



The information in this guide was informed by
the *University of British Columbia's* [Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines](#).
We thank those before us who have done the work of information gathering and sharing.

Peace, Friendship, and Good Minds

The friendship wampum belt was presented to Queen's University Senate by the Clan Mothers at Tyendinaga, and the Grandmothers' Council in Kingston, on March 7, 2017. This cherished symbol is now present at all Senate meetings, to represent the lasting covenant of peace and friendship.

Terms to use and/or avoid

Native

This term is rarely used in respectful conversations and we advise this term not be used unless there is a specific reason to do so, such as in an organizational name that derives from an earlier period (e.g., Queen's Native Students Association). However, those with Indigenous ancestry might use the term to refer to themselves or other Indigenous peoples. 'First Nations,' 'Aboriginal,' and more recently, 'Indigenous' are more current and are preferred by many in the community, though each has particular nuances.

Aboriginal

'Aboriginal' is a general term that collectively refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada, and is found in the Canadian constitution. This distinction legalized in 1982 when the Constitution Act came into being. Section 35 (2) of the Act states, "Aboriginal Peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. It is broad, on one hand, because it includes all Canadian groups, but specific, on the other, in that it is not widely used in international contexts. (In the US, for instance, it is not widely understood.) Though until recently a preferred term, it does carry a negative connotation because of its use in government policy, though not nearly as strong a one as its predecessor, 'Indian.' Please note that 'Aboriginal' should never be used as a noun, e.g., 'Aboriginals think...'

Indigenous

The term 'Indigenous' refers to all of these groups, either collectively or separately, and is the term used in international contexts, e.g., the 'United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (UNDRIP). Recently, it has been associated more with activism than government policy and so has emerged, for many, as the preferred term. In some contexts, however, it can be ambiguous: a reference to 'Indigenous people in Canada' could include Maori or American Indian (US) people living here, as well as Canadian Aboriginal people, so in contexts in which legal specificity to people originating in Canada is important, 'Aboriginal,' or a more qualified use of 'Indigenous' may be warranted (e.g., The Indigenous Peoples of Canada). Thus, it may be acceptable to use both terms in a formal document or across a communications channel. To avoid confusion, however, do not use both in the same article, unless there is a logical reason to do so.

First Nations

Most, but not all, reserve-based communities in Canada refer to themselves as 'First Nations'. For informal documents, use 'First Nation,' or, collectively in referring to reserve-based communities, 'First Nations,' but in specific references, it is more preferential to use the name that the community (or First Nation) uses publicly. The term 'First Nations' can be applied to individuals, but, technically refers only to those who have Indian status under Canadian law as part of a recognized community. Many Aboriginal people in Canada do not have this formal connection, and those who are Métis or Inuit should never be referred to as 'First Nations.' Sometimes, the term 'Nation' is more generally applied to a whole cultural group, e.g., "the Mohawk Nation."

Indian

The term 'Indian' because of its negative connotation, should be avoided in most contexts unless it is used as part of a historical reference or used in reference to a government policy (eg. The Indian Act, 'status Indian'). You may encounter, particularly in legal or policy contexts, the terms 'status Indian,' 'Indian status' or 'status.' All refer to the government classification system in which 'status' confers certain agreements based on treaties with the Crown, however; historically, certain penalties were also handed down. This is a technical area with sensitivities, so you may want to consult with knowledgeable people before initiating the use of any of these terms.



Gerald McMaster,
niya nehiyaw, 1993,
acrylic, graphite on
unstretched canvas.
185.30 x 258.50 cm.
Purchase, Chancellor
Richardson Memorial
Fund, 1995 (38-039).

Be specific: Métis, Inuit and Aboriginal

Métis

Métis are a specific Indigenous (and Aboriginal) group in Canada with a very specific social history. Until very recently, they have not been regarded as 'Indians' under Canadian law and are never considered 'First Nations.' The term 'Métis' may be used as singular or plural, and refers to individuals or groups, e.g., "Tom, a Métis student, is attending Queen's University," or "The Indian Act does not govern the Métis." Please be sure to use the acute accent over the 'é' in Métis unless quoting a name or source in which it is not used.

Inuit

Inuit are another Aboriginal group, historically located in the Arctic and legally and culturally distinct from First Nations or legally-defined Indians and Métis. The singular of 'Inuit' is 'Inuk,' and because the translation of Inuit is 'the people,' it is redundant to add 'people' after it. Do not use 'Eskimo,' which the Inuit consider a derogatory term.

Aboriginal

Be aware that Aboriginal people, however named, do not 'belong' to Canada. Therefore, do not preface any of the terms considered above with a possessive, e.g., "Canada's Aboriginal (or First Nations, Inuit, Indigenous, Métis) people", or worse yet, "our Aboriginal people." This is profoundly insulting and not easily forgiven, as it invokes an entire history of paternalism and control.

Do not use 'Aboriginal' as a noun, but rather as an adjective. The former, especially 'Aboriginals,' connotes an early colonial time when poorly conceived synonyms like 'Indians,' 'primitives' and others were casually applied to Indigenous people. It is also needlessly reductive, as it unnecessarily diminishes an agglomeration of distinct Indigenous groups to a singularly blunt term. For example: Do not say "The Aboriginals of Canada..." or "the student is an Aboriginal". Instead say "The Aboriginal Peoples of Canada..." or "He is an Aboriginal student (person, athlete, leader, etc.) ..."

When in doubt as to what is the most appropriate term to use, ask the person or group involved, learn what is in use in your area or subject field, or simply ask someone knowledgeable.



Acknowledgement & Recognition of Territory

To be meaningful and respectful, a territorial acknowledgement needs to be intentional. This is a time to give thanks, consider our individual and collective role in the stewardship of Mother Earth and in building relationships between Indigenous people and communities and the rest of the country.

The following ‘acknowledgement of territory’ statement is an institutional recognition of the traditional inhabitants of the land on which Queen’s University is located:

“To acknowledge this traditional territory is to recognize its longer history, one predating the establishment of the earliest European colonies. It is also to acknowledge this territory’s significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived, and continue to live, upon it and whose practices and spiritualities were tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the territory and its other inhabitants today. It is my understanding that this territory is included in the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Confederacy of the Ojibwe and Allied Nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. The Kingston Indigenous community continues to reflect the area’s Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee roots. There is also a significant Métis community as well as First people from other Nations across Turtle Island present here today.”

Using the Land Acknowledgement

Websites and email signatures:

Queen's University is situated on the territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek.

Ne Queen's University e'tho nońwe nikanónhsote tsi nońwe ne Haudenosaunee tánon Anishinaabek tehatihsnónhsahere ne óhontsa.

Gimaakwe Gchi-gkinoomaagegamig atemagad Naadowe miinwaa Anishinaabe aking.

I am grateful to live as an uninvited guest upon the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Anishinabek Nation.



Words of welcome at campus events:

Instructors may wish to use it during their first class of a semester.

"To begin, let us acknowledge that Queen's is situated on traditional Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-in-ah-bay) and Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-o-show-nee) territory. We are grateful to be able to live, learn and play on these lands."

This can also serve as a guide for your own personal acknowledgement. The idea is that the recognition not just be rote or pro forma but that you think about why you are saying it and interject meaning into the words.

When should you acknowledge the traditional territory?

- Ambassador events
- Course syllabi
- Email signature (including official emails to all students)
- First day of classes
- Graduations/convocation
- Job postings
- Newsletters
- Orientation
- Staff meetings and professional development sessions
- Websites
- Workshops/Conferences

A more in-depth historical context is available on the Queen's Encyclopedia [webpage](#).

Please consult the [Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#) when planning a conference/workshop/event to determine when to invite an Elder and the most appropriate welcome.

