

Indigenous Peoples in Turtle Island (Canada)

June 21st, is National Indigenous Peoples Day. It is an opportunity for all Canadians to celebrate the unique heritage, diversity and amazing contributions First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have contributed to Turtle Island (the land we call Canada). There are three distinct groups; First Nations, Métis and Inuit which are all Indigenous peoples. Although Indigenous groups share similarities, they are all unique in their languages, spiritual beliefs and heritage.



First Nations: This is the term we use to describe Indigenous people who are not Métis or Inuit. They were the original **occupants** of Turtle Island (the land we now call Canada) and were the first people to experience European contact, **negotiate** trades and settlement. **Statistics** Canada's 2016 **census** identified over 977 thousand people as First Nations. There are 634 First Nations in Turtle Island, speaking more than 50 **distinct** languages. Even within First Nations groups, there are members who prefer to be **identified** by their **tribal** or national identities. For example, they may choose to say, "I'm Haida," instead of "First Nation."

Métis: Some people argue about who should be called Métis, but the term is most often used to describe someone who has European-Indigenous **ancestry**. Meaning, these are people who can trace their origins to the Red River Valley and the Prairies. The Métis most commonly spoken language is called Michif. Michif is a combination of Cree and Métis French. There are also some English and Indigenous words that may be heard in Michif. Michif is spoken in scattered Métis communities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba and in North Dakota in the United States. There are about 300 Michif speakers in the Northwest Territories. In Alberta, there are about 50 speakers of Michif who are all over the age of 60. The total number of Michif speakers is **estimated** to be just over 1,100.

"First Nations drummers in Whistler's Canada Day parade" by [Ruth Hartnup](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Thoughtful consideration has been taken to ensure we pay respect to Indigenous peoples in our resources, with Truth and Reconciliation as our mission.

Inuit: The term Inuit refers to groups of people, usually in the far north of Turtle Island, that are not considered First Nations or Métis. Many Inuit live in 53 communities across the northern regions of the land we now call Canada. They **inhabit** the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut, Northern Quebec and the northeastern coast of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As of the 2016 census, over 65,000 Inuit lived in Turtle Island. The term “Eskimo” was **traditionally** what the Inuit were called, but this is not a term of respect nor is it **appropriate**. It should not be used. The word Inuit means “the people” in the Inuktitut language. There are a number of **dialects** that make up the Inuit language. The Government of Nunavut chose the term Inuktu to **represent** all the **dialects**.



Definitions and Questions

Define the following **bolded terms** from the reading passage. Read the passage again carefully for context clues.

occupants:

negotiate:

statistics:

census:

distinct:

identified:

tribal:

ancestry:

estimated:

inhabit:

traditionally:

appropriate:

dialects:

represent:

1. What day is National Indigenous Peoples Day?
2. What are the three distinct Indigenous groups in Turtle Island (Canada)?
3. How are Indigenous groups different from each other?
4. According to Canada's 2016 Census, about how many people identified as First Nations?

Definitions and Questions

5. What language do Métis people speak?
6. What two languages make up Michif?
7. In what areas do most Inuit live?
8. What does the name Inuit mean?