TREATY RELATIONS
COMMISSION OF MANITOBA

LET'S EXPLORE

TREATY TURNING POINTS

WHAT ABOUT ..?

CANADA'S OATH OF CITIZENSHIP

CANADA'S OATH OF CITIZENSHIP



In 2023, more than 354,000 people became Canadian citizens in more than 3,000 citizenship ceremonies across the country.

FIRST NATIONS' IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP

Prior to European arrival, First Nations had their own histories and methods of defining identity. These were based on matriarchal, patriarchal, clan, and kinship systems.

The Canadian government issued the Indian Act in 1876. Using a colonial lens, it redefined who an 'Indian' was:

- Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band
- Any child of such person
- Any person who is or was lawfully married to such person

The Indian Act also spelled out a process of enfranchisement whereby 'Indians' could acquire full Canadian citizenship by giving up their Treaty rights and ties to their community. In 1961 the enfranchisement process was removed from the Indian Act.

CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

With the exception of First Nation peoples, all Canadians at some time in their family's history came as newcomers to what we know today as the country of Canada. From Confederation in 1867 to 1947, newcomers to Canada became naturalized immigrants and were considered British subjects.

The Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947 created the category of Canadian citizenship and allowed people already living in Canada to obtain citizenship regardless of their country of origin. The new act also established the criteria for immigrants to obtain citizenship.

New immigrants to Canada at this time were required to recite the Oath of Allegiance for Purposes of Citizenship:

"I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors, according to law, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen".

CANADA'S OATH OF CITIZENSHIP

Naturalization is the formal process by which a person who isn't a Canadian citizen can become a Canadian citizen. The person must usually become a permanent resident first and then get their citizenship at a citizenship ceremony.

A **permanent resident** is a newcomer who Canada has extended the ability to live and work in Canada permanently. They have has access to social benefits and can apply for Canadian citizenship.

CANADA'S OATH OF CITIZENSHIP

In 1977 the Citizenship Act was amended. This included changes to the oath. The words 'Queen of Canada' were inserted after Queen Elizabeth's name and the oath was officially named the Canadian Citizenship Oath.

The new oath maintained the traditional swearing of allegiance to the British monarch, but also inserted the name of Canada three times as a reminder of the country's status as a constitutional monarchy.

OATH OF CITIZENSHIP RECOGNIZING TREATIES

The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action called for a revision of the Oath of Citizenship. The TRC's final report stated: "Precisely because 'we are all Treaty People', Canada's Oath of Citizenship must include a solemn promise to respect Aboriginal and Treaty rights".

In 2021, in response to Call to Action 94, the Canadian government updated the Oath of Citizenship to include Indigenous Peoples:

"I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to (His or Her) Majesty (King or Queen) (Regnal name and numeral), (King or Queen) of Canada, (His or Her) Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen."

SHARE YOUR UNDERSTANDINGS

- Describe the evolution of Canada's Oath of Citizenship.

- Why is the new Oath a turning point Treaty history and the Treaty relationship?