

CLASSIFYING THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF CANADA

- A. There are many ways to classify the native peoples of Canada. One of them is to use three broad categories:
1. Indians – members of an Indian band;
 2. Métis – people of mixed native and European ancestry;
 3. Inuit – Arctic dwellers, formerly called Eskimos.
- B. Another way to classify the native peoples is according to the languages they spoke. Their 53 different languages can be grouped into a few language families, but this is not too helpful since people who spoke the same language did not always live the same way and people who lived the same way often spoke different languages.
- C. The way the original native peoples of Canada are usually grouped for study purposes is based on their geographical locations, because people who lived in a particular location usually shared many things in common. The native peoples did not recognize our national or provincial boundaries; indeed, these did not exist during the early history of our continent. Many of the events of our history involved native peoples from present day United States and most of the categorical groups listed below extended into that part of the continent. It is important to understand those as well, because they will be included in our study of Chapter 10. Canada's original native peoples are often grouped into the following six or seven categories. At the end of this chapter in the Canadian Supplement, you will find a map of Canada showing these geographical areas. For more detail as to where individual tribes were located, you may look for maps in other books, like *The Story of Canada*, *An Illustrated History of Canada*, and *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation*.
1. Arctic – the Inuit (formerly called Eskimos), who spoke variations of a single language. The map on pages 16 and 17 of *The Story of Canada* further breaks the Inuit category down into locations showing the "Mackenzie Delta Inuit," "Caribou Inuit," etc.
 2. Northeast – comprised of two major groups:
 - a. Eastern Woodlands Farmers – who spoke the Iroquoian language. They were the only native peoples of Canada who depended mostly on the produce from their farms. They lived in longhouses in protected villages in present-day Ontario and New York.
 - b. Eastern Woodlands Hunters – who spoke variations of the Algonquian language. In Canada, they lived in small bands in the forests of Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces and moved about in canoes and toboggans or dog teams. They fished and hunted for their food, and traded with their southern neighbours for farm produce. They also gathered wild rice.
 3. Northwest Coast – who spoke nineteen distinct languages, including the Tlingit and Tsimshian language families. They lived in villages near river mouths and harbours, and ate a great variety of food including fish. They used large dugout canoes to move around. They are known for their potlatches and woodcarving skills.

4. Plains -- who spoke Algonquian, Athapaskan, or Siouan. They hunted buffalo and used every part of the animal in their daily life, making everything from tipis (using the hide) to fuel (using the dung). There is an excellent section on this in *The Story of Canada*, pages 114-118.
5. Plateau -- who spoke Kootenayan, Salishan or Athapaskan. They lived between the Rocky Mountains and the Coast Mountains in partly underground pit houses. They ate fish, game and plants they gathered.
6. Subarctic -- who spoke variations of the Athapaskan language for the most part. They lived in birchbark wigwams and many followed the caribou as it was their main meat supply.