

Foundations



Pulling Together

A Guide for Indigenization
of Post-Secondary Institutions

Professional Learning Series



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Artist Statement

Inspired by the annual gathering of ocean-going canoes through Tribal Journeys, ‘Pulling Together’ created by Kwakwaka’wakw artist, Lou-ann Neel, is intended to represent the connections each of us has to our respective Nations and to one another as we Pull Together. Working toward our common visions, we move forward in sync, so we can continue to build and manifest strong, healthy communities with foundations rooted in our ancient ways.

Thank you to all of the writers and contributors to the guides. We asked writers to share a phrase from their Indigenous languages on paddling or pulling together...

‘alhgoh ts’ut’o ~ Wicēhtowin ~
kən limt p cyʕap ~ si’sixwanuxw ~ ʕihšʕ ~
Alh ka net tsa doh ~ snuhwulh ~
Hilzaqz as qíǵuála qúsa mánáǵuala wíwúyalaǵsm ~
k’idéin át has jeewli.àat ~ Na’tsa’mah̓t ~
S’yat kii ga goot’deem ~ Yequx deni nanadin ~
Mamook isick

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Accessibility Statement

Accessibility features of the web version of this resource

The web version of the *Pulling Together: Foundations Guide*¹ has been designed with accessibility in mind by incorporating the following features:

- It has been optimized for people who use screen-reader technology.
 - all content can be navigated using a keyboard
 - links, headings, and tables are formatted to work with screen readers
 - images have alt tags
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone.
- The option to increase font size (see tab on top right of screen)

Other file formats available

In addition to the web version, this book is available in a number of file formats including PDF, EPUB (for eReaders), MOBI (for Kindles), and various editable files. Here is a link to where you can download this book in another file format.² Look for the “Download this book” drop-down menu to select the file type you want.

Those using a print copy of this resource can find the URLs for any websites mentioned in this resource in the footnotes.

Known accessibility issues and areas for improvement

While we strive to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. Any issues we identify will be listed below. There are currently no known issues.

Accessibility standards

The web version of this resource has been designed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0,³ level AA. In addition, it follows all guidelines in Accessibility Toolkit: Checklist for Accessibility.⁴ The development of this toolkit involved working with students with various print disabilities who provided their personal perspectives and helped test the content.

Let us know if you are having problems accessing this guide

We are always looking for ways to make our resources more accessible. If you have problems accessing this resource, please contact us to let us know so we can fix the issue.

Please include the following information:

- The location of the problem by providing a web address or page description
- A description of the problem
- The computer, software, browser, and any assistive technology you are using that can help us diagnose and solve your issue
 - e.g., Windows 10, Google Chrome (Version 65.0.3325.181), NVDA screen reader

You can contact us through the following web form: [Report an Error](#)

This statement was last updated on August 6, 2019.

Notes

1. Web version: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/>
2. Download this book in another file format: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/>
3. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>
4. Accessibility Toolkit: Checklist for Accessibility: <https://opentextbc.ca/accessibilitytoolkit/back-matter/appendix-checklist-for-accessibility-toolkit/>

Overview

Purpose of this guide

The *Foundations Guide* is part of an open professional learning series developed for staff across post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. Guides in the series include: Foundations;¹ Leaders and Administrators;² Curriculum Developers;³ Teachers and Instructors;⁴ Front-line Staff, Student Services, and Advisors;⁵ and Researchers.⁶ These guides are the result of the Indigenization Project, a collaboration between BCcampus and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. The project was supported by a steering committee of Indigenous education leaders from BC universities, colleges, and institutes, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, and Métis Nation BC.

These guides are intended to support the systemic change occurring across post-secondary institutions through Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation. A guiding principle from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada process states why this change is happening.

Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity. (2015, p. 3)

We all have a role to play. As noted by Universities Canada, “[h]igher education offers great potential for reconciliation and a renewed relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.” (2015) Similarly, Colleges and Institutions Canada notes that “Indigenous education will strengthen colleges’ and institutes’ contribution to improving the lives of learners and communities.” (2015) These guides provide a way for all faculty and staff to Indigenize their practice in post-secondary education.

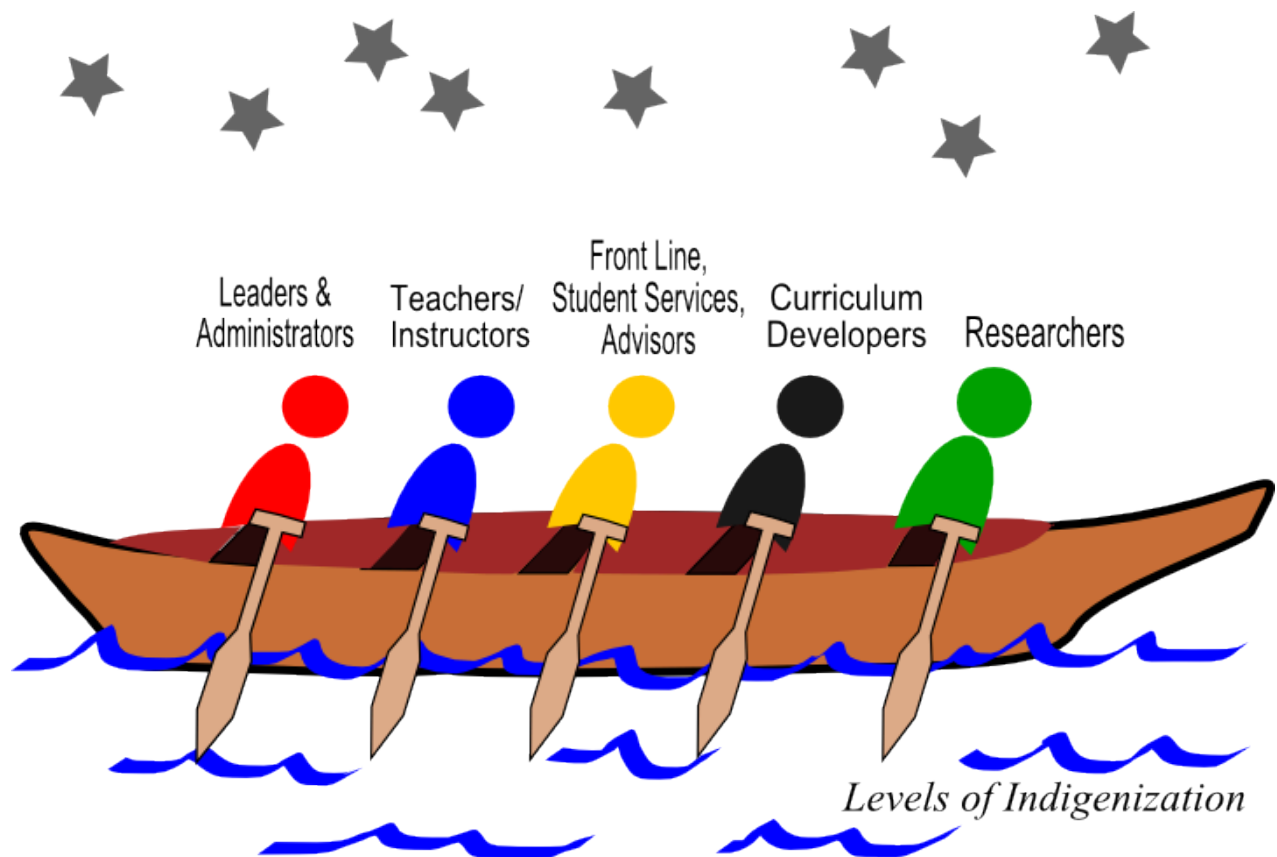


Fig 0.1: Pulling Together: A Canoe Journey

The Indigenization Project can be described as an evolving story of how diverse people can journey forward in a canoe (Fig 0.1). In Indigenous methodology, stories emphasize our relationships with our environment, our communities, and with each other. To stay on course, we are guided by the stars in the sky, with each star a project principle: deliver holistically, learn from one another, work together, share strengths, value collaboration, deepen the learning, engage respectfully, and learn to work in discomfort. As we look ahead, we do not forget our past.

The canoe holds Indigenous Peoples and the key people in post-secondary education whose roles support, lead, and build Indigenization. Our combined strengths give us balance and the ability to steer and paddle in unison as we sit side by side. The paddles are the open resources. As we learn to pull together, we understand that our shared knowledge makes us stronger and makes us one.

The perpetual motion and depth of water reflects the evolving process of Indigenization. Indigenization is relational and collaborative and involves various levels of transformation, from inclusion and integration to infusion of Indigenous perspectives and approaches in education. As we learn together, we ask new questions, so we continue our journey with curiosity and optimism, always looking for new stories to share.

We hope these guides support you in your learning journey. As open education resources they can be adapted to fit local context, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples who connect with and advise your institution. We expect that as more educators use and revise these guides, they will evolve over time.

How to use and adapt this guide

The *Foundations Guide* explores Indigenous-Canadian relationships from contact to the present. This guide looks at the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and the historical and contemporary realities since contact.

You can use the guide to:

- increase your awareness of Indigenous People, our histories, decolonization, and reconciliation
- enhance your knowledge of how Indigenous history and realities in Canada affect relationships and how this may influence how you work with Indigenous people and colleagues in post-secondary education

This guide can be used as part of a learning community or in a group learning experience, adapting and augmenting it to include Indigenization pathways at your institution for Indigenous students and communities.

The *Foundations Guide* is not a definitive resource, since First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives and approaches are diverse across the province. We invite you to augment it with your own stories and examples, and, where possible, include Indigenous voice and perspectives from your area in the materials.

Note: For a technical description of how to adapt this guide please see [Appendix D](#).

Media Attributions

- Fig 0.1: Pulling Together: A Canoe Journey © Dianne Biin is licensed under a [CC BY \(Attribution\)](#) license

Notes

1. Pulling Together: Foundations Guide: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/>
2. Pulling Together: A Guide for Leaders and Administrators: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationleadersadministrators/>
3. Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/>
4. Pulling Together: A Guide for Teachers and Instructors: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationinstructors/>
5. Pulling Together: A Guide for Front-Line Staff, Student Services, and Advisors: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/>
6. Pulling Together: A Guide for Researchers, Hiłk'ala: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationresearchers/>

Acknowledgements

The materials in this guide have been adapted from *First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers*, created for the City of Vancouver in 2014 by Kory Wilson and Jane Henderson. The City of Vancouver is grateful to Kory Wilson, Jane Henderson, BCIT, and The Drive Learning Consultants for designing and developing the materials as an online resource.

The BCcampus Indigenization Project steering committee is grateful for Kory's work in adapting the online materials as an open educational resource for public post-secondary institutions across the province. The committee would also like to thank Métis Nation British Columbia for contributing open content to the guide.

Introduction

Restoring the relationship

It is commonly claimed that Canada has two founding Nations, the French and the English. However, before contact, Indigenous Peoples were living and thriving here in complex societies. The “original people” still exist and live all over Canada, from their traditional territories to urban centres. Indigenous Peoples have made, and continue to make, enormous contributions to Canadian society – politically, economically, and culturally.

Sadly, too many Canadians are unaware of this, and this lack of awareness is a barrier to improving relationships between all Canadians, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

The relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people has not been an easy one, as you will learn throughout this guide, but it is vital that this relationship continue to improve. The strength of a good relationship is that everyone understands and knows the truth about past and contemporary realities. This is especially important in regard to Indigenous Peoples. By learning the truth about the past, confronting it, and acknowledging its consequences, we can move toward an inclusive future.

Learning Goals

- This guide will introduce you to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and to the historical relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.
- You will learn about the past and the contemporary realities of Indigenous Peoples. This is an often misunderstood history, but we believe that it is only through an understanding of the past that we can create a better future.
- Whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, we hope this guide will increase your understanding of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Turtle Island

Turtle Island is the name the Lenape, Iroquois, Anishinaabe, and other Woodland Nations gave to North America. The name comes from the story about Sky Woman, who fell to Earth through a hole in the sky. The earth at this time was covered with water. The animals saw her predicament and tried to help her. Muskrat swam to the bottom of the ocean to collect dirt to create land. Turtle offered to carry this dirt on his back, and the collected dirt grew into the land we call North America. The term Turtle Island is now used today for North America by many Indigenous people, Indigenous rights activists, and environmental activists.

Let's imagine a society, maybe Canada; we'll call it "northern Turtle Island."

Imagine when people came off the airplane they were met by Indigenous people, not a customs person. When we look at traditional ways of entering up here on the coast, there was a whole protocol of ceremony and approach. What is your intent in coming? Are you coming for war? Are you coming for peace? If the newly arrived say, "I'm coming here for my family. My family is struggling, we need to help make money for them," Indigenous people would welcome them. They'd help them get a job and help them get what they need. They would teach them about the real name of this continent, Turtle Island, and about the territory they've entered.

– Curtis Clearsky, Blackfoot and Anishnaabe First Nations, *Our Roots: Stories from Grandview Woodland*, Vancouver Dialogues, 2012

Section 1: Introduction to Indigenous Peoples



Fig 1.1: Nuu-chah-nulth canoe

Media Attributions

- [Fig 1.1: Ahousaht Beach](#) © [Sam Beebe](#) is licensed under a [CC BY \(Attribution\)](#) license

Introduction

Section 1 will introduce you to the Indigenous Peoples in Canada, their histories, and their cultures. It will also answer some of the questions that people often ask about Indigenous Peoples and debunk some of the common myths and misconceptions.

It should take around an hour to complete Section 1. Please complete the Locate Yourself activity first.

Topics

In Section 1 you will learn about:

- Aboriginal or Indigenous?
- Indigenous Peoples in Canada
- First Nations
- Métis
- Inuit
- Urban Indigenous peoples
- Demographics
- Acknowledging traditional territories

Activity 1: Locate Yourself (10 min)

Reflect on the area, city, or town where you live.

1. Whose traditional First Nations territory do you currently live, work and play?
2. How do you know?
3. If you don't know, spend some time researching this online.

Knowledge Check

Answer the following questions to assess your current knowledge of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Once you have completed a question, click on the arrow to see the next one. As you go through the remainder of Section 1, think about these questions.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=190#h5p-6>

Note: If you are not using the online version of the *Foundations Guide*, you can find the Knowledge Check questions and answers in Appendix A.

Aboriginal or Indigenous?

Section 35 (2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, defined “Aboriginal peoples in Canada” as including “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.”

These terms will be explained as we progress through the guide. Some of them have changed or are changing.

For example, **Indian** is now considered offensive and has been replaced by *First Nations*. And we are hearing the term *Indigenous* more and more in Canada. It is being used synonymously with **Aboriginal**, and in many cases it is the preferred term as the collective noun for **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit**. There are many reasons for this shift. One reason is that the prefix *ab* can mean “from” or “away from,” which has led to a concern that *Aboriginal* could be misinterpreted as “away from” or “not” original. *Indigenous* comes from the Latin word *indigena*, which means “sprung from the land; native.” And Indigenous Peoples recognize that, rather than a single group of people, there are many separate and unique Nations (Ward, 2017).

Wherever possible, though, you should use the specific names of the Nations and communities, especially if you are acknowledging territory and identity.

First Nations

In Canada, the accepted term for people who are Indigenous and who do not identify as Inuit or Métis is *First Nations*. In the past, these people were referred to as “Indians.” Today, *Indian* is considered an offensive colonial term and should not be used.

First Nations people have lived and thrived since time immemorial on this land now called Canada. They have many different languages, cultures, traditions, and spiritual beliefs. Historically, First Nations managed their lands and resources with their own governments, laws, policies, and practices. Their societies were very complex and included systems for trade and commerce, building relationships, managing resources, and spirituality.

Today, there are around 630 different First Nation communities across Canada – about half of which are in British Columbia and Ontario. According to the 2016 Census,¹ there are over 70 distinct Indigenous languages recognized across the country, and UNESCO’s world atlas of languages in danger recognizes over 80 distinct Indigenous languages in Canada, including those that no longer have speakers.²

Frequently asked questions about First Nations

How many First Nations people are there?

First Nations make up the largest group of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. In 2016, there were 977,230 First Nations people in Canada.

Where do First Nations people live?

First Nations people live in every province and territory. The largest First Nations populations are in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. However, while First Nations people living in these provinces accounted for less than 4 per cent of the total provincial populations in 2011, they represent almost one-third of the total population of the Northwest Territories and almost one-fifth of the total population of Yukon.

Do all First Nations people live on reserves?

No. Many First Nations people live off reserve. In 2011, only about half (49.3 per cent) of the 637,660 First Nations people in Canada who reported being Status Indians lived on a reserve. The numbers vary widely by province, with Quebec having the highest proportion of First Nations people living on reserve, at nearly three-quarters.

Is it okay to use the word *Indian* to describe First Nations people?

The term *Indian* refers to the legal identity of a First Nations person who is registered under the **Indian Act**. *Indian* should be used only when referring to a First Nations person with status under the Indian Act, and only within a legal context. Otherwise, the use of the term *Indian* in Canada is considered outdated and offensive.

You may notice that the terms *American Indian* and *Native Indian* are still in current and common usage in the United States. Some First Nations people in Canada will also refer to themselves as “Indians,” and the federal legislation is still called the Indian Act. But *Indian* is still not a term you should use.

What does *Status Indian* mean?

A person who is recognized by the federal government as being registered under the Indian Act is referred to as a “Status Indian.” Status Indians may be entitled to certain programs and services offered by federal agencies and provincial governments.

There have been many rules for deciding who is eligible for registration as an Indian under the Indian Act. Significant changes were made to the legislation in 1951, 1985 and again in 2011.

People who identify themselves as Indians but who are not entitled to registration on the Indian Register under the Indian Act are referred to as “**non-Status Indians**.” Some of them may be members of a First Nation even though the federal government does not recognize them as Status Indians.

Do First Nations people pay taxes?

It is a common misconception that First Nations people in Canada do not pay federal or provincial taxes.

Under certain circumstances, Status Indians can be exempted from paying tax. For example, income earned on a reserve can be tax exempt, and any goods or services purchased by a Status Indian on a reserve or delivered to them on a reserve are sales-tax exempt.

So there are limited situations where Status Indians may not have to pay income tax or sales tax. However, non-Status Indians, Métis people, and Inuit are not eligible for any tax exemptions.

Do First Nations people get free housing?

No.

There are two main categories of housing on reserve: market-based housing and non-profit social housing. Market-based housing refers to households paying the full costs associated with purchasing or renting their housing. This is not free housing!

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Agency delivers housing programs and services to all Canadians across the country under the National Housing Act.

Do First Nations students get free post-secondary education?

Some students will and some students will not get funding for post-secondary education. It depends on the First Nation to which the student belongs and whether the First Nation has funding for the student. The demand for funding is often greater than the funds available, and some communities are in states of crisis in which they must focus their resources on other areas.

First Nations culture

Culture is an expression of a community's worldview and unique relationship with the land. Indigenous cultures across Canada are diverse, but there are commonalities among them. Traditionally their societies have been communal, every member had roles and responsibilities, there was equality between men and women, nature was valued, and life was cyclical.

You will learn more below about other significant characteristics of First Nation cultures.

Education

Traditional Indigenous education is different from European-style education. Children learn with their families and immediate community. Learning is ongoing and does not take place at specific times. Children learn how to live, survive, participate in, and contribute to their community. They are encouraged to take part in everyday activities alongside adults to watch and listen, and then eventually practise what they have learned.

Education is a lifelong process, continuing as people grow into different roles – child, youth, adult, and Elder.

Community

Indigenous cultures are traditionally inclusive. Lynda Gray (2011), from the Tsimshian First Nation, writes: "Everyone had a place in the community despite their gender, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, or age. Women, Elders, Two-spirit, children, and youth were an integral part of a healthy and vibrant community" (p. 32).

Elders

In Indigenous cultures, Elders are cherished and respected. An Elder is not simply an older or elderly person, but is usually someone who is very knowledgeable about the history, values, and teachings of his or her culture. He or she lives according to these values and teachings. Each Indigenous community determines who are respected Elders.

For their knowledge, wisdom, and behaviour, Elders are valuable role models and teachers for all members of the community. Elders play an important role in maintaining the tradition of passing along oral histories.

Oral traditions

First Nations pass along values and family and community histories through oral storytelling. Oral histories and stories have been passed down from generation to generation and are essential to maintaining Indigenous identity and culture. People repeat stories to keep information alive over generations. Particular people within each First Nation have memorized oral histories with great care. Indigenous cultures also tell stories and histories through symbolic objects. Carved totem poles and house posts are a good example of this kind of visual language, with a long history on the West Coast.

Ownership

Each Indigenous culture, community, and even family has its own historical and traditional stories, songs, or dances. Different cultures have different rules about ownership. Some songs, names, symbols, and dances belong only to some people or families and cannot be used, retold, danced, or sung without permission. Sometimes they are given to someone in a ceremony. Other songs and dances are openly shared.

The Potlatch

The Potlatch is the cultural, political, economic, and educational heart of First Nations along the Northwest Coast. A Potlatch may be held to celebrate births, marriages, or deaths; settle disputes; raise totem poles; or pass on names, songs, dances, or other responsibilities. Potlatches are large events that can last several days. They often include two important aspects: the host giving away gifts, and the recording, in oral history, of the events and arrangements included in the ceremony.

The Canadian government used the Indian Act to ban the Potlatch from 1884 to 1951. The government took away cultural items used in the Potlatch, such as drums, blankets, and masks. In spite of the ban, many communities continued to hold Potlatches in secret. The Potlatch continues today.

The cedar tree



Fig 1.2: A Culturally Modified Tree in Goat Rocks Wilderness, a part of Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Washington, USA.

The cedar tree is a well-known symbol among First Nation cultures along the northwest coast and is sometimes referred to as the “tree of life.” There are two kinds of indigenous cedars on the coast: red cedar and yellow cedar. The roots, boughs, bark, and trunk of the red and yellow cedar are sustainably harvested and used for cultural and practical purposes.

Some practices are shared by Indigenous cultures along the northwest coast, but each culture has its own specific traditions, uses, ceremony, and etiquette for collecting and using cedar. The people who collect cedar are careful to make sure that they do not take too much and that the tree as a species will survive. Traditionally, before a tree is cut down, the woodcutters say a prayer to thank the tree’s spirit for providing a great benefit to the people who are about to use it.

Media Attributions

- Fig 1.2: “Culturally Modified Tree” © US Forest Service is licensed under a Public Domain license

Notes

1. Census in brief. The Aboriginal languages of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016022/98-200-x2016022-eng.cfm>
2. UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger: <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php>

Métis

In the 17th and 18th centuries, many French and Scottish men migrated to Canada to work in the fur trade with the Hudson’s Bay Company or the North West Company, or as independent traders. Some had children with First Nations women and formed new communities. The French mixed families and their descendants were most often referred to as “Métis” (from the French word for “to mix”). The Scottish mixed families and their descendants were referred to as “half-breeds.” Today the term *half-breed* is considered offensive and is no longer used.

Frequently asked questions about the Métis

Who are the Métis?

The Métis are one of the “aboriginal peoples of Canada” identified in Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982. The Métis are people who are Indigenous and do not identify as First Nations or Inuit. The Métis National Council defines “Métis” as 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.”

Chris Anderson, professor of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, writes:

I’m Métis because I belong (and claim allegiance) to a set of Métis memories, territories, and leaders who challenged and continue to challenge colonial authorities’ unitary claims to land and society. What’s your excuse for recognizing me – for recognizing us – in any terms other than those of the Métis nationhood produced in these struggles?

(2011)

What is the “Métis Nation”?

The Métis Nation comprises contemporary Métis Citizens who descend from the historic Métis Homeland. The Métis National Council has represented the Métis Nation on both the national and international stages since 1983. Métis Nation British Columbia, Métis Nation Alberta, Métis Nation Saskatchewan, Manitoba Métis Federation, and Métis Nation of Ontario are regional governing members of the national council.

Can anyone be a Métis Citizen?

No.

Self-identification is one of four criteria that each Métis Citizen must meet to register with the Nation.

This concept of Métis identity is complicated by those who self-identify as Métis because of their longing to belong to one of the Constitutional Aboriginal groups in Section 35 (1) but cannot claim Indian Status or assert their Inuit ancestry. Many of these individuals believe their mixed ancestry justifies their claim to be Métis. As we have seen in the definition of who is Métis, there are individuals who are not in turn accepted by the Métis Nation because they have no connection to the historic Métis Homeland and no ancestral ties are not Métis.

What does “Métis Citizen” mean?

The Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Powley* (2003) further defined the s. 35 term of Métis. The Powley Story¹ explains the importance of this case for Métis citizenry.

The Supreme Court further clarified the definition of Métis, stating:

“Métis” does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage; rather, it refers to distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears. Métis communities evolved and flourished prior to the entrenchment of European control, when the influence of European settlers and political institutions became pre-eminent.

Following the *Powley* decision, Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) implemented the Métis Identification Registry² in 2005.

How many Métis are there?

In 2016, 587,545 people identified as Métis, representing 32.3% of the total Indigenous population and 1.4% of the total Canadian population.

Do Métis people pay taxes?

Métis Citizens are not exempt from paying Provincial Sales Tax (PST) or Goods and Services Tax (GST). Métis people in Canada contribute over a billion dollars in taxes each year.

Do Métis people get free post-secondary education?

Métis students are not eligible for funding through the federal government’s Post-Secondary Student Support program; only status First Nations and Inuit students are eligible for funding through that program. Métis students in BC can apply to MNBC for post-secondary funding through the MNBC Indigenous Skills and Employment Training program, which is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada. Other options for Métis students include student aid, scholarships and bursaries.

Métis culture

Métis culture is very different from First Nations and Inuit cultures. The red Voyageur sash is recognized as a part of the distinct Métis culture. It was part of the clothing worn by Métis people every day and had many uses such as a holder, washcloth, bridle or saddle blanket. The sash is worn by Métis people today in celebration of their culture and identity.

The Métis flag³ has a blue background with a white infinity symbol and depicts the joining of two cultures and the existence of a people forever.

Métis traditional clothing styles are a mixture of European and First Nation styles. The main decorating method was the flower beadwork or embroidery that the Métis are famous for. The traditional dance of the Métis includes the waltz Quadrille, the square dance, Drops of Brandy, the Duck Dance, la Double Gigue, and the Red River Jig, which is the most widely known of the dances. The main musical instrument of the Métis is the fiddle, which the Métis traditionally made from maple wood and birch bark. Unlike other traditional styles of music, the Métis style of fiddle music is not contained in a bar structure, and this creates a bounce to the tune that is unique to the Métis.

The Métis were also known by many other names, including the “buffalo hunters.” During the late 1700s and early 1800s, the Métis were established as the foremost processors and suppliers of pemmican to the new world. The Métis Nation’s gross national product from this source was larger than the total revenues of other economies during that time.

Métis language

One of the factors that makes the Métis culture distinct is the creation of a language that is syncretic, meaning it is not classifiable as belonging to just one language family. Much like the double ancestry of the Métis, the **Michif** language has grammatical and lexical features of both Indigenous (Cree, Dene, and Ojibwa) and French (Indo-European language). Verbs, sounds, and nouns from the Saulteaux language have also been absorbed. This creates a language that is very unique among languages around the globe, as no other languages show mixed nouns from one language and verbs from another in the manner that Michif does.

Métis spirituality

A common misconception is that the Métis practised only the religion of their fathers (Catholic or Protestant). The reality is a spiritual mixture is as complex as Métis people. Métis children learned from both their father’s and mother’s religious background and traditional teachings. Métis learned to live with both worlds, with First Nations’ and Settler spiritual beliefs.

Kinship connections

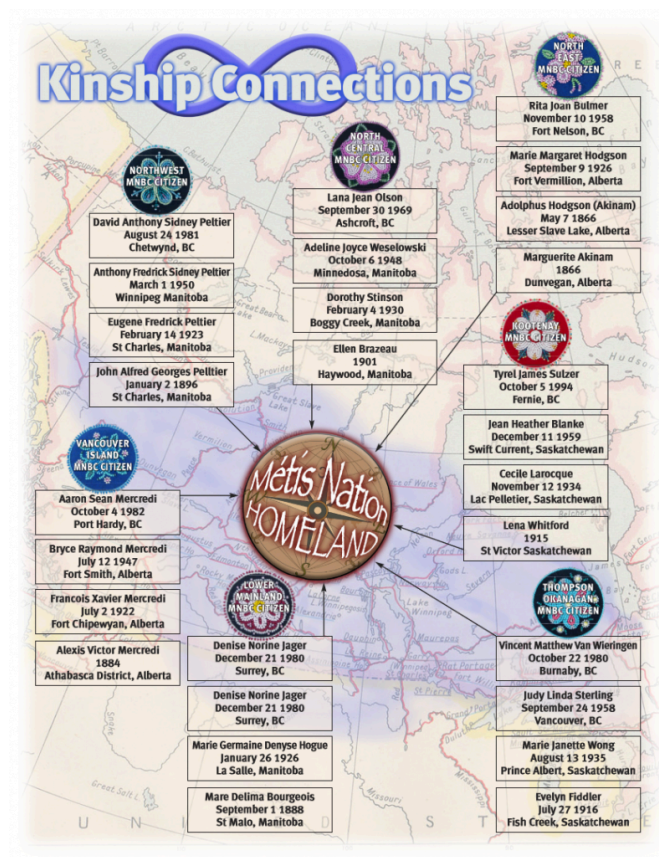


Fig 1.3: Kinship Connections. Métis Nation British Columbia, 2017.

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) is a self-governing Nation. The governance structure includes seven geographic regions and 37 Métis chartered communities.

The Kinship Connections diagram represents seven MNBC Citizens, one from each region. Beginning in the North West (top left corner) with David Anthony Sidney Peltier, the diagram shows how each of the Métis Citizens is directly connected to the historic Métis Homeland through kinship connections.

All Métis Citizens in British Columbia have this same connection. They have an understanding of who they are through the well-documented experience of their ancestors that connect them to the historic Métis Homeland and the founders of the first Métis Nation who had settled in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Ontario.

Media Attributions

- Fig 1.3: Kinship Connections. Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), 2017 © MNBC. It is not subject to the Creative Commons license and may not be reproduced without the prior and express written consent of MNBC.

Notes

- Métis Nation Ontario's The Powley Story: <https://www.metisnation.org/registry/the-powley-case/>
- MNBC Citizens & Culture: <https://www.mnbc.ca/citizens-community>
- Métis flag on Wikipedia: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metis_Blue.svg

Inuit

Inuit are Indigenous Peoples living in the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and Russia.¹ Inuit have lived and thrived in the Arctic for thousands of years. Traditionally they lived off the resources of the land, hunting whales, seals, caribou, fish, and birds, and many Inuit continue to harvest these resources today. Inuit existed prior to contact and Inuit is the accepted term for people who are Indigenous and do not identify as First Nations or Métis.

The Inuit way of life and culture changed when Inuit made contact with European missionaries, whalers, and explorers and later began participating in the fur trade. It changed again between about 1950 and 1970, when the Government of Canada moved many Inuit communities away from their traditional “hunting and gathering” or mobile way of life on the land and into permanent, centralized settlements.

Historically Inuit were referred to as “**Eskimos**” or “**Esquimaux**,” but this term is neither accurate nor respectful and should not be used. The word **Inuit** (singular Inuk) means “the people” in the **Inuktitut** language.

Frequently asked questions about Inuit

Where do Inuit live?



Fig 1.4: Inuit Regions in Canada

Many Inuit live in 53 communities across the northern regions of Canada, mostly along the Arctic coast, in Inuit Nunangat, which means “the place where Inuit live.” Inuit Nunangat consists of four regions: the Northwest Territories and Yukon (Inuvialuit), Nunavut, Northern Quebec (Nunavik), and the northeastern coast of Newfoundland and Labrador (Nunatsiavut).

How many Inuit are there?

Approximately 65,000 Inuit live in Canada, according to the 2016 Census. The majority live in Nunavut, with smaller numbers in the other three regions of Inuit

Nunangat, as well as a small number living in urban centres in southern Canada.

Are Inuit First Nations?

Canada’s Constitution (s. 35) recognizes three groups of Indigenous peoples – First Nations, Métis, and

Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Inuit are distinct from First Nation and Métis groups.

What language do Inuit speak?

The Inuit language is made up of a variety of dialects that vary from region to region. The Government of Nunavut selected the term Inuktut to represent all Inuit dialects spoken in Nunavut, including Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. However, even within Nunavut there are variations in pronunciation and vocabulary.

Do Inuit live on reserves?

Inuit do not live on reserves, but in contemporary communities.

Do Inuit live in igloos?

Inuit do not live in igloos, unless they are sleeping overnight on the land.

Do Inuit have land claims?

Yes, land claim agreements have been signed in all four Inuit regions:

- Nunavik (as part of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement) in 1975
- Inuvialuit in 1984
- Nunavut in 1993
- Nunatsiavut in 2005

Under their respective land claim agreements, Inuit were granted title to certain blocks of land. These four land claim regions cover about 40 per cent of Canada's land mass.

Do Inuit pay taxes?

Yes, Inuit are tax-paying citizens of Canada.

Who are Innu?

Innu are a First Nation in eastern Canada. They are not Inuit.

Inuit culture

Inuit have lived on Nunangat (the land, water, and ice) since time immemorial and continue to do so

today. Cultural and oral traditions are based on sharing, co-operation, and respect for the land, the animals, fish, and peoples.

Government and communities

Once the comprehensive land agreements were signed, governing organizations were formed to manage land claim implementation: Nunatsiavut Government, Makivik Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the Inuvialut Regional Corporation. The national organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (which means “Inuit are united in Canada”), holds permanent seats for Inuit Circumpolar Council, Pauktuutit Inuit women of Canada, and the national Inuit youth council.

Most of the 53 Inuit communities across these regions operate as municipalities. The capital of Inuvialut is Inuvik; the capital of Nunavut is Iqaluit; the capital of Nunavik is Kuujjuaq; and the capital of Nunatsiavut is Nain. This [interactive Google map](#)² provides population density and images for each community.

Elders

Regarded and respected as the knowledge keepers and advisors, Inuit Elders have seen their roles change since contact.

As advisors, Elders ensured that everybody’s voice was heard in decision making to ensure survival. Today, since contact and relocation, Elders now see themselves as the holders and teachers of their language and values, as they only form about 2 per cent of the Inuit population. They also have a voice in research, as they have seen the rapid climatic changes to the land and animals.

Knowledge of the land, importance and continuance of family structures, and rites of passage is just one of the contributions Elders make to maintaining Inuit communities today, using an oral tradition.

Knowledge of the land – sila

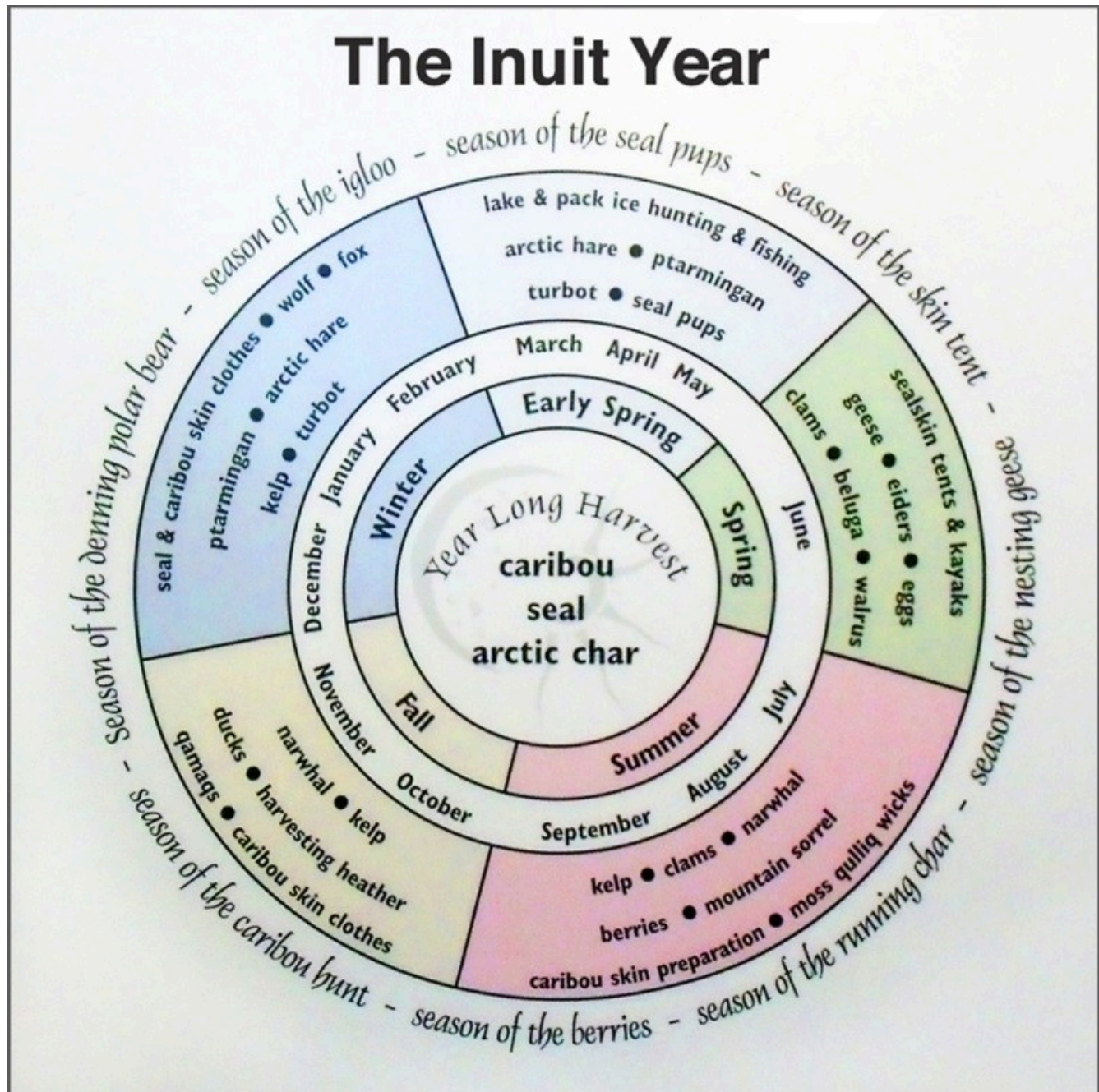


Fig 1.5: Inuit Grocery List

This diagram highlights Inuit knowledge (sila) of the movement of resources and changes to the land and sea. This knowledge is passed on through oral traditions and time spent on the land. With the resettlement of Inuit to different areas of the Arctic in the 1950s, this knowledge was disrupted. Research on and revitalization of knowledge and traditions are ongoing. For instance, the Inuit Quajisarvingat Knowledge Centre took 15 years to relearn the trail systems across Nunangat, from Lake Winnipeg to the tip of Ellesmere Island. The resulting [Pan Inuit Trails](#)³ is an interactive atlas that is a knowledge repository and an assertion of Inuit sovereignty.

Language

There are numerous dialects of Inuktitut, with varying levels of speaker fluency. Dialects are nuances in a language that reflect a specific location and community. Today, each regional governance organization supports language learning in schools and communities to continue the use of the language in everyday life.

There are two styles of Inuktitut writing: syllabics and Roman orthography. Syllabics use symbols to represent sounds rather than letters. Roman orthography uses the English alphabet to sound out the words.

Media Attributions

- Fig 1.4: Inuit Regions in Canada © Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license
- Fig 1.5: Inuit Grocery List © Mike Beauregard is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

Notes

1. Please note that this section has not been vetted by Inuit writers and the information is based on current Nunavut government information.
2. Interactive Google map: <https://goo.gl/8Tvs2A>
3. Pan Inuit Trail Atlas Module: <http://www.paninuittrails.org/index.html?module=module.about>

Urban Indigenous Peoples

In 2016, almost 900,000 Indigenous people lived in urban areas (towns and cities with a population of 30,000 or more), accounting for more than half of Indigenous people in Canada. They are often referred to as “Urban Indigenous peoples.” The largest Urban Indigenous populations are in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto.

Many Indigenous people move to cities seeking employment or educational opportunities. Some have lived in cities for generations, while for others the transition from rural areas or reserves to urban settings is still very new. Many Canadian cities occupy the traditional territories and reserves of First Nations. For example, Vancouver lies on the traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

Most Urban Indigenous peoples consider the city they live in to be their “home.” However, for many it is also important to keep a close connection to the Indigenous community of their family’s origin. This could be the place where they were born or where their parents or grandparents lived. Connection to these communities helps many people retain their traditional and contemporary Indigenous culture.

Urban Indigenous peoples in Vancouver

The Urban Indigenous peoples in Vancouver are an important and visible part of the city’s life. However, the majority believe they are viewed in negative ways. Despite this, according to the Urban Indigenous Peoples Study (2010), among Indigenous people in Vancouver:

- 83 per cent are “very proud” of their Indigenous identity
- 52 per cent are “very proud” of being Canadian
- 44 per cent are not concerned about losing their cultural identity; they feel it is strong enough to continue and that they can protect it
- 70 per cent think Indigenous culture has become stronger in the last five years
- 18 per cent hope that young people from the next generation will stay connected to their cultural community, and 17 per cent hope their young people will experience life without racism and discrimination.

Demographics

In 2016, there were more than 1.67 million Indigenous people in Canada, representing 4.9 per cent of the total population, up from 3.8 per cent in 2006.

Canadian and Indigenous Peoples population, 2016 Census

Table 1.1 Canadian and Indigenous Peoples Population¹

Group	Population*	Percentage of total Indigenous population	Percentage of total* Canadian population	Percentage increase since 2006
Total Canadians	35,151,728	—		
Total Indigenous Peoples	1,673,785	—	4.9%	42.5%
First Nations	977,230	58.4%	2.8%	39.3%
Métis	587,545	35.1%	1.7%	51.2%
Inuit	65,025	3.9%	0.2%	29.1%

In 2016, almost 900,000 Indigenous people lived in urban areas with a population of 30,000 or more, accounting for more than half (51.8 per cent) of Indigenous people in Canada.

Where Indigenous Peoples in Canada live

The largest First Nations population is in Ontario (236,680), followed by British Columbia (172,520) and Alberta (136,585).

According to the 2011 Census, First Nations people living in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta accounted for less than 4 per cent of the total provincial populations. However, First Nations people accounted for 32.7 per cent of the total population of the Northwest Territories, 19.8 per cent of the total population of Yukon, and about 10 per cent of the population of Manitoba and that of Saskatchewan. In Nunavut, First Nations people account for 0.34 per cent of the population.

In Quebec, nearly three-quarters (72.0 per cent) of First Nations people with registered Indian status lived on reserve, the highest proportion among the provinces. This was followed by New Brunswick (68.8 per cent) and Nova Scotia (68.0 per cent). In Ontario, 37.0 per cent of First Nations people with

registered Indian status lived on a reserve, the second lowest proportion among the provinces after Newfoundland and Labrador (35.1 per cent).

Métis people live in every province and territory in the country, but in 2016 the majority lived in Ontario (120,585) and the western provinces (351,020). But the Métis population is growing fastest in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

The majority of Inuit live in Nunavut (30,135), followed by Nunavik (11,800), Inuvialuit (3,110), and Nunatsiavut (2,285). Another 17,690 Inuit live outside of Inuit Nunangat, many in urban centres in southern Canada, including Ottawa, Edmonton, and Montreal. Ottawa-Gatineau had the largest Inuit population.

Where Urban Indigenous peoples live

In 2016, Winnipeg had the largest Urban Indigenous population, followed by Edmonton and Vancouver. But Indigenous people account for a much larger proportion (around 35 per cent in the 2006 Census) of the population of several smaller cities in the western provinces, including Prince Rupert, Prince Albert, and Thompson.

Table 1.2 Urban Indigenous Populations, 2016 Census

City	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Total
Winnipeg	38,700	52,130	315	91,145
Edmonton	33,880	39,435	1,115	74,430
Vancouver	35,770	23,425	405	59,600
Toronto	27,805	15,245	690	43,740
Calgary	17,955	22,220	440	40,615
Ottawa-Gatineau	17,790	17,155	1,280	36,225
Montreal	16,130	15,455	975	32,560

Notes

1. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>

Acknowledging Traditional Territories

Ninety-five percent of British Columbia, including Vancouver, is on unceded traditional First Nations territory. **Unceded** means that First Nations people never ceded or legally signed away their lands to the Crown or to Canada. A **traditional territory** is the geographic area identified by a First Nation as the land they and/or their ancestors traditionally occupied and used.

Before beginning an event, meeting, or conference, it is proper protocol to acknowledge the host nation, its people and its land. You may hear someone begin an event by saying something like this:

“Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting today on the traditional territories of the _____ people (or Nation). We thank them for allowing us to meet and learn together on their territory.”

Here is a map of some of the First Nation traditional territories in British Columbia.

It's important to note that maps are colonial and political objects, and they can exercise power by what they include and exclude. This map in particular is simplified and incomplete. Many nations are not included, and the map itself implies clear borders between nations, which was often not the case. For example, the Sinixt Nation (whose traditional territories extend across the American border through the B.C. interior and up to north of Revelstoke) is excluded from this map. This is likely because in 1956, the Canadian government declared the Sinixt Nation extinct in Canada, a ruling that members of the Sinixt Nation have been successfully opposing through the court systems (see [Indigenous Peoples living in U.S. can claim Aboriginal rights in Canada: Supreme Court](#)¹ and [Sinixt Indigenous nation not 'extinct' in Canada, Supreme Court rules](#)²). Here are some maps compiled by the Sinixt Nation to counter that erasure: [Maps – Sinixt Nation](#).³

Wherever you are located, you will need to research how to properly acknowledge the lands you are on. A good place to start is Native-Land.ca or the websites of local nations.

Media Attributions

- Fig 1.6: Map showing First Nations territories in B.C. © the British Columbia Ministry of Education. It is not subject to the Creative Commons license and may not be reproduced without the prior and express written consent of the British Columbia Ministry of Education.

Notes

1. <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/supreme-court-rules-on-desautel-sinixt-indigenous-peoples-in-u-s-can-claim-aboriginal-rights-in-canada/>
2. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/supreme-court-of-canada-desautel-sinixt-ruling-1.5998062>
3. <https://sinixtnation.org/content/maps>

Conclusion

You have reached the end of Section 1 of the *Foundations Guide*. You should now have an understanding of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, their histories and their cultures. You should have also debunked some of the common myths and misconceptions about Indigenous peoples.

Knowledge Check

Now that you have completed Section 1, answer the Knowledge Check questions again.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=222#h5p-6>

Note: If you are not using the online version of the *Foundations Guide*, you can find the Knowledge Check questions and answers in Appendix A.

Section 2: Colonization



Fig 2.1: Two Gitksan First Nation girls in a dugout cedar canoe by the Skeena River at Kitwanga (Gitwangak/Gitwangax), British Columbia

Media Attributions

- Fig 2.1: Two Gitksan First Nation girls in a dugout cedar canoe by the Skeena River at Kitwanga (Gitwangak/Gitwangax), British Columbia © WJ Topley/Library Archives of Canada is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license

Introduction

Section 2 will examine the role of colonization and how it continues to affect Indigenous Peoples in Canada and define the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people today.

Topics

In Section 2, you will learn about:

- Colonization
- Treaties
- Laws and Acts of Parliament
- The Reserve System
- Residential Schools
- Truth and Reconciliation

It should take you up to three hours to complete Section 2, including watching the recommended videos. Please complete the Locate Yourself activity and the Knowledge Check first.

Activity 1: Locate Yourself (10 min)

Reflect on the following questions.

1. Have you ever experienced being stereotyped or discriminated against?
2. If yes, what were the short-term consequences? What were the long-term consequences?

Knowledge Check

Answer the questions below as a way to assess your understanding of decolonization and reconciliation.

Note: If you not using the online version of the *Foundations Guide*, you can find the Knowledge Check questions and answers in [Appendix A](#).



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=5#h5p-2>

Colonization

Before the arrival of European explorers and traders, North America was occupied by Indigenous Peoples living and thriving with their own distinct cultures, languages, and ways of knowing. Today, while many Indigenous people are very successful in business, law, medicine, arts, and sports, Indigenous Peoples as a group are at the negative end of every socio-economic indicator. How did this happen?

The short answer is *colonization*.

What is colonization?

In Canada, colonization occurred when a new group of people migrated to North America, took over and began to control Indigenous Peoples. Colonizers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, make policies that do not favour the Indigenous Peoples. They seize land and control the access to resources and trade. As a result, the Indigenous people become dependent on colonizers.

Today many Indigenous people still struggle, but it is a testament to the strength of their ancestors that Indigenous People are still here and are fighting to right the wrongs of the past.

Go forth, nor bend to greed of white men's hands,
By right, by birth we Indians own these lands.

– Emily Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake, 1861–1913; Mohawk/English poet and performer), from “A Cry from an Indian Wife”.

Before the arrival of European explorers and traders, Indigenous Peoples were organized into complex, self-governing nations throughout what is now called North America. In its early days, the relationship between European traders and Indigenous Peoples was mutually beneficial. Indigenous Peoples were able to help traders adjust to the new land and could share their knowledge and expertise. In return, the traders offered useful materials and goods, such as horses, guns, metal knives, and kettles to the Indigenous Peoples. However, as time went by and more European settlers arrived, the relationship between the two peoples became much more challenging.

The myth of terra nullius

European map-makers drew unexplored landscapes as blank spaces. Instead of interpreting these blank spaces as areas yet to be mapped, they saw them as empty land waiting to be settled. When settlers arrived in North America, they regarded it as terra nullius, or “nobody’s land.” They simply ignored the fact that Indigenous Peoples had been living on these lands for thousands of years, with their own

cultures and civilizations. For the settlers, the land was theirs to colonize. As time went on, more and more settlers took over the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples.

Changing names and rewriting history

The settlers began to give their own names and descriptions to the land they had “discovered.” For example, Vancouver and Vancouver Island are named after Captain George Vancouver, who was born in England in 1757, and not after a hereditary Chief of the territory, whose family had lived in the area since the beginning of time. The land, landmarks, bodies of water and mountain ranges already had names, given to them by Indigenous Peoples. Settlers did not learn these names and made their own names for landmarks, mountains, bodies of water and regions instead. This was one of the ways in history was rewritten to excluded Indigenous Peoples contributions and presence.

Competing priorities and worldviews

Initially, the relationship was mutually beneficial for settlers and Indigenous Peoples, but this relationship did not last. Each group had their competing priorities based on fundamentally different values such as:

- the role and place of women
- ownership and use of land
- who should govern and run the society
- education and child-rearing

Colonizers used their numbers, laws, policies, and powers to gain control of Indigenous Peoples, thus leading Indigenous Peoples to be dependent on colonizers.

The colonizers' worldview

The British and French were fighting for control of North America, which they viewed as a rich source of raw materials. In their worldview, the natural environment was a resource that could be exploited for individual gain. Individuals and companies could become very wealthy by controlling the resources of this “New World.” The colonizer worldview valued competition, individualism and male-superiority.

The Indigenous worldview

In contrast, Indigenous Peoples value the group or the collective more than the individual. Each person has their role, and each contributed to the success of the group. Extended families were large and included aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on.

Indigenous Peoples viewed women as being equal to men. Women were supported, honoured, and respected for their role as the givers of life.

In the Indigenous worldview, everything has a spirit and deserves to be respected. The natural world was not simply a resource to control or conquer.

Justifying colonization

The colonizers thought they were superior to all those of non-European descent, and some did not consider Indigenous Peoples to be “people” at all. They did not consider Indigenous laws, governments, medicines, cultures, beliefs, or relationships to be legitimate. They believed that they had the right and moral obligation to make decisions affecting everybody, without consultation with Indigenous Peoples. These beliefs and prejudices were used to justify the acts and laws that came into being as part of the process of colonization.

The impact of disease

When the Europeans arrived, they brought smallpox and other diseases that were previously unknown in North America. The Indigenous population had no immunity because, unlike the Europeans, they did not have centuries of exposure to these diseases. It has been estimated that as many as 90%–95% of the Indigenous population died from these introduced diseases.



Fig 2.2: A medicine man caring for an ill person.

A punishment from God?

These deadly epidemics happened before either the settlers or Indigenous Peoples properly understood the causes of disease. Christian missionaries told Indigenous people that one of the reasons for their sickness was the fact that they did not believe in the Christian God and did not attend church. Indigenous people saw that the settlers were not as badly affected by disease, and many were persuaded to abandon their traditional beliefs and convert to Christianity.

Media Attributions

- Fig 2.2: A medicine man caring for an ill person © National Library of Medicine is licensed under a [CC0 \(Creative Commons Zero\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

The Tools of Colonization

In the rest of Section 2, we will look at the ways in which the Europeans colonized the country. The process of colonization and gaining control over the land, now called Canada, was a multifaceted action. We will consider four tools of colonization:

- Treaties
- Laws and acts of Parliament
- The reserve system
- Residential schools

One of the tools was the creation and signing of treaties, which the settlers viewed as a process that transferred title and control of First Nations' land to non-Indigenous people and governments. These treaties were obtained through unequal negotiations and the purpose, meaning, and long term significance of the signed treaties were understood differently by each signatory body. The British government, and then the Canadian government (after 1867), viewed the treaties as the completion of the transfer and control of land title to the "Crown." First Nations viewed themselves as equal partners (a Nation) when they signed the treaties, and as such they would still have access to their way of life and their traditional territories for their people, much like two governments working in parallel.

Treaties: Who gains?

In theory, both parties to a treaty should gain something by signing, and each party also has obligations to the other. However, this was not the case for First Nations.

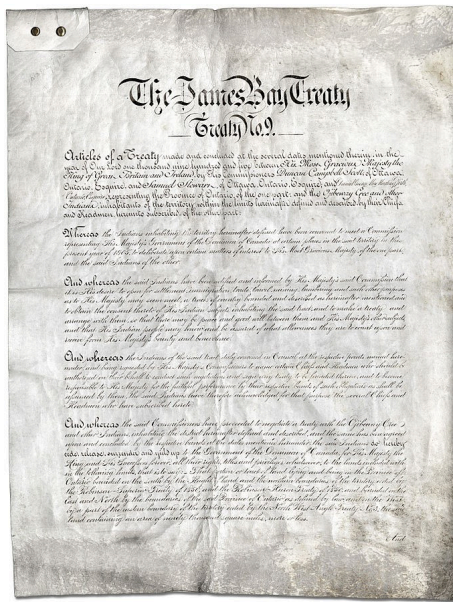


Fig 2.3: James Bay Treaty (Treaty 9)

First Nations Peoples entered into these treaties in good faith. They saw them as an alternative to conflict and a way to forge a better relationship. Besides, no one can really “own the land”, so they assumed the land would still be available for their use.

The actual negotiations of the treaties were fraught with trickery, as many First Nations were not fully informed of the real content and meaning of the treaties. They were written in English, which they often could not read, and oral translations were not always accurate. First Nation leaders often had no real way of verifying what they were signing and assumed that the oral agreement surrounding the paper treaty was just as important. An oral agreement is honoured and is often witnessed by others present. These witnesses key task is to then remember and share what they heard in the agreement between parties.

Media Attributions

- Fig 2.3: James Bay Treaty (Treaty 9) is licensed under a [Public Domain](#) license

Types of Treaties

There were many types of treaties, each signed with different goals in mind. Treaty types include:

- Historic treaties
- Peace and Friendship Treaties (1725–1779)
- Douglas Treaties (1850–1854)
- Numbered Treaties (1871–1921)
- Modern treaties

Prior to 1960, the treaties signed in Canada covered all of the country except for most of Yukon, British Columbia, and Nunavut.

Historic treaties

Historic treaties are those treaties signed by First Nations and the British and Canadian governments between 1701 and 1923. The British and Canadian governments wanted to sign treaties with First Nations in order to reduce the possibility of conflict and to support European immigration and land settlement, agriculture, natural resource use, trade, and other economic developments.

Peace and Friendship Treaties (1725–1779)

The **Peace and Friendship Treaties**, signed in the Maritimes in pre-Confederation Canada, were intended to end hostilities and encourage co-operation between the British and Mi'kmaq and Maliseet First Nations. Unlike later treaties signed in other parts of Canada, the Peace and Friendship Treaties did not involve First Nations surrendering rights to the lands and the resources they had traditionally used and occupied. In modern times, the Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed that Mi'kmaq and Maliseet First Nations continue to enjoy their treaty rights to hunt, fish, and gather.

The Douglas Treaties (1850–1854)

James Douglas was the Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1849, when its western headquarters was moved from Vancouver, Washington, to Victoria in the new British colony of Vancouver Island. Douglas became governor of the colony and began to encourage British settlement on First Nations lands. Over a period of four years, he made a series of 14 land purchases, known today as the **Douglas Treaties**. These treaties applied to territories on Vancouver Island and covered small tracts of land around Victoria, Nanaimo, and Port Hardy.

The Numbered Treaties (1871–1921)

Eleven **Numbered Treaties** were signed by the First Nations in Canada and the reigning monarchs of Canada (Victoria, Edward VII, or George V) between 1871 and 1921. The treaties provided the government with large tracts of land in exchange for promises made to the First Nations of the area. The specific terms differed with each treaty.



Fig 2.4: Numbered Treaties Map

The First Nations leadership and the Canadian government had different goals in signing the Numbered Treaties.

The First Nations' goals were to:

- secure the survival of their people (who had been seriously affected by disease and starvation)
- establish a peaceful relationship with the settler government
- ensure their cultural and spiritual survival as separate and distinct nations by keeping their own form of government and institutions
- begin to transition from a hunter-gatherer society to an economy based on agriculture and animal husbandry

The Canadian government's goals were to:

- advance colonization across the Prairie regions
- complete the Canada Pacific Railway
- extract the resources from the area

Modern treaties

Many modern treaties are being negotiated today. The Government of Canada officially calls modern treaties Comprehensive Land Claims. As of May 2017, 65 First Nations in British Columbia were participating in the treaty process. Six First Nations have completed a treaty. These negotiations are “tri-partite,” meaning that three levels of government are involved: the First Nation, the Government of Canada, and the Province of British Columbia. The first modern treaty in British Columbia was completed in 1999 with the Nisga'a First Nation¹ although this treaty was negotiated outside of the B.C. treaty process.

There are many barriers to First Nations achieving a treaty today. Some First Nations have been working for decades to get treaties for their people. The process is very slow and expensive. Also, for many years the Government of Canada tried to stop First Nations from organizing a treaty process. From 1927 to 1951, the Indian Act made it illegal to meet or raise funds for Indigenous rights and lands claims issues.

For these and other reasons, some First Nations in British Columbia do not agree with the treaty process. Union of BC Indian Chiefs² has described why these agreements are not fair or equal:

- The Government of Canada gets recognition of its sovereignty, but First Nations do not. First Nations get limited recognition of their right to a piece of land that is always much smaller than their traditional territory. They have to co-manage that land with the government.
- First Nations may achieve self-government, but they have to obey Canadian and provincial laws. Canada does not have to obey any First Nations laws.
- Modern treaties are the “full and final settlement” between First Nations and the federal and provincial governments. The First Nation agrees it will not make any legal claims against Canada or B.C. to right historical wrongs. For example, it will not seek compensation for any past extraction of resources or destroyed habitat.

Media Attributions

- Fig 2.4: Number Treaties Map © Yug has been modified (Numbers added) is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) license

Notes

1. Nisga'a First Nation Understanding the Treaty: <http://www.nisgaanation.ca/understanding-treaty>
2. Union of BC Indian Chiefs: <https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/>

Laws and Acts of Parliament

We are not your slaves. These lakes, these woods and mountains were left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance; and we will part with them to none.

– Pontiac or Obwandiyag (c. 1720–1769; Odawa chief, French ally, and resistor of British occupation)

A second tool of colonization used to exert colonial power was through making laws and passing acts of Parliament. Prior to Canada becoming a country in 1867, many laws and acts were made and passed either in the British Parliament or by the colonial governments in North America. In both cases, these laws and acts were made without consultation with the Indigenous Peoples whom they affected. After 1867, the federal and provincial governments of Canada passed acts and laws that were designed to encourage settlement on Indigenous land and to assimilate Indigenous Peoples – encouraging them or coercing them to abandon their culture, languages, and lifeways and to adopt settler culture.

Royal Proclamation, 1763

An important early legal document was the Royal Proclamation issued by George III in 1763. It formally ceded North America to Britain from France. According to the Royal Proclamation, British colonists were forbidden to settle on Indigenous lands, and settler officials were forbidden to grant lands without royal approval. It further stated that Indigenous lands could only be ceded to the Crown and that they could not be sold to the settlers. The Royal Proclamation is significant in law, and it is referenced by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Gradual Civilization Act, 1857

In 1857, the pre-confederation Parliament of the Province of Canada passed the Gradual Civilization Act. It was created with the purpose of terminating First Nations men's Indian identity and enfranchising them to become British subjects. It was assumed that First Nations men would willingly surrender their legal and ancestral identities for the "privilege" of becoming British. Individuals or entire bands could enfranchise. If a man enfranchised, his wife and children were automatically enfranchised. This contributed to the marginalization of First Nations women.

Under the Gradual Civilization Act, enfranchised men were entitled to "a piece of land not exceeding fifty acres out of the lands reserved or set apart for the use of his tribe." This land and money would become their property, but by accepting it they would give up "all claim to any further share in the lands or moneys then belonging to or reserved for the use of their tribe, and cease to have a voice in the proceedings thereof." Often the promises of enfranchisement were not honoured and the First Nation man would not receive what was promised.

Enfranchisement was to remain an important aim of the government after Canada came into existence in 1867. Enfranchisement could occur involuntarily if a First Nations man wanted to go to university, enlist, was “of good moral character,” or spoke English.

Other pre-Confederation laws

During the same period, the Province of Canada introduced other laws that treated First Nations people differently, including:

- consumption laws (banning First Nations people from consuming liquor)
- taxation (exempting some First Nations people from paying certain taxes)
- commercial laws (First Nations people could only sell their land to the Crown)
- different treatment of First Nations men and First Nations women

The Indian Act

Indian Act, 1876

The most important single act affecting First Nations is the Indian Act, passed by the federal government of the new Dominion of Canada in 1876 and still in existence today. The Indian Act was another attempt to assimilate First Nations people into Canadian society as quickly as possible. Under section 91(24) of the British North America Act (1867), the federal government was given jurisdiction or control over “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians,” providing exclusive authority over Indian affairs. You can [read the complete Indian Act online](#).¹

Who is an “Indian”?

In the Indian Act, the Government of Canada defines who is an “Indian.” If the government defines you as an “Indian,” you are said to have “Status.” For this reason, “Indian” is a legal word, but not one that many Indigenous people are comfortable using to describe themselves.

Not all people who identify as First Nations are Status Indian under the Indian Act. Over time there have been many different laws defining who is and who is not eligible for status. Defining who is and who is not an “Indian” is challenging and complicated. “Indians” are the only group of people where the Government of Canada decides who belongs and who does not.

Status and non-Status

Historically, the Indian Act applied only to Indigenous Peoples that the Crown recognized as “Indians.” It excluded Métis and Inuit, and created a group of people who were not entitled to Indian status, referred to as “non-Status Indians.” “Status” determines who the government considers to be entitled to rights that apply to some, but not all, First Nation Peoples in Canada, including:

- the granting of reserves and the rights associated with them
- an extended hunting season
- a less restricted right to bear arms
- some medical coverage
- more freedom in the management of gaming and tobacco

Enfranchisement

The Indian Act made enfranchisement legally compulsory. Under the Indian Act from 1876 until 1955, Status Indians would lose their legal and ancestral identities (or Indian Status) for a variety of reasons,

especially if they were women. Enfranchisement was offered to men (although if they were married, their wives and children would be considered enfranchised too).

Until as recently as 1982, the legal status of First Nations women was affected by who they married. First Nation women with Status lost their Indian Status when they married a non-Status man. First Nations women also lost their Indian Status when they married Métis or non-Indigenous men. All the children in these marriages would not be entitled to Indian Status.

Women also lost their status if their husbands died or abandoned them, in which case the woman would:

- lose the right to live on reserve land and have access to band resources,
- not necessarily become a member of her previous band again,
- be involuntarily enfranchised, losing her legal Indian status rights; her children could also be involuntarily enfranchised as a result.

Further discrimination against women

Under the Indian Act, First Nations women were also banned from voting and running in Chief and Council elections. The oppression of First Nations women under the Indian Act resulted in long-term poverty, marginalization and violence, which they are still trying to overcome today.

Inuit and Métis women were also oppressed and discriminated against, and prevented from:

- serving in the Canadian armed forces
- getting a college or university degree
- leaving their communities for long periods (e.g., for employment)
- becoming an ordained minister
- becoming a professional (e.g., a doctor or lawyer)

Impacts of the Indian Act: A timeline

Over the years, the Indian Act has legislated extreme changes in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Navigate the timeline below to view some of these impacts.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=80#h5p-5>

Note: If you are not using the online version of this guide, you can find the timeline in Appendix B.

Amendments to the Indian Act

The problem is we, as Indigenous peoples, have not been dealt with fairly, and also the governments have not dealt with the Indigenous issues the way we would like them to have.

– Elijah Harper (1949–2013; Oji-Cree; Canadian politician, first Treaty Indian elected as a provincial politician, Chief of the Red Sucker Lake community, recipient of the Order of Manitoba and the Stanley Knowles Humanitarian Award, and a key player in the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord)

1951

Amendments to the Indian Act in 1951 made it no longer illegal for First Nations people to:

- gather in groups of more than three
- leave the reserve without a pass
- hire a lawyer
- own property
- practise their culture

But many of the more harmful provisions still remained, including:

- the definition of who is an “Indian”
- the reserve system
- residential school policies
- an imposed system of government

As of 2017, all of these provisions still remain, except residential schools.

1985

In 1985, Bill C-31 was passed, amending the Indian Act to bring it into line with gender equality under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There were three major goals:

- to address gender discrimination in the Indian Act
- to restore Indian status to those who had been forcibly enfranchised
- to allow First Nations to control their own membership as a step toward self-government

The Indian Act today

The Indian Act is still in force, which is a major reason why the use of the offensive term “Indian” persists today.

Note: The Indian Act uses the terms “Indian” and “White” as these were the terms used at the time. These are not terms that you should use in your conversations.

Notes

1. Indian Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. I-5): <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/>

The Reserve System

We the Original Peoples of this land know the Creator put us here. The Creator gave us laws that govern all our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind.

The Laws of the Creator defined our rights and responsibilities. The Creator gave us our spiritual beliefs, our languages, our culture, and a place on Mother Earth which provided us with all our needs.

We have maintained our Freedom, our Languages, and our Traditions from time immemorial. We continue to exercise the rights and fulfill the responsibilities and obligations given to us by the Creator for the land upon which we were placed.

The Creator has given us the right to govern ourselves and the right to self-determination. The rights and responsibilities given to us by the creator cannot be altered or taken away by any other Nation.

– A Declaration of First Nations from the Assembly of First Nations

Before colonizers arrived, First Nations people and Inuit had the use of all the land and water in what is now Canada. Their traditional territories were (and are) very large. When Europeans arrived, they and the First Nations people and Inuit came into conflict over who would control these lands and resources.

The creation of reserves

Under the Indian Act, the Canadian government defined a reserve as land that has been set aside (not apart) by the government for the use and benefit of an Indian band. Reserve land is still classified as federal land, and First Nations do not have title to reserve land. Reserves were often created on less valuable land and sometimes located outside the traditional territory of the particular First Nation. If the First Nation had lived traditionally by hunting and gathering in a particularly rich area, confinement to a small, uninhabitable place was a very difficult transition. Allotted reserves were always small compared to the First Nations' traditional territory.

Reserves in the 20th century

In the early 20th century, there was a rapid increase in poverty on reserves due to imposed laws and policies. Canadian laws made it illegal for First Nations people to use traditional means of resource distribution and limited their ability to fish and hunt. An amendment to the Indian Act in 1927 also made it illegal for them to challenge their situation in court. Many First Nations people living on reserves found that they could not sustain themselves or their families. However, leaving the reserve meant facing discrimination and assimilation in the cities and giving up their rights as Status Indians.

The reserve system: Important facts

It is important to know the following facts:

- First Nations people were not consulted when reserves were created. They did not give consent.
- They were not compensated for the lands that were taken from them.
- Since their creation, reserves have been moved and reduced and their resources have been taken – all without compensation for First Nations.
- Until as recently as 1958, people living on reserve needed written permission from the Indian Agent in order to leave the reserve for any reason.

The reserve system today

Many First Nations people continue to live on small reserves, which the government still controls. This is a source of much of the conflict between First Nations and the government, at both provincial and federal levels.

Today, First Nations people still live with the problems created by the reserve system:

- There is often not enough land for all members to have housing.
- Some services are provided only to people living on reserve, so people living off reserve do not get the same services.
- Many reserves are very isolated and do not have basic services, such as electricity or running water.

Despite the hardships caused by the reserve system, reserves, as communities, are also a place of cultural survival, where Indigenous languages are spoken and taught in schools and cultural practices are thriving.

Residential Schools

For roughly seven generations nearly every Indigenous child in Canada was sent to a residential school. They were taken from their families, tribes and communities, and forced to live in those institutions of assimilation. The results while unintended have been devastating. We witness it first in the loss of Indigenous languages and traditional beliefs. We see it more tragically in the loss of parenting skills, and, ironically, in unacceptably poor education results. We see the despair that results in runaway rates of suicide, family violence, substance abuse, high rates of incarceration, street gang influence, child welfare apprehensions, homelessness, poverty, and family breakdowns. Yet while the government achieved such unintended devastation, it failed in its intended result. Indians never assimilated.

– Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair (Mizanay Gheezhik; Ojibway; first Indigenous judge in Manitoba, superior court judge, adjunct professor, and chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission), speech to the United Nations, 2010

One of the most infamous consequences of the Indian Act was the promotion of residential schools. Duncan Campbell Scott, Head of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, famously said in 1920 that “the goal of the Indian Residential School is to ‘kill the Indian in the child.’” Sadly, in many cases, this goal was accomplished. Children were not allowed to speak their language and had to give up their cultural practices, beliefs, and any connection to their Indigenous way of life.

Today, Indigenous Peoples are still living with the legacy of residential schools in the form of post-traumatic stress and **intergenerational trauma**.

The legacy of the residential school system is still with us today, and it is important that all people understand its history and legacy. Only when we understand the true history of Canada and its relationship with Indigenous Peoples can reconciliation begin. We can create a Canada that is inclusive of Indigenous Peoples and where Indigenous Peoples are self-determining in a nation-to-nation relationship.

The residential school system

The residential school system consisted of 140 schools across the country, funded by the federal government and run by churches. More than 150,000 Indigenous children attended the schools.

The first government-funded residential schools were opened in the 1870s. The last federally funded residential school closed in 1996 in Saskatchewan. In British Columbia, the first residential school was started in Mission in 1861. It was run by the Catholic Church. This residential school was the last to close in the province, shutting down in 1984.

Day schools and residential schools were made mandatory for Indigenous children between the ages of 7 and 15 in 1884. Parents could no longer choose between sending their children to the schools and

keeping them at home, and they could be fined or even sent to prison if they tried to keep their children at home.

The government wanted to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into Canadian society, which meant they would have to give up their languages, spiritual beliefs, and cultural practices. Indigenous children were removed from their parents, family, and all cultural influences and traditions. They lived at residential schools for months or years at a time rather than going home every day after class. Many of these children did not see their families for very long periods of time.

Since the intent of the government and churches was to erase Indigenous culture in the children – “kill the Indian in the child” and stop the transmission of culture from one generation to another – many people think the residential schools were a form of cultural genocide.

The residential school experience

On the children’s arrival at the residential schools, the staff took away their clothes and cultural belongings. Their hair was cut and they were required to wear Euro-Canadian uniforms. They were forbidden to speak their language, practise their cultural traditions, or spend time with children of the opposite sex, including their brothers and sisters, and were physically punished if they did. They were required to practise Christianity.

Children usually attended school in the morning and the boys worked as farm labourers in the afternoon while the girls did domestic chores and cleaned. They often received only a Grade 5 education, as it was expected that they would be low-paid workers in Canadian society.

The government paid the church a certain amount of money for each student. The more students at the school, the more money the church would receive. The children did not get enough food and lived in buildings that were hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Overcrowding and poor diet meant that diseases spread rapidly, and many students died in the schools.

Disconnection from their families, communities, languages, and cultures led to great suffering for the children. Many also experienced neglect and abuse – physical, psychological, and sexual – at the schools. Some committed suicide. Some died trying to escape. Indigenous children are the only children in Canadian history to be taken from their families and required by law to live in institutions because of their race and culture.

For most Indigenous people, the memories of residential school are negative and life-altering. They remember feeling lonely, hungry, and scared. They remember being told that Indigenous culture is strange and inferior, that Indigenous beliefs and practices are wrong, and that they would never be successful.

The continuing legacy of the residential school system

Canada’s residential school system had and continues to have serious consequences for Indigenous Peoples. It is important to understand this history so it is not repeated, and to work toward righting the

wrongs of the past so Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can move forward in a spirit of nation-to-nation relationship based on respect, transparency, and accountability.

Loss of confidence and culture

Many of the people who attended residential schools left with very little education and a belief that it is shameful to be an “Indian.” Many were unable to speak their language, so they could not communicate with their family members and particularly their grandparents, who in many communities would have been important sources of knowledge for them. Many also found it hard to fit into Canadian society. They had a low level of education and faced racism and discrimination when they tried to find work. Unable to fit into community life and not accepted in mainstream society, some felt that they did not belong anywhere.

Psychological effects

Many people who attended residential schools experienced a variety of psychological effects, including:

- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – terror, nightmares, and flashbacks that develop after a terrifying experience
- survivor syndrome– guilt felt by people who have survived a threatening situation that others did not survive

Sadly, the effects of residential school are not only felt by those who attended residential schools. Intergenerational trauma are the effects of traumatic experiences passed on to the next generations. For example, the children and grandchildren of residential school survivors grow up feeling something is wrong, but they do not know what because parents and relatives live with the pain and grief of their experiences in silence.

Effects on communities

Traditionally, Indigenous histories, traditions, beliefs, and values were passed from one generation to the next through experiential learning and oral storytelling. With the children away at school, there was no one left to receive this knowledge. Many Indigenous languages that were spoken in Canada are now gone. Many cultural and spiritual practices have been lost.

The loss of culture is a loss for both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada. Families suffered from the separation for many years. Because they were removed from their families, many students grew up without the knowledge and skills to raise their own families. It prevented children from learning from their Elders and growing into a role in their community and having a healthy self-esteem and identity.

Apologies and reparations

In the 1990s, groups of residential school survivors sued the Canadian government and the churches that ran the schools. One of the largest class action suits in Canadian history was settled in 2007. It resulted in the establishment of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and payment of \$1.9 billion. This settlement made several promises. It gave more funds to the Indigenous Healing Foundation (now closed) for healing programs in communities, and offered payments to survivors as reparation. Reparation payments are compensation for past wrongs endured by the victims.

The official apology

On June 11, 2008, the Government of Canada issued a formal apology. You can view a [video of the apology](#)¹ online. Here is part of the text of the apology:

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.... Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions, and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Indigenous cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child.” Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.... To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry....

Healing

Many Indigenous families and communities have organized formally and informally to heal from residential school legacies, and many survivors are now Elders. The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS) grew out of a committee of survivors in 1994. It has centres in B.C. cities, including Vancouver. Its many projects include providing crisis counselling, court support, workshops, conferences, information and referrals, and media announcements. The society researches the history and effects of residential schools. The IRSSS also advocates for justice and healing in traditional and non-Indigenous ways.

Notes

1. Official Apology video: <https://youtu.be/-ryC74bbrEE>

Truth and Reconciliation

We must be honest about the real two solitudes in this country, that between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens, and commit to doing tangible things to close the divide in awareness, understanding and relationships.... We can no longer afford to be strangers to each other in this country that we now share. We could actually come to know each other not just as labels or hyphenated Canadians but rather as neighbors and as friends, as people that we care about.

– Dr. Marie Wilson (award-winning print, radio, and television journalist; university lecturer; commissioner, Truth and Reconciliation Commission)

Like other policies under the Indian Act, the negative effects of residential schools were passed from generation to generation. Indigenous Peoples have been working hard to overcome the legacy of residential schools and to change the realities for themselves, their families, and their Nations. The federal government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) to deal with the legacy of residential schools. Its mandate was to accumulate, document, and commemorate the experiences of the 80,000 survivors of the residential school system in Canada, so the survivors could begin to heal from the trauma of these experiences.

The TRC had two overarching goals:

- to document the experiences of all survivors, families, and communities personally affected by residential schools – including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis former residential school students and their families and communities, the churches, former school employees, government, and other Canadians
- to teach all Canadians about what happened in residential schools

The TRC pursued truth by gathering people's stories and statements, researching government records, and providing public education. The TRC saw reconciliation as an ongoing individual and collective process.

The TRC's 94 Calls to Action

The TRC built on the Government of Canada's "Statement of Reconciliation" dated January 7, 1998. The commission completed its work on December 18, 2015. However, the journey of Truth and Reconciliation is far from over.

The TRC produced several reports based on the histories and stories of residential school survivors. One of the most significant reports is the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, which proposes 94 specific calls to action aimed at redressing the legacy of residential schools

and advancing the process of Canadian reconciliation. You can read more at the [Reconciliation Canada website](http://reconciliationcanada.ca/).¹

The work of the TRC was not just about documenting a particularly difficult part of Indigenous history in Canada. It was rooted in the belief that telling the truth about our common history gives us a much better starting point in building a better future. By ending the silences under which Indigenous Peoples have suffered for many decades, the TRC opened the possibility that we may all come to see each other and our different histories more clearly and be able to work together in a better way to resolve issues that have long divided us. It is the beginning of a new kind of hope.

Activity 1: Stolen Children: Voices (30 min)

This 20 minute CBC mini-documentary *Stolen Children: Voices*² shares stories from survivors and the effects of residential school on their culture, community, and families.

Reflect on *Stolen Children*

- What was the most shocking part of the video? What was the hardest part to understand or accept?
- What would have happened to you as a child if you had been taken away from your family?
- How do you think the impacts of these schools might still be affecting Indigenous Peoples today?

Activity 2: Tons of stuff you need to know

In this book, *First Nations 101: tons of stuff you need to know about First Nations peoples*,³ Tsimshian author Lynda Gray discusses and debunks many stereotypes and misinformation about First Nations people. Read this book to learn more, and then share this book with others.

Notes

1. Reconciliation Canada website: <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/>
2. Stolen Children: Voices: <https://youtu.be/vdR9HcmiXLA>
3. First Nations 101: tons of stuff you need to know about First Nations peoples: <http://www.firstnations101.com/>

Conclusion

You have reached the end of the Section 2 of the *Foundations Guide*. You should now have an understanding of what colonization means and how the history of colonization has affected, and continues to affect, Indigenous Peoples today.

Knowledge Check

Now that you have completed Section 2, answer the Knowledge Check questions again.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=90#h5p-2>

Note: If you are not using the online version of the *Foundations Guide*, you can find the Knowledge Check questions and answers in Appendix A.

Section 3: Decolonization



Fig 3.1

Media Attributions

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Introduction

Each day that Indigenous rights are not honoured or fulfilled, inequality between Indigenous peoples and the settler society grows.

– *Idle No More*, “The Story”

In Canada, we are still dealing with the legacy of colonization. Media, institutions, and ordinary people still perpetuate harmful stereotypes and beliefs about Indigenous Peoples. This creates a society that continues to discriminate against Indigenous Peoples.

Decolonization is the “undoing” of colonization and a process by which Indigenous Peoples are regaining their rightful place in Canada and are thriving.

In Section 3, we will address some of the challenges that exist because of centuries of institutionalized racism.

It should take you about 1 hour to complete Section 3. Please complete the Locate Yourself activity first.

Topics

In Section 3, you will learn about:

- Stereotypes
- Microaggressions
- Cultural appropriation
- Taking back control
- Indigenous rights, title, self-determination, and government
- Decolonization
- Reconciliation

Activity 1: Locate yourself (15 min)

Reflect on the following questions

1. Have you ever experienced being stereotyped or discriminated against?
2. If yes, what were the short-term consequences? What were the long-term consequences?

Knowledge Check

Answer the questions below as a way to assess your understanding of decolonization and reconciliation.

Note: If you not using the online version of the *Foundations Guide*, you can find the Knowledge Check questions and answers in Appendix A.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=103#h5p-1>

Myths, Stereotypes, and Racism

Read the following 9 statements about Indigenous Peoples, and select “Myth” or “Fact.” As you go through the remainder of Section 3, think about these myths.

Note: If you are not using the online version of the *Foundations Guide*, you can find the Myth or Fact questions and answers in [Appendix C](#).



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=112#h5p-3>

Where do the myths come from?

Although the situation is improving, far too many Canadians do not know the histories, cultures, or current issues facing Indigenous Peoples. There are many reasons for this:

- Years of government policies have worked to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into mainstream Canadian society.
- Reserves have isolated First Nations people from Canadian society.
- Very little is taught about the true history of Canada and Indigenous Peoples.
- Film, television, and media often perpetuate Indigenous stereotypes.

Stereotypes

In order to ensure that there is understanding, respect, and appreciation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, both need to meet, work together, and learn about each other. Otherwise, non-Indigenous people may learn about Indigenous Peoples only from the news and other sources. Usually what people know, or think they know, comes from the images and characters they see or read about in movies, TV shows, magazines, books, and news reports.

Stereotypes do great harm. Whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, you will often hear negative stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples, but you might not always have enough information to see past the stereotypes and see past the racism to find the truth.

The Canadian school system has contributed to these stereotypes, as very little is taught about Indigenous Peoples and their real history. This is changing. For example, the Province of British

Columbia has mandated the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and history across the K–12 curriculum.

Indigenous stories and histories in the mainstream media have normally been told from a non-Indigenous point of view. This can lead to misunderstandings that can harm the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The Hollywood film industry has made millions from telling stories about “cowboys and Indians.” In TV shows and movies, Indigenous characters are often played by non-Indigenous people and the representations of Indigenous Peoples are rarely accurate. Instead, filmmakers use stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples.

Negative stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples are still widespread in sports, though there is a growing movement to replace team names and mascots that perpetuate the stereotypes.

Overcoming the stereotypes

Indigenous people work in the media – in newspapers, radio, book publishing, film, web journalism, and television. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is a cable television network in Canada that produces and broadcasts programs by and for Indigenous Peoples. These films and TV shows can help break down some of the negative stereotypes.

For non-Indigenous Canadians, the visible and positive presence of Indigenous Peoples in the media is a real alternative to stereotypes. Real people, places, and cultures are much more complex than stereotypes.

Getting to know Indigenous Peoples and learning about their real history and contemporary reality will help to break down negative stereotypes and can heal some of the damage. Many people are now working to ensure that future generations of children in Canada will receive more complete and accurate views of Indigenous Peoples and a more truthful account of Canadian history in their education.

Microaggressions

The term **micro-aggressions** is sometimes used to describe the insults, dismissals, or casual degradations a dominant culture inflicts on a marginalized group of people. Often they are a form of unintended discrimination, but one that has the same effect as willful discrimination. Usually perpetrators intend no offence and are unaware they are causing harm. Generally, they are well-meaning and consider themselves to be unprejudiced.

Many Indigenous people experience microaggressions on a regular basis. They are often statements that:

- repeat or affirm stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples or subtly demean them
- position the dominant non-Indigenous culture as normal and the Indigenous culture as abnormal

- express disapproval of or discomfort with Indigenous Peoples
- assume all Indigenous Peoples are the same
- minimize the existence of discrimination against Indigenous Peoples
- deny the perpetrator's own bias toward Indigenous Peoples
- minimize real conflict between the Indigenous Peoples and the dominant non-Indigenous culture

People who experience microaggressions may feel anger, frustration, or exhaustion from feeling that they must “represent” their group or suppress their own cultural expression and beliefs.

Cultural appropriation

Cultural appropriation is the adoption or use of culturally significant items by someone from another culture. During this process the original meaning is usually lost or distorted.

Pop culture has a history of using Indigenous symbols to sell fashion. Traditional Indigenous clothing with deep spiritual significance is marketed as “cute,” “sexy,” or “cool.”

Cultural appropriation is offensive when someone from a dominant culture exploits the cultural and intellectual property of a marginalized group of people, and even more so when the dominant culture has outlawed many of the cultural items that are now being marketed.

Taking Back Control

... [A] man cannot be educated unless he lives and works in a community which is culturally and socially vibrant. He needs his traditional way of life as a backdrop and as a basis upon which to grow. Combined with this is the need for other tools, such as Native languages and traditional institutions, which are essential for proper development and growth.

– Billy Diamond, “The Cree experience”

As we have seen, in the past the Government of Canada has unilaterally enacted laws and policies that have adversely affected Indigenous Peoples. This continues to happen. However, Indigenous Peoples have been pursuing recognition of their “rights and title” and self-government. Some have done this through treaties, the courts, and negotiations. Increasingly, Indigenous Peoples are taking back control over the decisions that affect them.

Indigenous resistance

Although they have had serious consequences, the laws and policies stemming from the Indian Act did not succeed in destroying all Indigenous traditions. Indigenous Peoples have always fought against the Indian Act and for their rights.

Indigenous Peoples have continued to practice their culture underground and have found new ways to avoid persecution. They organized against residential schools and won court victories and an official apology from the Government of Canada.

Indigenous Peoples have continued to raise their children to be proud of their cultures and identities and to resist assimilation in their everyday lives.

Idle No More

A well-known recent response to colonization was the Idle No More movement. The movement began in November 2012 when four Saskatchewan women, Jessica Gordon (Cree), Sylvia McAdam (Cree), Nina Wilson (Nakota/Plains Cree), and Sheelah McLean (Canadian) responded to the government’s omnibus Bill C-45, which challenged First Nations sovereignty and weakened environmental protections throughout Canada. Using Facebook and Twitter, #IdleNoMore was created to promote a series of “teach-ins” on the impacts of Bill C-45.

The Idle No More movement inspired more than 100 protests, flash mobs, and round dances in shopping malls and in the streets. Support for Idle No More spread outside of Canada, with solidarity protests in the U.S., Sweden, U.K., Germany, New Zealand, and Egypt.

Indigenous rights, title, self-determination, and government

Key terms

Indigenous rights, title, self-determination, and government

Indigenous rights are collective rights that flow from the fact that Indigenous Peoples continuously occupied the land that is now called Canada. They are inherent rights, which Indigenous peoples have practised and enjoyed since before settler contact. In Canadian law, Indigenous title and rights are different from the rights of non-Indigenous Canadian citizens. Indigenous title and rights do not come from the Canadian government, although they are recognized by it. They are rights that come from Indigenous Peoples' relationships with their territories and land, even before Canada became a country, and from Indigenous social, political, economic, and legal systems that have been in place for a long time.

Aboriginal title is the inherent right of Indigenous Peoples to their lands and waters. It is recognized by common law. This inherent right comes from the long history Indigenous Peoples have had with the land. *Inherent* means nobody can take the right away.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples includes the right to **self-determination**. The Assembly of First Nations describes self-determination as a Nation's right to choose its own government and decide on its own economic, social, and cultural development. Today, Indigenous Peoples are exercising their Indigenous rights and title for self-determination and benefiting from the wealth and resources of this land that is now called Canada.

Self-government means First Nations can take control of and responsibility for decisions affecting them. Self-government can take many forms. It can include making laws and deciding how to spend money or raise money through taxation, deliver programs, and build economic opportunities. First Nations governed themselves for thousands of years before the arrival of settlers. Their governments were organized to meet their economic, social, and geographic conditions and needs, and were shaped by their cultures and beliefs. First Nations governments were weakened by policies that imposed settler laws and forms of government. Under the Indian Act, the Canadian government created Indian Bands and Councils to administer and provide services to their memberships and made aspects of traditional Indigenous government illegal. First Nations are in the process of nation-rebuilding and asserting self-government.

Decolonization

We know there are no boats waiting in the harbour to take all of the non-Natives back someplace. We know people are not going to get on planes and say, “Oh well, we didn’t get this country so we will go somewhere else.” The non-Natives are all going to be here after negotiations. And so are we. What I want to leave behind is the injustice. I wish that we could start again.

– Steven Lewis Point (Xwě lī qwěł tēl, Stó:lō, former lieutenant governor of British Columbia, former provincial court judge, former Chief of the Skowkale First Nation, chair of advisory committee for Missing Women Commission of Inquiry), Foreword to *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (2001)

Decolonization is every Canadian’s responsibility

A common misunderstanding is that decolonization is an attempt to re-establish the conditions of a pre-colonial North America and would require a mass departure of all non-Indigenous people from the continent. That is not the goal. As Canadians, we can all take part in building a genuine decolonization movement. This movement would respect the land on which we are all living and the people to whom it inherently belongs.

What would decolonization look like?

Decolonization would mark a fundamental change in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It would bring an end to the settler effects on Indigenous Peoples with respect to their:

- governments
- ideologies
- religions
- education systems
- cultures

Decolonization requires an understanding of Indigenous history and acceptance and acknowledgement of the truth and consequences of that history. The process of decolonization must include non-Indigenous people and Indigenous Peoples working toward a future that includes all.

Canadian citizens must acknowledge that the Canada we know today was built on the legacy of colonization and the displacement of Indigenous Peoples. Decolonization must continue until Indigenous Peoples are no longer at the negative end of socio-economic indicators or over-represented in areas such as the criminal justice or child welfare system.

For Indigenous Peoples, decolonization begins with learning about who they are and recovering their culture and self-determination.

Many Indigenous people may have difficulty understanding different aspects of, or perspectives on, Indigenous knowledge. This process can be difficult for all of the reasons we have already discussed, and it will take time to overcome the difficulties. It must occur on many levels: as an individual, a member of a family, a community, and a Nation. It requires perseverance, support, and knowledge of culture.

The process of decolonization is a process of healing and moving away from a place of anger, loss, and grief toward a place where Indigenous Peoples can thrive. This can be overwhelming and seemingly impossible for some. It must be acknowledged that not all Indigenous Peoples are in the same place on this “decolonization journey,” but together Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous peoples can succeed.

Continuous reinforcement and rediscovery of Indigenous language, cultural, and spiritual practices empowers people to move forward in their growth as proud Indigenous citizens.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is an important part of the process of decolonization. Reconciliation requires that Indigenous people tell their stories and that they are heard. It requires a shared understanding of our common past and a shared vision of the future.

An important step on the road to reconciliation was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), created in 2007 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

The TRC was inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa.

What you can do

People ask, “What can be done?” or “What can I do?” or they are uncertain or uncomfortable about getting involved. It can feel daunting, and both responses are normal. The fact that you have taken the time to finish all of the sections in this guide has made a difference already, and if you can share what you learned with those around you, then you will make a difference. As we saw, many stereotypes and problems occur when people do not know the truth or even any information about Indigenous Peoples. Increasing awareness is very important.

If you would like to learn more, we encourage you to seek out information:

- Read the “Calls to Action.”
- Visit a Friendship Centre.
- Read books by Indigenous authors.
- Take a course or workshop on Indigenous Peoples history and culture.
- Form a group within your work team to talk about Indigenous issues.
- Participate in events such as the Walk for Reconciliation and National Indigenous Day activities.

It is important to note that Indigenous Peoples need allies and not people to tell them what to do, or to direct and benefit from Indigenous issues and challenges. We need to work together and support each other to make a place where all people are valued and included. Reconciliation is a very personal journey and one in which all Canadians must play a part.

Conclusion

You have reached the end of Section 3 of the *Foundations Guide*. In this section, you explored the complexity of identifying and deconstructing falsehoods and misinformation that have been perpetuated through media and policy. You should now have an understanding of what colonization means and how the history of colonization has affected, and continues to affect, Indigenous Peoples today. You should be able to recognize how centuries of institutionalized racism has created stereotypes of and hostility toward Indigenous Peoples. You should also be aware of ways you can support decolonization and reconciliation.

The work of deconstructing and reconstructing is a shared process and not solely one for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to tackle. It is a shared responsibility to rebuild relationships and create lasting partnerships and alliances.

The writers of the *Foundations Guide* and the Indigenization Project steering committee hope you have started your path to Indigenization and reconciliation with the information highlighted in this guide. As stated at the beginning of the guide, this is not a definitive resource; it is a start for lifelong learning and positioning yourself within Indigenous-Canadian relations. Thank you for taking this journey with us.

Knowledge Check

Now that you have completed Section 3, answer the Knowledge Check questions again.

Note: If you are not using the online version of the *Foundations Guide*, you can find the questions and answers in [Appendix A](#).



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/?p=126#h5p-1>

Appendix A: Knowledge Check Questions and Answers

Note: The same questions are used in the Knowledge Check at both the beginning and end of each section.

Section 1: Introduction to Indigenous Peoples

Questions

1. How many First Nations are there in Canada?
 1. Fewer than 100
 2. More than 100 but fewer than 500
 3. More than 500
2. The terms *First Nations* and *Indigenous Peoples* have the same meaning.
 1. True
 2. False
3. The three First Nations in Vancouver are the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh.
 1. True
 2. False
4. To be recognized as a Métis citizen in BC, one must:
 1. Self-identify as Métis
 2. Have a direct ancestral connection to the historic Métis community
 3. Be accepted by a contemporary Métis community
 4. All of the above

Answers

1. How many First Nations are there in Canada?
 1. Fewer than 100 – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn how many different First Nations there are in Canada today in this section.
 2. More than 100 but fewer than 500 – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn how many different First Nations there are in Canada today in this section.
 3. **More than 500** – That’s right! The exact number can vary, but there are around 630 First Nations in Canada.
2. The terms *First Nations* and *Indigenous Peoples* have the same meaning.

1. True – Sorry, that’s not right. You’ll learn the difference between these terms in this section.
2. **False** – That’s right! First Nations are one of the three groups of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, but not all Indigenous people are First Nations.
3. The three First Nations in Vancouver are the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh.
 1. **True** – That’s right! The three First Nations in Vancouver are Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh.
 2. False – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about the First Nations of Vancouver in this section.
4. To be recognized as a Métis citizen in BC, one must:
 1. Self-identify as Métis – Sorry, you are partially right. You will learn more about Métis peoples in this section.
 2. Have a direct ancestral connection to the historic Métis community – Sorry, you are partially right. You will learn more about Métis peoples in this section.
 3. Be accepted by a contemporary Métis community – Sorry, you are partially right. You will learn more about Métis peoples in this section.
 4. **All of the above** – That’s right! All conditions must be met to be recognized as a Métis citizen in BC

Section 2: Colonization

Questions

1. Who decides whether someone is “officially” a Status Indian?
 1. The federal government
 2. The Assembly of First Nations
 3. Anyone can decide to be a Status Indian
2. First Nations people still have laws and policies applied to them that are different from those applied to non-First Nations people.
 1. True
 2. False

Answers

1. Who decides whether someone is “officially” a Status Indian?
 1. **The federal government** – That’s right! The federal government decides who is a “Status Indian.” There are no other ethnic groups in Canada for which the government decides membership. Further, there is only an Indian Act, and not an Italian or Irish Act.

2. The Assembly of First Nations – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about the laws and policies that apply only to Indigenous Peoples in this section.
3. Anyone can decide to be a Status Indian. – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about the laws and policies that apply only to Indigenous Peoples in this section.
2. First Nations people still have laws and policies applied to them that are different from those applied to non-First Nations people. (True/False)
 1. **True** – That’s right! The Indian Act still exists and status Indians are still governed by it. There are many areas where Aboriginal people are treated differently with different laws and policies.
 2. False – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn more about status in this section.

Section 3: Decolonization

Questions

1. _____ is when someone takes an image, symbol, idea, song, dance, and so on from a group of people that they are not part of and uses it or claims it as their own or to advance themselves or their product. It is done without permission from or respect for the group.
 1. Microaggression
 2. Cultural appropriation
 3. Stereotyping
2. Which of the following statements about Aboriginal rights is true?
 1. Aboriginal rights are rights that Indigenous people have by virtue of the fact that they are Indigenous.
 2. They are rights that have been protected in the Constitution Act, 1982.
 3. The Canadian courts continue to define the extent of these rights.
 4. Indigenous people view Aboriginal rights as expansive and inclusive of both their traditional and contemporary ways of knowing and being.
 5. All of these are true
3. What was established on June 2, 2008, and completed in December 2015, with the overarching goal of documenting and acknowledging the experiences of residential school survivors while working toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?
 1. The Indian Act
 2. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission
 3. The Canada 150+ Commission
4. _____ is a process by which Indigenous Peoples are reclaiming their identities, land, and ways of being and knowing.

1. Decolonization
2. Reconciliation
3. The treaty process

Answers

1. _____ is when someone takes an image, symbol, idea, song, dance, and so on from a group of people that they are not part of, and uses it or claims it as their own or to advance themselves or their product. It is done without permission from or respect for the group.
 1. Microaggression – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about cultural appropriation in this section.
 2. **Cultural appropriation** – That’s right! Cultural appropriation is when someone takes an image, symbol, idea, song, dance, and so on from a group of people that they are not part of, and uses it or claims it as their own or to advance themselves or their product. It is done without permission from or respect for the group.
 3. Stereotyping – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about cultural appropriation in this section.
2. Which of the following statements about Aboriginal rights is true?
 1. Aboriginal rights are rights that Indigenous people have by virtue of the fact that they are Indigenous. – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about Aboriginal rights in this section.
 2. They are rights that have been protected in the Constitution Act, 1982. – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about Aboriginal rights in this section.
 3. The Canadian courts continue to define the extent of these rights. – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about Aboriginal rights in this section.
 4. Indigenous people view Aboriginal rights as expansive and inclusive of both their traditional and contemporary ways of knowing and being. – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about Aboriginal rights in this section.
 5. **All of these are true** – That’s right! All of these are true.
3. What was established on June 2, 2008, and completed in December 2015, with the overarching goal of documenting and acknowledging the experiences of residential school survivors while working toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?
 1. The Indian Act – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in this section.
 2. **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission** – That’s right! The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established on June 2, 2008, and was completed in December 2015. One of the final documents to come from the TRC is the 94 “Calls to Action” that were released June 2015 with the goal of redressing “the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. There is much more to the TRC and the legacy of residential

schools, so we encourage you to learn more by doing your own research online.

3. The Canada 150+ Commission – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in this section.
4. _____ is a process by which Indigenous Peoples are reclaiming their identities, land, and ways of being and knowing.
 1. **Decolonization** – That’s right! Decolonization is the “undoing” of all that colonization did to Indigenous Peoples. It is the changing of laws and policies that have been used to oppress and control Indigenous Peoples. It is the court cases and land claims settlements that have been fought for to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are benefiting from the land and have a future of self-government and self-determination. It is the righting of the wrongs of the past and changing the socio-economic indicators so that Indigenous Peoples are at or are moving toward the positive end.
 2. Reconciliation – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about decolonization in this section.
 3. The treaty process – Sorry, that’s not right. You will learn about decolonization in this section.

Appendix B: Indian Act Timeline

Timeline: The Impact of the Indian Act

Over the years, the Indian Act has legislated extreme changes in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. The timeline below provides some examples.

1867

Federal government assumes responsibility for all “Indians and lands reserved for Indians”

Canada became a country with the passing of the British North America Act. In Section 91(24) the federal government (Canadian government) was assigned responsibility for all “Indians and lands reserved for Indians.”

1876

Indian Act becomes law

The Indian Act became law, and Indigenous governance systems were replaced with elected or appointed Band Councils. Women were not allowed to participate.

1879

Residential schools become official policy

Residential schools became the official government policy for educating First Nations children. Residential schools forcibly removed First Nations children from their families and communities to attend distant schools, where many died and many more suffered abuse.

1884–1951

Ceremonies banned

The Indian Act banned ceremonies such as the potlatch, ghost dance, and sun dance. People were arrested for performing them and their ceremonial materials were taken away by the government. The effects of this prohibition are still felt today.

1911–1951

Reserve land taken from bands without consent

The government could take reserve land from bands without their consent and (between 1918 and 1951) could also lease reserve land to settlers without the band’s agreement.

1914–1951

Traditional and ceremonial clothing banned

It was illegal for Indigenous Peoples to wear their traditional and ceremonial clothing.

1927–1951

Status Indians barred from seeking legal advice, fundraising, or meeting in groups

It was illegal for Status Indians to hire lawyers or seek legal advice, fundraise for land claims, or meet in groups. Many had to stop organizing, but others continued to do so secretly to fight for their rights.

1951

Political organizing and cultural activities legalized

It was no longer illegal for Indigenous Peoples to organize politically to fight for their rights. And performing cultural activities was no longer illegal.

1985

First Nations people no longer forced to give up their “status”

It was no longer possible for the government to force people to give up their “Indian status” and lose their Indigenous rights. In the past, First Nations people could lose their Indian status through marriage, for example. And before 1960, a person had to give up his or her Indian status in order to vote federally.

Appendix C: Myth or Fact?

1. **Indigenous Peoples never had a written language.** That's a myth! European and Asian writing systems are one way of transmitting information in visual symbols, but there are others. Indigenous Peoples have used symbols and a variety of markings to communicate and tell a story. Totem poles, petroglyphs, and pictographs are examples of visual language.
2. **Indigenous Peoples do not pay any taxes.** That's a myth! All Indigenous Peoples are required to pay taxes like all other Canadians. This includes all income, federal, provincial, and municipal taxes, as well as taxes for goods and services bought off reserve. The only exceptions are for people recognized by the federal government as "Status Indians." They do not have to pay:
 1. income tax if they earn 60 per cent of their income on a reserve
 2. provincial or federal sales tax if they purchase goods or services on reserve or have them delivered to the reserve
3. **Everything that happened to Indigenous Peoples "happened so long ago that they should just get over it."** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples are still dealing with the effects of colonization. Considering that Indigenous Peoples were almost eliminated by introduced diseases from settlers, those who were resilient and survived now experience ongoing impacts on their quality of life, identity, cultural expression, and traditional practice. For example, the Indian Act still controls many aspects of First Nations people's lives and limits the ability for First Nation communities to self-govern. Until 1951, it was illegal for First Nations people to gather in groups of more than three, leave a reserve without a pass, hire a lawyer, own property, or practise their culture. It has only been since 1982, with the amendment to the Constitution, that the legal status of First Nations women was no longer decided by who they married. The last residential school in B.C. closed in 1984, so even those who did not attend the schools still suffer from the ongoing legacy of pain, loss, and racism.
4. **Indigenous Peoples are all the same.** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples and communities across Canada are very diverse in language, culture, and traditions. There are over 200 First Nation communities across B.C. They speak more than 36 distinct languages. In the 2016 Census, 270,000 people in B.C. self-identified as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit. This number does not include First Nations people on reserve, as many reserves were not included in the census. Depending on where you are in the province, cultural practices and traditions will differ from one another.
5. **Indigenous cultures were very primitive.** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples have complex cultures and systems of governance, commerce, trade, and agriculture that thrived for thousands of years before settler contact. Even though numerous peace treaties were established in eastern and central Canada, the settler government would not recognize or validate these strong systems and approaches. For instance, B.C.'s Governor James Douglas negotiated agreements with First Nation communities on Vancouver Island, but subsequent governors nullified these agreements.

6. **Indigenous Peoples get free university education and free housing.** That's a myth! Some First Nations people are eligible for post-secondary education funds, if they are a Status Indian and if their First Nation community has enough federally allocated money to fund all or part of their post-secondary education. Many Indigenous people receive no help from their communities or the government when pursuing post-secondary education. As for free housing, each First Nation negotiates with the federal government to access funding to build homes on reserve, and the First Nation then secures mortgages for the homes. Tenants make payments to the First Nation to repay the mortgage. If a tenant does get subsidized help with their housing, this is because they have a special low-income status. Even if a tenant pays off the mortgage, the house is not in their name and they cannot sell it.
7. **Indigenous Peoples have more problems with addiction and crime than other people.** That's a myth! As a population, Indigenous people are more likely to face addictions and are over-represented in the criminal justice system, but this is not because they are more criminally inclined or because their bodies are more susceptible to addictions (though this was thought to be the case by scientists and many people for decades). The reasons for the increased likelihood of addictions and over-representation in the criminal justice system are multiple and result from a combination of influences related to colonization. These include lack of recognition of their cultures, traditions, and languages; government policies; racism, discrimination, and stereotyping; breakdown in family structure; poverty; isolation; and residential schools, cycles of dysfunction, and intergenerational trauma. In large cities, there are more police officers in poor neighbourhoods. If Indigenous people are poorer than most Canadians (and statistically they are), then they are more likely to come into contact with police officers or the criminal justice system. In addition, once in the criminal system, Indigenous people face further discrimination as a result of lack of understanding and cultural differences that lead to institutional bias and racism. They are therefore more likely to be convicted and given longer sentences.
8. **Indigenous youth were not affected by residential schools or colonization.** That's a myth! Colonization has had a lasting effect on Indigenous communities, including breakdown of the family structure, poverty, depression, addictions, intergenerational trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Indigenous youth must overcome many social and economic barriers in order to break this harmful cycle. Many Indigenous people continue to experience racism – sometimes direct and intentional and sometimes in the form of uninformed opinions, misunderstandings, and prejudice. This affects their ability to live healthy and productive lives.
9. **Indigenous Peoples don't want to get along with the government and be a part of Canada.** That's a myth! Indigenous Peoples are already part of Canada and want the federal government to recognize their autonomy and rights as distinct peoples, as stated in the Constitution. Indigenous Peoples have been unfairly treated in Canada – from having their lands and territories unlawfully taken to government decisions made on their behalf without consultation.

Appendix D: Adapting this Guide

What is Pressbooks?

Pressbooks is a web-based authoring tool based on the WordPress authoring platform. If you've created a website using WordPress, you'll find some similarities working with Pressbooks. Pressbooks allows you to create content once and publish it in many different formats. These export formats enable the resource to be easily imported and edited in different platforms such as WordPress, Wikis and even learning management systems. The formats appear at the bottom of the web version of the resource to allow other users to easily export and adapt the resource. These features will allow the resources we are developing to be used, adapted, contextualized and localized by different institutions and communities. Pressbooks will make the resource more available to different users by giving them the option of accessing it on the web, on their mobile devices or print it out as a PDF document. By designing each part of the resource as a standalone guide institutions will be able to select and adapt the sections to use, edit and adapt for their context. These features will allow the resources we are developing to be used, adapted, contextualized and localized by different institutions and communities.

Export formats

Print PDF	Allows documents to be easily shared while retaining the same visual formatting. It is page-oriented and has a static layout. Print PDF optimized for printing
Digital PDF	For digital PDF distribution
xHTML	This format allows the resource to be used and edited in different systems
WordPress XML	These files can be imported into WordPress and the resources can be easily adapted into an interactive website.
EPUB	EPUB files are designed for portability. These files are used for most eBooks and other eReaders. The point of these files is not to provide editing capability, but to deliver a comprehensive package that contains all elements of a book including text and images — like a zipped package — to a device for reading.

Ways that I can adapt this guide

Pressbooks is available to staff and faculty at all post-secondary institutions in B.C. on the [BC Pressbook site](#).¹ This allows each institution program or course to copy this guide into your own instance of Pressbooks and adapt it to include local content, context, and resources. You can then export the guide you have created into any of the different formats above. You can also import this guide into your local instance and revise it, localize and adapt it there. This will also enable you to add multimedia or even interactive components.

Notes

1. BC Pressbooks: <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/>

Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal

an English word that means “from original.” In the Indian Act, Aboriginal includes the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. In many cases, the preferred term is Indigenous.

Colonization

occurs when a new group of people migrates into a territory and then takes over and begins to control the Indigenous group. The settlers impose their own cultural values, religions, and laws, seizing land and controlling access to resources and trade. As a result, the Indigenous people become dependent on the settlers.

Comprehensive Land Claims

the Government of Canada’s term for modern treaties.

Cultural appropriation

the adoption or use of culturally significant items by someone from another culture. Usually, during this process the original meaning is lost or distorted.

Douglas Treaties

14 land purchase completed between 1850 and 1854 by James Douglas, governor of the British colony of Vancouver Island. They applied to territories on Vancouver Island and covered small tracts of land around Victoria, Nanaimo, and Port Hardy.

Eskimo/Esquimaux

a settler term historically used to refer to Inuit. It is neither accurate nor respectful and should not be used.

First Nations

the accepted term for people who are Indigenous and who do not identify as Inuit or Métis. Today there are around 630 First Nations in Canada.

Historic treaties

treaties signed by First Nations and the British and Canadian governments between 1701 and 1923.

Indian

refers to the legal identity of a First Nations person who is registered under the Indian Act. It should be used only within this legal context, and is otherwise considered an offensive term.

Indian Act

legislation passed by the federal government of the Dominion of Canada in 1876, and still in existence today, giving it jurisdiction or control over “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians.”

Indigenous Peoples

from the Latin *indigena*, meaning “sprung from the land; native.” Indigenous is being used synonymously with Aboriginal, and in many cases is the preferred term. It includes the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.

Innu

a First Nation in eastern Canada. They are not Inuit.

Intergenerational trauma

where the effects of traumatic experiences are passed on to the next generations.

Inuit (singular Inuk)

an Indigenous group living in the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and Russia. Historically they were referred to in Canada as “Eskimos” or “Esquimaux,” but this term is neither accurate nor respectful and should not be used.

Inuktitut

one of the dialects of the Inuit language spoken in Nunavut.

Métis

a distinct Indigenous group with formal recognition equal to that of the First Nations and Inuit. Their ancestors were French and Scottish men who migrated to Canada in the 17th and 18th centuries to work in the fur trade and who had children with First Nations women and then formed new communities. The families and their descendants were most often referred to as Métis (from the French for “to mix”).

Michif

a language historically spoken by Métis people, mixing words from French, Cree, and Dene.

Micro-aggressions

a term sometimes used to describe the insults, dismissals, or casual degradations a dominant

culture inflicts on a marginalized group of people. Often they are a form of unintended discrimination, but one that has the same effect as willful discrimination. Usually perpetrators intend no offence and are unaware they are causing harm. Generally, they are well-meaning and consider themselves to be unprejudiced.

Modern treaties

treaties being negotiated today in B.C. through tri-partite negotiations with three levels of government: the First Nation, the Government of Canada, and the Province of British Columbia. The first modern treaty in B.C. was completed in 1999 with the Nisga'a First Nation. Some First Nations in B.C. do not agree with the treaty process.

Non-Status Indian

a person who identifies as Indian but who is not entitled to registration under the Indian Act. Some non-Status Indians may be members of a First Nation.

Numbered Treaties

11 treaties signed by the First Nations peoples and the reigning monarchs of Canada between 1871 and 1921, providing the settler government with large tracts of land in exchange for promises that varied by treaty.

Peace and Friendship Treaties

treaties signed in the Maritimes between 1725 and 1779 intended to end hostilities and encourage co-operation between the British and Mi'kmaq and Maliseet First Nations.

Status Indian

a person who is recognized by the federal government as being registered under the Indian Act. Status Indians may be entitled to certain programs and services offered by federal agencies and provincial governments.

Terra nullius

“nobody’s land” – unexplored landscapes drawn by European map-makers as blank spaces representing empty land waiting to be settled, rather than territories occupied by Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years.

Traditional territory

the geographic area identified by a First Nation as the land they and their ancestors traditionally occupied and used.

Treaty

a document viewed by settlers and settler governments as transferring and surrendering title and control of Indigenous Peoples' land to them.

Turtle Island

the name the Lenape, Iroquois, Anishnaabe, and other Woodland Nations gave to North America. The name comes from a story about Sky Woman. Many Indigenous people, Indigenous rights activists, and environmental activists now use the term for North America.

Unceded lands

lands that First Nations people never ceded/surrendered or legally signed away to the Crown or to Canada.

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Overview

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Versioning History

This page provides a record of changes made to this guide since publication. Each set of edits is acknowledged with a 0.01 increase in the version number. The exported files for this guide reflect the most recent version.

If you find an error in this guide, please fill out the [Report an Error](#) form.¹

Versioning History

Version	Date	Type of change	Description
1.00	September 5, 2018	Book published.	
1.01	May 23, 2019	Error correction in <u>Inuit</u> chapter.	<p>Error: Inuit have one language, called Inuktitut. It is spoken in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Northern Quebec, and Nunatsiavut (Labrador). Each region has its own dialect.</p> <p>Correction: The Inuit language is made up of a variety of dialects that vary from region to region. The Government of Nunavut selected the term Inuktitut to represent all Inuit dialects spoken in Nunavut, including Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. However, even within Nunavut there are variations in pronunciation and vocabulary.²</p> <p>The glossary definition for “Inuktitut” and the reference list were updated to align with this change.</p>
1.02	August 6, 2019	Updated the book’s theme.	The styles of this book have been updated, which may affect the page numbers of the PDF and print copy.
1.03	October 2, 2019	ISBNs and Metadata	eBook and Print ISBNs, licence and publisher information added.

1.04	October 16, 2020	Updated broken links	<p>Corrected broken links for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRC: What have learned. Principles of Truth and Reconciliation • Apology from the Government of Canada to the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools • History of Idle No More
1.05	May 5, 2021	Added paragraph to <u>Acknowledging Traditional Territories</u> .	A paragraph was inserted at the end of this chapter to provide additional context about the limitations of the specific map and to link to additional resources.
1.06	November 2, 2021	Error correction in <u>Aboriginal or Indigenous?</u> and <u>Glossary of Terms</u> .	The “Ab” in Aboriginal was incorrectly interpreted as meaning “not.” The text was corrected to clarify that “ab” can mean “from” or “away from.”
1.07	August 22, 2024	Revised heading level, glossary, and broken links.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised heading level for accessibility. • Glossary terms are re-applied using the Pressbooks Glossary tool. • Fixed broken links throughout the book.

Notes

1. Report an Open Textbook Error: <https://open.bccampus.ca/use-open-textbooks/reporting-an-open-textbook->

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2. Correction made based on information from the following source <https://tusaalanga.ca/node/2502>