

Different Aboriginal Groups

Before the early settlers arrived in what is Canada today, there were already many Aboriginal peoples living here. They lived in different geographical regions, each with a different climate and landscape. As a result, different Aboriginal groups developed different ways of life and relied on different resources.

Groupings of Aboriginal Peoples

At the time of initial contact with Europeans like me, there were more than 80 “nations” of Aboriginal peoples. These nations have been categorized by historians into six cultural groups:



- **Northwest Coast**
- **Plateau**
- **Plains**
- **Eastern Woodlands**
- **Subarctic**
- **Arctic**

Different Terms for Aboriginal Peoples

“Aboriginal” is the term for all descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. It is defined by the Constitution Act in 1982 to refer to Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.

“First Nations” is the contemporary term for “Indian”. “Inuit” is the term for Aboriginal peoples in the Arctic. “Métis” is the term used for people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry.

“Native” is also used to refer to all Aboriginal groups, regardless of legal, historical, and political distinctions.

Different Aboriginal Groups

Read the following descriptions about the Aboriginal peoples in Canada and fill in the blanks with the words in the box.

geographical resources climatic
nations Canada Europe Métis
cedar cultural beans



Aboriginal peoples had been living in 1. _____ long before settlers came from 2. _____. There were about 80 3. _____ at the time, spreading all over what is Canada today. Because of geographic and 4. _____ differences, different Aboriginal peoples relied on different 5. _____ and so developed different ways of life. For example, Aboriginal peoples from the Eastern Woodlands used their fertile soil to grow corn, 6. _____, and squash, while those from the Northwest Coast relied on salmon from the ocean and 7. _____ trees from forests. Historians broadly categorize the Aboriginal peoples into six 8. _____ groups according to different 9. _____ regions. In the Constitution Act of 1982, the term “Aboriginal” refers to Indian, Inuit, and 10. _____ peoples of Canada.