

Terminology & Relationships

In this section, we will identify certain appropriate terms and protocols when working with Indigenous peoples.

Terminology

- **First Nations** is a term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian”, which many found offensive.
- “**Métis** means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other [Indigenous] peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.”
Source: Métis National Council
- **Inuit** are the Indigenous inhabitants of the Arctic, from Siberia to Greenland. In Canada, Inuit live primarily in Inuit Nunangat which is composed of the land, water, and ice in the Arctic region; and encompasses 35 percent of Canada’s landmass and 50 percent of its coastline. There are four regions across Inuit Nunangat including the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut. There are approximately 65,000 Inuit in Canada.
- For many, the problem is with the term '**Aboriginal**' itself, as the root meaning of the word 'ab' means 'away from' or 'not' in Latin. Thus the word Aboriginal can imply 'not original'.
- The term '**Indian**' was first used by Christopher Columbus in 1492, believing he had reached India. For this reason, avoid the use of the terms like “Indian” or “Native”; with the exception of when they are used in legal matters, in direct quotation, or in titles and names such as the Indian Act, Native Women’s Association, or the Osoyoos Indian Band.
- Until recently, outsiders called the Inuit '**Eskimo**' which is derogatory. Now they prefer their own term, **Inuit**, meaning simply "people"; or **Inuk** when referring to an individual.

First Nation or First Nations? The singular “First Nation” has no legal definition and can be used to describe Indigenous people who are neither Métis nor Inuit; a tribal grouping or the people who live in them; a reserve-based community; or a single Indigenous person. There are 634 distinct First Nations in Canada.

Terminology : Indigenous

- Around the world, **many First Peoples prefer the term 'Indigenous' to describe themselves**, as opposed to terms such as: 'Indian', 'Native', and 'Aboriginal', which are colonial terms. This does not imply blanket acceptance, but widespread preference. **Indigenous is a collective noun in Canada for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.**
- **Avoid using possessive phrases** such as "Canada's Indigenous peoples" or "Canada's First Nations/Métis/Inuit" or "our"; as this implies domination and ownership of Indigenous people. We would not say Canada's Black people for example, nor would Inuit say 'our Canadians'.
- **The word 'Indigenous' should also be capitalized at all times.** Canadian Press' Stylebook adopted this change in 2017.

Respectful Relations

Whenever possible, consult the Indigenous Nation or community whose territories your workplace resides on. Look for ways to include them and make them visible; for example their flags, heroes, veterans, stories, and innovations.

*It is important to note that when you engage with Indigenous people that it reflects a **partnership and collaborative approach**. Historically, settlers have shown a paternalistic, authoritative-style relationship over Indigenous peoples; one in which they lead the priorities and agenda and only seek out Indigenous peoples into that set framework or decision. When working, learning from, or collaborating with Indigenous peoples it is therefore important to help undo this approach rooted in colonialism.*