

# 10 Things to Know About Indigenous People in Canada

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## 1. There are hundreds of cultural/linguistic groups of Indigenous people in Canada, but there are only 3 broad legally recognized groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Across Canada there are more than 630 First Nations communities (or “reserves”), more than 10 federally recognized Métis settlements, and many Inuit communities. According to [Statistics Canada's 2016 Census results](#), there are 1,673,785 Indigenous people in Canada, which represents 4.9% of the population.

## 2. Indigenous populations are growing at a rate 4x faster than the Canadian population in general

Natural increase, increased life expectancy, and high fertility rates have led to [a 42.5% increase in the Indigenous population since 2006](#). The Indigenous population is also younger. In 2011, the average age of the Indigenous population was 32.1 years compared to 40.9 years for the non-Indigenous population. One-third of First Nations people (29.2%) and one-third (33.0%) of Inuit people were 14 years of age or younger.

## 3. More than half of First Nations people live off reserve. More than half live in western provinces.

[First Nations populations](#) have become increasingly urban over time: by 2016, 55.8% lived off reserve. Almost 22.3% of First Nations live in Ontario, representing just 2.8% of the provincial population (versus 18% in Manitoba, for example, and 85.9% in Nunavut). More than half (55%) of First Nations people live west of Ontario.

## 4. Indigenous people's education levels are increasing, but still lag those of non-Indigenous Canadians

Indigenous youth experience significant barriers: youth living in remote and isolated communities must often leave their families and board with strangers in larger cities to receive their high school education. [Just under half \(48%\) of Indigenous people between 25 and 64 years old in 2011](#) had a post-secondary qualification compared to 65% of non-Indigenous people in the same age group. Twenty-nine percent of Indigenous people had ‘no certificate, diploma or degree’ compared to 12% of non-Indigenous people in Canada.

## **5. Indigenous households are more likely to be food insecure than non-Indigenous households.**

For off-reserve Indigenous households, [22.3% were food insecure](#) in 2011 compared to 7.6% of non-Indigenous households.

## **6. There are more than 70 Indigenous languages used in Canada.**

Because many Indigenous languages have been lost, there are initiatives underway across Canada to ensure that Indigenous languages are taught and used. 2019 is the [Year of Indigenous Languages](#). [According to the 2016 Census](#), more than 70 Indigenous languages have more than 500 speakers with Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibwe being the language families with the most speakers.

## **7. Half of young children in foster care in 2016 were Indigenous.**

In 2016, [51.2% of all foster children in the 0 to 4 age category were Indigenous](#). The proportions were [similar for children aged 5-9 and 10-14](#). In 2016 Dr. Cindy Blackstock and the Assembly of First Nations won a [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case](#) against the federal government to ensure that Indigenous child welfare agencies have equal resources (funding, people, and support) as well as capacity support to change the current child welfare system to reflect an Indigenous method of child raising.

## **8. Indigenous people face systemic racism in health and social institutions such as the health care, justice, and education systems.**

Stories of neglect and mistreatment within the healthcare system are common: [Mr. Brian Sinclair waited unattended](#) in a Winnipeg emergency room for 34 hours with an easily treatable infection before he died. Indigenous organizations estimate that [between 1,000 and 4,000 Indigenous women are murdered or missing](#) in Canada with little attention from the justice system. The Office of the Correctional Investigator has reported that Indigenous people (4.1% of the adult Canadian population) now [make up 27% of the federal prison population](#).

## **9. There are 94 Calls to Action listed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report from 2015. There are 440 recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report from 1996.**

There have been many reports from different sources over the past 100 years including a report by [Dr. Peter Bryce](#) in 1909, [Judge Berger's Pipeline Inquiry](#) in 1974, [Professor H.B. Hawthorn's](#) 1967 *Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies*, and the [1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#). Some of these reports and initiatives led to greater awareness of Indigenous people's needs. For instance, the 1996 Royal Commission led to

the creation of the [Aboriginal Healing Foundation](#), which wrote reports about residential schools and other issues. Most recently, we have the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#).

## **10. Positionality, ownership, and partnership will be part of the reconciliation journey.**

[Thomas King](#) wrote that through our stories, we come to know who we are as individuals, groups and societies. Everyone has a worldview that includes their values, beliefs, knowledge, culture, language(s), spiritual beliefs, and the ceremonies they pass down. All people must understand and acknowledge their own positions in our society and what they value and believe for reconciliation to move forward. [We must reflect on the generations that came before us and those that will come in the future](#). We need to find ways to take ownership over what has occurred and reconcile to make change for the future. We will need to [partner and find ways to move forward](#) as peoples and for the future of the human race.