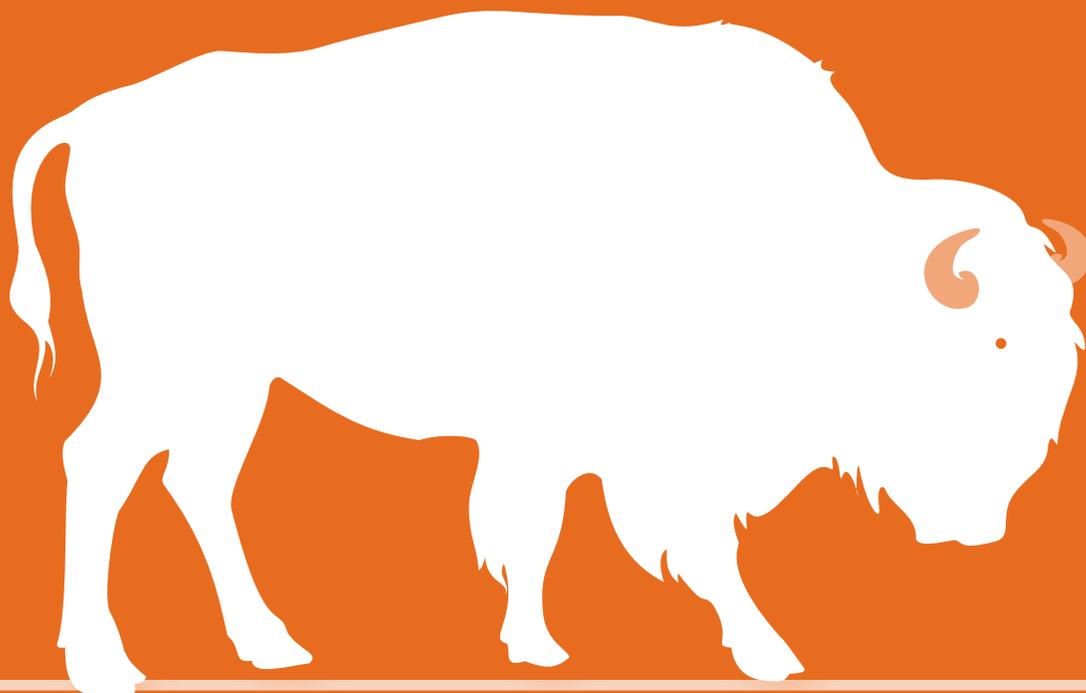


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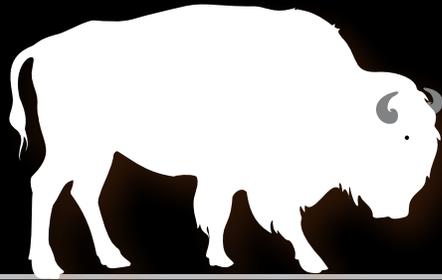
A Teachers' Resource for First Nations, Métis and  
Inuit Education in Alberta



The Alberta Teachers' Association



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*The rare birth of a white buffalo on the Great Plains was considered a sacred event that represented hope, rebirth and unity for the tribes who depended on the buffalo for their sustenance.*

*Many tribes have passed down legends that explain the symbolism of the white buffalo.*

*We have used the white buffalo to show respect for Aboriginal history and culture in the hope that, as teachers become more familiar with Aboriginal culture, they can foster hope, rebirth and unity among Aboriginal students.*





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# Foreword

“Education is our buffalo” is a phrase often used by First Nations elders to signify the importance of education to their communities (Christensen 2000). As one Treaty 7 member stated (Alberta Education 2002),

I believe that education is our buffalo. If any changes for the good are to be made it will be education that does the job. It doesn't matter where you send your kids; you need to support them to succeed—to give them a chance to succeed.

The Alberta Teachers' Association's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights program supports the development of inclusive classrooms where all students feel included, safe, valued and supported in their learning. In recent years, teachers have become more aware of prejudice toward, stereotyping of and outright discrimination toward Aboriginal peoples in this society. Teachers can do their part to address this issue by increasing their awareness and understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives. In doing so, they will be better able to implement instructional programs that support Aboriginal students and teach Aboriginal learning outcomes to all students.

The Association has developed a workshop titled “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education—Taking Root, Branching Out,” which complements *Education Is Our Buffalo*. The workshop involves teachers in examining the history, world views, cultures and current perspectives of Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Teachers will learn better ways to meet curriculum outcomes, address racism and help Aboriginal students succeed in school. This highly interactive workshop models pedagogical approaches for meeting the learning needs of a wide range of students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. *Education Is Our Buffalo—A Teachers' Resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education in Alberta* will be provided to workshop participants free of charge. It is strongly recommended that a full day be devoted to this workshop.

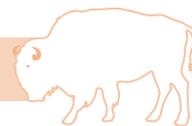
To book this workshop, contact

The Alberta Teachers' Association, Professional Development program area

Phone: (780) 447-9485 (direct) or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta)

Fax: (780) 455-6481

e-mail: [janey.kemp@ata.ab.ca](mailto:janey.kemp@ata.ab.ca)



# Message from the Executive Secretary

The logo of the white buffalo stamped on the pages of this volume embodies a time-honoured symbolism that is particularly esteemed by the First Nations peoples of Alberta. It is a symbolism worthy of both exploration and appreciation.

As part of its ongoing commitment to public education and to the professional development of teachers, the Alberta Teachers' Association regularly develops resource materials. *Education Is Our Buffalo: A Teachers' Resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education in Alberta* is one such resource. In addressing the particular needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers and learners, this collection of materials sheds light on issues of diversity, equity and human rights as they touch the day-to-day life in Alberta schools and society.

On behalf of the Association, I want to thank the contributors to this work—Aboriginal educators who have prepared resources to help non-Aboriginal classroom teachers recognize the richness of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures as well as the wisdom that lies within these traditions. *Education Is Our Buffalo* is part of a set of resources that will be of use to a wide cross-section of Alberta teachers and learners as well as to First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers and learners.

Gordon Thomas  
Executive Secretary  
Alberta Teachers' Association



# Acknowledgements

The Alberta Teachers' Association would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following people in the development of this publication.

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Liz Poitras

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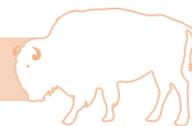
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As novelist Thomas King states, "Stories are wondrous things and they are dangerous. Once a story is told it cannot be called back. Once told it is loose in the world." The publisher of this resource has taken steps to ensure the accuracy of all information included in this resource. However, if you have concerns with any aspect of this publication, please contact the Alberta Teachers' Association.



# The Principal Writers

## Leo Fox

Leo Fox is a member of the Kainai First Nation and has worked in the area of Blackfoot language since 1972. As coordinator for the Ninastako Cultural Centre until 1976, he was involved in standardizing Blackfoot orthography. In 1976 he enrolled at the University of Lethbridge to earn his teaching credentials. In 1978, Leo began teaching at St Mary's Junior/Senior High School (now Kainai High School) on the Blood Reserve. Along with his Grade 8 class, Leo published a *Blackfoot Language Handbook* in 1978. Later, he was transferred to Levern Elementary School (now Aahsaopi Elementary School). He was appointed principal of that school in 1985 and remained in the position until December 1999, at which time he was seconded to write a program for alcohol and drug abuse education for the Kainai Board of Education. In addition to *Kipaitapiiwahsinnooni*, which was published in 2001, Leo has been involved in the writing of the four volumes of *Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi—Stories from Our Elders*. He has also worked on other tribal publications and with Alberta Education. He is currently the coordinator of the Kainai Studies Program with the Kainai Board of Education. Leo received his undergraduate degrees in history and secondary social studies from the University of Lethbridge. He did graduate work in Western Canadian history at the University of Calgary and has a diploma in journalism from Lethbridge Community College.

## Ed Lavallee

Ed Lavallee is a traditional Plains Nehiyaw (Cree) of the Sturgeon Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan. He attended the University of Saskatchewan and worked as coeditor of the *Native People* newspaper, published by the former Alberta Native Communication Society, now the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta. He has studied Aboriginal history, spirituality and philosophy with elders for many years. He concentrated his studies with elders during a five-year stint at the Indian Cultural College, now affiliated with the First Nations University of Saskatchewan. He has worked with Aboriginal organizations across Canada and for federal and provincial governments in various management positions.

## Liz Poitras

Liz Poitras is a Cree woman who grew up in Slave Lake, Alberta. She has been a member of various boards, the most recent being the provincial Child and Family Services board. She is a family-oriented educator and administrator. In addition to being a certified nursing aide, she has a bachelor of education degree from the University of Alberta and a master of arts in organizational leadership from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. She has taught all levels, from elementary to postsecondary to adults. She has also taught in a treatment centre for troubled youth.

## Amoudla Sataa

Amoudla Sataa was born in Iqaluit, Nunavut, and is the second-oldest daughter in a family of 10 children. Her father, Akaka Sataa, is from an old whaling camp between Iqaluit and Cape Dorset, and her mother, Qimaqut Sataa, is from a camp 70 miles from Iqaluit. Amoudla attended college in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where she received a diploma in personnel management and industrial relations. She transferred her credits to the Public and Business Administration Diploma program at Nunavut Arctic College, which had just opened and offered limited courses. Later she was accepted into the Sivliuqtit Senior Management Training program in Ottawa. This program was a partnership initiative between Nunavut and the federal government. Throughout Amoudla's 21 years of public service, with the governments of



the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and the federal government, she has had opportunities to work in a team environment, independently or as a team leader. She has also worked with various national Aboriginal organizations and local Inuit organizations, and was a founding member of the Edmonton Inuit Cultural Society. Amoudla, who speaks Inuktitut, is a strong supporter of diversity and the issues that arise from it. She enjoys promoting her Inuit culture and heritage, dispelling myths and breaking down barriers. It is with great pride that she encourages the sharing of knowledge of her culture.



MANY PEOPLES,  
MANY CULTURES

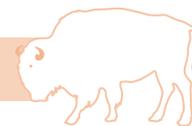
## Many Peoples, Many Cultures

*Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without love, our self-esteem weakens. Without it, our courage fails. Without love, we can no longer look confidently at the world. We turn inward and begin to feed upon our own personalities, and little by little, we destroy ourselves. With it, we are creative. With it, we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others.*

—Chief Dan George



MANY PEOPLES,  
MANY CULTURES  
MANY PEOPLES,  
MANY CULTURES  
MANY PEOPLES,  
MANY CULTURES



## Many Peoples, Many Cultures

North America has always been home to many Aboriginal peoples, each with their own language, religion, beliefs, customs and laws. Many Aboriginals were living in North, Central and South America at the time of the arrival of the first Europeans in the 1400s. Estimates range from 8.4 million to 112.5 million persons. In any case, from the Incas to the Navajo to the Plains Cree to the Inuit, the Americas have long been home to developed, sophisticated and rich Native cultures.

Aboriginal populations declined dramatically through the process of colonization, which brought about wars and starvation and also wave after wave of smallpox and influenza epidemics throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. These deaths occurred because the immune systems of Aboriginal peoples did not protect them from diseases that came with Europeans. It is estimated that as many as 80 per cent of the entire Aboriginal population of the Americas were ravaged by these diseases.

## Present-Day North American Aboriginal Population

Canada's Aboriginal peoples include Inuit, Métis and peoples designated as First Nations, and the combined indigenous population is estimated at close to 1 million. The status of these peoples is recognized by Canada's *Constitution Act* of 1982. In Canada's north, the 1999 creation of Nunavut gave the Inuit a degree of administrative autonomy.

According to the 2003 American census, the combined populations of Native Americans, Inuit and other indigenous people in the US was 2,786,652 (which is about 1.5 per cent of the population). The US government recognizes some 563 scheduled tribes at the federal level, while state governments recognize a number of others.

In Mexico, approximately 30 per cent of the total population identify themselves as indigenous.

It is difficult to estimate the present total population of the world's indigenous peoples because of the difficulties of identification and

the inadequacies of census data. Recent UN estimates range from 300 million to 350 million by the start of the 21st century. This includes at least 5,000 distinct peoples in over 70 countries and equates to just under 6 per cent of the total world population.

Many indigenous societies survive, even though they may no longer inhabit their traditional lands because of such things as relocation (sometimes forced), migration and resettlement, or because they were supplanted by other groups. According to Statistics Canada (2001 census), about 25 per cent of Canada's Aboriginal population live in eleven major census metropolitan areas. Winnipeg has the highest Aboriginal population, at about 52,400, more than Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Edmonton is second, with almost 41,000, followed by Vancouver, with slightly more than 36,000 (Statistics Canada). In addition, the Aboriginal general population is much younger on average than the Canadian population. The average age of the Aboriginal population in 2001 was 24.7 years, 13 years younger than the average of 37.6 years in the general population.

Children under 14 accounted for 33 per cent of all Aboriginal people, compared with 24 per cent of Canada's total population. And school performance continues to be a pressing problem—according to Statistics Canada (2003) only about half of Aboriginal students finish high school.

The proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 was also greater among the Aboriginal population than in the total population. These young people represented almost one-fifth (17 per cent) of all age groups within the Aboriginal population, compared with about 13 per cent in the general population.

With such concentrations in the younger age groups, there were relatively few Aboriginal people in older age groups. For example, only 4 per cent of the Aboriginal population was aged 65 and over, compared with 13 per cent of the general population.

Sadly, the world has lost entire groups of indigenous people and, along with them, their cultural knowledge, ways of being and language.



The Beothuk of Newfoundland are an example of a people that was entirely wiped out. Still other groups are threatened, while some indigenous populations are undergoing a recovery or expansion in numbers.

## Who Are First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples?

In Canada, various acts of government over the past 150 years have attempted to define the identity of Aboriginal peoples, resulting in a complex system that can be hard to understand and that often divides people from the same family into different groups.

The *Indian Act* of 1867 defined the natural North American inhabitants as *Indians*. The *Constitution Act* of 1982 subdivided Aboriginal peoples into Indians, Métis and Inuit. Indians were further divided into Status/Registered and Non-Status Indians. Complicating things further, Status/Registered Indians were further separated into Treaty and Non-Treaty Indians. Each designation has

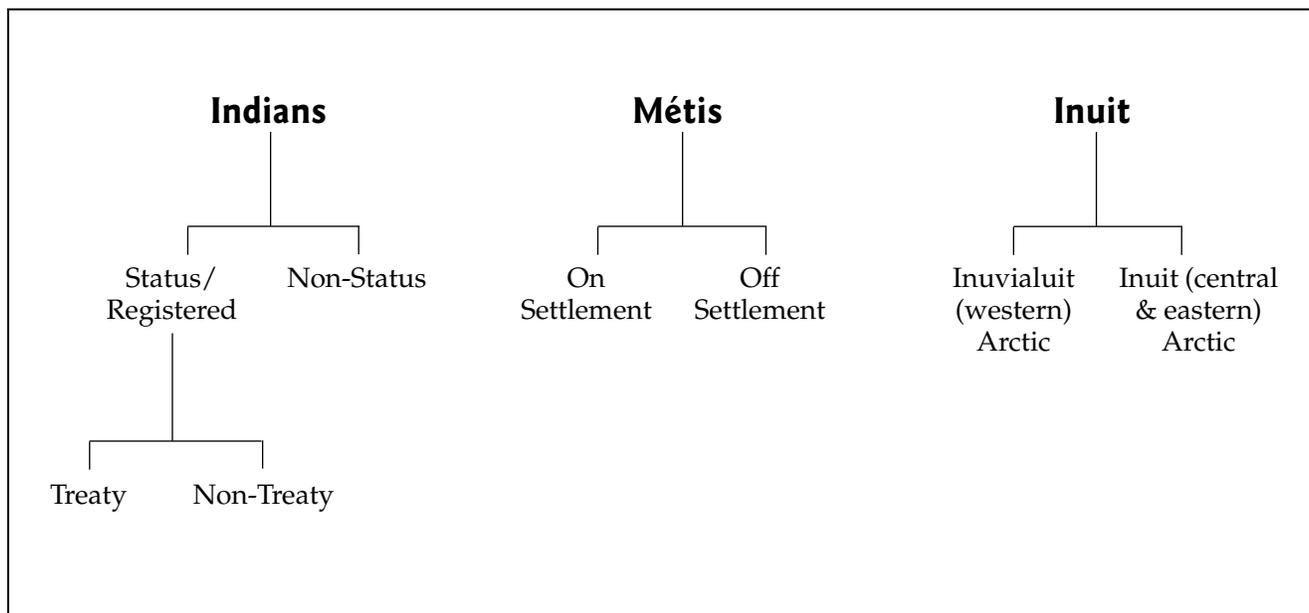
different rights and privileges. Though use of the term *Indian* has declined because of its association with colonialism, the term is commonly used by many Aboriginal people and embedded in much legislation, including the names of government departments, for example the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. (See page 6 for a first-hand description of one Aboriginal woman's experience with the often confusing and problematic government nomenclature related to Aboriginal people.)

The flow chart below illustrates the main designations for First Nations peoples: Indians according to the *Constitution Act*, 1982, Métis and Inuit peoples.

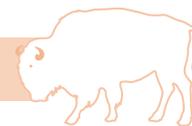
In 1980, all the chiefs of Canada declared that the term *First Nations People* would from that time forward refer to all their members. All tribes have their own terms for their individual nations in their own languages, which in most instances translate as *the real people*. The Cree in Alberta refer to themselves as *Nehiyawak*. The Kainai (Blood), the Siksika (Blackfoot) and the Piikani (Peigan)

## Aboriginal Peoples

Canadian *Constitution Act*, 1982 (Section 35)



Adapted and used with permission from the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit, 1996, p 10



refer to themselves as Niitsitapi. The Chipewyan and the Tsuu T'ina refer to themselves as Dene. The Nakoda (Stoney) refer to themselves as Ista.

## Definitions of Terms

*The following definitions are provided to clarify the somewhat confusing classification system related to Canada's Aboriginal peoples. These terms also appear in alphabetical order in the glossary.*

**Aboriginal:** Defined by the *Constitution Act* (1982) to refer to Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

**Indigenous peoples:** The original people in any region of the planet. This all-inclusive term is usually used in referring to Aboriginal people in an international context.

**First Nations:** A term used by the Assembly of First Nations to refer to their membership. In 1980, all the chiefs in Canada adopted a declaration to call their member nations (the Cree, the Mohawk, the Blackfoot, the Dene, etc) *First Nations*, because they did not like the terms *Indian band* and *Indian tribe*. The term is also used to reinforce the idea that Aboriginal peoples were the original inhabitants of the Americas—they were the “first nations” of North America.

**Native:** This term is used synonymously for all the Aboriginal peoples in Canada who are Indian or Inuit. In the general context, *Native* refers to the people living in what became Canada before the arrival of Europeans.

**Indian:** A common misnomer applied to the original people throughout the Americas. The term was used by Christopher Columbus when he arrived in the New World, thinking he had arrived on the shores of India. The *Indian Act* of Canada includes a definition of *Indians*.

**Bill C-31 Indian:** A person who has regained or gained status as a registered Indian under the terms of the *Indian Act* after the passage of Bill C-31 in the Canadian Parliament in 1985. Prior to Bill C-31, women who married men not considered Indian under the *Indian Act* were taken off the Indian register and lost all their rights as Indians. These

women took their cause for reinstatement to the United Nations and eventually to the Supreme Court of Canada. The court decided against them by one vote but advised the Canadian government to correct and change the discriminatory section of the *Indian Act*. Parliament acted and passed Bill C-31 in 1985.

**Registered/Status Indian:** A person recorded as an Indian in the Indian register by virtue of descent from registered Indians.

**Non-Status Indian:** A person of Indian ancestry who is not registered as an Indian.

**Treaty Indian:** A member of a band of Indians that signed a treaty with the government of Canada.

**Non-Treaty Indian:** A person who is registered as an Indian under the *Indian Act* but is not a member of a treaty band.

**Inuit:** Inuit word meaning “the people.” The singular is *Inuk*. Refers to the Aboriginal peoples who generally live north of the treeline in Canada, near Canada's Arctic coast (as well as to the Native peoples of Greenland). In 1997, 726 Inuit from territories in Canada, Alaska and Russia lived in Alberta. To say “Inuit people” is redundant, and most prefer simply *Inuit*.

**Eskimo:** Cree term for the people of the far North, meaning “eaters of raw meat” because of their custom of eating their food raw at the site of the kill. This word is not widely accepted in Canada; however, it is still used in parts of the western Arctic. The government and people of the United States continue to use the term when referring to Aboriginal people in Alaska.

**Inuvialuit:** Inuit who live in the western Arctic (generally the Northwest Territories).

**Métis:** The term for a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

**Métis Nation:** Refers to the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which now comprises all Métis Nation peoples and is one



of the “Aboriginal peoples of Canada” as defined in s.35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.

**Métis Off Settlement:** Métis people who live off settlements have the same constitutional rights as Métis who live on settlement. The only difference is that they are not entitled to benefits that are specific to the settlements.

**Métis On Settlement:** Since 1989, the Métis peoples of Alberta who live on settlements are protected by constitutional law through “letters of patent.” Métis people who live on settlements

have political and democratic forms of self-government and have signed agreements with the province for the long-term management of natural resources (under the *Settlements Act*). Settlement lands are protected by the Métis Settlements Accord. Alberta is the only province that has passed legislation specifically for Métis people.

**Historic Métis Nation:** The Aboriginal people known as Métis (sometimes derogatorily called half-breeds) who reside in the traditional Métis Nation’s homeland, an area in west-central North America.

## The Indian Register

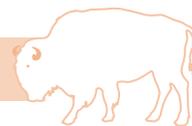
The Indian Register is the official record of Status or Registered Indians and is maintained by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Status Indians have rights and benefits not granted to unregistered Indians, Inuit or Métis, specifically the right to reserve land and exemption from federal and provincial taxes for reserve residents.

As far back as 1850 the colonial governments of British North America kept records of Indians and bands entitled to benefits under the treaties they signed with the various First Nations. In 1951 the current Indian Register was established by amendment of the *Indian Act*. In 1985, the *Indian Act* was amended again. The purpose of the amendment was to restore Indian status to people who had lost it through discriminatory provisions of the act. Over 100,000 people who had lost their status have since been added to the register.

The discriminatory reasons for revoking status were

- marrying a man who was not a Status Indian,
- enfranchisement (until 1960, an Indian could vote in federal elections only by renouncing Indian status),
- having a mother and paternal grandmother who did not have status before marriage (these people lost status at 21) and
- being born out of wedlock of a Status mother and a non-Status father.

Since 1985, each band has developed and implemented its own membership code.



## Who Is an Indian?

**Be** careful when you use the term *Indian*, which is a legal term defined in the *Indian Act*. Sometimes a person with one or even two Caucasian parents could be considered a Treaty Indian, while a person of full-blooded Indian ancestry may not legally be an Indian, as my own situation shows.

I was born a Treaty Indian to Treaty Indian parents. In 1965, I married a Métis and, under section 12-1B of the former *Indian Act*, I lost my Treaty status and became a Non-Status Indian. When I lost my status, the Department of Indian Affairs sent me a Blue Card stating that, as of a certain date, I was deemed not to be an Indian, and I did not fit into the Métis criteria for assistance or benefits, such as scholarships.

At the time, upon marrying a Métis, I received a lifetime Métis membership. My children and I were able to participate in Métis community functions, including running for office, and I eventually became the president of a Métis local.

In contrast, the bride of a Treaty male could become a Treaty Indian regardless of her ancestry. Thus, Caucasians have become Treaty Indians with all the rights and privileges that pertain to that status.

In 1985, the federal government, acknowledging the discrimination in the *Indian Act*, changed the act (known today as Bill C-31). My children and I became Treaty Indians, commonly referred to as Bill C-31 Indians, but as a Treaty Indian I could no longer participate in Métis politics. My children and I had no rights, no benefits and did not belong anywhere. In fact, when my husband ran for a Métis office, we could not even vote for him.

In summary, according to federal government legal definitions, I was a

- Treaty Indian on reserve,
- Non-Status Indian and Métis, and
- Treaty Indian, but with no band membership.

These government labels have caused division and discrimination within Aboriginal communities. A child labelled First Nations may be Bill C-31, but as Bill C-31, he or she does not have the rights and privileges or land base of the First Nation in which he or she may be registered.

—Liz Poitras



## Alberta's First Nations

Alberta's present-day First Nations include the Dene *tha*, the Beaver and the Chipewyan of the Athapaskan-speaking group in the north; the Cree of the north, who speak the Woodland dialect, and the Plains Cree, who lived in the central part of the province; the Iroquois, who arrived in Edmonton during the fur trade and were given the Callihoo reserve near St Albert; the Stoney (Nakoda), who live on two reserves west of Edmonton and on four others west of Calgary; the Saulteaux (Plains Ojibwa) of the O'Chiese reserve, located west of Rocky Mountain House; the Tsuu T'ina, formerly the Sarcee, with a reserve just outside of Calgary; and the Confederacy of Blackfoot Nations—the Siksika, the Blood and the Peigan—in the southern part of the province.

**Anishinabe:** Ojibwa term for themselves, meaning “the people”.

**Blood:** The name of an Aboriginal group of the southern Alberta Blackfoot Confederacy living in southern Alberta. Like the term *Indian*, *Blood* is a misnomer. It is actually the mistranslation of the word *Aapaiaitsitapi*, a term referring to the use of white weasel fur (ermine) for clothing decoration. The word for “blood” is *Aapaniitsitapi*. Instead of *Blood*, this group prefers the word *Kainai*, which means “many” or “all chiefs.”

**Chipewyan:** A Cree term for the Dene people of northern Saskatchewan and Alberta that refers to their manner of dress. *Chip-way-yan Enoowuk* means “pointed-hood-wearing people.”

**Cree:** The term *Cree* is a contraction of *Kristenaux*, the French spelling of *Kenisteniwuk*, the name given to Natives of the James Bay area in the 1700s by French fur traders.

**Dene:** Term used by the Dene to refer to themselves. It means “the people.”

**Ista:** Nakoda (Stoney) term used by the Nakoda to refer to themselves. It means “the people.”

**Kainai:** Blackfoot name for the Blood tribe of southern Alberta, meaning “many” or “all chiefs.”

**Nehiyaw (singular), Nehiyawak (plural):** A Cree person and Cree people, respectively, in the Cree language.

**Niitsitapi:** When referring to themselves, members of the three Blackfoot Nations (Kainai, Piikani, Siksika) of southern Alberta used the term *Niitsitapi*. It means the “real” or “only people.” Today, this Blackfoot word refers to any First Nations person.

**Piikani:** This Blackfoot name is a shortened form of *Aapikani*, which translates as “scabby robe.” It was coined long ago because of the way this tribe tanned their hides. This tribe is one of the three members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The English version of this name is Peigan.

**Saulteaux:** A French term for the plains Ojibwa Indians who moved onto the plains from the Sault Ste Marie area of Ontario.

**Siksika:** *Siksika* means “blackfoot.” The name came about because early members of this tribe lived in an area that had particularly black soil that stained their feet and moccasins no matter how hard they tried to clean them.

**Stoney:** A Cree name for the Nakoda Sioux people, who were the allies of the Cree when they moved onto the plains before European contact. The name refers to the custom of preparing food using heated stones; the Cree term for stone is *asini* and the Sioux term is *pwatuk*. The French wrote the word as *Assiniboine*. In parts of Canada, these people are known as Assiniboine; in Alberta, they are known as Stoney Indians.

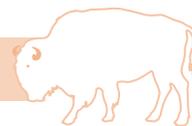


UNDERSTANDING  
ABORIGINAL  
HISTORIES  
**Understanding  
Aboriginal Histories**

*To understand the present we must understand the past.*

—Dr Betty Bastien





## The First Nations Way of Life

The First Nations peoples of Canada are a rich and diverse population with many languages and cultural traditions. The First Nations people of the plains and woodlands of Alberta lived in small groups or bands, subsisted on the bounties of their environment and lived in harmony with Mother Earth. In the summer they would gather in huge encampments to renew friendships or form new ones, trade and barter, talk about relationships with other nations, and conduct social and spiritual ceremonies. These encampments were set up in a manner prescribed by long tradition and were policed by a warrior society chosen for that particular gathering. During these times, the plains First Nations people would mount and conduct a well-organized yearly hunt for buffalo, the major source of their food supply and the raw material for their clothing and home equipment. After the hunt concluded, they would disperse to their wintering areas, generally to river valleys, where game was plentiful.

Each band chose its leaders by consensus. Leaders were band members who showed many skills. They were good providers who commanded the respect and trust of the people. Other members who held leadership positions were respected elders, religious and medicine people, and warriors who had shown valour in battles. Wise women would also have a say in band matters when their counsel was needed. Most disputes and the affairs of the band were resolved by a council of the leaders.

## Colonialism

There can be no denying that the way of life for every First Nation from the Inuit to the Incas changed when Europeans began arriving in what they called the New World and began a policy of colonialism. According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*,

Colonialism is the policy or practice by which one country installs a settlement of its people on the lands of another society. Usually, a colonizing country also quickly establishes political control over the other society. Colonialism is

generally associated with European overseas expansion that began about 1500. But it has occurred in most parts of the world and in most historical eras, even the most ancient.

Through the centuries, nations have established colonies primarily for economic reasons. For example, nations have set up colonies to gain privileged access to prized manufactured items, to obtain opportunities for profitable investments, to secure access to raw materials or to provide markets for their goods. In some cases, religious organizations strongly supported colonization efforts as a way of gaining converts among nonbelievers. Religious conversion of Native people rarely ranked as the primary reason for colonization. It did however provide a rationalization that was considered acceptable at the time.

Colonial practices and abuses inflicted on the First Nations population in what is now known as Canada are well documented. Prior to Confederation, early European explorers reaching the eastern seaboard of North America would claim to have discovered the lands, despite the presence of cultures that had been there for countless generations. These explorers claimed sovereignty over these lands for their respective kings and queens, who often funded their voyages of discovery.

One such explorer was Jacques Cartier, who in 1534 was sent by King Francis I of France on a voyage of discovery. He reached the Canadian east coast, sailed past New-Found-Land, rounded the Gulf of St Lawrence, landed on the Gaspé Peninsula, crossed the St Lawrence estuary and received credit for the “discovery” of the St Lawrence River, even though First Nations had canoed in those waters for centuries.

In 1670, colonialism became entrenched when King Charles II of England granted the Royal Charter incorporating the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). The charter’s provisions gave trading rights to his cousin, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, and 17 other noblemen, who formed a group known as the Company of Adventurers. In effect, this group of “adventurers” received dominion over all lands whose rivers and lakes drained into the Hudson Bay, some 15 million square miles, which was over one-third the area of present-day Canada. The vast



territory became known as Rupert's Land, and it became the scene of the great North American fur trade. For several centuries, operating out of its headquarters at York Factory on the shore of the Hudson Bay, the HBC controlled the lucrative fur trade throughout much of British-controlled North America and functioned as the *de facto* government in much of the continent. It had the power to establish and enforce laws, erect forts, maintain ships of war, and make peace or war with the First Nations peoples. The company's traders and trappers established trading relationships with many First Nations groups, and it built a system of trading posts that functioned as centres of official authority in many areas of western Canada and the United States. In 1870 the vast territory of the HBC, all of it privately owned, became the largest component in the newly formed Dominion of Canada. As the fur trade began to decline, the company evolved into a business that sold staples to settlers in the Canadian west and north, and it is best known today as a major department store.

In 1870, as the fur trade declined, Rupert's Land was transferred to the newly established country by an act of the British parliament upon payment of 300,000 pounds. This all occurred without consultation with or consent from the indigenous people whose land was being bartered. Ultimately, this led to the fight for restitution of land rights by the Métis people under the leadership of Louis Riel, who led the Métis resistance in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Colonialism has created many wounds that have not healed. Present-day First Nations people are both mystified and enraged that a foreign people could claim to discover land that they had lived on for generations, claim it in the name of a foreign monarch, and exploit the inhabitants and the raw materials of that place for their own benefit.

## First Nations Treaties

European colonizers often signed treaties with indigenous peoples to legitimize their sovereignty and gain political and economic control over places and people. In many cases, the treaties were very disadvantageous to the Native people, who often did not understand the implications of what they were signing.

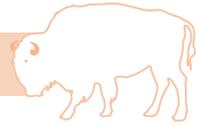
*The police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter. I wish them all good, and trust that all our hearts will increase in goodness from this time forward. I am satisfied, I will sign the treaty.*

—Chief Crowfoot (1830–1890)  
Siksika Nation  
Blackfoot peacemaker  
and diplomat

In Canada, all First Nations treaties were signed with the British Crown. Thus, the federal government has the primary responsibility, under the Constitution of Canada, to address the needs of Canada's Aboriginal people; however, provincial governments also have responsibilities with respect to Aboriginal peoples.

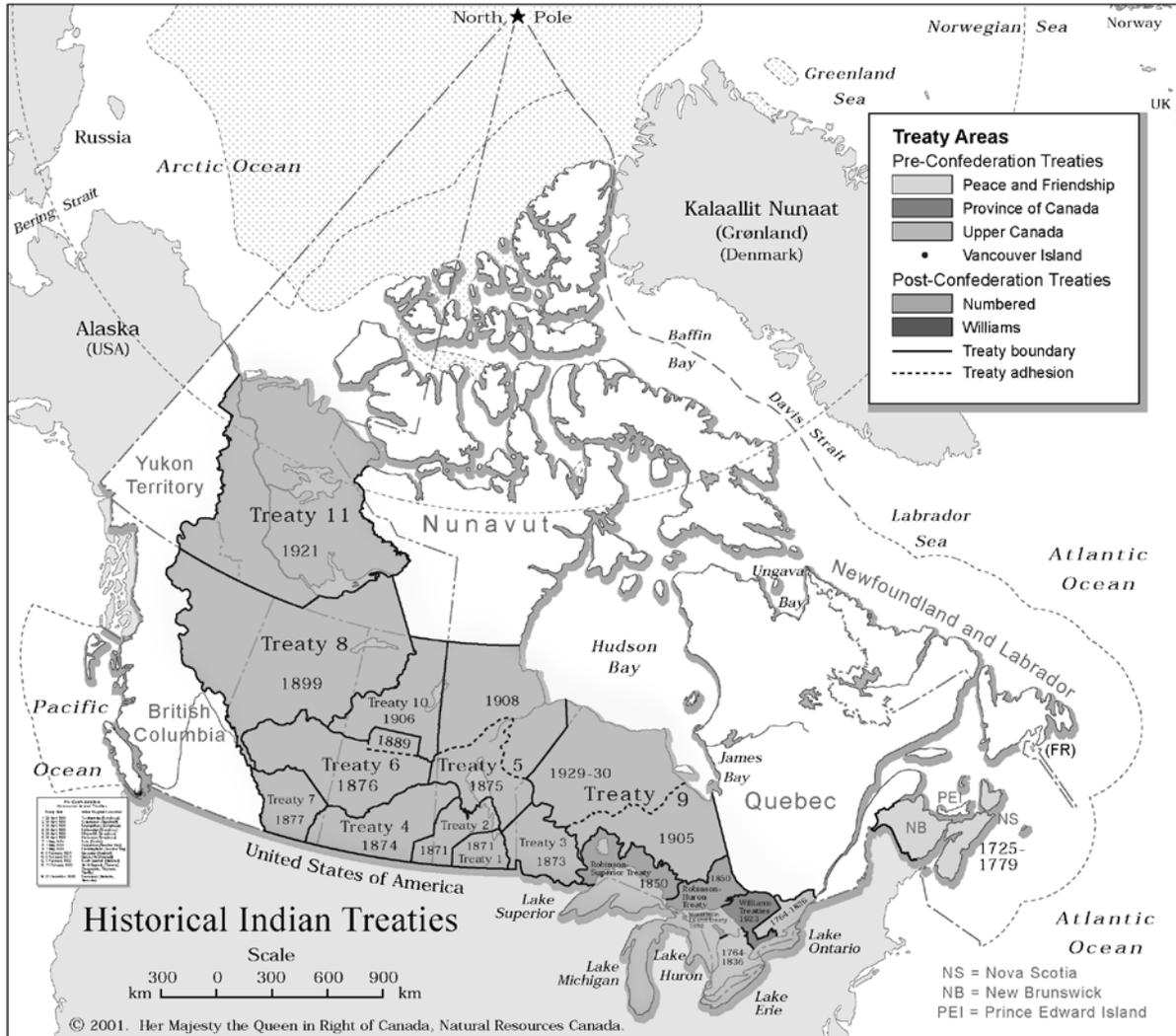
In 1870, the HBC sold Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory (which included present-day Alberta and Saskatchewan) to the Dominion of Canada. The First Nations peoples of these lands had been devastated by smallpox. The buffalo were fast disappearing and the fur trade had taken away a lot of the region's fur-bearing animals, making the First Nations' way of life impossible to sustain. The people had become paupers on their own land.

The province of Alberta is covered by numbered treaties, which are legal documents that confer rights and specify obligations on both parties. No two treaties are identical. Treaties 6, 7 and 8, which are described in greater detail later in this section, cover most of Alberta and discuss rights such as entitlement to reserve lands, hunting, fishing and trapping. To First Nations peoples, treaties are extremely meaningful and are seen as sacred agreements sworn to by the signing parties and sealed by pipe ceremonies. These ceremonies involved the offering of tobacco—a plant traditionally honoured and respected among the people as a gift from the Creator to be used with respect and honoured for its sacred properties. The most honoured way to offer tobacco is through



## Treaty Areas

Aboriginal peoples of Canada have signed a total of 11 treaties with colonial and Canadian governments. This map identifies each treaty area.



[http://atlas.gc.ca/site/english/maps/reference/national/hist\\_treaties/referencemap\\_image\\_view](http://atlas.gc.ca/site/english/maps/reference/national/hist_treaties/referencemap_image_view)

Reprinted with permission from the Atlas of Canada.



a pipe ceremony. The preparation for using the pipe and the tobacco involved sacred ceremonies conducted by elders and spiritual leaders. While the pipe ceremonies varied among various First Nations, the basic intent was the same in the case of signing treaties—that the agreements were meant to be binding, honoured and respected. (Adapted from *Tobacco, The Sacred Gift*, a presentation by Ron Sunshine.)

## Treaty 6

In 1871, First Nations leaders representing the Plains Cree from Edmonton House to Fort Carlton went to the chief factor of the HBC of the Saskatchewan District to discover what Canada had in mind for them. The government had already signed treaties with other First Nations peoples to the south and east of them. In 1876, the Cree and Saulteaux signed Treaty 6 with the Crown, which surrendered their rights and title to all lands in most of central Alberta and Saskatchewan—more than 125,000 square miles—in exchange for free education, medical care and land for reserves.

## Treaty 7

The Blackfoot Treaty, or Treaty 7, was signed in 1877 between the Crown and five bands in southern Alberta: the Kainai (Blood), Siksika (Blackfoot), Piikani (Peigan), Nakoda (Stoney) and Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee). The treaty was concluded at Soyoohpawahko (Bowfoot Crossing), which today is on the Blackfoot Reserve. At this signing, the government attempted to assign one large reserve to two of the three Blackfoot-speaking tribes and the Tsuu T'ina. However, only the Siksika remained at the location of this originally assigned reserve. The Tsuu T'ina moved westward and settled close to what is now the city of Calgary. The Piikani chose their traditional area close to the Porcupine Hills, between what are now Pincher Creek and Fort Macleod. The Kainai, who were to have shared a reserve with the Siksika and Tsuu T'ina, chose a reserve close to their traditional wintering grounds and the sacred Mookoansin (Belly Buttes) and Ninastako (Chief Mountain). Their reserve is bounded by the Belly and the St Mary rivers and is the largest reserve in Canada.

### Treaty 6

Signed at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt (now in Saskatchewan) on August 26, 1876, by James McKay, Indian Commissioner, W J Christie and head chiefs of the Carlton Indians: MIS-TO-WA-SIS (X his mark); AUTUK-UK-KOOP (X his mark); and chiefs: (all signed with X) PEE-YAHN-KAH-NICHK-OO-SIT; AH-YAH-TUS-KUM-IK-IM-AM; KEE-TOO-WA-HAW; CHA-KAS-TA-PAY-SIN; JOHN SMITH; JAMES SMITH; CHIP-EE-WAY-AN and councillors.

*Copy of Treaty 6: LAND Publication No QS-0574-000-EE-A-1. Queens Printer, Ottawa, 1964*

### Treaty 7

Signed at Bowfoot Crossing (Soyoohpawahko) on September 22, 1877. It was signed by:

DAVID LAIRD, Lieutenant-Governor of North West Territories and Special Indian Commissioner

JAMES F MACLEOD, Lieutenant Colonel, NWMP and Special Indian Commissioner

CHAPO-MEXICO, or CROWFOOT, Head Chief of the South Blackfeet

MATOSE-APIW, or OLD SUN, Head Chief of the North Blackfeet

STAMISCOTOCAR, or Bull Head, Head Chief of the Sarcees

MEKASTO, or RED CROW, Head Chief of the South Bloods

SOOTENAH or RAINY CHIEF, Head Chief of the North Bloods

SAKOYE-AOTAN or HEAVY SHIELD, Head Chief of the Middle Blackfeet

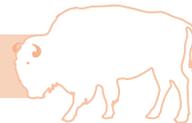
ZOATSE-TAPITAPIW, or SETTING Ont AN EAGLE TAIL, Head Chief of the North Peigan

MAS-GWA-AH-SID or BEAR'S PAW

CHE-ME-KA, or JOHN

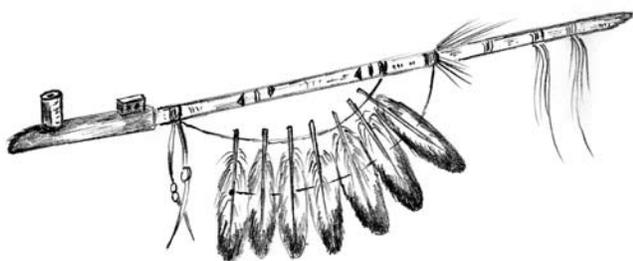
KI-CHI-PWOT or JACOB

(There were other signatories but these are the major leaders of the five tribes. All names/spellings were taken from the original treaty document. Information taken from Treaty 7 Tribal Council website.)



## Treaty 8

Treaty 8, the most comprehensive treaty, encompassed a land mass of 840,000 kilometres. It included the Cree, Dene Soultine (Chipewyan), Dunne'za (Beaver) and Dene tha (Slavey) people of northern Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, and parts of the Northwest Territories. The first part was signed at Lesser Slave Lake in June 21, 1899. Additions were made in July 1899. Today there are 23 First Nations included in Alberta's Treaty 8 region.



## The Impact of "Indian" Treaties

Canada's First Nations people view their treaties as sacred agreements that were negotiated and signed between the sovereign First Nations and the British Crown. The numbered treaties signed by the First Nations of western Canada meant the surrender of most lands that are now the Canadian prairie provinces. In exchange for signing, the First Nations peoples were to live in peace with the new Canadian settlers and be given reserved lands for their exclusive ownership. These lands were allotted to individual bands, with the size being determined by the number of people making up each band. In most cases, a parcel of 260 acres per family was given. First Nations people were also promised a yearly annuity of money, education, medicine and, in some instances, equipment for those who wanted to become farmers.

Much reserve land was lost to dishonest deals with government agents (sometimes called Indian

### Treaty 8

Signed at Lesser Slave Lake on June 21, 1899. Adhesions to the Treaty were taken later in the summer at Peace River Landing, Fort Vermilion, Fond du Lac, Dunvegan, Fort Chipewyan, Smith's Landing, Fort McMurray and Wabasca Lake. Further adhesions were taken in 1990 at Sturgeon Lake, Fort St John, Hay River and Great Slave Lake.

Treaty 8 was signed by: David Laird, Treaty Commissioner; J.A.J. McKenna, Treaty Commissioner; and J.H. Ross, Treaty Commissioner. The chief was: KEE-NOO-SHAY-OO and his mark (X); the Headman were (and they all marked their signatures with an "X"): MOOSTOOS; FELIX GIROUX; WEE-CHEE-WAY-SIS; CHARLES NEE-SUE-TA-SIS CAPTAIN (headman for Sturgeon Lake)

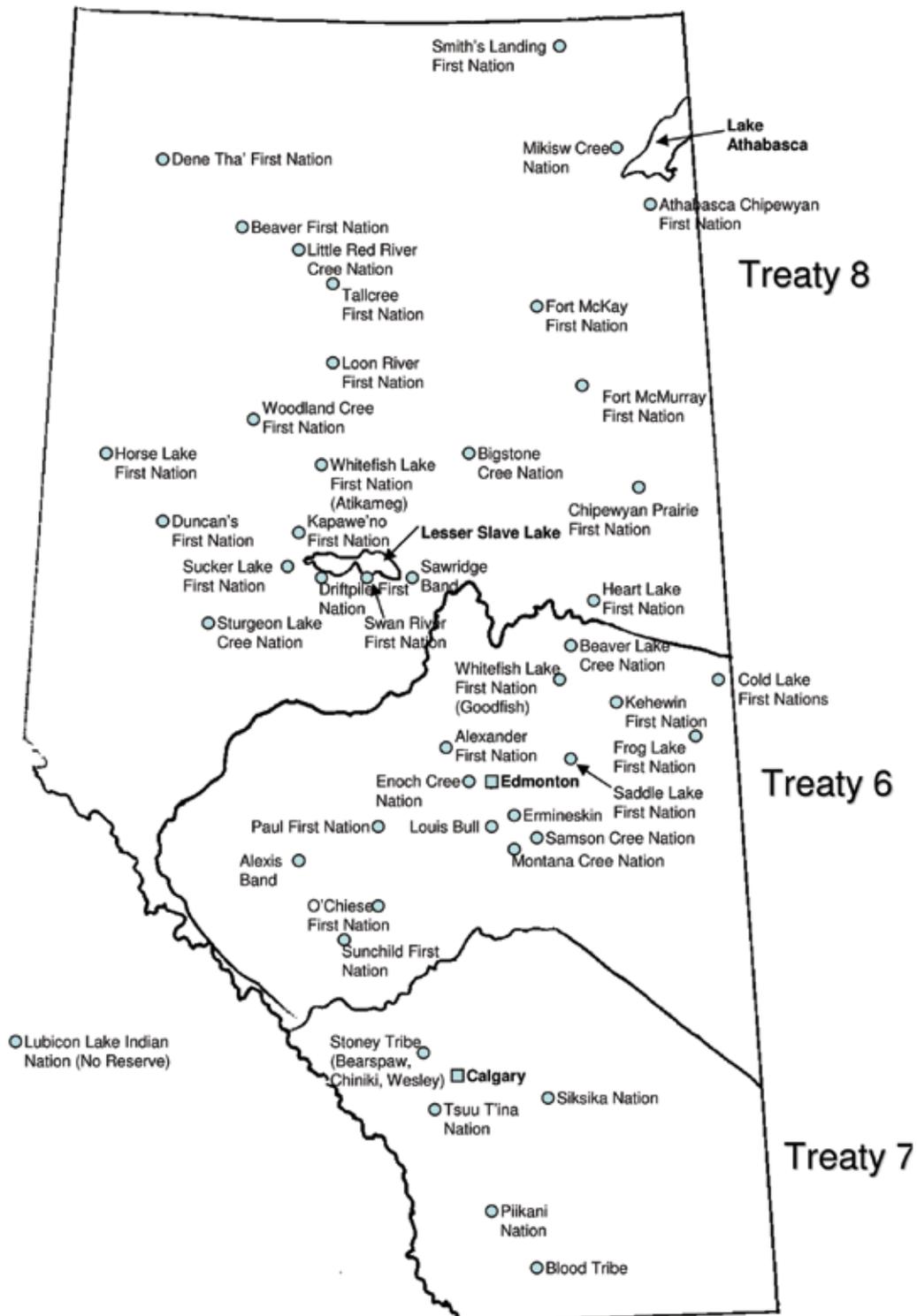
*Copy of Treaty 8: IAND Publication No QS-0576-000-EE-A-16. Queens Printer, Ottawa, 1966*

agents) who were assigned to make deals with Indian bands in the early years and, sometimes, settlers living near reserves. Economically struggling Indian band councils were often tricked into selling off some of their land. Some chiefs and their band councillors, in an attempt to ensure the survival of their bands, signed bad deals, and as a result, ended up losing mineral and natural resources on their land.

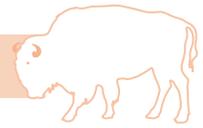
One such case resulted in the loss of the entire reserve of the Passpasschase Indian band, which was located on 39 square miles of land on what is now the south side of Edmonton. Unbeknownst to the chief and his councillors, a referendum to decide if the band would enfranchise (give up their Indian status) was held during their absence. The referendum passed, but its legality is still being contested by descendants.



## A Map of Alberta First Nations



*Adapted from Alberta Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs*



Most Canadians are unaware of the significance of these treaties to First Nations and misconstrue the services that First Nations people are entitled to receive as handouts, paid for with taxpayer dollars. They do not understand that the terms of the treaties must continue to be honoured by the federal and provincial governments as was originally promised.

With the signing of treaties many aspects of First Nations life were changed forever. In Alberta the First Nations people were nomadic; they followed the buffalo herds, which were the main source of food and which provided other necessities important to sustaining their way of life. They did not have a concept of private property and did not practise private ownership; instead, they viewed themselves as having a relationship with and a responsibility for the land. When colonial powers took control of traditional tribal lands, First Nations lost the power to determine their own future and to have an equal role in building the province.

First Nations are governed by chiefs and tribal councils and are members of three treaty organizations: the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, Treaty 7 Tribal Council and Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta. In addition, member First Nations have created the following organizations: Athabasca Tribal Council, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council,

Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council, North Peace Tribal Council, Tribal Chiefs Ventures Inc, Western Cree Tribal Council and Yellowhead Tribal Council.

The treaty-making process is ongoing in Canada. Many First Nations have yet to sign modern treaties, as is the case with the majority of First Nations in British Columbia and the Lubicon in northern Alberta.

## The Métis

The original Métis people of Canada were born in the beginning of the 1600s as a result of intermarriage between Cree, Ojibwa and Salteaux women and French and Scottish fur traders. Scandinavian, Irish and English ancestries were added to the mix as western Canada was settled by Europeans.

As a result of this mixed heritage, the Métis became intermediaries between European and Indian cultures. They worked as guides, interpreters and outfitters to forts and trading companies, and established villages from the Great Lakes to the Mackenzie Delta.

The Métis fought for land rights twice in what the government termed “rebellions,” after the HBC sold Métis homelands in Manitoba to Canada in 1870. Forced out of their homes, they moved west into Saskatchewan and Alberta. Some of those without land stayed with Indian relatives on reserves, but they were eventually asked to leave because they were not Indians according to the *Indian Act*. Some became known as “road allowance people,” because they built homes alongside roads on land that did not belong to them.

After the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, the Canadian government offered money and land scrip to the Métis as compensation for relinquishing title to any land due to them based on their First Nations ancestry. Many who took the land scrip eventually sold their land, while others chose to join Indian bands in which they had relatives.

In 1928, Métis leaders organized the Métis Association of Alberta to petition the government and make it aware of Métis issues. In 1938, the Alberta

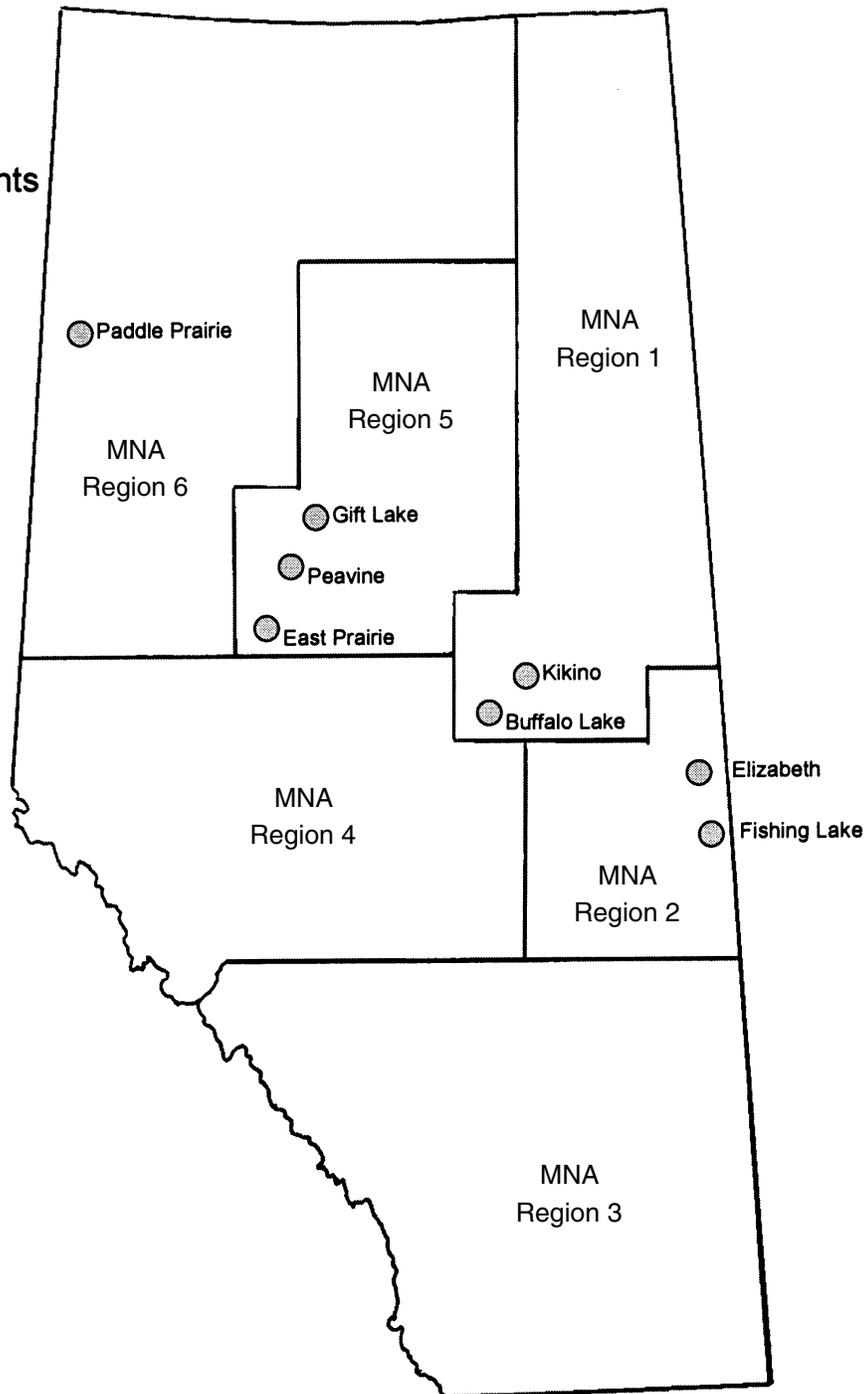
**A**ssociation des Métis d'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord Ouest, the Alberta Métis Association, was formed in 1932 to address the terrible socioeconomic conditions of the Métis. The first officers were Joseph Francis Dion, president; Malcolm Norris, vice-president; Felix Callihou, vice-president; and members Jim Brady and Pete Tomkins. Together they constituted the Big Five, and their political action and work helped found the Métis settlements, the *Métis Betterment Act* and the continued improvement of the Métis living conditions. Malcolm Norris and J F Dion were also influential in the formation of the Indian Association.

Source: Homer Poitras, Dion's grandson

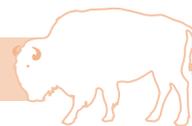


## A Map of the Métis Nations of Alberta Association (MNA) Regional Zones

1998  
Métis  
Settlements



*Adapted from Alberta Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs*



government passed the *Métis Betterment Act*, which set aside 1.25 million acres of land for Alberta's Métis people. The land was divided into 12 settlements, eight of which remain: Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie and Peavine. All are located in the central and northern part of the province.

## Métis Accords

The Métis Association, now the Métis Nation of Alberta, had Joseph Dion (1988–1960) as its first president.

The Government of Alberta and the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) have signed several framework agreements that outline how both parties are to address the needs and aspirations of Métis people, including preserving their identity and cultural heritage.

The eight Métis settlements in Alberta comprise a land base of 1.25 million acres.

The Federation of Métis Settlements was formed as a legal entity on behalf of the eight communities in 1975.

In 1989 the provincial government and the Federation of Métis Settlement Association signed the Alberta– Métis Settlements Accord that secured land ownership and unprecedented economic, social, community and political development.

The Métis Settlements achieved the inclusion of Métis in the Constitution Act of 1982 which accorded them the same recognition as other Indigenous Nations of Canada.

In 1990 the Métis Settlements Act passed land titles to settlement lands to the Métis Settlements General Council.

In 1992 the governments of Canada and Alberta signed a Tripartite Process Agreement with the Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNAA) that provides a forum for discussions on furthering Métis self-management.



When the Office of the Métis Settlements Ombudsman was established in 2003, it provided the means for complaints to be heard in an impartial and independent manner and a place to promote the rights and responsibilities of Métis Settlement Councils.

## Inuit Land Claims

Despite the fact that the Europeans contacted the Inuit in the 1700s, it wasn't until the 1940s that the Canadian government began to assert its presence in the Arctic region. At that time many Inuit were encouraged to live in settlements rather than pursue their traditional nomadic lives. Over time the settlements established schools, residences and supported RCMP detachments and became permanent features of life in the north.

Since the mid-1970s, Inuit have negotiated several comprehensive land claims with the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Province of Quebec. These include the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, signed in 1975; the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, signed in 1984 with the Inuit located in the Western Arctic; and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, reached in 1993. Each of these agreements meets the needs of the specific region. In all cases, the settlement package includes financial compensation, land rights, hunting rights and economic development opportunities. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement also committed the federal government to the division of the Northwest Territories and the creation of the territory of Nunavut on April 1, 1999 (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). The government of Nunavut administers approximately 20 per cent of Canada's land region and has power equivalent to that of existing territorial governments. An elected legislative assembly, a cabinet and a territorial court are the primary institutions of public government.

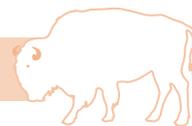


With the passage of two bills in the House of Commons in June of 1993, the Inuit of Nunavut took a large step in their work to regain control of their lives and their ancestral homeland.

Ending 20 years of negotiation, the Final Land Claims Agreement between the Inuit of Nunavut and the Government of Canada was ratified. A second bill created the new territory of Nunavut by April 1, 1999.

The passage of these bills means that our work now enters a new stage—that of implementing our own modern treaty with Canada. Instead of merely talking about political and economic development, we can actually make things happen. Instead of relying on other governments to protect our environment and wildlife, we can take measures ourselves.

*—Adapted from the Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NIT), a group that ensures that the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement continues to be implemented*



## A Timeline of Historical Events Involving Aboriginal People in Canada

This timeline reflects four stages that have characterized contact between European and Aboriginal peoples: alliance, marginalization, wardship and a move toward self-sufficiency. These four stages have been adapted from *Histories, Cultures, and Contemporary Issues of First Nation, Métis, Inuit Peoples of Alberta* (University of Alberta 2004, 1–189).

### Stage 1: Alliance (1600–1763)

From early settlement to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the relationship is characterized by partnership based on trade and military alliances.

- 1605 Samuel de Champlain establishes one of the first permanent European settlements in North America, at Port Royal in the Annapolis Basin, in Nova Scotia.
- 1670 The Hudson's Bay Company receives a charter granting it authority to trade in Rupert's Land (western Canada).
- 1754 Hudson's Bay Company employee Anthony Henday becomes the first English-speaking European to visit what is present-day Alberta. European trade goods, passed through the hands of First Nations traders, actually precede the arrival of European people. Ready access to these trade goods, especially guns, helps Woodland First Nations people move onto the plains to displace the plains tribes already there.
- 1755 The British establish the first Indian Affairs office.
- 1759 The British defeat the French on the Plains of Abraham.



### Stage 2: Marginalization (1763–1867)

Partnership gives way to a policy of extinguishing Indian peoples' occupation of the land in advance of settlement. Indian peoples, although given special protection, are relegated to the margins of Canadian society.

- 1763 A Royal Proclamation signed by King George III of England states, in essence, that from this time forward the Crown will negotiate with First Nations people for lands they wish to dispose of and that these lands will be purchased by or leased on behalf of the Crown.
- 1780 European diseases quickly follow the horse and gun into Alberta. Early epidemics are particularly deadly, as previously unexposed populations have no resistance. Smallpox claims tens of thousands of lives.
- 1791 The *Constitution Act* establishes Upper and Lower Canada.
- 1794 The Jay Treaty, a treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation between Great Britain and the United States of America, is signed in November. Since that time, according to the terms of the treaty, Native American groups (excluding Métis) in both the United States and Canada have enjoyed the right of free passage across the US–Canada border. However, the application and recognition of this right has taken decidedly different courses: while the US has generally treated the right liberally under statutory codification, the Canadian government has opted to develop and restrict the right under its court's common law.
- 1816 Cuthbert Grant and his fellow Métis supporters become prominent figures in the conflicts between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in a series of conflicts referred to as the Pemmican Wars. This period ushers in the first recorded and organized attempts to refer to the Métis as a nation. During this time, the first appearance of the blue Métis flag with the horizontal figure eight is recorded. The skirmishes culminate in the Battle of Seven Oaks.



- 1835 Some 40 million bison still roam the North American plains. Influenza epidemic devastates First Nations populations.
- 1856 Reverend George McDougall removes the Manitou Stone from a sacred spiritual site for the Plains Cree and Blackfoot peoples, near present-day Hardisty, Alberta. This act of removal prophesies disease, starvation and war.
- 1862 Hospice St Joseph, the first residential school in Alberta, opens at Lac la Biche.

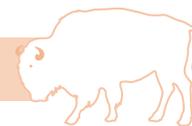
### Stage 3: Wardship (1867–1969)

With the signing of treaties and the first *Indian Act*, the relationship becomes one of imposed wardship (through the reserve system) as the government tries to assimilate Indian peoples into Canadian society.

- 1867 The *British North America Act* defines the relationship between “Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians” and the federal government of Canada.
- 1870 The Hudson’s Bay Company sells title of the Northwest (Rupert’s Land) to the Dominion of Canada without consulting or gaining consent of the First Nations, Inuit or Métis peoples. Overnight, Aboriginal peoples’ homeland becomes Canada’s frontier. The resulting discontent leads to the Red River Resistance, spearheaded by Louis Riel, and ultimately to the *Manitoba Act* of 1870.
- 1871–77 Treaties 1–7 are signed.
- 1873 North West Mounted Police are formed.
- 1876 The *Indian Act* is introduced and will restructure almost every aspect of First Nations life. The act deprives First Nations peoples of the right to govern themselves and denies them Canadian citizenship, barring them from voting in federal and provincial elections. The act also restricts their ability to conduct commerce and own land.
- 1885 Saskatchewan Métis face land-claim exclusions and general discontent similar to that faced by their Red River counterparts. Gabriel Dumont travels

to Montana to ask Louis Riel to lead a resistance in Saskatchewan. Riel, hoping to create another provisional government, is thrust into a different political situation. On May 12, after a string of battles, Riel surrenders to the North West Mounted Police at Batoche, Saskatchewan. Dumont flees the country while Riel stands trial. Riel is found guilty by a jury and is sentenced to be hanged, despite the jury’s recommendation for mercy, on November 16 (now Louis Riel Day).

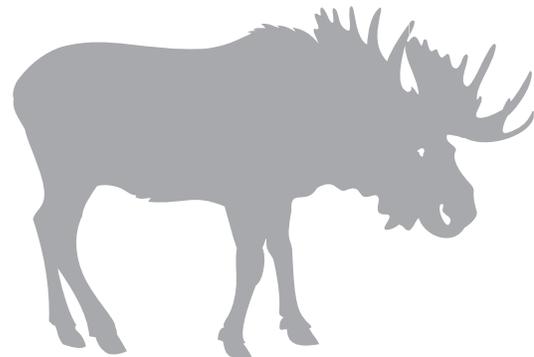
- 1890 Government officials and missionaries campaign to suppress traditional spirituality, complaining that sacred ceremonies prevent First Nations people from assimilating into Canadian society.
- 1899 Treaty 8 is signed. Scrip is issued to Métis living in northern Alberta.
- 1911 Aboriginal people account for less than 5 per cent of Alberta’s population.
- 1920 The *Indian Act* is amended, making it mandatory for all First Nations children to attend Indian residential schools.
- 1932 Association des Métis d’Alberta et des Territoires du Nord Ouest, Métis Association of Alberta, is formed.
- 1938 Alberta’s *Métis Betterment Act* (land set aside for Métis settlements) is signed.
- 1939 Alberta Indian Association is formed.
- 1951 The official campaign to suppress spirituality ends with an overhaul of the *Indian Act*. Some communities have kept their spiritual traditions alive, but others have lost many of their traditions. Indian women who married men without Indian status lost their own Indian status, as did their children. They were not allowed to live in the reserve community or receive treaty benefits.
- 1958 James Gladstone, a member of the Blood Tribe, becomes Canada’s first First Nations senator.
- 1960 Treaty Indians, Status Indians and Registered Indians receive the right to vote and are finally recognized as Canadian citizens. All First Nations people are accorded the right to vote in

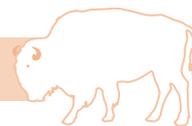


- federal elections. Métis have always had the right to vote.
- 1965** First Nations people organize for social change. They conduct investigations into living conditions on reserves and settlements and demand to be included in the development of government Aboriginal policies. First Nations people are given the right to vote in Alberta provincial elections.
- Stage 4: Move Toward Self-Sufficiency (1969–Present)**
- Indian peoples' rejection of the assimilation-oriented 1969 White Paper marks the end of wardship. Since 1969 the relationship has been characterized by movement toward self-determination and self-government based upon a reassertion of Indian people's rights and status as First Nations.
- 1969** Federal government, under the prime ministry of Pierre Trudeau, introduces the White Paper on Indian policy. It calls for a repeal of the *Indian Act*, renunciation of federal responsibilities and termination of Indian special status. Trudeau believed treaties were signed between sovereign nations only, and his government considered First Nations land claims too broad and unspecific. First Nations feared this stance would undermine their special rights and status within Canadian society. The First Nations response leads to the publication of *Citizen Plus*, also known as the Red Paper, which advocates reaffirming special status for Indians as defined by the treaties.
- 1970** Twelve First Nations communities conduct a peaceful sit-in at Blue Quills Indian Residential School for the purpose of obtaining control of the facility and assuming the responsibility of educating their children. This becomes the first successful people's movement when the federal government signs over the facility to the Blue Quills Native Education Council in December. Responsibility for educational programming comes the following year.
- 1971** The White Paper of 1969 is retracted.
- 1971** Inuit Tapirisat of Canada is founded to work on behalf of Inuit.
- 1973** The federal government agrees to First Nations' local control of their education. Many First Nations do take control of their allotted education funds over the next 15 years.
- 1974** The Honourable Ralph Garvin Steinhauer becomes the first First Nations Canadian to serve as lieutenant-governor of Alberta.
- 1975** First Land Claim Agreement with the Inuit and Cree of northern Quebec.
- 1982** Métis people are recognized in the Canadian Constitution as "Aboriginal peoples of Canada," defined as including Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. Canada repatriates its own constitution from Britain. The Canadian constitution recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights. The Assembly of First Nations recognizes June 21 as National Solidarity Day for all Aboriginal peoples.
- 1982** Amendment to Canada's Constitution recognizes and affirms Inuit Aboriginal and treaty rights.
- 1984** Inuvialuit of western Arctic finalize their land claim.
- 1985** The federal government passes Bill C-31, which returns Indian status to all those who lost it through marriage or other circumstances.
- 1986** The Supreme Court rules that treaties with First Nations need to be interpreted.
- 1986** The Piikani assume local control over their education administration from the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.
- 1987** The federal government begins transferring authority to plan and deliver health services to First Nations communities.
- 1987** The Nakoda and Tsuu T'ina people assume local control over their education administration from the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.



- 1988** The Kainai assume local control over their education administration from the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.
- 1988** The last Indian residential school closes.
- 1989** Siksika assume local control over their education administration from the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.
- 1990** Elijah Harper, an elected member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, withholds consent to a motion on the ratification process of the Meech Lake Accord. The accord is defeated.
- 1993** Eastern and central Inuit (Nunavut) sign their land claim with the government of Canada.
- 1996** The report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People gives a damning account of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, which highlights the distortion of that relationship over time and the terrible consequences for Aboriginal people—loss of land, power and self-respect. Few of the commission’s recommendations are presently being acted upon.
- 1998** The federal government issues a statement of reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples and apologizes for its role in the administration of residential schools.
- 1999** The territory of Nunavut is established, including recognition of Inuktitut as an official working language along with French and English.
- 2000** The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is established after many years of work by indigenous people from many parts of the world, including Canada. Credit for much of the work goes to Assembly of First Nations’ representative Wilton J Littlechild, LLB, QC, a former Alberta member of parliament, who worked for over 25 years to help establish this forum.
- 2002** On November 16, the federal government establishes the Office of Residential School Resolution.
- 2003** The Supreme Court of Canada case (R vs Powley) hands down a precedent-setting decision that offers the first legal recognition of Métis Aboriginal rights that were provided for in the *Constitution Act*, 1982. This case specifically addressed issues such as Métis identity, government responsibilities and the “Powley Test” for Métis hunting rights. It is a landmark decision for the Métis, who have been fighting for recognition of their First Nation rights for many years. In the same year, the Métis National Council adopts a national definition of *Métis*.
- 2005** On November 20, the federal government announces an agreement to pay out close to \$4 billion over five years to settle outstanding claims brought by Aboriginal peoples abused while attending government-run residential schools. The payments go to individual victims of the schools and will support a truth-and-reconciliation commission to examine the decades-long scandal of abuse.
- 2007** On Wednesday, September 19, 2007, the Canadian government formalized a compensation package of at least \$1.9 billion for an estimated 80,000 former residential school students. Mary Moonias, a teacher on the Louis Bull Reserve in Hobbema, was the first person in Canada to receive a payment.





## Moose

by Paul McLaughlin

*Reprinted with permission from the author.*

Trotting through the bush near the end of her run,  
The jogger feels a baby-tug on her sleeve,  
Stutter-steps to a stop, questions the trees,  
pulls back

A cedar bough and finds a new-born moose,  
A waif, curled silent in the snow, body steaming,  
Ears and nostrils twitching, big eyes beseeching,  
reaching out

And tugging on a mother's needs.

*Where's your mother?*

She saw men by the frozen lake, heard shots  
That made her wince. *Where is your mother?*

She can't neglect the way his  
dark brown eyes touch

Her cheek, can't shake the image of his mother  
lying bleeding

In the snow, can't leave him huddled there,  
shivering now,

Breath steaming in the shadows,  
baby eyes pleading

Help me!

She picks him up, all legs and ears and muzzle,  
Hugs him to her chest, wraps him in a blanket,  
Drives him to the rescue farm in the back of  
her van.

*Someone will care for you.*

Where he's penned with all the other  
homeless waifs.

A wallaby shipped half way round the world  
To be abandoned in Alberta. A dwarf goat.

Exotic geese.

A donkey no one wants to love any more.

Refugees

Confined in a concentration camp,  
Imprisoned by a wire fence, far from home,  
forever.

And that's where I first see him, his mew  
So like a lonely child's I think a little boy

Is hiding in the pen, crying for his mom.  
I ask the old Cree who's tending them  
what's going on.

*Damn city folk, he says. They pick them up  
And drop them off with me. Don't know*

*A moose's eyes look that sad,*

*It's just the way they are. I told her,*

*They hide the calves like that,*

*She knew where he was,*

*You should have left him there,*

*Now she's alone, searching for her baby.*

But what about the hunters? *They don't  
shoot moose*

*This time of year. The "shots" you heard  
Were poplar branches snapping from the  
weight of snow.*

*Only thing to do is keep him here*

*And care for him as best I can.*

*Maybe send him to a zoo.*

The ancient man goes silent.

He still recalls the day the Mounties came  
With guns. They pulled him from his mother's  
wailing arms

And flew him south to "save" him in a  
residential school.

*We're doing this for your own good, they said,*

*Though everything that came from it was bad.*

He still recalls the emptiness that filled his heart

As life beyond the wire fence went missing,

And how his mind went blank when

they removed

His tongue, his name, his god, his rights,

his childhood

And gave him in return assimilation,

A white man's world without a white man's skin.

He rubs the moose's nose.

*Now that you belong to us, he says,*

*You don't belong to anyone.*

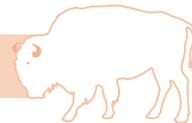
# ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY AND TEACHINGS

## Aboriginal Spirituality and Teachings

*All things are connected like the blood that unites us. We did not weave the web of life. We are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.*

—Chief Seattle, Suquamish Nation, 1854





## Spiritual and Social Renewal Among First Nations Peoples

First Nations people have been leading and reclaiming many of their social customs, traditional values and spiritual ceremonies since changes to the *Indian Act* in 1951 lifted restrictions on many of these practices. In the late 1800s, the Government of Canada feared that Indians would organize and rise up against the new settlers in the west, as was happening in the United States. At the same time missionaries were eager to convert the First Nations people they viewed as savages to Christianity in order to, as they put it, “civilize” them. At the urging of missionaries, the government passed laws restricting First Nations peoples from practising many of their ceremonies and customs. As a result many First Nations peoples continued to practise their traditional customs and ceremonies secretly, though many traditions were lost or forgotten during the long period of restrictions. Today First Nations elders and those with cultural expertise are involved in reviving many of the lost traditions. Their guidance ensures that the proper protocols and respect for First Nations laws and traditional knowledge are maintained.

## The First Nations World View

*World view* broadly refers to how people perceive and respond to their world. Generally, people make sense of their world through the lenses of their own cultural experiences and traditions. World view is shaped by complex factors and circumstances and determines what people value, believe and think. Together these factors motivate people’s actions and behaviours. Unfortunately, terrible misunderstandings occur when people’s world views clash. Historically this occurred when First Nations and Inuit groups and European colonizers met. Misunderstandings even continue to occur today among the descendants.

The First Nations peoples who occupied Turtle Island (today known as North America) have profoundly different philosophical and spiritual interpretations of their relationship with the Earth from those of non-Aboriginal Canadians. Generally, the Western world view places enormous value on

such things as private property, hierarchies, the notion of sovereign states with distinct international boundaries, the primacy of the marketplace and essentialist institutions like religion. Unfortunately this world view does not fit with the more holistic Aboriginal world view. This has resulted in conflict detrimental to Aboriginal peoples that has been discriminatory, at times hateful and even violent.

Perhaps one of the biggest differences between the two world views is the attitude toward the environment. A vital lesson still to be learned in the developed world is that the Earth, its atmosphere and its waters belong to all people. According to Ken Goodwill, Sioux spiritual leader and lecturer at the First Nations University of Canada, Aboriginal peoples have a unique relationship with their Earth Mother, and they relate all human activities to the Earth Mother. The cultures of Aboriginal peoples are holistic; that is, they are totally integrated in their connection to the Earth Mother. Many First Nations peoples believe that they come from the womb of the Earth itself. For example, when the Sioux refer to “all their relations,” they refer to all living things, be they animal or plant. Further, all things, animate and inanimate, possess spiritual significance.

Five strong threads are common in Aboriginal world views: a holistic perspective, the interconnectedness of all living things, connections to the land and community, the dynamic nature of the world and the strength of “power with” rather than “power over.” The image for this concept is a circle, in which all living things are equal. “Power with” is a dialogue during which everyone stands face to face (Alberta Education 2005, 13). Traditional Aboriginal education is based on these world views—it is a holistic process where learning takes place in all four spheres of human experience: spiritual, physical, emotional and mental. Spirituality, relationships and the expression of traditional values are the heart of Aboriginal education.

## The Inuit World View

For at least 5,000 years, the people and culture known throughout the world as Inuit have occupied a vast territory, one-third of Canada’s



## The Missionary Arrives

In the distance, the young missionary could see the tops of what the people at the fort had referred to as teepee, inverted conical dwellings used by the prairie tribes. He had heard how Indian women could dismantle one of these structures and be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

As he neared the small village, numerous dogs barked at him and curious children warily approached him. They chattered unintelligibly and pointed to his face. Soon women came out and jabbed at his stringy legs. Then they began to throw rocks at him. "*Miistapoot!*" ("Go away!"), they shouted. His horse spooked and began to buck. The next thing he felt was the warm earth beneath his tired body.

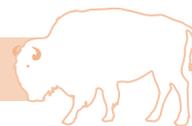
"*Maopiik!*" ("Stop that!"), a man's voice yelled. The priest picked himself up from the ground and made a little bow to the man who had rescued him. "*Merci,*" he said. The young priest's rescuer was a respected elder. This man of indefinite age had seen these *naapikoan* (white people) before. He always found the whiteness of their skin and the light colour of their hair fascinating. He gestured for the young priest to follow him. "*Apiit*" ("Come inside"), he said when they reached one of the teepees. It was surprisingly roomy inside. The floor was covered with skins. Around the edge was bedding. There were also large leather containers filled with dried meat. In the centre was a neat, circular firepit ringed by small rocks.

The young priest from France, and more recently from Quebec, had only a smattering of English and no understanding of Blackfoot. Still, he was there to save them and convert them to Roman Catholicism. The elder felt compassion for this strange young man and allowed him to stay in the village and sleep each night inside his teepee. The old man became fascinated when the priest knelt each night by his bedding, made the sign of the cross and clacked his rosary beads as he prayed.

Each day, the young priest would corner someone and, through crude signing, make that person understand that he wanted to learn their language. Slowly, as the weeks and months passed, he began to understand and speak Blackfoot. Now he could spread his message of salvation to these people through their own language. When he began to talk about God and Roman Catholicism, they listened and seemed receptive. Some even consented to be baptized. However, he became despondent when these same "converts" still participated in the sun-dance ceremonies, when all the people gathered to give thanks to *Ihtsipaitapiyo* (the Creator), *Naato'si* (sun) and *Ksaahkommiitapi* (spirits of the earth). He found it sacrilegious. He could not understand the inclusivity of *Niitsitapi* spirituality.

—Leo Fox

**Note:** This story of the arrival of the priest into a Blackfoot camp is loosely based on oral history. The Blackfoot words use the 13-letter orthography used in most Blackfoot texts today.



land mass, in the Arctic. This region continues to be shaped by natural forces into seemingly endless tundra, magnificent mountains and countless islands.

Traditionally, the land and the sea have provided everything the Inuit need. Their history is about people and their relationship to the environment and to each other; about dealing with change as well as the causes and consequences of change forced on them by colonialism; and about how they have re-established control over their cultural, economic and political destiny through land claims and self-government. Above all, it is about how the people are able to live in balance with the natural world.

The ancestors depended on their ability to maintain good relations with the spirits of both the animate and inanimate worlds. They recognized that they had to be careful, by respecting the animals and the spirit world.

## The Sacred Circle

The circle is a universal symbol of connection, unity, harmony, wholeness and eternity. In a circle all parts are equal (Kainai Board of Education et al 2005, 87). The circle is an important symbol, because the First Nations' belief system holds that everything is circular. Life is circular—a person is born, grows into childhood, matures and becomes old, at which point thoughts and actions become childlike again. The seasons are cyclical. Earth moves in a circle. Everything moves in a circle, from the rising sun to the setting sun, from the east and back to the east. The day is divided into four segments of time: sunrise, noon, sunset and night.

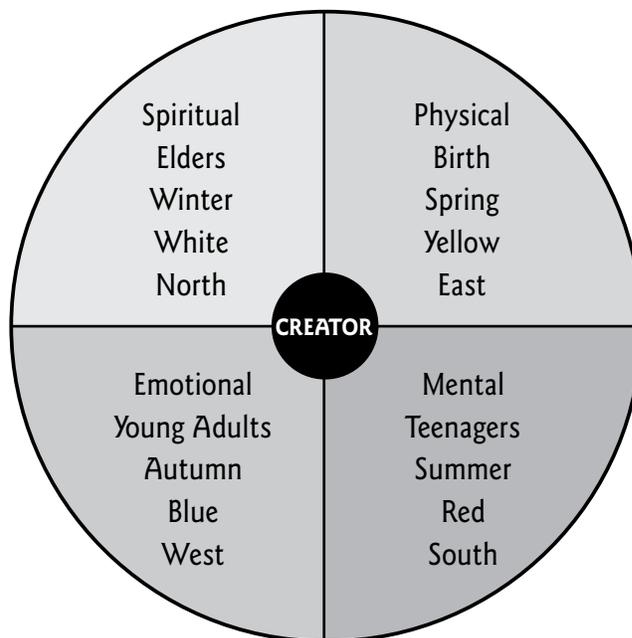
The circle also symbolizes inclusion and equality. In traditional First Nations meetings or gatherings, everyone sits in a circle in accordance with the belief that all people are equal. This symbol is drawn on teepees, woven into clothing and made into ornamental parts of one's national dress. The circle is also the basis of many beautiful works of jewellery and art, which are precious possessions.

The circle teaches that four elements—mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical—are distinctive

and powerful yet interconnected components of a balanced human life. Each of the four elements represents a particular way of perceiving things, but none is considered superior to or more significant than the others, and all are to be equally respected. The emphasis is always placed on the need to seek and explore the four great ways in order to gain a thorough understanding of one's own nature in relation to the surrounding world. Today, these four elements are often expressed in the medicine wheel, which has been adopted by many First Nations people regardless of whether it is part of their traditional culture. Just as the acorn carries within it the potential to become a mighty oak tree, the four aspects of our nature (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) are like seeds that have the potential to grow into powerful gifts (Alberta Education 2005, 87).

Other aspects of life can be symbolized using the circle or medicine wheel. For example, the four symbolic races (red, white, yellow and black) express the idea that we are all part of the same human family. All are brothers and sisters living on the same Mother Earth. The four stages of life—infancy, youth, maturity and old age—relate

## The Medicine Wheel



—Francis Whiskeyjack  
Saddle Lake, Alberta



## The Sacred Circle

When the Creator put us on this Earth, he gave us four gifts to help us through troubled times. The first was the gift of prayer; the second was the gift of sharing; the third gift was the gift of crying to wash away the pain and the fourth was laughter. If you are able to do these four things, it is said that you are on a healing journey.

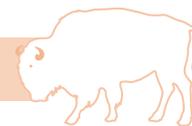
to a person's life cycle. Each part of the life cycle is characterized by celebrations and rituals. There are many variations in the ways this basic concept is expressed: the four directions, the four winds, the four sacred plants and other relationships that can be expressed in sets of four.

Among the First Nations groups in Canada, the four sacred plants—tobacco, sage, sweetgrass and cedar—are used in sacred ceremonies to help participants enter them with a good heart. These herbs are usually burned, and people carry out ritual actions using the smoke to cleanse their bodies and spirits. In the sweetgrass ceremony, also called a smudge, sweetgrass is used to symbolically cleanse the body and important objects. During pipe ceremonies where tobacco is offered, the smoke represents one's visible thought; tobacco

travels ahead of the words so that honesty will be received in a kind and respectful way (Kainai Board of Education et al 2005, 93).

Tobacco can be used as a gift, in ceremonies, in prayer and as a medicine (commercial tobacco should not be used as medicine because it contains harmful chemicals). Tobacco was never meant to be used as it is today, smoked indiscriminately to the detriment of one's health. When people want advice from an elder or prayers said on their behalf, they should first offer the elder tobacco.

Interpretations of the circle or medicine wheel vary greatly among First Nations groups. To learn more about how the circle or medicine wheel is represented and interpreted in your area, consult local elders.



## First Peoples Spirituality

First Nations people and Inuit who follow traditional ways believe in a higher power called the Great Spirit or the Creator. Spirituality is a part of being alive and a part of everyday life (Kainai Board of Education et al 2005, 68). This world view presents human beings as inhabiting a universe made by the Creator and striving to live in a respectful relationship with nature, one another and oneself (Alberta Education 2005, 156). Everything in the universe possesses a kind of power or energy, similar to soul; this power is capable of transferring to birds, animal and humans. For example, animals that become prey are part of a natural cycle whereby they offer themselves to become sustenance for the people. In return, the people honour the animals' spirits by offering prayers.

Like many other groups, First Nations people and Inuit place a great deal of faith in the power of prayer. Prayers thanking the Creator for all the blessings are offered during ceremonies such as sweats, at feasts and meetings, and at the

### Tips for Teachers

**I**t is an honour to be invited to participate in an Aboriginal ceremony. However, teachers must understand that it is inappropriate for anyone to conduct these ceremonies without guidance and supervision from a respected member of the community. If your school wants to host or conduct a ceremony, you must contact community representatives for guidance.

While it is important for students to learn basic information about Aboriginal spirituality and ceremonies, it is not respectful for non-Aboriginals to perform these ceremonies. Seek the advice of the community's elders and invite them to perform ceremonies for special events if it is appropriate and if students and parents consent. Recognize also that many teachings are gender specific and that it is only appropriate for either a male or a female to teach a particular teaching.

beginning and end of the day. Ceremonies are the primary vehicle for spiritual expression. A ceremonial leader or elder ensures the authenticity and integrity of spiritual observances. Nothing is written down, as the very act of writing would negate the significance of the ceremony. Teachings are therefore passed on from elder to elder in a strictly oral tradition.

Most First Nations and Inuit groups have varied beliefs and spiritual practices. It is important that one does not overgeneralize or characterize spirituality as being the same for everyone. What is most important is that some of the knowledge relating to spiritual beliefs and practices is privileged by those who are members of the community. It is an honour to be invited to share in sacred ceremonies.

Under no circumstances should non-Aboriginal teachers attempt to teach about First Nations or Inuit spirituality. If teachers and students are interested in knowing more, an elder or spiritual advisor should be approached to share teachings they believe are appropriate to the particular group.

### Elders

An elder is a male or female adult who has earned a reputation for wisdom and spiritual knowledge. Elders perform traditional ceremonies, are respected as teachers and are often sought out as healers. Some achieve this status because they have spent a lifetime studying a particular aspect of their people's culture and traditions; others achieve it because they are members of sacred societies or holders of sacred objects. Still others are respected as elders for their kindness and generosity.

Elders' contribution to education is enormous because they possess specialized knowledge about First Nations, Métis or Inuit history, society and spirituality. Elders seldom announce their status or position but are known to their communities.

### Medicine People

Healing practices of First Nations people encompass the healing beliefs of a therapeutic



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMOULILA SATAA

approach that combines spirituality, ceremony, herbalism, nutrition and the family, in treating a wide range of physical and emotional ailments. First Nations medicine uses a holistic approach that emphasizes the treatment of body, mind and spirit (University of Alberta 2004, 1–131). To First Nations, the term *medicine* is not restricted to herbal or chemical remedies for illness, although it can, of course, include these things. Medicine traditionally includes spiritual energy and enlightenment. The medicine people of traditional societies were powerful people who communicated with the spirit world. They used their knowledge and powers to benefit the community and strengthen spiritual balance. In traditional First Nations societies, medicine people had the job of restoring a person’s balance—physically, emotionally and spiritually (Kainai Board of Education et al 2005, 89). Modern medicine people are trained over the years as healers. The healer is a link to the spiritual world and is held in very high regard. The healer may prescribe herbal remedies to relieve symptoms of an ailment. Purification rituals may be used to cleanse the body (University of Alberta 2004, 1–131).

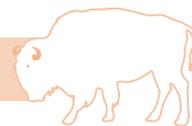
## Inuit Spirituality

Shamanism was common to most hunting cultures around the world. It embodies the people’s attachment to the land and environment. In traditional Inuit society, the Shaman was seen as a doctor-advisor-healer. The Shaman was not seen as camp leader; that role was given to the oldest person with experience hunting and trapping.

Inuit camps could have more than one Shaman, and the Shaman could be either a woman or a man. Shamans were born, not made. They had to have the ability to vision, to see spirits.

As with Christianity and other religions, Shamanism was never meant as an instant remedy for problems. Shamanism was respected and used only as a last resort.

Today in Nunavut, Shamanism is still practised secretly, not openly practised as in other places like Russia. Interestingly, it is discussed by curious young Inuit who have heard that Shamanism is a good way to heal. They see it as a positive tool.



**I**n my family, according to my mother, her family relations were known to practise Shamanism. One in particular named Tagonagag, who died an old elder, was the last person my mother had known to be a Shaman. He was considered to be a strong person, tall and muscular, and had the ability to work and play with even the biggest animals, including a polar bear. It was even said that he had the polar bear as a pet and protector.

—*Amoudla Sataa*

The Inuit believe in the spirits who help them whether on the land or in seeking and finding animals. According to Nattilikmiut, they believe in the existence of Naarjuk. This supreme being, equivalent to the Christian God, made the earth and water. It is believed that he exists somewhere in the universe. He is the boss of sila, the sky, looking after all our relations who have passed away.

Nuliajuk, the spirit of the sea, is the boss of all sea animals. Europeans refer to her as the “Sea Goddess.”

Many Inuit traditional names are spiritual.

Shamanism is the original religion of the Inuit. It was a way of life for many years before Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries arrived on the heels of European traders to forcibly replace Shamanism with Christianity. Some Europeans even considered Shamanism an “act of the devil.”

## Alberta Métis Spirituality

To understand Métis spirituality, one must understand Métis history. However, identifying a single starting point of the Métis people is difficult. Perhaps historian Grant MacEwan (1981, 3) said it best: “Scholars searching for the roots of the hybrid race heard again and again that the Métis Nation, if such it could be called, was born exactly nine months after the first white men arrived.”

Historically, the Métis can define their nationhood by important events, such as the battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, or the Riel Resistances of 1869/70 and 1885. If we look at these historical events as the start of Métis culture and spiritualism, we can see that the Métis show an affinity for European concepts of religion. Cuthbert Grant, Métis leader during the battle of Seven Oaks, was formally educated in Scotland. Riel was chosen by the Catholic Church to go into the seminary. Churches at Batouche and Red River, where priests presided during the buffalo hunt, and much historical documentation show that seminal Métis figures were rooted in Christianity.

This is not to say that the First Nations mothers of the Métis Nation had little influence. Being caught between the European and First Nations traditions has been a condition of Métis consciousness from the very beginning, and many proud Métis have practised traditional First Nations spiritualism.

Today Métis people most often practise one of three categories of spirituality: First Nations spirituality, Christianity or a blend of the two.

Teachers should consult with community leaders in addressing Métis spirituality.

# CULTURAL TRADITIONS

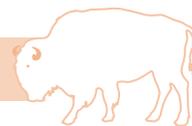
## Cultural Traditions

*Everyone likes to give as well as to receive. No one wishes to receive all the time.*

*We have taken much from your culture. I wish you had taken something from our culture . . . for there were some good and beautiful things in it.*

—Chief Dan George





## Handing Down Cultural Traditions

The acquisition of cultural knowledge is important to all peoples. Before the arrival of Europeans and the imposition of a foreign colonial educational system, First Nations, Métis and Inuit had their own oral educational system, which ensured that children learned the cultural values and history of the tribe, and they had a foundational principle—respect others and live in harmony with the environment.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures are not monolithic, and talking about one Aboriginal culture would be similar to talking about one Asian, European or African culture—each of these cultures includes a wide variety of nations, customs, traditions, languages and outlooks. It would be misleading to suggest that a list of common cultural traits could describe the richness and diversity of Aboriginal cultures. With 46 First Nations, 8 Métis Settlements and many urban Aboriginal communities including Inuit, Alberta's Aboriginal communities are diverse (Alberta Education 2005).

While each Aboriginal group has unique beliefs, customs and practices, there are some common general beliefs and teachings—all live in communities that define their relationships with each other, and such relationships define individual roles and responsibilities. In many Aboriginal communities the individual is identified by the family and where the family lives or comes from (Alberta Education 2005).

Both in the past and in the present, Aboriginal parents and grandparents, extended family members and elders have been responsible for passing knowledge to children. Aboriginal cultures are oral, so knowledge is passed down through stories. Children learn about the world around them and about the relationships between human beings and all other living and non-living things. Early in life they learn the importance of knowing who their relatives are and the value of the kinship system. They also learn manners and respect, and become acquainted with virtues and positive, humanistic qualities, such as love, kindness, honour,

generosity and sharing, which they are made to practise throughout childhood.

Children are taken to social and spiritual ceremonies to observe and learn their people's customs and practices, often taking part in the ceremonies themselves. During certain ceremonies, children are formally introduced and may be given a First Nations name or dance at their first powwow. Community members conduct the ceremonies, passing along additional knowledge about cultural practices. Often children who are musically talented learn the ceremonial songs and the correct drumming techniques and are recruited as valued members of singing groups.

Traditionally, hunting skills had to be learned. The duty of teaching hunting techniques fell first to the father or to a member of the community who was a great hunter. Boys learned to correctly use their hunting equipment. They were also taught about wild game, the natural world and where animals could be found. Becoming a good hunter depended on the amount of training one received and could take a long time. Proficient hunters were highly valued members of the community. These teachings continue today in many communities.

Mothers and other female members of the community passed homemaking and sewing skills down to the girls. Girls learned how to make clothing and other home products from animals, birds and plants, the raw materials of Mother Earth. They were taught the duties, roles and responsibilities expected of women. Women are important members of the community and often function as advisors, healers and providers. Women have important positions in some of the spiritual societies in the community.

Knowledge is passed down orally by other members of the community: historians, healers, those responsible for meting out justice, individuals with special knowledge of the environment, leaders of the social and spiritual societies, and storytellers, especially those familiar with important legends about each nation's mythological helper to the Creator, Weesakichak (Cree), Naapi (Blackfoot) and Nanaboosh (Ojibwa), whose earthly exploits had moral messages. In other words, education in First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures was seen as a community responsibility.



## Blackfoot Protocol

A verbal thank you is a social gesture or norm practised by the larger non-Native society. In some First Nations languages, such as Blackfoot, there is no word for thank you. Gratitude is expressed through kind words or acts of kindness. But that it is not to say every First Nations person adheres to his or her own cultural customs. The point is that all cultural groups respect other people's customs. For example, when one is on someone else's turf—in their home, on their reserve, in their city or even country—it is respectful to abide by their customs.

I always taught my First Nations students to say thank you in my classroom. I also explained the cultural differences and expectations to them and the importance of learning and practising others' cultural customs and norms. This taught them to be respectful and to function appropriately in any culture.

—*Josy Russell-Pakes*

Today, traditional Aboriginal cultures have been largely displaced by modern North American culture. The impact of the change has been so powerful that today many First Nations parents do not know how to speak their traditional languages. The main reason for this is that traditional cultural knowledge was almost lost when children were removed from their homes and placed in residential schools. School authorities strongly discouraged and punished students for using their language and practising their cultural traditions.

Nevertheless, there is cause for hope for the survival and revitalization of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and languages today. There are pockets of the Aboriginal population that still have a sophisticated traditional knowledge base. It is through them and a renewed interest in traditional language and culture that a new order will be achieved. For example, some traditional languages and culture are being taught in First Nations schools on reserves and in some public

schools. Elders and community members are being involved to ensure that there is local content in the curriculum. The last section of this resource provides information on Aboriginal programs for students and teachers currently available in Alberta.

## First Nations Symbols and Their Meanings

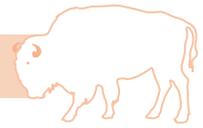
First Nations people from many different nations adopted ancestral symbols that represented ideas, beliefs, dreams or reality. Very often symbols represented figures in nature, such as important animals or birds, like the buffalo and the eagle. Sometimes the symbols represented the spirit world and spiritual helpers, like the thunderbird. Some symbols identified nations or clans, while others depicted celestial bodies, such as the sun, the moon and the stars. These last symbols are often seen on teepees and clothing and carved into jewellery.

Symbols take many forms. Some are beaded on clothing and others are painted on entire hides and tell a story of the history of a tribe or nation. A number of symbols are thousands of years old, and their meanings have been lost. The petroglyphs at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park in southern Alberta are an example of this.

First Nations people who believe in the traditional ways wear symbols that give them strength or identity. Following are some major First Nations symbols:

- The eagle is a symbol of truth, power and freedom as it roams the sky. Its wings represent the balance between male and female, each dependent upon the strengths and abilities of the other. When one holds the eagle feather, one must speak the truth as positively as one can, for the ear of the Creator is that much closer to the feather of the eagle. Therefore, First Nations people honour the feather of the eagle with great care, showing it respect and honesty at all times. To be given an eagle feather is the highest honour that can be awarded within First Nations culture.





- The bear symbolizes strength, endurance, intelligence and loyalty.



- The buffalo symbolizes subsistence, strength and the ability to survive.



- The rock symbolizes strength and endurance, and it holds the spirits of the ancestors.



- The drum is a powerful symbol of Aboriginal identity and represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth.

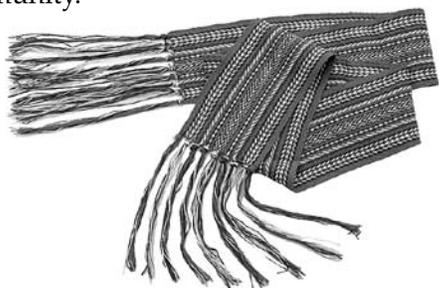
## Métis Symbols and Their Meanings

Important symbols of Métis culture are listed below.

- The infinity sign ( $\infty$ ) symbolizes two cultures together and the continuity of the Métis culture.



- The Red River cart is a well-known and ingeniously designed symbol of Métis identity. It can be used as a cart or as a raft when the wheels are removed.
- The Métis sash symbolizes present-day Métis identity but had many uses in the early days, often functioning as a rope or a belt. Much like the Scottish kilt, Métis use traditional woven patterns and colours in sashes to represent their community.



- The buffalo symbolizes subsistence, strength and the ability to survive.
- The fiddle is a favourite musical instrument of the Métis used for traditional songs and dances such as the Red River jig.

## Inuit Traditions, Values and Languages

To survive in Canada's Arctic required that the people willingly cooperate and share—primary values of Inuit life both then and now. The sharing of food best illustrates how these values tied the Inuit community together socially. When animals were killed, the meat and skin were shared among the community. Formal rules evolved that established how food would be distributed. For example, specific parts went to the hunter who killed the animal, other parts went to the helpers and other parts went to women. Leftover meat was divided among everyone, ensuring that everyone got an equal share. When Inuit were in need, they looked after each other.

Before people lived in the larger permanent communities of today, the values, traditions, skills and knowledge that defined the culture were expressed differently. The elders still speak of times when their lives were in sync with the seasons and, though life was somewhat nomadic, the people returned to the same places year after year. The nomadic movements provided opportunities to exploit seasonal resources and establish family hunting territories. This pattern did not imply that anyone owned the land or had exclusive hunting rights. It did, however, identify a group's territory and established localized social systems and patterns of land use. Again the principles of sharing and cooperation were central to life and to survival.

The Inuit have a long-standing code of behaviour based on time-honoured values and practice. Their values are communicated to children early in life through stories, legends, songs and direct modelling of behaviour. In addition to sharing and cooperating, children are instilled with values based on connecting with others (respect, generosity, love, equality, significance and trust); work



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMOULIIA SATARA

(observation, practice, mastery, teamwork, unity, consensus and conservation) and coping (patience, endurance, improvisation, strength, adaptability, resilience, resourcefulness, survival, interconnectedness and honesty).

Within their network of social relationships, they placed equal status on men and women even though they had different roles within the family and community. Women were usually keepers of information of family trees and storytellers. Women had certain patterns on their clothing and may have had tattoos on their faces. Women and young girls tended to qulliqs (seal oil lamps) and used ulus to prepare skins and then sewed them into clothing.

## Inuit Symbols and Their Meanings

The term *Inuksuk* (the singular of *Inuksuit*) means “to act in the capacity of a human.” It is an extension of an Inuk, a human being. These Inuksuit were designed to be messages fixed in time and space. Others may have been personal notes or grief marking where a loved one perished. Some Inuksuit were never approached and were avoided because of their power; some were sources of good fortune, cures and protection.

In addition to their earthly functions, certain *muksuk*-like figures had spiritual connotations and were objects of veneration, often marking the threshold of the spiritual landscape of the *Inumariit*, which means “the people who knew how to survive on the land living in a traditional way.”

## Cultural Protocols

In Alberta, each Aboriginal community has its own cultural and social traditions that translate into protocols that should be carefully respected. Although regional and nation-specific protocols have evolved over time, there are many similarities and common themes that are important to remember.

Using proper protocol means following the customs of the people or community. Because protocol varies between communities and individuals, it is important to ask an informed community member about the proper protocol for any given situation. Generally, people respect those who are considerate enough to ask.

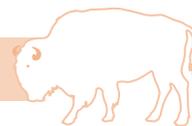
Each Aboriginal community has its own protocols, which can change in a community without notice (for example, when a new chief and council are elected). Protocols also change depending on whether a situation is informal or formal.

As noted in *Our Words, Our Ways* (Alberta Education 2005), protocols exist to

- build trusting, honest relationships;
- show respect for Aboriginal cultures, values and beliefs;
- allow others to speak in the voice and style of their cultural group;
- create balance in the consultation and negotiation process;
- open people’s minds to different attitudes; and
- improve relations with Aboriginal communities.

## Elders

Elders are men and women regarded as the keepers and teachers of an Aboriginal nation’s oral traditions and knowledge. Different elders hold different gifts. They can make significant contributions by bringing traditional ceremonies and teachings into the school and classroom; providing advice to parents, students, teachers and school administrators; providing information about Aboriginal communities; and acting as a bridge between the school and the community.



Elders are considered vital to the survival of Aboriginal cultures, and the transmission of cultural knowledge is an essential part of the preservation and promotion of cultural traditions and their protocols.

Elders are considered vital to the survival of Aboriginal cultures, and the transmission of cultural knowledge is an essential part of the preservation and promotion of cultural traditions and their protocols. Elders are always to be treated with great respect and honour. The roles of elders vary greatly from community to community, as do the protocols and traditions they teach. As noted in *Our Words, Our Ways* (Alberta Education 2005), elders often perform such services as

- giving prayers before meetings,
- describing or performing traditional ceremonies,
- sharing traditional knowledge,
- giving spiritual advice to individuals,
- demonstrating traditional crafts and practices, and
- teaching the community's protocols.

### Approaching an Elder

The best way to contact an elder and learn the proper protocols is to ask contacts in the community, such as Aboriginal liaisons in the school system, parents or Friendship Centre staff. Community members will provide the names of respected elders and can help teachers determine which elders would be appropriate visitors to the school or classroom.

When approaching a First Nations or Métis elder, protocol usually requires an offering of tobacco, a traditional sacred plant that is used to open the door to consult with elders. An Aboriginal liaison worker or elder's helper can guide you in the appropriate protocol for your community.



## First Nations Powwow

Powwows, also called Indian Days or Indian Celebrations, are usually held during July and August on reserves throughout Canada and the United States. Powwows have become a pan-Indian cultural movement throughout North America, and people travel hundreds of miles to attend. Those who travel from one powwow to another all summer long—usually traditional families or champion dancers—are said to be “on the powwow trail.”

Powwows bring together many different First Nations to celebrate their traditional heritage during three days of song and dance. The traditional powwow is conducive to reinforcing social bonds, spiritual beliefs and a common cultural heritage. The powwow setting is usually a huge encampment of tents, trailers and teepees around a main area called an arbor where food and craft booths are set up and where all the activities take place. Dance competitions, special dance demonstrations, naming ceremonies, feasts and giveaways take place each day following a sunrise ceremony. On the last day, the host nation or powwow committee shows gratitude to its visitors by conducting a giveaway.



### Gift-giving

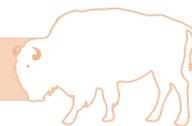
Gift-giving is an important part of many First Nations ceremonial gatherings. People traditionally offer their best and most valuable goods to sacrifice or distribute to guests or members of the community. Such gifts are a recognition that resources are meant to be shared. They are also thought to encourage the spiritual world to be as generous. (Kainai Board of Education et al. 2005, 91)

### Grand Entry

This beautiful parade of pride and colour starts off the powwow and each subsequent session of dancing. Preceded by the eagle staff, invited dignitaries and various categories of dancers join in the grand entry and dance to a special song rendered by the drum groups, following the path of the sun through the sky. The lineup is as follows: eagle staff; invited dignitaries; flag-bearers; dignitaries and princesses; men’s traditional, jingle and fancy dancers; women’s traditional, jingle and fancy dancers; and youth and children in categorical order. Spectators should always stand and remove caps and hats during the grand entry, flag songs and invocation.

### Honour Songs

As its name indicates, an honour song honours particular individuals for such things as respect for someone who has passed away, the return of a child to health after an illness or respect for an aged relative. Spectators should always stand and remove caps and hats when an honour song is performed.



Grand Entry

## The Dances

It is believed that most of the dances now being performed at modern celebrations evolved from a dance called the grass dance proper, which might have originated among the Pawnee or Ponca nations of the south central Great Plains. The dance was part of a series of dances connected to a three- and four-day ceremony honouring warriors for valour in victorious military excursions.

The most common dances are the grass dance and the crow hop, which originated among the Crow Nation of Montana; the chicken dance, which comes from the Blackfoot Nation; and the hoop dance, which is a specialty dance that originated in the southwestern United States. The hoop dance used to be danced only by males but is now also being danced by females. The eagle and buffalo dances are also specialty dances.

It is only within the last 80 years that women have taken an active part in the grass dance. Traditional women's dances include women's traditional, women's fancy and women's fancy shawl. Women

have also adopted an Ojibwa-inspired healing dance known as the jingle dress dance.

Group dancing has also come into vogue and someday may be a main part of these celebrations. All the dances are continually evolving, but dancers try to keep them true to their original form.

## Grass Dance

The grass dance proper was given to the Omaha nation, which in turn passed it on to the Sioux, who called it the Omaha. The different Sioux nations are credited with dispersing the dance widely to other First Nations living on the Great Plains of North America. When the Plains Cree acquired the dance, they called it the Sioux dance or *pwatsimoowin* (a Cree term meaning "Sioux dance"). Many of the ceremonial aspects of the grass dance proper are no longer performed because they are known to only a few nations. Songs from the original ceremony are still known and sung today, though new songs are developed year by year. The grass dance has evolved into different dances that are now performed at modern-day celebrations: the traditional, the grass dance and the fancy dance (for male dancers).



## Round Dance

The common round dance is performed by everyone at powwows and other social events. The traditional round dance practised by the Cree in Alberta and Saskatchewan usually occurs during a one-day communal event. It is a part of a memorial for a deceased relative and is held one year after his or her death. Round dances are now used to celebrate a birthday or marriage anniversary. The occasion includes a feast, giftgiving and round dances. Everyone sits on the floor during the feast to be as near to Mother Earth as possible. Teachers should be aware of the importance of this dance and should know that, for many First Nations parents, attendance at a round dance is a legitimate excuse for absence from school.

## Prairie Chicken Dance (Pihewisimowin)

*Pihewisimowin* is a ceremonial dance that originated in Alberta and Saskatchewan Cree communities. It is considered to have a strong spiritual meaning and follows other important ceremonies at powwow events. The dance depicts the life of the prairie chicken. During the dance, males move in circles while imitating the movements of the male prairie chicken during mating season. Dancers wear regalia that includes bustles and headdresses made of prairie chicken feathers. In place of the feather headdress, the men also adorn their heads with the roache headpiece. The ankles are decorated with prairie chicken feathers or fur and bells. Dancers move to singing and the sound of rattles. It is often followed by feasting.

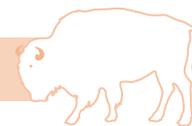


## Métis Culture

Métis cultural and linguistic traditions reflect a blend of their First Nations, French, English and/or Scottish predecessors. As with most other Aboriginal groups, the traditions that live today had their origins in practices that ensured the survival of the group. Often these included life on the land for some of the year.

Unique Métis languages emerged, such as Bungi, Patois and Michif. Bungi is a mixture of Orkney Scottish and Cree. Patois is classified as a French variant and is considered to be French with a First Nations influence. Michif is considered a language on its own, a mixture of French, Cree, Anishinabé and English (Kainai Board of Education et al 2005, 147).

The most common dance, the Red River jig originated in early times when groups and families met at summer and winter camps where they sang, told stories and danced. The Red River jig combines the fancy footwork of the First Nations dancing with the music of the European reels and square dances. These dances are usually accompanied by lively fiddle music.



## Recognizing the Achievements of First Nations, Métis and Inuit

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation established the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards in 1993 in conjunction with the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. The awards recognizing career achievements by Aboriginal professionals in diverse occupations serve to encourage and celebrate excellence in the Aboriginal community. The National Aboriginal Achievement Awards were established to build self-esteem and pride in the community and to provide role models for Aboriginal youth. More information about the awards and winners from past years is available at <http://naaf.ca/naaa.html>. As well, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada profiles prominent Aboriginal people on its website at [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca).

The following people have made significant contributions to Canada and their communities and serve as positive role models for Aboriginal youth. This is by no means a definitive list.

### Activists

Mary Two-Axe Earley, Giindajin Haawasti Guujaaw, Buffy Sainte-Marie, J Wilton Littlechild

### Actors

Gary Farmer, Chief Dan George, Graham Greene, Tina Keeper, Tantoo Cardinal, Jay Silverheels

### Architects

Douglas Cardinal

### Artists

Dinah Anderson, Kenojuak Ashevak, Kiawak Ashoona, Ohito Ashoona, Pitseolak Ashoona, Ramus Avingaq, Dorothy Grant, David Hannan, Gilbert Hay, Alex Janvier, Shirley Moorhouse, Daphne Odjig, Bill Reid, John Terriak, Christine Sioui Wawanoloath

### Athletes

Waneek Horn-Miller (water polo), Tom Longboat (track and field), Alwyn Morris (kayaking), Brian Trottier (hockey), Jordan TooToo (hockey), Darren Zack (baseball)

### Business

Mel E Benson, Wade Cachagee, Douglas Golosky, Chief Roy Albert Whitney

### Education

Leroy Little Bear, Phyllis Cardinal, Joseph Couture, Joe Dion, Emma LaRocque, Leona Makokis, Pat Makokis

### Filmmakers

Denis Arcand, Gil Cardinal, Alanis Obomsawin

### Historians

Josephine Crowshoe, Terry Lusty

### Historical Figures

Joseph Brant (politician and missionary), Chief Crowfoot, Gabriel Dumont (military leader), Louis Riel (politician)

### Law

Rose Boyko, Chester Cunningham, Roberta Jamieson, Muriel Stanley Venne

### Medicine

Lindsey Crowshoe, Malcolm King, Cornelia Weiman

### Musicians

Susan Aglukark, John Kim Bell, Fara, Tom Jackson, Kashtin, Laura Vinson, Buffy Sainte-Marie

### Politicians

John Amagoalik, Simon Baker, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Abel Bosum, Pearl Calahasen, Harold Cardinal, Matthew Coon Come, Tagak Curley, Billy Diamond, Georges Erasmus, Phil Fontaine, Dan Goodleaf, Elijah Harper, Ovide Mercredi, Mike Mitchell, Paul Okalik, Charlie Watt

### Writers

Jeanette Armstrong, Kateri Damm, Nora Dauenhauer, Joseph Dion, Leetia Ineak, Tomson Highway, E Pauline Johnson, Basil H Johnston, Thomas King, Carla Robinson

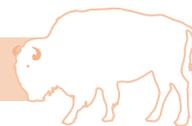
MOVING  
FORWARD

## Moving Forward

*It would be so much easier just to fold our hands and not make this fight. ... To say, I, one man, can do nothing. I grow afraid only when I see people thinking and acting like this. We all know the story about the man who sat beside the trail too long, and then it grew over and he could never find his way again. We can never forget what has happened, but we cannot go back nor can we just sit beside the trail.*

—Poundmaker, Plains Cree Chief, 1880s





## A Brief History of Aboriginal Education in Alberta

*My experiences at residential school taught me to be insecure, to be unsure of myself, to be uncertain of me.*

—Phil Fontaine  
National Chief,  
Assembly of First Nations

Traditionally, Aboriginal education was grounded in the community, and it was the community that was responsible for bringing up a child. The men took the boys hunting and fishing. The women taught the girls how to dry meat and make moccasins. Children learned their history and culture through stories told by the elders. European colonialism, in the form of federal government policies and the actions of Christian missionaries, had a devastating effect on Aboriginal education and traditional ways of life. Although most of the students in residential schools were First Nations, there were also some Métis and Inuit students.

When the federal government established residential schools to comply with its promise to provide education for the children of treaty First Nations, it asked for assistance from the missionaries. Many of the early missionaries, whether they were Roman Catholic, Church of England or Methodist, were very zealous. Young Aboriginal children were removed from the influence of their elders and their parents. Not only were they expected to become Christians, they were expected to speak, live and think like Christians. These schools reflected the government policy of assimilation.

Indian residential schools, some of which existed until the 1970s, have become synonymous with the worst features of colonialism. It is important to understand how the effects of these institutions continue to influence the behaviour of Aboriginal parents and students today.

According to David Rattray (2002), the following are some of the devastating effects of colonialism on Aboriginal students:

- Students have problems at home and see the world negatively.

- Students give up on themselves and feel that the future is hopeless.
- Teachers and school systems don't care or don't know how to deal with these problems.
- Bands/Aboriginal communities were not involved in education until recently.
- The historical mistreatment of Aboriginal people is reflected in the systemic/institutionalized racism prevalent in society today.

There are, however, indications that these effects are being relegated to the past as more and more First Nations students are graduating from all levels of formal education. Young First Nations students and parents are also recognizing the need for more knowledge about their cultures and languages.

In Alberta, the indigenous languages of the province's First Nations peoples were very strong until the mid-1970s. Since then, the number of fluent speakers has been steadily declining. This is due in large part to the higher number of First Nations students enrolling in provincial schools. Most of their parents attended residential schools and did not want their children to be taught in the same way they were taught: that is, isolated from their communities and punished for speaking their own language. So, they encouraged their children to speak English, and their own language took second place.

Today, there has been a complete turnaround in First Nations and some public schools. Students are being taught their indigenous languages and are encouraged to speak them. Teachers and administrators are also encouraging parents to participate in this and other aspects of the school program.

## Alberta's Aboriginal People Today

*It is often difficult for non-aboriginal Canadians who have not spent time on a remote reserve or with urban aboriginal people to grasp how serious our situation is.*

—Matthew Coon Come,  
Former Chief Assembly of First Nations, 2001



## Recollections of Residential School Days

I went to St Mary's Roman Catholic Indian Residential School from 1929 to 1937. My father was very involved with the Catholic Church, and he wanted me to be taught at a Catholic school. The subjects that I was taught were reading, writing, arithmetic and English. Sometimes we had to go work in the kitchen. The sisters would make us bake cakes. We also did cleaning. I didn't mind too much doing these extra things. The skills that I left school with were sewing, knitting, embroidery, cooking and cleaning.

Blackfoot was the only language I spoke when I started school. But in school, if we were caught speaking Blackfoot, we would have to kneel by one of the pillars in our playroom.

Looking back at my residential school experience, I would say that the good part about it was the education I got. I got enough education to help me live with the outside world. The bad part was the strapping we received when we did things we were not supposed to do. I was once strapped with a big, wide strap that left big, wide welts where I was hit. I don't remember why I was strapped.

One time, some girls were singing a song in Blackfoot in a corner of the dorm. They were sitting close to a window. They did not know that a priest was in the chapel right above us and could hear them. Those girls were caught and forced to kneel by the pillars. The priest also beat them with his cane, which was really a broomstick. When he finished beating them, the broomstick was broken in three pieces!

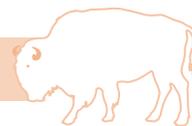
On another occasion, a friend and I were working in the kitchen. All of us were given pouches or bags for our personal things, which we wore underneath our regular clothes. My friend was carrying a rock in her pouch. The sisters found out about the rock, and my friend got beaten up.

We had names for two of the staff. One sister we called *Aamottski* (Wrinkled Face) and the supervisor was called *Maokisski* (Monkey Face). When one of them was coming, we would call out their names in Blackfoot to warn each other.

I did not lose my Blackfoot because I went to residential school. I still speak it, but I also speak English. My children all speak good Blackfoot, but they can also speak English. They had to learn to speak good English while they were in school or they would get punished. My grandchildren are learning some Blackfoot. They can't speak it fluently nor do they understand it. I hope that they can learn our language.

I found my residential school experience to be a very lonely experience. Every last Friday of the month I was allowed to go home for the weekend. When Sunday came around I would scream and cry not to have to go back to school. But my parents made me go back. I think that was the same for a lot of the other students. Otherwise, the food was good, and we got fed enough. We had nourishing food, and we always got dessert. We also got snacks around three o'clock each day.

*This story was put together from an unpublished interview with a residential school survivor on the Blood Reserve. The interview was conducted in 2000 by Leo Fox.*



## School Can Be a Scary Place

Many moons ago a little Indian brother and sister went to a public school. They were unable to speak or understand English. An airplane flew overhead and the boy ran to the window to get a good look. "Jesus Christ, airplane!" he said (he thought he knew some English). The teacher took him by the hair and dragged him back to his desk. He got strapped. His sister just shook with fright. They did not know what he had done wrong.

At recess, the girl went outside with the other students. The girls were playing a game. They called it "Ring Around the Rosie." They didn't let her play. She just watched. Later, when she had learned some English, she realized that they had been calling her "ugly Indian," "dirty Indian," "lousy Indian" and "drunken Indian" while she was watching them play. The experiences of this brother and sister in public school were not unlike those of many Aboriginal children at residential school, where Aboriginal children were alone in a predominantly white setting that was foreign, unwelcoming and mean. They had no friends. Often they had no money to pay for school supplies, books, school photos, lunch or even clothes. Their parents had no car. They had to walk five miles to school. The teacher used to ask them for money in front of the whole class. They were often embarrassed and had a low sense of self-worth.

Fortunately, there were people in their school who made a difference. The school nurse hired the girl to do odd jobs in the health clinic. A teacher hired her to clean her house. Eventually, the girl got a scholarship to continue her education.

— Liz Poitras

In Alberta today there are 47 First Nations groups living on and off the 124 reserves in the province. Together they represent many linguistic groups, the largest being the Algonquian Cree, who make up more than half of the Aboriginal people in Alberta. Less than half of the First Nations people lived on a reserve in 2001.

Fully half of the just over 199,000 Aboriginal people of Alberta now make their homes in urban areas. About 41,000 live in Edmonton, 19,800 in Calgary and 2,300 in Lethbridge.

It is estimated that by the year 2012, Aboriginal peoples will make up one-tenth of Alberta's population. By the year 2017, it is estimated that there will be 971,000 First Nations people, 380,500 Métis and 68,400 Inuit in Canada. Of the three Aboriginal groups, the largest gain in population between 1996 and 2001 occurred among the Métis, whose numbers increased 43 per cent. In 2001 the census data indicate that in the total Canadian Aboriginal population, 62 per cent are First Nations, 30 per cent Métis and 5 per cent Inuit.

## A 2006 Snapshot

A Statistics Canada report on Aboriginal peoples based on data obtained from the 2006 census provides some interesting figures about Canada's and Alberta's FNMI populations.

### Population Growth

According to the report, Canada's Aboriginal population broke the 1 million mark for the first time ever, with 1,172,790 self-reporting as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Currently, Aboriginal people account for 3.8 per cent of the total population of Canada.

The report also noted that approximately 390,000 people identified as Métis in the 2006 census, an increase of 91 per cent since 1996. The large increase is attributed to increased self-reporting, though higher birth rates also play a role.

Approximately 4 per cent, or 50,485, reported that they were Inuit, a 26 per cent increase from 1996. Alberta is home to 1,605 Inuit (615 in 1996).



## Employment Issues

Stronger provincial economies have caused a decrease in Aboriginal unemployment and drop-out rates in Western Canada. For off-reserve First Nations people (approximately 70 per cent of the total), employment grew 23 per cent between 2001 and 2005 in Western Canada, compared with only 11 per cent for the general population.

As well, the number of Aboriginal people in trade apprenticeships increased dramatically, from 200 in 2001 to 1,100 in 2006. The most common occupation for Aboriginal men in 2001 was construction trades, while for women it was clerical work.

Alberta had the highest Aboriginal employment rate in the West, and Calgary led all western cities at 70.8 per cent.

## Language

Nationally, the use of indigenous languages remains quite strong on reserves; 51 per cent of on-reserve First Nations people reported that they could converse in an Aboriginal language. Off reserve, the percentage is only 12 per cent. Cree was the most widely spoken native language; the number of First Nations people who could speak Cree increased 7 per cent between 2001 and 2006. Other First Nations languages that gained speakers include Oji-Cree, Blackfoot and Dene.

In 2006, 69 per cent of Canada's Inuit reported that they could converse in Inuktitut, down from 72 per cent a decade earlier.

As for Métis, only 4 per cent reported being able to speak a native language compared with 5 per cent a decade ago.

## Housing

Aboriginal people are almost four times as likely to live in a crowded home and three times as likely to live in one that needs major repairs.

There is great variation in housing between Aboriginal groups, and between on- and off-reserve groups as well. Further, the proportion of Aboriginal people living in crowded dwellings in need of repair was substantially higher in western urban centres, particularly in Regina and Edmonton.

Canada's Inuit live in some of the most cramped dwellings. In 2006, 31 per cent of all Inuit lived in crowded houses, compared with 3 per cent of the general population.

## Incarceration

The incarceration statistics for Aboriginal people are troubling. Though Aboriginals make up 3 per cent of the Canadian adult population, they make up 22 per cent of admissions to provincial/territorial jails and 17 per cent of admissions to federal prisons. Furthermore, Aboriginal youth constitute 25 per cent of youth held on remand.

## Suicide

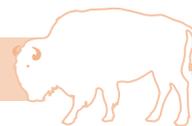
In recent decades, the rate of suicide among Aboriginals has been more than three times the national average. More young people commit suicide than elderly, and the rate of youth suicide is rising. Compared with the general population, suicide in Aboriginal adolescents is more likely to occur in clusters. While suicide clusters cause sensational headlines, in reality some Aboriginal communities have lower than average rates (Kirmayer et al, 2007).

## Misconceptions About Aboriginal People

*Adapted from Abboud, Chong et al (2002)*

### **The injustices done to First Nations peoples and Inuit are a thing of the past and not an issue today.**

Until the 1970s, many First Nations and Inuit children were sent far away from their families to attend residential schools. In many residential schools, children were forbidden to speak their mother tongues, their cultures were condemned as barbaric and their spirituality was considered heathen. The negative impact of this period in their history lives on. Some former students still bear the emotional and physical scars of the experience. Many parents and grandparents of today's youth went to residential schools. In 2005, the Government of Canada agreed to redress these injustices by compensating individuals and establishing truth and reconciliation boards (not unlike those in South Africa) to begin a healing process.



### **All First Nations and Inuit communities face living conditions similar to Third World countries.**

No two communities are the same. Differences in geographic location (urban, rural or isolated) combined with access to economic development mean that economic disparities exist among First Nations and Inuit communities. Leaders are implementing many initiatives to improve living conditions on reserves. The goal is to increase their standard of living to Canadian standards in all communities.

### **All Aboriginal students are good at art.**

As in any diverse population, First Nations and Inuit individuals are different from each other. Although many First Nations people and Inuit value symbols and pictures as important expressions of spirituality and culture, they are not necessarily artistic themselves. It is important to not pigeon-hole students and to stimulate all learning styles and interest.

### **The conditions First Nations peoples face in Canada are exaggerated. They aren't that bad.**

Although First Nations people in Canada are making many positive strides, there is still a long way to go to eliminate the disparities between them and most Canadians. Many reserves are small, remote and deficient in resources. The average life expectancy of First Nations people is five to ten years below the Canadian average. According to Statistics Canada, in 2001, 40 per cent of the Aboriginal children lived in poverty; that figure rose to 50 per cent in single-mother households.

### **Aboriginal people aren't doing much to make things better for themselves.**

Aboriginal groups are getting more involved in working toward a better future. Many programs have been developed and implemented by Aboriginal youth and adults, geared toward increasing the life chances of future generations. Youth are increasingly becoming involved in politics and governance. They are joining councils so that their voices are heard and their issues and concerns are at the forefront.

### **Making eye contact is a universal communication skill.**

Understanding protocol is very important because it indicates respect. Some Aboriginal people maintain the traditional way and avoid eye contact; others do not. The important thing is to not misinterpret lack of eye contact as a sign of disrespect. Discuss forms of nonverbal communication and their meanings so that everyone is aware of the nuances.

## **Recent Developments in K–12 Aboriginal Education**

### **The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework**

Alberta Education's (2002) *First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Policy Framework* was developed through a committee of representatives from the First Nations and Métis organizations and education stakeholders including the Alberta Teachers' Association. The foundation for the policy framework was based on information gathered by the largest public consultation process on Aboriginal education ever undertaken in Canada.

The policy framework contains a vision statement, goals, principles, strategies and performance measures intended to help the education system and education partners improve Aboriginal learner success in Alberta. The vision articulated in the framework is that "the life-long learning aspirations and potential of First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals and communities are realized through a responsive and accountable public education system that is recognized as a provincial leader in Aboriginal Education." Alberta Education has made a commitment to proactive collaboration and communication to implement strategies to achieve the vision, which includes

- increasing the knowledge among all Albertans of the governance, history, treaty and Aboriginal rights, lands, culture and languages;
- providing First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners with access to culturally relevant learning opportunities and quality support services;



- developing ministry capacity to address First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner needs effectively; and
- reporting progress on achievement of the long-term goals of the framework.

### Aboriginal Teacher Education

The University of Alberta Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) was established in 2002 after the Faculty of Education successfully obtained ACCESS funding to begin the program. ATEP is an off-campus elementary teacher education program designed to improve the educational success of Aboriginal children by increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in northern Alberta

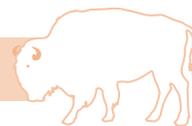
communities. ATEP is a four-year teacher education program offered in conjunction with an existing First Nations college. These include a three- and four-year BEd completion program at Blue Quills First Nations College; a three- and four-year BEd completion program at Northern Lakes College; and a full four-year community-based program in collaboration with Northern Lakes College in Grouard, Slave Lake, Wabasca, Peace River and Fort Vermilion. A three- and four-year completion program at Maskwachees Cultural College in Hobbema began in September 2005.

Students who successfully complete the programs are graduates of the U of A and meet the educational requirements for interim teacher



**In** assessing the educational landscape and practices that presently underlie the delivery of education for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in Canada, a clear conclusion emerges: the old paradigm that neglected to make the culture, history, and languages of Aboriginal peoples an integral part of students' learning must undergo a fundamental change.

—Canadian Teachers' Federation (2000)



certification in Alberta. Faculty from the U of A and from the colleges are instructors in the programs. Each program has a coordinator, and ATEP has a director at the U of A. Elders within the communities play an important role in the programs. The richness of culture, language and history is extremely important to the program and to those involved, and the elders provide the vital link between the Aboriginal communities and the education students.

The University of Lethbridge Niitsitapi program was established in 2003. The U of L partners with Red Crow Community College, located on the Kainai First Nation, to offer a teacher education program within the Faculty of Education. The program for local First Nations students incorporates additional cultural supports, including consultants from the Aboriginal community, in a specialized, culturally sensitive Blackfoot teacher education program. Students graduate with a five-year combined degree qualification—the same credentials as their counterparts in the regular program.

The University of Calgary's Bachelor of Education, Master of Teaching program includes course material on indigenous peoples' ways of knowing, pedagogy for diverse classrooms and issues in Aboriginal education.

### **Aboriginal Teacher Education Instructional Modules**

In partnership with the Universities of Lethbridge, Calgary and Alberta, the ministry funded the development of curriculum for teacher preparation programs that addresses the needs of Aboriginal learners in K–12. Beginning in 2007, all graduating teachers will have had coursework based on this curriculum.

### **First Nations, Métis and Inuit Curriculum Initiatives**

Implementation of the *FNMI Education Policy Framework* has been under way since 2002, and Alberta Education has developed new policies, enhanced funding for Aboriginal students and developed new curriculum.





Information about the programs and guides listed below can be found on the Alberta Education website at [www.education.gov.ab.ca](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca).

### **Aboriginal Languages Program**

Currently two Aboriginal language programs are offered in Alberta schools. The Blackfoot Language and Culture program was implemented for K–9 in 1990, and the senior high program was implemented in 1993. The Cree Language and Culture program was implemented for K–12 in 2004.

### **Aboriginal Studies 10-20-30**

The first provincial program in Aboriginal studies was developed in partnership with elders, educators and ministry staff. The course content for Aboriginal Studies 10-20-30 deals with First Nations and Métis history and contemporary issues and with Aboriginal perspectives. The course was available for schools to offer in 2003 with an authorized resource list and a set of three award-winning textbooks.

### **Social Studies K–12 Curriculum**

The first curriculum to be developed since adoption of the FNMI framework is social studies K–12. Aboriginal historical, cultural and spiritual content has been integrated into the new program.

### **Infusion of Aboriginal Content into K–12 Curriculum**

Alberta Education is working to include Aboriginal perspectives in all subject areas, including fine arts, physical education, literacy and science. Additional teaching and learning resources will be identified to support these curriculum outcomes.

### **Handbook for Aboriginal Parents of Children with Special Needs**

This handbook provides Aboriginal parents with information about their rights and responsibilities regarding the education of their children with special needs, as well as available education supports and services.

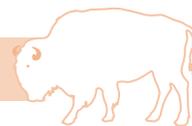
### **Instructional Funding for Aboriginal Learners**

The basic instructional grants to schools in 2004/05 were increased by \$1,020 per eligible student to help schools provide programs and services to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. (This amount will increase in the future at the same rate as the basic instructional grant.) The number of eligible students will be determined by the number of students in the school who have self-identified as Status Indian/First Nations, Non Status Indian/First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. The self-identification process can only work if students and their parents feel comfortable with disclosing their Aboriginal background. Teachers need to respect the wishes of students and parents and follow the privacy policies of the school district.

### **Aboriginal Liaison Workers**

A number of school districts now employ Aboriginal liaison workers to provide teachers with advice and curriculum suggestions regarding Aboriginal education and to support Aboriginal students and their parents. Job descriptions for liaison workers vary across the province but often include the following responsibilities (Alberta Education 2005):

- Establishing and maintaining trust with Aboriginal students and their families
- Acting as a communication link between home and school to assist with school-related issues
- Meeting with individual students on a regular basis to find out what these students need
- Connecting with Aboriginal organizations and community services so they can refer students and families to the community resources they need
- Providing assistance to teachers for presentations related to Aboriginal culture, issues and languages
- Organizing cultural events and activities for the school community.



## Incorporating Aboriginal Teaching into Today's Classrooms

*I believe we all have a purpose for being on Earth. I believe that life is our classroom. It allows us to learn what we need to learn to fulfil that purpose with understanding, compassion and love. The twenty-first century is destined to bring us back to why we are here and who we really are.*

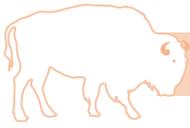
—Adele Arcand,  
Former Director of Education,  
Treaty 6



### Guidelines for Teachers

The following suggestions will guide teachers in being more culturally sensitive to Aboriginal students, their parents and their community.

- Create an open and welcoming atmosphere in the school and classroom by establishing partnerships with the community, cosponsoring community events and helping parents work with their children. Be respectful of the concerns of parents and involve them by asking them to share their expertise and provide assistance regarding their child's learning needs.
- Be a positive role model. Nurture behaviours that value relationships, are based on respect and promote equality. Recognize that all students are distinct and everyone's culture is valued. Deal with derogatory, demeaning and bullying behaviours.
- Learn about local ways of knowing and teaching to address curriculum outcomes and link the school to the community. Involve Aboriginal liaison personnel in bridging the school and community. Explore ways to work with cultural differences and work with the class to set criteria for behaviour. For example, discuss when it is appropriate to be punctual (for appointments) and when it is acceptable to be late (transitioning from one event to another).
- Develop the observation and listening skills necessary to understand the knowledge and perspectives of the local community, and apply that understanding in teaching practice.
- Carefully review all curriculum resource materials to ensure cultural accuracy and appropriateness. Do not undertake craft activities, ceremonies or physical activities that trivialize Aboriginal dress, dance or beliefs. Research authentic methods for constructing artifacts and, where possible, use the proper materials. Realize that many Aboriginal songs, dances, legends and ceremonies are considered sacred and should not be invented or portrayed in an activity.
- Avoid using materials that offend Aboriginal students, such as alphabet displays that show *I* is for *Indian* and *E* is for *Eskimo*. Reciting rhymes or songs that stereotype or diminish a culture (such as "One little, two little, three little Indians. . .") is inappropriate. When using commercial displays, select those that respectfully include all races.
- Avoid singling out Aboriginal students and asking them to describe their families' traditions or their peoples' culture(s). Do not assume that because a student is Aboriginal he or she knows or can speak on behalf of the community. Take steps to recognize and



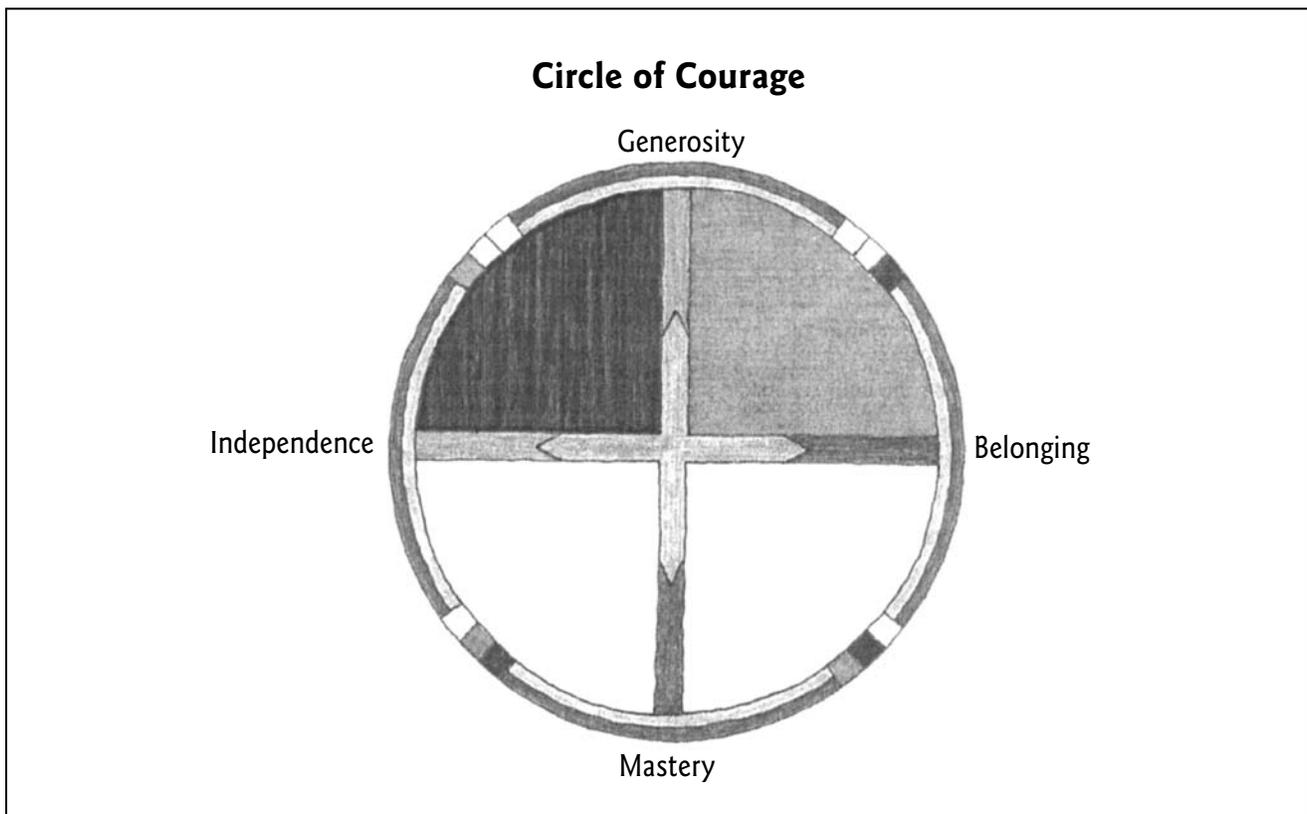
validate all aspects of the knowledge students bring with them and assist them in their ongoing quest for personal and cultural affirmation. Information that is shared should be offered voluntarily.

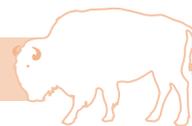
- Make every effort to utilize locally relevant curriculum materials with which students can readily identify, including materials prepared by Aboriginal elders. Make effective use of local expertise, especially elders, when local cultural knowledge is being addressed in the curriculum. Ensure that elders have adequate time to present. Respect local protocols when you invite them to share their wisdom.
- Do not assume that there are no Aboriginal students in your classroom. Surnames do not always identify ancestry, nor does physical appearance. Speak respectfully about Aboriginal culture even or especially when Aboriginal students are not present.

- Support efforts to maintain local cultures, traditional histories and languages. Offer courses in Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal languages. Where possible ensure that Aboriginal teachers deliver the programs. Provide professional development opportunities for non-Aboriginal teachers to be better able to offer courses. Build library and classroom resources so that they reflect students' and communities' interests.
- Properly reference cultural and intellectual property rights in teaching.

### Circle of Courage

Educators Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern have devised a model of youth empowerment that they call the Circle of Courage. This model is based on three areas of research: contemporary knowledge, the wisdom and teaching of workers in human development, and Aboriginal theories about child rearing.





The Circle of Courage is founded on four main values (belonging, mastery, independence and generosity) and promotes a reclaiming environment; that is, the aim of the program is to lead youth to claim something that has been devalued. In doing this, youth are encouraged to live more meaningful, enriched lives, which leads to increased respect for youth in society at large.

For more information, go to the Reclaiming Youth Network at [www.Reclaiming.com](http://www.Reclaiming.com).

## Talking Circles

Talking circles are based on the sacred traditions of sharing circles. Talking circles create a safe environment for participants to share their point of view with others. In a talking circle everyone is equal and everyone belongs. Participants in a talking circle learn to listen to and respect the views of others. The intention is to open people's hearts so that they can understand and connect with one another. Teachers can use talking circles to solve disputes, get input or feedback on an issue or topic, or share stories and personal anecdotes.

Following are the steps in a typical talking circle as identified in *Our Words, Our Ways* (Alberta Education 2005):

- Participants sit in a circle, which symbolizes completeness.

- Ground rules are reviewed. For example:
  - ♦ Everyone's contributions are equally important.
  - ♦ People should say what they feel or believe, beginning with "I-statements" (for example, "I feel that...")
  - ♦ All comments should directly address the question or the issue, not comments another person has made. Both negative and positive comments about what others say should be avoided.
- An everyday object such as a rock or pencil is sometimes used as a talking object.
- When the talking object is placed in someone's hands, it is that person's turn to share his or her thoughts, without interruption. The object is then passed to the next person in a clockwise direction.
- Whoever is holding the object has the right to speak, and others have the responsibility to listen.
- Everyone listens in a nonjudgmental way.
- Silence is an acceptable response. There must be no negative reaction to the phrase, "I pass."
- Speakers should feel free to express themselves in any way that is comfortable to them (for example, sharing a story or a personal experience, using examples or metaphors).

*An Aboriginal grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt about the tragedy that occurred on September 11, 2001.*

*He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is vengeful, angry and violent. The other wolf is loving and compassionate."*

*The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?"*

*The grandfather answered, "The one I feed."*

—Tanzen Two Feather



## To the Seventh Generation

*Survive*

*Keep hopes and dreams*

*Take care of yourself*

*Remember your spirit*

*Be there for each other*

*Respect courage*

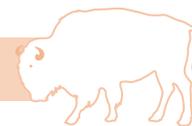
*Share knowledge*

*Always keep learning*

*Remember your values*

—Elder, *Strengthening the Sacred Circle: 2000 and Beyond*





# Glossary

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

**Anishinabe:** Ojibwa term for themselves, meaning “the people.”

**Assembly of First Nations (AFN):** The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is the national representative organization of the First Nations in Canada. There are over 630 First Nations communities in Canada. The AFN Secretariat presents the views of the various nations on issues such as Aboriginal and treaty rights, economic development, education, languages and literacy, health, housing, social development, justice, taxation, land claims, and the environment. The chiefs meet annually to set national policy and direction. Every three years the national chief is elected by the chiefs-in-assembly. The present national chief is Phil Fontaine. The chiefs meet between the annual assemblies every three to four months in a forum called the Confederacy of Nations to set ongoing direction. The membership of the confederacy consists of chiefs and other regional leaders chosen according to a formula based on the population of each region. The AFN receives most of its operating funds from the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

**Bill C-31 Indian:** A person who has regained or gained status as a registered Indian under the terms of the *Indian Act* after the passage of Bill C-31 in the Canadian Parliament in 1985. Prior to Bill C-31, women who married men not considered Indian under the *Indian Act* were taken off the Indian register and lost all their rights as Indians. These women took their cause for reinstatement to the United Nations and eventually to the Supreme Court of Canada. The court decided against them by one vote but advised the Canadian government to correct and change the discriminatory section of the *Indian Act*. Parliament acted and passed Bill C-31 in 1985.

**Blood:** The name of an Aboriginal group of the southern Alberta Blackfoot Confederacy living in southern Alberta. Like the term *Indian*, *Blood* is a misnomer. It is actually the mistranslation of the word *Aapaiaitsitapi*, a term referring to the use of white weasel fur (ermine) for clothing decoration. The word for “blood” is *Aaapaniitsitapi*. Instead of Blood, this group prefers the word *Kainai*, which means “many” or “all chiefs.”

**Bois brûlé:** Literally meaning “burnt wood” in French, this phrase refers to the Métis. It may be from the Ojibwa term *wissakodewin*, meaning “half-burnt woodsmen,” in reference to the lighter colour of the Métis compared to their Indian brothers.

**Chipewyan:** A Cree term for the Dene people of northern Saskatchewan and Alberta that refers to their manner of dress. *Chip-way-yan Enoowuk* means “pointed-hood-wearing people.”

**Cree:** The term *Cree* is a contraction of *Kristenaux*, the French spelling of *Kenisteniwuk*, the name given to Natives of the James Bay area in the 1700s by French fur traders.

**Dene:** Term used by the Dene to refer to themselves. It means “the people.”

**Elder:** A revered member of the Aboriginal community who is a keeper and transmitter of the culture and history of the people. People go to elders for their wise counsel, and elders are often called upon to advise their leaders on matters of great importance for the benefit of the community. Elders are an important part of the community because they pass down the knowledge and traditions of the culture. Elders have knowledge and wisdom, which they might have received as a gift from the Creator. An elder can also be a medicine man or woman. Chronological age is not a factor in becoming an elder.

**Eskimo:** Cree term for the people of the far North, meaning “eaters of raw meat” because of their custom of eating their food raw at the site of the kill. This word is not widely accepted in Canada; however, it is still used in parts of the western Arctic. The American government and the people of the United States continue to use the term when referring to Aboriginal people in Alaska.

**First Nations:** In Canada, the group of Aboriginal peoples formerly or alternatively 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 occupations 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*.

**First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Policy Framework:** An official policy developed in 2002 under the advice of an advisory committee



with representatives of the First Nations and Métis organizations and education stakeholders including the Alberta Teachers' Association. The foundation for the policy framework was based on information gained through the largest public consultation process on Aboriginal education ever undertaken in Canada.

**Historic Métis Nation:** The Aboriginal people known as Métis (sometimes pejoratively called half-breeds) who reside in the traditional Métis Nation's homeland, an area in west-central North America.

**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 culture among various First Nations.

**Indian Register:** The official record of Status or Registered Indians in Canada, maintained by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

**Indigenous peoples:** The original people in any region of the planet. This all-inclusive term is usually used in referring to Aboriginal people in an international context.

**Innu First Nation (formerly Montagnais):** are part of the linguistic family of the Cree language located in Quebec and Labrador. The language of Innus is Innu-Aimun.

**Inuit:** Inuit word meaning "the people." The singular is *Inuk*. Refers to the 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 Alaska.

**Inuvialuit:** Inuit who live in the western Arctic.

**Ista:** Nakoda (Stoney) term used by the Nakoda to refer to themselves. It means "the people."

**Kainai:** Blackfoot name for the Blood tribe of southern Alberta, meaning "many" or "all chiefs."

**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.

**Métis Off Settlement:** Métis people who live off settlements have the same constitutional rights as Métis who live on settlements. The only difference is that they are not entitled to benefits that are specific to the settlements.

**Métis On Settlement:** Since 1989, the Métis peoples of Alberta who live on settlements have been protected by constitutional law through "letters of patent." Métis people who live on settlements have political and democratic forms of self-government and have signed agreements with the province for the long-term management of natural resources (under the *Settlements Act*). Settlement lands are protected by the Métis Settlements Accord; Alberta is the only province that has passed legislation specially for Métis people.

**Native:** This term is used synonymously for all the Aboriginal peoples in Canada who are Indian, Métis or Inuit. In the general context, *Native* refers to the people living in what became Canada before the arrival of Europeans.

**Nehiyaw (singular), Nehiyawak (plural):** A Cree person and Cree people, respectively, in the Cree language.

**Niitsitapi:** When referring to themselves, members of the three Blackfoot Nations (Kainai, Piikani, Siksika) of southern Alberta used the term *Niitsitapi*. It means the "real" or "only people." Today, this Blackfoot word refers to any First Nations person.

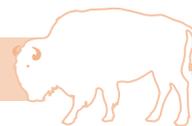
**Non-Status Indian:** A person of Indian ancestry who is not registered as an Indian.

**Non-Treaty Indian:** A person who is registered as an Indian under the *Indian Act* but is not a member of a treaty band.

**Piikani:** This Blackfoot name is a shortened form of *Aapikani*, which translates as "scabby robe." It was coined long ago when the tanned hides of this tribe appeared to have scabs on them. This tribe is one of the three members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The English version of this name is Peigan.

**Red Paper:** The 1970 Aboriginal response to the Trudeau government White Paper of 1969. The actual name of this document was *Citizens Plus*, but it became more commonly known as the Red Paper, and it countered all of the proposals in the White Paper. An Aboriginal delegation, backed by other Canadian citizens, met with the government and successfully convinced it to radically change its positions. The government later abandoned the White Paper.

**Registered/Status Indian:** A person recorded as an Indian in the Indian register by virtue of descent from registered Indians.



**Saulteaux:** A French term for the plains Ojibwa Indians who moved onto the plains from the Sault Ste Marie area of Ontario.

**Scrip:** Certificate entitling the holder to acquire a certain portion of public lands. Specifically, a certificate issued to Métis people entitling them to 240 acres or money for the purchase of land. Issued in compensation for land they lost after the Northwest Rebellion.

**Shaman:** Also called a healer. This person has knowledge of herbal medicine and spiritual healing gained through visions, studying under a medicine person, or simply as a gift from the Creator (Great Spirit).

**Siksika:** The third member of the Blackfoot Confederacy. *Siksika* means “blackfoot.” The name came about because early members of this tribe lived in an area that had particularly black soil that stained their feet and moccasins no matter how hard they tried to clean them.

**Stoney:** A Cree name for the Nakoda Sioux people, who were the allies of the Cree when they moved onto the plains before European contact. The name refers to the custom of preparing food using heated stones; the Cree term for stone is *asini* and the Sioux term, *pwatuk*. The French wrote the word as *Assiniboine*. In parts of Canada, these people are known as Assiniboine; in Alberta, they are known as Stoney Indians.

**Treaty Indian:** A member of a band of Indians that signed a treaty with the Government of Canada.

**Turtle Island:** The Iroquois and Ojibwa term referring to the continent of North America. The term refers to the Iroquois story of the creation of the world, and is accepted and used by some other First Nations.

**Two-Spirited:** Some Aboriginal people identify themselves as two-spirited rather than as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans-identified. Historically, in many Aboriginal cultures, two-spirited persons were respected leaders and medicine people and were often accorded special status based on their unique ability to understand both male and female.

**White Paper:** In Commonwealth countries, a White Paper is an informal parliamentary paper that states a government position. In 1969 in Canada, the Trudeau government tabled a White Paper to abolish the *Indian Act* in Canada and recognize First Nations as the same as other minorities in Canada, rather than a distinct group. The government backed down from this position in 1971, after vociferous opposition from Aboriginal groups, who issued the Red Paper in response.

## Web Resources

**A Guide to Aboriginal Organizations** in Alberta is available from [www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/firstnations/pdf/guide/%20to%20aboriginal%20organizations.pdf](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/firstnations/pdf/guide/%20to%20aboriginal%20organizations.pdf)

**Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development**, Alberta Government website contains information about the programs and services provided by the provincial government as well as the latest information from Statistics Canada Census Survey. [www.aand.gov.ab.ca](http://www.aand.gov.ab.ca)

**Aboriginal Canada Portal** developed by the Government of Canada is a portal for Canadian Aboriginal online resources, contacts, information, and government programs and services. [www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca)

**Aboriginal Youth Network** provides information on youth issues and includes a special section on stories about culture and traditions from First Nations, Métis and Inuit elders and other resource people from across Canada. <http://ayn.ca/AYNHome.aspx>

This website contains information from the **National Library of Canada**, National Archives of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization as well as local historical sites. The collection includes a large number of items catalogued under the heading of First Peoples. <http://collections.ic.gc.ca/>

**British Columbia Ministry of Education:** Framework and sample lesson plans

*Planning Guide and Framework for Development of Aboriginal Learning Resources;*

*Shared Learnings: Integrating BC Aboriginal Content K to 10* (1998. Aboriginal Education Initiative)

[www.gov.bc.ca/bvprd/bc/search.do?navId=NAV\\_ID\\_province&action=searchresult&qp=&nh=10&qt=Planning%20Guide%20and%20Framework%20for%20Development%20of%20Aboriginal%20Learning%20Resources](http://www.gov.bc.ca/bvprd/bc/search.do?navId=NAV_ID_province&action=searchresult&qp=&nh=10&qt=Planning%20Guide%20and%20Framework%20for%20Development%20of%20Aboriginal%20Learning%20Resources)

**Canadian Aboriginal Links:** [www.bloorstreet.com/300block/aborcan.htm](http://www.bloorstreet.com/300block/aborcan.htm)

**The Cradleboard Teaching Project** is a project of the Nihewan Foundation for American Indian Education, which was founded by Buffy Sainte-Marie in 1996. It has created 15 traditional curriculum units written from a Native American point of view. The Cradleboard Teaching Project website notes that, rather than simply surfing the Net, the Cradleboard



students engage in interactive dialogues with cross-cultural peers in other areas of the country. Cradleboard is a multidisciplinary project that maximizes what many schools are already doing [www.cradleboard.org/main.html](http://www.cradleboard.org/main.html)

**The Dreamcatcher Tour** brings Tom Jackson's message of empowerment to communities suffering the loss of young lives to suicide, and the **Huron Carole Benefit Concert Series** raises money in Tom Jackson's drive to end hunger in this country. [www.tomali.com](http://www.tomali.com)

**First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework.** February 2002: Alberta Education. [www.education.gov.ab.ca/nativeed/nativepolicy](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/nativeed/nativepolicy)

**Government of Nunavut, Iqaluit, Nunavut:** [www.gov.nu.ca](http://www.gov.nu.ca)

**Improving Academic Performance Among Native American Students:** [www.ael.org/page.htm?&index=263&pd=1](http://www.ael.org/page.htm?&index=263&pd=1)

**Learning about Walking in Beauty: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms.** This 300-page document describes Aboriginal education in Canada. Most classroom teachers today, states the report, have been "poorly educated" about Aboriginal peoples. For these educators, integrating Aboriginal world views, cultures, histories and contemporary concerns into mandated curricula is very challenging. *Learning about Walking in Beauty* offers a wealth of information, links to additional resources, and practical strategies and recommendations to support classroom teachers. Produced by the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies and Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2002. [www.crr.ca](http://www.crr.ca)

**Indian and Northern Affairs Canada:** Many topics, including gifted education, indigenous knowledge and pedagogy, parental involvement, racism, early childhood development, teacher recruitment. [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca)

Free resources for teachers and students. Information about children's literature. Contact [learningcircle@inac.gc.ca](mailto:learningcircle@inac.gc.ca)

Teachers' Section: [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/12000\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/12000_e.html)

Students' Section: [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/index\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/index_e.html)

Education Reports: [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu)

**Métis Nation of Alberta** was formed in 1932 to pursue the advancement of the socio-economic and cultural well-being of the Métis people of Alberta. [www.albertametis.com](http://www.albertametis.com)

**Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada.** Political reality of Native people in Canada. Edited by John Bird, Lorraine Land and Murray MacAdam. Toronto: Public Justice Resource Centre and Irwin Publishing, 2001.

276 pp \$26.95/\$21.50 for orders of 10 or more. Publication code: N2N-10-01. Call 1-800-667-8046.

Book review can be found at [www.turning-point.ca/index.php/article/view/43/1/28](http://www.turning-point.ca/index.php/article/view/43/1/28)

**Native Residential Schools in Canada. National Library of Canada** [www.nlc-bnc.ca/2/35/index-e.html](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/2/35/index-e.html)

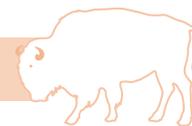
**Nunavut Tunngavik's** website promotes Inuit economic, social and cultural well-being through the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and includes a newsletter. [www.tunngavik.com](http://www.tunngavik.com) or [www.qaujisaqtiit.ca](http://www.qaujisaqtiit.ca)

**Reclaiming Youth Network and the Circle of Courage Philosophy** [www.reclaiming.com](http://www.reclaiming.com)

**Safe and Caring Lesson Plans Incorporating Aboriginal Culture in the Classroom**

For elementary teachers: Go to [www.sacsc.ca/resources.htm](http://www.sacsc.ca/resources.htm) to order the elementary teaching resource *Toward a Safe and Caring Curriculum*.

For secondary teachers: Go to [www.sacsc.ca/resources.htm](http://www.sacsc.ca/resources.htm) and click on "Secondary Lesson Plans and Strategies." Lessons with First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture are added on a continuing basis. Teachers are paid an honorarium for lessons that are published. Submit online.

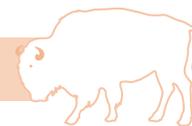


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