

Issue Brief: Reconciliation

Indigenous: The original people inhabiting land prior to conquest or colonization. Canadian institutions are transitioning away from “Indian” and “Aboriginal,” as they are seen as outdated despite remaining legal terms. In Canada, Indigenous peoples include First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. There are over 60 Indigenous languages in Canada.

Status Indian: The federal legal term for a person of First Nations heritage, as defined by the Indian Act.

Aboriginal: The collective term that encompasses three distinct groups: First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. It was used by government and national groups most commonly with the addition of Section 35 to the Canadian Constitution through the 1982 Constitution Act.

First Nations/First Peoples: First Nations and First Peoples are descriptors referring to those formerly or otherwise known as Indians, but not Métis or Inuit, in Canada. In Canada, there are 634 First Nations communities and over 50 distinct nations, including Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Dene and Sto:lo. Within these, there are more specific bands and clans.

Inuit: Indigenous people of northern Canada (Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Northern Quebec) and part of Greenland and Alaska. Inuit means ‘the people’ in the Inuktitut language.

Métis: People of mixed First Nations and European ancestry (namely Scottish and French), who formed their own unique cultural markers, traditions and language called Michif.

Turtle Island: The name given to North America by the Lenape, Iroquois and Anishinaabe peoples.

A Brief History of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island



According to Statistics Canada, Toronto's Indigenous population is approximately 20,000 (per the 2011 Census). But a recent study by St. Michael's Hospital estimates the population may be two or three times larger - between 34,000 and 69,000.

People for Education's annual school survey shows that only 27% of Toronto's secondary schools and 2% of elementary schools offer programs in Indigenous Studies. The Toronto District School Board has approved a plan for a K-12 First Nations school, which follows the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report that recommended educational reform.

A 2016 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study examines Indigenous child poverty in Canada. The study used the LIM-AT (low income measure – after tax) and is the first to apply this measure to reserves and territories. The highest poverty rates were seen among children who were: Status First Nations (51% overall, 60% on reserve, and 40% off reserve); immigrants (32%); non-status First Nations (29%); Inuit (25%); Métis (23%); and racialized (22%).

n.b. Indian Status as defined by the Indian Act was determined by patrilineal ancestry. Amendments such as Bill C-35 have attempted to make Indian Status more inclusive, but many people are still ineligible or have lost status through the changes. [Read more.](#)

EnviroNics Institute released a 2016 report on the opinions of Canadian residents towards reconciliation. They found that a majority agreed that "individual Canadians have a role in bringing about reconciliation" and supported specific rights and calls to action.

Do individual Canadians have a role in bringing about reconciliation?

2008



2016



Learn More:

- Native Women's Centre: [The Seven Grandfather Teachings](#)
 - Mississaugas of New Credit First Nations: [The Toronto Purchase](#)
 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission: [Final Report and Calls to Action](#)
 - Native Women's Association of Canada: [Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls](#)
 - Reconciliation Canada: [National Narrative on Reconciliation Report](#)
 - United Nations: [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
 - The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: [The Declaration of Action](#)
 - Joseph Boyden: [Wenjack](#)
 - David Hackett: [Champlain's Dream](#)
 - Rupert Ross: [Dancing with a Ghost - Exploring Aboriginal Reality](#)
 - Thomas King: [The Inconvenient Indian](#)
- [More Resources](#)

Support for Aboriginal rights and reconciliation

