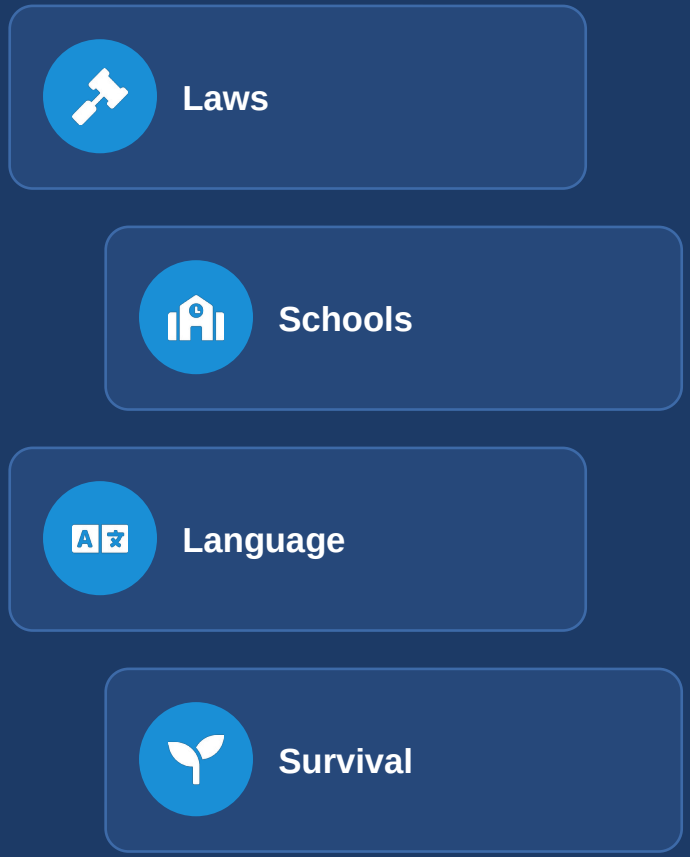
NBE3U Living Words, Lesson 6

Silenced and Spoken

Laws, schools and the survival of oral traditions



Today's goals

We are learning…

- How laws and policies disrupted oral traditions.
- How communities have continued and restored them.

I can…

- Explain how the potlatch ban and residential schools disrupted oral traditions.
- Describe forces that helped traditions continue.
- Identify perspective and bias in accounts of these events.
- Connect the past to access today.

Today's plan

Time	What we're doing	You will…
0–8 min	**Care**	Listen
8–25 min	**The ban**	Note
25–40 min	**Schools and language**	Note
40–58 min	**Continuation**	Map
58–75 min	**Two accounts**	Analyse

Before we begin

This is recent history

Many families live with its effects today.

Take care

You may step out or pass at any time.

Support

Hope for Wellness: 1-855-242-3310 (24/7). Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868. Call or text 988. Residential School Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419.

Speak for yourself

No one speaks for a Nation or a family.



Big idea

For decades, Canadian law and policy worked to silence Indigenous oral traditions: the potlatch ban, residential schools that punished children for speaking their languages, and the loss of fluent speakers. The traditions survived because people kept them, sometimes in secret, and are now bringing them back.

The potlatch ban

A potlatch is a ceremony of Northwest Coast Nations where names, rights and histories are witnessed and passed on, and gifts are given. In 1884, Canada amended the Indian Act to ban it. The law came into force on January 1, 1885.

The ban stayed in the Indian Act until 1951: sixty-six years in which people risked jail to keep their oral records alive.

Village Island, 1921

On December 25, 1921, police broke up a potlatch at Village Island, B.C. Forty-five people were arrested. About 600 masks and ceremonial objects were confiscated and sent to museums.

Kwakwaka'wakw communities worked for decades to bring them home. The U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay opened in 1980. “U'mista” means the return of something important.

Other forces

Residential schools

Children were punished for speaking their languages.

Fewer speakers

Michif: 1,845 speakers in the 2021 census; fewer than 1,000 fluent.

Moving away

Relocation and city life broke up the gatherings where knowledge passed on.

Map the forces

On page 1, in pairs:

1. For each force, explain how it disrupted oral traditions.
2. Then explain how people kept traditions going.
3. Which force did the most damage?
4. Be ready to defend your answer.

Disrupted, not ended

Disruption

- Laws, schools and relocation.
- Confiscated objects.
- Silenced languages.

Continuation

- Practised in secret; kept by Elders.
- Objects returned; museums run by communities.
- Language revival (Lesson 11).

Disruption is part of the story. So is survival.

Two accounts

On page 2 (original model texts):

1. Underline loaded words in each account.
2. Whose view does each one centre?
3. What does each leave out?
4. Which would you trust, and why?

Talk it out



Account A sounds calm and official. Does a calm tone make an account fair?

Sentence starters

“A calm tone can hide…”

“The word ‘wasteful’…”

“Fair would mean…”

How it works

- Groups: 4 minutes.
- Then whole class.

Taking care



If today raised anything for you, talk to me, a counsellor or a trusted adult.

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Check yourself

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

Success criteria	Not yet	Almost	Got it
I can explain how the potlatch ban and residential schools disrupted oral traditions.			
I can describe forces that helped traditions continue.			
I can identify perspective and bias in accounts of these events.			
I can connect the past to access today.			

Exit ticket

1. When the potlatch ban began and ended.

2. One force that helped oral traditions continue.

3. One loaded word in Account A.

Next class: Métis Voices.

Teacher reveal

Silenced and spoken: key points

The ban: Indian Act amendment approved 1884, in force January 1, 1885; removed in 1951. Targeted the potlatch, where names, rights and histories were witnessed and passed on.

Cranmer potlatch: December 25, 1921, Village Island: 45 arrested, about 600 objects confiscated and sent to museums.

Schools and language: Children were punished for speaking their languages; fewer speakers means fewer listeners and keepers.

Continuation: Practices continued in secret, Elders kept teachings, and communities fought for repatriation (U'mista, 1980) and language revival.

Bias: The official account calls a ceremony “wasteful”; the museum label names a law and a loss. Word choice reveals perspective.