

## All About Indigenous Peoples

### Instructions:

- *Please highlight/underline/circle the words you do not know the meaning of.*
- *Sign onto the Flip (link on the blog) and record yourself reading the following information!*
- *Please write down two reflections and two questions you have about Indigenous culture.*

Indigenous peoples are the people of native tribes who lived in Canada before Europeans came here. We use the term "Indigenous" because these nations were here long before Canada became a country. Indigenous peoples have many cultures and some of the cultures are very different from others - just like ours!

**Culture:** There are currently over 600 recognized Indigenous governments or bands across Canada with distinctive cultures, languages, art, and music. We have certain days of the year to celebrate Indigenous peoples and communities. For example, *National Indigenous Peoples Day* on June 21st and *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation* on September 30th. These days recognize the cultures and contributions of Indigenous peoples of Canada. These important days also draw attention to the injustices Indigenous communities have endured for generations.

**Food:** Foods such as game meat like bison or elk, freshwater fish including salmon and trout, root vegetables, wild rice, maple, corn, local berries and various teas are all either traditional Indigenous foods or originated in Canada with roots in Indigenous cuisines, and are eaten widely throughout the country.

**Languages:** Today, there are over thirty different languages spoken by indigenous people, most of which are spoken only in Canada. Many are in decline. Those with the most speakers include Anishinaabe and Cree (together totalling up to 150,000 speakers). Many Aboriginal peoples have lost their native languages and often all but surviving elders speak English or French as their first language.

**Art:** Indigenous peoples were producing art for thousands of years before the arrival of European settler colonists and the eventual establishment of Canada as a country. Indigenous art consists of symbols. These symbols were used as a means of communication; communication of their lives on earth, their rituals, food, customs and also to show constellations and for ritual decorations. These works were almost always ceremonial or religious.

**Music:** Indigenous peoples of Canada are made up of diverse groups, each with their own musical traditions. There are similarities in the music, but it is usually social (public) or ceremonial (private). Public, social music may be dance music accompanied by rattles and drums. Private, ceremonial music includes vocal songs with accompaniment on percussion, used to mark occasions like Sun Dances. Traditionally, Indigenous peoples used the materials at hand to make their instruments for centuries before Europeans immigrated to Canada. Indigenous peoples made gourds and animal horns into rattles, which were elaborately carved and beautifully painted. In woodland areas, they made horns of birch bark and drumsticks of carved antlers and wood. Traditional percussion instruments such as drums were generally made of carved wood and animal hides. These musical instruments provide the background for songs, and songs are the background for dances. Traditional Indigenous peoples consider song and dance to be sacred. For years after Europeans came to Canada, Indigenous peoples were forbidden to practice their ceremonies.