

Decolonizing Activity: Exploring Your Name

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Goal:

- To get youth to explore a piece of their identity.

Instructions:

- Sitting in circle ask youth to go around answering the following question(s): **“What is your name?”**, **“Do you have any story about your name?”**, **“Can you share one thing about your name?”**, **“Do you know your Spirit name?”**

Probing questions:

- **“Where did your name come from?”**, **“Who named you?”**, **“Do you have more than one name?”**, **“How did you get it?”**, **“Is there a meaning to it?”**
- Try not to probe for nick names as they are not always positive or appropriate. When they do come up, even if inappropriate, take it as a learning opportunity and talk about how we all have the right to be respected and called by what we choose and more importantly we have the power to choose what we answer to.

Note to facilitators:

Specifically with Indigenous youth: A Spirit Name or the knowledge of traditional names that are used in Indigenous cultures (sometimes still called an “Indian name”) are shared. Part of the teaching is every human being has a Spirit name that tells us a lot about who we are, our gifts, and the spirit we carry. It is said we all have a Spirit name that is with us whether we know it or not. If we wish to learn more about ourselves it can be helpful to find out the name of the spirit that carries us. A way we may find our name is by using our Tobacco as the sacred Medicine it is meant for and offering it directly to Creator either by putting it in a Sacred (blessed) Fire or Water or out on a

clean spot on the Earth, (usually by a tree is good). Then we ask Creator for our name. Often when we ask Creator directly our answers come in mysterious ways or through our dreams and we have to be open to receiving our answers this way.

A common way to get our name is to offer Tobacco to an Elder or Medicine person who has the Gift to have names revealed to them from the Spirits. Usually this happens in a ceremony the Medicine person has been given and they can translate our name to us. Often the name our spirit carries has to do with nature and animals, so we watch that animal or specific part of nature to see what it does, how it reacts and what it goes through. By learning about the name of our spirit we can learn lots about our own qualities, characteristics and responsibilities in life. The more we understand our spirit the better we understand ourselves.

This activity can have lots of positives by getting youth to explore their identity. Other positives often include being named after or by someone, funny stories, knowing who named you, nicknames and hopes that were given with the name or even something simple as a different spelling to a name. This activity can be open and inclusive of naming practices from all cultures and can be an opportunity to introduce Spirit names for those who've not heard those teachings.

Debrief:

- Thank everyone for sharing their name.
- Our names are powerful. It is good to say our names out loud because there is power in knowing who we are and calling on the power within us.