The purpose of this thesis is to explore approaches to the study of the bureaucracy, records-keeping, and records of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and its predecessors, from 1755-1950, within the framework of the policy of assimilation of the First Nations peoples of Canada. The thesis employs a "contextual" approach in its description of the organization and functioning of the DIA. First it discusses the writings of archivists who have called for the study of the context in which information is used to be at the heart of archival theory and practice. It proceeds to analyze the works of scholars who have written about the power of records to shape reality, specifically focusing on the DIA bureaucracy and the records it produced. In the nineteenth-century the DIA expanded from a small group of military officials to a large impersonal bureaucracy which eventually controlled many aspects of the lives of Canada's First Nations people. The evolution of the records-keeping methods, and records, of the DIA is described to demonstrate how they functioned within the department. Examples of how the records-keeping of the DIA was an integral part of the process of attempted assimilation are shown. The study concludes that archivists and historians have only started to explore this topic, although it can bring fruitful results. It is hoped that the thesis points out some interesting avenues of approach.