

Theme: Identity, Family & Community

Authored by global oneness project

*“A language tells who you are. It is connected with your culture,
with your lands, with your family.”*

Polina Shulbaeva, Selkup, Narym Dialect

Tomsk Oblast, Russia



From the Global Oneness Project film *Wukchumni*. Marie Wilcox (left), eighty-five, is the remaining fluent speaker of the Wukchumni language, a dialect of the Yokuts tribal group,

Identity can be defined as the various ways individuals and groups define themselves by their beliefs, ethnicity, and culture, among other characteristics. Indigenous peoples may identify themselves through their tribe or tribal nation, as well as the Indigenous language they speak.

Access the Google Earth tour [Celebrating Indigenous Languages](#). Divide into pairs or small groups. With your partners or group members, explore the tour through the theme of identity and how the role of family and community is essential to language vitality. Answer the following questions and use this [note-taker](#) to write down your observations, insights, and evidence from *Celebrating Indigenous Languages*.

Questions

1. Select and listen to three greetings from three speakers. What do you notice? What sounds are new to you?
2. Describe ways the speakers greet you in their native languages, in addition to saying *hello*. What phrases or words are used? Describe the similarities and differences between the three speakers.
3. *Expressive* or *peaceful* are words used by some speakers to describe their languages. What do you hear? Select two languages. What words would you use to describe these languages?
4. Describe the relationship between a speaker's language and his/her family. Find an example in one of the greetings, phrases, or songs. How does a language bring family and community closer together?
5. Provide an example of how speaking in one's native language gives a person a sense of pride, power, or freedom. In what ways, from the speakers' perspectives, do these qualities help to define their identities?
6. "I do this not for myself, but for my children and grandchildren, so that in the future, they'll hear our language," said [Dolores Greyeyes Sand](#), Plains Cree, from Crown Hill, Saskatchewan, Canada. What are some additional examples of ways the individuals express the importance of passing their languages on to their children and grandchildren?
7. What is your favorite greeting or phrase shared by the Indigenous language speakers? Why? Describe what makes this greeting or phrase unique and why it impacts you.
8. "We want our people to know our family, identity and language are one. By knowing the language, you understand the culture," says [Rev. Elder Suamalie N T Iosefa Naisali](#), speaker of Faipati Faka Tuvalu from the Tuvalu Islands in the South Pacific. Why might this be an important message for the world?

Reflecting and Projecting

In one paragraph, write a response to the following questions.

1. Anthropologist Keith Basso asked, “What can the study of spoken languages reveal about the shapes and contours of other cultural worlds?” What do you know now about the relationship between language and culture? How did your perspective shift? In what ways do the Indigenous language speakers provide you with a new way of seeing the world? In what ways do their stories add to a more comprehensive global story of humanity?
2. What new insights or reflections do you have about your own language(s), family, community, and culture?
3. Do you know which Indigenous people are the original stewards of the land you live on? Research to find out the following:
 - The name of the tribe, territory, and language. (Note: In North America, students can use the website resource [Native Land](#)).
 - Learn a local Indigenous or Native word. What did you learn?
 - Ask students to share their findings with the class.