On Air: APTN and news from an Indigenous newsroom

NBE3U, Unit 6: Signal and Story, Lesson 2. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

The same event can become two different stories. Comparing coverage from an Indigenous newsroom with coverage from a mainstream outlet shows how sources, words, images and order shape what an audience understands, and whose voices are heard first.

What students do: Students learn about APTN's history and mandate, compare two teacher-chosen news reports on the same event (one from APTN News, one from a mainstream outlet), analyse sources, word choice, images and framing, and evaluate how effectively each report communicates.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
E1.3	evaluate how effectively information, themes, ideas, issues, and opinions are communicated in media texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant media texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and decide whether the texts achieve their intended purpose
E1.2	interpret media texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant media texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, identifying and explaining the overt and implied messages they convey
E5.1	describe the contributions of a variety of individuals, organizations, and initiatives to the development and production of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit media texts
E1.5	identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant media texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power

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 how news is shaped by who makes it. • We are learning to evaluate how effectively a news report communicates.	• I can describe APTN's history and purpose. • I can compare sources, words and images in two reports on the same event. • I can identify overt and implied messages in a news report. • I can evaluate which report communicates more effectively, and for whom.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** On Air deck.
- **Handouts:** Two Reports (page 1), Framing Analysis (page 2).
- **Media:** Two short news reports on the same recent event: one from APTN News (aptnnews.ca) and one from a mainstream Canadian outlet. Choose and preview them.

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Hook**	What makes news?	Discuss.	
8–20	**APTN**	History and mandate.	Note.	
20–45	**Two reports**	Watch or read both.	Compare.	Sources and words compared.
45–62	**Framing**	Overt and implied messages.	Analyse.	Implied messages explained.
62–75	**Evaluate**	Which works better, for whom?	Write.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Transcripts or printed versions of both reports.
- **ELL:** Word bank: headline, lead, source, frame, quote.
- **Challenge:** Compare a third report from a regional or Indigenous outlet in another province or territory.

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Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Framing Analysis	Evaluating effectiveness (E1.3), messages (E1.2) and perspectives and bias (E1.5)

On Air: key points

- **APTN:** Launched nationally September 1, 1999; grew out of Television Northern Canada (1992); programs in English, French and many Indigenous languages.
- **Sources:** Look at who is quoted first and most: community members, leaders, officials, police, experts.
- **Words:** Verbs and labels frame the story: “protesters” or “land defenders,” “dispute” or “rights.”
- **Images:** Who is shown, where, and doing what? Crowds, faces, maps, archive footage.
- **Implied message:** What the report suggests without saying it, often through order and omission.
- **Evaluation:** Effectiveness depends on purpose and audience: a report can be clear and accurate for one audience and incomplete for another.

Teacher notes

- APTN launched on September 1, 1999, the world's first national Indigenous broadcaster (it grew out of Television Northern Canada, 1992). In February 1999 the CRTC licensed APTN as a national network, and since then cable and satellite providers have had to carry it in their basic service. In September 2024 it split into two channels: APTN and APTN Languages (The Canadian Encyclopedia; aptn.ca).
- Choose an event that is not a crisis involving students' own communities. News about missing and murdered Indigenous women, deaths in custody or residential school burials is especially difficult; if you use such a story, name it beforehand and give care routines. This course discusses colonization, residential schools and their effects. Some students and families carry this history personally. Support: Hope for Wellness Help Line (for Indigenous people across Canada, 24/7, by phone or online chat at hopeforwellness.ca; English and French, with Cree, Ojibway and Inuktut on request at certain times), 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868; 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline (call or text 988); National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419.
- Preview every clip, episode or post before class. Choose excerpts that are short, non-graphic and suitable for your students; check your board's approved media list.
- 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.
- Facts in this lesson were checked in November 2026. Media organizations, funding and leadership change; check for updates before teaching.

Coming up

Lesson 3, The Money and the Rules.

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