Who Makes Literature Happen? Publishers, prizes and organizations

NBE3U, Unit 5: Stories Now, Lesson 10. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

Books don't reach readers on their own. Indigenous-led publishers, editors, prizes and organizations have built the space for contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit literature, from Theytus Books in 1980 to the Indigenous Voices Awards in 2018.

What students do: Students research, in a jigsaw, the contributions of Indigenous-led publishers (Theytus Books, Kegedonce Press, Inhabit Media, the Gabriel Dumont Institute), prizes and programs (the Indigenous Voices Awards, Canada Reads) and organizations, then explain how each has influenced literature and identity in Canada.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
C5.1	describe the contributions of a variety of individuals, organizations, and initiatives to the development of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit literature
C5.2	analyse the influence of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit literary works on identities and heritage in Canada, commenting with increasing insight on the role of literature as a social and cultural force in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities
C1.3	identify the most important ideas and supporting details in texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, in relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts

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.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning about the people and organizations behind contemporary Indigenous literature. • We are learning how they influence identity and heritage.	• I can describe the contribution of one publisher, prize or organization. • I can identify the most important facts in a source. • I can explain its influence on literature and identity. • I can share my findings clearly with a group.

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Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Who Makes Literature Happen? deck.
- **Handouts:** Jigsaw Notes (page 1), Influence Map (page 2).
- **Devices:** The organizations' own websites (Theytus Books, Kegedonce Press, Inhabit Media, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Indigenous Voices Awards).

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Hook**	Who decides what gets published?	Discuss.	
8–15	**Overview**	Timeline.	Note.	
15–40	**Expert groups**	Research.	Research.	Key facts from own sites.
40–60	**Home groups**	Teach.	Share.	
60–75	**Influence**	Map.	Write.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Fact cards for each organization.
- **ELL:** Jigsaw notes with headings.
- **Challenge:** Find the publisher of your circle novel and research it.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Jigsaw Notes and Influence Map	Contributions (C5.1), influence (C5.2), important ideas (C1.3)

Who makes literature happen: key points

- **Theytus Books (1980):** Founded by Randy Fred; the first and oldest Indigenous publishing house in Canada, now in Penticton at the En'owkin Centre.
- **Kegedonce Press (1993):** Founded by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm at Neyaashiinigmiing; Indigenous literature, especially poetry.
- **Inhabit Media (2006):** The first Inuit-owned independent publisher in the Canadian Arctic; Inuit stories, oral history and knowledge.
- **Gabriel Dumont Institute (1980):** Métis Nation–Saskatchewan's education arm; more than 100 Métis cultural and educational resources.
- **Indigenous Voices Awards (2017–18):** Crowdfunded prize for First Nations, Métis and Inuit writers, including unpublished and Indigenous-language work.

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- **Influence:** Indigenous control of publishing means Indigenous editors decide which stories are told and how: control of the narrative (A3).

Teacher notes

- Facts checked November 2026; ask students to confirm current details on each organization's own website. Theytus Books: founded 1980 by Randy Fred in Nanaimo, moved to Penticton in 1981; it describes itself as the first and oldest Indigenous publishing house in Canada and operates from the En'owkin Centre. Kegedonce Press: founded 1993 by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm at Neyaashiinigmiing (Cape Croker), known for poetry. Inhabit Media: incorporated 2006; the first Inuit-owned independent publisher in the Canadian Arctic, publishing Inuit stories, oral history and knowledge with Elders and storytellers. Gabriel Dumont Institute: incorporated 1980, the education arm of Métis Nation–Saskatchewan; its publishing department has produced more than 100 Métis resources. Indigenous Voices Awards: founded 2017 through a crowdfunding campaign (goal $10,000; raised more than $140,000) after a controversy over a proposed “appropriation prize”; first winners May 2018; administered by the Indigenous Literary Studies Association. Michelle Good's Five Little Indians won CBC's Canada Reads in 2022.
- If students ask how the prize began: in 2017, an editor's column and online comments joking about an “appropriation prize” were widely criticized as dismissive of Indigenous writers, and a crowdfunding campaign for a prize for Indigenous writers followed. Keep the focus on the writers the prize supports.
- 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 11, Stories and Screens.

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