

## Terminology of First Nations, Native, Aboriginal and Metis

(NAHO Glossary & Terms)

### FIRST NATION(S)

The term First Nations came into common usage in the 1970s to replace band or Indian, which some people found offensive (see Indian). Despite its widespread use, there is no legal definition for this term in Canada.

First Nations People - Many people prefer to be called First Nations or First Nations People instead of Indians. The term is not a synonym for Aboriginal Peoples because it doesn't include Inuit or Métis. The term First Nations People generally applies to both Status and Non-Status Indians.

First Nation - Many bands started to replace the word band in their name with First Nation in the 1980s. It is a matter of preference by individual First Nations/bands.

### FIRST PEOPLES

First Peoples is another collective term used to describe the original peoples of Canada and their descendants. It is used less frequently than terms like Aboriginal Peoples and Native Peoples.

### INDIAN

The term Indian collectively describes all the Indigenous People in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. Indian Peoples are one of three peoples recognized as Aboriginal in the Constitution Act of 1982 along with Inuit and Métis. In addition, three categories apply to Indians in Canada: Status Indians, Non-Status Indians and Treaty Indians. The term Indian is considered outdated by many people, and there is much debate over whether to continue using this term.

Status Indians - Status Indians are people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Certain criteria determine who can be registered as a Status Indian. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the Indian Act and are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law.

Non-Status Indians - Non-Status Indians are people who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but whom the Government of Canada does not recognize as Indians under the Indian Act, either because they are unable to prove their Indian status or have lost their status rights. Non-Status Indians are not entitled to the same rights and benefits available to Status Indians.

Treaty Indians - Treaty Indians are descendants of Indians who signed treaties with Canada and who have a contemporary connection with a treaty band.

## INDIGENOUS

Indigenous means "native to the area." In this sense, Aboriginal Peoples are indeed indigenous to North America. Its meaning is similar to Aboriginal Peoples, Native Peoples or First Peoples.

The term is rarely used, but when it is, it usually refers to aboriginal people internationally. The term is gaining acceptance, particularly among some Aboriginal scholars to recognize the place of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada's late-colonial era and implies land tenure. The term is also used by the United Nations in its working groups and in its Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

## INNU

Innu are the Naskapi and Montagnais First Nations Peoples who live in Quebec and Labrador. They are not to be confused with Inuit or Inuk.

## INUIT

Inuit are the Aboriginal People of Arctic Canada. Inuit live primarily in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and northern parts of Quebec and throughout most of Labrador. They have traditionally lived north of the tree line in the area bordered by the Mackenzie Delta in the west, the Labrador coast in the east, the southern point of Hudson Bay in the south, and the High Arctic islands in the north. The word Inuit means "the people" in Inuktitut and is the term by which Inuit refer to themselves.

The Indian Act does not cover Inuit. However, in 1939, the Supreme Court of Canada interpreted the federal government's power to make laws affecting "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians" as extending to Inuit.

Inuk - Inuk is the singular form of Inuit. Use Inuk when referring to one person. When referring to two people, the correct term is Inuuk while three or more is Inuit.

Inuktitut - Inuktitut is the Inuit language and writing system. Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuit are also language and writing systems for Western Arctic and Kitikmeot Region; Qaniuyaapiat for syllabics and Qaliuyaapait for Roman Orthography or Inuinnaqtun.

Communities and Settlements - Inuit live in communities and settlements. Inuit never lived on reserves, therefore the terms on-reserve and off-reserve do not apply to Inuit, only to First Nations. There are four Inuit comprehensive land claims regions covering one-third of Canada: they are Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Labrador. Nunavut has three subregions - Kitikmeot, Kivalliq and Qikiqtaaluk - which are called regions.

## MÉTIS

The word Métis is French for "mixed blood." The Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes Métis as one of the three Aboriginal Peoples.

Historically, the term Métis applied to the children of French fur traders and Cree women in the Prairies, of English and Scottish traders and Dene women in the north, and Inuit

and British in Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, the term is used broadly to describe people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis. Note that Métis organizations in Canada have differing criteria about who qualifies as a Métis person.

Métis Settlements - In 1938, the Alberta government set aside 1.25 million acres of land for eight Métis settlements, however, Métis never lived on reserves. Therefore the terms on-reserve and off-reserve do not apply to them, only to First Nations.

#### NATIVE

Native is a word similar in meaning to Aboriginal. Native Peoples is a collective term to describe the descendants of the original peoples of North America. The term is increasingly seen as outdated (particularly when used as a noun) and is starting to lose acceptance.

#### NATIVE AMERICAN

This commonly-used term in the United States describes the descendants of the original peoples of North America. The term has not caught on in Canada because of the apparent reference to U.S. citizenship. However, some Aboriginal Peoples in Canada have argued that because they are descendants of the original peoples of the Americas, the term Native American should apply to them regardless of their citizenship. Native North American has been used to identify the original peoples of Canada and the United States.