

iam...

Digital Storytelling Research Project

Lesson Plans for Students from Grades 9 to 12

A project by

**Toronto
Metropolitan
University**

**Canada Excellence
Research Chair in
Migration & Integration**

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INTRODUCTION

i am... is a Digital Storytelling Research Project of the [Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration program](#) at the Toronto Metropolitan University, and is led by the program Chair [Anna Triandafyllidou](#) and Gemini award-winning filmmaker and scholar [Cyrus Sundar Singh](#). The project was created to explore our individual and collective sense of identity and belonging within Canada.

In the fall of 2020, *i am...* invited 28 graduate students from across the country to produce a short film about their lived experiences and asked them to address three questions: How do you see yourself? How are you seen by others? How do you wish to be seen? The project resulted in 28 personal narratives that provide a glimpse into the complexities of navigating intolerance, exclusion and racism as citizens and newcomers. The collection of completed films comes at a time when we urgently need to better understand identity and belonging in the context of pandemic vulnerabilities, bigotry, anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism in Canada (and internationally.)

Recognizing that the *i am...* films were a valuable resource that educators could use to introduce important concepts of diversity and inclusion into the classroom, CERC Migration commissioned educators **Cynthia Grant** and **Amita Handa** (see their biographies page 42) to produce this teacher's guide.

The Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration program is led by [Anna Triandafyllidou](#). The research program, based at the Toronto Metropolitan University in downtown Toronto, has the mission to explore the links between migration and post-migration processes, voluntary and involuntary movement, domestic and global migration, and the role of countries of origin and diaspora. CERC Migration pays special attention to Canadian realities while also engaging in comparative research with and among other countries in various global regions.

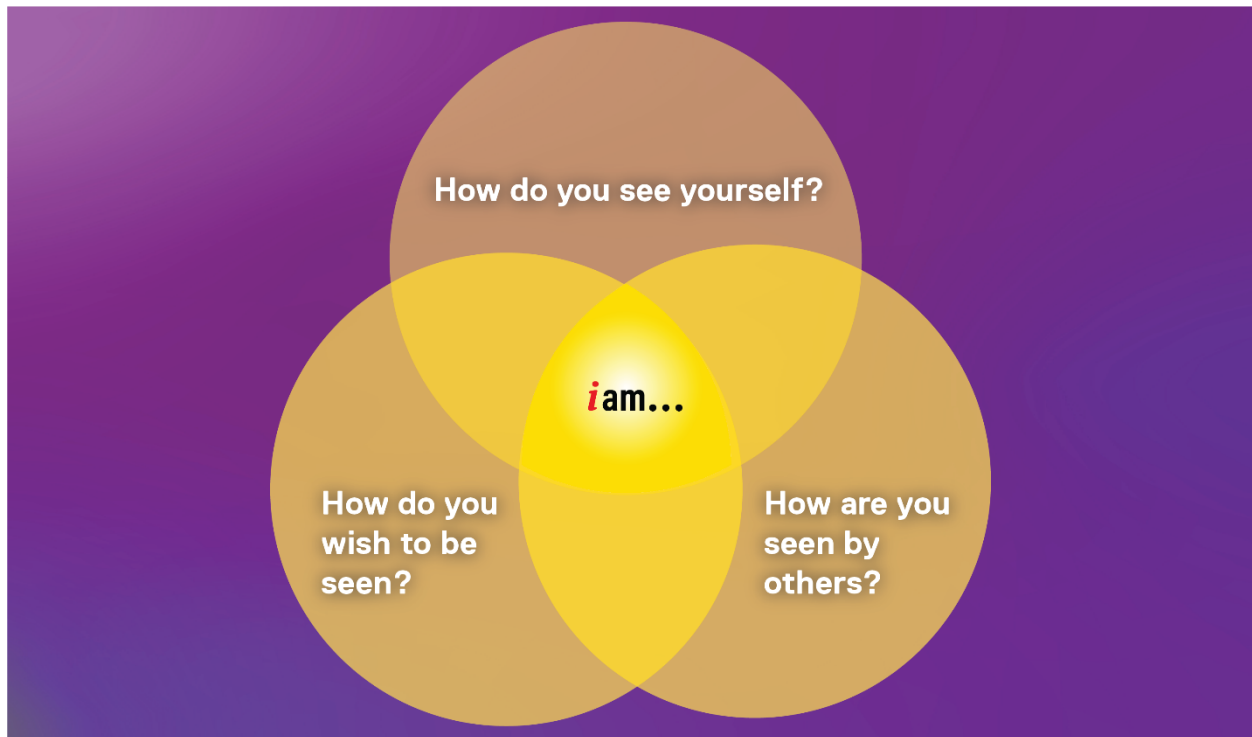




Purpose of this guide

This guide is designed to help teachers, administrators, students and communities explore the themes and concepts of the 28 short films presented in the *iam...* project.

The films weave together a tapestry of identity and belonging in Canada today and provide transformative teaching possibilities for teachers. They were developed through workshops conducted by Gemini Award-winning filmmaker and scholar Cyrus Sundar Singh, who charged the filmmakers to explore three key questions of identity and belonging:



The aim of this guide is to help teachers and other users challenge systems of inequity and exclusion, and foster a sense of equity and inclusion in their classroom that works toward affirming every student's sense of well-being and belonging. This guide will:

- Support teachers, administrators and students
- Challenge systems of inequity and exclusion
- Foster a sense of inclusion, well-being and belonging

Designed for students of grades 9 to 12, this guide provides lesson plans for students using a cross section of short films from the *iam...* project. The films explore various aspects of identity, belonging, and exclusion, often from marginalized voices.



Each lesson plan, for the most part, is designed so that teachers may use it as a stand-alone unit or as part of a series of lessons that build upon one another. As a series, the lessons can lead to a culminating assignment for which examples are presented at the end of this guide. The activities throughout the guide can be used in small or large group settings and may be adapted for the virtual classroom as well.

- Lesson plans can be used as stand-alone units.
- Lesson plans may be used as an entire series toward a culminating activity.
- Interactive activities are suitable for small and large groups, and can be adapted for virtual settings.

Who is this guide for: Subject areas and levels

Secondary school teachers may explore the topics and focus to determine which lessons are most suitable for their purposes. Suggestions are as follows:

- Teachers of English as a second language (ESL) and English courses will find most of the lessons in this guide useful. The early lessons in this guide, **Unit 1: Who Am I?** are more accessible for ESL courses and the Intermediate-level secondary English courses.
- Grade 9 Geography teachers may find that the exploration of **Unit 1, Culture and traditions** complements their work in the classroom.
- Social Science teachers will find that the lessons with a focus on stereotypes, discrimination and racism in the **Unit 2: How Am I Seen?** section will engage and challenge their students.
- Arts teachers will find that the early lessons may be a suitable catalyst for the production of creative work. In addition, **Unit 2, Lesson 6: Home culture and peer culture** provides an engaging way to encourage self-expression in an arts class.
- Teachers in varied disciplines may utilize the lessons to engage their classes in a process that culminates in the production of student work. The product might be in visual arts, spoken word, dance or theatre. The **Culminating Activities** page indicates many possibilities for substantial project assignments. As well, there are handouts, with suggestions for individual and group discussions. The themes of this project could be investigated from a multitude of approaches. This guide provides a number of concrete options.



The lessons have been designed to support teachers in the classroom in leading important discussions on equity, inclusion and racism. However, educators need to continue to follow guidance from the Ministry of Education, board equity policies and procedures, equity advisors and professional development in the area.

Pedagogy and research: The importance of youth identity

Young people are at a crucial stage of development in their lives. Piaget and Erickson identify common characteristics to the youth experience at this stage of life such as turbulence and doubt, a sense of growing awareness, alienation and experimentation, and liberation. More recently, psychologists have focused on concerns around anxiety and depression. Educator Wexler describes the period of teen years as a time of becoming somebody.¹

The teenage years, then, are a key time during which students ‘negotiate identity’ (as per the work of scholar Jim Cummins²), when they figure out who they are and must negotiate the sometimes quite different worlds of home, school and peer cultures.³ Schools and classrooms are a key site for young people making meaning of their lives and should serve as a space for exploration of self and identity.⁴

The process of migration, the consequent changes in economic and geographical ties, has profound implications for the understanding of identity. Identity, in this instance, has to be constructed outside the boundaries of a person’s country of origin and in relation to the diaspora, or a new home. The success of immigrants is often measured by the degree to which they assimilate to Canadian culture. But the process of assimilation, far from being voluntary, has been increasingly understood as coercive.⁵ What would be the price one would pay if they did not assimilate, in terms of bullying, discrimination and opportunities? Peer pressure must be seen within this framework.

¹ Wexler, P. (1992). *Becoming somebody: Toward a Social Psychology of school*. London; Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press.

² Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society* (1st ed.). Ontario, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.

³ Phelan, P., Davidson, A. L.; Yu, H. (1993). Students’ multiple worlds: Navigating the borders of family, peer, and school culture. In P. Phelan, & A. L. Davidson (Eds.), *Renegotiating cultural diversity in American schools* (pp. 52-88). New York: Teachers College Press.

⁴ Grant, C. (2008). *Identity Constructs: Creative expressions of cultural identity in the lives of young people*, Dissertation, University of Toronto.

⁵ Handa, A. (2003), *Of silk saris & mini-skirts: South Asian Girls Walk the Tightrope of Culture*, Toronto Women’s Press/Canadian Scholars Press.



Dominant narratives of what it means to be Canadian often equates Canadian with white-ness. The racial or ethnic other is seen as inferior, less than or backward. Adolescents from systemically marginalized and racialized groups, who are also grappling with their identities and surroundings, are often given the message that their parents and culture are socially undesirable and inadequate⁶.

This search for identity, the longing for and reinvention of home, takes place within the context of Canadian racism and assimilation. The status of immigrant parents may be diminished due to language barriers, economic dislocation and cultural practices outside the Canadian norm. This makes the challenges of identity formation even more complicated for their children⁷.

Identity is foundational in nurturing a sense of self, belonging, and culture. It also serves as a point of reference towards (mis)understanding the world around us locally and globally. Throughout our lives, how we are identified, individually or as a group, impedes or advances access and opportunity. Adding to this mix are colonial ideologies of race, skin colour, and ethnicity that serve to enslave, subjugate, and disenfranchise individuals or groups along racial lines. Thus, identity becomes layered and complicated. How we choose to be seen (identify) or how we are seen (identified) is critical to not only the quality of our lives but in extreme moments of bigotry, racism, and fear, may also become the difference between living and dying. (<https://www.torontomu.ca/cerc-migration/iam/>)

Arts, Identity and Creative Expression

Art and creative expression may play a vital and unique role in youth development, which has been recognized for some time by art therapists. In terms of cognitive development, psychologist Lev Vygotsky saw art as an exercise of thought and a means of expression as well as a release of anxieties surrounding identity. “Art releases an aspect of our psyche which finds no expression in our everyday lives.” (Vygotsky, 1970, p.244).

Arts-based explorations offer a positive space for the expression of ideas and representations for key questions of identity. The hope is that students enhance their

⁶ Tsolidis, G. (1960) Ethnic Minority Girls and Self-Esteem. In *Hearts and Minds: Self-Esteem and the Schooling of Girls*, ed.ed. J. Kenway and S. Willis (p. 60) London: Falmer Press.

⁷ Vygotsky, L.S. (1928). 1971 *The psychology of art*. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press.



understanding of themselves and others through the pedagogical possibilities offered here.

All 28 filmmakers in the *i am...* project have expressed unique aspects of themselves and their social identities by exploring the following three questions in their work:

- How do you see yourself?
- How are you seen by others?
- How do you wish to be seen?

In viewing, witnessing and responding to the films, the students may be inspired and engaged in creating and voicing their own narratives through multimedia. Exploring identity through creative expressions of writing, painting, photography, podcast, film, dance, drama or music – offers a special learning opportunity. Dewey wrote of this educational moment:

Knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than knowledge because it is combined with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience.... John Dewey⁸, page 302

With the exciting pedagogical possibilities offered by the *i am...* project, this guide encourages teachers to find questions that will engage students in their individual and collective journeys. Each lesson proposed provides ideas and suggestions for discussion as well as the basic understanding of some core concepts around identity and belonging, inclusion and exclusion.

A primary guiding principle in these units involves opening up space for the voices of the students as participants. The importance of voice cannot be emphasized enough. Research shows that **students who feel they have a voice in their classroom and school contexts are seven times more likely to be academically engaged than those who do not. Student voice also helps to support self-worth, cultural esteem and motivation in school.**⁹

Noted feminist educator bell hooks emphasizes how important it is for students to develop a sense of voice and how it leads to meaningful educational transformation:

⁸ Dewey, J., (1980) Art as experience. New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons. p.302).

⁹ Student Voice: A growing movement within education that benefits students and teachers. Downloaded at: <https://centerontransition.org/publications/download.cfm?id=61#:~:text=BENEFITS%20OF%20INCREASING%20STUDENT%20VOICE,Voice%20and%20Aspirations%2C%202016>



...only as subjects can we speak. Awareness of the need to speak, to voice the various dimensions of our lives, is one way [to begin] the process of education for critical consciousness.¹⁰ bell hooks, page 12

In that final phrase, she references the work of Paulo Freire quite obviously by echoing the title of one of his most important books *Education for Critical Consciousness*. As teachers, we have an obligation to open up the space for meaningful discussion and meaning-making. This takes place as students draw on and explore their lived realities.

When students arrive in Canada during their teens, this process is particularly difficult for a number of reasons:

- influences and pressures of peer culture are particularly strong
- time for language acquisition and integration is shortened
- sense of loss of friends and familiar cultural experiences may be profound
- discrimination based on various identities they may hold as newcomers, such as racism, and discrimination based on accent, place of ancestry, as English-language learners, etc.

Sometimes, the transition into the new culture produces tensions that are challenging. As teachers, we must be mindful of the sensitivity required with students who are new to the language and the culture as well as students who may be marginalized or excluded from the dominant culture for various reasons.

Activities are intended to valorize the home cultures of the students, their various identities and promote an inclusive classroom.

Note: This guide can be useful for all students who may not fit in for various reasons: for newcomers facing discrimination; and/or any students who are systemically marginalized due to various identities, including LGBTQ, racialized students, students with disabilities, who can find the teen years challenging.

¹⁰ Hooks, B. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press.





Unit 1 – Who Am I?

Overview

This unit begins with a soft introduction into understanding “Who am I?”, or, as the *i am...* project asks, “How do you see yourself?” The first lesson assists students in identifying themselves. In subsequent lessons, students will begin to understand that part of who they are is socially constructed and contributes to their social identity. Throughout this guide, students will begin to understand that there are differences between individual, chosen aspects of their identity and the ascribed, social aspects of their identity. For example, students will be able to distinguish between what they perceive as their individual personal preferences, hobbies and favorite foods versus those parts of their identities that have meaning outside in the world, such as their gender, sexuality or race. Students will understand that there are internal and external parts to their identity – how they see themselves and how the world sees them.

The following activity is an introduction to how they see themselves. It needs to be noted, however, even what we see as individual preferences, such as hobbies (tennis, golf vs. basketball) and foods (hamburgers and fries vs. curry and sushi) are racialized and are therefore not removed from the pressures of dominant culture, racism and discrimination.

Goal of this unit:

- To provide an understanding of the difference between individual chosen aspects of identity and social identities, which have social meaning and currency.

Unit 1, Lesson 1: Parts of my identity

Icebreaker activity:

Overview:

Students will work individually, then participate in an interactive activity to explore how they see themselves in pairs or in groups of three. Students will then share and engage in a large group discussion.

Materials:

Handout: (see page 12), paper, crayons/pencil crayons can also be provided. Make copies for students.

Time:

30-45 minutes





Instructions:

Students to **fill out Handout: Parts of my identity** (page 12). Ask students to put their name in the middle, and write their answers next to the circles, such as their favorite hobbies, birth order, etc. Students can also use crayons to decorate their diagram.

Teacher's tip:

Teachers can use the handout or get students to create their own. Teachers can modify the categories included in the identity wheel handout.

Pair share:

Once students fill out their diagram, they will form a pair or make a group of three if there is an odd student out and share parts of their identity wheel with each other.

Large group discussion:

Teachers will ask students who volunteer to share parts of their identity wheel.

Examples, provided below:

- Who speaks more than two languages, more than three languages? Would anyone like to share the languages they speak with us?
- Who has more than two siblings? More than three siblings?
- Does anyone have grandparents or other family members who are important members of their household? Who wants to share?
- Let's go around the room and hear about everyone's superpowers: Did you find it difficult to fill out parts of the diagram? Were there any parts of the diagram that didn't apply to you?

Take home message and further discussion points:

There is a difference between the parts of our identity that we feel are chosen such as hobbies, interests and personal likes and dislikes (though as mentioned before some of this has to do with dominant narratives around what is cool versus not cool) and other categories of our identity that are not chosen and ascribed, such as height, age, our perceived ethnic-racial identities, how much family wealth we are born into. In the case of the latter, certain identities are more valued by society than others. Questions to explore: is it more valued to be shorter or taller, have more wealth or less wealth, does society value the elderly over younger people?

Note: The teacher may wish to use the Flower Power exercise, a common resource in equity education, to further explore these concepts.





Unit 1, Lesson 1: Handout: Parts of my identity

Adapted from *Thoughts on Arting*: <http://www.thoughtsonarting.com/thoughts-on-arting/archives/12-2018>





Unit 1, Lesson 2: Culture and traditions

Overview:

Students learn to express themselves both orally and in writing in addition to the artistic activities suggested in these lessons. Specifically, they will

- have an opportunity to name and explain objects from their home cultures (which is used loosely here to mean any cultural artifacts or objects students feel are meaningful to their sense of identity, ancestry, culture or home)
- explore how their personal history affects their sense of self and the world
- be encouraged to express themselves artistically as a way to share their cultures
- have an opportunity to understand the cultures of other students.

Warm up activity:

Students, in small groups or pairs, are asked to think about objects or clothing that have meaning to them in terms of their culture or heritage. They can share this and also consider why those objects have meaning.

Films:

Three films are recommended for this lesson:

[Known in Land of Unknowns](https://bit.ly/3q4BaSg) <https://bit.ly/3q4BaSg> by Zehra Melike Palta

[My Traditions](https://bit.ly/3Q88dPU) <https://bit.ly/3Q88dPU> by Devon Sereda Goldie

[I am Fragrance](https://bit.ly/3B5ul3u) <https://bit.ly/3B5ul3u> by Arij Elmi

Teacher's tip:

Discussion topics are suggested below for each film. The teacher may facilitate extensive discussion or more limited discussion. Discussion should help students to make meaning of the films and to help them relate the films to their own experience of heritage and culture, immigration and sense of belonging. As well, discussion may encourage an exchange among students.

Depending on the classroom demographics, the teacher may decide to form small groups to discuss the films. The journal sheet provided at the end of the lesson may be adapted by the teacher depending on the level of English language in the classroom.



Activity: Watch film 1

[Known in Land of Unknowns](https://bit.ly/3q4BaSg) <https://bit.ly/3q4BaSg> by Zehra Melike Palta

Film description:

Students hear how Zehra followed her father who fled to Canada. (The experience of a parent coming to Canada first is an experience that many students may share.)

As a member of Alevi, an ethnic minority in Turkey, the musical instrument (baglama) is part of her identity and is a symbol of resistance. The filmmaker shows us (the viewers) her instrument as a symbol of her identity. She struggles with how to be accepted ...

“How I wish others would see me and accept me – expectations imposed on me to gain



the identity of being a Canadian.” Late in the film, she expresses a desire to belong and be accepted with a tear running down her face.

Discussion topics:

The musical instrument has deep meaning for the filmmaker. This may be discussed as a whole group to ensure that all students understand the significance. The teacher may note that the filmmaker came later – after her father had come to Canada.

In small groups, or as a class, students may continue to think about and discuss objects that are unique to their cultures (included on sheet).

Whole group discussion:

Why might the family come in stages to Canada or anywhere? List as many different reasons as possible.

What hardships might result? Can you think of how this is experienced by specific cultures in our community today? (i.e. the experience of Filipino and Caribbean families.)

Note:

Depending on the composition of the classroom, the teacher may generate further discussion. Students should be encouraged to share their stories while being mindful that some students do not wish to reveal their migration stories.

Additional teacher resources:

Baglama instrument:

1. <https://www.fethiyetimes.com/magazine/22480-saz-single-instrument-represents-turkish-folk-music.html>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1sUEQLC7f8&t=66s>



Activity: Watch film 2

[My Tradition](https://bit.ly/3Q88dPU) <https://bit.ly/3Q88dPU> by Devon Sereda Goldie

Film description

In this film, students see the filmmaker transform herself as she puts on the makeup and clothing of her Ukrainian culture. The message, as stated by Devon, is the reclaiming of her “heritage and identity.”

Discussion topics:

The focus of the discussion with the students is on their sense of culture and traditions related to their home cultures.

- Do you wear clothing that is traditional? When do you wear the clothing? How do you feel when you wear the clothing? Or, perhaps you see others wearing the clothing of your culture or their own. How do you feel about this?
- Do you think your school is multicultural? Is it acceptable to wear “cultural clothing” other than what is the Canadian norm? Is it only on special days? How comfortable would people feel wearing cultural clothing on a daily basis? What is



the cultural clothing of Canadians – students need to understand the dominant culture clothes and how wearing clothes outside the dominant culture could make students open to teasing, bullying, exclusion, feeling ‘singled-out’ or discrimination (This concept will be developed further in the next section with the *I am Fragrance Film*.)

Additional teacher resources:

1. On fashion industry targeting teens (this may be useful when discussing the handout): <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2021/7/19/22535050/gen-z-relationship-fast-fashion>
2. Driving teen egos--and buying--through 'branding': <https://www.apa.org/monitor/jun04/driving>



Activity: Watch film 3

[I am Fragrance](https://bit.ly/3B5ul3u) <https://bit.ly/3B5ul3u> by Arij Elmi

Film description:

In the beginning of this film, the filmmaker explores identity via speaking of "hands covered in henna and...I am a series of rituals". She describes herself as of "Somali descent". She speaks of hidden stories, universe in a bottle.

Teacher's tip:

On henna – the teacher should immediately acknowledge that henna is used across many cultures. The art of henna is called mehndi in Hindi and Urdu. Students may not know that the art of henna has been practiced in Pakistan, India, Africa and the Middle East for over 5000 years. Originally, henna was used for its natural cooling properties.

Additional teacher resource:

<https://www.herculture.org/blog/2016/5/3/henna-cultural-appreciation-or-cultural-appropriation>

Discussion topics:

Again, the film explores a cultural practice or custom that students may know from their home culture.

The teacher may wish to focus the theme discussion around belonging and identity.

- What objects and traditions are important?
- What is their significance?
- How do we gain a sense of belonging through these objects and traditions?

Teacher's tip:

The sheet below may be adapted by the teacher. The sheet is fairly simple so the teacher may wish to redesign the sheet. The sheet is proposed with ESL students in mind and may be changed based on the ESL level.



Unit 1, Lesson 2: Handout
Exploring our cultures. Guided journal writing.

In each film, the filmmakers include unique cultural objects that seem to symbolize or represent their distinct cultures.

1. For each film, talk about the “item” that is important to the filmmaker. (Please write a complete sentence.)

Zehra

Devon

Arij

2. Do you have clothing that is traditional that you wear or something else that is important to your culture? When do you use this or wear the clothing? Why is it important to you? (Write a paragraph.)
3. How do you feel a sense of belonging to your culture? If you are a newcomer, how do you connect to your culture?
4. What would be the traditional clothing of Canadians? (Most often, students will be wearing jeans, leggings, hoodies, t-shirts. Ask them if there is peer pressure when it comes to clothing? Do we really have free choice or are we most often guided by popular culture trends? (Use back of page if needed.)
5. What would happen if a student wanted to wear clothing not associated with their gender. Debating question: If you were a parent would you let your four-year old son wear a dress to school. Why or why not?





Teacher's tip:

When debriefing, point out that a large proportion of the world's population wears what we would consider in North America a dress/women's clothing, such as a kilt in Scotland, a lungi or dhoti in parts of South Asia and Dashiki, and Madiba shirts in parts of Africa. Students usually respond that this is cultural clothing – what about the cultural norm in Canada? It's also interesting to debate the question of whether students should have to wear uniforms. While students are usually on the side of freedom of choice and expression, they often change their position when it comes to gender and clothing.

Unit 1, Lesson 3: Remembering our histories and stories

Objectives:

Students learn to express themselves both orally and in writing, and through artistic activities designed by the teacher (see suggestions in the **culminating assignment** section at the end of this guide.)

- Students will have the opportunity to discuss their family's immigration stories.
- Students will discuss and understand some of the reasons why families immigrate.
- Students will have the opportunity to understand the cultures of others including the filmmakers and other students in their classroom.

Warm up activity:

Pair and share activity:

- Discuss with your partner the immigration stories in your family.
- What do you know about the stories of your ancestors around immigration?
- Indigenous people have been on this land for more than 15 thousand years.

Two films are recommended for this unit.



Activity: Watch film 1

[all that was broken](https://bit.ly/3Tt9eES) <https://bit.ly/3Tt9eES> by Tenzin Butsang

Film description:

In this film, the filmmaker uses old family footage of dancing and traditions. In the soundtrack (teacher may need to assist students with this), the viewer hears the news of Lhasa being destroyed. The Dalai Lama has left (teacher may wish to explain the significance of this). The family must immigrate to Canada. The father experiences loss and the mother experiences longing.



Discussion:

The filmmaker's family had to leave Tibet. Some families must leave due to conflict in the home country. The particular political situation may mean the family must leave.

- Do you know why you or your ancestors left their land to come to Canada?
- What are other reasons for people to decide to leave their home countries?
- Do we see this reflected in our community?
- What people right now are leaving different regions of the world?

This is a good opportunity to explain the difference between refugees and those who immigrate for other reasons. Teachers may build on the examples relevant to this and acknowledge that students in the room may know this due to their own experiences. Currently, due to war or its aftermath, there are several countries in the world where people are leaving (for example, Ukraine, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan.) In different eras, other communities have fled their homelands, including the Tamils of Sri Lanka, Somalian refugees, and many more from Asia and Africa. Back in the 1800s the Irish were forced to migrate during the famine.

Artistic questions:

How can you create a film of old family movies/clips? What footage might you use for your story?

Additional teacher resources:

Dalai Lama:

1. <https://time.com/3742242/dalai-lama-1959/>
2. <https://www.dalailama.com/the-dalai-lama/biography-and-daily-life/birth-to-exile>

Refugees:

1. UNHCR's Teaching About Refugees <https://www.unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees>



Activity: Watch film 2

[in-between](https://bit.ly/3B5Y5mc) <https://bit.ly/3B5Y5mc> by Nazanin Mirzadeh

Film description:

The filmmaker's story begins in the Emirates. There is film footage of fishermen and pearl divers from this time. The filmmaker's grandfather went from Iran to Dubai in 1963 where she was born. Later the filmmaker speaks of immigrating to Canada with her family.

Three generations are referred to in this film with each generation migrating.





Discussion:

As with the earlier film, students are encouraged to think about the immigration stories from their own families. The teacher may set up small groups or pairs to continue discussions of their stories.

Large group discussion:

- What does the title of the film mean?
- The filmmaker describes three generations of "in-betweeners"... "belonging to neither" culture. What do you think this means?
- She also says: "I also am in-between, I was born in one land, live in another but belong to neither..." What do you think this means?

Teacher's note:

We return to the concept of 'in between' in a subsequent lesson on negotiating identities.

Unit 1, Lesson 4: What's in a name?

In this lesson, we ask students to reflect on their names. Names are one of the fundamental and first ways in which we identify ourselves and others. But in schools and out in the world, how we choose to name ourselves and present our names is layered with ideas of who belongs and who may not.

Activity:

Who:

Entire class, all grade levels

How:

In pairs or in groups of three if there is an odd person out

Materials:

No materials needed but students can use pen and paper to write if needed.

Time:

10-15 minutes

Instructions:

Step 1:

Ask students to **pair up, or assign pairs**. This activity is also a good icebreaker and helps students who normally wouldn't interact with each other learn about each other in a fun interactive way.





Once in pairs **students will take turns answering the following questions:**

- Who named you?
- Does your name have a meaning or funny story behind it?
- Do you know the ethnic origin of your name?
- Has your name ever been mis-pronounced?

Once a student completes all the questions, the other student will answer the questions.

Step 2:

Ask students to come back to the large group format. Students will present their partners name, who named them, etc., to the large group and vice versa. If you have time you can do the whole class. If it's a large group, you may want to limit the sharing. You will be surprised how much students love talking about their names.

Step 3:

Large group discussion questions:

- a) Ask students to reflect upon in what circumstances may people want to change their name? Are there some acceptable and unacceptable names?
- b) Why might people feel the need to change their names?

Step 4:



Watch film

[Can I Just Call You Sue?](https://bit.ly/3KCruYy) <https://bit.ly/3KCruYy> by Soo Kyung Min

Film description

The filmmaker begins with her mother singing a children's nursery song in Korean. Then she speaks of belonging: Blue Jays, skating, hair colour, in-home language. She mentions her Asian eyes, forks and knives, the pressure to belong, her Asian name. The film builds in a cacophony of sounds which climax with a shattering sound.

The film captures the dilemma of fitting in as an immigrant living in mainstream Canadian society. It asks questions, such as "Don't you have an English name that is easier? ...Why don't you use forks and knives? They are so much more convenient. Don't you know how to use them?"

The film shows the protagonist being divided into different percentages of 'Canadian-ness.' At the beginning of the film she is 0% Canadian, as she watches the Blue Jays,





she goes up to 47%, then when she uses a blonde hair wig, up to 70%, at the end, she ends with the statement I am 100%.

Activity:

Ask students to watch the film again slowly in pairs in front of computers or watch again on the large screen pausing at certain moments. Students are to be given the following questions as a handout to aid their discussion in either pairs or small groups (or a breakout room if virtual). Alternatively, take up the questions with the larger group.

Discussion questions:

- a) Is there shame related to names when it comes to culture? Why may some students feel pressure to anglicize their names? Is this fair?
- b) At the beginning of the film, the sign reads I am 0% Canadian, during the rest of the film, what are some factors that Canadian-ness is measured against (answer key: you don't skate, you need lighter hair, you need prettier eyes – as in blue contact lenses, you don't know how to use a knife, a fork)
- c) When Soo at the end of the film says she is 100% – what does she mean?
- d) Overall, what do you think the filmmaker was trying to say?

Take home message:

Our names tell a unique story about who we are and our ancestry. However, our names, depending on our origins and due to racism and exclusion, can make us feel inferior and singled out. How can we as a class and school make sure this doesn't happen? By pronouncing students' names correctly, you can foster a sense of belonging and build positive relationships in the classroom, which are crucial for healthy social, psychological, and educational outcomes. In this lesson on names, we begin to understand how we see ourselves through our names, and how we may be seen by others. The next Unit explores the question, How Am I Seen?

Additional teacher resources:

Teachers may find the following resources useful, including a toolkit below. Several classes can be spent on discussing various aspects of names, identity and inclusion.

1. "Teachers, please learn our names!: racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom":
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13613324.2012.674026>
2. <https://www.mynamemyidentity.org/>



Unit 2 – How Am I Seen?

Overview

In this unit, students begin to understand the notion of social identities and the idea of visible and invisible identities. The unit also looks at how society gives certain aspects of our identity value. Students will also examine the idea of living in-between identities, and the impact of stereotyping and racism.

Goal of this unit:

- To generate an understanding of how the world around us works to construct identity.

Unit 2, Lesson 1: Social identities, categories & expectations

Activity: Watch film

[Pirates Don't Meow](https://bit.ly/3AIRpJy) <https://bit.ly/3AIRpJy> by Danah Elsayed

Film description:

The filmmaker speaks of visible identities. She begins by showing pictures of children as she speaks of the pressure to celebrate Halloween and the sounds associated with the costumes (thus, the title of film). She, as a child, did not wear a Halloween costume and was asked why and then she was provided with a costume. Years later, she begins to wear a hijab and, through this, her social identity becomes visible.

Discussion (large group):

Ask students to identify some of the themes of the film. Danah speaks of the pressure to fit in with accepted “Canadian” customs, such as Halloween. Ask students about this kind of peer pressure to assimilate? Can people think of other examples in the school where people may feel pressure to assimilate (example: the last lesson spoke about the pressure to anglicize names in order to fit in.)

Brainstorm: (large group or in pairs)

- Ask student to identify the different reasons students get teased or made fun of – such as accent, height, ability, race, religion, ethnicity, etc.
- Then create a two-column list of what a person may feel when they are excluded (such as angry, frustrated, lonely, depressed, low self-esteem) on one side of the page. Ask students to create a list of how students feel when they are included. (happy, confident, loved, accepted, etc.), on the other side of the page.



- How can students help to create a school environment that is inclusive and accepting? Ask students to generate ideas.

Discussion questions:

- What does Danah mean when she says pirates don't meow? How does her film create room for people who may not fit into the norm?
- Danah also speaks of visible versus invisible identities. Ask students if they can give some examples of visible and invisible identities.

Teacher example if needed: When you think of a person with a disability, what comes to mind? Students usually say a person in a wheelchair or a person who is blind. Draw attention to the fact that there are hidden disabilities, such as learning disabilities – such as dyslexia, that people may not see. Also speak about mixed-race people, for whom a part of their heritage may not be visible.

Activity:

Write the definition and points about social identity from the film on the board and discuss as a class:

Social identity: A series of negotiations between you and others in order to place you in a social category, like hipster, old dude, religious girl. It takes the most salient [obvious] part of your identity like wearing glasses, hair style, or hijab to categorize you. Once you are categorized, people expect you to act in a way that is consistent with your category.

Discussion questions:

- Even though social identities can be positive, such as I am a girl and proud, or LGBTQ, or religious, how can they be limiting according to Danah?
- Are there assumptions associated with people's social categories – or obvious parts of their identities, i.e. those who wear glasses, those who are in a wheelchair, etc.

Note: (If the teacher has time, watch Nicole Lee's film [How do you see me?](https://bit.ly/3TCLYUY) <https://bit.ly/3TCLYUY> which is an Indigenous perspective on invisible identities that shows that sometimes you are not accepted by dominant mainstream society or your own community. This also ties into those who may be mixed race, or an LGBTQ racialized person, for example.)



Unit 2, Lesson 2: Handout: Concepts of stereotypes, prejudice & discrimination

Source: *CALL IT WHAT IT IS: Handout from Harmony Movement, Educator’s Equity Workbook*

<https://www.harmony.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Equity-Workbook-sample-web.pdf>

Stereotype: A stereotype is an idea or belief that assumes the sameness of all members of a particular group. Stereotypes fail to recognize individual differences and attribute the same characteristic(s) to all members of a group. There is no such thing as a positive stereotype.

What are some of the stereotypes we see in the media about gender? About socio-economic status? Race? Ability? Age? Language? Sexual orientation? Mental and physical health? (For example, “pink is for girls” or “teenagers are lazy”.)

Prejudice: A prejudice is a prejudgment or assumption about a person or a group of people without adequate knowledge of who they are. It is an irrational thought or attitude, often based on stereotypes. Prejudices can affect someone’s behavior towards another person or group. An example of a prejudgment is assuming that someone will be a bad student because of the way he or she looks.

Can you think of a time when someone prejudged you before getting to know you?

Can you think of a time when you prejudged someone else? How did you feel when you discovered the truth?





Unit 2, Lesson 2 Handout (continued)

Discrimination: Discrimination is an action based on prejudiced attitudes. It is the unfair, or inequitable treatment of someone based on their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, socio-economic status, language, faith or other part of their identity, and it can be conscious or unconscious. To discriminate, one group must have social, economic and/or political power to affect another group.

Discrimination can be individual, such as imitating someone's accent, or spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation. It can also occur on a larger systemic level, involving policies and procedures which limit access to services or activities, such as charging money to join a school team or club. Students who face discrimination can feel unsafe and unaccepted at school, impeding their ability to learn.

What individual acts of discrimination have you seen at school?

What about examples of systemic discrimination?





Unit 2, Lesson 3: The impact of stereotypes

Overview

There are several films that explore identity in terms of how the filmmaker is seen. Often, the filmmaker speaks out of deep frustration or anger in how the outside world 'sees' them. The following films will examine how people are viewed externally and the impact of stereotyping and racism.



Activity: Watch film

[Existing is Exhausting](https://bit.ly/3TyCnyC) <https://bit.ly/3TyCnyC> by Sana Patel

Film description

The filmmaker explores how she is seen as a brown Muslim woman. Beginning from the standard, if inappropriate, question: "Where are you from?" She also asks "Who is gatekeeping Canadian-ness?" The film explores the impact of stereotypes on women who wear the hijab and that other aspects of their identity become invisible. The filmmaker captures this when she says, people "take one look at us and they are fixated on our cultural and religious identity."

Discussion questions

After the film, ask students the following questions:

- a) Could you relate to anything in the film?
- b) Sana asks, "What does a Canadian name sound like?" Ask students: Is there such a thing as a 'Canadian name'?
- c) Why do many people still think of Canadians as white European Canadians? Does this make sense?
- d) The use of the term 'exotic' is problematic. Why doesn't Sana like being referred to as exotic? Additional teacher resource on exotic: <https://www.rifemagazine.co.uk/2016/09/why-calling-me-exotic-isnt-a-compliment/>
- e) Ask students to reflect on stereotyping and how Sana addressed this in the film. For example, "I don't have to be saved and rescued, just because I am wearing a hijab." What does she mean by that?
- f) What are some assumptions or stereotypes people have about people wearing the hijab?
- g) What does the filmmaker mean in the film by "they take one look at us and they are fixated on our cultural and religious identity?"
- h) And, what does Sana mean in the film when they say, "I don't have the luxury to be complex?"



- i) What does Sana mean in the film, “This is all that people see” and the phrase “Existing is exhausting?”

Note: We will discuss this film again, under the section Negotiating Identities



Activity: Watch film

[How do you see me?](https://bit.ly/3TCLYUY) <https://bit.ly/3TCLYUY> by Nicole Lee

Film description:

The filmmaker is seen skating on a rink while the viewer hears an extended monologue about who she is and how she's seen. Nicole poses the question to the viewer: “When you think First Nations or Indigenous, what do you see?” Eventually, she sought to attain her status card, thereby asserting her identity. “This is me” and no one can tell me otherwise: she says. (She's challenging the viewers' idea of First Nations.) At the end of the film, she asks: “How do you see me?”

Discussion:

- “When you think of a First Nations or Indigenous person, how do you see me?” What do you think Nicole is trying to get at by asking this question?
- She seems excited to be getting her status card – do students know what a status card is? Please see teacher resource for more information on status card.
- Nicole feels nervous because she's not sure if her community identifies her as Indigenous – why may her community members not see her as Indigenous? (Teacher note: Point out there is no uniformity, when it comes to Indigenous peoples, or other identities, for that matter. We may ask: what does a real Indigenous person, Muslim person “look” like? — often these are based on assumptions.)

Teachers' resources:

What is an Indian Status Card:

1. https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/indian_status/
2. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/05/30/462683809/opinion-my-first-nations-identity-feels-more-like-an-absence>
3. <https://theconversation.com/stolen-identities-what-does-it-mean-to-be-indigenous-dont-call-me-resilient-podcast-ep-8-transcript-166252>





Unit 2, Lesson 4: Experiencing racism

In this lesson, students engage in discussing the experience of racism or stereotyping. Further, students consider the complex identities of the filmmakers and explore this within themselves.

Impact of racism

The impact of racism is life altering. There are many emotions which may come in response: anger, confusion and depression. Students need to become empathetic, particularly those students who are not likely to experience racism themselves.

The following films present powerful testaments surrounding the impact of racism.



Activity: Watch film

[Sad Boy](https://bit.ly/3QbpA29) <https://bit.ly/3QbpA29> by Donovan Hayden

Film description:

The filmmaker describes his response to racism which has resulted in depression or symptoms of depression. This powerful piece explains that the way in which he is seen as a black man is at the core of his inner conflict. The teacher may want to note the following lines/themes from the film for discussion later on:

“Exposed chest. But we don’t do that, I can’t do that...So I smile... I tried therapy...I used to tell people community was the solution for depression.”
Donovan speaks of voices in his head, including "get over it...I don't know when I will be happy again...Why should I be happy in a white world engulfed by a pandemic? I am done trying to be happy...How can I find community in a pandemic...I am done performing, it's more important I be honest with you and myself.”

Discussion:

This film provides a sensitive and honest portrayal of the reality of the connection between depression and racism.

Ask students to discuss the emotional response of the filmmaker in *Sad Boy*.

- What did you/the students learn about the connection between mental health and racism?
- What do you/students think about the idea that “we perform by putting on a smile when inside we may be feeling something else.” Could you relate to this either due to racism or due to mental health or any other identity?



- The filmmaker refers to Louis Armstrong – “a tired raw Black man, his chest exposed.” As an expression of internal conflict, Donovan says, “we don’t do that, I don’t do that.” The exposed chest leads to questions that lead to honesty, and honesty leads to vulnerability. What does Donovan mean by “we don’t do that”? To explore the Louis Armstrong reference further, please see link below.
- The filmmaker experiences racism with a therapist. This leads to the therapist’s awkward acknowledgement of her whiteness and privilege
- What is Donovan saying when he asks, “why should I be happy in a white world engulfed in a pandemic?”

Teacher resources:

Louis Armstrong:

1. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/what-louis-armstrong-really-thinks>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/dec/17/not-a-wonderful-world-louis-armstrong-was-hated-by-so-many>

Mental health: Impact on Black communities

1. https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2021-02/covid_19_tip_sheet%20health_in_black_communities_eng.pdf
2. <https://globalnews.ca/news/8661446/research-finds-pandemic-has-had-disproportionate-effect-on-mental-health-of-black-british-columbians/>



Activity: Watch film

<https://bit.ly/3TxXaIP> by Kadija Lodge-Tulloch

Film description:

This filmmaker describes herself as a Black Christian Activist. She asks, “Why is my Black existence a threat to your existence?” In her extended monologue, she asks, “How can I serve a god of love? Can I resolve my identity as a Black woman, as a Christian? How could I serve a god that loves within a world of so much hate? I can’t breathe”. She speaks about her inner turmoil and pain and hope in darkness and the injustices of society. Towards the end, she says, “Black Lives Matter and Christ matters.”



Discussion:

- Ask students if they feel it's acceptable, or even cool to be religious? Is it acceptable as a norm?
- What is the inner turmoil that Kadija experiences?
- What are the different parts of her identity that she is trying to negotiate and deal with?
- What does she mean, when she says, how can I serve a god that loves within a world that hates so much?
- What does she mean at the end when she says, Black Lives Matter, Christian Lives Matter?

Teacher resources:

Black Lives Matter, Why You Shouldn't Say All Lives Matter – a film with youth voices
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGLt7apJWS0>

We will pick up on the theme of living in between identities and negotiating identities in the following lessons.

Unit 2, Lesson 5: Exploration of belonging and living 'in-between'

Warm up question:

Can anyone relate to the idea of living in between, in terms of identity? (If not, the teacher will simply explain that the class will be learning more about this in the following lesson).

Warm up activity:

Teachers may generate more discussion by posting three sheets on which students may use post-it notes to indicate some of their ideas or impressions of the culture in the following categories: Home, school, and peer or popular culture.

As a follow-up activity, students fill out the following chart which asks them to list notable influences or cultural practices in their lives.





Unit 2, Lesson 5: Handout: Cultural influences

Home	School	Peer culture	Popular culture
<p>Routines:</p>	<p>Routines:</p>	<p>Routines:</p>	<p>Routines:</p>
<p>Expectations (examples):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals (together? All or some?) • Special occasion • Meals (birthday? Holidays?) • Helping with Chores <p>Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such as, take your shoes off when you enter • Bedtime • How loudly you can talk • Language you use to speak in • What words you can use (swearing, etc.) <p>List more:</p>	<p>Expectations (examples):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend class • Get to school on time <p>Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No running in the hallways • Permission to use washroom <p>List more:</p>	<p>Expectations (examples):</p> <p>Rules</p> <p>List more:</p>	<p>Expectations (examples):</p> <p>Rules</p> <p>List more:</p>





Discussion:

- Can I act the same way around my parents as I would around my friends?
- Can I act the same way around teachers as I would my friends?
- How is acting differently in different situations a sign of respect given the context?
- Have people ever heard of the idea of code switching based on the context?
- When does code switching become a survival technique?
 - Resource: (People of colour have to code switch to fit into white norms)
<https://metro.co.uk/2020/03/03/what-is-code-switching-12221478/>

Teacher's tip:

The discussion from this may be adapted depending on your particular classroom and demographics. For example, a class may enjoy meeting in groups based on their particular culture or this may not be appropriate due to concerns about inclusion and exclusion.

For those teaching ESL, newcomers may feel like they do not belong which can lead to feelings of loss, depression and alienation. Teachers need to be sensitive to the needs of the students in the room.

Additional teacher resource:

1. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2019/12/17/culture-code-switching>
2. <https://metro.co.uk/2020/03/03/what-is-code-switching-12221478/>

Unit 2, Lesson 6: Home culture and peer culture

Warm up activity:

- What activities do you love to do? (A review if you have done this already)
- Are those activities connected to your home culture?



Activity: Watch film

[Bboying](https://bit.ly/3CSsKoE) <https://bit.ly/3CSsKoE> by Steve Aeng

Film description:

In this film, the filmmaker focuses on his love of break dancing. He's a break boy and, through this, as he says, he is "expressing [him]self creatively and physically". Steve, who grew up in Windsor, loves this. At the end, viewers find out that he was born to Cambodian refugees.



Discussion:

- Did you like the film and find it effective?
- Were you at all surprised by this film?
- When Steve says that he was born to Cambodian refugees, how do you think his parents view his break dancing?
- Could there be tensions over this?

Journal assignment:

At this time, teachers may wish to ask students to complete a journal. The prompt questions and expectations should be adjusted based on grade level (or ESL level) and the maturity of the students. As well, the demographics of the classroom may affect the appropriate questions to generate meaningful reflection.

Prompts:

Please respond to the following points and questions:

- Think and write about your family over three generations and the changes that each generation faced. In some families, there was no immigration, but other changes took place.
- What about your situation? Are you in-between cultures? How so?
- With the idea that there are three cultures that you are navigating, discuss that and the tensions that may exist for you.





Unit 3 - Negotiating Identities

Overview

This unit explores the notion of 'living in between' and how people negotiate their identities. Some of this negotiating is complex and challenging. In other cases, the films show how people have made sense of their own identities and come to a sense of closure or comfort with their sense of self. In the latter case, the filmmakers were able to feel a sense of agency in being able to define themselves. The *i am...* project frames this question as, how do I wish to be seen?

Goal of this unit:

- To create an understanding of how we come to define our own sense of identity.

Unit 3, Lesson 1: Negotiating with others

We begin this lesson with Kaylee Downee's film where her narrative moves from the question: what are you? to, who are you?



Activity: Watch film

[Scotian to the Core](https://bit.ly/3Q3yIG9) <https://bit.ly/3Q3yIG9> by Kaylee Downee

Film description:

As a person who has a parent of African Nova Scotian descent, Kaylee informs the viewer that the community has been in Nova Scotia 400 years due to the North Atlantic Slave Trade. She describes Nova Scotia as the birthplace of Black Heritage in Canada. She also explains in the 1960s, there was a mass influx of Black Nova Scotians to Toronto.

Discussion:

- Kaylee speaks of Nova Scotia as the birthplace of Black Heritage in Canada. When we think of Black history in Canada, what have people been taught?
- What do you think of some of the questions she gets asked by people, such as: what are you? (I am Canadian); where are you from? what is your ethnicity? ...African Nova Scotian ...interesting, what is that?
- She says she often has to share the history of African Nova Scotians in Canada – why is this? Is this history common knowledge? Is it something that is taught?
- If we learn anything about Black Canadian history, it's often about the underground railroad – while this lasted about 30 years. Do people know that the history of slavery in Canada lasted over 200 years?



- What do you think of Kaylee’s definition of Canadian – Being Canadian to me looks like family, gatherings, food, culture and laughter
- How do you define Canadian – and who is Canadian?
- Do you think Kaylee has a sense of pride when she speaks of her heritage, why or why not?

Additional resources:

Note that the teacher must provide context for the transatlantic slave trade as an unfortunate but true part of colonial and Canadian history. This topic needs to be handled with sensitivity and care. This film could also be an opportunity to introduce the topic and stories of the Underground Railroad.

1. Legacies of colonialism and anti-Black racism
<https://etfvoice.ca/feature/learning-critically-address-anti-black-racism-voice-conversation-kike-ojo-thompson>
2. Transatlantic slave trade
<https://blackhistoryintwominutes.com/transatlantic-slave-trade/> (for teacher education)
3. History of slavery in Canada
<https://humanrights.ca/story/the-story-of-slavery-in-canadian-history>
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/canada-s-slavery-secret-the-whitewashing-of-200-years-of-enslavement-1.4726313>
4. Information on Africville and Black Nova Scotians
<https://africvillemuseum.org/africville-heritage-trust/the-story>

Unit 3, Lesson 2: Negotiating Islamophobia & self-identification

Overview:

For this lesson, the students will watch three separate films, each touching on how women negotiate their identities in relation to the hijab. The women discuss in various ways how Islamophobia plays a role in how they are seen as well as how they negotiate the cultural meaning of the hijab as individuals and within their families and communities. This lesson revisits two films Danah Elsayed’s *Pirates Don’t Meow* (Unit 2, Lesson 1) and Sana Patel’s *Existing is Exhausting* (discussed previously in Unit 2, Lesson 3). Note: for those who haven’t seen these films from a previous lesson, it’s okay to introduce them now. The third film referenced in this lesson is Nooreen Hussain’s film, *Luxury to be Complex*.

Activity: Watch films



Step 1:



Watch film:

[Pirates Don't Meow https://bit.ly/3AIRpJy](https://bit.ly/3AIRpJy) by Danah Elsayed (for description, see Unit 2, Lesson 1)

Film description:

The filmmaker speaks of visible identities. She begins by showing pictures of children as she speaks of the pressure to celebrate Halloween and the sounds associated with the costumes (thus, the title of film). She, as a child, did not wear a Halloween costume and was asked why and then she was provided with a costume. Years later, she begins to wear a hijab and, through this, her social identity becomes visible. Aside from invisible and visible identities, Danah speaks of how she went from wearing the hijab to not wearing the hijab.

Discussion:

- Are there any interesting points you noted about the film?
- What do you think about the filmmaker's journey in coming to the decision of wearing the hijab?
- How was she excluded from school activities when she was younger?
- How did wearing the hijab give her some comfort during Halloween?

Step 2:



Watch film:

[Luxury to be Complex https://bit.ly/3Rc9wi3](https://bit.ly/3Rc9wi3) by Nooreen Hussain

Film description:

Nooreen Hussain speaks about her journey of identity in *Luxury to be Complex*. After wearing the hijab in her formative years, she makes the difficult decision to stop wearing. In her reflection, she identifies that the connection to her cultural traditions made the decision much more difficult.

Discussion:

- Nooreen talks about no longer wearing the hijab after her father dies. This was a difficult choice for her, separating her from a very familiar, safe and comforting practice. Why do you think that is?
- Nooreen says, "My story is about finding liberation and making my own choices that reflect my own journey toward authenticity – losing a parent really challenges you." What do you think she means by this?
- Finally, Nooreen talks about how racialized people don't have the luxury to be complex. What does she mean by that? (Tip: racialized people are often seen



as having fixed identities. Danah also speaks about this in her film, of being defined only by the most salient or obvious features.)

- Nooreen also speaks of the ways western society looks at identity versus other societies (individual versus collective identity.) It is important to note here that one is not better than the other; it is just different. Also, it is important to note: Indigenous communities also operate from a sense of collectivity. For more information, please see:
https://www.nelson.com/assets/pdf/Circle_of_Life_Worldviews_Explained.pdf
- Compare the two films. What do you think about this journey of identity: one woman deciding to wear the hijab and the other woman deciding to unveil? Discuss the idea of visible and invisible identities.

Step 3:



Watch film:

[Existing is Exhausting](https://bit.ly/3TyCnyC) <https://bit.ly/3TyCnyC> by Sana Patel

Film description:

This film was introduced earlier in the section, in Unit 2, Lesson 3, The impact of stereotypes. The filmmaker explores how she is seen as a brown Muslim woman. Beginning from the standard, if inappropriate question, “Where are you from?” she also asks, “Who is gatekeeping Canadian-ness?” The film explores the impact of stereotypes on women who wear the hijab and that other aspects of their identity become invisible. The filmmaker captures this when she says, people “take one look at us and they are fixated on our cultural and religious identity.” However, here in this lesson, we also want to look at Sana’s film from the perspective of negotiating identity, how she is seen and how she wants to be seen, and in relation to the hijab.

Discussion:

- In this film, Sana says she does not have to be saved or rescued just because she wears the hijab – what does she mean by this?
- She also speaks about good Muslim vs. bad Muslim – discuss the expectations she may have inside her Muslim community.
- Finally, discuss how Sana wants to be seen, and also how does Danah and Nooreen wish to be seen?
- How are negotiating identities and expectations difficult?
- How do the filmmakers come to terms with their own sense of identity?
- Is identity fixed, or are some aspects of identity fluid? Can some aspects of identity change over time (such as our gender identities, our sexual orientations, our religious identities, etc.?)



Culminating Activities - Sharing your story and making meaning

Overview

If you have used this guide as a series of lessons and watched the *i am...* films, you can ask your students to prepare a culminating assignment.

Students can use the films from this unit as an entry point of possibilities in which to prepare a creative piece on their identities, personal and/or family traditions, or experience and impact of stereotyping and/or discrimination.

Students are encouraged to consider possibilities. The form may be:

- A storytelling either recorded or live
- Film possibilities:
 - using objects or old family movies/clips
 - Telling their story through silent images
 - Using stock film footage as in the film *Hey Siri*
 - Using cue cards
 - Scripting a dialogue or exchange between two people, as in *Existing is Exhausting*
- Photo collage (singular or multiple) with description.
- A PowerPoint presentation
- A skit or theatre piece
- A podcast
- Song or a sound composition/voice piece
- Spoken Word piece
- Dance

Students will work individually or in groups to create their culminating activity and present it to the class. Students can also present their culminating activity to students in younger grades. This can be a very beneficial model of learning – peer to peer education and can help to bring up the awareness of other students and also shift toward a more positive inclusive school culture.

Teachers can use the documents below to help students choose and create an outline for their presentation and the following document as a rubric for grading and assessment purposes. Both the culminating assignment outline and the rubric can be modified to suit the teacher's needs and context.





Culminating assignment outline

Outline	Please fill in the column
In what form would you like to present your culminating assignment? Film (recorded on a mobile device or other?), Photo Collage or Visual (if so, what kind – Skit, Voice Recording, Dance, PowerPoint?)	
Are you going to work in a group or independently?	
Which films/lessons inspired you?	
What aspect of identity would you like to explore?	
Write down some points around what you would like to express or discuss in your culminating activity?	
What support or supporting materials do you need? What kind of research will you need to develop your ideas or assignment? Will you be interviewing other people?	
Additional comments:	





Rubric for culminating assignment

Please complete the form below (where 4+=Exemplary, 4=Excellent, 3=Good, 2=Satisfactory, and 1=Needs Work)

Student name or student group:	Level and comment
Initiative: is able to initiate and begin the workshop and finds ways to solve any problem related to set up or beginning	
Social skills: polite, respectful and engages students in a positive manner and is able to set the tone of the workshop and make students feels comfortable	
Punctuality and attendance: ** very important**	
Workshop material: is prepared with material and supplies	
Enthusiasm and engagement: demonstrates an active interest	
Communication skills: verbal, non-verbal communication and active listening	
Role model: e.g., consistent, fair, patient, well-mannered, respectful, etc.	
Supports partners and shares leadership	
Comments	





Summary of *i am...* filmmakers and films

Steve Aeng | *Bboying*

Tenzin Butsang | *All that was broken*

Kalyee Downey | *Soctian to the Core*

Arij Elmi | *I am Fragrance*

Danah Elsayed | *Pirates Don't Meow*

Donavan Hayden | *Sad boy*

Karina Hincapié | *Las dos maletas*

Nooreen Hussain | *Luxury to be Complex*

Viveka Ichikawa | *Without Blur*

Hussein Janmohamed | *Husna (Beautiful/good)*

Neomi Jayaratne | *Acceptance*

Marycarmen Lara Villanueva | *M(other) Glitch*

Nicole Lee | *How do you see me?*

Kadija Lodge-Tulloch | *Light Piercing Through
Darkness*

Amelia Mrhar | *Inner Hobo*

Soo Kyung Min | *Can I just call you Sue?*

Nazanin Mirzadeh | *in-betweener*

Zehra Palta | *Known in the Land of Unknowns*

Sana Patel | *Existing is Exhausting*

Temi Phillips | *Beneath these Skins*

Yasmine Rabia | *Hey Siri*

Samita Sarwan | *The Price of my Blue Dress*

Philip Semple | *F.I.N.E.*

Devon Sereda Goldie | *My Tradition*

Chelsea Thomas | *Healing the School(ed) Girl*

Bruno Vompean | *Starting Out*

Eddy Wang | *Fragments of China/Canada*

Joel Zhang | *The Me I was Scared to See*

<https://www.torontomu.ca/iam/>



About the Authors

Cynthia Grant has an extensive background as a practitioner and scholar in both the arts and education. She was the Founding Artistic Director of Nightwood Theatre, a prominent feminist theatre company and the Company of Sirens, an educational theatre company specializing in presentations on gender-based violence and racial biases. Her graduate studies focused on the transformative power of the arts in community settings during her Master's in Education in Adult Education. Later, her graduate work focused on cultural identity among youth. Grant's dissertation, "Identity Constructs: Creative Expressions of Cultural Identities in the Lives of Young People", explores how creative projects with a focus on cultural identity provide a transformative pedagogy in school settings. As an educator, she has worked at McMaster University, Ottawa University and York University. Recently, she taught English, ESL and Drama for the Toronto District School Board.

Amita Handa has worked in the area of equity and anti-racism for 20 years. She is a researcher, educator and facilitator. With a doctorate in Sociology, she has developed expertise in the area of equity and anti-racism. Handa has taught courses at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson), University of Toronto and George Brown College and has for the past 15 years worked as Student Equity Advisor at the Toronto District School Board. As a skilled facilitator, she has learned to challenge and provoke critical analysis and reflection through courageous conversations in an environment that promotes respectful dialogue. Handa is also the author of "Of Silk Saris and Mini Skirts" which addresses the experiences of young, second-generation South Asian women in Canada, through the lens of race and gender. She is committed to issues of social justice and very passionate about her work.

Artistic Director

Cyrus Sundar Singh is an [AcademiCreActivist](#): a Gemini Award-winning filmmaker, scholar, songwriter, composer, poet, and changemaker who continues to expand conventional boundaries through his research, films and music. His productions have taken him across the world including India, Israel, Spain, Haiti, Jamaica, and Sri Lanka. On the foundation of his documentary/storytelling career that began with his Award-winning NFB debut [Film Club](#) (2001), Cyrus conceived and successfully produced the site-specific hybrid *live*-documentary world premieres [Brothers In The Kitchen](#) in 2016 as his MFA thesis project, two iterations of [Africville in Black and White](#) in 2017/18, and the virtual *live*-documentary *In the Wake of Time* (2021). His recent publications include: [Floating to the Lure of the Promised Land in Refuge in Canada: Narratives of](#)





[Dislocation](#) (2021); [How We See: The Colourization of Race in Gnosis: Journal of Philosophy](#) (2020). Cyrus serves on numerous boards and steering committees within Toronto's Community Housing neighbourhoods of Regent Park, St. James Town and Thorncliffe Park.

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