

“These diverse textualities and interpretive traditions generally require particular kinds of extensive specialised training that are most often limited to specific community members, with specific linguistic and cultural knowledge who are charged with community responsibilities”(23).

Teachings from Albert Dumont: Session #1

- Be mindful of how perspectives result from life experiences, positionality, and unconscious bias. Reflect on how these things could be influencing our reactions as we interact with literatures and with students.
- When working with older students and parents, remember that we chose this work. Be mindful of the experiences that they bring to the classroom, be patient, and remember that everyone is “entitled to have a bad day occasionally”.
- He reminds us of the “riches” in this land that we need to appreciate and the hatred and racism that continue to exist today because of people who came here to extract these rich resources. He reminds us of the ignorance and stereotypes associated with this colonial history. This is not Indigenous history but colonial history.
- He reminds us that people who hold tight to racist beliefs “want to believe these things” - this needs to be challenged by exploring the counter narratives shared through Indigenous literatures and history. For example, look at the complexity of the birch bark canoe to challenge stereotypes.
- Indigenous Literatures are important and we should look at “traditional teaching stories that have been in this country for thousands of years and that still pack a punch and give a teaching”. Albert shared an Algonquin teaching story in the video. [Go to this link](#) to find this video.
- Many stories shared through the oral tradition teach about democracy and other important value systems. It is important that we do not allow unconscious bias and stereotypes to lead to an undermining of literatures that don't fall under the expectations of the canon.
- Be mindful of how Indigenous literature challenges misinformation that exists in the news
- Thompson Highway is an Indigenous author in Canada who should be studied along with other authors who showcase humour.
- Albert reflects on how he is part of “A people interrupted” by colonialism and he discusses how many incorrect narratives about Indigenous people were promoted to make society think there was an “Indian problem” when there has never been a problem. Indigenous spirituality is important and it should be looked at in schools and talked about in a circle that is supported.
- Albert teaches about what the concept All Our Relations means in the video referenced above.
- Albert also speaks about a real life memory that explores the relationship between the spirit world and the physical world - “there is just one world”.

Why Indigenous Literatures Matter Session 1 Participant Insights:

- “Indigenous literatures are good medicine. They remind us of who we are and where we are going, on our own and in relation to those with whom we share this world”

- We have to push ourselves and be open to being uncomfortable because it means we are experiencing change and we are on a learning journey.
- Teachers spoke about the importance of PD to educate teachers on the true history of Canada.
- There are so many nuances associated with the words “settler vs coloniser”
- Teachers must be mindful to be responsive and not reactive - it’s important that we deconstruct the difference. Responsive means doing learning proactively, building relationships with students and with learning partners, collaborating with people with more knowledge and experience, and having access to vetted resources so there is a way to respond to students’ needs. Being responsive also means teaching with students at the centre, being mindful of trauma informed pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy.
- We have to be mindful of our audience - are we teaching keeping in mind students’ lived experiences? Are we being mindful of how we bring our own unconscious bias and assumptions to a text and to the class?
- Who are we to “judge a text”? Who are we to determine “what is canon”?
- Reconsider how we label texts. For example, a participant spoke about how labeling a book like *Moon of the Crusted Snow* as speculative fiction diminishes the very real lived experiences of individuals who live the realities of cultural genocide in Canada.
- When assigning books, we must be sensitive to providing trigger warnings
- When teaching about traditional texts like the Wampum Belt, Birch Bark scrolls, oral tradition, it is important to collaborate with individuals like Elders who carry this knowledge and can share it properly. Remember that there are guest speakers’ contact information and videos of guest speakers on the Indigenous Education website and the NBE website.

Text Recommendations from Jennifer David During Session 2

- Commented on Gary Farmer and appreciating the work he has done
- Drew Hayden *Taylor Take Me To the Chief*
- *Split Tooth*
- *The Lesser Blessed*
- *Rez Sisters*
- *Moccasin Square Gardens*
- *Shoe Boy* (memoir)
- *Breath Tracks*
- *Trick or Treaty* combined with *Indian Horse*
- *Halfbreed + A Really Good Brown Girl* by Maria Campbell

Check out the [Session 2 Video](#) for advice that compliments the above text recommendations including information on critical race theory, understanding the Tricksters in Indigenous Literatures, genre, & appropriation vs appreciation.

Text Recommendations From the Participants During Session 2:

- Valerie Plain: *American Indians in Children's Literature*, Dr. Debbie Reese, provides critical analysis of Indigenous peoples in children's and young adult books.
- Deborah Lewis: My Grade 5/6 class completed biographical writing and slide presentations on Indigenous Role Models. They loved discussing how they are inspired with their subjects' activism and contributions to community, sports, etc.
- Rebecca Carew: Suggestion for NBE Teachers: Consider showing Indigenous Influencers Reels and TikToks! @NotoriousCree @the_landk @indigenous_baddie @marikasila to showcase joy, culture, and youth positivity...could pair with article <https://www.shutterstock.com/blog/indigenous-creatives-on-tiktok>
- Jen David: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GmX5stT9rU>
- Jen David17:51 http://www.odjig.com/nanabush_books.html
- Marianne Graham17:57 <https://robertmunsch.com/book/a-promise-is-a-promise-2>
- Mike McPake17:58 Robert Munsch's *Bear for Breakfast*, illustrated by Kitigan Zibi's Jay Odjick, is a great picture book. <https://www.cbc.ca/books/how-jay-odjick-illustrated-the-robert-munsch-picture-book-bear-for-breakfast-1.5081483> Valerie Plain17:59i was just going to post that one. It is also in the Algonquin language.
- Valerie Plain <https://etfovoice.ca/book/nibis-water-song>
- Mike McPake18:15 *There There* by Tommy Orange is an interesting and powerful exploration of the urban Indigenous experience in the United States
- Valerie Plain18:27 *Firekeeper's Daughter* by Angeline Boulley for older teens. very good.

Daniel Heath Justice's Advice During Session 3:

- Choose stories that speak to students the most - start with relationships and have a variety of literature so students have choice and read texts that are compelling to them.
- Sometimes the themes are less riveting to students than the characters - find books with characters that students can relate to and then once you "get" the students you can lead them into the important thematic discussions where historic, social, and political contexts can be taught/addressed.
- Colonialism is a long history of abuse and you can't change it in a year or even in a generation. Similarly, we can't introduce one text and think that this will do all of the work. We have to teach many texts over many years and in many courses.
- Remember to teach about the complexity of Indigenous culture, language, and literatures

Consider checking out this video [interview](#) to hear Daniel Heath Justice discuss:

- Shifts in how Indigenous literatures are being published and what this reflects about societal perspectives, relationships, and our progress with Truth and Reconciliation.
- Suggestions regarding teaching Indigenous Literatures to “new Canadians”.
- Insights into appropriation vs appreciation + harmful literary stereotypes to avoid.

Participant TakeAways From Session #3:

