

IDENTITY

Identity is complicated. Who we are, where we come from, our paternal/maternal relations, what our caregivers experienced, among other things, all make up personal identity.

Indigenous identity refers to the cultural and historical identity of Indigenous Peoples, which encompasses the beliefs, traditions, customs, and practices passed down through generations. Indigenous identity is often linked to specific territories and is rooted in connections to the land, culture, language, and community.

For Indigenous Peoples, this is not just a personal or individual characteristic, but is also a political and legal category. Indigenous identity is recognized and protected by international law, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous identity is also shaped by experiences of colonization, including the forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from their lands, the imposition of foreign laws and cultures, and residential schools.

Today, Indigenous identity is an important part of self-determination and sovereignty movements. Many Indigenous Peoples see their identity as a key aspect of their resistance against ongoing colonization and the assertion of rights to self-determination, lands, resources, and cultural heritage. For many, the maintenance and revitalization of cultural traditions, practices, and languages is seen as crucial to survival as distinct peoples.



Students and staff at Port Elgin Regional School, Port Elgin, NB learn a traditional dance with Mi'kmaw fiddler and singer, Morgan Toney, who brings together the fiddling of Cape Breton with the old songs of the Mi'kmaq.



École St. Patrick High School, Yellowknife, NT, "Feeding of the Fire Ceremony" in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.



**Learn more
about Identity.**

Inquiry Questions

1. What is Indigenous identity?
2. Why is it important for people to be able to self-identify as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis?
3. How does community, ancestry, or belonging to a band influence identity?
4. As a result of the Indian Act, many women and their children lost their Indian Status with the Canadian government. Why do you think this happened?
5. How does First Nations, Inuit, and Métis identity change throughout Canada?
6. How do Indigenous Peoples contribute to Canada's identity as a nation?
7. Why would someone pretend to be Indigenous and why is this harmful?