

What's in a name?

Materials Needed:

Large blank paper
Pens, pencils, colours
Cultural Naming story

Can Use:

iPads
iPencils
Naming Story

Process:

Step 1

Read the students a naming story, then ask that they put their name in the centre of the blank paper. They can choose to write their name in anyway they want, full name, first name only, the name they prefer to be called. Give them a few minutes with this process to let them make it more interesting, (you may choose to make this an art piece, in which case you can give them more time to make their name reflect who they are turning letters into strengths and hobbies etc.) When they are done tell them they will have 6 minutes to write everything they can think of about their name around it. Have them annotate it. I give them an example, this is my full name but I prefer to be called... my sister couldn't say my name so she called me... Do this process for 6 minutes (you can choose your own time I found that this amount of time allows the students to go deeper in without extending too long)

When they finish ask a few questions to round it out. I have used some of the questions bellow.

- 1) Who picked your name and why they picked it?
- 2) Do you know what your name means? If not look it up now and put that meaning on the page.
- 3) Do you think that meaning represents you? Why or why not?
- 4) Did your family have any other names they were thinking of giving you?

These question vary.

Step 2

I have the students pair up in different ways to share some of their thinking about their names. I have found that this helps set up a safe classroom, we all have names, we all have a narrative around these names. This helps the people in the room see each other as the individuals they are. After they have shared with two or three people I give them another couple of minutes to write anything else they may want to add about their name. Often seeing what others wrote triggers new ideas.

Step 3

We share together, talking about our names and the stories behind them, the things that we found interesting.

Next Steps:

From here I have gone a number of ways. If this work moves into a “self discovery” piece I may:

- A) Use the name pages as the cover to their personal portfolio for the year
- B) Put them up leaving room under for other work you will be doing about “self”
- C) Have them find another name they believe would also fit them and explain why
- D) Take a picture using their phone or iPads to start an electronic portfolio (unless the work was done electronically)
- E) Have them determine if names mean anything why or why not?

If I was moving into Indigenous work I may:

- A) Have them determine if names mean anything why or why not?
- B) Research the names of places around them who were they named after, when, why?
- C) Research the traditional names around them. Determine why they are or are not named traditionally?
- D) Have them find the language around names found in the TRC

There are many ways to use this activity as a jumping point. Try this activity on your own or with a friend and you will be surprised by the power of it.