

# Terminology Guide: Research on Aboriginal Heritage

# **Contents**

Introduction	. 6
A	. 6
Aboriginal Peoples	. 6
Aboriginal and Treaty Rights	. 6
Aboriginal Title	. 7
American Indian	. 7
Amerindian	. 7
В	. 7
Band	. 7
Band Chief	. 7
Band Council	. 7
Band List	. 7
Band Membership	. 7
Band Number	. 7
Bill C-31, 1985:	.8
Bill C-3, 2010	. 8
Black Series:	. 8
British North America Act, 1867	.8
C	.8
Commutation	.8
Constitution Act, 1982 (formerly the British North America Act, 1867)	.8
Cultural Expressions	.9
Custom(ary)	.9
D	. 9

Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	ent9
1868	9
1869	9
1873	9
1880	9
1883	9
1887	10
1936	10
1949–1950	10
1966	10
1968	10
1978	10
2011	10
E	10
Elder(s)	10
Enfranchised Indian	10
Eskimo	10
Ethnohistory	11
F	11
First Nation(s)	11
First Peoples	11
H	11
Half-breed:	11
Half-caste:	11
1	11
Indian:	11

	Indian Act, 1876:	12
	Indian Affairs Annual Reports:	12
	Indian General List:	12
	Indian Register:	12
	Indian Reserve:	12
	Indian Status:	12
	Indigenous Peoples:	12
	Inuk:	12
	Inuit:	12
	Interest Distribution Pay List(s):	12
L		13
	Land Claim(s):	13
M	Λ	13
	Manitoba Act, 1870:	13
	Manitoba Act, 1870:	
		13
	Manitoba Act Affidavits:	13
	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:	13
	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:  Métis Community:	13 13 13
	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:  Métis Community:  Métis Land Claims:	13 13 14
N	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:  Métis Community:  Métis Land Claims:  Métis Rights:	13131414
N	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:  Métis Community:  Métis Land Claims:  Métis Rights:  Métis Settlement(s):	13 13 14 14 14
N	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:  Métis Community:  Métis Land Claims:  Métis Rights:  Métis Settlement(s):	131314141414
N	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:  Métis Community:  Métis Land Claims:  Métis Rights:  Métis Settlement(s):  Native:	13131414141414
	Manitoba Act Affidavits:  Métis:  Métis Community:  Métis Land Claims:  Métis Rights:  Métis Settlement(s):  Native:  Non-Status Indian:	13131414141414

Off-Reserve:	14
Office of the Federal Interlocutor:	15
Oral History:	15
Oral Tradition:	15
Original White Settler(s):	15
R	15
Red River Colony (Settlement):	15
Red Series:	15
Residential Schools:	15
Reserve:	16
Reservation:	16
Rupert's Land:	16
S	16
School Records:	16
Scrip:	16
Scrip Affidavits:	16
Scrip Application(s):	17
Scrip Commission:	17
Self-determination:	17
Self-government:	17
Senator:	17
Squaw:	17
Staked Claim:	17
Status Indian (Registered Indian):	18
T	18
Treaty:	18

Treaty Annuity Pay List(s):	18
Treaty Indian:	18
Treaty Rights:	18
Tribe:	18
Tribal Council:	18
U	19
(Un)Civilized:	19
Other sources from which content is adapted	19
Endnotes:	20

### Introduction

Seeking an understanding about Aboriginal identity through family histories and genealogy research may be seen as a challenging task in Canada because of what <u>Kesler</u> refers to as two systems of definitions, one based in law and legislation, the other in family tradition and community practice. For example, a researcher will find that documents written at an earlier point in history may use terms, such as "Indian," "Half-breed," and "Eskimo" in ways that may or may not be acceptable to those being referred to, and which have since been replaced by other terms. It is important therefore to recognize that languages have contexts and histories. As cultures change, so do the meanings of words and their usage for a given period, place and culture.

### A

# **Aboriginal Peoples**

A collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982 recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples. "In this Act, 'aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada." These are separate groups, with each having unique and diverse heritage, language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

# **Aboriginal and Treaty Rights**

Rights that some Aboriginal peoples of Canada hold as a result of their ancestors' longstanding use and occupancy of the land. Examples include hunting, trapping and fishing rights on ancestral lands. Aboriginal rights vary from group to group depending on the customs, practices, traditions, treaties and agreements that have formed part of their distinctive cultures. Section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982 states "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed." <sup>iii</sup>

# **Aboriginal Title**

A term that legally recognizes Aboriginal interest in land. It is based on the long-standing use and occupancy of land by Aboriginal peoples as the descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada.

### **American Indian**

A term used in the United States to describe the descendants of the original peoples of North America. Synonyms: North American Indian and Native American.

#### **Amerindian**

A North American Indian.

#### R

#### **Band**

Members of a First Nation or group for whom lands have been set apart, and for whom money is held by the Crown. It is a body of "Indians" declared by the Governor-in-Council to be a Band for the purposes of the *Indian Act*. Many Bands today prefer to be called First Nations and have changed their names accordingly. For example, the Batchewana Band is now called the Batchewana First Nation.

#### **Band Chief**

The leader of a local Band and Band Council. The Chief is elected by eligible voters in the community or members of the Band, by councillors according to the regulations of the *Indian Act*, or sometimes according to Band custom.

### **Band Council**

The governing or administrative body of a Band, elected according to Band custom or procedures specified in the *Indian Act*. It usually consists of a chief and councillors who are elected for two- or three-year terms by eligible voters in the community.

### **Band List**

A list of the members of a particular Band. The list is controlled by the Band and/or maintained by the federal government.

### **Band Membership**

Denoted when a person is recognized as, or entitled to be, part of a Band and whose name appears on an approved Band or First Nation list of members.

### **Band Number**

A federal government-issued identification number assigned to a family or an individual adult living within a Band or First Nation.

### Bill C-31, 1985:

A Bill that changed the "Indian" registration system adopted and maintained by the federal government so that entitlement was no longer based on sexually discriminatory rules. However, the amendments "resulted in a complicated array of categories of Indians and restrictions on status..." which was further challenged. See *Bill C-3*, 2010.

### Bill C-3, 2010

"This bill amends provisions of the *Indian Act* that the Court of Appeal for British Columbia found to be unconstitutional in the case of *McIvor vs. Canada*. The bringing into force of Bill C-3 will ensure that eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of marrying non-Indian men will become entitled to registration (Indian status)." \(^{\mathbb{V}}\)

### **Black Series:**

A series of files that were part of a central registry filing system created by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) between 1872 and 1923. The files, known as the "Red and Black Series," included the incoming and outgoing correspondence at DIA headquarters. The name of each series was based on the colour of the leather letter books used by the records office to distinguish the correspondence between eastern and western Canada. These files have been transferred to Library and Archives Canada for archiving and preservation.

### **British North America Act, 1867**

See Constitution Act, 1982.

 $\mathbf{C}$ 

### **Commutation**

A legal action provided for in the *Indian Act* by which an Indian woman who married a non-Indian relinquished her right to annuities, or any other regular cash payments, by accepting a lump-sum payment, ending her financial connections to a Band. See *Bill C-31*, 1985 *and Bill C-3*, 2010.

# Constitution Act, 1982 (formerly the British North America Act, 1867)

Section 91(24) of the *British North America Act*, 1867 states that legislative authority for "Indians and Lands Reserved for the Indians" rests with the federal government. vi

Section 35 of the repatriated *Constitution Act*, 1982 states the following:

- (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
- (2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
- (3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.
- (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons. vii

### **Cultural Expressions**

Expressions of cultural practice, both traditional and contemporary, that include oral narratives, stories, literature, sounds and music, art and crafts, motifs, names, signs, symbols, performances, architectural design, objects, places and other forms. Aboriginal cultures are expressed as either tangible or intangible and include customs and practices passed on from generation to generation.

# Custom(ary)

A technical term referring to an actual or nominal traditional Aboriginal practice, as opposed to one set out by Canadian law. For example, Band Councils chosen by "custom" are selected or elected by traditional means rather than by the rules contained in the *Indian Act*. However, such customs or customary practices are recognized by the Act.

### D

# **Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development**

The federal department whose mandate is to support Canada's Aboriginal and northern peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) in their efforts to improve social well-being and economic prosperity; develop healthier, more sustainable communities; and participate more fully in Canada's political, social and economic development—to the benefit of all Canadians. The department is responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and for fulfilling the government's constitutional responsibilities in the North. It also works with urban Aboriginal people, Métis and Non-Status Indians (many of whom live in rural areas) through the Office of the Federal Interlocutor. Viii Evolution of the department is as follows:

#### 1868

The Department of the Secretary of State of Canada and the office of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs are created.

#### 1869

Responsibilities of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs are passed to the Secretary of State for the Provinces.

#### 1873

The Secretary of State for the Provinces is abolished. The Department of the Interior is created, and the Minister of the Interior becomes the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.

#### 1880

The Department of Indian Affairs is created by statute in 1880. (The Minister of the Interior continues to be the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.)

#### 1883

Responsibilities of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs are passed to the President of the Privy Council by Order in Council on October 17.

#### 1887

Responsibilities of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs are returned to the Minister of the Interior on October 3 and remain there until 1936.

#### 1936

The offices of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs and the Minister of the Interior are abolished. The office of the Minister of Mines and Resources is created and the Department of Indian Affairs is reduced to Branch status within the Department of Mines and Resources.

#### 1949-1950

The Department of Mines and Resources is abolished and the Indian Affairs Branch is transferred to the newly created Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

#### 1966

The Indian Affairs Branch is transferred to the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is established owing to the passage of the *Government Organization Act*, 1966.

#### 1968

The Indian Affairs Branch within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is dissolved, and the Indian and Eskimo Affairs Program is created.

#### 1978

Within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the name of the Indian and Eskimo Affairs Program is changed to the Indian and Inuit Affairs Program.

#### 2011

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development changes its name to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

### E

# Elder(s)

A term that refers to Aboriginal persons who are respected and consulted because of their wisdom, knowledge, experience, background and insight. It does not necessarily signify age.

### **Enfranchised Indian**

An Indian who lost the right by legal process to Indian Status and Band membership, and became a British subject. The process of enfranchisement was abolished in the 1985 amendment to the *Indian Act*.

#### Eskimo

A term that came into use in the seventeenth century to describe a people inhabiting the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, Alaska and Siberia. It has been replaced by the term "Inuit," which is what the people of these regions prefer to call themselves.

# **Ethnohistory**

The knowledge, study or anthropological interpretation of history, especially the histories of oral societies for which relatively few written records are available. In this process, many different sources of information are compared and interpreted.

F

# First Nation(s)

A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian," which some people found offensive. Among its uses, the term refers to the Status, non-Status and Treaty Indians of Canada. Some Indian peoples have replaced the word "Band" in the name of their community with the term "First Nation," respecting their distinct language, culture, heritage and systems of knowledge. Although "First Nation" is widely used, it has no legal definition.

# **First Peoples**

A collective term used to describe the original peoples of Canada and their descendants.

H

### Half-breed:

A term used almost exclusively by the federal government throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Race served to distinguish between populations or groups when describing an individual who was of mixed ethnicity or "blood."

#### Half-caste:

See Half-breed.

Ī

#### **Indian:**

A term commonly used to describe the hundreds of distinct nations of Aboriginal Peoples throughout North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. It can be traced back to Christopher Columbus in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries during his expeditions to find Asia. Widely used by explorers and missionaries, the term was later adopted by the Government of Canada and incorporated into the *Indian Act*, 1876. It is often used in the context of historical government departments, documents, policies and laws. Indians are one of three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada—Indian (First Nation), Inuit and Métis—according to Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.

### Indian Act, 1876:

The Canadian legislation, first passed in 1876, which defines an Indian in relation to the federal government's fiduciary responsibility as it applies to "Indians" living on-reserve. The Act sets out certain federal obligations and regulates the management of Indian reserve lands, Indian monies and other resources, as well as approves or disallows First Nation bylaws. It has been amended several times, most recently in 1985 with *Bill C-31* and again in 2011 with *Bill C-3* pertaining to identity.

# **Indian Affairs Annual Reports:**

The annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from 1967 to 1990 and those of the Indian Affairs portfolio from 1864 to 1966.

#### **Indian General List:**

A list of all persons registered as Indians in the Indian Register who are not members of a Band.

### **Indian Register:**

A centralized record of all persons registered as Indians in Canada. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is the official federal body in charge of maintaining the Indian Register and Band Lists.

### **Indian Reserve:**

A tract of land, the legal title to which is held by the Crown, set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian Band.

#### **Indian Status:**

A person's legal status as an Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act*.

# **Indigenous Peoples:**

Ethnic groups defined as "indigenous" according to one of several meanings of the term. Historically it refers to the original inhabitants of a territory. For this purpose, the term refers to people classified as indigenous under international law in such documents as the "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." XII

### Inuk:

The singular form of the term "Inuit."

### **Inuit:**

An Inuktitut term, meaning "people" who live in communities across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador) land claim regions. Inuit call this vast region Inuit Nunangat. XIII. Inuit are one of three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada—Indian (First Nation), Inuit and Métis—according to Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.

# **Interest Distribution Pay List(s):**

A list created to record the names of selected members of a Band (generally the heads of families) and the payments of money made to them. However, around 1893, and until the

creation of the Indian Register of 1951, the pay lists also included the names of other members of a Band and the government used these lists as Band membership lists.

L

# Land Claim(s):

A term originally used by Aboriginal peoples in the late 1960s to describe their right to ownership over, and compensation for, lands they traditionally occupied. In 1973, the Government of Canada recognized two broad classes of First Nation land claims—comprehensive and specific—and adopted these in the Land Claims Policy of 1974. XIV Comprehensive claims, which are wide in scope, are based on the assessment that there may be continuing Aboriginal rights to lands and natural resources. Specific claims deal with precise grievances regarding the fulfillment of treaties and relating to the administration of lands and assets under the *Indian Act*.

M

### Manitoba Act, 1870:

A statute that established Manitoba as a Province in the Dominion of Canada after months of tension between the Canadian and Provisional Government established by Louis Riel and the Métis. The Act protected specific rights of residents in the Red River Settlement. It granted 1.4 million acres of land to the Métis as a result of negotiations. The Act was given constitutional status by the Imperial Parliament via the *British North America Act*, 1871.

### **Manitoba Act Affidavits:**

Section 31 of the *Manitoba Act*, 1870 required Métis individuals to make an application, in the form of an affidavit, to the commissioners appointed by the government.<sup>xv</sup> An affidavit is a written statement or declaration confirmed under oath before an authorized official, for use as evidence in court. These documents provide such information as the claimant's name, date of birth, names of parents, children and affiliated parish. See *Manitoba Act*, 1870.

#### **Métis:**

A term defined by the Métis National Council as one who self-identifies as Métis, who is distinct from First Nation and Inuit, who is of historic Métis Nation ancestry and accepted by and belonging to a Métis community. The Métis are one of three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada—Indian (First Nation), Inuit and Métis—according to Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.

# **Métis Community:**

A group of Métis people who live in, or who have come from, the same geographic area. A community may include more than one settlement, town or village in an area.

### **Métis Land Claims:**

A complex series of legislation, beginning with the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, providing for the settlement of claims arising from Aboriginal rights to land in western Canada.

# **Métis Rights:**

The Supreme Court of Canada, in the 2003 case of *R. vs. Powley*, affirms and recognizes that Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982 "is a substantive promise to the Métis that recognizes their distinct existence and protects their existing Aboriginal rights." xvi

### **Métis Settlement(s):**

Broadly applied, a Métis settlement is a small village settled by the Métis, such as Batoche, Saskatchewan. More formally, the term refers to the eight Alberta Métis settlements. These settlements are the only recognized Métis Nation land base in Canada.

### N

### **Native:**

A term that refers to a person of Aboriginal ancestry, indigenous to the land. It can be used synonymously with Indian or Métis.

#### **Non-Status Indian:**

A person who identifies as an Indian or member of a First Nation or Band but is not entitled, for various reasons, to registration under the *Indian Act* of the federal government.

### **Northwest Territories:**

The territory created in 1870 when the Hudson's Bay Company transferred Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory to the Government of Canada.

#### 0

#### On-Reserve:

A term used to describe First Nations living on a reserve for which the Crown has jurisdiction over and a fiduciary responsibility.

#### Off-Reserve:

A term used to describe First Nations who live away from their original home, territory or reserve. It may also refer to services or objects that are not part of the reserve or territory but relate to First Nations.

### Office of the Federal Interlocutor:

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development serves as the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. The Federal Interlocutor helps to find practical ways to improve federal programs and services for Métis, Non-Status Indians and urban Aboriginal people.

# **Oral History:**

A historical account memorized or recorded from the spoken words of people who have knowledge of past peoples, places, events and cultural traditions.

### **Oral Tradition:**

The verbal transmission of a people's cultural heritage, history, stories and accounts passed on from generation to generation through narratives, songs, chants, music, literature and other forms.

# **Original White Settler(s):**

A term applied to the residents of the Province of Manitoba who came into the Red River Settlement between 1813 and 1835 under the auspices of Lord Selkirk. It also applied to the children of these residents. \*\*xvii\*\*

#### R

# **Red River Colony (Settlement):**

A settlement area on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in what is now Manitoba and North Dakota, founded in 1812 by the Earl of Selkirk. In 1811 the Hudson's Bay Company granted Selkirk some 300,000 km² of the land it had claimed in the Winnipeg Basin, which he called Assiniboia.

#### **Red Series:**

A series of files that were part of a central registry filing system created by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) between 1872 and 1923. The files, known as the "Red and Black Series," included incoming and outgoing correspondence at DIA headquarters. The name of each series was based on the colour of the leather letter books used by the records office to distinguish the correspondence between eastern and western Canada. These files have been transferred to Library and Archives Canada for archiving and preservation.

### **Residential Schools:**

A variety of institutions that include industrial schools, boarding schools and student residences, initially developed in New France by Catholic missionaries to provide care and schooling. The federal government and churches developed a system of residential schools in Canada stretching from Nova Scotia to the Arctic from the 1830s onward. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children. In 1884 the *Indian Act* was amended to include compulsory residential school attendance for Status Indians under age 16. By the 1940s it was determined by both the government and most missionary bodies that the schools were ineffective, and Native protests helped to secure a

change in policy. In 1969 it was decided to close the residential schools, and the last school, located in Saskatchewan, was closed in 1996. \*\*

#### **Reserve:**

A tract of land, the legal title to which is held by the Crown, set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian Band or First Nation. Some Bands or First Nations have more than one reserve.

### **Reservation:**

Land set aside by the U.S. government for the use and occupation of a group of Native Americans. The term does not apply in Canada.

# **Rupert's Land:**

In 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company was granted a charter by King Charles II establishing a trading monopoly over territory consisting of the Hudson Bay drainage basin. This represents the land with rivers that drain into Hudson's Bay including parts of Quebec and Ontario, all of Manitoba, most of Saskatchewan and southern Alberta, and parts of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

S

### **School Records:**

Files that contain information such as a pupil's name, age, gender, Band number, religion, medical examinations, grade of enrolment, level achieved, parents' names, agent's recommendation, and even police report in the case of truants or runaways.

# Scrip:

A term used to describe "a certificate, voucher, etc. issued either as land scrip or money scrip, establishing the bearer's right to something." Section 125 of the *Dominion Lands Act*, 1879, made a provision to:

Satisfy any claims existing in connection with the extinguishment of the Indian title, preferred by the half-breeds resident in the North-West Territories outside of the limits of Manitoba, on the fifteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and seventy, by granting land to such persons, to such extent and on such terms and conditions as may be deemed expedient. \*\*XIII

In 1883, Section 125 of the *Dominion Lands Act* was amended to include Métis people, who had been resident in the Northwest Territories prior to 15 July 1870, in the distribution of scrip. \*\*xiii\* The Government of Canada offered land scrip and money scrip, issued in coupons, or pieces of paper that resembled paper money that could be redeemed at the Dominion Lands Office.

# **Scrip Affidavits:**

See Manitoba Act Affidavits.

# Scrip Application(s):

A document constituting the first step in a Métis person's claim to scrip. Similar to Manitoba Act Affidavits, it asked questions about the Métis claimant's family, occupation and residence thereby providing genealogical, geographical, occupational and economic information on the historical Métis population.

# **Scrip Commission:**

A term to describe one of eleven Half-breed Scrip Commissions set up in 1885. Each dealt with the claims of Métis people who, on or before July 15, 1870, were living in territory that had since been ceded to the government by treaties with First Nations.

### **Self-determination:**

A term introduced to gradually replace the term, "self-government." The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's Community-Based Self-Government Policy of 1984 was perceived as more of a municipal government model and did not fully recognize the authoritative powers to the extent envisioned and asserted by many Aboriginal peoples.

# **Self-government:**

A term originally conceived and used by Aboriginal peoples in the late 1970s to describe their right to govern their own affairs. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development adopted the term and applied it to the Community-Based Self-Government Policy of 1984. Such a government is designed, established and administered by Aboriginal peoples under the Canadian Constitution through a process of negotiation with Canada and, where applicable, the provincial government.\*

#### **Senator:**

A highly respected individual whose knowledge, values and experience is recognized within Métis communities. Senators are designated to share their knowledge, culture and traditions with members of their communities and the general public.

#### Squaw:

A phonetic rendering of an Algonkian word meaning the totality of being female. Other variants are *squa*, *esqua*, *skwa* and *skwe*. Historically the word "squaw" has been misused by non-Algonkian speakers. However, traditional use is seen in other related words like *nidobaskwa* (a female friend), *manigebeskwa* (a woman of the words), or *Squaw Sachem* (a female chief).\*\* Also related is *Iskwekwak--Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak* (neither Indian princesses nor squaw drudges).\*\*\*

# **Staked Claim:**

A term often used in departmental correspondence to refer to river lots claimed by Manitoba Métis. The lots were generally located along the Rat, Salle and Seine Rivers and were marked "...by the planting of two posts on the front of the lot near the bank of the river, one post for each limit...." Since the locations were staked before the implementation of legal surveys by the Department of the Interior, the legal recognition of staked claims became a major issue between the federal government and Métis leaders. The federal government established several Half-breed Scrip Commissions to deal with this issue. \*xxvii\*

### **Status Indian (Registered Indian):**

A person entitled to have his or her name included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Certain criteria determine who can be registered as a Status Indian. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the *Indian Act*, which defines an Indian as "a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian." Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law. \*xxviii\*

### T

### **Treaty:**

A formal, ratified agreement or contract usually made between two nations, such as those between Aboriginal peoples and governments.

# **Treaty Annuity Pay List(s):**

A list created to record the names of selected members of a Band (generally the heads of families) and the payments of money made to them. Around 1893, and until the creation of the Indian Register of 1951, pay lists also included the names of other members of a Band and the government used these lists as Band membership lists.

# **Treaty Indian:**

A Status Indian who is recognized by or belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown.

# **Treaty Rights:**

The specific rights of the Aboriginal peoples embodied in the treaties they entered into with the Crown, initially Great Britain and after Confederation, Canada. They often address matters such as the creation of reserves and the rights of Aboriginal communities to hunt, fish and trap on Crown lands. Treaty rights are protected by section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982. See Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. \*xxix\*

### Tribe:

A group of Native Americans sharing a common language and culture. The term is frequently used in the United States but only rarely in Canada. An example of this is the Blood Tribe in Alberta.

### **Tribal Council:**

A regional group made up of members of several Bands or First Nations and representing their respective interests. The Council administers funds or delivers common services to the group such as health, financial, educational, social or technical services. Membership in a Tribal Council tends to be organized around geographic, political, or cultural and linguistic lines.

# (Un)Civilized:

A term that can be traced back in literature to the logs of explorers and missionaries (later incorporated into the texts of anthropologists and Canadian government bureaucratic and legislative texts). It carries connotations of "violent unstructured peoples" with little or no social organization, who are far less refined than Europeans and, in the missionary context, people who are not un-Christian. \*xxx\*

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