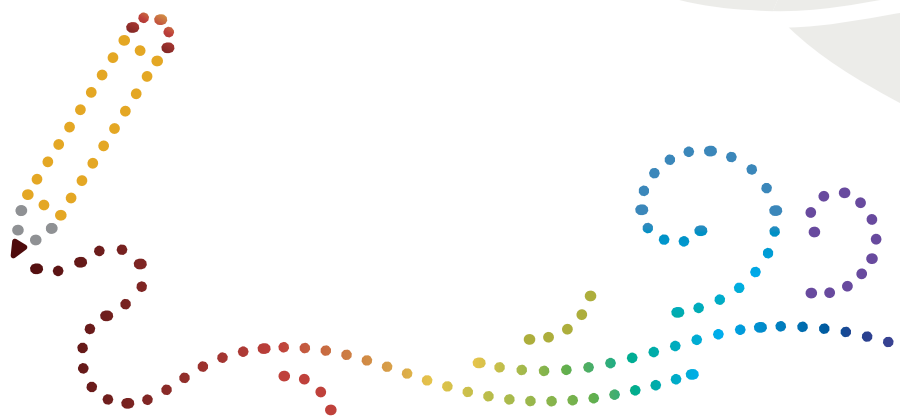


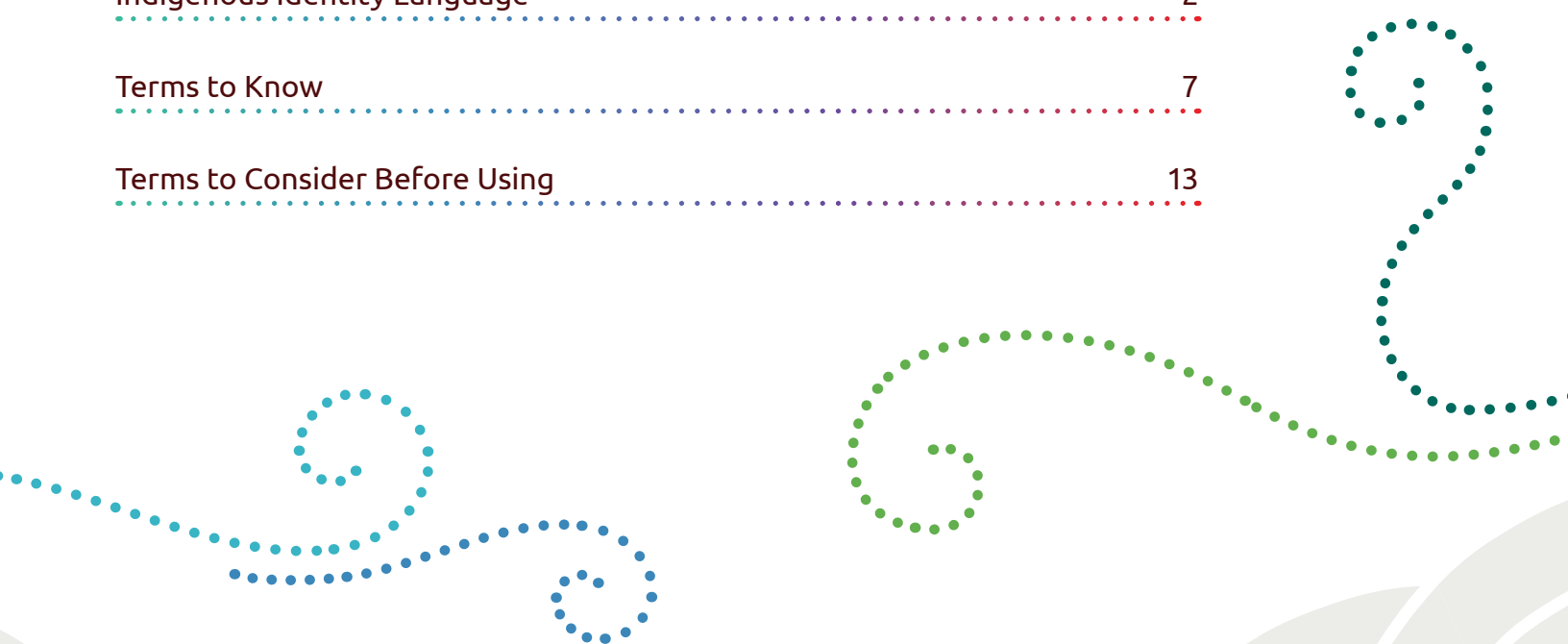
Indigenous Inclusion Language



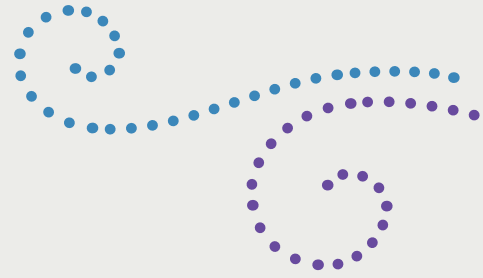
This language guide includes three sections to support your language journey towards Indigenous inclusion. The first section highlights current and historical language about Indigenous identities; the second section is terminology that often surfaces about or connected to experiences of Indigeneity or disability, and the third section is focused on terms to avoid using with an explanation about why to avoid it, and what to use instead.

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Indigenous Identity Language



These terms are about Indigenous identities, and shares both current and past language to support your learning on why and how terms have been used. A key piece to keep in mind is that most language about Indigenous peoples has been put upon them as ways to describe very diverse cultures and peoples. These terms have usually not been created or used by Indigenous peoples. As you start to build relationships with Indigenous peoples, get to know them, learn their names and the Nations or communities that they come from.

Indian Act

The Indian Act, first passed in 1876, is a Canadian law that controls many aspects of the lives of Indigenous peoples legally recognized as “Indians.” It regulates identity, reserves, and governance. While it grants certain rights, the Act was created to assimilate Indigenous peoples, enforce colonial control, and disrupt traditional ways of life.

Historical Context:

- Banned cultural ceremonies like the potlatch and sun dance.
- Restricted movement through the pass system.
- Forced band councils to replace traditional leadership.
- Took away the status of Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men

Present-Day Implications:

Although some discriminatory rules have been removed, the Act still limits Indigenous self-governance. Many Indigenous leaders advocate for replacing it with laws that respect Indigenous sovereignty and nation-to-nation relationships.

References and further reading:

Joseph, B. (2018). *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*. Indigenous Relations Press.

McIvor, S. (2004). *Gender Discrimination under the Indian Act*. Retrieved from <https://www.lawnow.org>.

Palmer, P. (2011). *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*. Purich Publishing.



Status Indian

Status Indian refers to a person officially recognized under the Indian Act, with rights to certain benefits like healthcare, education funding, and tax exemptions.

Non-Status Indian refers to someone who identifies as First Nations but doesn't meet the legal criteria under the Indian Act, often due to historical policies that excluded certain groups.

Critical Impacts:

- The status system divides Indigenous communities and imposes colonial definitions of identity.
- Advocates stress the need for Indigenous communities to define identity on their own terms.

References and further reading:

Joseph, B. (2018). *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*. Indigenous Relations Press.

McIvor, S. (2004). *Gender Discrimination under the Indian Act*. Retrieved from <https://www.lawnow.org>.

Palmer, P. (2011). *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*. Purich Publishing.

On-Reserve/ Off-Reserve

On-reserve refers to Indigenous people living on land set aside under the Indian Act, managed by band councils. Reserves were designed to confine Indigenous peoples to specific areas, often with limited resources.

Off-reserve refers to Indigenous people living outside reserves, often in urban or rural areas. Off-reserve individuals may face barriers accessing services tied to status.

Critical Impacts:

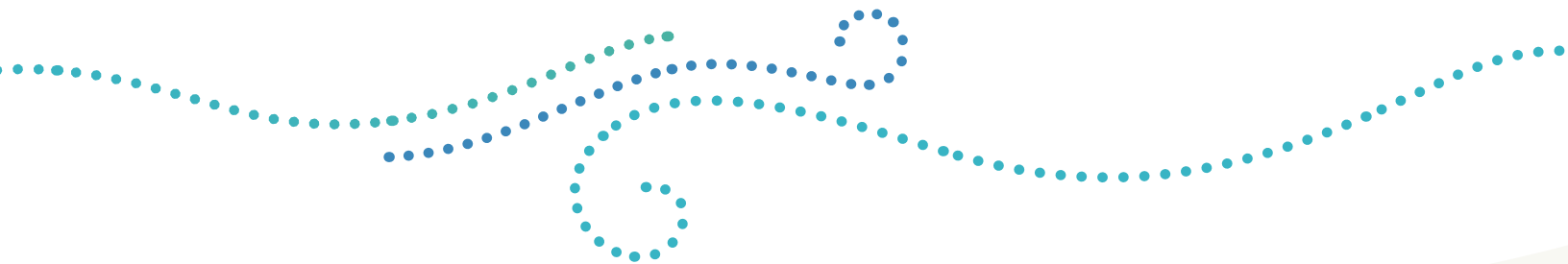
- The on-reserve/off-reserve divide fragments communities and limits access to resources.
- Indigenous-led efforts aim to close these gaps and strengthen connections between on- and off-reserve populations.

References and further reading:

Assembly of First Nations (AFN). (2017). *Canada's Discriminatory Indian Act Policies*. Retrieved from <https://www.afn.ca>.

Joseph, B. (2018). *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*. Indigenous Relations Press.

Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study*. Retrieved from <https://www.uaps.ca>.



Indigenous

The term **Indigenous** refers to people with ancestral ties to land and sovereignty before colonization. In Canada this refers to First Nations (status or non-status), Métis, and Inuit.

Indigenous peoples is preferred over “Aboriginal” for several reasons:

- Emphasizes deep cultural ties to land and sovereignty.
- Recognized globally, aligning with human rights standards.
- Includes Indigenous peoples worldwide who now live in Canada.
- Replaces “Aboriginal,” which is seen as outdated.

First Nations

Refers to “Indians” as defined in the Indian Act, whether they have status or not. It’s a widely used term in Canada, distinct from Métis and Inuit.

Inuit

The Indigenous people living primarily in Inuit Nunangat, the territory covering the land, ice and water of Nunavut, Nunatsiavut (northern Labrador), Nunavik (northern Quebec) and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (northern Yukon and Northwest Territories).

In Use:

- Always capitalize the term Indigenous
- Use the names of specific nations (ie: xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam)).
- Indigenous is not interchangeable with First Nations—similar to how all Germans are European, but not all Europeans are German.

References and further reading:

United Nations. (2007). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). <https://journals.uvic.ca/journalinfo/ijih/IJHDefiningIndigenousPeoplesWithinCanada.pdf>.

In Use:

- Avoid “Native” when discussing First Nations People.
- Use “First Nation” for a single group and “First Nations” for multiple groups.
- Do not use “Indian” unless referring to legal or historical contexts.

Quick Notes:

- Legally and culturally distinct from First Nations or legally defined Indians and Métis
- Inuit means “the people.” Avoid saying “Inuit people,” as it translates to “People People.”
- Use “Inuk” for one person and “Inuit” for the group.
- Do not use “Eskimo,” as it is a derogatory term.

Métis

Métis are a distinct Indigenous group in Canada, originating from the intermarriage of First Nations and European settlers, particularly in the Prairie provinces.

Historical Context:

- Métis culture developed in the Red River Settlement (now Manitoba), blending Indigenous and European traditions.
- The Métis played pivotal roles in the fur trade and buffalo hunting.
- Events such as the Red River Resistance and North-West Rebellion, led by Louis Riel, symbolized Métis struggles for land and rights against colonial expansion.
- Scrip was issued to Métis families as part of land claims but often led to exploitation and loss of land due to systemic inequities.

Quick Notes:

- Métis are legally and culturally distinct from First Nations and Inuit.
- Métis rights, including land claims, are recognized under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, but remain politically complex.
- The Manitoba Métis Federation and Métis National Council are key governing bodies representing Métis interests today.

In Use:

- Always refer to Métis as Métis, not as a generalized “Indigenous” label unless discussing collective rights.
- Avoid outdated terms like “half-breed,” as they are derogatory and dismiss the Métis Nation’s distinct cultural identity.

References and further reading:

Métis National Council. *Who Are the Métis?* <https://www.metisnation.ca>.

Manitoba Métis Federation. *About the Métis*. <https://www.mmf.mb.ca>.

Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35.

Elder

An **Elder** is a respected member of an Indigenous community recognized for their knowledge, wisdom, and guidance. They often preserve cultural traditions, teach younger generations, and lead spiritual practices.

Alternate Names and Titles:

- **Spiritual Guide:** For those leading ceremonies.
- **Knowledge Keeper:** Emphasizes their role in preserving cultural knowledge.
- **First Name:** Some Elders prefer being addressed by their name.

Always ask how an Elder wishes to be addressed to honor their protocols.

Quick Notes:

- Elders hold authority through respect, not election.
- Always capitalize “Elder” as it signifies a title of honor.
- Ask how an Elder prefers to be addressed.

Sources:

Assembly of First Nations. *Role of Elders in Indigenous Communities*. <https://www.afn.ca>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Calls to Action*.

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. *Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples*.

Land Acknowledgement

A formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous peoples as traditional stewards of the land. It acknowledges the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. Land acknowledgements are often delivered at the beginning of public events, meetings, or gatherings to honor the original inhabitants of the area and to raise awareness about histories that have been marginalized.

<https://guides.library.ubc.ca/c.php?g=722577&p=5183707>

Traditional Territory

The geographic area that a particular Indigenous nation or community has historically occupied or used. These territories hold cultural, spiritual, and economic significance, encompassing lands, waters, and resources integral to the identity and survival of the community.

<https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>

Treaty

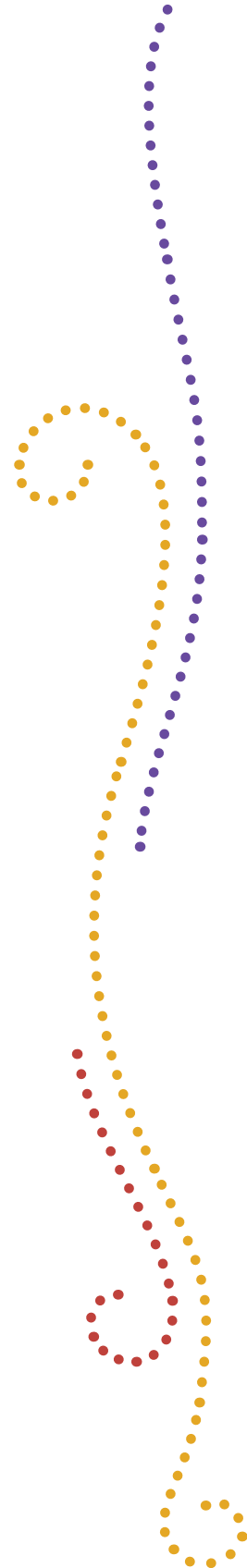
A formal agreement between Indigenous nations and colonial or federal governments that outlines the terms under which land and resources are shared or allocated. Treaties often detail the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved, including provisions for land use, hunting, fishing, and governance. It's important to note that the interpretation and implementation of treaties have been sources of ongoing disputes and legal challenges.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/land-acknowledgment>

Two-Spirit

An umbrella term that encompasses a number of understandings of gender and sexuality among many Indigenous North Americans — has its roots in traditions and cultures dating back centuries. Note that two-spirit was coined in the 1990s. Current indigenous communities have started using “indigequer” as a neoconcept for queerness within indigenous communities.

<https://www.them.us/story/inqueery-two-spirit>



Unceded

Refers to land that was never legally ceded or surrendered to the Crown or government through treaties or other agreements. In Canada, this means certain traditional territories remain under the stewardship of Indigenous peoples who have not relinquished their land rights.

<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/land-acknowledgement.aspx>

Anti-Indigenous Racism

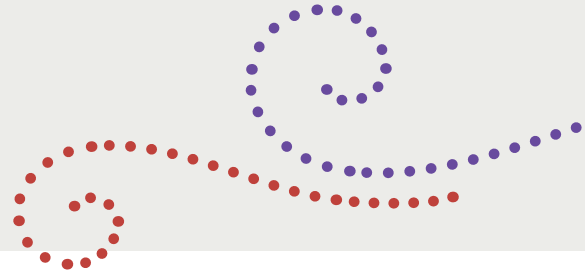
A specific form of systemic racism, discrimination, and stereotyping directed at Indigenous peoples, rooted in the history of colonization and the ongoing effects of colonial policies. It includes systemic barriers that disproportionately affect Indigenous communities in areas such as health care, education, housing, employment, and justice. Anti-Indigenous racism manifests through discriminatory laws (e.g., the Indian Act), harmful stereotypes, exclusionary practices, and the historical and ongoing denial of Indigenous rights, culture, and sovereignty.

Sources:

<https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/ediinpractice/chapter/key-concepts-in-anti-indigenous-racism>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/systemic-racism-discrimination/anti-racism-toolkit/anti-racism-lexicon.html>

Terms to Know



Ableism

Discrimination against people with disabilities, based on the belief that they are less capable or valuable. Ableism creates systemic barriers that limit inclusion and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability>

Accessibility

Providing everyone of all abilities the opportunity to participate fully. The more accessible an environment, program, product, service, or process is from the start, the less there will be a need for accommodation.

Allyship

A lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with Indigenous individuals and communities. It involves actively challenging systemic racism, decolonizing practices, and amplifying Indigenous voices while educating oneself on the histories and experiences of Indigenous peoples. Allyship requires ongoing self-reflection and action to address personal biases and privileges while advocating for equity and justice.

Sources:

<https://www.queensu.ca/indigenous/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/being-ally>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/indigenous/learning/anti-indigenous-racism/anti-indigenous-racism-workshop>

<https://www.cultureally.com/blog/indigenous-allyship-resources>



Anti-Oppression

Actions and strategies that challenge and dismantle systems of privilege and inequality that marginalize specific groups. Anti-oppression emphasizes creating equity by addressing power imbalances and systemic injustices.

<https://crrf-fcrr.ca/glossary-of-terms/>

Anti-Racism

The active process of identifying and addressing racism at all levels—individual, systemic, and societal. Anti-racism involves challenging discriminatory beliefs, systems, and policies that uphold racial inequities and creating equitable access to resources, opportunities, and power.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/systemic-racism-discrimination/anti-racism-toolkit.html>

Attitudinal Barriers

Negative assumptions, stereotypes, or prejudices about individuals that limit their inclusion and participation. These barriers often stem from societal attitudes that devalue differences, such as disabilities or cultural identities.

Belonging

The feeling of being valued, accepted, and included within a group or community. Belonging is achieved through inclusive relationships and environments that respect individual identities and contributions.

https://communityfoundations.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Vital_Signs_Sport_and_Belonging.pdf



Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is the act of taking from someone else's culture without their consent. This can include using aspects of traditional knowledge or cultural expressions, as well as particular music, dances, regalia, cuisine, symbols, ceremonies, artistic expressions and so on. Appropriation often happens in a context of power imbalance, where dominant cultures exploit or commodify the culture of marginalized or oppressed groups. Cultural appropriation dismisses the sacred meanings and histories associated with these practices or items, disregarding the lived experiences and rights of the originating communities.

Cultural appropriation perpetuates systemic oppression by exploiting cultural elements for profit or personal gain while sidelining the voices and rights of those who belong to the culture. It separates people from their histories, sacred practices, and identities, often reinforcing the historical erasure caused by colonization.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/cultural-appropriation-of-indigenous-peoples-in-canada>

Example:

Misuse of Traditional Practices:

- Non-Indigenous individuals or businesses using Indigenous medicines, healing practices, or ceremonies without proper knowledge or permission. For instance, smudging with sage is a sacred practice, but its commercialization often ignores the significance and protocols surrounding it.

Sports Teams and Mascots:

- The use of Indigenous names, imagery, or practices by sports teams (e.g., Washington Redskins, Chicago Blackhawks, Cleveland Indians). Acts like the "Tomahawk Chop" trivialize Indigenous traditions and reduce them to caricatures for entertainment.
- Anishinaabe columnist Jesse Wenté emphasized the harm caused by cultural appropriation in sports, stating:
"We are not your mascots, we are human beings."

Language and Naming:

- Appropriating Indigenous words, place names, or symbols for branding (e.g., using Indigenous names for products or businesses without connection or contribution to Indigenous communities).

Cultural Appropriation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/cultural-appropriation-of-indigenous-peoples-in-canada>

Decolonization

The process of undoing colonial systems and restoring Indigenous sovereignty, land, and cultural practices. Decolonization requires dismantling systems that marginalize Indigenous peoples and centering their leadership and knowledge.

<https://www.bmc.org/glossary-culture-transformation/decolonization>

Discrimination

Treating someone unfairly based on personal characteristics like race, gender, or disability. Discrimination can be overt or systemic, creating unequal opportunities and access.

<https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/individuals/human-rights/about-discrimination>

Diversity

The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within an individual, group, or organization. Diversity includes (but is not limited to) factors such as age, sex, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sexual orientation, educational background, and expertise (Ontario Human Rights Commission).

<https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition.html>

Equity

Is about treating people fairly. Equity recognizes differences in access, barriers, and opportunities and seeks to mitigate these in order to support participation, contribution, and success. While equality focuses on creating the same starting line for everyone, equity has the goal of providing everyone with the same finish line.

Inclusion

The act of making everyone feel welcome and allowing them to be their true self. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, and valued for who they are and for their contributions to organizational and societal goals.

<https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/blogs/diversity-vs-inclusion-whats-the-difference?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

Intersectionality

Recognizing how overlapping identities, such as race, gender, and class, create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. Intersectionality emphasizes the interconnectedness of systemic oppression.



Privilege

Unearned advantages or benefits given to certain groups due to systemic inequities. Privilege often goes unnoticed by those who benefit from it but perpetuates imbalances in access to power and resources.

Sources:

Assembly of First Nations. Understanding Systemic Inequities. <https://www.afn.ca>

Racism

Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal. It can manifest in subtle forms and is not always tangible.

Like any other system of oppression racism can be internalized.

Despite the fact that Canada has made much progress, unfortunately racism and racial discrimination remain a persistent reality in Canadian society. This fact must be acknowledged as a starting point to effectively address racism and racial discrimination.

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/racial-discrimination-race-and-racism-fact-sheet>

Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) defines reconciliation as an ongoing commitment to renewing nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. Reconciliation is an ongoing process, and all Canadians have a role to play in advancing it.

Working toward reconciliation means learning about and acknowledging the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been harmed, and continue to be harmed by colonization, including institutions and systems. It also includes working toward systemic change by challenging the status quo and prioritizing Indigenous perspectives, stewardship, and land rights.

https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

<https://pipikwanpehtakwan.com/2022/what-does-truth-and-reconciliation-mean-to-you-1033>



Turtle Island

Turtle Island is a term used by many Indigenous peoples to refer to North America. The name originates from Creation stories shared among several Indigenous Nations, such as the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Anishinaabe, which describe the continent as being formed on the back of a giant turtle. These stories highlight the deep connection between land, animals, and humans in Indigenous worldviews.

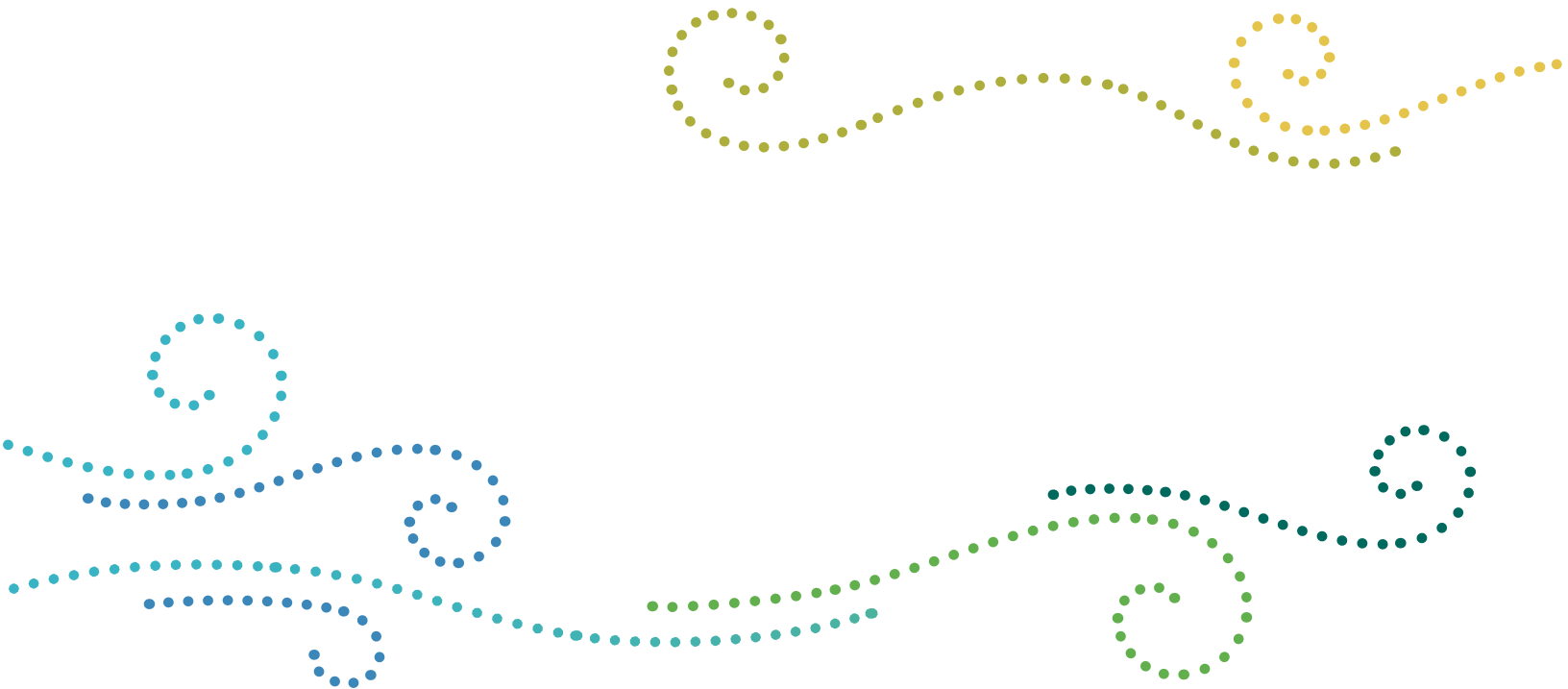
Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Creation Stories. <https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com>

White Supremacy

White supremacy is a political, economic, and cultural system in which white people overwhelmingly control power, material resources, and ideas of white superiority and entitlement. It is also the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to Black people, Indigenous people, and other racialized people as well as their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. The building blocks of Canadian institutions and still underpin dominant cultural beliefs as well as policies that uphold racial inequities today.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796806068323>

<https://www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading/systems-of-oppression/white-supremacy/>



Terms to Consider Before Using

Awareness of the use of “Canadian”

Organizations should be mindful when using the term “Canadian” to refer to individuals residing within Canada from coast to coast to coast. This terminology can inadvertently exclude Indigenous peoples, as well as newcomers who have not attained full citizenship status. By adopting more inclusive language, organizations can ensure that all individuals, regardless of background or legal status, feel valued and represented within their communities. This adjustment fosters diversity and respect while aligning with commitments to equity and inclusion. Alternative terms could include: residents of Canada, people living in Canada, members of Canadian communities, or Canadians from all backgrounds.

A similar consideration applies to phrases like “Team Canada.” While this term often symbolizes unity and camaraderie, language should celebrate the achievements of all individuals without marginalizing any subgroup. It is also important to recognize that Indigenous athletes and newcomers may maintain strong ties to their respective communities or countries of origin. Celebrating these connections alongside their contributions enriches the narrative and reinforces an inclusive approach.



Ability

Terms to Avoid	Suggested Alternatives	Reasoning
Differently abled, handicapped, crippled	<p>person(s) with a disability</p> <p>Some disability-specific organizations are suggesting the following language: person(s) experiencing a disability or living with a disability</p>	Disability is NOT a bad word. Using euphemisms to describe disability is patronizing and diverges the conversation to make those who are not disabled more comfortable
Normal	Conventional, common, ordinary, typical, regular	This phrase results in the “othering” of non-White people and those who live with disabilities, mental illness or diseases as not being whole or regular
That’s crazy/insane	<p>That’s ridiculous</p> <p>Unreal</p>	Discriminates against those with mental health concerns
Retarded	Boring, uncool	This term is a slur against those who are neurodivergent or have an intellectual disability. It should not be used to make a point about a person, place or thing.
That’s so lame	That’s so boring/uninteresting	Ableist term
Blindsided	Surprised	Ableist term
Blindspot	Something you didn’t know, unawareness, gap	Ableist term
Exceptions	Accommodations	Implies negative connotation of more effort opposed to accessibility
Paralyzed	Froze/stopped	This term can be triggering to those who live with some type of paralysis



Indigeneity

Terms to Avoid	Suggested Alternatives	Reasoning
Pow-wow (e.g., "Let's have a pow-wow."),	Let's meet and discuss	Cultural appropriation
Top of the totem pole	Leader, in charge, decision makers	Cultural appropriation
Stakeholders	Community, engaged Community Member or Partner	Colonizers would literally put a stake in the land when they were colonizing
Spirit Animal	Something (or someone) you connect to	Cultural appropriation
Tribe	Community, friends, connections	Tribe describes Indigenous communities and groups.
Eskimo	Inuit	Derogatory and outdated

Slave Trade

Terms to Avoid	Suggested Alternatives	Reasoning
Master	Leader, in charge,	Masters were the owners of slaves.
Nitty Gritty	Fundamentals, Core Details	Believed to reference the conditions of slave ships, human suffering during the slave trade

Additional Terms

Terms to Avoid	Suggested Alternatives
Nicknames	Confirm it is okay first
Black/white list	Refrain from identifying things in black and white

