

NI'N AQ NO'KMAQ

TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Ni'n aq No'kmaq translates to “Me and My Relations”. It is the process by which WE, the Mi'kmaq of PEI (and not the Federal and Provincial Governments) determine who can exercise Aboriginal and Treaty rights in PEI.

The work we're focused on is asking the Mi'kmaq of PEI what does it mean to be Mi'kmaq? Who do we consider family? When our Treaties say “our heirs, and the heirs of our heirs forever” – what does that mean to us?

Indigenous:

The term Indigenous is used in academia, in international conversations, and now in mainstream Canadian society as an alternative to First Nation or Aboriginal.

First Nation:

This term was used to describe a community, such as "Lennox Island Band", which later evolved into "Lennox Island First Nation". First Nation then developed into the term to describe a tribe, so for example, the Mi'kmaq Nation as a whole.

Native:

Native is another term used in place of “Indian”, “First Nation”, or “Indigenous”.

Aboriginal:

An Aboriginal Canadian can be First Nation, Inuit, or Métis. It is the legal term used to describe these groups of people under section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Indian:

“Indian” is the legal term used to describe First Nation peoples in the Indian Act. When Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas, he thought he was in India, so he called the people he met “Indians” and the term stuck.

Band member:

Band member is a status “Indian” registered to a band. In addition to the entitlements, they receive as an “Indian”, a Band member also has access to Band administered programs and have certain political rights as a member of the band (like the right to vote in band elections).

Community member:

Community members are individuals living in and/or a part of Mi'kmaw communities or bands. However, a community member may also include other individuals who contribute and are accepted by the Nation.

Status/Non-status:

Status:A term derived from the Indian Act. A person with “status” is a registered “Indian” under the Indian Act. A status “Indian” has certain entitlements from the Federal Government such as tax exemption on-reserve, non-insured health benefits, and post-secondary education support. Not all status Indians are Band members.

Non-Status:A person who was never registered or is no longer registered as an “Indian” due to the discriminatory nature of the Indian Act.

Métis:

The Métis are the descendants of European fur traders and First Nation women from the 1800s. A common misconception is that if someone is non-status or if they have Indigenous ancestry, then they are Métis. Métis are not covered under the Indian Act. The Métis people have their own distinct identity – their own cultural practices, language (Michif) and traditions. Distinct Métis communities or “homeland” are found in the three Prairie Provinces and parts of Ontario, British Columbia, The Northwest Territories, and the Northern United States.

Blood Quantum:

Blood quantum is a race-based extinguishment concept under which if a person does not meet a minimum percent of “Indian blood”, they are not considered a member of that Indigenous Nation. It can lead to discrimination wherein children from single parent family homes, children where the fathers are not identified on the birth certificate and adopted children – although raised in the community would not be considered Mi’kmaq. Blood quantum overlooks traditional governance systems of how Indigenous Nations have historically included and recognized individuals as members of their society. The *Indian Act* uses the concept of blood quantum to determine who is Indian and who isn’t.

Citizenship:

The concept of citizen is about granting full political membership to individuals who comply or meet certain rules. They can have a specific link through birth or ancestral connection, but individuals can also be a citizen if they meet certain membership requirements eg. Length of residence, acceptance by the Nation, etc.

Beneficiary:

A beneficiary is an individual who receives a benefit and, in this instance, would be able to exercise his or her Aboriginal or Treaty rights in PEI. Under the Peace and Friendship Treaties it says, “their heirs, and the heirs of their heirs forever”. L’nuey’s work is asking who should be able to hunt and fish in PEI as a Mi’kmaq Treaty holder.

Collective Identity:

An individual’s identity is shaped by their environment, family, and culture. When asked “who is Mi’kmaq” each person has a different answer because we all have our own understanding of who we are as individuals and as a group. The Aboriginal identity lies in people’s collective life, their history, ancestry, culture, values, traditions, and ties to the land – rather than their race. It is the fundamental values, behaviours, and ideals of a group of people.

Race:

The concept of “race” is about classifying groups of people based on physical characteristics. Race-based thinking can often lead to one group being ranked as more superior to the other. An extreme example of this is Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany with the mission of creating the Arian Race. Blood quantum falls under this concept. For the Ni’n aq No’kmaq process we are looking at concepts like “ancestry”, “ethnicity”, and “collective identity” – not race.

Ethnicity:

Ethnicity builds on the concept of ancestry. Ethnicity refers to a group or nation of people who have a shared ancestry and culture. The difference between ethnicity and citizenship is that with citizenship, it is not necessary to have ancestral connection to be a part of the nation. After a period of residency and a knowledge test, one can gain citizenship. With ethnicity, ancestry is a required component. The Mi’kmaq Nation is an ethnic group. The work to determine who is an Heir of the Treaties is the process of defining what Mi’kmaq ethnicity looks like.

Nation:

A Nation is “a group of people who share a sense of common identity”. It does not only have to be about living in the same country – but can include sharing common characteristics like ethnicity, language, culture, faith, and a common history. The Mi’kmaq are a Nation and Mi’kma’ki is the physical territory of the Mi’kmaq Nation. For the work conducted by L’nuey, when we speak of a Nation, we are referring to the Mi’kmaq of PEI.

Ancestry:

Ancestry is a demonstration of family links. It can include adoption and birth.