

STUDY GUIDE:

Welcome to our Homelands

OVERVIEW

The *Welcome to Canada* video attempts to provide an introduction to the vast richness of Indigenous people's values and views while highlighting some of the many complex historical events that have shaped this country and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

After watching the video, we hope that you will be inspired to continue to learn more about Indigenous peoples of Canada. This accompanying video study guide provides additional information, suggested links and terminology to help you increase your awareness of Indigenous peoples of Canada. We hope you will use this guide as a jumping off point for further learning.

How does Canada define Indigenous peoples? Section 35 (2) of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 defines Aboriginal peoples to include the "Indian," Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

The term "Indian" is considered an offensive colonial term. The term **Indigenous** is also preferable to Aboriginal when discussing Indigenous people of Canada.

First Nations is the term used to refer to people who are Indigenous and who do not identify as Inuit or Métis.

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Canada

Inuit are a group of Indigenous peoples living in 53 communities within the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland and Alaska. Historically Inuit were referred to as "Eskimos," but this term is not respectful, and should not be used.

- en.wikipedia.org/w/Inuit

Métis is from a French word "to mix." They are a distinct Indigenous group that trace their descendants from mixed ancestry of First Nations and Europeans. Their descendants were referred to as "half-breeds" which is no longer used and considered offensive.

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9tis_in_Canada

IN THE VIDEO

As of 2016, there were 1,673,785 Indigenous people in Canada, which represented 4.9% of the total population. Today, there are around 634 different First Nations in Canada, and approximately 60 different language groups, living all over Canada, in traditional territories and in urban centres.

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Nations

In the video, you were introduced and welcomed by six Indigenous representatives from across Canada. You can find more information about these Indigenous people through the following links:

GWAYEE (BRITISH COLUMBIA - FIRST NATIONS)

- kingcome.ca
- youtube.com/watch?v=OCIB00xJkiY

INUVIK (NORTHWEST TERRITORIES - INUIT)

- inuvik.ca/en/index.asp
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Northern_Canada

PENTICTON (BRITISH COLUMBIA - FIRST NATIONS)

- syilx.org/about-us/syilx-nation
- pib.ca

SIX NATIONS (ONTARIO)

- sndevcorp.ca/history-of-six-nations
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Nations_of_the_Grand_River

UNAMA'KI (CAPE BRETON, NOVA SCOTIA)

- cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/unamaki-college/mikmaq-resource-centre/mikmaq-resource-guide/historical-overview

ÎLE-A-LA CROSSE, (SASKATCHEWAN - MÉTIS)

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%8E%C3%A0-la-Crosse

If you watched this video in Canada, reach out and learn more about the First Nations in your community or region. You can start with a google search to see whose Indigenous territory your town or city is on and refer to other links.

Indigenous people have distinct values and oral traditions. Oral histories and stories are essential to maintaining Indigenous identity and culture. Often it is the role of particular people within each community to memorize the oral history with great care. Indigenous peoples pass along values and histories from generation to generation through oral storytelling. Indigenous cultures also tell stories and histories through symbolic objects and visual language such as carved totem poles and house posts.

Each Indigenous culture, community, and even family has its own historical and traditional stories, songs or dances. Different cultures have different rules about ownership. Some songs, names, symbols or dances belong to some people or families and cannot be used, retold, danced or sung without permission.

KEY EVENTS

The historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada is complex and influenced by colonialization, historical events, laws and racist attitudes. These events have shaped contemporary issues still felt today by Indigenous peoples. However, there are various initiatives currently underway in Canada to improve and address the historic wrongs of the past.

This final section of the study guide attempts to provide additional information to some key historic events highlighted in the video.

COLONIZATION

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Canada

Before the arrival of Europeans, North America was occupied by Indigenous people living and thriving within their own distinct cultures, languages, and ways of knowing. Indigenous Peoples have lived in what is now called Canada for over 10,000 years.

The British and French (claimed as the two founding nations of Canada) were fighting for control of North America, which they viewed as a rich source of raw materials. When Europeans arrived in North America, they regarded it as "nobody's land." Europeans imposed their own cultural values, religions, laws and made policies in their favour; some did not believe Indigenous people to be "people" at all.

As a result, European values and beliefs have made their way into Canadian Institutions and policies in the form of systemic and institutional discrimination and bias. Much of the work today is about righting the wrongs of the past and overcoming the consequences of discrimination and prejudice.

THE INDIAN ACT, 1876

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Act

The Indian Act is federal legislation that indicates how Indigenous Reserves and Bands can operate and defines who is recognized as an "Indian." The Indian Act was another attempt to assimilate First Nations people into European society as quickly as possible. The Act covers many different aspects such as how an "Indian" acquired or lost status, the legal status of women, enfranchisement, etc. The Indian Act is still in force today and it is still a challenging piece of legislation for Indigenous people.

Reserves: With the arrival and settlement of Europeans, First Nations people and Europeans came into conflict over who would control these lands and resources, and First Nations people were placed on small tracts of land called reserves. Many First Nations continue to live on small reserves, which the government still controls. This is a source of much of the conflict between Indigenous people and the government.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Indian_residential_school_system

One of the most disturbing legacies of the Indian Act was the mandatory attendance in residential schools. There were 140 Indian Residential Schools, funded by the federal government and run by churches. More than 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend them. The government wanted to assimilate Indigenous people into Euro-Canadian society.

Indigenous children were taken from their parents and families and forced to give up all their languages, spiritual beliefs and cultural practices. On June 11th 2008 the Government of Canada issued a formal apology to residential school survivors. You can find a copy of the apology delivered by the Prime Minister at the following link:

- rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1571589171655

MURDERED AND MISSING INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

- mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report

In September 2016, the Government of Canada launched the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). MMIWG refers to a human rights crisis because of missing and murdered Indigenous women between 1980 and 2012. Indigenous women's groups document the number of missing and murdered to be over 4,000. Increased awareness has resulted in tremendous support for Indigenous families and communities and brought people together with the common goal of seeking justice.

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC)

- cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-94-calls-toaction-1.3362258

The federal government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2008 to examine the legacy of residential schools. The mandate of the TRC was to accumulate, document and commemorate the experiences of the 80,000 survivors of the residential school system in Canada, so that the survivors could begin to heal from the trauma of these experiences.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report and published 94 Calls to Action, urging all levels of government to work together to change policies and programs in a concerted effort to repair the harm caused by residential schools and move forward with reconciliation.

The work of the TRC was not just about documenting a particularly difficult part of Canadian history but it was rooted in the belief that telling the truth about Indigenous and non-Indigenous history gives us a better starting point in building a better future. It is the beginning of a new kind of hope.

Many stereotypes and problems occur when people do not know the truth, or any information about Indigenous people. We encourage you to seek out the information: read the TRC "Calls to Action," visit a Friendship Centre; read books by Indigenous authors; explore arts created by Indigenous artists; take a class on Indigenous people; form a group within your work team to talk about Indigenous issues; participate in events such as the Walk for Reconciliation and National Indigenous Day activities across Canada.

We need to work together and support each other to make a place where all people are valued and included. Reconciliation is a very personal journey and one in which all Canadians must play a part.