

# Stepping Stones



## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

### Planning your learning journey

*What are the most appropriate terms to use when referring to First Nations, Métis and Inuit?*



YUET CHAN

*Greetings are shared at the Awasis Day celebration at Prince Charles School in Edmonton. The Awasis program teaches Cree language, cultural teachings and activities to its elementary students.*

### FIRST STEPS



There are many terms that are used to describe First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Canada. At times, the variety of terms can be confusing. The use of any of these terms has historical, legal and situational contexts that should be taken into consideration. Preferred terms, however, will continue to change as conventions evolve over time. The Alberta Teachers' Association uses the term Indigenous and is used in the Alberta context to refer to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Many Indigenous people prefer terms based on their specific community and traditional names for identification, for example, *Dene Tha* or *Saddle Lake Cree Nation*. Knowing the differences between terms and which is appropriate for each situation is important to prevent misunderstandings. If you are uncertain which term is appropriate, ask the local people and/or community for their preference.



# EXPLANATION OF TERMS



Many Indigenous people prefer terms based on their specific community for identification.

## Aboriginal Peoples of Canada

- The first peoples in Canada and their descendants, according to Section 35 of the *Canadian Constitution*, 1982.
- Includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- Each group is distinct and has its own history, culture, protocols, traditions and languages.
- Usually used as a term in government policy
- In November 2015, the Canadian government renamed Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development.

## Bill C-31 Indian

- A person who gained or regained Indian status because of the *Act to Amend the Indian Act*, 1985
- Prior to Bill C-31, status Indian women lost their status, band membership and all associated rights when they married non-status men.
- Bill C-3, introduced in Parliament in 2010, sought to address continued gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*, but inequalities and gender issues continue.

## Ceremonialist

- A highly respected member of a First Nations or Métis community
- Recognized and identified by members of the community as being knowledgeable about spirituality and spiritual practices  
(*Guiding Voices*  
[www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmigv/index.html](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmigv/index.html))

## Elder

- A highly respected member of a First Nations, Métis or Inuit community
- Recognized and identified by members of the community as carrying important wisdom, oral traditions and knowledge of their culture
- An elder shares his/her understandings through teachings, ceremonies, stories and/or songs.
- Individual elders hold different gifts or talents.
- The role of an elder and the appropriate protocols for approaching an elder vary from community to community.
- An elder does not have to be a senior citizen; the carrying of knowledge and the recognition by the community are the key factors in determining who is an elder.  
(*Guiding Voices*  
[www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmigv/index.html](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmigv/index.html))

## First Nations

- *First Nations* refers to status and non-status Indian peoples in Canada.
- Not a legal term; the Canadian constitution and legislation still use the term *Indian*
- Term used by the Assembly of First Nations ([www.afn.ca/en/about-afn/description-of-the-afn](http://www.afn.ca/en/about-afn/description-of-the-afn))
- Refers to the over 617 distinct Indigenous groups in Canada
- Each Indigenous group has its own distinct culture, language, traditions and protocols.
- First Nation is also used to replace *band* when referring to communities.

## FNMI

- An acronym for First Nations, Métis and Inuit used in many Alberta educational publications
- This acronym should not be used to refer to First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit peoples as it is considered offensive by many and often misunderstood.

## Indigenous Peoples

- Term used globally to refer to the original inhabitants of any region
- Includes the three groups of Indigenous people in Canada: First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples does not directly define the term, but is discussed in a report on Indigenous peoples and United Nations Human Rights System.

## Inuit

- “The people” in Inuktitut language
- Inuit is plural and the singular form is Inuk.
- The Indigenous people in Northern Canada who live in Nunavut, the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Northern Labrador. Specifically, Inuit originated in the central and eastern Arctic and Inuvialuit originated in the western Arctic.

## Knowledge Keeper

- A member of a First Nations, Métis or Inuit community
- Recognized and identified by elders of the community as being knowledgeable about cultural practices, products or world views (*Guiding Voices* [www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmigv/index.html](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmigv/index.html))

## Métis

- Métis are one of the three distinct Aboriginal peoples of Canada recognized in the 1982 Canadian constitution.
- Métis communities and their distinct culture were established with the growth of the fur trade prior to the North-West Territories becoming part of Canada. They played a crucial role in the development and success of the fur trade throughout the Canadian west.
- Many Canadians have mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, but that does not in itself make them Métis or eligible to be registered as Métis. Métis in Alberta are Aboriginal people who are related by kinship to, but culturally distinct from, other Aboriginal people, possessing their own Michif language, customs, traditions and relationships to land.

## Non-status Indian

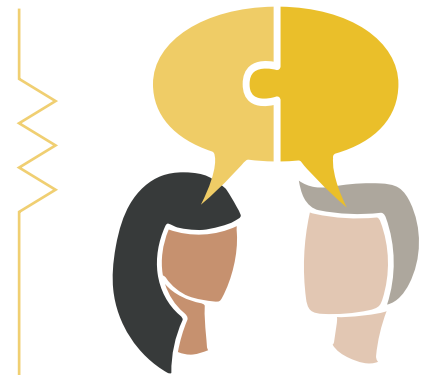
- A First Nations person who is not registered or who has lost their status under the *Indian Act*

## Status/Registered Indian

- A First Nations person who meets the requirements and is registered with the Canadian government under the *Indian Act*

## Treaty Indian

- A status Indian whose ancestors signed a treaty (legal document between nations) with the Crown



## NEXT STEPS



Educators always want to be respectful in their conversations and working relationships with people of a different culture. This includes using the culturally appropriate terminology when working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit or engaging in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education.

The terms defined in this fact sheet are general guidelines, and best practice is to confirm with the individual beforehand how they wish to be addressed. For example, one should not assume that an individual can be introduced as First Nation as they may prefer to be introduced using their home community name.

## Continuing Your Learning Journey

a) Why there are a variety of terms for Indigenous peoples in Canada?

---

---

---

---

b) How is terminology connected to identity?

---

---

---

---

c) As a teacher, why it is important to know the difference between an elder, a knowledge keeper and a ceremonialist?

---

---

---

---

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Alberta Education. 2005. *Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners*. Edmonton, AB: Aboriginal Services Branch and Learning and Teaching Resources. <https://education.alberta.ca/media/563982/our-words-our-ways.pdf>.

Guiding Voices, Alberta Education. *A Curriculum Development Tool for Inclusion of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Perspectives Throughout Curriculum*. <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmigv/index.html>.

WNCP Common Tool for Assessing and Validating Teaching and Learning Resources for Cultural Appropriateness and Historical Accuracy of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Content (2011). [http://wncp.ca/media/49329/wncptool\\_%20assessing\\_validating.pdf](http://wncp.ca/media/49329/wncptool_%20assessing_validating.pdf).

United Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf).

Education is our Buffalo, Alberta Teachers' Association, (2016) [http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SitecollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Humane-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20\(PD-80-7\).pdf](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SitecollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Humane-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20(PD-80-7).pdf).



*Stepping Stones* is a publication of the Alberta Teachers' Association **Walking Together Project** intended to support certificated teachers on their learning journey to meet the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Foundational Knowledge competency in the Teaching Quality Standard.

Walking Together would like to acknowledge the contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit community members within Alberta in developing these resources.

For additional resources and information on Walking Together visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).

[www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)  [walkingtogetherata](https://www.instagram.com/walkingtogetherata)  [@ATAindigenous](https://twitter.com/ATAindigenous)



# Walking Together

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

