Contradictions: Noble and savage, vanishing and threatening

NBE3U, Unit 2: Behind the Image, Lesson 9. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

Settler images contradicted themselves. Indigenous people were noble and savage, vanishing and dangerous, “wildflowers” and scandals, traitors and founders. The contradictions weren't mistakes: each image served a different purpose for the people making it.

What students do: Students gather the contradictions met so far in the unit, add new pairs, analyse the reasons each image was useful to its creators, and organize their ideas into a comparison chart and a paragraph plan they can use in the representation analysis essay.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
A2.2	identify contradictions in how First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures have been depicted in various contemporary and historical Indigenous text forms, and non-Indigenous texts, and analyse the reasons for the divergence of views
A2.1	determine how the messages relating to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures conveyed in various contemporary and historical Indigenous text forms, and, as appropriate, in non-Indigenous texts, might change if they were presented from a range of different perspectives, and make appropriate inferences about how the viewpoint of the creator/author is shaped by factors related to historical period, gender, culture, sexual orientation, ability, and/or politics
C1.8	identify and analyse the perspectives and/or biases evident in texts dealing with themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, commenting with growing understanding on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power
D1.4	identify, sort, and order main ideas and supporting details for writing tasks, using a variety of strategies and selecting the organizational pattern best suited to the content and the purpose for writing

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 to identify contradictions in how Indigenous peoples have been depicted, and why. • We are learning to organize ideas for an analytical paragraph.	• I can identify contradictory depictions in texts and images. • I can analyse the reasons for the divergence of views. • I can explain how perspective shaped each depiction. • I can sort ideas into a logical paragraph plan.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Contradictions deck.
- **Handouts:** Contradiction Pairs (page 1), Paragraph Plan (page 2).
- **Students:** Notes from Lessons 1 to 8.

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Hook**	Both at once?	Discuss.	
8–30	**Contradiction pairs**	Gather and add.	Analyse.	Reasons explained.
30–45	**Why?**	Who benefited?	Discuss.	
45–70	**Paragraph plan**	Organize.	Plan.	Logical order.
70–75	**Exit**	Reflect.	Write.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Two pairs partly completed.
- **ELL:** Word bank: contradiction, divergence, serve, justify.
- **Challenge:** Find a contradiction in a current media text.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Contradiction Pairs and Paragraph Plan	Contradictions and reasons (A2.2), perspective (A2.1), bias (C1.8) and organization (D1.4)

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Contradictions: key points

- **Noble / savage:** “Noble” made Indigenous people romantic subjects for art; “savage” justified taking land and wars. Both erased real Nations.
- **Vanishing / threatening:** “Vanishing” excused policies; “threatening” justified troops and laws. Both served the government.
- **Wildflower / scandal:** Christine was charming until she defended her mother's marriage law. Approval depended on silence.
- **Traitor / founder:** Riel's image changed as Métis and Manitoba perspectives gained power.
- **The reason:** Each image served its creator's purpose at that moment, which is why they could contradict each other.

Teacher notes

- Keep the focus on the image-makers' purposes, not on judging Indigenous people. Do not ask students to list slurs or stereotypes aloud beyond the pairs on the slides.
- Riel: hanged November 16, 1885; recognized as a founder of Manitoba in 1992 (CBC News, November 2015).
- 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.
- 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.
- 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, Whose Story?

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