

# PRE-LESSON

## #4 – Cultural Identity

This 10-minute “**bell-ringer**” activity will help prepare your students for their joint field trip to the Utah Museum of Fine Arts and Natural History Museum of Utah.

You can do one activity each day the week before your field trip or do them all at one time!



**NATURAL HISTORY**  
MUSEUM OF UTAH  
Rio Tinto Center | University of Utah

**When talking about identity, we might use words that describe our culture, heritage, race, or ethnicity.**

Have you ever heard any of these words? Native American, American Indian, First Nations, Diné, Maya, Latina/o, Chicano/a, Hispanic, Indian, Indigenous, and Native. These are words that people use to describe their identity. Maybe you have used some of these words to describe yourself?

Each of these words has a complicated meaning and history. At times they have been embraced by some and criticized by others. For some people they have been a source of pride and for others hurtful.

**What words do you like to use to describe your own culture, heritage, race, or ethnicity?**

Here is a quote from the *Native Voices* exhibition at the Natural History Museum of Utah:

**“For our band to succeed and prosper our youth need to further their education. I know there are lots of obstacles in life but they need to be strong and push forward. They need to remember who they are and who they represent, for they will our future leaders one day.”**

– Elliott Yazzi, Koosharem Band, Paiute

What do you think Elliott Yazzi means by “remember who they are”? Is it important to you to “remember” who you are and who you “represent”? Discuss with a partner.



As a class we will be listening to two stories of people reflecting on their own cultural identities. As I read each story aloud think about the words they use to describe themselves and the feelings they express.

## ***Karyn Denny, Navajo***



“Because I don’t live on the reservation, and my kids don’t, they’ll grow up to be westernized. They’ll have that memory, “My mom was Indian.” But I don’t think they are going to take that sense to their heart and say, “I’m Native.” My children’s father is from Brazil. They just feel like they are part of this big huge multiracial nation.”

**Do you identify in the same way as your family members? How might the way we identify ourselves change over time?**



## ***Corinna Bow, Kanosh Band Paiute***

Our ancestors knew their direction and purpose in life. They believed this land was given to all to share and appreciate and fought to hold onto the Native way of life. The important things in life were and still are the things you take with you when the creator calls you home (love, honor, dignity, respect, etc.). But today's Natives must fight the war within themselves, between their traditions and becoming the modern Indian.

We are proud people yet we struggle to hold on to our language. We have come a long way from yesterday's broken treaties, but the future and existence of the Paiute traditions lies in its members and the choices they make to preserve for the future.

**Corinna describes a “war within themselves,”  
between tradition and becoming modern.  
What do you think she is saying?**

# WRAP UP!

## **With a partner discuss the following questions:**

- How do these two people describe their identity and the importance of their indigenous identity?
- Can you think of a time when someone shared their cultural identity with you? What did they say? What did they share?

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