



Interrogating Media Bias to Understand Identity

Lesson Plan

[NBE 3C Curriculum Expectations](#)

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada

A.2 Deconstructing: demonstrate an understanding of how representations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, communities, and cultures in text forms created in Canada are influenced by perspectives related to or shaped by historical period, cultural background, and social and political conditions and events, including perspectives related to gender and the role of women;

A2.1 determine how the messages relating to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures conveyed in various contemporary and historical Indigenous text forms, and, as appropriate, in non-Indigenous texts, might change if they were presented from different perspectives (e.g., the perspectives of veterans, landowners, non-Indigenous immigrants, elderly community members, First Nations women, individuals who live off the land), and make inferences about how the viewpoint of the creator/author is shaped by factors related to historical period, gender, culture, sexual orientation, ability, and/or politics

Reading and Literature Studies

C.1 Reading for Meaning: read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, informational, and graphic texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, using a range of strategies to construct meaning;

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 texts, commenting on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, identity, and power



Learning Goals & Success Criteria

Learning Goals

We are learning to:

- Explain how media outlets reaffirm bias(es) of their intended audience

Success Criteria


I can:

- Explain how my own perceptions of Canadian Identity may stop me from seeing the true lived experiences of others
- Reflect on bias in the media and explain how it can marginalize communities of people that face collective challenges to participating fully in society

Essential Questions

1. How can our own worldview interfere with how we explain and explore topics?
2. How can being aware of our biases help us to report more truthfully?

Lesson Materials and Resources

1. Video:  It's Time to Re-imagine Canada's 'nice' Identity | Riley Yesno | TEDxU...
2. Copies of/access to [What it takes for Aboriginal people to make the news](#) (2014)




Lesson Plan

Minds On


1. Pose the following two questions to the class for students to respond to in their personal writing journals:
 - a. Why do you think some Americans travel internationally with a Canadian flag on their backpack?
(stereotypical views may emerge in students' discussion of Canada; the purpose of the lesson will be to dismantle some of these idealistic views of the country)
2. Share Essential Questions, Learning Goals, and Success Criteria of the lesson.

Action

3. Explain to students that they will be watching a TEDx Video titled:
 [It's Time to Re-imagine Canada's 'nice' Identity | Riley Yesno | TEDxUofT](#) This video (2019) features Riley Yesno who explores some historical truths about Canada that are often overlooked in general descriptions and depictions of the country. "Riley Yesno is an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, a former member of the Prime Minister's Youth Council and an Indigenous Rights advocate. Her talk will reflect on dominant perceptions of Canadian identity, and question if they are truly as accurate as we may think they are" (ted.com)
4. Distribute the handout "[It's Time to Re-Imagine Canada's 'nice' Identity Quotation Analysis](#)" (see pg. 6) to students. There are 4 quotations pulled from Yesno's talk. After each quotation is spoken (time indicated on the handout) pause the video and allow students to reflect on the quotation in the graphic organizer and to reflect on and respond to the prompt associated with each quotation.
5. Have students share their responses with an elbow partner. Students can then share some reflections with the entire class.
6. Ask students, "Who do you think the intended audience is for this TEDxTalk? Why do you think Yesno is giving this talk? Did it change your perception of Canada in any way?"



7. Students will revisit their journaling prompts from the Minds On. Share the following prompt and have students respond in their writing journals: Has Riley Yesno's TEDxTalk changed your views on Canada? Why or why not?
8. In a short whole-class discussion, ask students, "Why is Riley's voice important? What happens when Riley's voice is missing from the discussion on re-imagining Canada's 'nice' identity?"
9. As a class, come up with a definition for bias. Ask students, "How would you define bias? What does it look like? What does it not look like? Create a definition of bias/media bias as a group. (It's important to avoid positioning bias as 'bad' as it is part of human nature. Explaining that being aware of our biases and how we act on them is important).
10. Students read the transcript from the TVO interview with Professor Carmen Robertson [Rewriting journalism: How Canadian media reinforces Indigenous stereotypes](#)
11. Students could annotate the text using the method used in your classroom for text annotation (a video regarding how to annotate a text by Kristina Smekens is a nice refresher on annotation for grade 11 students. You can watch the first 11 minutes with your class if you haven't discussed annotation yet):

 Classroom Connections: Introduce Annotation

Consolidation

12. Have a brief discussion about the interview transcript. What did they notice? What did they wonder? How does Robertson address Indigenous representation in the media? Does she think it's changing?
13. Students complete a [Reader Response](#) (see pg. 7) based on a quotation for assessment for learning (this will let the teacher know how far to go with bias in the next few class periods).

Robertson's work has focused on depictions of Indigenous peoples in historic and contemporary society. She says, "There are nice features and stories that we see in the press today, but when there's a flashpoint moment, it just seems like they go back to what they know deep inside them, and that's often demeaning and destructive." In a well formed paragraph, explain what you think Robertson means



when she says “...deep inside them.” How does this (bias) cloud the relationship between mainstream media and Indigenous peoples?

Extension Possibilities

1. Make connections to the [Lesson: Understanding Documentary Film as a Form of Resistance](#).
2. Students explore other articles from other news outlets about an Indigenous person or issue. Have students explore multiple outlets about the same topic to see how anti-Indigenous racism shapes the narrative and how they are understood.

Disclaimer

The images and many of the text pieces included in these resources are available in the public domain.



It's Time to Re-Imagine Canada's 'nice' Identity Quotation Analysis

Quotation from Yesno's TEDTalk	Prompt to which to respond
"This piece painted a very different picture of the Canada than the one before it" (2:12).	Why do you think the depictions of Canada are so different between the two articles?
"I think the earliest memory from my life, actually, is of me brushing my teeth in a cup of boiled water because there was no clean water coming from the tap" (6:55).	Did you ever have to deal with not having clean drinking water in your own childhood? Do you think this is a regular problem for most Canadians?
"...oh the good Americans" (9:15).	Why do you think people from other countries see Canadians as "the good Americans?"
"While I do not negate that there are atrocities happening in other countries, to always deflect to these sorts of phrases when confronted with an uncomfortable reality is a scapegoat" (12:50).	Why do you think people deflect blame when confronted with an uncomfortable reality? Why is it easier to say something like, "Well it's worse in other countries" instead of confronting the problems here?

