



TLDSB 2026 Student Census Glossary and support information

The information and definitions shared in this glossary are not intended to be the answers to all questions you may have about identity and diversity. This material should be seen as a resource to allow for a deeper understanding of the complex and nuanced ideas that are explored through the Student Census.

Language(s) first spoken

Please note, the list provided represents the languages most frequently spoken by students in the TLDSB (but it is not complete).

The open-ended box has been provided in order to ensure that all students/parents have the opportunity to self-identify their/their child's first language.

If a student first learned to speak a First Nations, Métis (Michif), or Inuit, a follow up question will allow them to identify the language more specifically.

Indigenous identity

First Nations, Métis (Michif) and Inuit, refer to the three main groups of peoples who are the traditional inhabitants of this land. It is important to remember that First Nations, Métis (Michif), and Inuit each have their own culture and have significant diversity within and across their communities, based largely on the environment they traditionally inhabited and their lived histories.

Definition of First Nation

"First Nation" is a term used to describe the Indigenous peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s and '80s and generally replaced the term "Indian," although unlike "Indian," the term "First Nation" does not have a legal definition. While "First Nations" refers to the ethnicity of First Nations Peoples, the singular "First Nation" can refer to a band, a reserve-based community, or a larger tribal grouping and the "status-Indians" who live in them. (as sourced from [UBC Indigenous Foundation](#)):

"Indian Status" refers to a specific legal identity of an Aboriginal person in Canada. *"Status Indians"* are registered under the Indian Act on the Indian Register— a central registry maintained by [Indigenous Services Canada](#).

"Non-status" First Nations people without status under the Indian Act remain legally unrecognized as Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government... However, status



and non-status Indians also share many common concerns – displacement from their ancestral homelands and their traditional ways of life, socio-economic challenges, a desire to practice their own cultures and traditions and to determine their own identities and futures.

Note: for the purpose of this Student Census “Status” and “Non-Status” are considered together for Indigenous Identity.

National definition of Métis

- 1.1 - "Métis" means 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.
- 1.2 - "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland.
- 1.3 - "Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-breeds as they were then known.
- 1.4 - "Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" within the meaning of s.35 of the Constitution Act 1982.
- 1.5 - "Distinct from other Aboriginal peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.

(as sourced from the [Métis Nation of Ontario](#))

Information about Inuit

Inuit are an Indigenous people living primarily in Inuit Nunangat. The term “Inuit Nunangat” is a Canadian Inuit term that includes land, water, and ice. Inuit consider the land, water, and ice, of their homeland to be integral to their culture and way of life.

The majority of Inuit live in 51 communities spread across Inuit Nunangat. They have lived in their homeland since time immemorial. Inuit communities are among the most culturally resilient in North America. Roughly 60 percent of Inuit report an ability to conduct a conversation in Inuktitut (the Inuit language). There are four Inuit regions in Canada: Inuvialuit (NWT and Yukon), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), Nunatsiavut



(Labrador), and Nunavut. (as sourced from [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#))

There are many urban Inuit across Canada, including significant populations in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and St. John's. (as sourced from [Tungasuvvingat Inuit](#)).

Status in Canada (Immigration Status)

We recognize that many Indigenous people refer to the landmass of North America as Turtle Island, which reflects a holistic view of land and kinship. For the purpose of the census Canada is defined as the ten provinces and three territories which extend from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean and into the Arctic Ocean. Combining this information provides an inclusive opportunity for Indigenous Families to identify their status in Canada.

A Canadian Citizen is Canadian by birth (either born in Canada or born outside Canada to a Canadian citizen who was themselves either born in Canada or granted citizenship) or has applied for a grant of citizenship and has received Canadian citizenship (naturalization).

An international student is a temporary resident who is legally authorized to study in Canada on a temporary basis. With a few exceptions, foreign students must get a study permit if they are taking a course of studies that will last for more than six months.

A landed immigrant/permanent resident is a person who has legally immigrated to Canada and has acquired permanent resident status, but is not yet a Canadian citizen. *Permanent residents will usually have a 'Permanent Resident Card' with their photo and name on it (these are often multi-coloured, but mostly a light bluish colour).*

A refugee claimant is a person who has applied for refugee protection status while in Canada and is waiting for a decision on his/her claim from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

Ethnic origin

Ethnic origin refers to a person's ethnic or cultural origins. Ethnic groups usually have a shared identity, heritage, ancestry, or historical past. They often have a similar culture, language and/or religion.

The list in the Student Census includes many of the most common ethnic and cultural identities according to the most recent Canadian student census. However, we know



that everyone is unique and that this list does not include all the different identities of all our students. If students have an ethnic or cultural identity that is not listed, they should be encouraged to select “Ethnicity(ies) not listed (please specify)”: and to type in their identity into the box provided. They can select more than one option.

The list includes countries, regions, and cultural backgrounds with which many people, their families, and/or ancestors will identify. Some identities are associated with individual countries, whereas others include people from many different countries. As needed, please support students as they try to select choices that best reflect their identity.

Below you will find details and clarification for some of the ethnic and cultural identities listed in the Student Census.

Acadian - Individuals of Acadian heritage are the descendants of French settlers who arrived in the area now known as Nova Scotia in the early 1600s.

East Indian - Most individuals of Indian descent will not identify as “East Indian.” The addition of ‘East’ to describe people of Indian descent is still used in these types of questions to avoid confusion with the outdated (but legally still active) use of the term “Indian” to describe the Indigenous people of Canada.

Jewish - Individuals of Jewish heritage and/or followers of Judaism. Jewish people have inhabited many regions around the globe for centuries.

Race

In our society, people are often described by their race or racial background. For example, some people are considered “White” or “Black” or “East Asian,” etc. It is important to be aware that within each of these options there is a lot of diversity (including what many might consider to be different racial groups within each category provided).

Religion, Creed, spiritual affiliation, or belief

This question includes most major world religions, but it is worth noting that there may be denominations within each religion that students may wish to specify (they may use the open text box for that).

Non-catholic christian denominations are quite diverse and may include: Protestant denominations (Evangelical, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Mennonites, United, Charismatic, Adventist), Jehovah’s



Witnesses, Mormons (Latter Day Saints), Eastern Orthodox, Christian Science, and any other Christian identity or group that does not identify as Catholic.

Indigenous spirituality (adapted from the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)): While Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices can vary significantly among different First Nation, Métis and Inuit groups and individuals, and across different regions, some common elements are shared across many communities. For example, many Indigenous people describe Indigenous Spirituality as a “way of life” and “way of knowing” (or worldview) that was centered on a relationship with the Creator, the land and “all our relations.” This often includes all other beings and forms of life, including what are commonly perceived as inanimate objects, which were generally seen to be imbued with a spirit or soul. Many Indigenous people describe Indigenous Spirituality as being inseparable from their traditional Indigenous culture and identity.

Gender identity and sexual orientation

Gender identity is a person’s individual sense of being a boy/man, a girl/woman, both, neither or having another identity on the gender spectrum. A person’s gender identity may be different from the sex that was identified for them when they were born (such as female, intersex, or male). For more information about gender identities, you can read the [Ontario Public Service Glossary on Gender Identity](#).

For some students and parents/guardians, gender identity is a sensitive or confusing topic. Teachers are not expected to explain or define different identities for students, but to answer questions students may have to the best of their ability and to support students in selecting the gender identity that applies to them most accurately. The image of the [Genderbread Person](#) (pg 15 of the Positive Space Resource) may provide further information related to questions about gender identity.

Two-spirit - Some Indigenous people identify themselves as two-spirit rather than as bisexual, gay, lesbian, or transgender. Historically, in many Indigenous cultures, two-spirit persons were respected leaders and medicine people with specific roles in communities. Before colonization, two-spirit persons were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives. It is important to note that to identify as Two-Spirit, one must understand and identify with the Indigenous heritage and the responsibility of holding this identity. Being an Indigenous person who identifies as a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, does not necessarily mean that someone is a Two-Spirit person.



The question on sexual orientation is only asked on the Grade 7 - 12 Student Census.

Sexual orientation is a personal characteristic that forms part of who you are. It covers the range of feelings and expressions related to an individual's romantic and/or physical attractions. Sexual orientation is distinct from an individual's gender identity.

Once again, you may find the [Genderbread Person](#) (pg 15 of the Positive Space Resource) to be a useful resource for questions related to sexual orientation.

Disability, chronic health issue, or exceptionality

Some people identify as having a disability because of a permanent or long-term health condition that makes it difficult for them to function in an environment that is not fully inclusive and accessible. A person's disability may be diagnosed or not diagnosed. It may be hidden or visible. Some students who have disabilities may have a special plan at school to help them (an Individual Education Plan or IEP), but some do not.

A disability may be physical, mental, behavioural, developmental, sensory, communicational or a combination of any of these. Barriers such as settings that are hard to access (like school, shops or public places), negative attitudes, and barriers to information contribute to a person's experience of having a disability.

For more information on about human rights and disabilities, you may wish to refer to information shared by the Ontario Human Rights Commission:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability>

School safety and belonging

The questions on school safety and belonging will help to link student census data with information we typically gather in the climate survey. For students in Grade 7 - 12, the student census asks questions about how safe they feel in a variety of locations. For the purpose of the census "outdoors" refers to any space on school property outside of the main building. This would not include how they feel if they walked into town at lunchtime.

Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status is a measure of an individual's or family's combined economic and social position, typically determined by income, education, occupation, and wealth. It is used to assess quality of life, access to resources, and to identify disparities in health and social outcomes. reflecting availability of opportunities and resources.