

Indigenous Peoples in Toronto: An Introduction for Newcomers



A collaborative project by: City of Toronto's Newcomers Office, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Access Alliance Multicultural Services, and The City of Toronto's Indigenous Affairs Office

Toronto, a City of Immigrants

70% of Toronto's population has a direct connection to immigration.

- Toronto is home to more than 500,000 newcomers.
- Top immigrant destination in Canada
- 200+ different ethnic origins, 140+ languages spoken
- 46.6% residents are foreign-born
- 26% of those born in CA have at least one parent foreign-born
- 55.7%+ are visible minorities



Making the Case: Indigenous-Newcomer Connections

- Indigenous and newcomer communities are two of the fastest growing populations in Canada.
- As guests on these lands, newcomers need and want to learn the truth and history of the land they now call home.
- Newcomers are often disadvantaged when it comes to learning about First Peoples due to language barriers, limited resources and information, which may lead to them reinforcing negative stereotypes
- Common experiences - poverty, un/under-employment, discrimination, trauma from displacement, loss of language and land due to colonial histories in countries of origin, similar worldviews with a **focus on the collective instead of the individual**
- The spirit of allyship and the genuine interest to learn.
- Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action #93 and #94 “**Newcomers to Canada**”
- **City of Toronto’s Reconciliation Action Plan**

Indigenous-Newcomer Relations: A Vision for Toronto

- A literature review and national scan of existing projects and initiatives was conducted.
- The Newcomer Office partnered with OCASI and the City's Indigenous Affairs Office on the initiative, Indigenous - Newcomer Relations: A Vision for Toronto.
- Hosted an Open Forum in 2020 on Indigenous-Newcomer relations, to gather feedback on proposed initiative which includes the following components:
 - 1. *Develop a resource guide for newcomers***
 - 2. *Establish an Indigenous-Newcomer Advisory Circle***
 - 3. *Facilitate dialogue circles, to build relationships between the two communities.***
 - 4. *Create an online orientation tool for immigrant and refugee sector service providers***
- Received buy-in for the initiative through informal meetings with Indigenous partners, and presenting to Indigenous committees and networks (TASSC, AAAC).
- In 2022: through an RFQ recruited Ridge Road Training and Consulting, Inc. to develop the Resource Guide and formalize an Indigenous-Newcomer Advisory Circle.

The Vision



To create an Indigenous authored resource for all Torontonians



Offer critical and nuanced perspectives on contemporary Indigenous realities



To honour the unique experiences of newcomers through an Indigenous framework

The Process



Consultation

Fall 2022: Group
Engagement Sessions

Winter 2022-Spring
2023: Individual
Sessions



Advisory Circle

Indigenous and
Newcomer Experts

October 2022 - May 2023



Collaboration

Iterative Co-Authorship

Cyclical Peer Review &
Revision Process

Project Challenges/Barriers

Challenges

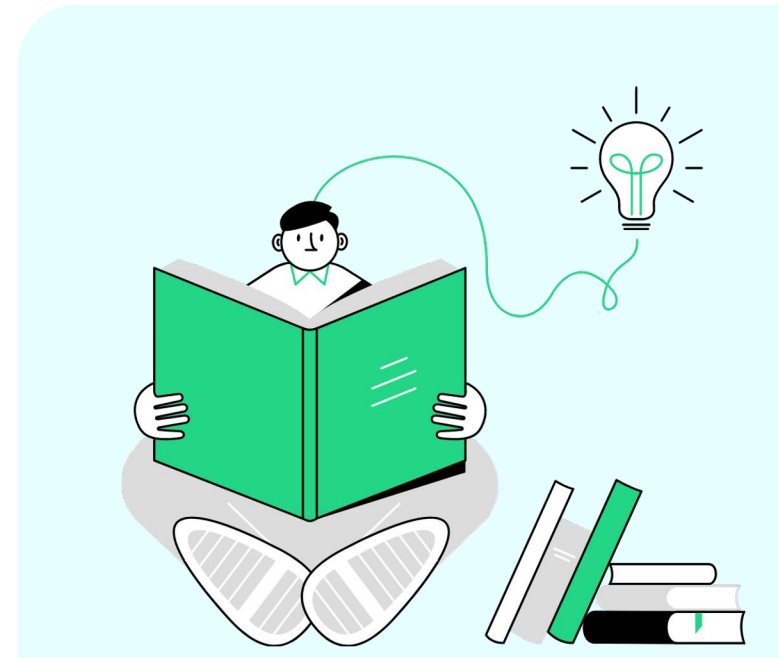
- Limited financial resources.
- Consulting with all relevant stakeholders was challenging given busy schedules and conflicting priorities.
- Creating a resource that provides an honest and authentic history of Canada and Toronto that pays credence to the historical and ongoing legacy of colonialism.
- Designing and creating a resource that addressed the needs and usability requirements of a diverse newcomer population. i.e. accessibility and language barriers.

Addressing Challenges

- Leveraging partnerships and in-kind and financial contributions from them.
- Conducted rolling consultations on the indigenous side and spoke to subject matter experts as content was being developed.
- Relied on the combined lived experience and diverse expertise of our Advisory Circle.
- Creating the complementary facilitator's guide.
- Focused on designing the guide with stylistic elements: interactive and engaging; that we know appeal to English language and lower-level learners.

The Structure

- 01 Introduction
- 02 Indigenous Peoples of the Toronto Region 03
Indigenous History in Toronto
- 04 Contemporary Indigenous Lives
- 05 Cultural Awareness
- 06 Building Relationships



CHAPTER TWO

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE TORONTO REGION

There are three groups of Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada. They are **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit**.

There are more than 630 First Nations communities spread throughout Canada, which represent more than 50 distinct nations. Using the term “nation” means that First Nations were fully independent nations before settler colonisation. Each First Nation community has its own history, culture, and worldview. The Métis people are the descendants of Indigenous women and early European settler men who intermarried in the 1600s. The Métis have a distinct identity, culture, and language. The Inuit are Indigenous peoples from the Arctic of Canada, referred to as Inuit Nunangat (*Ee-noo-eet Noo-nung-uhit*). There are differences among the 53 Inuit communities across Canada, but they have cultural and linguistic similarities. Some Indigenous peoples have family lines going to more than one Indigenous nation.

First Nations

Toronto is located on the traditional territory of three separate alliances of culturally and linguistically related First Nations. These are the three groups mentioned in the City of Toronto Land Acknowledgement: **Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee**.

Wendat:

Wen-daht
(wendæht)

Anishinaabe:

Ah-NI-shi-NAH-beh
(æ nɪʃə nɒbe)

Haudenosaunee:

hoh-DEE-noh-SHoh-nee
(hɒdɪnːɒsɒni)

First Nations

Referring to the original nations in Canada. The members of these nations and their descendants have existed across Canada for thousands of years.

Métis

A person who self-identifies as Métis is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Inuit

A distinct Indigenous people of the north. Inuit means “people” in the Inuit language of Inuktitut.

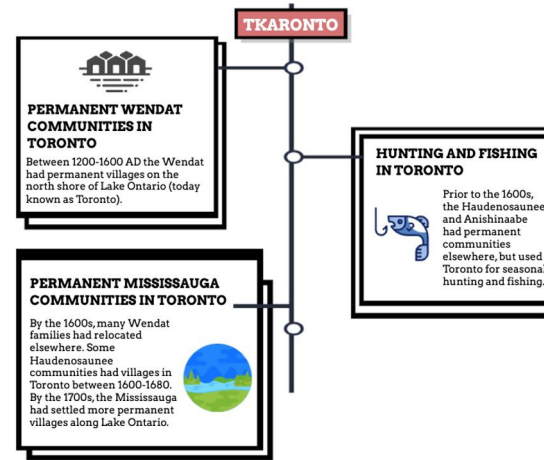
Pre-Contact History

Toronto has been a significant place of history and transformation for many Indigenous nations. Toronto’s access to the Great Lakes is one of the reasons it has an incredibly rich history of bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples together over generations.

Dish with One Spoon: Sharing this Land

Long before Canada was founded, the area that is now Toronto was a busy place. The Wendat Peoples had permanent settlements in the Toronto area. Other Indigenous Peoples including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe used the land mainly for hunting, fishing, and access to trade routes with the Great Lakes.

Such busy waterways and shorelines created concerns over rights and responsibilities to use this region. The Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant was negotiated by the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee. This agreement was made to ensure the sustainability of the Great Lakes region. The agreement outlined how all Indigenous Peoples today and tomorrow could continue to benefit from using this land. It is an agreement to share the lands of the Great Lakes region peacefully and respectfully.



Spotlight

**TO DO
ACTIVITY** 

Download the **First Story app** and plan your own Indigenous walking tour.



Toronto Islands

The Toronto Islands are sacred lands the Mississaugas call *Mnisiing* (*Min-eh-sing*) which means "on the islands". The islands served as a place of healing, ceremony, childbirth, and burial. The islands were also important for food harvesting, hunting, and fishing.

The Wendat Confederacy thrived on the fur trade but contact with Europeans also cost many lives. Approximately 45% of the Wendat population died because of foreign European diseases in the 1630s and 1640s. Weakened and tired from such immense loss, in 1648 and 1649 the Wendat Confederacy was defeated by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This defeat meant that the Wendat People had to leave their traditional territories. Some Wendat People fled east into Quebec to be protected by their French allies from the Haudenosaunee. Today, most of the Wendat community is in Wendake, Quebec, but their ties to Toronto remain strong.

Sketch of a Haudenosaunee woman dancing in traditional regalia, 2023. Reproduced with permission from artist Imani Mitten (Six Nations, ON).

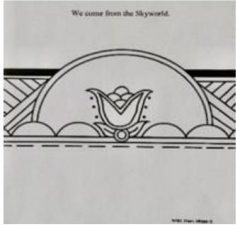


Indigenous Peoples in Toronto 2023 - 17

Six Nations
Colouring Book

Chapter 1: Activity 1

Creation Stories



'We come from the Skyworld'
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Creation or origin stories explain how the world came to be according to the community's spiritual and cultural beliefs. Creation stories are different across communities, though they may share some similarities.

In this activity, students will explore creation stories from two Toronto-area First Nations confederacies introduced in Chapter 2 – the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. The stories will provide background knowledge for Indigenous practices and beliefs students will be introduced to in future chapters.

Teacher Preparation [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Turtle Island](#)
[Creation Story Companion: Cultural Fluency #1](#) (Six Nations Polytech, YouTube 29:31 min)

Key Words Ojibway/Ojibwe (O-jib-wa)
Haudenosaunee (hoh-DEE-noh-SHoh-nee)

Materials Chart Paper

Step-by-Step:

1. Provide information about Turtle Island from the Facilitator Notes (page 6)
2. Show the video [Ojibway Creation Story](#) (YouTube, 7:03 min)
3. Through classroom discussion, identify words to add to the classroom vocabulary list (replay

Facilitator's Guide

Designed for ELL/LINC Instructors to take up the guide with learners

Launch Event for “Indigenous Peoples in Toronto: An Introduction for Newcomers”

Date: July 27, 2023

Attendance: 150 guests

Speeches: Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik, City leadership, and project partners.

Prayers & Remarks: Opening and closing by Indigenous-Newcomer Advisory Circle members.

Performances: Three acts featuring newcomer and Indigenous artists.

Media Coverage: Featured by CityNews, CTV, CBC News, and CBC Radio Canada.





Project Outcomes

- **Indigenous People in Toronto: An Introduction for Newcomers:**
- First-of-its-kind resource in Ontario.
- Selected for inclusion in the 2024/25 Municipal Innovations Chapter book, authored by faculty at York and Western Universities in collaboration with Institute of Public Administration (IPAC).
- Significant uptake across Indigenous-newcomer sectors, City divisions, school boards, ESL/LINC programs, and community.
- Over 6500 copies disseminated, and more than 1500 views of online versions.
- Main resource and Facilitator's Guide available in English and French, main resource also available in Spanish and simplified Chinese.
- Resources accessible online on the City's website and partner websites (OCASI and Access Alliance).
- Led by authors of the resources, more than 400 sector and school board staff have participated in workshop sessions on how best to use the resources.
- The collaborative project that guided the development of these resources is a showcase of multi-sectoral and inter-cultural collaboration underpinned by Indigenous and newcomer leadership and expertise.

Ongoing Efforts

- Continued promotion and dissemination of resources.
- Translation into additional newcomer languages.
- Strengthening relationships with Indigenous partners and communities.
- Providing opportunities for newcomers to engage in dialogue and relationship building with Indigenous Peoples.
- Collaboration with settlement sector and Indigenous partners to implement phase two of the initiative: creating an online self-directed learning platform for settlement sector staff and ESL/LINC instructors.



Thank you!
Nyá:wen
for your time

Muna Gaye - City of Toronto
maimuna.gaye@toronto.ca

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Dr. Kiera Brant-Birioukov
Dr. Anton Birioukov-Brant
For contributing content
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