The Names We Carry: Identity in a memoir and a contemporary poem

NBE3U, Unit 1: Where We Stand, Lesson 8. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

Identity is built from many things: names, family, land, language, community and choices. A memoir from 1902 and a contemporary poem show how a person's identity can be given, earned, taken away and reclaimed.

What students do: Students read the opening of Charles Eastman's Indian Boyhood (1902), in which he explains his first name, Hakadah, and the name he later earned; read a teacher-chosen contemporary poem by a First Nations, Métis or Inuit poet about identity; map the sources of identity in each; and write and share a short reflection on their own name or identity.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
A1.3	identify and explain diverse themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identities, as reflected in various Indigenous text forms, and, as appropriate, in relevant non-Indigenous texts
C1.1	read a variety of student- and teacher-selected contemporary texts from diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources and historical texts, identifying specific purposes for reading
B3.1	orally communicate information and ideas related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and/or perspectives for a range of purposes, using language and following social codes appropriate for the intended purpose and audience

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning how texts explore identity. • We are learning to share ideas clearly in conversation.	• I can identify the sources of identity in a text. • I can compare how two texts from different times explore identity. • I can set a purpose for reading. • I can share a short reflection clearly with a partner.

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Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** The Names We Carry deck.
- **Handouts:** Identity Map (page 1), My Name (page 2).
- **Texts:** Eastman, Indian Boyhood (1902), opening (on the slide and page 1); a teacher-chosen poem about identity by a First Nations, Métis or Inuit poet from board-approved resources (for example, from the poets listed below).

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Warm-up**	Where names come from.	Discuss.	
8–25	**Eastman**	Hakadah.	Read.	
25–45	**The poem**	Teacher-chosen.	Read.	Sources of identity.
45–60	**Identity map**	Compare.	Map.	Comparison.
60–75	**My name**	Write and share.	Write; share.	Clear sharing.

Differentiation

- **Support:** Glossary for the Eastman passage.
- **ELL:** Read the poem aloud twice; provide a line-by-line paraphrase.
- **Challenge:** Compare a third text about names from your reading log.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Identity Map and pair sharing	Identity (A1.3), purposes for reading (C1.1) and speaking clearly (B3.1)

Names and identity: key points

- **Hakadah:** Eastman's first name meant “the pitiful last” because his mother died soon after his birth; he had to earn a better one.
- **Earned names:** In Dakota tradition as he describes it, names mark passages in a life; he later earned the name Ohiyesa, “the winner.”
- **Two names, two worlds:** As a young man he took the name Charles Alexander Eastman, linking his identity to two cultures.
- **Sources of identity:** Names, family (his grandmother), land, language, community, and choices.
- **The poem:** Answers depend on the poem chosen; look for how the poet claims or reclaims identity.

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Teacher notes

- This course discusses colonization, residential schools and their effects. Some students and families carry this history personally. Support: Hope for Wellness Help Line (for Indigenous people across Canada, 24/7, by phone or online chat at hopeforwellness.ca; English and French, with Cree, Ojibway and Inuktut on request at certain times), 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868; 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline (call or text 988); National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419.
- Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), Santee Dakota (1858–1939), was born near Redwood Falls, Minnesota; after the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 his grandmother and uncle raised him in exile in Manitoba until his father returned when he was about fifteen. He became a physician and wrote Indian Boyhood (1902). He earned the name Ohiyesa, “the winner.”
- Zitkála-Šá (Yankton Dakota) and Charles Eastman (Santee Dakota) wrote in the United States. Dakota homelands cross today's border, and Eastman spent his boyhood in exile in Manitoba after the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862. Their accounts of U.S. boarding schools are context for, not the same as, Canada's residential school system.
- Johnson, Zitkála-Šá and Eastman are historical writers (they died in 1913, 1938 and 1939). We read them as historical context: Indigenous writers who answered settler audiences a century ago. The course's contemporary voices are First Nations, Métis and Inuit creators chosen by the teacher.
- Choose a contemporary poem about identity from board-approved resources, for example by Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer (Cree), Marilyn Dumont (Cree and Métis) or Katherena Vermette (Red River Métis). Preview it. Do not reproduce copyrighted poems in handouts unless your board's licence allows; project or read them from the book.
- Writing about one's own name is optional; offer an alternative (a name of a place, a team or a character). Do not ask Indigenous students to speak for their communities, to share personal or family histories, or to act as experts. Every student's participation in sharing is optional.
- Historical texts use the words of their time, including terms now considered offensive (for example, “Red-skin,” “savage,” “squaw,” “half-breed,” “Eskimo”). We quote accurately when analysing, explain why these terms are harmful, and use today's terms (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous, or the specific Nation) in our own words. Readers may say “[skip]” instead of reading a slur aloud.

Coming up

Lesson 9, Self-Determination.

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