

Script for Overheads

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This is the land before the white people came. There were no reserves. There was no white regulation of Indian ways. There was Indian law and Indian ways. Indians owned and managed and used all of its resources. The map shows the Aboriginal claim for land, for fishing, hunting, and trapping rights, for Indian use of timber, grasses, water, minerals and many other things. None of these things have ever been surrendered or ceded to the whites. These things make up our claim for Aboriginal Rights and Native Title.

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The first Indian reserves in British Columbia were set up by James Douglas, the first Governor of the Colony of British Columbia. His policy was to recognize aboriginal rights and to make reserves as big as the Bands desired. Some of these early reserves were quite large. They were set up in the South Island, Fraser Valley, Fraser Canyon, and the Thompson River areas.

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Joseph Trutch was Commissioner of Lands and Works and later Lieutenant-Governor. He made big changes in Douglas' policy. He refused to recognize Native Title. He made large reductions in the size of reserves by "re-alloting" them. Small reserves and non-recognition of Native Title has been the policy of the Province ever since. Trutch's policy led to disputes with Ottawa. There were great protests by Indian leaders and nearly an Indian war.

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The Indian Reserve Commission was set up by both the Province and Ottawa. Its job was to review the size of Trutch's reserves and to set up reserves in areas that had none. Over 35 years it allotted, or "re-alloted" most of the reserves in British Columbia. Sometimes it made reserves smaller by resurveys. The Province also refused to approve some of the reserves that were set up by the Indian Reserve Commission. Sometimes the reserves were set up without meaningful consultations with the Bands.

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In 1871 British Columbia became part of the rest of Canada. The Federal government was given responsibility for Indians. The department of Indian affairs started its administration in British Columbia shortly after. Reserves have lost much land in many different ways due to Department of Indian Affairs' land policies. There have also been losses because Dep. of Indian Affairs failed to protect Indian rights. Ways such as land sales, rights-of-way, resurveys, and lands taken for "public purposes" are examples.

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The McKenna - McBride Royal Commission was set up by both the Province and Ottawa. Its job was to review the work of the Indian Reserve Commission and to settle the dispute between the two governments over the size and location of the reserves. The Royal Commission took away reserve lands by "correcting" the acreage allotted by the Indian Reserve Commission. It also took rights-of-way, as well as the "cut-off lands."

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Most of the ways that reserves have lost land in the past are going on today. There are still land sales and surrenders. There are still rights-of-way takings and Provincial Order-in-Council No. 1036 has recently been used in this regard. Since 1940 land has been lost by the War Measures Act and by transferral to other Federal departments. There have been cancellations of reserves set up by the McKenna-McBride Commission and at least one reversion to the Province because it was claimed the Band was extinct. These are only some examples, there are many others.