

INTRODUCTION TO INDIGENOUS REALITIES

To begin this educational pathway, we will suggest some basic vocabulary when speaking about Indigenous people.

We want to help you understand why it is important to use the appropriate terminology. Once you familiarize yourself with the terms, we will talk about the notion of territory.

It is important for us to illustrate the distinction between Indigenous Peoples’ traditional land and the reserve land on which they were displaced. This will help you understand how colonization disrupted Indigenous Peoples’ relationship with the land. In the last sub-section, you will have the opportunity to listen to Indigenous Peoples’ expertise.

TERMINOLOGY

Many of the labels given to Indigenous groups throughout history were imposed by Europeans: Indian, Savage, etc. By this process, Indigenous Peoples were stripped of their identities and belittled with denigrating labels.

For this reason, it is crucial to respect the process by which Indigenous groups reclaim their identity, their names, and the terms they use to describe themselves.



How to talk about Indigenous People

CBC Indigenous

In this video, Inuk journalist Ossie Michelin presents a friendly how-to guide on terminology. He explains the difference between the terms Indigenous, First Nation, Inuit and Métis.



A rose by any other name is a mihkokwaniy

Indigenous Issues 101, Chelsea Vowel.

In this online publication, Métis writer Chelsea Vowel explains why the terms used to refer to Indigenous Peoples keep changing and helps us understand the vocabulary used today by Indigenous Peoples when referring to themselves.



Identity

Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada [Métis section, Chapter 1]

This chapter from the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada will help clarify the distinction between métis identity and Métis communities. This atlas was written in collaboration with the Métis National Council.



Lexicon of Terminology

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

This lexicon published by the “Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls” contains the definitions for many concepts and terms that are useful for understanding and talking about Indigenous realities.

INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

You may have heard North America referred to as "Turtle Island." In many First Nations' Creation Stories, it is said that the territory where we live is carried on the back of a turtle. For example, the Kanien'kehá:ka say that the first inhabitants arrived from the sky onto the back of a turtle. They describe it as a big island in the middle of a large body of water.

KEPEK

In this pathway, we have chosen to use the word *Kepek* to refer to the Province of Quebec. The name Quebec actually originates from the word *kepek* or *kapak*, an expression that means "get off" or "disembark" in Atikamekw Nehirowimowin, Innu-Aimun¹ and other Indigenous languages.

KANATA

In this pathway, the name *Kanata* is used to refer to the country of Canada. The word Canada comes directly from Indigenous Iroquoian languages. In Kanien'kéha (Mohawk), Kanata means "town" or "village".²

In this subsection, we invite you to learn about the history and long relationship that Indigenous Peoples have with the land and to deconstruct colonial concepts of borders and nations.

Native Land

Native Land Digital

This interactive map is designed to help users identify Indigenous Nations, territories and communities. It includes information on the languages spoken in each territory and the division of Indigenous traditional territories by treaty.

11 Nations Map

Amnesty International

This map identifies the 10 First Nations and Inuit that live in Kepek. It shows the location of the 55 Indigenous communities. These territories are land that has been colonially delineated by the federal government. It is therefore not necessarily their traditional or ancestral territory.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Indigenous Directions Leadership Group,
Concordia University

This resource was prepared by the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group of Concordia University. It provides a detailed explanation of how to pronounce a territorial acknowledgement for events that take place in Tiohtià:ke, the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) word used to refer to Montreal, and explains its importance.

Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements

âpihtawikosisân, Chelsea Vowell

In this blog publication, Métis writer Chelsea Vowell gives her opinion on territorial acknowledgements. She provides suggestions in order to prevent territorial acknowledgements from being stripped of their power through repetition.

¹ Desjardins, C. Guide d'accompagnement. Je m'appelle humain. (2021).

² The Origin of the name Canada, Canadian Encyclopedia. (2019)

UNLEARNING COLONIAL HISTORY

The history of Kanata was written by the settlers. Indigenous Peoples, though their bodies and voices, were erased from the narrative. In this section, you will have the opportunity to listen to Indigenous Peoples share their experiences and expertise.



Discovery

Telling our Twisted Histories, CBC Podcasts

In the first episode of Telling our Twisted Histories, host Kaniehtiio Horn asks Indigenous Peoples what the word “discovery” means to them, in order to see how they envision decolonizing the word and to rewrite this part of history from an Indigenous perspective.



Colonization Road

First Hand, CBC Docs

Anishinaabe comedian Ryan McMahon talks about the structure of colonization and the way in which roads were used to displace Indigenous Peoples by invading territory without consent. The documentary also explains the “logic” behind settler colonialism.

Additional Resources

- Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada**, Vowel, C. HighWater Press.
- The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America**, King, T. University of Minnesota Press.
- Our Story: Aboriginal Voices on Canada’s Past**, M. Campbell and al., Anchor Canada.
- You Are on Indian Land**, National Film Board of Canada.
- Meaningful Land Acknowledgements**, Lindsay Brant, Center for Teaching & Learning, Queen’s University.
- Kabak**, Wapikoni.
- Telling our Twisted Histories**, Terre Innue and CBC Podcasts
- The Border Crossed Us**, All my Relations.
- Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada**, Canadian Geographic.

Borders

Thomas King



In this short story, Cherokee author Thomas King invites his readers to think about how colonial borders have disrupted the way in which Indigenous Peoples live on their traditional land.

Gifts of the Land | A Guided Nature Tour with Robin Wall Kimmerer

The Commons, Kansas University



Potawatomi botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer takes us on a guided tour in the forest. She talks about the land as a teacher, as a caretaker and she explains the relationality that links us to the territory.