

---

## Canadian Evolution Of Human Rights And Battle For Inclusivity

Canada, being one of the countries who won the war, is helping out nations and people around the world in the present day. This does not mean that Canada has always been kind and helpful and offered justified equality to all during the developing periods of the country. Canada has evolved like any other, consisting of intense historical events that have forged it to be as strong, proud and reputed as known today. Issues regarding gender equality, immigration policies and the treatment of the Aboriginal Canadians were some of the most widely spread affairs that had to be dealt with in Canadian history. Thus, the degree of inclusiveness and equality for Canadian minorities and gender groups has profoundly changed throughout the twentieth century.

A Canadian woman's life revolved around the house for decades during the 19th century and before. The First World War was when they got an opportunity to try something different and participate in a cause apart from their everyday lives.<sup>1</sup> Due to the lack of men during the war, women replaced men in the factories and other jobs such as secretaries and clerks. Additionally, over 3000 women served in the Army Medical Corps.<sup>2</sup> The women's status was increased as society looked at them being capable of doing "man's work". In 1918, all women over the age of 21 were given the right to vote. Despite being given new rights and higher status, Canadian women were still not considered "persons" under the law.<sup>3</sup> An England judge proclaimed that "Women are persons in matters of pains and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges".<sup>4</sup> This meant that women could be punished equally as men but could not possess the same rights and privileges as men including holding high positions in the government such as a judge or a senator. This led to a group of women establishing the Person's Case in 1929, which was rejected by the Supreme Court of Canada and was then

taken to the British Privy Council. Finally, the case was taken into consideration and was accepted at the British Privy Council. Prime Minister Mackenzie King selected the first female senator in Canada. Regardless of women gaining much more respect, reputation and job opportunities, later on, they did not necessarily earn the same amounts as the men. "In 1961 earnings of women employed full-time, year-round, were 59% of the earnings of men in the same categories; when part-time workers were added, women's wages dropped to 54% of men's".<sup>5</sup> In 1978, when the Canadian Human Rights Act was executed, it prohibited discrimination based on sex and ensured "equal pay for work of equal value". The 20th century consisted of prodigious advancements for the women and these were important matters to be dealt with as gender discrimination shouldn't be acceptable. No person can possibly give valid and justified reasoning to why women must have any fewer rights than men. Discrimination based on gender had been passed down for generations and it was necessary that changes be brought into society in order to implement and preserve gender equality for the future. However, besides gender discrimination, there are other equality rights that have evolved over time such as immigration policies based on racial and cultural differences.

European immigration, mostly British and French were frequent until the early 20th century. Canada did not accept any people from Asian or African countries. After the First World War, the immigration policies had gotten even more strict. Under the Immigration Act in 1919, the

---

government restricted people from communist countries, people of different religious beliefs and people from countries that had fought against Canada in war.<sup>6</sup> After the Second World War, large parts of Europe were destroyed and the populations of the nations were struggling.

'165,000 "Displaced Persons" were admitted to Canada from 1947 to 1953'.<sup>7</sup> Canada was still hesitant on accepting immigrants, and Prime Minister Mackenzie King wanted to ensure the

careful selection and settlement of immigrants to make it advantageous for the Canadian economy. Canada wanted and needed immigrants but did not want people from different cultural backgrounds in order to preserve Canada's origins. After several changes in the governmental policies and some humanity, in 1962, John Diefenbaker introduced a new immigration policy, removing cultural and racial restrictions on immigrants. "Through the 1970's and 80's, the proportion of immigrants from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America continued to grow".<sup>8</sup> In 1982, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms ensured the preservation of Canada's multicultural heritage. Canada has made some mistakes in its past, cultural and racial discrimination is one of the greatest. But no one can be blamed as humans are not perfect and it is in human nature to make errors during tough times. The change was necessary and it is good that the mistakes were resolved to form the proud Canada we know today. Unfortunately, all the racial and cultural discrimination was not only for foreign countries. Some of it lay right in Canada.

It always seemed that Canadians were very kind to the Aboriginal people living in Canada after the Europeans arrived. Unfortunately, that was not the case until the second half of the 20th century. The First Nations, including the Inuits were barely acknowledged until the 1940s.<sup>9</sup> This meant that they were not necessarily treated equally. In the 1870s, residential schools were built and run by the churches. Thousands of Aboriginal children were forced out of their families to attend the government schools in order to learn "white" culture and also practice Christianity.<sup>10</sup> "Aboriginal children were often subjected to physical, emotional, or

sexual abuse from those running the schools".<sup>11</sup> The children were also punished when speaking their native languages and practicing their native religions. Approximately 150,000 Aboriginal children were separated from their families and sent to residential schools.<sup>12</sup> Another action that caused suffering by the government of Canada was transporting 92 Inuits to the High Arctic Islands.<sup>13</sup> It was discovered that the government had promised the Inuits better-living conditions, but turned out that the Inuits were misled and had to suffer in extremely dark and cold conditions. In 2005, Canada offered a \$2 billion settlement package to the Aboriginal people and the Prime Minister made a formal apology on behalf of the government for all the mistakes made in the past. The treatment of Aboriginal Canadians was not fair and very unjust. This land belonged to the Aboriginals, which was then shared with the Europeans. Being unfair and unjust to the people who shared their lands with us wasn't a sign of peace and equality. The change was necessary and it had to happen fast. The Aboriginals deserve the same rights and privileges as any other Canadian citizen. Better justice was brought which has prevented discriminatory conflicts in the future.

The degree of inclusiveness and equality for Canadian minorities and gender groups has profoundly changed throughout the twentieth century. Important changes in gender equality, immigration and racial/cultural discrimination, and Aboriginal equality has shaped how Canadian society functions today. This evolution of the human rights makes Canada a nation that supports equality and justice to all.

---

eduzaurus.com