TREATY RELATIONS
COMMISSION OF MANITOBA

LET'S EXPLORE

TREATY TURNING POINTS

WHAT ABOUT ..?

WAHBUNG: OUR TOMORROWS

WAHBUNG: OUR TOMORROWS

"The history and past policies regarding the Indian people cannot and must not be ignored, for their effects are with us all in the present Indian fact. To deny the past and to refuse to recognize its implications, is to distort the present; to distort the present is to take risks with the future that are blatantly irresponsible"

Wahbung, 1971

FIRST NATIONS AND CANADA

For over 150 years, the Crown used policies and laws to attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian society and dispossess them of their lands. Indigenous peoples were removed from their homelands, and their distinct cultures, systems of governance, institutions, laws and ways of life were undermined. Despite this, Indigenous peoples worked to rebuild, revitalize and regain control over their communities.

This story is also one of resistance. Indigenous Peoples actively resisted the Crown's actions by writing petitions, marching for equality, establishing advocacy organizations, and battling through the courts to defend their rights.

Adapted from: https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/APPA/Reports/APPAReport-Phase1_WEB_e.pdf

THE WHITE PAPER, 1969

The 1969 White Paper was a Canadian government policy paper that aimed to abolish existing legal documents relating to Indigenous peoples. These included the Indian Act and Treaties. It also sought to assimilate all "Indian" peoples into mainstream Canadian society.

The policy planned to eliminate Indian Status, incorporate First Nations under provincial government responsibilities rather than federal, and convert reserve lands to private property that could be sold by the band or its members. It also provided funding for economic development and the appointment of a commissioner to address outstanding land claims and gradually terminate existing Treaties.

The White Paper was brought forward by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. The government's goal was to achieve equality among all Canadians by eliminating 'Indian' as a distinct legal status and by regarding Indigenous peoples simply as citizens with the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as other Canadians.

The 1969 White Paper was met with forceful opposition from Indigenous leaders across the country, sparking a new era of Indigenous political organizing lasting for decades. The White Paper was withdrawn in 1970.

WAHBUNG: OUR TOMORROWS



Chief Dave Courchene Sr. was the Grand Chief of Manitoba when *Wahbung* was published. He was the first honorary lifetime Grand Chief of all the First Nations of Manitoba and author of the "partnership concept" between First Nations and the federal and provincial governments.

WAHBUNG: OUR TOMORROWS

Across Canada, provincial and territorial First Nation organizations prepared position papers expressing their views in opposition to the White Paper. It became a national movement asserting First Nations' self-determination.

In 1971, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs) presented its position paper called *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*. It outlined an agenda for action, including First Nations' right to design and have full authority over their health, education, and child and family services systems, informed by First Nations worldviews, laws, and ways of knowing.

Wahbung was the first position paper produced jointly by Manitoba's First Nation leaders. In it, they wrote their goal was to: "achieve a just and honourable and mutually satisfactory relationship between the people of Canada and the Indian people of Manitoba".

SHARE YOUR UNDERSTANDINGS

- What events led to the publishing of *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*?

- Why was *Wahbung* groundbreaking at the time? What did Manitoba First Nation leaders want to achieve?