



COMMUNITY

A community is more than the land on which you live, work and play. There are many things from your own communities, culture, identity and upbringing that have shaped who you are today, and who you will be tomorrow. Take a moment to reflect. Think about the people, the [languages](#), the [cultures](#), the land ([geography](#)), the [shared stories](#) and customary practices and celebrations that have influenced you in your life. These are integral components of how a community helped create your story and shape your identity, your beliefs, your traditions and your worldview. Each community member should feel a sense of belonging, pride and empowerment. Ask yourself: “[Where do you come from?](#)” Where you come from is more than just a location on a [map](#); it is also a part of your story and helps to form your cultural identity and your relationship to the land and to all living things (humans, animals, insects, plants, water).

Due to [Western colonial practices](#), policies, laws and a long [history of discrimination](#) that were intentionally inflicted on Indigenous Peoples, many First Nations, Métis and Inuit were negatively impacted. The [effects of colonization](#), including the Residential School system, are immeasurable and have left [intergenerational impacts](#). However, the strength and perseverance of Indigenous Peoples is incredible and the power of the collective unification in healing and standing for justice is also prevalent. The [mindset of domination](#) over land and people is not a new construct and has created an imbalance in relationships with one another and with the land. There is a need for restoration and balance. Collectively, we can work together by recognizing the historical and current relationship between Canada and the Indigenous Peoples, and work towards creating communities that embrace shared responsibilities of caring for the land and each other.

Indigenous [worldviews on health and wellness](#) includes that each member of the community, young and old, has a role to play and a responsibility to take care of one another and the environment. For instance, [Traditional Knowledge Keepers](#) (Elders, Métis Senators and Knowledge Holders) are respected members of any age who have been chosen by the community for their ability to impart profound and useful knowledge for the betterment and livelihood of their people and the environment. They are responsible for healing the community and connecting the past to the present and the future. The community grows stronger through the sharing of knowledge, stories and histories of the land. To keep the [community healthy](#), each member must promote healing and wellness by learning to take care of self, of family, of community, and most importantly, the land on which all in the community live, work and play.



A strong and healthy community relies on relationships built on mutual trust and respect. These relationships start with self then extend outwards to others and the land, including the [water](#), the [plants](#) and the animals sharing the land. It is an individual and collective responsibility to develop and maintain a healthy relationship with the land. The land gives us everything we need to survive and to create a healthy community. It is that relationship to land that centres the culture of community. Going beyond a land acknowledgment is to honour our communities. Look within, acknowledge where you've come from and the rich history and worldviews that have shaped you into who you are today. Creating meaningful relationships with the Indigenous Peoples in your region is one way to acknowledge the collective strength of the community and our [shared responsibility](#) to protecting the land. Knowing where we come from and where our ancestors have walked before us helps us better understand our role and responsibility to the community. Through our relationships with others, we build healthy communities and reaffirm our responsibility to maintain a loving and respectful relationship with the land. By examining our relationship to the land on which we live, learn and play, we learn our responsibility to take care of the land. We do this for future generations by building more sustainable, loving, nurturing, safe, healthy, diverse and thriving communities that are imbued with respect for the land.

Activity 1: Getting to the Heart of the Community

To explore what a healthy community is and how we are all [connected](#) to the land.

Instructions:

1. Divide students into small groups.
2. Invite each group to collaborate and create a definition of what community means.
3. Use the following prompts to initiate group discussion:
 - Who lives in the community?
 - What actions, events, celebrations or values do members in the community share?
 - How do members interact to form their community?
4. Each group will write their definition on paper and verbally share with the class.
5. After each group has shared, invite students to respond to the following questions:
 - What makes a healthy community?
 - What words or ways do community members support one another?
 - How does the community rely on the land (natural environment)?
 - What relationships do humans share with non-humans?
 - How do people show respect to the land and others?
 - What makes you healthy (mind, body, spirit)?

