

**1. Tell us about yourself – what’s your name and where are you from?**

My name is Robert Sylliboy, and I’m from Esgenoôpetitj First Nation.

**2. What does Indigenous Peoples Day mean to you?**

To me, Indigenous Peoples Day is a gathering of all First Nations. We’re out celebrating and being noticed and recognized; people see our traditions and customs. It’s a gathering of friends, enjoying the day, and teaching non-Indigenous people about our culture.

**3. What is the best way for non-Indigenous people to observe Indigenous Peoples Day?**

If you’re in Fredericton, there will be a mini powwow in front of the legislature. There will be drumming and dancing – it will be a real cultural event. For others, if there’s a First Nation community near you, there are all kinds of activities planned to learn firsthand about First Nation culture.

**4. What do you wish non-Indigenous people knew about Indigenous people?**

I wish they would know we are just people like they are. Some people have negative connotations about the word “reservation” – the only reservation I know is when I go to a restaurant. But it’s just a community. We have very loving and nurturing families, and we’re easygoing people.

**5. Can you share an Indigenous teaching that you wish non-Indigenous people understood?**

When we have a smudge ceremony, it’s like when non-Indigenous people go to church. Even though it doesn’t happen in a specific building, you’re talking directly to the Creator.

Smudging is when we burn sage, sweetgrass, tobacco and cedar – those are our four medicines. We smudge our eyes to see what the Creator has given to us today. And we smudge our ears to hear all the great sounds the Creator has made for us today. We smudge to make sure we have clean thoughts above everything the Creator has made for us today. We smudge in the mornings and in the evenings before we go to bed – we thank the Creator and talk to our ancestors. Some people do it multiple times a day, especially if they’re having a bad day, to get negative energy away from them.

**6. What is a distinct aspect of Indigenous culture that you wish more people knew?**





I would say the love for our elders and our youth. We look to seven generations ahead and behind us. Looking at the generations that came before, we respect our elders and their wisdom and experience. If an elder is standing and you're sitting, you offer them your seat. Looking to the generations ahead, we make decisions that will benefit our youth and the future, like we're planting a seed.

#### **7. How can non-Indigenous people show support for Indigenous people year-round?**

Just go up and say hello. Be like a child and ask questions to learn more. Think about what we can do together – think in terms of “we” rather than “I.” Indigenous people ask, “How are we doing today” because as soon as you say “I” or “you” you’re segregating yourself. But if we think about the “we,” we will understand each other more.