

Person's Guide to kihêw waciston (and other Indigenous spaces)

Who are Indigenous People?

Important Definitions

How to be Respectful in Indigenous Spaces

Additional Resources

Who are Indigenous people?



According to the government of Canada, Indigenous peoples are “the original peoples of North America [Turtle Island] and their descendants”. While all Indigenous people share a relation to the First Peoples, Indigenous groups are vastly diverse! Indigenous people live in both urban and rural areas. Some participate in cultural practices and some do not. Some are visibly Indigenous and others are not. Different Indigenous groups have different languages and cultures, and all Indigenous people are unique with different values and interests.

(Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada; 2024)



The above painting is titled “All My Relatives” and was created by Wade Stamp from Saddle Lake First Nations. The work represents the idea that all Indigenous peoples are welcome here and that we are all related. The original painting and a glass recreation can be seen at kihew.waciston.com.

First Nations

“First Nations” is a general term that refers to groups of Indigenous people who are distinct from Métis and Inuit peoples. Many nations and communities fall under the First Nations umbrella such as Cree (nêhiyaw), Dene, Saulteaux, or Stoney Nakoda (these groups also happen to be the four signatories of Treaty Six)



(Parrott et al., 2006)

Métis



The Métis are an Indigenous group with both First Nations and European settler ancestry. A common misconception is that the group includes any person who has a mix of First Nations and European ancestry, however, Métis people are different from mixed Indigenous people. Métis people have their own unique culture and heritage that can be traced back to early settlements on Turtle Island.

(Gaudry et al., 2009)

Inuit

“Inuit — Inuktitut for “the people” — are an Indigenous people, the majority of whom inhabit the northern regions of Canada. An Inuit person is known as an Inuk. The Inuit homeland is known as Inuit Nunangat, which refers to the land, water and ice contained in the Arctic region.”



(Aodla Freeman et al., 2010, para. 1)

Indigenous

Used internationally to describe the first people of many countries. In Canada, used to describe First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people legally and colloquially.

Aboriginal

A newer term adopted in the Constitution Act of 1982 to describe First Nations, Metis, Inuit people. Used mostly in legal works.

Indian

Used to describe First Nations people in a historic colloquial way and legally. This term can be seen as offensive and should generally be avoided by non-Indigenous people unless referring to legal documents.

Do You Know What These Words Actually Mean?

Native American

Used to describe Indigenous people from the United States.

Status

A person who (under the Indian Act) are registered or entitled to be registered as Indians under the Indian Act.

Non-Status

A legal term for First Nations person who is NOT registered under the Indian Act.

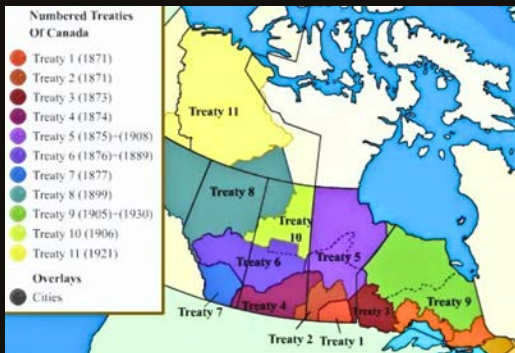
CANADA & THE CROWN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Treaties

"In Canada, treaties are legal documents made between the First Nations people and the Crown. ... Early contact treaties were mostly concerning issues of peace and friendship. Today there are eleven

"Numbered Treaties" which were signed between 1871 and 1921. The government thought the treaties would help to assimilate First Nation peoples into white, colonial society and culture. For First Nations people, treaties were oral agreements that discussed the sharing of the land. These oral agreements were later written by the government, omitting certain oral promises. Oral tradition and spoken words held more importance to First Nations people than what was written on paper" (Alberta Treaties 6, 7, 8, n.d., p. 1).

You may have heard the term "we are all treaty people"; this means that everyone on treaty land has the responsibility to live by and uphold the promises that were made in the treaties. What Treaty land do you reside on, and what does that treaty say?



The Indian Act

Introduced in 1876, the act “gave the government sweeping powers with regards to First Nations identity, political structures, governance, cultural practices and education. These powers restricted Indigenous freedoms and allowed officials to determine Indigenous rights and benefits based on “good moral character” (Indian Act, n.d.). The act included laws that banned ceremony and dancing, and generally forced Indigenous people to assimilate. While there have been changes made to the act, many people today call for it to be abolished due to its roots in oppression.

Residential Schools, Day Schools, & the 60's Scoop

From the 1830's to the 1990's, residential schools and day schools were used as a form of cultural genocide. Thousands of Indigenous children were sexually, physically, and emotionally abused, and many died at the hands of the schools. The goal of the schools was to force the children to assimilate into non-Indigenous culture. The effects of these schools is still present today in survivors, as well as their families through intergenerational trauma.

The 60's scoop was another well known attempt by the government to assimilate Indigenous children. During this time, Indigenous children were apprehended by the government and moved to non-Indigenous families, leaving children traumatized. While many people know about the 60's scoop, many do not realize that “scoops” have continued to happen well after the 60's, and some argue continue to this day.

Today

Trauma from the impacts of colonization and genocide are still present today in all Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in the justice system, the child welfare system, are less likely to succeed academically, and have poorer social determinants of health compared to the general population. Despite this, Indigenous peoples are making great strides in healing and revitalizing culture.

MEDICINES

Hundreds of different plants and fungi are used as medicine by Indigenous peoples; however, there are four or five that are used commonly in ceremony.

The sacred medicines are cedar, sage, sweetgrass and tobacco or fungus (depending on who you ask). These medicines may be used in ceremony, to smudge, or as gifts.

(The four sacred medicines, n.d.)

It is important to note that Tobacco is a different “type” of medicine, and to some people, it is not seen as a medicine at all. Rather than being used to treat an ailment, tobacco is used to connect with the spiritual universe.

SMUDGING

Smudging is a ceremonial practice that involves the burning of one or more of the sacred medicines, and using the smoke to cleanse or purify a space, object or person. It is believed that smudging removes negativity and cleanses the mind, body, and spirit.

Smudging is commonly used before gatherings or in ceremony, but can be used at any time.

There is no wrong way to smudge, but if you are unsure of how to start, ask a knowledge keeper.

(The importance of smudging, 2023)

CEREMONY

Ceremony is a central part of Indigenous cultures. There are many different types of ceremonies, but they are generally all intended to strengthen a person's connection to the spirit world and creator.

From the 1800s until the 1950s Indigenous ceremonies were banned by the Canadian government. Participating in ceremonies today can be an important part of connecting to culture and cultural revitalization for Indigenous peoples.

PROTOCOL

It is customary to provide elders, knowledge keepers, or other Indigenous people or organizations with an offering (protocol) when they provide you with a teaching or service.

Protocol is often in the form of tobacco and/or fabric known as broadcloth.

However offerings can vary; some knowledge keepers do not accept certain items, so asking them beforehand can be helpful. A gift such as coffee or a gift card can also be appropriate to offer.

How can I be **respectful** in Indigenous spaces?

Remember you are a guest

Indigenous spaces and organizations (such as kihêw waciston) are here to serve Indigenous people. Please aim to uplift and prioritize Indigenous folks!

Practice allyship 100% of the time

Stand up for Indigenous people in and outside of Indigenous spaces. By associating with Indigenous people and spaces, you are agreeing to be an ally no matter where you are.

Treat our sacred spaces how you would treat any other sacred space

How would you act in a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple? The same behaviour should be used around our medicines and sacred items!



Ask questions

If you are unsure of something, ask!

But Remember...

Most Indigenous people are not spokespeople for the community. Indigenous peoples are not a monolith, meaning one person does not speak for all Indigenous people. Additionally, if somebody did not “sign up” to answer your questions, ask someone else. Students who are minding their business are not the appropriate people to ask about Indigenous culture and issues, ask a staff member or knowledge keeper instead.

Seek out Indigenous Joy

Indigenous culture is full of beauty, humour, diversity, and joy! It can be easy to focus on the negative effects of colonization but don't forget to explore the many positive aspects of Indigenous culture. Whether you like crafts, sports, music, literature, or just having a good time, there is something for everyone!

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Additional Resources

Indigenous Peoples:

The Canadian Encyclopedia

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/collection/aboriginal-peoples>

Hundreds of articles and videos on topics from conflicts to sports to art to leaders.



The Truth and Reconciliation

Commission Calls to Action

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf

The TRC's direct calls to action for the Canadian government and all Canadians.



Indigenous Canada Course:

University of Alberta

<https://www.ualberta.ca/en/admissions-programs/online-courses/indigenous-canada/index.html>

Take a FREE course through the UofA on Indigenous history, culture, and more.



APTN News

<https://www.aptnnews.ca/>

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network is an Indigenous broadcasting network. Keep up with stories that are important to Indigenous people, written by Indigenous people.



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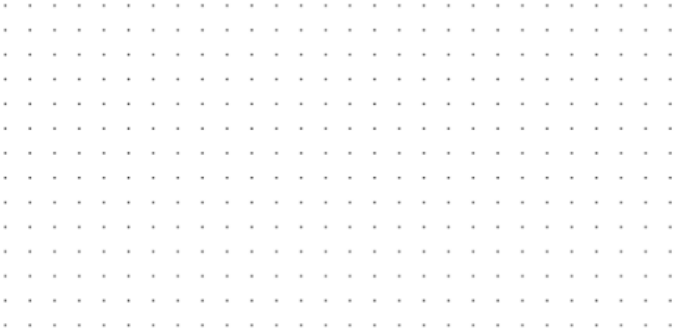
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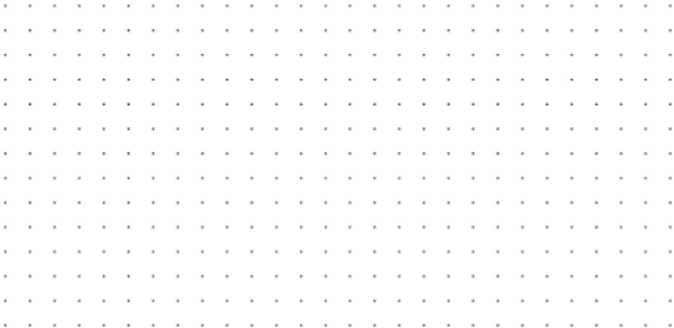
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I will show respect in
Indigenous spaces
by...

A rectangular area filled with a grid of small, evenly spaced dots, intended for handwritten notes.

I will support
Indigenous people
by...

A rectangular area filled with a grid of small, evenly spaced dots, intended for handwritten notes.

This image shows a full page of dot grid paper. The dots are arranged in a precise, repeating square pattern across the entire surface. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

This image shows a full page of dot grid paper. The dots are arranged in a precise, repeating pattern across the entire surface, forming a grid that can be used for writing, drawing, or planning. The dots are small and evenly spaced both horizontally and vertically.

