



Members of A Tribe Called Red. Photo by Pat Bolduc, www.atribecalledred.com



Aboriginal Identity

People define who they are in many different ways. Answering the simple question, “Who are you?” can be more complicated than it first appears. However, when thinking about or referring to groups of people such as students, teachers, newcomers or Aboriginal people, this complexity can tend to get lost. Too often when people think about a group, they don’t consider the individual identities of each of its members. This can lead to the use of stereotypes and cause many misunderstandings. In this unit, explore some common stereotypes and misconceptions of Aboriginal People, learn where these stereotypes may have come from and why they are still so prevalent today. You will find out more about Aboriginal peoples’ lives, aspirations and accomplishments to get a better understanding of who these people actually are.

Reflect

Brainstorm

You will have 1–2 minutes to introduce yourself to a group of your classmates. It is ok if you already know each other. Brainstorm what you are going to say and make a couple of notes on the mind map below. When everyone is ready, take turns introducing yourselves.



Where does our identity come from?

After everyone has had a chance to introduce themselves, discuss the following questions.

1. How many people in your group talked about their **personal identity**? For example, how many people said things such as, “I’m kind. I’m intelligent. I’m funny. I’m healthy.” Take a moment to describe your personal identity to your group if you haven’t already.
2. How many people in your group talked about their **actions**? For example, did anyone say things such as, “I like to run. I play the piano. I read a lot. I enjoy playing video games.” Take a moment to describe some of your hobbies to your group if you haven’t already.
3. How many people in your group talked about their **social identity**? For example, how many people said things such as, “I’m a student. I’m a teacher. I’m Canadian. I’m a parent.” Take a moment to describe your social identity to your group if you haven’t already.
4. How many people in your group talked about the **places that identify them** or the **places that they are connected to**? For example, did anyone say things such as “I’m from China. I’m from Tehran. I live in Vancouver.” Take a moment to tell your group about some of the places you feel connected to and why you feel this way if you haven’t already.
5. Based on the information you shared when introducing yourselves and your answers to the questions above, how would you define identity?
6. Where does a person’s identity come from?
7. What are some of the factors that can lead to a person’s identity shifting or changing?



UCCA, 93.049/21 Billy Williams in full Haida regalia, Haida Gwaii / Miss Blackwood, From Mission to Partnership Collection, 19--.



UCCA, 86.158/20 Graduates of Alberni Indian Residential School, 1960, Alberni / United Church of Canada Board of Home Missions, 1960.



Vancouver 2010 Olympics - First Nation Performers at the Aboriginal Pavillion. Courtesy of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Imagine

Read

Read the article and discuss the questions in a small group.

In order to truly understand Aboriginal identity, a person would have to meet and spend time with each Aboriginal person who lives here in Canada. Of course, that is not possible. However, it is possible to learn about Aboriginal culture and people as well as the many different factors that have influenced their lives and other Canadians' perceptions of them. Some of these factors include the Canadian governments' attitudes and policies toward Aboriginal people since first contact, the portrayal of Aboriginal people in popular media, and the many stereotypes and misconceptions about Aboriginal people. By understanding these factors, and learning more about Aboriginal people, we can get a better understanding of Aboriginal identity. So, perhaps let's start with a little bit of history.

Imagine a group of people come to settle on your land. They look and act very different from you. They have a different culture and a different belief system. They have a different economic system and a different political system. They speak a different language. They educate their children in a different way. They punish their criminals in a different way. Over time more and more of these people come to your land and begin to settle, and this migration begins to bring dramatic changes to your way of life. The newcomers bring many interesting items with them that you have never seen before, and so you begin to trade goods with them. Unfortunately, they also bring with them many unfamiliar diseases that your immune system cannot handle, so many of your family members and friends die. Soon the leaders of these people decide that the land is now theirs, and they institute, or introduce, an unfamiliar political system to run "their new country." They give your traditional territory away to other newcomers, leaving you and your community with only a small piece of land to live on. The newly formed government decides that in this "new" country there is no place for your culture, traditions or language. They begin to refer to you and your people and all of the other First Peoples from the different nations by one name. They believe that your way of life is inferior to theirs, and so the best thing for you is to become exactly like them. They decide that they will "help" you become more like them by sending your children to faraway schools for at least 10 months of the year. At these schools, your children learn the language, belief system and culture of these newcomers. The children are made to believe that your way of life is strange and primitive and that it is best to forget it. The government makes it illegal for you to keep your children away from these schools, so many generations of children are sent away. It also creates

"Aboriginal people face a unique contradiction by being defined as a minority group in their own country. Aboriginal people did not have to immigrate to a different cultural context thinking they might have to change their ways in order to fit into the new environment. In fact, the very country in which they originated suddenly became foreign to them."

(Friesen & Friesen, 2005, p. 160)

laws that make it illegal for you to keep your traditional political and economic systems, to practice your traditional beliefs or to wear your traditional clothes. Over time your culture, your language, and your way of life is slowly forgotten by many of your people. Eventually, there are many more newcomers than your own people, but you and your community continue to work hard to try to keep your culture and your language alive. After many generations, some of the descendants of these newcomers begin to realize that the laws that their ancestors had created were unfair and wrong. They realize that sending your children away to residential schools was a grave mistake. They know that prohibiting you and your people from practicing your cultural traditions was wrong. They want to make amends. However, others who are living on your traditional territory today know very little about these laws, this history or the many impacts it has had on your people.

Discuss

Discuss the following questions in small groups.

1. How might you have felt when these newcomers first came to your land?
2. Along with trading goods, what other types of interactions do you think your people might have had with these newcomers?
3. Why do you think the newcomers' government wanted to create laws to prevent your people from practicing your cultural traditions?
4. Why do you think the newcomers' government decided to send your children away to residential schools?
 - How do you think these laws and decisions might have affected your community?
5. How do you think these events might have impacted the identity of your people?

The reading and questions above ask you to imagine these events and put yourself and your family in these situations because these are some of the events and situations that Aboriginal people in Canada have experienced since the arrival of Europeans to their traditional territories. Without understanding this history, it is impossible to understand Aboriginal identity because this history has played a huge role in shaping the lives of Aboriginal people. Without understanding this history, it is impossible to truly appreciate the strength and resilience of Aboriginal cultures, communities and individuals.

Consider

Before you listen

There are many words used to refer to Aboriginal people in Canada. Do you know the difference? Work with your group. Discuss the different meaning and use of each of the following words. (Note: Some words have a similar meaning but are used differently.)

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**Aboriginal
Indian**

**Native
First Nation**

**Inuit
Métis**

Listen and check

Listen and take notes on the meaning and use of these terms.



What's in a name?: <http://youtu.be/ZPtcKOtvm4>

Word	Term
Aboriginal	
Indian	
Native	
First Nation	
Métis	
Inuit	

Check your understanding

Using your notes write answers to the following questions. When you are finished compare your answers with a partner.

1. Which term is currently considered to be the most appropriate to use when talking about Canada's indigenous peoples?
2. Which term do many indigenous people find offensive? Why do they feel this way?
3. What is the difference between First Nations and Métis?
4. Which Indigenous people live in Northern Canada?

Vocabulary in Context

The following words are from the listening. Read through the words and the definitions and match as many as you can without using a dictionary. Then, listen again and try to use the context to work out the meaning of any new words.

New Vocabulary

1. ___ connotation
2. ___ assimilate
3. ___ primitive
4. ___ inferior
5. ___ absorb
6. ___ aspect
7. ___ distinction
8. ___ heritage
9. ___ ancestry
10. ___ contentious

Definitions

- A. very simple, not advanced or developed
- B. difference, dissimilarity
- C. the meaning suggested by a particular word
- D. the people in your family a long time ago
- E. not as good as something or someone else, having a lower quality, rank or status
- F. likely to cause people to be angry or upset
- G. to become part of a community or society by adopting its culture
- H. a feature or part of something
- I. to take something in so it becomes part of something else
- J. traditions, beliefs that are part of the history of a group of people

Discussion

In a small group, discuss the following questions.

1. What are some terms used to refer to people who have immigrated to Canada?
2. Are there any positive or negative connotations associated with these terms? If so, what are they?
3. Where do you think these connotations might come from?
4. Recently the term “newcomer” is being used more and more to refer to people who have immigrated to Canada. Why do you think this is?

Stories

Discuss

Work in a small group. Discuss the following question. Take notes on your answers.

What do you know about Canada's Aboriginal people?

How do you know?

How do you know this information about Aboriginal people? Put a check mark next to all of the people, places and things that you have gotten this information from.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV | <input type="checkbox"/> your neighbourhood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> movies | <input type="checkbox"/> a friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> a classmate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the radio | <input type="checkbox"/> a family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> magazines | <input type="checkbox"/> a teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> books | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the internet | <input type="checkbox"/> an Aboriginal person |

If you did not get your information from an Aboriginal person, it is quite possible that what you think you know comes more from stereotypes and misinformation than reality.



Barbara Bedford & Alan Roscoe in *The Last of the Mohicans*.
For Wikimedia. Released under CC-by-SA-3.0



Pocahontas. Photo by Jeff Nickel for Flickr.
Released under CC-by-NC-SA-2.0

Before you Read

Work in a small group. Discuss the following questions.

Describe the images of Aboriginal people or characters that you have seen in TV programs, in the news, in advertisements and in movies.

1. What did the characters look like?
2. What were they wearing?
3. Which adjectives would you use to describe their appearance and personality?
4. What are some stereotypes that might be perpetuated by these images?

Read

Read the article and answer the questions.

Aboriginal Stereotypes in Film & TV

Relatively few people living in Canada know much about Aboriginal people, their traditional cultures, their languages, their perspectives or their beliefs. This lack of knowledge is likely the result of long-standing government policies that tried to assimilate Aboriginal people into mainstream Canadian society. It could be because many Aboriginal people have lived on reserves away from mainstream Canadian society for many generations. Or it could be because Canadian schools have not taught children about Aboriginal people, history or culture. Whatever the reason, generally people know very little, and what they do know, or think they know, usually comes from the images and characters that they see or read about in movies, TV shows, magazines, books and news reports. Unfortunately, these representations of Aboriginal people often don't give an accurate picture of who Aboriginal people actually are. Instead, they perpetuate, or continue, Aboriginal stereotypes. Exploring some of these stereotypes can be a helpful way to ensure that what we know about Aboriginal people is actually true.

It may be surprising for some people to learn that not all Aboriginal people wear buckskins for clothes or feathers in their long black hair. Buckskins, moccasins, beads and feathers have been key features of images of Aboriginal people for many years. Yet, many Aboriginal people don't wear any of these things. So where did these images come from and why are they so ingrained in Western culture? The movie and TV industries have played a major role in perpetuating these types of images over the past century, and certain stereotypical characters have come along with them. One stereotypical Aboriginal character that was often seen in films in the 1940s and 50s, and continues to make appearances even today, is the "Savage Warrior." The Savage Warrior stereotype was depicted, or shown, in these films as a muscular, dangerous Indian man with long black braids and war paint on his face. He was a skilled fighter who was out to kill as many white men as possible. In the movies, he would attack settler villages and camps, for apparently no reason, forcing the courageous white cowboys to fight to save their homes and families. Many children in North America grew up watching these cowboy and Indian films, and they began to take these epic battles into the playgrounds and school yards. Young boys would play cowboys and Indians with their pretend guns and bows and arrows. But of course since the heroes, or good guys, in the movies were always the cowboys, few children ever wanted to have to play the role of the villainous Savage Warrior.

Another stereotypical Aboriginal image that has been perpetuated by the film industry is that of the exotic Indian Princess. One of the most famous of these characters is Pocahontas with her long flowing black hair and her slightly revealing buckskin dress. Although there really was an Aboriginal woman named Pocahontas who lived in the early 1600s, her character has been greatly romanticized over time. In the 1995 Walt Disney movie *Pocahontas*, she is portrayed as the beautiful, gentle Indian girl who risks her life to save the life of the British ship captain with whom she has fallen in love. Unlike the Savage Warrior, the Indian Princess is depicted as being sympathetic to the explorers and settlers who are coming to her land.

The final stereotypical Aboriginal character that has often been shown in Western films and TV shows is the Wise Noble Elder. This character's long braids have become white with time and experience. He is knowledgeable and has a mystical presence and a deep connection to the land, animals and spirits.

Throughout the 1900s, the use of these romanticized versions of Native characters in films and on TV influenced public perception of who Aboriginal people are, and led to many of the stereotypes that are still common today. Interestingly, however, it was rarely Aboriginal people who actually played these roles. Actors with Italian, Spanish or Filipino ancestry usually got these parts. Sometimes, even white actors wearing dark make-up would play the Savage Warrior or Indian Princess. Although this use of non-Aboriginal actors for Aboriginal roles is less common today, it does still happen. For example, in the popular movies of the *Twilight* series (2008-2012), the character of Jacob Black (a Native Warrior/werewolf) who is supposed to be from the Quileute tribe, is played by a non-Aboriginal actor. Similarly, in the 2013 film *The Lone Ranger*, the lead Aboriginal character, Tonto, is played by another non-Aboriginal actor, Johnny Depp. Both of these actors have claimed to have "distant Aboriginal ancestry," but this information only came to light after the movies were released. This means they were not hired to play these roles because of their Aboriginal roots. So where are all of the Aboriginal actors?

Although many of the films with Indian Princesses, Savage Warriors or Noble Elders were released decades ago, their influence on public perception is still strong today. This may be because, since the release of these films, there have been very few authentic Aboriginal characters portrayed in film or on TV. This means that there have been very few images or characters to replace the stereotypes. More often than not the only real Natives that the Canadian public sees in the media are the Aboriginal people in the news. This is because very few movies or TV programs include Aboriginal actors playing any of the roles. We don't see Aboriginal doctors, nurses or police investigators in the popular TV dramas. We don't see romantic comedies about a young Aboriginal woman who finds true love. We don't see action films with heroic Aboriginal characters saving the planet from the evil plans of a mad scientist. We don't see sitcoms about an Aboriginal family or a group of Aboriginal friends. In fact, we don't even see many Aboriginal journalists or news reporters. And because the only place that most of us see Aboriginal people is in the news, many new stereotypes and misconceptions have been added to the old ones. In the news business bad news gets higher ratings than good news, so many of the stories that we see about Aboriginal people are centred on violence, crime or tragedy. This type of reporting tends to preserve and modernize the stereotype of the Savage or Native Warrior. However, in these stories, he is no longer wearing buckskins and moccasins. Instead, he wears jeans, a t-shirt and a hoodie, but he is depicted as being just as scary and dangerous.

Although most mainstream film and TV seems to have done little to question or breakdown these damaging Aboriginal stereotypes, there is hope. There are in fact many Aboriginal actors, and in the past decade a few TV shows such as *Arctic Air* and *8th Fire*, and movies such as *Reel Injun* have been featuring Aboriginal actors.. Hopefully, these films and shows will be able to dispel some of the Aboriginal stereotypes, but it may take a long time to undo the influence of images that have been around for a hundred years.

Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond, who wrote and directed the documentary film *Reel Injun* (2009), stated that one of his inspirations for making his movie was the fact that when he was a little boy playing cowboys and Indians with his Aboriginal friends, no one wanted to be the Indians.

Vocabulary

Work in a small group. Write the words from the box beside each stereotype. Some words can be used in more than one place. Use your dictionary to look up the meaning of any new words.

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| admirable | dangerous | otherworldly | simple | tender |
| aggressive | devious | passive | soft-spoken | threatening |
| attractive | fierce | primitive | striking | well-built |
| brave | mythical | scheming | submissive | vicious |

Stereotype	Characteristics
Indian Princess	
Savage Warrior	
Wise Noble Elder	

Comprehension

Write answers to the following questions using your own words.

1. What is the author’s purpose for writing this article?

2. According to the author, what are some possible reasons that people living in Canada know so little about Aboriginal people?

3. Why are stereotypes of the Indian Princess, the Savage Warrior and the Noble Elder still so prevalent in Western culture today?

Critical thinking

Work with a small group. Discuss the following questions.

1. Have you seen a film, TV show or news report that included an Aboriginal stereotype? If so, tell your group about it.
2. Are there other Aboriginal stereotypes that you are familiar with that are not included in the reading? Where do you think these stereotypes might come from?
3. Which stereotype do you think is most damaging — Indian Princess, Savage Warrior or Noble Elder? Why?
4. In what ways do you think these stereotypes might affect Aboriginal people?
5. Do you think the effects of these stereotypes are different for people of different ages? Explain.
6. What do you think can be done to break down some of these stereotypes?



Native Indian Americana Warriors Indian Maiden and Musician Photo by Otto Done Dexter
Card S29212B Postmarked Courtesy of Don...The UpNorth Memories Guy...Harrison for Flickr.
Released under CC-by-NC-ND-2.0

The Facts

Dispelling the Myths

Along with stereotypes there are also a lot of misconceptions about Aboriginal people. Here are some of the most common misconceptions. Can you find the fact that matches?

Misconception #1: There are no Aboriginal people left in Canada.

Misconception #2: All of Canada's Aboriginal people speak the same language.

Misconception #3: All Aboriginal people live on reserves.

Misconception #4: Aboriginal people don't have to pay taxes.

Misconception #5: Aboriginal people live in teepees and igloos.

Misconception #6: Aboriginal people wear buckskins, feathers and moccasins. They have long black braided hair.

Misconception #7: Aboriginal people don't have to pay for college or university.

Misconception #8: All Aboriginal people are the same.

Misconception #9: Before the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal cultures were primitive.

Misconception #10: Aboriginal people are dangerous.

Misconception #11: Colonization happened a long time ago, so Aboriginal people should just get over it and move on.

Misconception #12: Aboriginal people worship totem poles and rocks.

Misconception #13: Aboriginal Peoples have always had the same rights as others in Canada.

Misconception #14: Aboriginal people are lazy and don't want to work.

Misconception #15: All Aboriginal people are alcoholics or drug addicts.

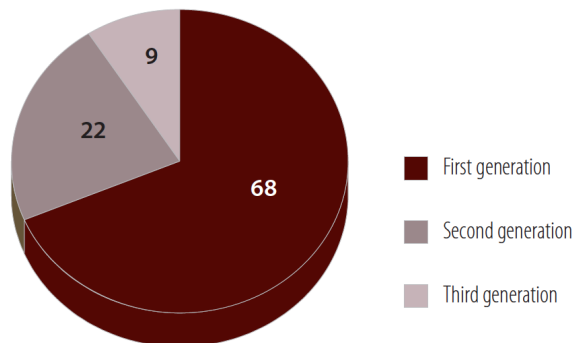
Before you listen

Work in a small group. Discuss the following questions. Take notes on your answers.

Urban Aboriginal People

1. More and more Aboriginal people in Canada are moving to urban areas. What are some possible reasons for this?
2. What might some of the challenges be for these urban Aboriginal people?
3. Gabriel George of the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation says that in many ways Aboriginal people are like immigrants in their own land. In what ways do you think the experiences of urban Aboriginal people might be similar to the experiences of immigrants? List as many similarities as you can.

First, second and third generation city residents



Urban Aboriginal People's Study (2010), page 30.

Listen and check

Now listen and check your answers.



Urban Aboriginal People: <http://youtu.be/86ZZYPf85rg>

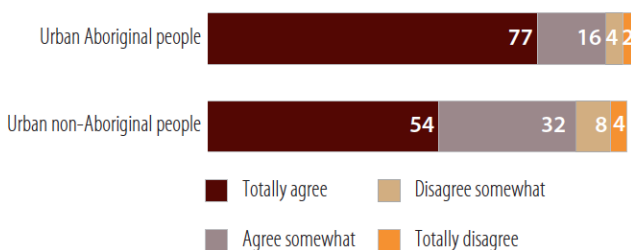
Listen for details

Listen again and answer the following questions.

1. How many Aboriginal people lived in Vancouver in 2011?
2. Why are Aboriginal populations in urban areas so diverse?
3. What does first generation urban Aboriginal mean?
4. What does 3rd generation immigrant mean?
5. In what ways are the experiences of urban Aboriginals and immigrants similar?
6. In what ways are they different?
7. What is an Aboriginal friendship centre?

There is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: "There is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country."



Urban Aboriginal People's Study (2010), page 66

A World Perspective

A quick survey

Circle the best answer(s) for each question below. Then compare your answers with your partner's.

1. What is the most important reason you moved to this city/country?
 - A. family
 - B. career advancement
 - C. education
 - D. work
 - E. for city life/amenities
 - F. other: _____

2. What are three things you most want to achieve in your lifetime? (Circle 3)
 - A. travel/vacation
 - B. home ownership
 - C. complete education/degree
 - D. happiness/live a good life
 - E. career/job satisfaction
 - F. financial independence/security
 - G. good health/longevity
 - H. start/raise/provide for a family
 - I. see children/grandchildren succeed
 - J. other: _____

3. People define a successful life in many different ways. Please indicate whether the following are very important (VI), somewhat important (SI) or not so important (NI) to your idea of a successful life. Write the letters on the line.
 - A. ____ raising healthy, well-adjusted children who contribute to community
 - B. ____ being close to family and friends
 - C. ____ living a balanced life
 - D. ____ having a good job/successful career
 - E. ____ financial independence
 - F. ____ having strong connection to your cultural background
 - G. ____ owning a home

4. One of the challenges of moving to a new place can be keeping one's cultural identity. Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: "I am concerned about losing my cultural identity."
- A. totally agree
 - B. agree somewhat
 - C. disagree somewhat
 - D. totally disagree
5. In your opinion, what aspects of your culture are most important to pass on to your children or grandchildren, or to the next generation? (Circle 3)
- A. music
 - B. customs/traditions
 - C. ceremonies
 - D. family values
 - E. language
 - F. spirituality
 - G. food
 - H. celebrations/events
 - I. art
 - J. other: _____

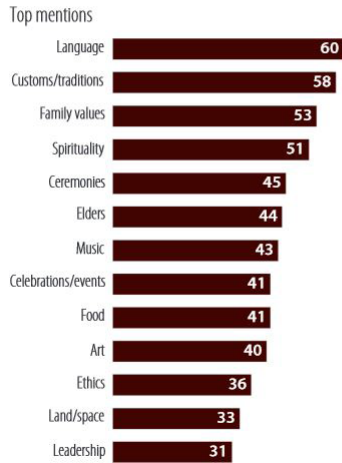
Discuss

Work in a small group. Look at the graphs below from the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010). Compare these results to the answers given by your group members.

1. In what ways are the answers given by urban Aboriginal people similar to your own?
2. In what ways are they different?
3. Are any of the results surprising to you? Why?

Most important aspects of Aboriginal culture to pass to next generation

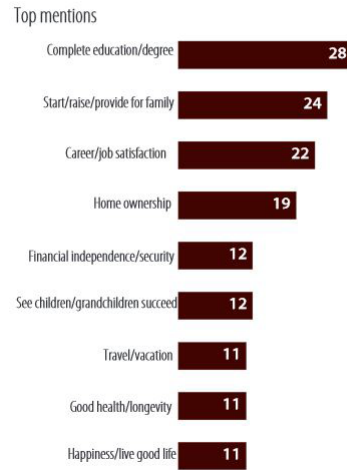
In your opinion, what aspects of Aboriginal culture are most important to be passed on to your children or grandchildren, or to the next generation?



Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010), page 62

Life aspirations

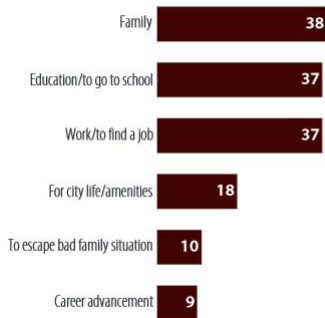
What are three things that you most want to achieve in your lifetime?



Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010), page 106

Top reasons for moving to the city

What is the most important reason why you first moved to your city?

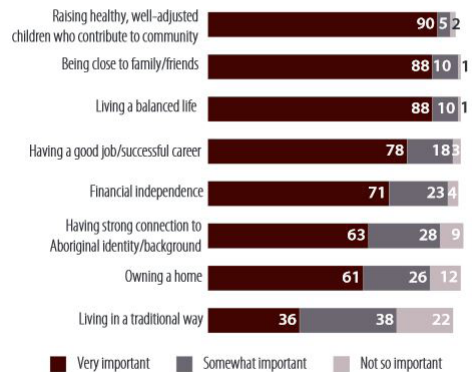


* Subsample: Among those who were not born or raised in their city.

Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010), page 32

Definition of a successful life

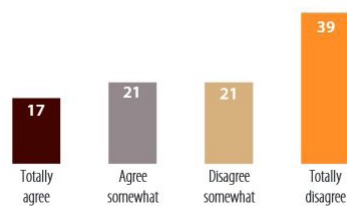
People define a successful life in a many different ways. Please tell me if the following are very important, somewhat important or not so important to your idea of a successful life.



Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010), page 108

Concern over losing cultural identity

Do you totally agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or totally disagree with the following statement: "I am concerned about losing my cultural identity."



Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010), page 67

Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010) can be downloaded here:
http://142.132.1.159/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/UAPS-Main-Report_Dec.pdf

The Real Stories

Brian Jungen (Partner A)

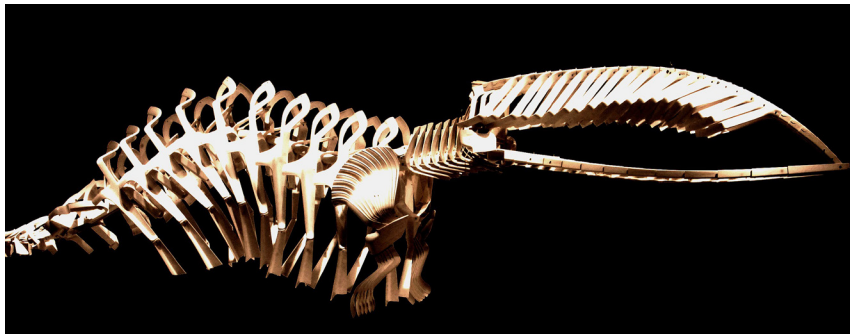
Read and share

Read and take notes on the short biography below. Then use these notes to share this information with your partner.

Many Aboriginal people today are reclaiming and redefining their Aboriginal identity. They are freeing themselves from the stigma, or shame, of being an “Indian,” which so many of their parents and grandparents experienced. They are also freeing themselves from the stereotypes that they have seen all around them growing up. They are articulate, educated, creative and modern, and they are finding ways to construct new Aboriginal identities that blend traditional language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs with mainstream Canadian culture.

Brian Jungen

Brian Jungen was born in the town of Fort St. John in northern BC in 1970. He has Swiss and Dane-zaa First Nations ancestry. He graduated from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver in 1992 and now works as an artist. His work is exhibited in galleries all across the world, and he was the first living Aboriginal artist to have his work displayed at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC.



Shapeshifter. (Installation by Brian Jungen) Photo by Ben R for Flickr. Released under CC-by-NC-ND-2.0

However, Brian Jungen is not a traditional Aboriginal artist. At his exhibitions, people do not find masks, totem poles, blankets and baskets made from cedar. Instead, Brian Jungen creates his art pieces out of the objects that he finds in everyday life. One of his most famous works, for example, titled *Shapeshifter*, is a large sculpture of a whale made from white plastic

chairs that Jungen found in discount stores. Whales are considered to have great spiritual power by many First Nations groups in BC, and the Shapeshifter is an important character in many traditional Aboriginal stories. Another of his works, titled *Prototypes of New Understanding* consists of Aboriginal masks that have been created from different parts of Nike Air Jordan shoes. So why make whale sculptures from plastic chairs and masks from shoes? Jungen has stated that he is trying to make people think about the fact that in mainstream society Aboriginal art is sometimes only seen as a commodity rather than an important part of a Nation’s culture. For example, people can purchase totem pole statues and dream catchers that were made in China from many tourist gift shops.¹ After creating his masks, Jungen said, “It was interesting to see how by simply manipulating the Air Jordan shoes you could evoke specific cultural traditions whilst simultaneously amplifying the process of cultural corruption and assimilation.”²

1. National Museum of the American Indian <http://nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/jungen/cutups.html>

2. Native Arts Collective <http://nativeartscollective.com/artist/dunne-za/brian-jungen>

A Tribe Called Red (Partner B)

Read and share

Read and take notes on the short biography below. Then use these notes to share this information with your partner.

Many Aboriginal people today are reclaiming and redefining their Aboriginal identity. They are freeing themselves from the stigma, or shame, of being an 'Indian' which so many of their parents and grandparents experienced. They are also freeing themselves from the stereotypes that they have seen all around them growing up. They are articulate, educated, creative and modern, and they are finding ways to construct new Aboriginal identities that blend traditional language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs with mainstream Canadian culture.

A Tribe Called Red

A Tribe Called Red is a popular electronic music group from Ottawa, Ontario that is made up of 3 Aboriginal DJs: Ian Campeau (DJ NDN), Dan General (DJ Shub) and Bear Witness (DJ Bear Witness). These DJs have created an entirely new music style that mixes First Nations traditional powwow vocals and drumming with electronic music. Powwows are large gatherings of people who come together to celebrate and share Aboriginal music, songs and dances. Although powwows originated in the Prairies, today First Nations and Aboriginal groups all over North America have their own distinct powwow songs and dances. Powwows are common on First Nations reserves or in communities with large Aboriginal populations; however, they are less frequently seen in large urban areas. And this was exactly the reason why A Tribe Called Red decided to start holding what they call "Electric Pow Wows" in Ottawa. These Electric Pow Wow Events are held in nightclubs throughout the city, and introduce many young non-Aboriginal people to powwow music. A Tribe Called Red says that "their Electric Pow Wow events in Ottawa showcase native talent and Aboriginal culture."¹



A Tribe Called Red-hall4-mozpics (1)_GF. Photo by Rencontres Trans Musicales for Flickr. Released under CC-by-NC-2.0

But there is even more to the music than teaching people about Aboriginal singing and drumming. Many of the songs that the band produces also include lyrics that describe current Aboriginal issues. In this way, the music informs its listeners about topics and events that they may not see or hear about in mainstream Canadian media. Also, A Tribe Called Red often takes many of the stereotypical images of Aboriginal people found in films and on TV and uses them in their music videos to try to show how absurd those stereotypes really are.

This desire to undo the influence of one-dimensional portrayals of Aboriginal people is also sometimes seen in other ways. In September 2013, Ian Campeau (DJ NDN) filed a human rights complaint against a local youth football club because they are using the name Napean Redskins. He is asking that the name be changed to something that is less offensive to Aboriginal people.² Terms like "redskins" and "brave" and "chief" are still associated with images of the fierce Native Warrior stereotype and all of the negative connotations that this image brings. Therefore, some Aboriginal people find it disrespectful and insulting that sports teams continue to use these words as team names. Mr. Campeau points out that mainstream Canadians might feel the same way if the team name was the Napean Whiteskins or the Napean Blackskins.

1. A Tribe Called Red official website <http://atribecalledred.com/bio/>.

2. CBC News <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/redskins-name-draws-human-rights-complaint-in-ottawa-1.1332647>

Discuss

After you have shared your information with a partner, discuss the following questions.

1. How are these artists reclaiming and redefining Aboriginal identity?
2. Do you know of any artists or musicians from your own country who are blending and redefining cultures in a similar way? If so, tell your partner about them.
3. Do you know of any artists or musicians from Canadian immigrant families who are doing this? If so, tell your partner about them.

Research

1. Look online for more images of Brian Jungen's art work. Find 2–3 pieces of artwork that you particularly like or that you feel have a particularly strong message. Share these images with your classmates and explain why you are drawn to them.
2. Look online for more information about A Tribe Called Red. Find and listen to a few of their songs. Can you find the lyrics for these songs? What are the songs about? Can you find a music video by this group? What are some of the messages in the video? What do you think of their music? Do you like it? Why or why not? Share the songs, lyrics, videos and your opinion of the music with your classmates.
3. Look online for the logos of the following sports teams.
 - Chicago Blackhawks
 - Washington Redskins
 - Cleveland Indians
 - Atlanta Braves
 - Kansas City Chiefs

What do the logos look like? Which stereotypes might these logos perpetuate? Do you think that these sports teams should change their names and logos? Why or why not? Share the logos and your opinion with your classmates.

Give a Presentation

One of the effects of Aboriginal stereotypes is that people sometimes think that all Aboriginal people are the same. This is a bit like saying all immigrants or newcomers are the same. In fact, Aboriginal people are just as diverse as the rest of the Canadian population, not only in their cultures, but also in who they are as individual people. Research one of the following Aboriginal people. Prepare a brief presentation and/or report on this person to share with your class.



Buffy Sainte-Marie, Grand Gala du Disque, 1968. Dutch National Archives via Wikimedia. Released under CC-by-SA-3.0



Phil Fontaine. For Wikimedia. Released under CC-by-SA-3.0



Shawn Atleo. For Wikimedia. Released under CC-by-SA-3.0

Grahame Greene
Phil Fontaine
Susan Point
Bill Reid
Neil Diamond (filmmaker)
Jordin Tootoo
Richard Van Camp

Elijah Harper
Roy Henry Vickers
Chief Dan George
Buffy Sainte-Marie
Ted Nolan
Gary Farmer
Shawn Atleo

Adam Beach
Evan Adams
Tantoo Cardinal
Corrine Hunt
Steven Point
Jeanette Armstrong
Chief Justice Murray Sinclair

In your presentation/report you may wish to include the following:

- where this person is from (First Nation, community, city, province, etc.)
- what this person's occupation is
- this person's accomplishments/achievements
- adjectives that describe this person's character (see task below) and specific example to support your choices
- ways in which this person — or his/her life — is disproving/contradicting common Aboriginal stereotypes and misconceptions

Vocabulary builder

Here is a list of some adjectives that can be used to describe a person. Look up the meaning of any unfamiliar words in your dictionary. Then, choose 3–4 words that you think best describe the person you researched. Think of specific examples from this person’s life that show these qualities. Include this information in your presentation/report.

adaptable

ambitious

articulate

daring

compassionate

competent

conscientious

decisive

diligent

diplomatic

dynamic

influential

innovative

inspiring

knowledgeable

optimistic

passionate

persistent

self-assured

resourceful

My Perspective

Projects & Assignments

These projects and assignments give you a chance to share your ideas and perspective on this topic.

Journal/Blog

Go back to the reflection task in which you and your group had to write down everything you know about Canada’s Aboriginal people. Take a look at your notes. How has your understanding of Aboriginal people changed after completing this unit?

Collage

Create a collage of images and/or texts that explores how newcomers are currently being portrayed in Canadian popular culture.

- Find images online, in newspapers, in magazines that reference immigrant people and make a collage.
- Share your collage with a small group. Discuss the types of messages about newcomers that are being portrayed in the media. Compare these to the types of messages that are portrayed about Aboriginal people.
- If there are any negative stereotypes, suggest ways that these stereotypes can be dispelled.

Essay

Write an essay, based on your own ideas, that identifies and explains 2–3 factors that influence mainstream Canada’s perception of newcomers. In your essay, explain the impact of this on immigrant communities and/or individuals.

Sharing and Connecting

Projects & Assignments

These projects and assignments give you a chance to learn more about this topic and/or share what you have learned with others.

Current Events Assignment (Aboriginal Community)

- Find a recent newspaper article in your local newspaper or online that discusses **Aboriginal people**.
- Read the article carefully.
- Look up the meaning of new words in your English-English dictionary.
- Take notes on the key information in the article.
- Using your notes and any pictures related to the article retell your news story to a small group of classmates.
- Discuss any biases and stereotypes you think the story contains and support your opinion with specific examples from the story.

Current Events Assignment (Newcomer Community)

- Find a recent newspaper article in your local newspaper or online that discusses **newcomers**.
- Read the article carefully.
- Look up the meaning of new words in your English-English dictionary.
- Take notes on the key information in the article.
- Using your notes and any pictures related to the article retell your news story to a small group of classmates.
- Discuss any biases and stereotypes you think the story contains and support your opinion with specific examples from the story.