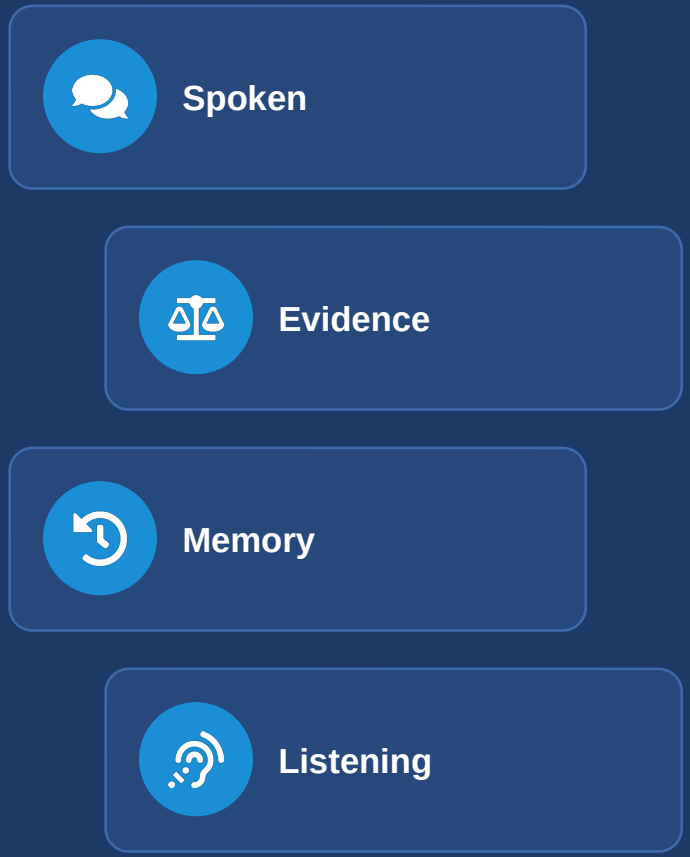
NBE3U Living Words, Lesson 1

Living Words

Oral tradition as text, record and evidence



Today's goals

We are learning…

- What makes an oral tradition a text.
- How Canadian law has treated oral history.

I can…

- Name several oral text forms and explain their purpose.
- Explain how the Delgamuukw decision changed the status of oral history.
- Identify the most important ideas in a short account.
- Explain why “oral” does not mean “less reliable.”

Today's plan

Time	What we're doing	You will…
0–10 min	**Hook**	Sort
10–25 min	**Oral text forms**	Note
25–50 min	**Delgamuukw**	Read and summarize
50–65 min	**Reliable?**	Discuss
65–75 min	**Journal**	Write

Warm-up



Name something you know that nobody ever wrote down for you. How do you know it's true?

Sentence starters

“My family always says…”

“I learned it by watching…”

“I trust it because…”

How it works

- Pairs: 3 minutes.
- Share only what you're comfortable sharing.

Big idea

For thousands of years, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have kept their histories, laws and knowledge in spoken words: stories, speeches, songs and teachings passed carefully from one generation to the next. Canadian courts once dismissed these records as hearsay. In 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada said they must count.

Ways of keeping knowledge

On page 1, in pairs:

1. Add an example to each row.
2. How does each form protect accuracy?
3. Where can each form go wrong?
4. Which forms did you rank highest? Why?

Oral text forms

Reiterative storytelling

Repetition and variation keep a teaching's spirit and intent alive.

Creation stories

A spiritual foundation: how people and the natural world are related.

Acknowledgements

Greetings that recognize a speaker's family and clan connections.

Names

Traditional names connect a person, a community and the spiritual realm.

Customs that govern oral texts

Who	Elders, Métis Senators, Knowledge Keepers and knowledge holders carry teachings. *Communities choose who may teach.*
When	Some stories belong to a season or a stage of life. *Lesson 4 looks at seasonal protocols.*
How	Metaphor, humour and repetition guide listeners. *Accuracy is protected by practice.*

A courtroom, 1987

Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs went to court to prove their title to about 58,000 square kilometres in northwestern British Columbia. Elders testified with their oral histories, often in their own languages.

In 1991 the trial judge ruled against them. On December 11, 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada ordered a new trial and held that oral histories must be weighed as evidence.

Build the case file

On page 2, in pairs:

1. Who brought the case, and what did they claim?
2. What evidence did they use?
3. What did each court decide?
4. Why does the 1997 decision matter for oral history?

Two kinds of record

A written record

- Fixed on paper.
- Can be copied exactly.
- Can be lost, forged or one-sided.

An oral record

- Carried by trained keepers.
- Protected by repetition, witnesses and protocol.
- Lives in language and relationships.

Ask: Why might a legal system built on paper struggle to hear the second kind?

Talk it out



Some people assume that anything written down is more reliable than anything spoken. What would you say to them now?

Sentence starters

“That assumes…”

“Oral histories protect accuracy by…”

“The Delgamuukw case shows…”

How it works

- Groups of three: 5 minutes.
- One speaker reports.

Start your listening journal

In your notebook or a document:

1. Date the entry and name today's topic.
2. One idea that changed how you think about “text.”
3. One question you'll listen for this unit.
4. 80 to 100 words.

Check yourself

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

Success criteria	Not yet	Almost	Got it
I can name several oral text forms and explain their purpose.			
I can explain how the Delgamuukw decision changed the status of oral history.			
I can identify the most important ideas in a short account.			
I can explain why “oral” does not mean “less reliable.”			

Exit ticket

1. One oral text form and its purpose.

2. What the Supreme Court decided in 1997.

3. One question you'll listen for.

Next class: How We Listen.

Teacher reveal

Living words: key points

Oral text forms: Reiterative storytelling (repetition with variation keeps the teaching's spirit), creation stories (a spiritual foundation; humans and the natural world), acknowledgements (greetings recognizing family and clan), names (connecting person, community and spirit).

Customs: Rules govern who tells, when, and to whom: by season, by the listener's age, by role (Elders, Métis Senators, Knowledge Keepers).

Delgamuukw: Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs claimed title to their lands; the 1991 trial ruling rejected their oral histories; the Supreme Court (December 11, 1997) said oral history must be given weight as evidence.

Why it matters: A legal system built on paper had to make room for knowledge kept in speech, names and ceremony.

Reliable? Oral traditions use repetition, witnesses, designated keepers and protocols to protect accuracy.