

First Nations, Metis, Inuit

Indigenization Column: April 10, 2017

Aaniin, Boozhoo kina wiya (Hello everyone)!

This week I'd like to discuss some of the history and information about some of the terms you may be hearing regarding Indigenization. In the last column, I made references to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people, at times collectively referred to as FNMI. I'd like to take this opportunity to provide further information about these three groups and how each term is used for the Indigenous people of Canada.

First Nations people are the original inhabitants of North America, south of the Arctic region. There are approximately 635 recognized First Nations across Canada today. First Nations can refer to the individual people, in terms of First Nations people, and can also be used to refer to the area in which the people reside, the First Nation. As an example, you may have heard of Rama First Nation north of Orillia. The members of Rama First Nation are First Nations people. There are different names for the First Nations across Canada, so it is always important to do a quick search of the region or group to see what title they prefer and use it out of respect. For more information about First Nations people, please visit <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1307460872523>

Metis people are the descendants of First Nations people and Europeans, originating in the early days of colonization. Metis is not a term that refers to all individuals with mixed ancestry, but instead refers to a specific cultural group mainly originating in the Red River Valley, crossing Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and into the United States. The Metis language is called Michif, and is derived from a combination of European and Indigenous languages. For more information about Metis people, please visit <http://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-metis>

The Inuit are the original inhabitants of the Arctic region of Canada, including the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern Quebec, and Labrador. They are also found in Alaska and Greenland. Inuit is the Inuktitut word for 'the people', and the word Inuk refers to an individual Inuit person. There are various cultural groups within the Inuit community, including Labradormiut (Labrador), Nunavimmiut (Ungava), Baffin Island, Iglulingmiut (Iglulik), Kivallirmiut (Caribou), Netsilingmiut (Netsilik), Inuinait (Copper) and Inuvialuit or Western Arctic Inuit, and there are five dialects of Inuktitut. For more information about Inuit people, please visit <http://www.inuulitsivik.ca/northern-life-and-inuit-culture/who-are-the-inuits>

As a note, the term FNMI and their definitions do not specifically include non-status and self-identifying Indigenous people. Non-status and self-identifying Indigenous people are those with Indigenous ancestry who do not fall under the Canadian government's legal definitions of First Nations people. At Georgian College, we are very aware of the importance of recognizing all Indigenous peoples, despite their categories or labels. We value identity in all its forms, and it is my hope that this article piques your interest to learn more about the diverse populations of Indigenous peoples and the terms used to discuss their unique cultures and identities.