



[PSC Home](#) > [Employment Equity and Diversity](#) > [Affirmation of Aboriginal Affiliation](#)

Reference Document: Affirmation of Aboriginal Affiliation Form (AAAF)

A. Definition of Aboriginal Peoples

Canadian Constitution: The *Constitution Act*, 1982, Part II, section 35 states:

1. The existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
2. In this Act, "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

"Aboriginal peoples" is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. More than one million people in Canada identify themselves as Aboriginal people, according to the 2006 Census.

Status Indian: A person who is registered as an Indian under the Indian Act. The Act sets out the requirements for determining who is an Indian for the purposes of the *Indian Act*.

Non-status Indians: commonly refers to people who identify themselves as Indians but who are not entitled to registration on the Indian Register, pursuant to the Indian Act. Some of them may be members of a First Nation. Non-Status Indian also refers to a person of Indian ancestry who was simply not enrolled on treaty or Band lists at the time enrolment was occurring, or was removed from the Indian registry due to enfranchisement provisions in the *Indian Act*.

Métis: commonly refers to one of two definitions:

- Métis are individuals who have Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, self-identify themselves as Métis and are accepted by a Métis community as Métis.
- Métis is a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Inuit: (singular, Inuk) refers to the Aboriginal people of Arctic Canada. About 45 000 Inuit live in 53 communities in: Nunatsiavut (Labrador); Nunavik (Quebec); Nunavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories. Each of these four Inuit groups have settled land claims. [Further information is available.](#)

B. Other Aboriginal definitions

First Nation: A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian," which some people found offensive. Although the term "First Nation" is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term "First Nations peoples" refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and non-Status. Some Indian peoples have also adopted the term "First Nation" to replace the word "Band" in the name of their community.

Indian: Indian peoples are one of three groups of people recognized as Aboriginal in the *Constitution Act*, 1982. It specifies that Aboriginal people in Canada consist of Indians, Inuit and Métis. Indians in

Canada are often referred to as: Status Indians, non-Status Indians and Treaty Indians.

Treaty Indian: A Status Indian who belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown.

Beneficiary: An Aboriginal person who is on an enrollment list of a specified comprehensive land claim agreement and is entitled to certain rights under that agreement.

C. *Indian Act* related definitions

Indian Act: Canadian federal legislation, first passed in 1876, and amended several times since. It sets out certain federal government obligations and regulates the management of Indian reserve lands, Indian moneys and other resources. Among its many provisions, the *Indian Act* currently requires the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to manage certain moneys belonging to First Nations and Indian lands and to approve or disallow First Nations by-laws.

Band: A body of Indians for whose collective use and benefit lands have been set apart or money is held by the Crown, or declared to be a Band for the purposes of the *Indian Act*. Each Band has its own governing Band Council, usually consisting of one chief and several councillors. Community members choose the chief and councillors by election, or sometimes through custom. The members of a Band generally share common values, traditions and practices rooted in their ancestral heritage. Today, many Bands prefer to be known as First Nations.

Band membership: What an individual Indian has when they are a recognized member of a Band and whose name appears on an approved Band List. Where a Band has adopted its own membership code, it may define who has a right to membership in the Band, so being a Status Indian is not necessarily synonymous with being a Band member. Status Indians who are not Band members are listed in the General List.

Bill C-31: The pre-legislation name of the 1985 *Act to Amend the Indian Act*. This Act eliminated certain discriminatory provisions of the *Indian Act*, including the section that resulted in Indian women losing their Indian status when they married non-Status men. Bill C-31 enabled people affected by the discriminatory provisions of the old *Indian Act* to apply to have their Indian status and membership restored.

D. Treaty definitions

Historic treaties: In Canada, Aboriginal peoples and various pre-Confederation and post-Confederation governments have concluded 68 major treaties. These treaties cover most of Ontario, the Prairie Provinces and parts of Vancouver Island, the Northwest Territories and Atlantic Canada. Indian treaties in Canada are constitutionally recognized agreements between the Crown and Aboriginal peoples. Most of these agreements describe exchanges where Aboriginal groups agree to share some of their interests in their ancestral lands in return for various kinds of payments and promises from Crown officials.

Land claims: In 1973, the federal government recognized two broad classes of claims — comprehensive and specific. Comprehensive claims are based on the assessment that there may be continuing Aboriginal rights to lands and natural resources. These kinds of claims come up in those parts of Canada where the Aboriginal title has not previously been dealt with by treaty and other legal means. The claims are called “comprehensive” because of their wide scope. They include such things as land titles, fishing and trapping rights and financial compensation. Specific claims deal with specific grievances that First Nations may have regarding the fulfilment of treaties. Specific claims also cover grievances relating to the administration of First Nations lands and assets under the *Indian Act*.

Self-government agreements: set out arrangements for Aboriginal groups to govern their internal

affairs and assume greater responsibility and control over the decision-making that affects their communities. Self-government agreements address: the structure and accountability of Aboriginal governments, their law-making powers, financial arrangements and their responsibilities for providing programs and services to their members. Self-government enables Aboriginal governments to work in partnership with other governments and the private sector to promote economic development and improve social conditions.

Comprehensive claims settlements also include self-government arrangements.

E. Demographic definitions

Off-reserve: A term used to describe people, services or objects that are not part of a reserve, but relate to First Nations.

Reserve: Tract of land, the legal title to which is held by the Crown, set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian Band.

Aboriginal communities: are located in urban, rural and remote locations across Canada. They include:

- First Nations or Indian Bands, generally located on lands called reserves;
- Inuit communities located in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories (Inuvialuit), Northern Quebec (Nunavik) and Labrador (Nunatsiavut);
- Métis communities; and
- communities of Aboriginal peoples (including Métis, non-Status Indians, Inuit and First Nation individuals) in cities or towns which are not part of reserves or traditional territories (for example, the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg).

Urban Aboriginal people: refers primarily to Inuit, Métis and First Nations currently residing in urban areas. According to 2006 Census data, off-reserve Aboriginal peoples constitute the fastest growing segment of Canadian society. In 2006 a full 56% of Aboriginal people lived in urban areas, up from 50% in 1996. The cities with the largest Aboriginal populations were Winnipeg (68 380), Edmonton (52 100), Vancouver (40 310), Toronto (26 575), Calgary (26 575), Saskatoon (21 535) and Regina (17 105).

F. Related links

- [Aboriginal portal Canada, List of Aboriginal Communities and Organizations](#)
- [List of Inuit organizations](#)
- [List of Ontario Métis organizations](#)
- [List of North American Aboriginal communities and organizations](#)

Date Modified: 2009-11-16