# Checking the Picture: Is our novel accurate, and how would we know?

**NBE3U, Unit 5: Stories Now, Lesson 9.** 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

### Lesson at a glance

Fiction invents, but it can still represent real lives accurately or inaccurately. To evaluate a novel's picture of a community, we check it against the author's own words, Indigenous-led sources and our knowledge from the course, and we ask what updated representations might change.

**What students do:** Circles hold a mid-novel check-in, then evaluate how accurately their novel represents the lives and activities of its communities using the Representation Tracker's notes, the author's statements and Indigenous-led sources, and explain how such representations can influence society.

## Curriculum expectations

| Code | Students will… |
|---|---|
| A3.4 | evaluate a variety of contemporary text forms to determine how accurately they represent the lives and activities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals and communities, past and present, and explain, with increasing insight, how updated representations can influence society |
| 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 |
| C1.7 | evaluate the effectiveness of texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, using evidence from the text to support their opinions |

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 evaluate how accurately a novel represents real lives.<br>• We are learning to identify perspectives and the questions they raise. | • I can gather evidence of how my novel represents its community.<br>• I can use the author's own words and Indigenous-led sources to check it.<br>• I can evaluate accuracy and complexity with evidence.<br>• I can explain how updated representations can influence society. |

## Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Checking the Picture deck.
- **Handouts:** Accuracy Audit (page 1), Influence (page 2).
- **Books:** Circle novels; Representation Tracker notes.
- **Devices:** For author interviews and Indigenous-led sources.

## Lesson sequence

| Time (min) | Part | Teacher | Students | Look for |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0–15 | **Check-in** | Circles. | Discuss. | |
| 15–25 | **Criteria** | How to judge. | Note. | |
| 25–55 | **Audit** | Research and evidence. | Evaluate. | Sources named. |
| 55–70 | **Influence** | Society. | Write. | |
| 70–75 | **Exit** | Reflect. | Write. | |

## Differentiation

- **Support:** Teacher-selected author interview links.
- **ELL:** Audit with sentence frames.
- **Challenge:** Compare two circles' audits.

## Assessment

| Type | Tool | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment for learning | Accuracy Audit | Accuracy and influence (A3.4), perspectives (C1.8), evaluation (C1.7) |

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### Checking the picture: key points

- **Specific:** Named places, real practices, everyday detail, not generic “Native” imagery.
- **Complex:** Characters disagree, joke, change; communities include many views.
- **Grounded:** The author explains their relationship to the community and their sources.
- **Limits:** A novel is one view, not the view; speculative novels invent futures but can be true to people and values.
- **Influence:** Updated representations can change readers' assumptions, school curricula and public debate; they can also be misread, so context matters.

## Teacher notes

- Accuracy here is not “is this exactly how every community lives?” No novel represents a whole people. Ask: Is it specific, complex and grounded? What does the author say about their sources and community?
- Sources: the author's interviews and notes; Indigenous-led media such as APTN News; Nations' own websites. Teach students to name each source.
- 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.
- 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, Who Makes Literature Happen?

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