



A Story of Two Centuries in Canada

Commented [KS1]: Consider a creative title that reflects your family's history or the formation of your identity!

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Canadian Identity

Identity can be defined as "the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is". Our identity can be our eye colour, height, gender or name. As Canadians, our identity is often stereotyped as loving hockey, saying "sorry", living in an igloo or owning a beaver. But being Canadian is much more complex than that, as a nation of immigrants from all over the globe to our First Nations who have been here before, documenting and defining Canadian Identity has been a struggle for years. Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau once said "There is no such thing as a model or ideal Canadian. What could be more absurd than the concept of an "all Canadian" boy or girl? A society which emphasizes uniformity is one which creates intolerance and hate."

Every Canadian has a different identity and that's what makes it so hard to classify Canadians under one characteristic, but that is what makes Canada so diverse. We have a small population but our different cultures and traditions are countless. Canada officially became a multicultural society in 1971 when the government began to recognize the value and dignity of Canadians of all races and ethnic groups, all languages and all religions. Everyone has a story to tell about their identity. Mine starts with the ancestors who have been here over many centuries.

My cultural background is very diverse, and for many years I would consider myself Scottish, Irish and Ukrainian. Three of my grandparents were first generation Canadians, all of

Commented [KS2]: If you're going to use a quote from another source, be sure to cite it.

Commented [KS3]: Always begin with a hook. It could be a definition, a question, or an exciting statement.

Commented [KS4]: Consider writing about what Canadian identity is or what it is perceived to be by others. What does it mean to be Canadian?

Commented [KS5]: Be sure to introduce your story/history in the introductory section.

them born to immigrant parents. When my paternal grandmother passed away in 2012 an interesting story began to unfold. My grandmother was Metis which was previously unknown to any of our immediate family. The more we looked into it the more fascinating it became. My great-great grandfather Samuel Ballendine, a “Half-Breed” according to government documents, was born in St. Andrews Parish in 1839, and he married Elizabeth Smith in 1860. Shortly after their marriage Samuel was convinced to travel out west by his cousin Peter Ballendine. Peter was the son of a “Half-Breed” voyager, interpreter and trader with the Hudson’s Bay Company. After moving far west, Samuel began trading for the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Saskatchewan River District. A short ten years after their marriage and three kids, Elizabeth and Samuel parted ways. Elizabeth stayed with the children, William, Mary and Roderick in St Andrews and Samuel stayed in Saskatchewan.

Samuel traveled back to St. Andrews and was documented as a resident in 1870 at the time of the transfer of territory governed by the Hudson’s Bay Company when Manitoba became the fifth province in Canada. Later that year Samuel moved to Prince Albert and began a common law relationship with Mary Chatelain, a treaty Indian with whom he had three more children with. My family believes Samuel Ballendine moved around so much due to his participation in the Red River Resistance and his fear of the law. Documents at the time also revealed that several years after he left his wife and kids in St Andrews, he was present when Treaty 6 was being negotiated and signed in the Fort Pitt- Fort Carlton- Battleford area with Poundmaker, a prominent Plains Cree Chief known as a peace keeper and defender of his people. The main interpreters of note were Samuel and Peter Ballendine. Later in 1883, records also show that Samuel Ballendine was the administrator for Strike-Him-on-the-Back’s

Commented [KS6]: You may wish to give an overview that details your historical lineage or family tree. You don’t need to explain every person in your family, but rather focus on a few people that you know something interesting/unique about.

Commented [KS7]: In the next few paragraphs, highlight or detail a particular story or person/people that have had an impacted on your family tree or history.

Try to use as many specific details as possible!

Commented [KS8]: It’s okay to make some assumptions. You may not know every detail or motivation for someone’s actions.

Reserve (later renamed the Sweetgrass Reserve) which was Poundmaker's Reserve. It would seem that Samuel was an interpreter for others as well, as he is mentioned as an interpreter for the Indian department and during the Red River Rebellion where in 1885, he served in number two company of the Battleford Home Guard. After a long life of excitement, Samuel Ballendine died at the age of 62 on May 23, 1901. It must have been a hard choice for Samuel to leave his first wife and children, but during this time of uncertainty and the turmoil that erupted during the Riel Rebellion, anyone who had any ties to this must have sensed great danger for themselves and their families.

His youngest son Rodrick (from his first Elizabeth) married Elizabeth Mary Jane Muir. They settled in Clandeboye with Rodrick's mother, Elizabeth Ballendine where they worked as farmers. Soon after they had a daughter also named Elizabeth. Elizabeth, a "Half Breed Indian" according to the census, is my great grandmother. In 1926 Elizabeth marries Roy Taylor and they have five children, the second child, my grandmother. Elizabeth died during the birth of her sixth child leaving five children without a mother. This was a very tough time for my grandmother and although she did not tell us about her indigenous roots she often talked about the loss of her mother and how hard it was on her and her siblings. Verna (my Grandmother), the second oldest, took on the role of looking after the younger children until her father remarried. Roy Taylor remarried and his new English wife Mary took over the raising of the children. This seems to be where the rich history and traditions of our Indigenous heritage gets lost. This must have been very hard for my grandmother and her brothers and sisters as they would have had to leave behind everything they knew and all of their traditions.

Commented [KS9]: Notice how the student has connected Samuel and his choices back to the formation of his identity.

Remember, this isn't a laundry list of details, but rather a chance for you to reflect on how identity is formed (choices, circumstances, force, etc.)

This must have been a tough choice for my grandmother but she chose to start a new life and a new history and adopted new traditions with her step-mother.

Commented [KS10]: Notice here how the student reflects on what she believes was the turning point in her family's history and understanding of identity.

This story of my family has brought to light my Indigenous heritage and Metis background. My grandmother never mentioned this to anyone, we assume she was ashamed or trying to hide it. Perhaps it was in fear of being taken away to Residential Schools or having her own children taken away. My grandmother's choice to conceal her mother's Indigenous background withheld a part of my identity. I find it very sad that she felt she had to hide this part of who she was and really shines a light on the effects racism has on families for many generations.

Commented [KS11]: Notice how the student uses this paragraph to reflect on how this particular family story is historically significant.

She also relates these people and their circumstances back to how it impacted their identity (and ultimately her identity).

The more I uncover about our history the more interesting and rich it becomes. I also realize why my grandmother had such a love of the land, animals, plants and flowers as she spent much time with her mother and aunts on the land. She loved picking wild berries, especially saskatoons, and could tell the call of any bird and recognize the smallest animal footprint. Often my grandmother would walk the railway tracks and rescue lady's slippers before they would be sprayed by the railway with chemicals and she took me on many of those walks. Today whenever I see a lady's slipper I check to make sure it is out of harm's way.

Commented [KS12]: This paragraph is a chance for you to reflect on how your relatives have impacted you and your identity. Be sure to explain how they have had significance in who you are and your identity.

My grandmother taught me to love animals, and to respect the land, the plants and all the earth has to offer.

My grandmother also taught us the importance of education and of going to school. She loved to learn and encouraged us to try very hard and to get good grades. My grandmother wanted to make sure we would go to university and get good jobs. In our family

education is a value that has been passed on to my dad and to us; you don't mess around with marks in our house.

It is very evident that although some of our history was hidden from us it has still made us who we are today. The connections to our past and to our ancestors finds a way to influence who we are in many ways. I am very grateful I know some of my past, I guess I will never know the entire story or why she tried to leave it behind. But now I can embrace who I am and continue to uncover the many fascinating events and experiences that have made me who I am today. I also know that I am from strong stock, from people who made tough choices, and sacrifices to make a life, to do what was right even if it is hard. I will use my new insights and understandings to make sure that I too make tough choices, I do what is right and I make a difference in this world. I will try and do what my grandmother was not able to do, to learn more about my indigenous heritage and be proud of who I am and where I came from.

Commented [KS13]: Every piece of writing needs a conclusion!

Be sure to recap the major points of your understanding of Canadian identity, your family's history, and how it has impacted how you see yourself.

Bibliography

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Samuel Ballendine (1839-1903). www.redriverancestry.ca/BALLENDINE-SAMUEL-1839.php.