

## Glossary

The definitions provided here reflect the context of this textbook. In other contexts, some words and terms have alternative meanings.

**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.

**Aboriginal rights:** privileges or powers accorded to Aboriginal peoples due to their original or longstanding use and occupancy of the land. These rights vary depending on each group's cultural customs, practices, and traditions, but may include rights to hunt, trap, and fish on ancestral lands.

**Aboriginal title:** the legal right to the exclusive use and occupancy of ancestral land by Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal title is a collective property right.

**Adhesion:** an addition to an existing treaty in which First Nations become part of the agreement

**Alienate:** to give another individual or group a sense of being out of harmony or excluded. Years spent at residential schools left many Aboriginal individuals with a sense of alienation from both their cultural heritage and mainstream society.

**Alliances:** working partnerships in pursuit of common interests

**Assimilation:** the process of absorbing or being absorbed by a group or system. In Canada during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, government policies of assimilation attempted to make Aboriginal peoples adopt non-Aboriginal culture.

**Band:** a term defined by the Indian Act to describe a territorially based group of First Nations people who share a common culture and ancestry; e.g., the Samson Cree Nation

**Band councils:** a term defined by the Indian Act to describe the governments of bands. Each band council includes one or more chiefs and several councillors.

**Bill C-31:** a proposal to amend the Indian Act approved by parliament in 1985. The amendment increased First Nations control over band membership. It also removed the section of the act that stripped women of their status and rights — including the right to live on a reserve — when they married non-status men. As a result, 100 000 people — often referred to as *Bill C-31 Indians* — were able to have their status reinstated.

**Ceded lands:** lands to which legal title has been surrendered. *See Aboriginal title*

**Circular seasonal time frame:** a type of calendar system based on the cycles of nature through the four seasons and the repetitive changes — the migration of animals and birds and a changing food supply — that occur during those times. Traditionally, the activities, ceremonies, and rituals of First Nations and Inuit peoples centred on this sense of time.

**Collective rights:** privileges or powers that belong to a group of people. *See Individual rights*

**Colonization:** the establishment of a colony or colonies, involving one country taking political and economic control of another country or territory and attempting to change the existing culture, often by importing many people as settlers or administrators to encourage social transformation. The colonized country is usually exploited for the benefit of the colonizing country.

**Common law:** the legal system of most English-speaking countries, which is based on traditions and legal precedent. Common law is supplemented by statutory law, which is written legislation.

**Comprehensive land claims:** demands for title to certain lands that have never come under treaties or other legal agreements. Such demands are based on Aboriginal rights.

**Confederacy:** a formal alliance of nations, states, organizations, or individuals

**Consensus:** a collectively held opinion

**Constitution:** the written or unwritten set of principles and institutions by which a nation governs itself

**Crown:** a symbolic term denoting the British monarch, Canada's head of state. All government actions are carried out in the Queen's name, or on behalf of the Crown.

**Crown land:** land owned by the Crown and controlled by the federal or provincial government; such ownership dates back to the colonization of Canada, when land was claimed on behalf of the reigning monarch

**Cultural bias:** an attitude that favours one culture over another. A history textbook that ignores or diminishes the contributions of Aboriginal peoples illustrates a cultural bias.

**Cultural environment:** a geographic region that is home to groups of people sharing similar cultural characteristics. Much diversity can exist, however, even within a single cultural environment.

**Devolution:** the transfer of an unexercised right to an ultimate owner, especially by a central government to another administration

**Discrimination:** unequal treatment resulting from distinguishing one group of people as inferior to another, especially on the grounds of race, colour, or gender

**Displacement:** the state of people being forced to move from homelands as a result of war, abuse, disaster, or other conflict

**Enfranchise:** to endow with the rights of citizenship or membership, especially the right to vote. Enfranchisement was defined with respect to First Nations people in the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857. Enfranchisement, in this case, meant that First Nations individuals had to abandon their First Nations identity, assimilate into Euro-Canadian culture, and give up Indian status in order to receive the rights of Canadian citizenship. In some cases, First Nations individuals were not given a choice, but were automatically enfranchised for various reasons.

**Ethnocentrism:** the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others and the tendency to judge other cultures by the standards of one's own. Ethnocentrism can, but does not always, involve racism.

**Fee simple:** ownership of land in which the rights to use the land are unlimited

**Feudal:** a political and economic system of landholding based on reciprocal relationships between the Crown, nobles, and peasants. The nobles held the Crown's land in exchange for military service and peasants lived on the land and received military protection from the nobles in exchange for a share of their produce or service.

**Fiduciary:** a relationship of trust in which one party, which holds certain powers and privileges, must act in another party's best interests

**First Nations:** in Canada, the group of Aboriginal peoples formerly or alternately known as Indians (a disfavoured term; see *Indian*). First Nations refers to individuals — over 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 original historical occupation and use of territory. Though no Canadian legal definition of this term exists (the constitution refers to *Indians*), the United Nations considers it synonymous with *indigenous peoples*.

**Geographic environments:** territories that include distinctive land and water features, climate, and resources

**Geopolitical:** involving a combination of geographic and political factors that relate to or influence a nation or region

**Heterogeneous:** composed of differing elements or having unlike qualities; diverse. First Nations are heterogeneous. See *homogeneous*

**Holistic:** emphasizing the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts

**Homogeneous:** composed of or having the same or similar elements or qualities; uniform. A single First Nations community would be considered homogeneous. See *heterogeneous*

**Human rights:** privileges or powers regarded as fundamentally or inherently belonging to all persons, such as freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution

**Imperialism:** the policy of building and maintaining an empire or colonies in which many states and peoples, spread over a wide geographic area, are politically and economically controlled by one dominant state

**Inalienable:** cannot be transferred to another

**Indian:** a term used for a group of Aboriginal people who generally prefer (in Canada) 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 from 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.

**Indian Act:** the law governing First Nations people (and their descendants) who signed treaties or who were otherwise registered in the act's provisions. First passed in 1876 and amended many times since, the act designates federal government obligations towards registered individuals and regulations for the management of reserve lands.

**Indian register:** the federal government's list of Status Indians

**Indigenous peoples:** the original inhabitants of a land and their descendants

**Individual rights:** privileges or powers that belong to an individual. *See collective rights*

**Inherent rights:** privileges or powers in existence prior to Canada becoming a nation and outside of Canada's constitution or any other government or legal authority. Aboriginal peoples claim an inherent right to self-government based on their position as indigenous peoples. They exercised this right for centuries before European colonization, when their ability to exercise their rights was hampered. The Canadian government recognizes the inherent right of self-government and is now working to relinquish control over Aboriginal groups so that they can exercise it.

**Interdependent:** individuals or groups that rely upon one another for some purpose. A traditional Aboriginal worldview is holistic, in which the relationships between interdependent parts are more significant than any single part.

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

**Land claim:** a demand for title to or rights regarding certain territories. *See comprehensive land claims, specific land claims*

**Mainstream:** the ideas, values, and ways of behaving that are accepted by the majority of a country's people

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

**Migrations:** the movement of a group of people from one region to another. Some Aboriginal groups followed traditional ways of life based on seasonal patterns of movement. *See circular seasonal time frame*

**Mutual support:** a concept central to Aboriginal cultures in which relationships and activities benefit the whole rather than the individual

**Nation:** a community of people bound together by common traditions, culture, and usually language. Many nations have political independence and occupy a distinct territory.

**Natural laws:** systems governing how the natural world operates that can be learned through observation and experience. Such laws come from the Creator to allow all parts of creation to live in harmony.

**Non-ceded lands:** territories that Aboriginal peoples never made agreements to share

**Non-Status Indian:** a term created by the Indian Act that refers to First Nations people who are not registered, for whatever reason, according to the act's requirements and, therefore, do not qualify for the rights and benefits given to people registered as Status Indians

**Oral tradition:** a practice in which the entire body of knowledge, history, language, and all other aspects of a culture are passed from generation to generation through the spoken word

**Paternalistic:** of or relating to paternalism — a policy or practice of governing a group, usually employees or citizens of a state, in a way that a stereotypical father might deal with children, especially by providing for their needs without giving them rights or responsibilities, often with an element of charity and condescension

**Personal autonomy:** the ability of an individual to choose his or her own course of action. In traditional Aboriginal communities, individuals had personal autonomy, but usually acted in the best interests of the group because their holistic worldview made self-interest indistinguishable from the group's interest.

**Prejudice:** a preconceived idea, usually unfavourable, or an adverse judgment relating to an individual or group, often on the basis of social, physical, or cultural characteristics. Prejudice is an attitude that may lead to discrimination.

**Racism:** belief in the inferiority of a group of people solely because of their race, skin colour, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin

**Reserve:** land set aside, or reserved, by the government during the colonization of Canada for the use of a First Nation. The Crown holds legal title to reserve lands and the federal government has jurisdiction over reserves and the people living there.

**Resistance:** an act or instance of opposing or refusing to comply with rules, restrictions, or regulations considered unauthorized

**Scrip:** a government-issued certificate entitling the bearer to goods, money, or land

**Self-determination:** the principle that people of a territory have the authority to establish their own political, economic, and cultural futures without external interference

**Self-government:** a community's right to make decisions about matters internal to the community

**Sovereignty:** the authorized right and ability of a governing individual (e.g., a president or monarch) or institution of a society (e.g., a government) to exert political control over a given territory or people. Aboriginal claims to sovereignty generally centre on the right of a nation to rule itself without external control or inference.

**Specific land claims:** demands for land or other compensation that are made when a First Nation believes the government has not properly fulfilled treaty or other obligations

**Status Indian:** a term created by the Indian Act that refers to a First Nations person who is registered according to the act's requirements and therefore qualifies for certain rights and benefits

**Stereotype:** a rigid and inflexible mental image that portrays all individuals of an ethnic, national, cultural, or other group as being without individual characteristics

**Traditional:** Aboriginal ways of life that existed before political, economic, and social colonization by non-Aboriginal societies, as well as contemporary Aboriginal people or ways of life that are connected to the spiritual, social, and cultural teachings of this time period

**Traditional territory:** a region historically inhabited and used by an Aboriginal people

**Treaties:** legal agreements or contracts between two or more sovereign nations that set out obligations and responsibilities for both or all parties

**Treaty rights:** special rights to land or other entitlements due to people recognized as Treaty Indians under negotiated treaties. These rights depend on the precise terms and conditions of the treaty. No two treaties are identical, but usually they provide rights such as entitlement to reserve lands, hunting and fishing rights, annuities (small annual payments) for members, and sometimes freedom from certain types of taxation.

**Tripartite agreements:** deals between three groups to further some common purpose. The most common type of tripartite agreement involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada involves an Aboriginal government, a provincial or territorial government, and the federal government.

**Usufructuary rights:** the legal ability to use or receive benefit from a possession, such as land, without owning it in fee simple

**Worldview:** the perspective from which a person perceives, understands, and reacts to the world around them. People from a common culture share many elements of the same worldview.



## Suggested Resources for Further Reading and Research

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