

## Aboriginal References

**Aboriginal peoples** The original inhabitants of a land and their descendants. In 1982, the Canadian Constitution recognized three groups of Aboriginal peoples — First Nations, Métis, and Inuit — each with diverse sets of communities with their own histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

**First Nations** In Canada, the group of Aboriginal peoples formerly or alternatively known as Indians (a disfavoured term see Indians). “First Nations” refers to individuals — more than 500 000 First Nations people live in Canada — and to communities (or reserves) and their governments (or band councils). The term, which arose in the 1980s, is politically significant because it implies possession of rights arising from historical occupation and use of territory. Though no Canadian legal definition of this term exists (the Constitution refers to Indians), the United Nations considers the term synonymous with Indigenous peoples.

**Indians** Groups of Aboriginal peoples, who generally prefer to be called First Nations. The term “Indian” is still commonly used by Canadian governments, including in the Constitution. First Nations people generally disfavour the term because it originated in early European explorers’ mistaken impression that they had landed in India. It also ignores the great diversity of history and cultures among various First Nations.

**Indigenous peoples** The original inhabitants of a land and their descendants.

**Inuit** The Aboriginal people of northern Canada, who live primarily in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Labrador, and northern Québec. Inuit peoples also live in Greenland, Russia, and the American state of Alaska.

**Métis** A group of Aboriginal peoples with First Nations and European ancestry. Métis people identify with Métis history and culture, which dates to the fur trade era, when First Nations women and European (mostly French and British) men married and had children. The federal government refused for many years to give political recognition to the Métis, but they received recognition as Aboriginal people in the Constitution Act of 1982.