

Spirit Bear's Virtual School Glossary:

A Living Document

A Beary Caring Note on our Definitions

This glossary was created for the Spirit Bear Virtual School and is meant to be used in conjunction with *Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum* and the learning guides for the campaigns.

The glossary aims to support teachers and anyone who finds this resource valuable in making sense of reconciliation, justice, fairness, substantive equality, and ending discrimination against First Nations children, youth, and families. It is helpful to think of this list of words as starting points in your work toward reconciliation.

It is important to remember that that words may hold different meanings for different people. Also, the meanings of words change over time. In recognition of this, the Glossary is updated sporadically.

Definitions:

Aboriginal - This is a legal term used in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982. It recognizes the three distinct Aboriginal groups in Canada: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Aboriginal Rights - A right is something a person has that cannot be taken away. This right is protected by the law. Aboriginal peoples hold rights to hunting, trapping, and fishing on their ancestral and/or traditional lands. Rights vary from group to group based on customs, practices, traditions, agreements, culture, and Treaties. Aboriginal rights are ongoing, collective, unable to be taken away, and ought to be respected.

Assimilation - Is a harmful process where a dominant ideological group forces another group to follow their values, behaviours, and beliefs.

Band - A Band is a governing group of First Nations peoples. The federal government holds power over Bands by controlling their access to lands and funds enforced by the Indian Act. A Band is the term the Canadian government uses to refer to certain First Nations communities. Many communities now prefer the term First Nation to Band and have changed their names accordingly. See the definition of Indian Act below.

Band Council - A Band Council is the governing body of a Band or First Nation as enforced by the Indian Act. In Bands or First Nations communities, Chiefs and Councillors are elected using either what is determined by the Indian Act or custom election rules. The Indian Act enforced the Band system onto First Nation communities beginning in the late 1800s. See the definition of Indian Act below.

Bear Witness – To bear witness means to watch what is happening, listen to others, and learn about their experiences. It often involves learning about past or current injustices and helping others to learn and understand about them too. Bearing witness is a crucial part of helping to end injustice.

Bear Witness Day - Inspired by the Caring Society's "Berrister" named Spirit Bear, to "bear" witness means to watch what is happening and help others know and understand too. This means paying attention to how the Canadian government is treating First Nations children, youth, and families. Annually on May 10, the Caring Society invites all kids and youth in Canada, and around the world, to stand up for First Nations children.

Calls to Action - In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission alongside Residential School Survivors announced 94 Calls to Action. These call on governments, courts, businesses, schools, and all people living in Canada to take responsibility and help fix the mistakes of the past and the present. Taking up the Calls to Action will ensure that all First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and communities can be healthy, safe, and proud of who they are for our collective future.

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) - The CHRT is a type of court that is governed by the Canadian Human Rights Act. This court decides if a person or persons are being discriminated against. This discrimination could be by another person, or persons, or business, organizations, governments, etc. See the definition of discrimination below.

Chief - A chief is the leader of a Band or First Nation who is elected by eligible voters in the community, as determined by the Indian Act. Some First Nations communities follow traditional governance customs, including recognizing hereditary chiefs as leaders. The Indian Act only recognizes elected Band Chiefs. It is important not to use this word unless it is connected to its meaning. So, calling a friend 'Chief,' is not appropriate, unless they actually are one.

Children's Rights – The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) is a treaty that recognizes specific rights for children; it defines a child as any person who is under the age of eighteen. The UNCRC states that children are entitled to the universal standard for human rights and defines child-specific rights, which include the right to be free from discrimination no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, their gender, and if they have a disability. It also says that when adults make decisions, they should do so with the best interests of the child in mind.

Child Welfare - Child Welfare is a system that is supposed to provide children and families with the care and support they need to safely care for their children. Support might include access to cultural services, family programs, parenting education, etc. If child welfare agencies conclude that parents/guardians are not able to safely care for their children at home and in their communities, children may be given out-of-home care. However, many times when families request support, children are taken and placed in unfit, unsafe, and culturally unresponsive environments. Many of the same ideas that created residential schools are currently taking place in the Child Welfare system in Canada.

Courage - Courage is the strength to stand up for what is right, and to take action even when you might be scared, you may not succeed, or it might not be popular. Acting courageously means doing things that show respect for yourself, other people, and other living beings like plants, animals, water and more. Courage can be speaking out when you see something hurtful, answering a hard question, or telling the truth when nobody else wants to.

Court - Court is a place where people go to seek justice. There is a judge and jury of 12 people that come to a decision based on laws and evidence. Courts make decisions on whether someone committed a crime, how money should be spent, and whether laws are being used in the right way by the government and by citizens living in Canada. The court system in Canada is one of many approaches people can take to solve problems and seek justice.

Crown - The Crown is the head of state that is led by either a king or a queen. This is also called a monarchy. Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom are some of the countries that have governments that are under monarch rule. While Canada is led by a Prime Minister and Members of Parliament, Canada's decisions for passing bills and policies still need to be accepted by the reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II and their representative in Canada, the Governor General. Many Indigenous groups around the world have a longstanding relationship with the Crown due to Treaties and other forms of agreements.

Department of Indigenous Services Canada (*also known as: Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, and Indigenous Affairs and Northern Affairs Canada*) – The department in the Government of Canada responsible for carrying out the Indian Act, creating and administering programs, and providing services to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. It is one of two departments responsible for policies relating to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, the other being Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

Discrimination/Non-discrimination - Discrimination happens when people are treated unfairly because of who they are. The Government of Canada, as well as some people in Canada, continue to treat racialized peoples, folks living in poverty, people who practice religions other than Christianity, women and 2SLGBTQIA+¹ people, differently abled

¹ It is important to be up to date with evolving changes to this term as defined by the people who belong to these groups.

peoples, the elderly, and children unfairly. Discrimination can happen many different ways and in many areas of life, like at school or at work.

Non-discrimination means acting in ways that are not harmful to others and actively working toward non-discrimination in your daily life.

Elder (Community-Appointed) - A First Nations, Métis, or an Inuk leader who is respected, valued, and consulted by their community for knowing about their ways of living, thinking about the world, and/or holding cultural knowledge. Elders are important because they ensure that culture continues to be passed on to generations and generations to come. Being an Elder does not necessarily refer to a person's age, and each community will have their own ways of deciding who an Elder is. It is important to acknowledge that Elders are appointed by the community (rather than being self-appointed).

Equity - Equity means that every individual, depending on their specific needs and circumstances, gets what they need to live a healthy, happy, and safe life.

Equality - Equality is when everyone is given the same, not considering individual needs.

Ethical Judgements - Considering and deciding whether something is fair and equitable, what you can learn from it, and actions you can take to make things fair and equitable for everyone.

Fairness - Fairness happens when everyone gets what they need to be healthy, safe, valued, and respected. Acting fairly means treating yourself, other people, and all living beings such as animals, plants, and waters with kindness, respect, and equity. Fairness is the result of equity.

First Nation(s) - First Nations are one of the three peoples recognized as Aboriginal in Canada. There are over 600 different First Nations in Canada. There are over 50 different languages spoken by First Nations communities and each has their own ways of living and thinking about the world. First Nation(s) is also used to describe individuals, governments, Bands, and communities. When referring to a specific community, it is best to use that Nation's name.

First People(s) - This is a collective term used to describe the original peoples of Turtle Island, the world, and their descendants. This term is sometimes used in place of "Indigenous" and "Aboriginal." It means the peoples who were first to live and form connections with this land.

Funding - Funding means the money that is provided to First Nations to operate their services. Funding for First Nations is often less than provinces and territories in Canada receive to fund their services. It is important to know that under the Indian Act, the Government of Canada, specifically Indigenous Services Canada, is responsible for funding

public services such as: healthcare, education, clean drinking water, infrastructure, buildings, and child welfare on-reserves.

Government - The people in charge of a country form a government. In Canada, our government is made up of branches including the judiciary (courts and judges), the executive (Governor General, Prime Minister, and Cabinet) and the legislature (the Senate and the House of Commons). Some of these are elected positions whereas some of them are appointed by elected leaders. Governments decide which laws to create, how to spend Canada's money, what services and programs to create, and who gets those services.

Have a Heart Day - Have a Heart Day happens annually on February 14 and it is a child and youth-led reconciliation event that brings together caring Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have the opportunity to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are.

Human Rights - Human rights are something that everyone around the world has. They ensure that all people are treated fairly and equitably. In Canada, human rights are protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Canada's human rights laws come from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights include the right to education, clean water, shelter, and to be free from discrimination.

While some human rights are universal, meaning everyone has those rights, there are also limited or specific rights. For example, there are rights specific to children called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and there are specific rights as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which are defined below.

Indian – A complicated word that can refer to the legal identity of a First Nations person who has their identity recognized by Canada through the Indian Act. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people still use this word to describe each other. However, because this word has been used to discriminate against these groups for so long, it is inappropriate for non-Indigenous peoples to use it unless it is through a legal way, or through policy.

Indian Act - The Indian Act is a law that the Government of Canada made without the consent of First Nations. Canada passed the Indian Act to control, oppress, and assimilate First Nations. The government removed First Nations from the land and placed them on-reserves and it imposed the Band Council system. The Indian Act allowed the creation of residential schools and forced First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children and youth to attend. The Act defines who is considered Status Indian and until 1985 it denied First Nations women Status if they married a non-First Nations person. Although the Indian Act has undergone many changes since it passed in 1876, it continues to impact the lives and wellbeing of First Nations families and communities to this day.

Indigenous Languages – There are about 70 Indigenous languages spoken by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and communities since time immemorial. Indigenous languages hold and reflect unique worldviews and ways of living specific to place. The Government of Canada has tried to stop First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples from speaking and teaching their languages for generations. This is due to policies, residential schools, and day schools that forced children to assimilate to Canadian society and speak English or French.

Other ways First Nations, Inuit, and Métis had their languages taken away was due to the Sixties Scoop that removed children from their families, and the current day welfare system. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities are working hard to ensure their children and youth can speak their languages and this is called language revitalization.

Indigenous Peoples - Indigenous peoples are the original people who live on the land we currently call Canada. This term is often used to describe “Aboriginal” or “First Peoples” in Canada. The term refers to the three “Aboriginal” groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. In an international and global context, “Indigenous” refers to the original people of any land or a people with a long historical tradition of living on certain territories.

Innu – Innu (which means “people” in Innu-aimun, the Innu language), are a group of people who are from North-eastern Quebec and Labrador. Innu is the term used to describe all Innu; there are two groups who are considered Innu. Innu are not the same as Inuit, though many Innu and Inuit experience similar policies and forced relocations.

Inuit - Inuit means "the people" in Inuktitut, which is one of the languages spoken by Inuit. Inuit live in the circumpolar northern parts of Canada, as well as Greenland and Alaska. Inuit is a plural term; a single Inuit person is called an Inuk.

The term “Eskimo” is sometimes still used in a derogatory way toward Inuit and was first used by European explorers. The term is commonly used in the United States to refer to Inuit in Alaska, but many Inuit consider it inappropriate to use.

Inuk - An individual Inuit person.

Jordan's Principle - A child first principle and legal rule that says First Nations kids receive services they need when they need them and without delay to be happy, healthy, and safe. It is rooted in substantive equality.

Justice/Injustice - Justice is the concept that everyone deserves to be treated fairly and equitably. Justice is written into laws and rules.

Injustice occurs when people are not treated fairly or when they are discriminated against. Injustice also happens when laws are broken or are ignored. Sometimes laws and rules are not just, and the laws must change through the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

Kindness - Kindness is a personal quality or characteristic of someone who is caring, welcoming, and compassionate towards others. People who are kind will go out of their way to make someone feel like they matter.

Land acknowledgement – A land acknowledgement is a written or spoken statement ahead of a gathering that recognizes the First Peoples the gathering is taking place on. They remind us that we have responsibilities to the Indigenous peoples on whose land we gather, the land, water, animals, and other life that we, in many cases, have not been tending to respectfully. Land acknowledgements vary from place to place and should be made in relationship with the Indigenous peoples whose land you are on. They can serve as opportunities to renew commitments to reconciliation.

Métis - One of three distinct Indigenous groups in Canada, Métis are descendants of the historic Métis Nation, with a distinct culture, language (Michif), and governance system. Métis are defined by a collective history, by place-based kinship, by self-identity as Métis, and by acceptance by the Métis Nation.

Native - In Canada, this word was commonly used to describe “Aboriginal people.” Some Indigenous peoples use this term to talk about themselves and other Indigenous peoples. However, because it has been used by non-Indigenous people to discriminate against Indigenous people, non-Indigenous peoples should not use it.

In the United States, Indigenous people are officially called “Native Americans,” which is an accepted term in this instance.

Power - Power can mean a number of things, like electricity but in the way we use it, we connect it to when a government has authority and/or control over groups of people due to the decisions and actions they make. Power can be used in negative and positive ways - it depends on who holds it and what they decide to do with the power they have.

Reconciliation - Reconciliation means learning from the past so we do not repeat the same mistakes. It also means making the world a better place for all humans and animals. Reconciliation is everyone’s responsibility.

Reserve/On-Reserve/Off-Reserve - Pieces of land that the Government of Canada set aside for First Nations people to live on under the Indian Act. Today, many First Nations still live on-reserves. While the reserves are home to First Nations, the land is owned by the Government of Canada. Canada has legal promises to people living on-reserves but continues to not honour these promises. Reserves are a way for the Government of Canada to hold power over First Nations people by denying them the right to own the land they live on. When a First Nation member lives “on-reserve,” they have access to some benefits and services that are not available “off-reserve.” First Nations people can be members of a First Nation without living on-reserve.

Reserves are commonly known as communities.

Residential Schools/Residential School System - For over a hundred years, the Government of Canada took more than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children away from their families and homes and put them in Residential Schools. Residential Schools were a part of a system created by the Government of Canada and was put in place by the Indian Act and were run by churches.

In Residential Schools, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis kids were taught that their way of living and thinking about the world was wrong. They were not allowed to speak their languages, spend time with their families, and were often treated badly by the adults in charge of the schools. Many children got sick, and some died. The last Residential School closed in 1996 in Saskatchewan, but the impacts are intergenerational.

Responsible Citizenship - Persons living in Canada are learning about how to be responsible citizens. This means learning about Canada's past and present and taking responsibility for our roles and positions in our communities and society. Being responsible as a citizen also means taking action and standing up for what is right, even if it might be difficult to do. We can be accountable to each other and make the world a better place for all.

Responsibility - Responsibility means you have a promise. This could include caring for something or someone, completing a task or chore, or even taking care of the land, animals, people, or resources. To be responsible is to follow through on a job, task, event, or idea. Responsibility can be easy or difficult, and sometimes take courage to do.

Self-Determination - Self-determination is the ability for a group or individuals to make their own decisions for things that affect them. For example, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples can use self-determination to make their own systems of justice, child welfare, education, and health. Self-determination means getting to make choices without someone with more power telling you what you can and cannot do.

Shannen's Dream - Shannen's Dream, named in loving memory of Shannen Koostachin, makes sure that First Nations children and youth have the same educational opportunities as others, in ways that respect their language and culture.

Spirit Bear - A mem"bear" of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, Spirit Bear represents the 165,000 First Nations children impacted by the First Nations child welfare case at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, as well as the thousands of other children who have committed to learning about the case and have taken part in peaceful and respectful actions in support of reconciliation and equity. Spirit Bear joined the Caring Society team in 2008 and immediately committed himself to witnessing all the Tribunal hearings. In June 2017, Spirit Bear was awarded an honorary "Barrister" degree from Osgoode Law School. In October 2017, he was officially admitted to the "Bear" by the Indigenous Bar Association.

Spirit Bear Plan - First Nations children and families living on reserve and in the Territories receive public services funded by the federal government. Since confederation, these services have fallen significantly short of what other Canadians receive. These injustices need to end, and Spirit Bear's Plan will do just that. This plan has not been adopted yet by the House of Commons so more work needs to be done!

Substantive Equality - Substantive equality recognizes that not all people start from the same place with the same opportunities or privileges. Substantive equality ensures that everyone has the opportunity to succeed by providing some people with extra supports and/or different supports to make up for the disadvantage(s) they experience. Substantive equality is different than equality; equality is when everyone is treated the same, despite where they are starting from.

Supporter - Someone who supports First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples will stand alongside and take action with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to access their rights and end discrimination. Supporters listen to and learn from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Treaty - Signed legal promises made between “Aboriginal” peoples, the Crown, and the Canadian government. Treaties hold valuable information on how to live with one another and how to take care of the land. Treaties have been made before Canada became a country and are still being made to this day. Treaties are living documents that the Government of Canada, as well as Canadians, hold responsibilities to.

Truth-Telling - Truth-telling emphasizes meaning what you say and saying what you mean. Truth-telling can also mean talking about sad experiences. It takes courage to tell those stories, but often, they must be told to bring about action. This is what the residential school Survivors did. Because they told their stories, the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action were created. That is why these experiences were worth sharing.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was formed from the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The TRC oversaw the testimony of Indian Residential School Survivors who shared their experiences about what happened to them while attending the schools and oversaw the review of records from these institutions. In 2015, the TRC published its multi-volume report on their findings. Together, based on these findings, the Survivors, their families, and the TRC created 94 Calls to Action for communities, churches, governments, schools, and individuals living in Canada, to make a difference. They did this so that all Canadians can learn to never make the same mistakes again.

TRC Calls to Action – The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), along with Indian Residential School Survivors, created 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation in Canada. The Calls to Action are activities that all governments, courts, businesses, schools, and people living in Canada

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can participate in to help fix the mistakes of the past and present, so that all children—including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children—can grow up happy, healthy, safe, and proud of who they are.

Unsurrendered/Unceded Territory - Unsurrendered/Unceded territory is land where a Treaty between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and the Government of Canada or the Crown, were never signed so land was never surrendered nor given to the Government of Canada. Ottawa, where the Government of Canada is located is the unsurrendered/unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg peoples.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - The UNCRC is a child rights agreement created by the United Nations that provides a list of articles for all children under 18 years old. When a country signs the Convention of the Rights of the Child, it means that they are making a promise to protect all children in that country, no matter what their race, ethnicity, culture, gender expression, sexual orientation, and religion is.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) - The UNDRIP provides a list of articles for all rights of Indigenous peoples globally, including children and youth. These articles are supposed to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples across the world. The UNDRIP is part of international law

In Canada, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act was passed in June of 2021.

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