

Final Project: Text Set and Creative Assignment

Text Set

(see annotated bibliography below):

Theme: Strength and Resilience of Aboriginal Women

1. **Core Text:** *The Rez Sisters: A play in two acts* by Tomson Highway

2. Fiction

Novel: *The Evolution of Alice* by David Alexander Robertson

Short story collection: *Love beyond body, space & time: an Indigenous Sci-Fi Anthology* edited by Hope Nicholson

3. Film and Video

Empire of Dirt - Canadian feature film

[Indigenous Peoples in Canada \(Women\)](#) - NFB selection of films/mini-docs

[Mohawk Girls](#) - Modern TV series on APTN about 4 young Mohawk women

4. Picture books

Missing Nimama by Melanie Florence

When I was eight by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton

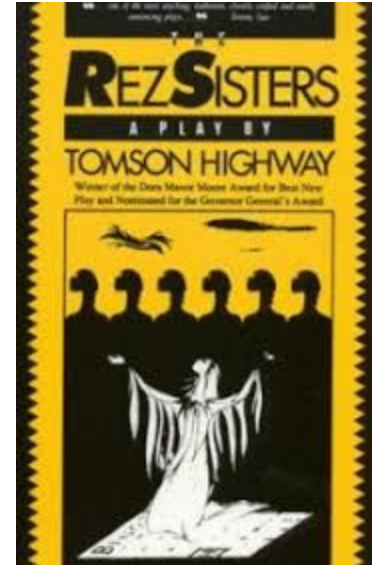
5. Poetry and Song

Poem: "i am graffiti" by Leanne Simpson

Song: "The Unforgotten" by Iskwe featuring Tanya Tagaq

6. Websites/Non-fiction

CBC online article: [Indigenous women take the lead](#) by Lenard Monkman & Juanita Taylor



CBC online article: ['The power to save lives': Jennifer Podemski's must-read call for Indigenous representation in media](#) by Jennifer Podemski

Maclean's magazine: ['It could have been me': 13 remarkable women share their own stories](#)
Can click on each woman's photo to reveal story. Good for format idea for final assignment maybe.

Statistics Canada: [Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report - First Nations, Metis and Inuit women.](#)

Annotated Bibliography

Florence, M. (2015). Missing Nimama. Aurora, Ontario: Clockwise Press.

This is a children's picture book that is intended for a more mature audience. It follows a young mother, who is one of the many missing Indigenous women, who watches over her young daughter from heaven as she grows up without her. This story helps humanize the impact of the loss of these women on family and society. It also uses alternate perspectives and voices which is important to consider. Clockwise Press offers a [Lit Circle lesson plan](#) which could be used.

Deer, T. (Producer) & Knight, C. (Producer). (2014 - present). The Mohawk girls [Television series]. Retrieved from <http://aptn.ca/mohawkgirls/>

This TV series is available for free online on the APTN website. It is based on a documentary written by Tracey Deer, and the series tracks the lives of four modern Mohawk women in their twenties as they figure how to be Mohawk in the 21st century. It does contain some racy language, but clips could be shown as many issues are compelling and relevant for teaching such as biracial relationships, friendships, women as successful breadwinners. It could serve as a current counterpart to *The Rez Sisters* and be useful for comparing and contrasting activities.

Highway, T. (1988). The rez sisters: A play in two acts. Calgary: Fifth House Ltd.

In this play, Highway explores the life and relationships of seven Aboriginal women who live on the Wasaychigan Hill Indian Reserve on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. They are all related by blood, adoption, or marriage, raise money to attend —the biggest bingo in the world and to bring one of the sisters, Marie-Adele Starblanket, to a doctor's appointment in Toronto. In the preparation and on the journey, the women reveal their stories and their relationships with each other. A male Nanabush, who is recognized only by the dying Marie-Adele and the mentally disabled Zhaboonigan, appears as a seagull, a black bird, and as the bingo master. This will act as the core text for the unit as it

encompasses myriad issues, such as shifting relationships, life of the reserve, rape, abandonment, disability, reflections on wealth, illness, Two-Spirit identity, and spirituality in the Aboriginal context. It shows the interconnectedness and resilience of Aboriginal women in facing many challenges which is shown through the format of the play which does not focus on a single storyline, but instead values each one equally.

Iskwe. (2018) "The unforgotten." Released on indie88. Retrieved from
<https://indie88.com/iskwe-shares-the-unforgotten-tanya-tagaq/>

This song is a community song which is meant to bring people together in a round dance in which people form a circle and hold hands. It is a connection both to each other and to our ancestors. Iskwe is an Irish-Cree/Dené singer songwriter who wishes to bring awareness to Aboriginal issues and simultaneously recognize the support from non-indigenous peoples. It offers a hopeful and inclusive message for students to become involved in standing up for justice for all.

Jordan-Fenton, C. & Pokiak-Fenton, M. (2013). When I was eight. Toronto: Annick Press.

This is a children's picture book about an eight-year old girl, named Olemaun who is eight who is very knowledgeable but does not yet know how to read. She is very persistent and proves the nuns at the outsiders' school wrong in their beliefs about her ability. It is based on a true story of one of the authors, Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and offers a context for discussion of racism, stereotyping, residential schools, power of literacy, tenacity and perseverance. This resource was found through Marshall's article: *Counter-storytelling through graphic life writing* which helps bring "context to the present and teaches how current conditions are manifestations of ongoing struggles over literature, language, literacy, and power". It allows for authentic Aboriginal voice to be heard.

Macdonald, M. (2015, Jun 17). 'It could have been me': Thirteen remarkable women share their own stories. Retrieved from
<http://site.macleans.ca/longform/almost-missing/index.html>

This is a Maclean's magazine online article that blends written narrative, images and video that captures the idea of Her Story. It contains very sensitive material and begins with "Warning: This page contains information about sexual assault and/or violence". The format is that an image and name of a woman is shown with a brief quote, and a link which further details her story about rape and abuse and includes a video option. These stories are stark and emotionally challenging to read. Usage of this resource would need scaffolding and careful consideration of the class makeup, climate, and maturity. Rape is one of the issues addressed in *The Rez Sisters*, and this resource is a further way to address the occurrence of rape and the long-lasting impact on women and society. Many of the women are in leadership roles now within their community and it is bracing to hear

their accounts of assault and abuse. The format of this resource is the inspiration of the assignment below, as students will be creating a Her Story biography for a character in the play.

Monkman, L. & Taylor, J. (2016, Mar 8). Indigenous women take the lead. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-women-who-are-taking-the-lead-1.3481310>

This is an online CBC article that showcases five Aboriginal women in prominent roles in current society. The article includes a brief biography, in addition to images and videos of these women who identify as artists, activists, and leaders across a variety of issues. This article shows the positive contributions and leadership roles that Aboriginal women are pursuing. It could also be used as a model for the Her Story assignment below.

National Film Board. Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Women). Retrieved from <https://www.nfb.ca/subjects/indigenous-peoples-in-canada-first-nations-and-metis/women/>

This is a collection of over 30 films by different film makers that all feature aspects and issues that relate to Aboriginal women in Canada. Many are quite short, and students could select a variety to watch and make notes on how Indigenous women are represented.

Nicholson, H. (ed.). (2016). *Love beyond body, space & time: an Indigenous Sci-Fi Anthology*. Winnipeg: Bedside Press.

This is a collection of short stories which were collected by the editor who believed that Two-Spirit stories needed to be told from the Aboriginal perspective. These stories are survivance stories that go beyond mere survival to include “persistence, adaptation, and flourishing in the future” (9). Some of these stories could be used to further explore the Aboriginal idea of Two-Spirit which is also present within Emily’s storyline in *The Rez Sisters*.

Podemski, J. (2018, Feb 22). ‘The power to save lives’: Jennifer Podemski’s must-read call for Indigenous representation in media. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/the-power-to-save-lives-jennifer-podemski-s-must-read-call-for-indigenous-representation-in-media-1.4553720>

This is a CBC news article written by Jennifer Podemski who is a renowned Aboriginal actress and has used her platform to promote equity and equality, and to work with Aboriginal youth. She became a film producer in response to the racist, colonial

perspectives that continued to dominate the telling of Aboriginal history and stories. She saw the need to promote Indigenous stories and perspectives into the Canadian narrative. This resource offers a way to examine the impact of media on beliefs around Indigenous peoples, why this is important and what actions can be done to address the misrepresentations and stereotypes. Podemski serves as a powerful, female role model in promoting change.

Robertson, D. A. (2016). *The evolution of Alice*. Winnipeg: Highwater Press.

This is a YA novel about a young mother of three girls living on a reserve in Manitoba who is strongly supported by her best friend Gideon. The community suffers through a rash of suicides and missing and murdered Aboriginal women. The themes include Aboriginal spirituality and the idea of community coming together in times of need. This novel is another way to hear and think about Aboriginal communities and the impact of missing and murdered women. Again, scaffolding for sensitive issues would need to be done ahead of time.

Simpson, L. "i am graffiti." Retrieved from
<https://www.poetryinvoice.com/poems/i-am-graffiti>

This poem is written as a response to the proceedings of Truth and Reconciliation. It is a reminder to Canadians, and the government in particular, that the injustices done to Aboriginal peoples will not be forgotten or erased. Leanne Simpson is a member of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg nation and is a scholar, artist and writer. She is an example of current day voice, strength and leadership among Aboriginal woman.

Statistics Canada. (2011). *Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report - First Nations, Metis and Inuit women*. Retrieved from
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11442-eng.htm>

This is a Canadian government website which offers information and statistics about (somewhat) current unique characteristics of the Aboriginal female population, and examines how things have been changing over time. It offers a way to bring in historical and factual information such as the Indian Act and notes the discriminatory policy that impacted Aboriginal women in particular, how many women identify as Aboriginal, where they live, employment, housing, language, employment and income, education, spousal abuse, residential school survivors, missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and health issues. It also includes a set of definitions that could be helpful for students. Exploring this site provides context and background for understanding past and current issues impacting Aboriginal women. This could be compared and contrasted with conditions for other women in Canada.

**Stebbings, P. (Director) & Master, S. (Writer). 2013. *Empire of dirt* [Motion Picture].
Canada: Redcloud Studios.**

This is a movie that is unique in that it stars three Aboriginal women as its main characters. The plot follows each woman as they face personal demons but centers on Lena and her personal growth. This film is a Canadian production and offers a current narrative of women overcoming struggles and setting positive role models.

Additional References

FNESC. Learning First Peoples. Retrieved from <http://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/efp/>

Marshall, E. (2016). Counter-storytelling through graphic life writing. *Language Arts*, 94(2), 79-93.

The Ojibwe People's Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/>

Tracey, K. N. & Menickelli, K., & Scales, R. Q. (2016). Courageous voices: Using text sets to inspire change. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60(5), 527-536.

Eng FP 12

HERSTORY Resiliency Biography

Choose **1** of the 7 women featured in *The Rez Sisters* - Pelajia Patchnose, Philomena Moosetail, Marie-Adele Starblanket, Annie Cook, Emily Dictionary or Zhaboonigan Peterson and create one of the following options which reveals the resiliency of this character:

a **fictional** online HER STORY biography

OR

a **fictional** online interview

Part 1: The Writing

Pick a character who resonates for you - you may share some characteristics/similarities, or are curious to explore in further depth. Your biography for this person should reflect current times and incorporate details and ideas drawn from the play *and* our additional readings, viewings and discussions. You may provide live links for resources that are included in your write-up. You need to be creative and imagine possibilities which are true to the character as revealed in the play: Elaborate. Enhance. Embellish.

Part 2: The Image

Create a [tugxedo](#) or [wordart](#) symbol to represent your character. This should consist of key words that represent your character that include her fictional, present self. Helpful tip: Leave the original wordart open so you can add and edit words as you progress through your assignment.

What Else?

This assignment should be shared electronically so that it can be compiled onto the class website.

Note the features on the example HERSTORY for Zhaboonigan using wordart. We will use this to co-create a rubric of important components.

30 marks

Timeline

Today - In class planning time

2 classes - In Library computer lab

Due Date:

