ABSTRACT

TITLE:	What Constitutes Native American Identity?
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ABSTRACT: The history of a people interacting with the environment? The policies that have centered on defining and reducing the plethora of cultures? The languages that are spoken? Or the degree of blood that can be measured through Blood Quantum requirements? I came to these questions because of my personal status as an enrolled member of the Muskogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma. Although I have never been to the reservation lands associated with my tribe, I don't know oral stories that define my culture, and I have never heard my native language, I nevertheless do receive the Native American Tuition Waiver from Fort Lewis College. The consequential identity crisis premeditated by institutions that tell me who I am without asking me have led to this research project. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs I am 3/32 Creek Indian proven through the display of my great grandmother's name on a single page of the 1906 Dawes rolls. From this document I have been able to interrogate my personal identity that was originally mandated from federal, state and college institutional perspectives. I argue that institutionalized identity marginalizes the importance of geography, story, and traditional practices among Native American groups. Through genealogical study, geographical map compilation, historical analysis through research, a DNA fingerprint test, and a survey of Native American students attending Fort Lewis College, I have started to construct the lost history of my Native American identity.