



Members of A Tribe Called Red. Photo by Pat Bolduc, [www.atribecalledred.com](http://www.atribecalledred.com)

## Aboriginal Identity

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### **Content Objectives**

In this unit, students will:

- explore some common stereotypes and misconceptions of Aboriginal people and discover the media's role in the perpetuation of these stereotypes and misconceptions
- reflect on some of their own ideas about Aboriginal people learn about the ways that Aboriginal people are trying to break down common misconceptions and stereotypes and reclaim their identity
- learn about urban Aboriginals and explore ways in which the lives and experiences of these people may be similar to their own
- explore the lives and achievements of well-known Aboriginal people including politicians, artists, actors, musicians, lawyers and Chiefs

# Reflect

## CLB Competency

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

## 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?

# Imagine

## CLB Competency

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

**Reading 8 – IV** Understand moderately complex extended descriptions, feature articles, reports and narrations.

**Teacher's notes:** *The purpose of this activity is to briefly introduce some of the historical events that Aboriginal people have experienced since contact with Europeans, so that students have a better understanding of current Aboriginal issues. Please be advised that some students may be sensitive to the content of this reading and the questions that follow because of the political history of their own country.*

## 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 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.

**Teacher's note:** *The purpose of these discussion questions is to give students a chance to critically think about the possible effects of these historical events. It is hoped that by completing this activity students will gain a better understanding of some of the events that have led to some of the current challenges and issues facing Aboriginal people today. Answers will vary greatly depending on the personal experiences of the students and the political history of their own countries. The answers included below are intended to give teachers more background information that they can share with their students if they wish.*

## Talk about it

Discuss the following questions in small groups.

1. How might you have felt when these newcomers first came to your land?

Answers will vary.

2. Along with trading goods, what other types of interactions do you think your people might have had with these newcomers?

For many decades after first contact, many Aboriginal people and settlers lived and interacted very amicably. They traded goods and taught each other their languages and skills. Aboriginal people taught settlers survival strategies, worked on settler farms, and assisted explorers in navigating their way through the unfamiliar terrain.

3. Why do you think the newcomers' government wanted to create laws to prevent your people from practicing your cultural traditions?

Students may come up with a variety of answers for this. It seems that the main reason for these laws was a lack of understanding of Aboriginal economic, political and cultural practices. The government at the time couldn't make sense of these practices through the lens of Western ideology.<sup>1</sup>

For example, it seems that the banning of the potlatch stemmed from a lack of understanding of this practice. The government at the time didn't understand the practice of giving away large amounts of wealth and goods that was common at the potlatch. However, this practice played a very important political, social and economic role in some Aboriginal communities. During the potlatch political alliances were made and witnessed, or officially acknowledged, by community members and neighbouring Nations. Also, oral histories and traditional stories were retold at the potlatch as a way to pass down this important information to younger generations and members of neighbouring Aboriginal communities. It was also at the potlatch that wealth and goods were redistributed to the community and shared with important members of other Nations. Chiefs would often give away most, if not all, of their wealth and goods to the participants as a way of showing their status. By accepting the goods, participants were making a kind of promise to acknowledge the Chief status and abide by the political alliances that were made and the oral histories that were told. The wealth and goods would be returned to the Chief at future potlatches put on by the recipients of his gifts.<sup>2</sup>

4. Why do you think the newcomers' government decided to send your children away to residential schools?

Again, according to historical documents it seems that the government at the time didn't understand the complex nature of Aboriginal languages, cultures and spiritual practices. They believed that these cultures and practices were primitive and that it was in the best interest of Aboriginal people to learn Euro-Canadian culture and religion and assimilate into Euro-Canadian society.<sup>3</sup>

1 Cole, D. & Chaikin, I. (1990). *An Iron Hand Upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast*. Seattle: University of Washington Press

2 BC Archives. <http://www.bccarchives.gov.bc.ca/exhibits/timemach/galler07/frames/potlatch.htm>.

3 Legacy of Hope Foundation. <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/>

5. How do you think these laws and decisions might have affected your community?

- The impacts of these laws and decisions have been devastating for most, if not all, Aboriginal communities. Here are some of the more commonly documented effects.
- Many communities lost access to their traditional hunting and fishing territories, so they were unable to continue their nomadic way of life.
- There was a dramatic decrease in the population of many Nations and communities. Many communities were devastated by small pox and other unfamiliar diseases that were brought by European settlers, so entire families and villages were wiped out.
- Numerous Aboriginal languages are now extinct. Today, there are many languages that are endangered because only a handful of Elders still speak these languages.
- Many oral histories, traditional stories and cultural practices have been lost.
- Many cultural artifacts have been lost, stolen or sold.
- Many Indian residential school survivors suffered emotional, sexual, physical or psychological abuse, and never gained the skills and knowledge of how to be parents. This has contributed to a great distrust of educational institutions, which are responsible for cycles of abuse, violence, alcoholism, drug addiction and other social problems within Aboriginal communities.

6. How do you think these events might have impacted the identity of your people?

For many generations, Aboriginal people were told that their culture was inferior to Euro-Canadian culture. In Indian residential schools, some Aboriginal children were told that they were not smart because they were “Indian.” They also were not permitted to speak their language or practice their culture, so many forgot how to do these things. Also, racism against Aboriginal people was and continues to be common. All of these factors contributed to a sense of shame at being “Indian” among some Aboriginal people. Some Aboriginal people today know very little about their cultural or ancestral roots. However, recently there is a strong movement among many Aboriginal communities and individuals to learn about the cultural practices and languages of their ancestors and reclaim and redefine their Aboriginal identity. This will be explored further in later activities.

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.

*“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)**

## Consider

### CLB Competency

**Listening 8 – IV** Understand extended monologues or presentations on topics that are generally familiar and related to general knowledge or technical/work-related issues in own field.

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

**Writing 7 – II** Reduce short oral discourse (such as live or recorded phone messages, pre-recorded public information, podcasts or short presentations) to notes.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

### 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.)

**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/ZPtckOtvnm4>

Word	Term
Aboriginal	
Indian	
Native	
First Nation	
Inuit	
Métis	

## Comprehension

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?

### Aboriginal

2. Which term do many indigenous people find offensive? Why do they feel this way?

Indian – because of its negative connotation and association with the past.

The term "Indian" became a permanent part of Canadian culture in 1876 when the federal government passed the Indian Act. The Indian Act is a federal law that was designed to govern, or rule, the day-to-day lives of Indian peoples. At the time that this law was created, the federal government wanted Aboriginal people to assimilate into Euro-Canadian culture. The government and many Euro-Canadian settlers believed that the Aboriginal way of life was primitive and inferior to their own. Therefore, the aim of the Indian Act was to get rid of Aboriginal cultures, languages, and political and economic systems and absorb Aboriginal people, or Indians, into mainstream Euro-Canadian society as quickly as possible.

3. What is the difference between First Nations and Métis?

First Nations – refers to Aboriginal people who are members of a particular tribe or First Nation community that is recognized by the federal government and the Indian Act. For example, the city of Vancouver sits on the traditional territory of 3 different First Nations: the Musqueam, the Squamish, and the Tsleil-waututh

Métis - used differently by different people

- General usage: the word Métis refers to people who have mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry;
- Specific usage: the term Métis only refers to people whose ancestors can be traced back to intermarriages between Aboriginal women and European men during the fur trade in the 18th and 19th century. The Métis people of this period had a very distinct language, and their cultural traditions were different from both Aboriginal and European communities.

4. Which Indigenous people live in Northern Canada?

The Inuit

## 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. **\_C\_** connotation
2. **\_G\_** assimilate
3. **\_A\_** primitive
4. **\_E\_** inferior
5. **\_I\_** absorb
6. **\_H\_** aspect
7. **\_B\_** distinction
8. **\_J\_** heritage
9. **\_D\_** ancestry
10. **\_F\_** 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

1. What are some terms used to refer to people who have immigrated to Canada?

Possible answers:

immigrants, permanent residents, refugees, skilled workers, newcomers, etc.

2. Are there any positive or negative connotations associated with these terms? If so, what are they?

Answers will vary.

3. Where do you think these connotations might come from?

Answers will vary, but as with the terms used to describe Aboriginal people, the connotations usually depend on the beliefs and attitudes of the speakers and the context of the conversation.

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?

Possible answers:

- “newcomer” is a broader term than immigrant or refugee
- “newcomer” does not have negative connotations attached to it; it is viewed as a more neutral term

## Audio script – What’s in a Name?

There are many different terms used to talk about Canada’s Aboriginal people, and the appropriate choice of word seems to depend on who is talking to whom and what the context is. This “correct” choice of term also seems to be constantly shifting, so it can be difficult to know which expression to use. However, it is important for all people living in Canada to be aware of these terms, what they mean and how they are used. It is also important for people to understand that most of these terms have not come from Aboriginal Peoples themselves, but were adopted by European explorers and settlers. Therefore, some of these terms have negative **connotations**, or meanings, and it is necessary to learn the differences between these terms and how to use them properly.

One word that is often used in legal contexts to refer to Aboriginal people is the term **Indian**. This term is used not only to refer to Aboriginal people in Canada, but also in other parts of North America. So, where did the term “Indian” come from? When the explorer Christopher Columbus (1451 – 1506) sailed west from Spain in hopes of finding a quick route to India, he landed in the Antilles, a group of islands in the Caribbean Sea. Because he believed he had reached the Indian Ocean, he mistakenly referred to the local peoples as “Indians.” Although it was soon realized that Columbus had made a mistake, Europeans continued to use the term “Indian” to refer to Aboriginal Peoples in North America.

The term “Indian” became a permanent part of Canadian culture in 1876 when the federal government passed the Indian Act. The Indian Act is a federal law that was designed to govern, or rule, the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people. At the time that this law was created, the federal government wanted Aboriginal people to **assimilate** into Euro-Canadian culture. The government and many Euro-Canadian settlers believed that the Aboriginal way of life was **primitive** and **inferior** to their own. Therefore, the aim of the Indian Act was to get rid of Aboriginal cultures, languages, and political and economic systems and **absorb** Aboriginal people, or Indians, into mainstream Euro-Canadian society as quickly as possible. Because there was a belief that Aboriginal cultures and therefore Aboriginal people were inferior, being called an “Indian” was anything but a compliment. Today, the Indian Act still exists and it still governs many **aspects** of Aboriginal peoples’ lives. However, the term Indian is used less and less in mainstream Canadian society because of its negative **connotation** and association with the past. The word Indian is often replaced with terms such as Native or Native American. These terms are used to highlight the fact that Aboriginal people were the original people of this land. However, today many people, including the federal government, use the term Aboriginal to refer to the First Peoples of Canada. This term is considered to be more respectful.

The terms **First Nations**, **Métis** and **Inuit** are also frequently used to identify Aboriginal people, but there are important **distinctions** between these names. Since the 1970s the term First Nations has been used more and more to replace the word Indian. However, the term First Nations does not actually refer to all Aboriginal people in Canada. Rather, it refers only to Aboriginal people who are members of a particular tribe or First Nation community that is recognized by the federal government and the Indian Act. For example, the city of Vancouver sits on the traditional territory of 3 different First Nations: the Musqueam, the Squamish, and the Tsleil-waututh. Today, there are over 630 different First Nations in Canada, many of which have very **distinct** cultures and languages.

The term Inuit, on the other hand, refers to the Aboriginal people who live in Northern or Arctic Canada, Alaska and Greenland. These people have a common cultural **heritage** and language. In the past, Inuit people were referred to as Eskimos, but today this term is not used in Canada.

The term Métis is a bit more complicated and is used differently by different people. This word is used both in a more general sense and a more specific one, and not everyone agrees on which one is accurate. In the more general usage, the word Métis refers to people who have mixed Aboriginal and European **ancestry**. Used in this way, many people in Canada can claim to be Métis. However, others argue that the term Métis only refers to people whose **ancestors** can be traced back to intermarriages between Aboriginal women and European men during the fur trade in the 18th and 19th century. The Métis people of this period had a very **distinct** language, and their cultural traditions were different from both Aboriginal and European communities. With these two different definitions of the term Métis, it is important that people are careful about how they use this term. Some people who have mixed heritage would never identify themselves as Métis, while others would.

So with all these terms, what do Aboriginal people themselves prefer? Well, the answer to that question is just as complex as the meaning and use of each of the separate terms. There are some basic suggestions, however, that might help. Generally, for non-Aboriginal people it is best to avoid using the term Indian. Although many Aboriginal people still use this term to identify themselves and other Aboriginal people, they may consider it disrespectful when a non-Aboriginal person uses it. This again goes back to the connection this word has to the Indian Act and the [racist policies](#) that Aboriginal people had to live by because of it. The least [contentious](#), or upsetting, terms to use currently are Aboriginal or Native. However, nowadays, some Aboriginal people prefer to identify themselves by their family ties or connection to a particular First Nation, rather than using these terms. For instance, they may introduce themselves as Musqueam, or as being from the Musqueam Nation.

It's clear that there are many words and phrases used to refer to Aboriginal people, and many different ways that Aboriginal people identify themselves. It is important, therefore, for people to understand and be sensitive to the history, meaning and usage of all these terms so that they can choose their words carefully and avoid misunderstandings.

### References

Here are some references on the Inuit and the Métis. If the links are down, try using a search engine with these terms: "who are the Inuit," "Canada's Inuit," and "Métis Nation."

Le centre de santé Inuulitsivik (2013) Information about Inuit. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.inuulitsivik.ca/northern-life-and-inuit-culture/who-are-the-inuits>

Métis National Council (n.d.) The Métis Nation. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.Métisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-Métis;>

### Other Sources

The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture  
<http://www.Metismuseum.ca/main.php>

# Stories

## CLB Competency

**Speaking 8 – III** Propose or recommend solutions to problems in a familiar area.

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

**Reading 8 – IV** Understand moderately complex extended descriptions, feature articles, reports and narrations.

## What do you know?

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.

## Read

### Pre-reading

In a small group, look at the images of how Aboriginal people have been portrayed in popular culture and discuss the following questions.

1. What adjectives would you use to describe the people in these pictures?
2. What stereotypes about Aboriginal people might come from these types of 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.

### 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.

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

Stereotype	Characteristics
Indian Princess	attractive, passive, primitive, simple, soft-spoken, striking, submissive, tender
Savage Warrior	aggressive, attractive, brave, dangerous, devious, fierce, primitive, scheming, threatening, well-built, vicious
Wise Noble Elder	admirable, brave, mythical, otherworldly, soft-spoken

### Comprehension

Write answers to the following questions using your own words.

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

- to introduce the reader to some common stereotypes and misconceptions of Aboriginal people and explain their connection to TV and film

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

- long-standing government policies that tried to assimilate Aboriginal people into mainstream Canadian society
- many Aboriginal people have lived on reserves away from mainstream Canadian society for many generations
- Canadian schools have not taught children about Aboriginal people, history or culture

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

- there have been very few authentic Aboriginal characters portrayed in film or on TV to replace these stereotypes
- these stereotypical images are still sometimes used in films

## Critical thinking

Work with a small group. Discuss the following questions.

**Teacher's note:** *Answers to the following questions will vary.*

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?

## The Facts

### CLB Competency

**Listening 8 – IV** Understand extended monologues or presentations on topics that are generally familiar and related to general knowledge or technical/work-related issues in own field.

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

**Reading 8 – IV** Understand moderately complex extended descriptions, feature articles, reports and narrations.

**Teacher's notes:** *Only the student materials contain the misconceptions.*

*Teachers may want to use the content of this activity to explore some of the strategies that can be used to identify opinions, facts and generalizations. For example, the teacher could highlight the use of the word "all" in statements such as "All Aboriginal people live on reserves." and "All Aboriginal people are the same."*

### Activity Options:

**Matching** - Teacher hands out Facts strips to small groups of students. Students work together to match the facts to the misconceptions.

**Jigsaw** - Cut up into strips. Put Ss into small groups of 3–4. Hand out 5 misconceptions and related facts to each group. Ss match, check answers with T, and then take notes on information. Then regroup Ss so that one person from each original group makes up the new groups (jigsaw). Ss share their information using their notes.

**Mixer** - Cut up into strips. Give each S 1–2 misconceptions and unrelated facts (not matching). Ss walk around the class and tell each other their misconceptions and try to find the matching facts. Once a match is found, the person with the misconception strip takes the matching fact strip. When all strips are matched, Ss return to their seats and share their information in a small group. Each group makes a poster with the misconceptions and facts that they have (written in note form rather than copying the long explanations). Posters are put up on walls, and information is shared through short presentations to whole class or by Ss moving from one poster to the next.

### 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.

**Fact:** In 2011, 1,400,685 people reported an Aboriginal identity. British Columbia has the second largest Aboriginal population (232,290 people) of all of Canada's provinces and territories.

**Fact:** There are over 60 different Aboriginal languages spoken in Canada and many of these languages are extremely different from the others. For example, the Mohawk language is about as similar to the Okanagan language as English is to Chinese. Over 30 of these languages are spoken in British Columbia.

**Fact:** 49.3% of First Nations people live on reserve. Inuit and Métis people don't have reserves.

**Fact:** Métis, Inuit and non-status Aboriginal people have to pay tax just like all other Canadians. First Nations people who are registered under the Indian Act (status Indians) and work on a reserve are not required to pay income tax. In some provinces, status Indians do not pay provincial sales tax, and if goods are delivered to a reserve, status Indians are not required to pay GST.

**Fact:** Aboriginal people live in houses just like other Canadians. Teepees are sometimes set up for festivals or celebrations, but they are no longer used as homes.

**Fact:** Aboriginal people in old movies may have looked like this, but today Aboriginal people are as diverse in appearance as any other group of people living in Canada. Traditional ceremonial clothing such as button blankets and headdresses may be worn during special occasions, and moccasin-style shoes seem to be in fashion these days, but generally Aboriginal peoples' hair and clothing are the same as other Canadians.

**Fact:** Status Indian students can apply to their band council to receive assistance in paying for post-secondary education. However, this funding is not guaranteed, and many status Indians do not apply. They may also receive financial assistance from the provincial government in the form of grants or loans that must be repaid. Métis and non-Status Indians do not receive money for post-secondary education.

**Fact:** There are over 630 First Nations in Canada. Many of these Nations have unique languages, cultures and belief systems. The Inuit also have their own distinct languages and cultural practices, as do the Métis.

**Fact:** Aboriginal cultures are diverse and extremely complex. Before contact, Aboriginal Peoples had their own economic, political, spiritual and educational systems.

**Fact:** Unfortunately, news reports about Aboriginal people often focused on violence, crime or tragedy rather than portraying the many positive stories that are happening in Aboriginal communities. This may be due to journalists' general lack of understanding of and interest in Aboriginal people, the small number of Aboriginal journalists and the fact that in the news world bad news gets higher ratings. Unfortunately, this one-sided reporting has made many non-Aboriginal people in Canada have an unjustified fear of Aboriginal people.

**Fact:** The effects of colonization are still being felt by many Aboriginal people in Canada. This is due to the continued use of the Indian Act which regulates many aspects of Aboriginal people's lives as well as the legacy of the Indian Residential School System.

**Fact:** Traditionally, Aboriginal Peoples had a different worldview than the Christian belief systems that were brought by European settlers. According to Aboriginal belief systems, the Creator made this world for all inhabitants to live upon equally and everything in this world, including the wind, the water, the plants, the mountains, and the animals, has a sacred spirit. And because everything has a sacred spirit, humans must respect and protect everything in this world. Totem poles, carvings and clothing with animal figures on them show Aboriginal peoples' close connection with and deep respect for other creatures in this world.

**Fact:** The creation of the Indian Act made life very difficult for Aboriginal people. Because of this Act, Aboriginal people were not given the same rights and privileges as Canadian citizens.

**Fact:** Aboriginal people work as teachers, artists, lawyers, business-owners, web-site designers and politicians just as other people in Canada do. In some areas of Canada, there are few employment opportunities, so it is difficult for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to find work. Furthermore, in some areas there are limited opportunities for Aboriginal people to get an education. Many First Nations people who live on reserves must leave their home community to attend high school. Also, schools on reserves receive significantly less money to operate than schools that are off reserve. Because of this, some students do not have the materials and resources they need to get a good education. These barriers to education can make it very challenging for Aboriginal people to find work when they are adults.

**Fact:** Alcoholism and drug addiction affect people from many different cultures and countries. Although there are some Aboriginal people who struggle with alcohol and drug addiction, there are also many others who do not.

Misconceptions	Facts
There are no Aboriginal people left in Canada.	In 2011, 1,400,685 people reported an Aboriginal identity. British Columbia has the second largest Aboriginal population (232,290 people) out of all of the provinces and territories. <sup>4</sup>
All of Canada's Aboriginal people speak the same language.	There are over 60 different Aboriginal languages spoken in Canada and many of these languages are extremely different from the others. For example, the Mohawk language is about as similar to the Okanagan language as English is to Chinese. Over 30 of these languages are spoken in British Columbia. <sup>5</sup>
All Aboriginal people live on reserves.	49.3% of First Nations people live on reserve. Inuit and Métis people don't have reserves. <sup>6</sup>
Aboriginal people don't have to pay taxes.	Métis, Inuit and non-status Aboriginal people have to pay tax just like all other Canadians. First Nations people who are registered under the Indian Act (status Indians) and work on a reserve are not required to pay income tax. In some provinces, status Indians do not pay provincial sales tax, and if goods are delivered to a reserve, status Indians are not required to pay GST. <sup>7</sup>
Aboriginal people live in teepees and igloos.	Aboriginal people live in houses just like other Canadians. Teepees are sometimes set up for festivals or celebrations, but they are no longer used as homes.
Aboriginal people wear buckskins, feathers and moccasins. They have long black braided hair.	Aboriginal people in old movies may have looked like this, but today Aboriginal people are as diverse in appearance as any other group of people living in Canada. Traditional ceremonial clothing such as button blankets and headdresses may be worn during special occasions, and moccasin-style shoes seem to be in fashion these days, but generally Aboriginal peoples' hair and clothing are the same as other Canadians.
Aboriginal people don't have to pay for college or university.	Status Indian students can apply to their band council to receive assistance in paying for post-secondary education. However, this funding is not guaranteed, and many status Indians do not apply. They may also receive financial assistance from the provincial government in the form of grants or loans that must be repaid. Métis and non-Status Indians do not receive money for post-secondary education. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey

<sup>5</sup> Indigenous Foundations - UBC

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey

<sup>7</sup> Assembly of First Nations - Top Misconceptions About Aboriginal Peoples Fact Sheet

<sup>8</sup> Assembly of First Nations - Top Misconceptions About Aboriginal Peoples Fact Sheet

Misconceptions	Facts
All Aboriginal people are the same.	There are over 630 First Nations in Canada. <sup>9</sup> Many of these Nations have unique languages, cultures and belief systems. The Inuit also have their own distinct languages and cultural practices, as do the Métis.
Before the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal cultures were primitive.	Aboriginal cultures are diverse and extremely complex. Before contact, Aboriginal Peoples had their own economic, political, spiritual and educational systems.
Aboriginal people are dangerous.	Unfortunately, news reports about Aboriginal people often focus on violence, crime or tragedy rather than portraying the many positive stories that are happening in Aboriginal communities. This may be due to journalists' general lack of understanding of Aboriginal people, the small number of Aboriginal journalists and the fact that in the news world bad news gets higher ratings. Unfortunately, this one-sided reporting has made some non-Aboriginal people in Canada afraid of Aboriginal people.
Colonization happened a long time ago, so Aboriginal people should just get over it and move on.	The effects of colonization are still being felt by many Aboriginal people in Canada. This is due to the continued use of the Indian Act which regulates many aspects of Aboriginal people's lives as well as the legacy of the Indian Residential School System.
Aboriginal people worship totem poles and rocks.	Traditionally, Aboriginal Peoples had a different worldview than the Christian belief systems that were brought by European settlers. According to Aboriginal belief systems, the Creator made this world for all inhabitants to live upon equally and everything in this world, including the wind, the water, the plants, the mountains, and the animals, has a sacred spirit. And because everything has a sacred spirit, humans must respect and protect everything in this world. Totem poles, carvings and clothing with animal figures on them show Aboriginal peoples' close connection with and deep respect for other creatures in this world.
Aboriginal peoples have always had the same rights as others in Canada.	The creation of the Indian Act made life very difficult for Aboriginal people. Because of this Act, Aboriginal people were not given the same rights and privileges as Canadian citizens.

Misconceptions	Facts
Aboriginal people are lazy and don't want to work.	Aboriginal people work as teachers, artists, lawyers, business-owners, website designers and politicians just as other people in Canada do. However, in some areas of Canada, there are few employment opportunities, so it is difficult for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to find work. Furthermore, in some areas there are limited opportunities for Aboriginal people to get an education. Many First Nations people who live on reserve must leave their families and home communities to attend high school. Also, schools on reserves receive significantly less money to operate than schools that are off reserve. Because of this, some students do not have the materials and resources they need to get a good education. These barriers to education can make it very challenging for Aboriginal people to get the education needed to find a good job.
All Aboriginal people are alcoholics or drug addicts.	Alcoholism and drug addiction affect people from many different cultures and countries. Although there are some Aboriginal people who struggle with alcohol and drug addiction, there are also many others who do not.



## Listen for details

Listen again and answer the following questions.

How many Aboriginal people lived in Vancouver in 2011?

52,375

Why are Aboriginal populations in urban areas so diverse?

The populations are made up members of the Host Nations of the territory and Aboriginal people from many other cultures. For example, Vancouver is home to the 3 Host Nations: the Musqueam, the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh as well as people from many other Nations and communities.

What does first generation urban Aboriginal mean?

- the person was born and raised outside of the city and moved to the city later

What does 3rd generation immigrant mean?

- the person was born and raised in Canada; the person's grandparents immigrated to Canada

In what ways are the experiences of urban Aboriginals and immigrants similar?

- they often live in very multicultural cities
- many have moved in order to access better education, jobs, services or amenities, or to be closer to family
- they may experience similar challenges when settling in their new city
- they may experience similar challenges in keeping connected to their cultural roots or learning/maintaining their ancestral languages

In what ways are they different?

It may be easier for some immigrants to access their cultural communities in large cities, so it may be easier for them to speak/learn their language, follow their cultural practices, etc.

What is an Aboriginal friendship centre?

It is like a cultural community centre. It's a place where urban Aboriginal people can get information about the city they live in, meet and spend time with other Aboriginal people, learn about Aboriginal values and spiritual practices and participate in cultural events.

### Audio script – Urban Aboriginal People

The number of Aboriginal people living in Canada's largest cities such as Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto is increasing. In fact, in 2006, 54% of Aboriginal people in Canada lived in urban areas. And according to the Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey, 52,375 Aboriginal people were living in the Greater Vancouver area. However, even with these large urban populations, many non-Aboriginal people who are living in the same cities know very little about their Aboriginal neighbours. This lack of knowledge may be playing a role in the perpetuation of negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people. For example, according to the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, a large survey of Canada's urban Aboriginal population, many urban Aboriginals feel that non-Native people see them as addicts who are lazy, uneducated and poor. However, in reality this is not the case. In fact, the lives of many urban Aboriginal people are quite similar to those of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

So who are the Aboriginal people living in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal and Canada's other large urban centres? Well, just like the non-Native population, which is made up of people from all over the world, the urban Aboriginal population is extremely diverse. There are people from many different nations that have unique cultures and distinct languages. Some of these people have migrated to the cities from other places such as smaller towns, villages or reserves. Others have had the city grow up around them. For instance, Vancouver's Aboriginal population is made up of the original inhabitants of this territory: the Musqueam, the Squamish and the Tseil-waututh as well as people with Gitksan, Haida, Cree, Okanagan, Tsawwassen, Inuit and Métis ancestry, among many others. The original peoples are referred to as the Hosts, or Host Nations, because the city is situated on their traditional territory. Those who have moved to the city from other areas are referred to as "urban Aboriginal people."

So why do so many Aboriginal people move to large urban areas? Like other immigrants, many come to be closer to family or to obtain a better education for themselves or their children. Others come to find employment or to live in a place with better services and amenities such as hospitals. Some urban Aboriginal families have been living in large cities for generations, while others have just arrived. This means that there are 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation urban Aboriginals in the same way that there are 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants. And there may be more similarities in the experiences and perspectives of these two groups than people are aware of. For example, 1st generation urban Aboriginals, who are new to the city, may experience some of the same challenges that newcomers from different countries do. Specifically, they may be far away from their families and communities for the first time, so they may feel a little lost or lonely. Or they may not be familiar with the city and may have difficulty navigating their way around and accessing the services they need. Likewise, some 3rd or 4th generation urban Aboriginals may have things in common with 3rd or 4th generation immigrants. For example, both groups may feel less of a connection to or less familiar with the homeland of their ancestors because they weren't born and raised there. Also, it might be more challenging for 3rd and 4th generation urban Aboriginals and 3rd and 4th generation immigrants to maintain their traditional language and cultural practices because they may live far away from their cultural communities.

However, even though there may be some similarities, there are also important distinctions between the experiences of these two groups. One of these is that fact that many immigrant communities in Canada, particularly those that are quite large, have settled in specific areas or neighbourhoods. Within these neighbourhoods, there are people who speak their language, stores that sell familiar goods, and restaurants that serve their traditional foods. Also, in many large Canadian cities, there are places of

worship such as churches, mosques, temples and synagogues where immigrants can continue to practice their spiritual beliefs. In many Canadian schools, there are heritage language classes where 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation immigrants, along with other Canadian students, can learn to speak languages such as Mandarin, Cantonese or Punjabi. In these ways, some parts of the cultures of Canada's immigrants have come with them, and this may give them a small sense of comfort in their new country.

However, this is not the case for many urban Aboriginal people. City life can be very different from living in a small rural community or on a reserve. In many of Canada's large cities there aren't specific neighbourhoods where people from one Aboriginal culture have settled. There may be neighbourhoods with large Aboriginal populations, but these populations are usually quite diverse and there is only a sprinkling of people from each different cultural community. This is because in the past many Aboriginal populations dramatically decreased in size during the small pox and influenza epidemics, so today many Aboriginal populations in both rural and urban areas are relatively small. There are also few places in major cities where Aboriginal people can gather to take part in traditional cultural events or spiritual ceremonies. For decades these types of gatherings were banned, so it was nearly impossible to create a space for these events and ceremonies in large urban areas. There are also few schools in large cities that offer classes in Aboriginal languages. The schools that do offer these types of classes usually teach the languages of the host nations, not the many different languages of the urban Aboriginal population. For all of these reasons, it can be difficult for 1st generation urban Aboriginal people to comfortably settle in their new urban environment, and it can be equally difficult for 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation urban Aboriginals to maintain a strong knowledge of and close connection to their cultural roots.

Fortunately, however, Aboriginal friendship centres are doing a lot to support and enhance the lives of Aboriginal people who are living in large urban areas. These organizations are similar to the cultural centres that have been established by immigrant communities such as the Scottish cultural centre, the Polish cultural centre and the Chinese cultural centre. They are places where urban Aboriginals can get information about the city and its services. They can meet other Aboriginal people and participate in cultural events. And Aboriginal friendship centres in large urban areas are often as multicultural as the community they serve, so people who access these centres can learn more about their own Aboriginal culture and the other Aboriginal cultures that exist in their city. This exposure to so many different cultures can sometimes lead to a sharing and blending of Aboriginal cultural practices and protocols. In other words, some urban Aboriginal people have been introduced to and taken on new cultural conventions that are not traditionally part of their own culture. This is very similar to the way in which many non-Aboriginal people in Canada have also been influenced by their multicultural environment and adopted new cultural practices. Perhaps it is this acceptance of a multicultural environment and the constant sharing and blending and redefining of identity that makes each person in Canada, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, so unique, yet also so connected.

**References**

EnviroNics (2010). Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study.

**Other Resources**

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study video (5 mins) is a short film that summarizes some of the ideas that are discussed in the listening and the survey above. It is made up of short clips of the interviews that were conducted with urban Aboriginal people for the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study.

<http://vimeo.com/10618237>

This video along with the main report and city reports can also be found on the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study website.

<http://www.uaps.ca/>

## A World Perspective

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**CLB Competency**

**Listening 8 – IV** Understand group interactions about abstract and complex ideas on familiar topics.

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

**Reading 8 – IV** Interpret information contained in moderately complex formatted texts (such as tables, graphs, diagrams and website navigation menus).

**Writing 8 – IV** Write a paragraph to explain information in a table, graph, flow chart or diagram.

**Teacher's notes:** *The following survey is made up of questions that were included in the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. At the end of this survey, there are graphs that show how these same questions were answered by the urban Aboriginal participants. This activity gives students a chance to better understand the opinions and aspirations of some urban Aboriginal people and compare them to their own. Teachers can also ask students to create their own graphs/tables based on the answers of the class and write a paragraph that compares the class answers to the answers given in the study.*

## 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?

## The Real Stories

### CLB Competency

**Reading 8 – IV** Understand moderately complex extended descriptions, feature articles, reports and narrations.

**Reading 8 – IV** Access, locate and integrate several pieces of information from relevant online reference sources.

**Writing 7 – IV** Write 2 or 3 connected paragraphs to relate a familiar sequence of events, make a comparison, or provide a detailed description of a person, system, routine or procedure.

**Writing 8 – II** Reduce a text of up to about 2 pages to an outline or summary.

### Read and share

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

#### Brian Jungen (Partner A)

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.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup>

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>

## Read and share

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

### A Tribe Called Red (Partner B)

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.”<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

<b>Grahame Greene</b>	<b>Elijah Harper</b>	<b>Adam Beach</b>
<b>Phil Fontaine</b>	<b>Roy Henry Vickers</b>	<b>Evan Adams</b>
<b>Susan Point</b>	<b>Chief Dan George</b>	<b>Tantoo Cardinal</b>
<b>Bill Reid</b>	<b>Buffy Sainte-Marie</b>	<b>Corrine Hunt</b>
<b>Neil Diamond (filmmaker)</b>	<b>Ted Nolan</b>	<b>Steven Point</b>
<b>Jordin Tootoo</b>	<b>Gary Farmer</b>	<b>Jeanette Armstrong</b>
<b>Richard Van Camp</b>	<b>Shawn Atleo</b>	<b>Chief Justice Murray Sinclair</b>

**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.

<b>adaptable</b>	<b>competent</b>	<b>dynamic</b>	<b>optimistic</b>
<b>compassionate</b>	<b>diplomatic</b>	<b>knowledgeable</b>	<b>resourceful</b>
<b>diligent</b>	<b>inspiring</b>	<b>self-assured</b>	
<b>innovative</b>	<b>persistent</b>	<b>daring</b>	
<b>passionate</b>	<b>articulate</b>	<b>decisive</b>	
<b>ambitious</b>	<b>conscientious</b>	<b>influential</b>	

**Teacher's note:** *On the following page, there is a note-taking form that students can fill in while doing their research. This form is not included in the student materials.*

### Research Note-Taking Sheet

Fill in this form with relevant information about the person you are researching. To avoid plagiarizing, write in point form using your own words rather than copying full sentences from your sources.

Name:	Education / Occupation:
This person is from: (Nation / province / city / town)	Languages:
Accomplishments / achievements:	
Adjective #1:	Examples to support your choice:
Adjective #2:	Examples to support your choice:
Adjective #3:	Examples to support your choice:
Ways of debunking common stereotypes and misconceptions:	

# My Perspective

## CLB Competency

**Speaking 8 – III** Propose or recommend solutions to problems in a familiar area.

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

**Writing 8 – IV** Write 3 or 4 connected paragraphs to relate a historical event, provide a detailed description of a phenomenon, explain a procedure, or express and analyze opinions on a familiar abstract topic.

## Projects & Assignments

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

**Teacher's note:** *The following tasks are meant to give students a chance to reflect on the information they've learned in this unit and apply some of these ideas to their own lives. Teachers should use their discretion when choosing which and/or how many activities to do with their class. Also, if activities such as research, report writing and essay writing have not been done in class previously, teachers are encouraged to break tasks 2 and 3 down into specific steps and teach the necessary skills to successfully complete each step.*

### 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

### CLB Competency

**Speaking 8 – IV** Give detailed information; express and qualify opinions or concerns; present solutions and options; indicate opposition or support for a stand in one-on-one interactions and small group discussions or meetings.

**Reading 8 – IV** Understand moderately complex extended descriptions, feature articles, reports and narrations.

**Writing 8 – II** Reduce a text of up to about 2 pages to an outline or summary. (Topic is of personal relevance and may be related to a specialized field.)

### 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.

## Resources for Teachers

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### Films

The following films were written and directed by Aboriginal people. Ss could watch one or more of these films at home or with the class, and discuss key themes, plot and characters.

*Reel Injun* (2009) is a documentary by Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond that explores the portrayal of Native Americans in film.

- <http://www.reelinjunthemovie.com>

"I'm Not the Indian You Had in Mind" (2007) by Thomas King, professor of creative writing at the University of Guelph, is a 6 minute spoken word poem that challenges some of the stereotypical images of First Nations people in the media.

- <http://www.nsi-canada.ca/2012/03/im-not-the-indian-you-had-in-mind/>

Activity Suggestion: Ss could read and discuss the poem first, then watch the video.

*Smoke Signals* (1998) is an award-winning movie directed by Chris Eyre and written by Sherman Alexie. It is a funny, witty, coming-of-age story about 2 young Aboriginal men.

### TV

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) has TV programs that feature real Aboriginal actors and news reports that discuss issues and events from an Aboriginal perspective.

- <http://www.aptn.ca>
- <http://aptn.ca/pages/news>

### Magazine

*SAY Magazine*

- <http://www.saymag.com/index.phtml>

### Website

The BC Archive has created this excellent website about BC First Nations. It includes brief descriptions of BC First Nations' who occupied different territories of BC. It includes information on the cultures and social, political and economic structures. It also includes information on how these societies changed after contact with European settlers. It includes a variety of archival pictures as well. Use the "forward" arrow at the bottom of each page to access information on different topics. It could be a very useful website for a research project into the lifestyle of BC's Aboriginal peoples before contact, or the changes that these communities experienced after contact.

- <http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/exhibits/timemach/galler07/frames/index.htm>

If this link does not work, try using a search engine with these terms: "BC archives + First Nations," or "BC Archives time machine + First Nations."

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