

VANCOUVER BIENNALE

BIG IDEAS WITH FILM

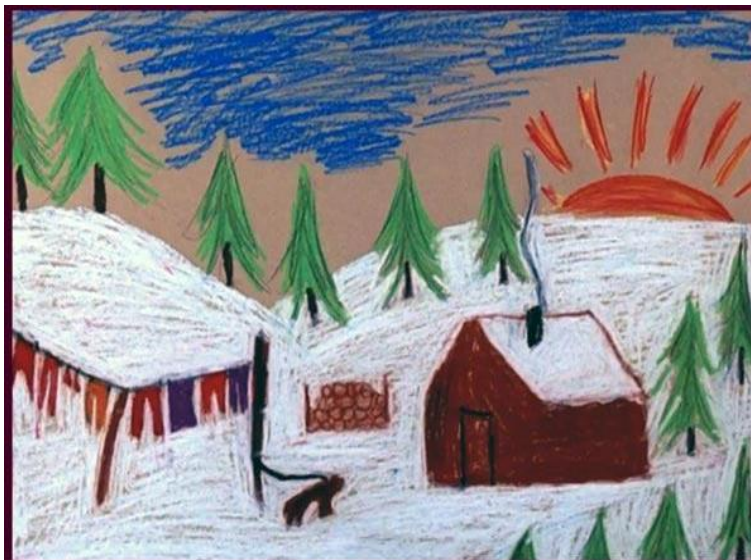
— TEACHER'S GUIDE

Unit Title: Narrative Drawing

Film: *Christmas at Moose Factory* (13 min)

Time required for: 8-10 lessons

Grade(s): 4-12



Unit Overview:

Through this guide students will learn about Alanis Obomsawin's intention to listen and share stories through her documentary as a way to learn about and draw attention to the experiences of children of Moose Cree First Nation. Using stills in the documentary that were created using drawings by students attending a residential school, this short film offers opportunities to open

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up discussion and reflection on Indigenous peoples' lives and experiences, and connect with units relating to residential school history and social impact in Canada.

This guide suggests a set of activities for grades 4-8 and adapted ideas for grades 9-12.

About the Film:

Released in 1971, this lyrical short documentary marked the directorial debut of legendary Abenaki director Alanis Obomsawin. Filmed at a residential school in northern Ontario, it is composed entirely of drawings by young Cree children and stories told by the children themselves. Listening has been at the core of Obomsawin's practice since the very beginning. "Documentary film," she said in a 2017 interview, "is the one place that our people can speak for themselves. I feel that the documentaries that I've been working on have been very valuable for the people, for our people to look at ourselves... and through that be able to make changes that really count for the future of our children to come."

Curricular Connections

| Subject | Curriculum Big Ideas | Inquiry Questions |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------|
| | | |

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| | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| <p>Art Education</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creative expression is a means to explore and share one's identity within a community. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can creative expression help to explore and share one's identity within one's community? |
| <p>Social Studies</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Traditions, perspectives, worldviews and stories are shared through aesthetic experiences. 3. Interactions between First Peoples and Europeans lead to conflict and cooperation, which continues to shape Canada's identity. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. How are traditions, stories, perspectives and worldviews shared through aesthetic experiences? 3. How do the interactions between First Peoples and Europeans continue to shape Canada's identity? |

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that Indigenous Peoples live all over Canada and have since time immemorial, and today they are trying to thrive in spite of the detrimental effects of the Indian Act.
- Analyze *Christmas at Moose Factory* and deduce some assumptions about Indigenous people being represented in the story, and assess the validity through research within sources provided by the teacher.
- Create a visual narrative from a compilation of detailed narrative drawings that recount an event.



Core Competencies in this Unit:

Communication (Collaborating), Thinking (Critical and Reflective thinking, and Creative thinking)

Suggested timeline of the Lessons.

Some lessons may easily be combined together

| Lessons 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 | Lesson 4 | Lesson 5 | Lesson 6/7-9 | Lesson 10 |
|--|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|--|-------------------------|
| Pre-screen Intro to Obomsawin and Indigenous education | Pre-screen Intro to documentary film | Screening & analysis of the film | Post-Screening Project description, skill and technique building | Introduction of narrative drawing project and description of the assignment | Skills building and work period on narrative drawing project | Presentation & critique |

Pre-Film Activities and Background Context on Alanis Obomsawin:

To prepare students for learning, teachers can start by asking students about their previous knowledge about Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Teachers may also use other resources such as storybooks and available online resources (see below) prior to watching the *Christmas at Moose Factory* short film, so that students have more background knowledge about Indigenous peoples and residential school history in Canada.



Cross-curricular teaching resources from First Nations Education Steering Committee:
<http://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/>

Teaching resource on residential school history from Historica Canada:
http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/32/ResidentialSchools_English.pdf

Alanis' words about Indigenous Peoples:

“Our past, our peoples’ history was vanished...Not only that was vanished, they had books that were written by the Catholic Church to tell the history of Canada and in those books, it was designed purposefully to create a lot of hate towards our people and that went on for hundreds of years. So, all those things have created more than racism. They created a very bad life for our people and when you are in it, you don’t realize it. You think life is like that, but when you grow older and by the time you are 16, 17 you start to feel that there is something terribly wrong. And when you understand the whole story then you start to fight to make changes. That’s what I have been doing for a very long time.” (Obomsawin, 2016)

Lesson #1 - Who is Alanis Obomsawin?

1. Questions to explore/discuss in this lesson:

- Who are the Indigenous Peoples of Canada? What nations do students know of? Which nations are part of our community in this region of Canada?
- How have the Canadian government’s historic or recent decisions and policies impacted the lives of Indigenous people?
- Who is Alanis Obomsawin?
- Why does she make films?



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Open up the discussion with these questions and start off with students sharing what they already know.

Expand class knowledge by watching these two short clips next:

Making Movie History: Alanis Obomsawin, 5 min

https://www.nfb.ca/film/making_movie_history_alanis_obomsawin/

Classroom Elder Roberta Price, CBC Radio, 5:32 min

Short audio clip from CBC Radio's Early Edition program about Elder Roberta Price, an Indigenous educator working with teachers and students across the province to share her story and her knowledge about issues related to Indigenous Peoples.

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2664456559>

2. Revisit that list of Lesson #1 questions again and discuss. For older students, teachers may share the resources, have students research in small groups and share their findings.

Lesson #2 - What is a documentary film?

For teachers, a review of different genres of documentary filmmaking may be helpful with this list from Dartmouth University:

<https://researchguides.dartmouth.edu/filmgenres/documentaries>

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1. Ask students to share what they think documentary film is. What distinguishes a documentary film from typical Hollywood films or a broadcast news story?
2. Share the list of documentary genres with them. Have students take 2 minutes to write down their ideas about:
 - Can they think of examples they have seen of films that match these genres?
 - What are the similarities and differences?
 - What are some common objectives of documentaries?
3. What filmmaking techniques are used in the documentaries you have seen?

Some examples may include:

Footage: live action (vérité or contemporaneous), re-enactments, informal (smartphone, home movies), archival, animation, something else?

Dialogue: interviews, monologue, conversational, scripted, voice-over, narrator, singing, no dialogue, something else?

Shots/Angles/Transitions: close-up, medium, long, wide, point of view (POV), two shot, low angle, high angle, montage, something else?

4. What do they think about dramatization/re-enactment – can acting to show an event be part of documentaries?



5. Essential questions for today--
 - What is a documentary film?
 - How is Alanis Obomsawin creating this film?
 - What is the difference between documentary and non-documentary movies?

Lesson #3 - Screening Day

Screen *Christmas at Moose Factory* in the class and then analyze the film together.

- Whose story is being shared and who is sharing it?
- What kind of drawings do we see, what did the children show us?
- How is this film made?
- How many different drawings make up this whole story?
- What else do you notice that adds to the emotions and dramatic effect of the story?
- What do we learn about the family represented in the story, and their culture?

Lessons 4 – 10: Post-Screening Project - Narrative Drawing:

Create a short visual narrative composed of at least 5 narrative drawings. Students can incorporate found images in their drawings or photocopy their created environment to transfer from one drawing to another to build their backgrounds or add a mixed-media effect to their drawings.

1. Before beginning the project, these tips will help students and teachers as they plan and create narrative drawings:

18 tips for telling a story through an artwork

<https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/illustration/18-tips-for-telling-story-through-artwork/>

2. Students can practice identifying structure or analyzing narrative drawings by looking at the work of other artists. The wordless book of *The Only Child* by Guojing is one such example, see the book trailer below:

The Only Child by Guojing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO4NNSd8x70>

Extension Project – Bring Still Images to Life

High school students in Media or Graphic Arts classes can combine analog and digital technologies by animating their images in post-production software such as Final Cut Pro or iMovie. It is also possible to add voice and sound effect or narration to each of the drawings with these programs.

Skills required for this project:

- Uploading scanned drawings as JPEG images to iMovie (free on iPhones or Mac computers) or Final Cut Pro. Other free video editing software or apps can work well, too.
- Using filters or transitions to edit photos together to create a video. Students could use the Ken Burns Effect.

The Ken Burns effect



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This is a simple film editing effect that uses static photos, smooth zooming and panning to bring still frames to life. Documentarian Ken Burns made the effect famous, but many filmmakers throughout history have used it, too.

Teachers will demo the technique and or provide a step by step handout for students. Teachers can follow these short videos below to learn how to create this effect.

Vocabulary needed: zoom in, zoom out, close up shot, camera pan.

Ken Burns Effect in iMovie - How to zoom in & out and hover over an image

4 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jSeHkY6PqE>

Tips to help you decide how to use Ken Burns Effect in your video:

<https://www.wevideo.com/blog/for-work/being-ken-burns>

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