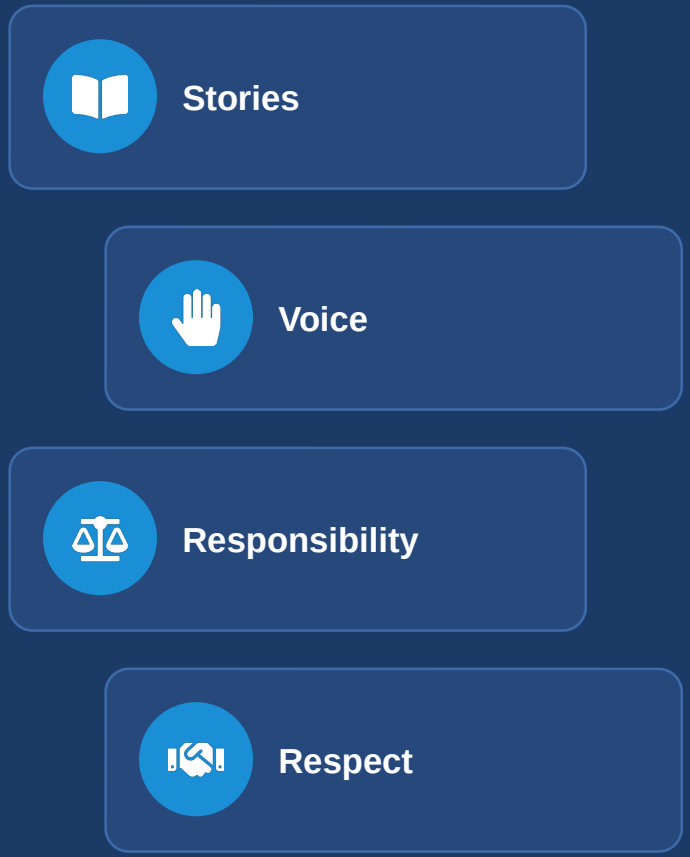
NBE3U Behind the Image, Lesson 10

Whose Story?

Story ownership, voice and responsibility



Today's goals

We are learning…

- Why Indigenous writers have called for control of their own stories.
- How under-representation shapes what a society reads.

I can…

- Summarize Keeshig-Tobias's argument accurately in my own words.
- Explain how outsiders' versions can crowd out Indigenous voices.
- Connect her argument to a text we have read.
- Listen and respond respectfully in a discussion.

Today's plan

Time	What we're doing	You will…
0–8 min	**Hook**	Discuss
8–25 min	**1990 and after**	Note
25–40 min	**Charlie the collector**	Read
40–62 min	**Discussion**	Discuss
62–75 min	**Respectful reader**	Write

Warm-up



Your grandmother tells you a family story. A stranger overhears, writes a bestseller from it and wins a prize. What did the stranger owe your family?

Sentence starters

“They should have asked…”

“It feels wrong because…”

“I'd want…”

How it works

- Pairs: 3 minutes.

Big idea

In 1990, Anishinaabe writer Lenore Keeshig-Tobias asked non-Indigenous writers in The Globe and Mail to stop stealing Native stories. Stories belong to the families and Nations that carry them, she argued; when outsiders' versions fill the shelves, Indigenous writers struggle to be heard. Her argument changed Canadian literature.

“Stop Stealing Native Stories”



On January 26, 1990, Anishinaabe writer Lenore Keeshig-Tobias argued in The Globe and Mail that outsiders who take Native stories and voices are taking cultural property.

Her point was also about access: outsiders' versions were published and praised, while Indigenous writers' own books received less attention and support.

What followed

When	What happened
1991	Keeshig-Tobias becomes founding chair of the Writers' Union of Canada's Racial Minority Writers' Committee
1992	The Union's members pass a motion against cultural appropriation
1994	Writing Thru Race conference, Vancouver

Indigenous writers, editors and publishers carry this work on today (Unit 5).

A collector of people

She entered. “Oh, no, I would not cry; I never do cry, but I would be heart-sore to lose you Joe, and apart from that”—a little wickedly —“you may come in handy for an exchange some day, as Charlie does always say when he hoards up duplicate relics.”

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), “A Red Girl's Reasoning” (1893), The Moccasin Maker (1913). Public domain.

Think about it

What does Charlie collect?

What is Christine joking about?

How is a person being treated like a relic?

Taking or learning?

Taking

- Retelling a family's or Nation's story without permission.
- Profiting while the community doesn't.
- Filling the shelf so Indigenous writers aren't heard.

Learning responsibly

- Reading Indigenous-authored texts first.
- Asking whose story it is, and following protocol.
- Crediting sources and supporting Indigenous writers.

Keeshig-Tobias's point: permission, credit and space for Indigenous voices.

How we'll discuss

Listen first

Summarize the last speaker before you respond.

Speak for yourself

Never for a Nation or a classmate.

Ask real questions

Curious, not “gotcha.”

Disagree with ideas

Not with people.

Structured discussion

What would it look like for our class, as readers and writers, to learn from First Nations, Métis and Inuit stories without taking them?

Sentence starters

“To summarize what ___ said…”

“I agree, and I'd add…”

“One thing we could do is…”

How it works

- Groups of four: 15 minutes.
- Each person speaks after summarizing.

Respectful reader guidelines

On page 2:

1. Write five guidelines.
2. Explain why each matters.
3. Note one idea from a classmate.
4. Star your most important guideline.

Check yourself

Be honest. This helps you choose what to work on next.

Success criteria	Not yet	Almost	Got it
I can summarize Keeshig-Tobias's argument accurately in my own words.			
I can explain how outsiders' versions can crowd out Indigenous voices.			
I can connect her argument to a text we have read.			
I can listen and respond respectfully in a discussion.			

Exit ticket

1. Keeshig-Tobias's argument in your own words.

2. How Charlie connects to her argument.

3. Your most important guideline.

Next class: Building the Analysis.

Teacher reveal

Whose story: key points

Keeshig-Tobias (1990): Outsiders who take Native stories and voices take cultural property; meanwhile Indigenous writers' own books get less attention and support.

The aftermath: A Writers' Union committee (1991), a motion against appropriation (1992) and the Writing Thru Race conference (1994).

Charlie in Johnson's story: A collector of “Indianology” who studies a people as objects and treats his wife as a relic: knowledge without respect.

Under-representation: When outsiders' versions dominate shelves and courses, readers meet Indigenous lives mostly through others' eyes.

A respectful reader: Seeks Indigenous-authored texts first, learns protocols, credits sources, and doesn't retell stories that aren't theirs.