Naming Matters: Terms, self-names and why naming choices count

NBE3U, Unit 1: Where We Stand, Lesson 2. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

Names carry history. Many names for Indigenous peoples were given by outsiders, some are written into law, and some are slurs. A people's own name for itself, such as Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee or Inuit, is a statement of identity and of the right to define yourself.

What students do: Students learn umbrella and specific terms (Indigenous; First Nations, Métis and Inuit; the specific Nation), the legal terms in the Constitution Act, 1982 and the Indian Act, self-names and outsider names, and UNDRIP's article on names; they find harmful terms in a historical poem, explain the naming choices, and draft entries for a class style guide.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
A3.2	identify appropriate ways to refer to Indigenous peoples in diverse contexts, and locate examples of inappropriate terminology in contemporary and historical text forms from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources and explain the significance of naming choices
A1.3	identify and explain diverse themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identities, as reflected in various Indigenous text forms, and, as appropriate, in relevant non-Indigenous texts
D1.1	identify the topic, purpose, and audience for a variety of writing tasks on subject matter related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning respectful, accurate ways to refer to Indigenous peoples. • We are learning why naming choices matter.	• I can use umbrella and specific terms accurately. • I can explain the difference between a self-name and an outsider name. • I can find inappropriate terms in a historical text and explain their effect. • I can write a clear style-guide entry for a specific audience.

© 2026 K9solutions

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Naming Matters deck.
- **Handouts:** Revise the Record (page 1), Our Style Guide (page 2).
- **Text:** Duncan Campbell Scott, “The Onondaga Madonna” (1898), lines 1–4 (on the slide).

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Warm-up**	Your name.	Discuss.	
8–25	**Terms**	Umbrella, specific, legal.	Note.	
25–40	**Self-names**	Outsider names; UNDRIP.	Analyse.	Naming choices explained.
40–55	**Revise the record**	Historical poem.	Find and explain.	Terms identified.
55–75	**Style guide**	Entries for an audience.	Write.	Clear entries.

Differentiation

- **Support:** A word bank of terms with one-line definitions.
- **ELL:** Terms chart with examples in sentences.
- **Challenge:** Research the self-name of a Nation connected to our area and its meaning.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Revise the Record and style-guide entries	Naming choices (A3.2), identity (A1.3) and audience and purpose (D1.1)

Naming: key points

- **Umbrella terms:** Indigenous (all); First Nations, Métis and Inuit are three distinct peoples. The most respectful choice is usually the specific Nation.
- **Legal terms:** Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 names “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples”; the Indian Act still uses “Indian.”
- **Outsider names:** Iroquois, Huron, Eskimo and Micmac were names used by outsiders; Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Inuit and Mi'kmaq are self-names.
- **UNDRIP 13(1):** Affirms Indigenous peoples' right to designate and keep their own names for communities, places and persons.
- **Scott's poem:** “Weird and waning race,” “tragic savage,” “pagan passion”: words that turn a woman into a stereotype and a people into a vanishing race.

© 2026 K9solutions

Teacher notes

- 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.
- “Inuit” means “the people” in Inuktut; one person is an Inuk. The Indian Act still uses “Indian” as a legal term, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 uses “aboriginal peoples.” Outside legal or historical contexts, use First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous, or the specific Nation.
- Self-names vary in spelling (for example, Anishinaabe/Anishinabe; Mi'kmaq is the plural and Mi'kmaw the singular and adjective). Follow the Nation's own usage where you can find it.
- 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.

Coming up

Lesson 3, Three Peoples, Many Nations.

© 2026 K9solutions