Living Words: Unit Overview

NBE3U, English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices (Grade 11, University), Unit 4. 13 classes of 75 minutes (about two and a half weeks).

The big question

What does it mean to keep knowledge in spoken words, and how do we listen to it with respect?

Students study First Nations, Métis and Inuit oral traditions as texts: forms such as acknowledgements, names and creation stories; wampum belts such as the Two Row Wampum and the Dish With One Spoon; the customs that govern who tells a story, when and to whom; and figures such as Nanabozho, Glooscap, Raven, Kiviuq and the woman of the sea, described in general terms and never retold. They learn how the Delgamuukw decision (1997) changed the status of oral history in Canadian courts, how the potlatch ban (1885–1951) and residential schools disrupted oral traditions, and how communities are keeping them alive through revitalization, repatriation and new platforms. Métis lessons cover Michif, fiddle music and Maria Campbell's choices in Stories of the Road Allowance People; Inuit lessons cover katajjaq and Elders' knowledge. Students practise culturally appropriate listening, analyse recorded oral texts and a speech, welcome an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Métis Senator (with a full alternative), and finish with a researched presentation or podcast and a listening journal.

Lessons

#	Lesson	Classes	Question	Expectations	What's inside
1	**Living Words**	1	What makes an oral tradition a text?	B1.1, B1.3, B2.4	Oral text forms; Delgamuukw (1997); listening journal begins
2	**How We Listen**	1	How should we listen to an oral teaching?	B1.4, B2.3, B4.1	Listening practices; goals; before, during, after
3	**Belts That Speak**	1	What does a wampum belt record?	B1.1, A2.5, B2.6	Two Row Wampum; Dish With One Spoon; the 1613 debate
4	**Who Tells, When and to Whom**	1	Who controls a story?	B1.1, A2.4, A2.5	Protocols; Johnson's Legends of Vancouver foreword; access
5	**Figures of the Oral Tradition**	1	What do these figures teach?	B1.2, A3.5, B2.6	Figure profiles; world views; why labels matter
6	**Silenced and Spoken**	1	How did oral traditions survive?	B1.3, A2.4, B2.8	Potlatch ban; Cranmer potlatch; U'mista; two accounts
7	**Métis Voices**	1	How do Métis oral traditions carry meaning?	B1.1, B2.5, B2.7	Michif; fiddle and jig; Senators; voice to page

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8	**Inuit Voices**	1	How do Inuit oral traditions continue?	B1.1, B1.3, B2.5	Katajjaq; Elders' knowledge; new platforms
9	**Reading a Speech**	1	How does a speech move listeners?	B2.7, B2.8, B2.9	Speech analysis; perspective; evaluating delivery
10	**Listening to a Teaching**	1	How do we listen to a person who carries knowledge?	B1.4, B2.2, B2.6, B4.2	A recorded teaching by an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Métis Senator; works with a guest if one can visit
11	**Keeping Words Alive**	1	How are languages and oral traditions coming back?	A3.5, B1.3, B2.4, B3.4	FirstVoices; Indigenous Languages Act; UNDRIP Article 31; topics
12	**Presentation Workshop**	1	How do we speak about others' traditions with care?	B3.3, B3.5, B3.6, B3.7	Structure; voice; non-verbal cues; respectful visuals
13	**Presentations and Reflection**	1	How have we grown as listeners and speakers?	B3.3, B3.7, B4.1, B4.2	Presentations or podcasts (summative); final reflection (summative)

Assessment

Type	In this unit
Assessment for learning	Case file, listening practices, belt reading, protocols and Legends of Vancouver analysis, figure profiles, disruption map and two accounts, Métis and Inuit listening analyses, speech analysis, teaching preparation and connections, effort research
Assessment as learning	Rehearsal feedback, self-checks, journal entries
Assessment of learning	Oral tradition presentation or podcast and the listening journal with a final reflection, with rubrics in the Summative Tasks file

Texts and media

Used in this unit:

- **Public domain:** E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), the foreword and a short passage from Legends of Vancouver (1911), read as a case study in credit and permission
- **Teacher-chosen recordings:** oral texts, performances and a speech by First Nations, Métis and Inuit speakers, from trusted or Indigenous-led sources (suggestions in the teacher notes; not reproduced)
- **Teacher-chosen book (optional):** Maria Campbell, Stories of the Road Allowance People (1995; titles only, not included)

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- **Original model texts:** two short accounts of the 1921 Cranmer potlatch in contrasting styles, a model evaluation and a model reflection, written for the lessons and labelled as such

This unit describes oral traditions, figures and protocols in general terms. Students never retell community stories or imitate ceremonies, songs or throat singing, and they never record a guest without permission. Lesson 6 discusses the potlatch ban and residential schools; lessons name these with care and include support resources (the Hope for Wellness Help Line, 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone; 9-8-8; the National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419). We strongly recommend reviewing the unit with your board's Indigenous education lead and inviting an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Métis Senator 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
- Slides with speaker notes
- Student handouts and organizers
- Editable Word and PowerPoint files, plus PDFs

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