

VANCOUVER BIENNALE

BIG IDEAS WITH FILM

— TEACHER'S GUIDE

Unit Title: The Indian Act and Indigenous Peoples' Rights

Film: Waban-Aki: People from Where the Sun Rises

(1 hr 44 min)

Time required for: 5-6 lessons

Grade(s): 6-12



Unit Overview:

This guide has been created to help teachers and students use Alanis Obomsawin's documentary film *Waban-Aki: People from Where the Sun Rises* as a primary source of knowledge about Indigenous peoples' lives and their struggles and interactions with the Canadian legal system. Obomsawin recounts this story through a lyrical narrative of her own hometown and her own people, the Abenaki or Waban-Aki nation. After decades of tirelessly recording others' stories, she focuses this film on her own.

Teachers in Law 12 may wish to expand and use this film along with other films of Obomsawin such as *Kanehsatake, 270 Years of Resistance* and

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Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Metis Child, to further explore and analyze the impacts of the judicial system on Indigenous peoples across Canada.

Subject Matter	Curriculum Big Ideas	Inquiry questions
Social Studies (History, Law and Geography)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Media sources can positively and negatively affect our understanding of important events and issues. Economic specialization and trade networks can lead to conflict and cooperation between societies. Contacts and conflicts between peoples stimulated significant cultural, social, political changes. Historical and contemporary injustices challenge the narrative of Canada as an inclusive multicultural society. A society's Law and legal framework affect many aspects of people's daily lives. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How can media sources impact in a positive or negative way viewer's understanding of Indigenous people and identities in Canada? How did Indigenous Peoples' engagement in fur trade with the French and the British shape their relationship with the Europeans? How did these exchanges impact the First Peoples' culture and sociopolitical position in Canada? How do historical and contemporary injustices challenge the narrative and identity of Canada as an inclusive and multicultural society? How did the Indian Act affect Indigenous peoples of Canada's daily lives?

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Recognize how Indigenous Peoples have lived all over Canada for many generations and pursued thriving lives in harmony with nature.

- Identify the expanse of the land and geographic regions where once the Abenaki people had lived.
- Construct a timeline or a chronological structure with a story, newspaper headline, or visuals that could relate to the real event.
- Analyze the impact of the Indian Act on Abenaki people's livelihood, their family unit and their Indigenous identity.

Core Competencies:

Communication (Collaborating), Thinking (Critical and Reflective thinking), Personal and Social (Positive personal and Cultural Identity).

Lessons

Lessons 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5-6
Pre-screening activities	Screening and film-notes worksheet	Screening and film notes worksheet	Work period on the post screening project	Work period on the post screening project/ presentation

Pre-Film Activities:

Before students watch the film, prime and prepare them with ideas and context. Pose questions to activate what they know and help spark curiosity about what they will discover. You can divide them into groups and ask them to discuss the following:

1. Can you think of any books or films that you have read or watched in which there was a representation of First Peoples of Canada? How was that representation? How did they impact the way you think about First Peoples of Canada? Do you think that is an accurate or truthful image?



2. When do you think was the initial contact of Europeans with the Indigenous peoples of North America and what do you know about their reaction to European settlers? Looking at our world today, how has this relationship changed (or not) over the centuries since?
3. What do you know about the Indian Act and why do you think it came into being?

Students may break into small groups. If possible, teachers may bring in iPads or plan a library day for students to conduct research to respond to these questions.

Discuss responses and findings together as a class or in 2-minute presentations from each group.

Screening Days/Activities: 2 lessons

Before the start of the film, give students the Film Notes Questions worksheet, and have students look over them to know in advance what information they need to look for while watching the film.

Ideas for a Film Notes Questions worksheet can be found in the bottom of this guide. It is designed to help focus attention during the film, and lay groundwork for later discussion together. The film statements can be discussed later as a class, and the fill in the blanks can be filled in by the students while they watch the film.

Post-Screening Dialogue:

Now that students have heard Obomsawin's first-hand narrative of her Indigenous community, give them a task of finding history, news or current events relating to Indigenous peoples of the host nation(s) in your region.

Invite a storyteller, knowledge keeper or Indigenous educator from the host nation in your region to come in to work with your students. Local indigenous storytellers can often be found by contacting local First Nations friendship centers, cultural centers or band councils. Fees often range from \$200-300 for a session in the classroom, paid the day of their visit. Sometimes an offering is also customary. Feel free to ask about this and other protocols when you call the friendship center or band council.



Have a conversation before the session with the knowledge keeper. Let them know the unit you are doing with the film. They can even watch the film on the NFB website before the class session. They may be open to talking with the students about the Indian Act and their experience or their community's experience, share knowledge or stories, perspectives, or they may have other ideas for the session that they feel would be relevant for young people to know.

Additional Resources:

Overview of the Economics of the Fur Trade

<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/history/05.htm>

Link to view the film from the National Film Board of Canada

https://www.nfb.ca/film/waban-aki_en/

50 years of Indigenous cinema: The impact of Alanis Obomsawin, CBC

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/50-years-of-indigenous-cinema-the-impact-of-alanis-obomsawin-1.5154592>

Waban-Aki Film Notes and Worksheet ideas

1. Where in North America do the Abenaki live, and what are their 2 main communities?

2. By the end of the American Revolution (late 1700's) how many Abenaki people were left in Canada and the United States? _____. What contributed to this?

3. Most people in Odanak in the beginning of 1900's would engage in _____ which would could provide them with sufficient income.
4. New England was the Abenaki peoples' territory, but border crossing became difficult and Abenaki people could not sell their crafts in the U.S. In the meantime,



- _____ took over the supervision of the _____ selling, and the Abenaki were forced to sell their _____ only to government stores.
5. Some of the older canoes made by the Abenaki nation had stitches made with spruce root, however with the increasing demands of the market they started to replace spruce stitching with _____. What impact did this decision have on the canoe building craftsmanship for most of the Abenaki people?
- _____
6. The _____ is the most integral part of the body of a Abenaki canoe.
7. Many Indigenous peoples of Odanak would face discrimination by others in their community if their mothers _____
8. Who was Jeanette Corbière? What was her legal case about and what impact did her case have? _____
- _____
9. One of the first titles of the Indian Act was _____.
10. The Indian Act does not honour and embrace many things that define the Indigenous way of living, such as _____, _____, and _____.

Class discussion ideas:

1. Who do you think benefits or doesn't benefit from the laws mentioned in the film? Why do laws like this exist, what are they for?
2. Did anything surprise you?
3. What was your response during the film?

Key ideas from the film to highlight in post-film class discussion:



1. Odanak and Wôlinak are two main Abenaki communities that lie in the south of Quebec in Canada, while many Abenaki people also live in the south of the border in the New England region.
2. What kind of discrimination does Alanis Obomsawin highlight in the film—including both from inside or outside the Indigenous community?
3. Before 1985, if an Indigenous woman married a non-Indigenous person, she would lose all of their rights as an Indigenous person. Can you think of reasons why the government made this law?
4. Jeanette Corbière was an Ojibway woman who contested section 12-1B of the Indian Act and fought for Indigenous women's right. Corbière didn't win her case in 1970 but her action created a momentum amongst Indigenous women. Finally, on April 17, 1985 Bill C31 was passed which helped more than 1500 Indigenous children and women to gain their status as an Indigenous person under the law.
5. Indigenous women are still facing both institutional and personal forms of discrimination. The 6-1 and 6-2 amendments of the Indian Act in 1985, in fact intended to cut off the children of Indigenous women who married with a non-indigenous person from their legal rights and from their Indigenous identity.
6. Many Abenaki people living in the United States today are still not recognized by the federal, local or state government. Why?
7. In Canada, many Abenaki youth are learning about their cultural heritage and their language and they are regaining their pride and identity as an Indigenous nation.

