

Exploring Your Identity: What Makes You Who You Are?

This activity will help your students reflect on and express their individual development and identity through art. Exploration of individual development and identity is a major theme within the national curriculum standards for social studies. Students will identify factors important to their development, including environmental experiences that help form their ecological identity.

Objectives:

- To help students describe factors that are important to the development of personal identity
- To provide students a creative outlet to tell their own personal story
- To inspire students to foster an ecological connection to their surrounding environment

Materials:

- [Explore Your Identity Student Worksheet](#)
- Computer
- Speakers
- Printer
- Magazines
- Paper
- Pencils
- Colored pencils
- Paint
- Paint brushes
- Scissors
- Glue

Process:

- 1) To continue with the theme of cultural identity started in the Ancient Icons activity, the teacher will introduce students to a modern-day case study about the indigenous Tacana people of Bolivia.
 - a) The Tacana, one of several indigenous communities in Bolivia, predate the Inca empire. Today, the majority of Tacana people live on ancestral lands adjacent to Madidi National Park. The Tacana people are amongst the 2015 winners of the Equator Prize, awarded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to initiatives that protect the environment and reduce poverty. Members of the community have created and operate a land management plan that is meant to stop forest loss, mitigate climate change, and help protect the biodiversity of their ancestral and surrounding lands, including Madidi National Park.¹ Not only do they rely on the land for food and resources, but they also depend on it for their livelihoods. Even with direct resource ties to the land, the Tacana still manage to protect forests better than most. Studies have shown that deforestation rates in the Tacana territories are nearly 5 times lower than in neighboring, unmanaged areas.²

- 2) Have students watch a short [video](#) on the Tacana people so that they can hear the power of people telling their own stories.³ The video will also foreground the Tacana’s connection to land and highlight that connection as a substantial factor in shaping their cultural identity.
- 3) The teacher will highlight for students that cultures, both modern and ancient (e.g. the Tacana and Chavín), are influenced by the environment that surrounds them. *Note: “people, places, and environments” is another major theme of social studies instruction.*
- 4) As a fun way to engage students in explicitly talking about the development of identity, the teacher will show them this [video](#), highlighting animals from Madidi National Park.⁴ *Translation: “We are all originals...We are all wild...We are all Bolivians...We are all Madidi.”*
- 5) The teacher transitions into having students reflect on their own individual development and identity. Ask students the probing question, “What makes you who you are?” Allow students the opportunity to converse with a partner and come back as a whole-group and share out.
- 6) The teacher will then ask students to reflect on the following question: *Does your personal identity include nature?*
 - a) This can be a hard question for students, particularly in urban areas. However, the teacher should urge students to think beyond yes or no answers. Encourage them to reflect back on experiences that could have fostered a connection to nature. These could include:
 - i) Childhood places or memories
 - ii) Mentors or teachers
 - iii) Outdoor experiences
 - iv) Science related experiences
 - v) Books, poems, or movies
 - vi) Community/Stewardship events
- 7) Students will be tasked with making a visual collage made up of images that reflect who they are as people and/or the people they want to become.
 - a) Instruct students that they can draw, paint, or use existing images (personal photos, magazine/computer images, etc.) to make their collage. Encourage them to think about who/what have been important influences in their personal development (family, friends, school, where they are from, hobbies, talents, etc.). **Their challenge is to also include elements of nature that help shape their identity.**

Citations:

- 1) Equator Initiatives. Consejo Indígena Del Puelblo Tacana (CIPTA): Plurinational State of Bolivia. New York: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2018. Accessed March 27, 2019
<https://www.equatorinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CIPTA-Bolivia.pdf>.
- 2) Ibid., 7.
- 3) Equator Initiatives. “Consejo Indígena Del Puelblo Tacana, Bolivia – Equator Prize 2015 Winner.” Vimeo video, 06:21. February 9, 2016. <https://vimeo.com/album/3754626/video/154789177>
- 4) WCS Bolivia. “We are all Madidi.” YouTube video, 01:00. June 8, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=a8P98b3MpAQ