

Social Studies Inquiry Centre: Grade 9 Canadian Identity
Caitlin Foote

Learning centre topic and theme:

Canadian Identity, Unit 6, Reflections on Canadian Identity

Learning centre objectives:

9.6.1- Students will be expected to portray their personal understandings of Canadian identity

The purpose of this learning centre is to introduce students to different ideas/notions of Canadian identity. Students should gain an awareness of how we have individual parts of our Canadian identity and how we as a group, class, school, community, province, and nation share other aspects. This activity acts as a starting point for students to think about their personal Canadian identity and the intersectionality with their classmates.

Materials required:

- Selections from the 2008 IPSOS Reid and The Dominion Institute study, “Defining Canada: A Nation Chooses the 101 Things that Best Define Their Country” (Appendix A)
- A hallway or outdoor space for students to move around
- List of discussion questions (Appendix B)

Procedure:

1. Introduce students to Unit 6 in the New Brunswick social studies curriculum and the above outcome (9.6.1). Ensure students that each of us have our own unique, equally important views on Canadian identity and what is important to us. It is important to keep an open mind and to be respectful of our peer’s identities and opinions, even if we do not agree with them.
2. Introduce the “Defining Canada: A Nation Chooses the 101 Things that Best Define Their Country” study (Appendix A). This is a 2008 survey of the people, places, events, accomplishments, and symbols that Canadians thought defined their country. This study was conducted 12 years ago, so not all current perspectives are taken into account. Additionally, the selected sample is not truly representative of Canada as whole. Having a copy of the full study on hand is important to address any additional questions your students may have.
3. Explain to students that you have selected 10 items from the list of 101 Canadian things presented in the study. Tell them that in a moment you will be going out into the hallway. Students are to line up single file in a row facing down the hall. In the hallway, the teacher will read one-by-one each item on the list. If the student considers that item to be a part of their identity, they will take a step forward, if they do not, they will not move. The different positioning of students in the hall will represent the fact that not all of us share the same aspects of Canadian identity. A student may be asked to share (if comfortable) why they stepped forward or did not in order to recognize their personal connections. If time permits, students may share some of their own points of identity for other students to step forward to. Ensure everyone understand the directions. If a student is not Canadian, ask them to consider which items on the list they strongly associate with Canada and to step forward for those. Additionally, if a student does not step forward for any item, this could be a great jumping off point for a discussion about why not everyone identifies with what some consider to be staples of Canada.
4. Proceed to the hallway/outdoors to complete the activity.
5. Once the activity is complete, have a quick debrief session with a few pre-prepared questions to continue to spark an interest/questions about Canadian identity to connect to a follow-up lesson/activity (Appendix B).

Suggestions for extension activities:

- Have students conduct their own study within the school as to what the school population considers to be the biggest parts of their Canadian identity. This could spark additional discussions about how to conduct good research, analyze data, etc. and act as an intersection between arts and science. This could also give students the chance to critique the study conducted in 2008. The findings could be presented using a variety of mediums (brochure, cellphilm, presentation, paper, podcast, children’s book, etc.)
- Have students conduct an inquiry project into one aspect of their Canadian identity to expand upon why they consider it to be Canadian and how it may or may not fit into the views of other Canadians. If a student is not comfortable sharing something of their own, they can pick something from the list of 101 things that interests them and research why/how it became such a strong part of Canadian identity. As per the last suggested activity, the findings here could also be presented using a variety of mediums.

Appendix A

Defining Canada: A Nation Chooses the 101 Things that Best Define Their Country

Appendix B

Potential Discussion Questions

- Why do you think it is that we all have different aspects that represent our Canadian identity?
- How do you share pieces of your Canadian identity with other Canadians and with people from other places in the world?
- Are you proud to be Canadian? Why or why not?
- What stereotypes do you believe exist for Canadian? Why do you believe these stereotypes exist? Do you agree with these stereotypes?
- Considering the 10 aspects of Canadian identity that were stated in the activity, how do you think these came to be considered representative of Canada?
- Do you believe that Canadian identity vastly changes based on where you are in the country? Why or why not?