Circle Guide

NBE3U, Unit 5: Stories Now. NBE3U, Stories Now, Circle Guide

How to run literature circles with contemporary novels by First Nations, Métis and Inuit writers: choosing books, roles, the calendar, care and a menu of teacher-chosen texts.

Before you start

- Choose three to five titles your board approves, including at least one by a First Nations, one by a Métis and one by an Inuk writer, and preview each for content. Titles only: these texts are under copyright and are not included. Choose from your board's approved resources, preview for content (several include residential schools, violence, sexual content or grief), add local creators where you can, and learn about each creator in their own words.
- These are literature circles: small reading groups with rotating roles. They are a classroom structure, not a cultural or ceremonial circle, and we don't call them sharing circles or talking circles.
- We strongly recommend reviewing this unit with your board's Indigenous education lead and, where possible, inviting a First Nations, Métis or Inuit Elder, Knowledge Keeper or guest speaker following your board's protocols (including offerings and honoraria). Local Nations' own sources come first.
- Do not ask Indigenous students to speak for their communities, to share personal or family histories, or to act as experts. Every student's participation in sharing is optional.

Care

This course discusses colonization, residential schools and their effects. Some students and families carry this history personally. Support: Hope for Wellness Help Line (for Indigenous people across Canada, 24/7, by phone or online chat at hopeforwellness.ca; English and French, with Cree, Ojibway and Inuktut on request at certain times), 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868; 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline (call or text 988); National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419.

Novel options (titles only; not included)

Author (Nation, as they name it)	Title	People	Content to preview
Richard Wagamese (Ojibwe, Wabaseemoong Independent Nations)	Indian Horse (2012)	First Nations	Residential school abuse; hockey; healing
Waubgeshig Rice (Anishinaabe, Wasauksing First Nation)	Moon of the Crusted Snow (2018)	First Nations	Collapse, survival, violence and death
Michelle Good (Cree, Red Pheasant Cree Nation)	Five Little Indians (2020)	First Nations	Survivors after residential school; abuse; addiction
Cherie Dimaline (Métis, Georgian Bay)	The Marrow Thieves (2017)	Métis	Speculative; violence; echoes of residential schools

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Author (Nation, as they name it)	Title	People	Content to preview
Katherena Vermette	A Girl Called Echo (graphic novels, 2017–)	Métis	Métis history; accessible entry point
Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk (Inuk, Nunavik)	Sanaaq (English 2014)	Inuit	Family life and change in Nunavik
Norma Dunning (Padlei Inuk)	Annie Muktuk and Other Stories (2017)	Inuit	Adult themes; preview and choose stories

Checked November 2026. Confirm availability and suitability with your board; add local and recent titles.

Other teacher-chosen texts for Lessons 5, 7 and 8

Creator	Text	Form and themes
Thomas King (Cherokee and Greek descent)	“Borders” (short story, 1993)	Identity, citizenship, the border
Tomson Highway (Cree, Barren Lands First Nation)	The Rez Sisters (play, 1986)	Community, humour, dreams
Drew Hayden Taylor (Ojibwe, Curve Lake First Nation)	Plays and essays	Humour, identity, stereotypes
Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer (Cree, Saddle Lake)	Burning in This Midnight Dream (poetry, 2016)	Residential school, memory, Cree language
Rita Joe (Mi'kmaw)	“I Lost My Talk” (poem)	Residential school and language
Marilyn Dumont (Cree and Métis)	A Really Good Brown Girl (poetry, 1996)	Identity, family, Métis experience
Norma Dunning (Padlei Inuk)	Annie Muktuk and Other Stories (2017)	Short stories: northern life, humour, identity

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Roles

Role	Job	Sentence starters
Discussion Director	Write three open questions; keep talk moving; invite everyone.	“Why do you think…?” “What if…?”
Passage Picker	Choose two passages; read aloud; explain why they matter.	“On page ___, the line… matters because…”
Connector	Link to course texts, the world, yourself (what you choose to share).	“This reminds me of… but differs because…”
Word Finder	Collect words that matter, including Indigenous-language words; confirm meanings in reliable sources.	“The word ___ means… (source). It matters because…”
Context Researcher	Learn about the author and setting from the author's own words and Indigenous-led sources; never guess identity.	“In an interview, the author said…”
Representation Tracker	Note how people and communities are shown: specific, complex, grounded?	“This scene flips the stereotype of…”

Unit calendar

Lesson	In class	Circle work
1–2	Book tasting; circle set-up	Choose; plan the calendar
3–5	Openings; voice; poems	Read to about one third
6	Circle meeting 1	Predictions tested; connections web
7–8	Drama; short fiction	Read on
9	Check-in; accuracy audit	Read to two thirds
10–11	Publishers, prizes, technology	Finish the novel
12	Circle meeting 2	Ending, theme, evidence bank
13–14	Personal response; essay workshop	Draft the essay
15	Seminar (summative)	Essay due after

Historical texts use the words of their time, including terms now considered offensive (for example, “Red-skin,” “savage,” “squaw,” “half-breed,” “Eskimo”). We quote accurately when analysing, explain why these terms are harmful, and use today's terms (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous, or the specific Nation) in our own words. Readers may say “[skip]” instead of reading a slur aloud.

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