well as dual accountability for funding recipients. This change in accountability results was very autocratic and resulted in a more rules-based funding approach, with little local governance over local management of programs. The failed 1969 *White Paper* proposed terminating the legal relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state and dismantling the *Indian Act*. In 1982, a Special Parliamentary Committee on Indian Self-Government also made recommendations for new administrative arrangements. In 1993, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s new government substituted the term “Indian monies” with the term “public funds,” as defined in the *Financial Administration Act*. In 1996, the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples advocated for the regeneration of the approximately 60 to 80 Indigenous nations as the basis for self-determination, and called for the creation of new agreements instead of modifying existing ones. Under the administration of former Prime Minister Paul Martin, the 2005 Kelowna Accord was a commitment “to take immediate action to improve the quality of life for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.”

In the past decade two important measures have been enacted. The author relates that at the time of writing, the current administration of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has created two new federal departments: the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, responsible for creating a new relationship with Indigenous peoples. The Department of Indigenous Services will be responsible for improving the quality of services to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

Annotated Weblinks

- 1) <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1400782178444/1400782270488>

The Government of Canada has provided a website that outlines the priorities of the Government of Canada around working to advance reconciliation and renew the relationship with Indigenous peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership.

- 2) <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/kelowna-accord/>

The Kelowna Accord lead by former Prime Minister Paul Martin began the process of consultation that involved the federal government, provincial and territorial governments, and five national Aboriginal organizations.

- 3) <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-affairs-and-northern-development-canada/>

This site offers a current profile of the new federal departments that oversee the policies for First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Northern Communities in Canada.