Voices of This Land: Unit Overview

ENG4U, Grade 12 English (University), Unit 5. 12 classes of 75 minutes (about two and a half weeks).

The big question

Who has the right to tell a story, and what changes when people tell their own?

Students begin by learning whose land they are on, which words to use and how to listen, then study the truth of residential schools through survivor testimony chosen by the teacher. At the centre of the unit is E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), the Mohawk poet and performer whose public domain poems and stories are included in full in a Voices Reader: “A Cry from an Indian Wife,” “The Cattle Thief,” “A Pagan in St. Paul's Cathedral,” “A Red Girl's Reasoning” and “As It Was in the Beginning.” Students read Duncan Campbell Scott's “The Onondaga Madonna” critically beside her work, asking what it means that the poet who wrote of a “waning race” also ran Indian Affairs. They then form inquiry groups around a contemporary text by a First Nations, Métis or Inuit creator, consider story, land and the ethics of retelling, and present what their pairing reveals. A learning journal runs through the whole unit.

Lessons

#	Lesson	Classes	Question	Expectations	What's inside
1	**Starting in a Good Way**	1	Whose land are we on?	OC 1.2, R 1.1, OC 3.1	Nations and treaties; terminology; protocols; TRC Calls 62 and 63
2	**Truth Before Reconciliation**	1	Why does truth come first?	OC 1.6, R 1.5, OC 1.8	Residential schools timeline; survivor testimony; Johnson, 1899
3	**Tekahionwake**	1	Who is the “pagan”?	R 1.8, R 2.3, OC 1.7	Johnson's life; two-part performance; reversing the gaze
4	**A Cry from an Indian Wife**	1	Can a poem argue with itself?	R 1.5, R 2.3, OC 1.6	1885; the speaker's shifts; empathy as argument
5	**The Cattle Thief**	1	Who are the real thieves?	R 1.4, R 2.3, OC 2.5	Two voices; irony; choral reading
6	**Who Holds the Pen?**	1	Who gets to tell a people's story?	R 1.8, M 1.5, OC 1.8	Scott's sonnet; the “vanishing Indian” myth; gaze vs voice
7	**A Red Girl's Reasoning**	1	Whose laws count?	R 1.4, R 1.7, R 1.8	The dinner party; Christine's argument; sovereignty
8	**As It Was in the Beginning**	1	What did the mission promise?	R 1.6, R 2.3, R 1.8	Esther's voice; Father Paul's hypocrisy; the title

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9	**Contemporary Voices**	1	What has changed in a century?	R 1.1, R 1.5, OC 1.6	Teacher-chosen texts; inquiry groups; draft questions
10	**Story and Land**	1	What does a name hold?	R 1.5, OC 1.8, R 4.1	Legends of Vancouver; ethics of retelling; place names; my place
11	**Inquiry Workshop**	1	What does our pairing reveal?	OC 2.1, OC 2.7, M 1.5	Evidence; Indigenous-led sources; planning; rehearsal
12	**Inquiry Presentations**	1	What will we carry forward?	OC 2.1, OC 1.2, W 4.1	Presentations (summative); final reflection (summative)

Assessment

Type	In this unit
Assessment for learning	Whose Land?, timeline and listening notes, reversing the gaze, shifts, two voices, two poets, Christine's argument, Esther's voice, inquiry notes, place names, presentation planner
Assessment as learning	Choral reading feedback, rehearsal feedback, self-checks, journal entries
Assessment of learning	Inquiry presentation (Lesson 12) and the learning journal with a final reflection, with rubrics in the Summative Tasks file

Texts

Included in the Start Here folder:

- **Voices Reader:** five poems and stories by E. Pauline Johnson, complete, and Duncan Campbell Scott's “The Onondaga Madonna” (all public domain)
- **Guide:** a starting menu of contemporary texts by First Nations, Métis and Inuit creators, to be chosen from your board's approved resources (titles only; not included)
- **Teacher-chosen media:** survivor testimony from a trusted source such as the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

This unit discusses colonization and residential schools, and “As It Was in the Beginning” ends in a killing. Lessons name these with care and include support resources (the Hope for Wellness Help Line, 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone; the National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419). Johnson and Scott use period terms now considered offensive; lessons explain why and let readers skip slurs. We strongly recommend reviewing the unit with your board's Indigenous education lead and inviting an Elder or Knowledge Keeper following board protocol. Do not ask Indigenous students to speak for their communities.

What's in each lesson

- Teacher lesson plan with expectations, timed sequence, differentiation, look-fors and answer guides

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- Slides with speaker notes
- Student handouts and organizers
- Editable Word and PowerPoint files, plus PDFs

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