

Decolonization Learning Journey

A four-part Learning Journey with Mi'kmaw Elders and knowledge sharers.

List of terminology

Aboriginal: a legal term defined in the Canadian Constitution. Section 35(2) of the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982* defines Aboriginal peoples of Canada as Indian, Inuit, and Métis. All Aboriginal peoples are Indigenous, but all Indigenous peoples are not Aboriginal.

Colonization: the process of settling or establishing control over Indigenous peoples. This process can take the form of early contact and settlement but can also take the form of modern policies and legislation that continues to impose control and regulate the lives of Indigenous peoples.

Contact: the term used to describe the first arrival of Europeans in the Americas

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada: the federal government department responsible for policies pertaining to Indigenous peoples in Canada (formerly known as Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)

Elder: an influential community member and knowledge holder who is recognized and respected for their teachings, values, and principles.

Elected chief: a chief whose authority to lead comes from an election process under the *Indian Act* system. Elected chiefs and councilors represent their communities and are accountable to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Explorers: Europeans who travelled to what is known today as North America to discover, establish, and settle new lands.

First Nation: First Nation people are the Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are located south of the Arctic. Individual nations also have terms for themselves as Indigenous people, for example, the Mi'kmaq use the term "L'nuk" or "L'nu."

Hereditary chief: a chief whose authority and title has been passed down through generations or through traditional selection processes. Chiefs on the Mi'kmaq Grand Council are hereditary chiefs.

Indian Act: the principal statute for governing First Nations in Canada. The *Act* does not apply to Inuit or Métis people and communities. The *Indian Act* allows the federal government to administer status, governments, land and money.

Indian: a term not commonly used in modern day Canada. It has largely been replaced by First Nation. The legal definition of Indian as outlined in the *Indian Act* of 1876 is still used in issues pertaining to the law. It is still used to describe Indian status

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Indigenous: an inclusive term which is becoming increasingly popular for those who see themselves as Indigenous. It means “of the land” and it not imposed by law or the Government of Canada.

Inuit: a distinct group of Aboriginal Canadians who are neither First Nations, or Métis. In Inuktitut, Inuit means “the People.” Historically the term Eskimo was used to describe the Indigenous peoples of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland; however, Eskimo is seen as demeaning and unacceptable, and has fallen out of use when referring to Arctic and subarctic peoples.

L’nu: or L’nuk, is the term the Mi’kmaq use to describe themselves as Indigenous people. It means “the people.”

Land code: the development and successful implementation of a land code allows a First Nation community can remove themselves the provisions of the *Indian Act* and develop their own laws

Métis: the descendants of Indigenous and European settlers who formed mixed communities around the fur trade. The Métis are recognized as Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The term Métis is viewed differently across the country and its use can be complex and contentious

Mi’kma’ki: the land or territory of the Mi’kmaq. It includes the Atlantic Provinces, some of Maine, and the Gaspé region of Quebec.

Mi’kmaq: an Algonquian Indigenous nation who occupy the territory of Mi’kma’ki (Atlantic Canada and the Gaspé peninsula). This spelling indicates reference to the collective or the plural form. It roughly translates to “family” or “relations.”

Mi’kmaw: the singular form of Mi’kmaq. This spelling can also be used as an adjective where it precedes a noun (Mi’kmaw people, Mi’kmaw rights).

Reconciliation: the restoration of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada through the establishment and maintenance of mutually respectful relationships.

Reserve: a portion of land owned by the Canadian government that has been set aside for First Nation peoples.

Self-governance: allows Indigenous nations to build their governance capacity and institutions, and take increased control over law-making authority.

Taxation: the tax system in Canada collects taxes from citizens to support services for all Canadians and to redistribute wealth. More than half of the Indigenous people living in Canada pay tax. Inuit, Métis, non-status Indians, and status Indians who move off reserve, are not exempt from paying tax in Canada.

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Treaty: agreements made between two, or possibly even several Nations or governments. Treaties are meant to govern the relationship between parties. Another name for a treaty may be an agreement or covenant.

Two-Eyed Seeing: seeing with a traditional (or Indigenous) eye, while acknowledging and seeing with a “western” eye.

Unama'ki: the Mi'kmaw word for Cape Breton Island. It loosely translates to “Land of Fog.”



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