Self-Determination: Who decides? Rights, governments and texts

NBE3U, Unit 1: Where We Stand, Lesson 9. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

Self-determination is the right of a people to decide their own future. First Nations, Métis and Inuit have governed themselves for thousands of years; in recent decades, constitutions, courts, land claims and the UN Declaration have recognized parts of that right, and Indigenous peoples continue to define it for themselves.

What students do: Students read section 35 and Article 3 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, rotate through stations on First Nations, Métis and Inuit self-determination (modern treaties and self-government; Red River, Powley and Daniels; land claims and Nunavut), compare how perspectives on the Declaration changed in Canada between 2007 and 2021, and write a paragraph answering “Who decides?”

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
A1.5	identify and explain diverse themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit self-determination, sovereignty, or self-governance, as reflected in various Indigenous text forms, and, as appropriate, in relevant non-Indigenous texts
A1.6	compare multiple perspectives on themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identities, relationships, and self-determination, sovereignty, or self-governance, as reflected in various texts from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources
C1.1	read a variety of student- and teacher-selected contemporary texts from diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources and historical texts, identifying specific purposes for reading

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.

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Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning what self-determination, sovereignty and self-governance mean. • We are learning to compare perspectives across time.	• I can define self-determination, sovereignty and self-governance. • I can describe one example from each of the three peoples. • I can compare Canada's 2007 and 2021 positions on UNDRIP. • I can read legal texts for a purpose.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Self-Determination deck.
- **Handouts:** Station Notes (page 1), Who Decides? (page 2).
- **Stations:** Three printed fact sheets made from the slides, plus Indigenous-led sources (for example itk.ca, metisnation.ca, a local First Nation's governance page).

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Warm-up**	Who decides for you?	Discuss.	
8–22	**Key texts**	Section 35; UNDRIP Article 3.	Read.	
22–50	**Stations**	Three peoples.	Rotate.	Examples noted.
50–60	**Perspectives**	2007 to 2021.	Compare.	Change explained.
60–75	**Who decides?**	Paragraph.	Write.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Station sheets with key sentences highlighted.
- **ELL:** Glossary: sovereignty, jurisdiction, land claim, self-government.
- **Challenge:** Research one modern treaty or self-government agreement in Ontario or the North.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Station Notes and Who Decides? paragraph	Self-determination (A1.5), comparing perspectives (A1.6) and reading for a purpose (C1.1)

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Self-determination: key points

- **Terms:** Self-determination: the right to decide your own future. Sovereignty: supreme authority over territory and people. Self-governance: running your own institutions.
- **First Nations:** Inherent governance long before Canada; today, band councils under the Indian Act, hereditary systems, and modern treaties and self-government agreements.
- **Métis:** The Red River provisional government (1869–70) led to the Manitoba Act; courts recognized Métis rights (Powley, 2003) and federal responsibility (Daniels, 2016).
- **Inuit:** Land claims across Inuit Nunangat, including the creation of Nunavut (1999), where most residents are Inuit.
- **UNDRIP:** Canada voted against it in 2007 and made it law to implement in 2021: a change in perspective worth explaining.

Teacher notes

- UNDRIP: adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007 (144 in favour, 4 against, including Canada, 11 abstentions); Canada stated qualified support in 2010, removed its objector status in 2016, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act received royal assent on June 21, 2021 (Canadian Encyclopedia).
- Inuit Nunangat land claims include the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975) and the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (1984); Nunavut became a territory on April 1, 1999 (ITK). Métis: Red River provisional government (1869–70), Manitoba Act (1870), R. v. Powley (2003), Daniels v. Canada (2016).
- Self-determination looks different for each Nation. Don't present one model as the answer.
- 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 10, The Truth We Carry.

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