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Individuals Responsible for Indian and Northern Affairs in Canada, 1755 to 2006

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The following is a chronological list of individuals responsible for Indian and Northern Affairs in Canada. It begins with the pre-Confederation superintendents and ends with the current Minister, the Honourable Jim Prentice. Acting ministers and ministers of state are not included in the list.

Before Confederation

Superintendents, Indian Affairs

The first Indian Department in Canada was created in 1755 as a branch of the British military in North America. The superintendents were responsible for maintaining good relations with the Indians and securing their allegiance to Britain—at first in the war against France, and then against American troops.

Sir William Johnson - 1755-1774
Colonel Guy Johnson - 1774-1782
Sir John Johnson - 1782-1796

1796 - Responsibility for Indian Affairs (Upper Canada) delegated to the Lieutenant-Governor
1800 - Responsibility for Indian Affairs (Lower Canada) delegated to the Governor General
1816 - Responsibility for Indian Affairs (Upper and Lower Canada) transferred to the Commander of the Armed Forces
1828 - The offices of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs and of Inspector General of the Department of Indian Affairs abolished. A new post of Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs is established.

Major-General H.C. Darling - 1828-1830

In 1830, the Indian Department was split into two offices. In Upper Canada, responsibility was transferred to the Lieutenant-Governor, who was assisted by a Chief Superintendent. In Lower Canada, control remained with the Military Secretary.

Colonel James Givins (Chief Superintendent - Upper Canada) - 1830-1837
Lieutenant-Colonel Duncan C. Napier (Lower Canada) - 1830-1841
Samuel P. Jarvis (Upper Canada) - 1837-1841

Governor Generals responsible for Indian Affairs

In 1841, Upper and Lower Canada were reunited into the Province of Canada, which had two regions: Canada West (now Ontario) and Canada East (now Quebec). The two offices of the department were amalgamated and placed under the authority of the Governor General. Although the Governor General was responsible for the department, the day-to-day control of the department was the responsibility of the Governor's secretary.

Sir Charles Bagot - 1841-1843
Sir Charles Metcalfe - 1843-1845
Charles Murray, Earl of Cathcart - 1846-1847
James Bruce, Earl of Elgin - 1847-1854
Sir Edmund Head - 1854-1861

Commissioners, Crown Lands Department responsible for Indian Affairs

In 1860, responsibility for Indian Affairs was transferred from imperial control to the Province of Canada. The Crown Lands Department assumed responsibility for Indian matters and its Commissioner was appointed Chief Superintendent.

Philip M.M.S. Vankoughnet - 1860-1862
George Sherwood - 1862
William McDougall - 1862-1864
Sir Alexander Campbell - 1864-1867

After Confederation

Ministers, Secretary of State Canada, and Secretary of State for the Provinces / Superintendents General, Indian Branch

After Confederation, control of Indian matters was assumed by the federal government and responsibility was delegated to the Department of Secretary of State Canada. The secretary held the positions of Registrar General and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. In 1873, these duties and powers were transferred to the Office of Secretary of State for the Provinces.

Sir Hector L. Langevin - 1867-1869
Joseph Howe - 1869-1873
Thomas N. Gibbs - 1873

Ministers, Department of the Interior/Superintendents General of Indian Affairs

In 1873, responsibility for Indian Affairs fell to the Minister of the Department of the Interior, who was also the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. In 1880, an independent Department of Indian Affairs was created, but responsibility for the new department remained with the Minister of the Department of the Interior until 1935, except during two periods. These two periods were between 1883 and 1887, when this portfolio was assigned to the Privy Council and, for a short while in 1930, when the portfolio was assigned to the Department of Immigration and Colonization.

Sir Alexander Campbell - 1873
David Laird - 1873-1876
David Mills - 1876-1878
Sir John A. Macdonald - 1878-1883
Sir D. L. MacPherson - 1883-1885
Thomas White - 1885-1888
Edgar Dewdney - 1888-1892
Thomas M. Daly - 1892-1896
Sir Hugh J. Macdonald - 1896
Sir Clifford Sifton - 1896-1905
Frank Oliver - 1905-1911

Robert Rogers - 1911-1912
William James Roche - 1912-1917
Arthur Meighen - 1917-1920
Sir James A. Lougheed - 1920-1921
Charles Stewart - 1921-1930
Ian Alistair Mackenzie (Department of Immigration and Colonization) - 1930
Thomas G. Murphy - 1930-1935

Ministers, Department of Mines and Resources (Responsible for Indian Affairs Branch)

In 1936, the office of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs was abolished. Until 1950, the Indian Affairs Branch reported through a director to the Minister of the newly-formed Department of Mines and Resources.

Thomas Alexander Crerar - 1935-1945
James Allison Glen - 1945-1948
James A. MacKinnon - 1948-1949
Colin Gibson - 1949-1950

Indian Affairs

Ministers, Department of Citizenship and Immigration (January 18, 1950)

In 1950, the Indian Affairs Branch was transferred to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, where it remained until 1965. A separate department was responsible for the North (see below). For a brief period (January 1 to October 3, 1966), Indian Affairs also reported to the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources.

Walter Harris - 1950-1954
John Pickersgill - 1954-1957
Ellen L. Fairclough - 1958-1962
Richard A. Bell - 1962-1963
Guy Favreau - 1963-1964
René Tremblay - 1964-1965
John Robert Nicholson - 1965
Jean Marchand - 1965-1966

Northern Affairs

Ministers, Department of Resources and Development (January 18, 1950)

Robert H. Winters - 1950-1953
Jean Lesage - 1953

Ministers, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (December 16, 1953)

Jean Lesage - 1953-1957
Douglas Harkness - 1957
(Francis) Alvin Hamilton - 1957-1960
Walter Dinsdale - 1960-1963
Arthur Laing - 1963-1966

Ministers, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, as we know it today, was created in October 1966 by authority of the *Government Organization Act*.

Arthur Laing - 1966-1968
Jean Chrétien - 1968-1974
Judd Buchanan - 1974-1976
Warren Allmand - 1976-1977
James Hugh Faulkner - 1977-1979
(Arthur) Jake Epp - 1979-1980
John Munro - 1980-1984
Doug Frith - 1984
David Crombie - 1984-1986
William McKnight - 1986-1989
Pierre H. Cadieux - 1989-1990
Thomas Siddon - 1990-1993
Pauline Browes - 1993
Ronald A. Irwin - 1993-1997
Jane Stewart - 1997-1999
Robert D. Nault - 1999-2004
Andy Mitchell - 2004-2004
Andy Scott - 2004-2006
Jim Prentice - 2006-

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This general information is provided as a brief overview only. The terms of the Indian Act, its regulations, other federal statutes and their interpretation by the courts take precedence over the content of this information sheet.

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