

Our Own Stories and Our Own Realities: Canada's First Nations Speaking Out Through Films

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The Canadian film industry has produced an impressive array of programs on Canada's First Nations. Between 1988 and 1991 the industry released some of the best works ever produced on Native issues and culture. The purpose of this review article is to spread the word that a good recent collection of film and video is available, most of it at moderate cost. I provide, first, a comprehensive review of a few of the films and, second, an annotated listing of many of the audiovisual materials—films and videos—produced since 1988.

The list is by no means exhaustive. Most of the films listed come from the National Film Board (NFB) and the television branch of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC-TV). This may be a reflection of accessibility and not a true picture of production in Canada: central agencies are by no means the only producers of quality film about aboriginal issues, but the many quality productions by other agencies and individuals are more difficult to locate.

Few of these films are geared toward very young audiences. When I mentioned this to producer Jerry Krepakevich of the NFB North West Centre during a recent interview, he explained that the kind of stories the filmmakers want to tell are complex in terms of subject matter and that children's videos are generally produced for television and therefore much more expensive to make. Also, few people are interested in producing children's films. He said that Canadian filmmakers are aware of the gap in production for this particular age group and are beginning to do more in this area. Krepakevich also noted that some filmmakers in Vancouver and Montreal are involved in producing for young audiences (March 30, 1992).

Those films released in the last few years for children and youth have generally dealt with sensitive issues such as family violence, sex education, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse, transmittable diseases, and foster care. These kinds of film are often educational in that they attempt to provide the kind of information that allows people to have greater control over their lives; they may be educational in a didactic sense as well. Some of the educational programs aimed at family viewing and classroom use also include guide books for parents and teachers.

In general, the films produced about Canada's First Nations people are documentary epics. The topics covered are timely and relevant, such as (a) the political struggles for self-government, land settlements, and aboriginal rights; (b) the consequences of historical contacts, government involvement and policies, settlement life for traditional nomadic groups, and being caught "between two worlds"—a phrase often used in this medium, and the title of the biographical film on Joseph Idlout, the famous Inuit hunter whose picture for many years was on the back of the Canadian two-dollar bill; (c) critical social problems experienced by Natives in

their communities, such as alcohol and drug abuse; confrontation with, and abuse by, non-Native systems; unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, suicide, racism, and family violence; and (d) aboriginal arts and crafts, and cultural heritage.

The films on arts and crafts and related aspects of cultural heritage reflect a deeply rooted land-based economy and culture. But the knowledge of most of these skills—for example, sealskin bootmaking, a necessary craft in Canada's arctic regions (e.g. in the film *Kamik*, 1989)—are fast disappearing because of replacement or alternate material technology. Many persons who have retained and practiced indigenous knowledge-based skills in the face of external influences are passing on; some are the last generation to have been born, raised, and educated on the land. By using film, some land-related skills are frozen in time, so that others interested in reviving this aspect of their cultural traditions can learn from them.

However diverse the subject matter, one central theme comes through in all the films: the desire to reclaim and protect the land, the cultures, and, most important of all, the people of the land from further destruction. Another theme seen in the films produced in the last five years is that action for Native people to regain control of their heritage and lives is long overdue.

Alanis Obomsawin, a Native filmmaker from the Odanak reserve northeast of Montreal, and an advocate of social reform for her people and for attitude changes in society at large, has this to say about the value of films in Native society today:

Films are a "bridge" so Native people can be heard directly, through their own voices: ... "We are living today the result of 400 years of history. Each Native person carries around that pain. We're carrying the pain of our fathers, our mothers, our grandfathers, our grandmothers. For generations, we were told we were not allowed to live the way we were brought up." (NFB, 1991, p. 3)

In collaboration with the NFB, aboriginal filmmakers have established Studio 1, the first national aboriginal film studio, for training aboriginal filmmakers and producing films and video on aboriginal issues, with the issues defined and articulated by the people themselves. The fall of 1991 saw the first phase of a three-part program, scheduled over two years. Carol Geddes, the head of Studio 1, which operates from the Edmonton-based NFB North West Centre, herself an award-winning film producer, comments in a similar spirit:

As First Nations' people move into an era of greater self-determination, one of the important aspects of that self-determination is the ability to tell our own stories and to interpret our own realities in media. Living in an increasingly media-oriented society means that the relevance of mass media has increased commensurably. Not only must we counter mis-representation and non-representation, but we must take the means of production of our own images into our own hands for the greater development of our communities. (NFB, 1991, p. 2)

As a result of such aspirations and the commitments of Geddes, Obomsawin, and others, a number of new documentary films on Native Canadian issues and culture have emerged. They have greater significance and impact than those of the past, for two reasons.

First, most of the films are produced and directed by Native filmmakers such as Wil Campbell (*The Spirit Within*, 1991), Gil Cardinal (*The Spirit Within*, 1991; and *Tikinagan*, 1991), Carol Geddes (*George Johnson, Tlingit Photographer*, in production), Alanis Obomsawin (*No Address*, 1988), David Poisey (*Starting Fire with Gunpowder*, 1991), and Loretta Todd (*The Learning Path*, 1991), to name just a few.

Second, the absence of ethnic tokenism or pandering make these recent productions a refreshing change from previous Hollywood-style releases. No longer are they films of happy-go-lucky Eskimos of the North, grinning toothily into the camera and going through the motions of drumming and dancing for the benefit of predominantly non-Native filmmakers. "White men have always been fascinated," says narrator Ann Meekitjuk Hanson in *Starting Fire with Gunpowder*, "with Inuit and their way of life." Today, the sentiment among the Native filmmakers and advocates of aboriginal self-government is that the stories of Native realities must be told, and that they must be told in a matter-of-fact, direct fashion by people who are living these realities every day.

Let us look more closely at the latest documentary programs produced about Canada's indigenous groups and at some of the diverse issues raised in the films. Most of the people in these films speak in their own Native language, and sometimes English subtitles are provided. Some films come in two language versions.

As Long As the Rivers Flow (Five-part series)

One of the most impressive undertakings is the five one-hour documentary series *As Long As the Rivers Flow*. Introduced in each part by the Native actress Tantoo Cardinal, the films are in one sense inseparable, even though they deal with very different themes. The coherence between them is that together they tell the epic story of "the struggle of Canada's Native people to regain control over their destiny" (NFB, 1991, p. 8). Each has its own story of struggle to recount. Beautifully crafted, the documentaries are thought provoking and emotive.

Time Immemorial. 1991, 57 min., Order No. 0191 058, \$26.95. Director: Hugh Brody; Producer: North West Centre, NFB of Canada.

The film was directed by Hugh Brody, and the setting is British Columbia's beautiful Nass Valley where the Nishga'a people have fought for over a century for their traditional Native lands, lands they have lived in "since time immemorial." Sometimes angry, sometimes rueful, descendants of the Nishga'a tribe talk about the historic battle their people have waged for four generations with the Canadian government over rights to Native lands and control of their culture and education. They envision a type of education for their children that not only follows the Native system of education but is also practical, so that the children can contribute to their own community. Another goal is to revive the Nishga'a language, which many lost as children when they were taken away from their parents to residential schools where English was the only language allowed. They still carry painful memories of their experiences in the schools and of how they came back to the Nass Valley schooled in dysfunctional ways.

Through the stories of the actors, supplemented by archival footage, the film retraces the determined lobbying of the Nishga'a on the land question case in Victoria, on Parliament Hill, at Westminster, and finally before the Supreme Court of Canada. Although they have not succeeded in resolving their land claims case, the people have gained widespread public and political attention. In fact, the first provincial delegation ever to negotiate the land question with the Nishga'a people arrived in the Nass Valley in 1991. Native self-determination is a long and slow process, as the case of the Nishga'a has demonstrated.

Tikinagan. 1991, 57 min., Order No. 0919 069, \$26.95. Director: Gil Cardinal; Producer: North West Centre, NFB.

The title *Tikinagan* is taken from an Ojibway word for cradle-board. This is a story of struggle to establish a Native-controlled child welfare agency in northwestern Ontario. When the Ontario government decided (saying that they were protecting the children) to close down the privately run Children's Aid Society (CAS) serving remote northern communities in 1987, it left the First Nations people in a predicament: it had been estimated that of the 400 children registered in the CAS, four out of five were Native. Native people that same year formed the Tikinagan Child and Family Services, with headquarters in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, to ensure the safety and well-being of the Native children in the communities. A Native owned and operated day care center was also created.

The film follows Angus Campbell, a Tikinagan worker, on some of his visits both to communities nearby and to those accessible only by air. One big difference between Tikinagan and the non-Native child welfare system is that it is Tikinagan's "role and goal to help support children and family within the communities," explains Campbell. "In the past, non-Native agencies customarily took the children away from the home and community. Now we keep the children in the community." Intervention rather than separation is the philosophy adopted in Tikinagan. In one example, a boy is put in the care of his grandparents until the father has resolved his own problems, and the father is allowed to visit the child every day. Rather than take the child away from the father, the child lives with his close kin in the same community. The close and continuous support network is beneficial to children in such situations.

The path is not smooth for the Tikinagan workers. The parents in the communities are wary of them because of past conflicts with provincial child welfare agencies. Campbell observes in frustration that as a result of that history families are resisting the services provided. In his own community, he has encountered alienation and accusations of betrayal because he works for Tikinagan.

Scenes of dilapidated buildings, some abandoned, dot the landscape of the communities visited by Campbell. In one town, there is a road that severed the community into two halves when the government paved it. Someone has painted obscene words on it in white. Such areas tend to have severe social problems. For example, gas sniffing, a widespread addiction among the young people, can cause brain damage. To deal with the growing social problems, the First Nations' people developed a plan that starts at the grassroots level, which allows the communities to handle their own problems. The grim realities of the young people living in the northwestern regions of Ontario is best expressed by a young woman seeking help from Tikinagan: "My future is going down the drain. This is the way I see my future—as a drunk. If I have kids I don't think I can keep them. They will be given away."

Flooding Job's Garden. 1991, 57 min., Order No. 0191 044, \$26.95. Director: Boyce Richardson; Producers: North West Centre, NFB.

Dedicated to the memory of Job Bear Skin, the third film of the series takes viewers to Northern Quebec where James Bay Cree had hunted and fished along the Lagrande River since time immemorial. An agreement was signed between James Bay people and Quebec in 1975, providing for hunting and fishing rights, control over health, education, and local government, and financial compensation

for relocation and development. The agreement has become a nightmare for these Indian people. Ever since that momentous year, which saw the beginning of Robert Bourassa's dream to develop hydroelectric power in the north under Hydro Quebec, James Bay Cree have realized the harsh impact of that agreement on the environment and on their heritage. Over 15 years, Cree hunters have witnessed the destruction of their rivers and hunting areas under Phase I of the project. Today, they must drink imported spring water at \$18 a bottle and buy their food from a modern shopping mall, and live in settlement centers instead of living off the land in bush camps. In the pre-1975 period, the banks of the Lagrande river were the favorite storytelling place for Cree elders. One scene in the film shows the banks sadly empty of Cree people, because today the elders can be found inside the shopping mall.

The juxtaposition of archival footage with more recent footage of this region is effective in giving viewers a good sense of the dramatic events. Teenage suicide had previously been rare in the Cree culture of James Bay, but it is one of many serious social problems today. An income security program had been touted by the governments as the biggest success of the James Bay agreement. In the film, the Cree hunters interviewed think otherwise and regret signing the agreement. For those hunters who were present at the signing of the agreement, disillusionment and bitterness have set in. The agreement promised compensation for the loss of rivers and hunting lands, but it has yet to be fully implemented.

When the Quebec government announced Phase II of the project, various Cree groups collectively mobilized to protect their culture, land, and future. During the 1990s, Hydro Quebec plans to dam all the rivers and invade all the corners of Cree land. In the final scene, the sons and daughters of Cree hunters are filmed marching with placards and shouting "No James Bay II." Job Bear Skin, Cree hunter, foresaw that this would happen and maintained from the time he first read about it in the newspaper in 1974 that the "land is not possession—[one] cannot exchange it for money as if the Crees own it" (translation from Cree).

Starting Fire With Gunpowder. 1991, 57 min., Order No. 0191 096, \$26.95.

Directors: David Poisey & William Hansen; Producer: North West Centre, NFB. This film retraces the history of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) from inception to the present. It documents how concerned Inuit formed their own broadcasting company in order to offset the influence of white television. Inuk filmmaker and narrator Neekitjuk Hanson explains, "We want it our way, not the way of the white man." Since the sudden arrival of television in the Arctic communities in the early 1970s, the Inuit have been avid watchers of "white man's TV." Some Inuit fear that their culture and language will be wiped out over time. The story told in *Starting Fire with Gunpowder* is one of self-determination, to keep the Inuit culture and language alive through the media. The film tells how a group of people successfully harnessed one form of modern technology to serve the common good. In the five hours (later it was cut to four and a half hours) allotted to IBC each week, documentary, drama, soap opera, animation and children's programs (such as the Inuit version of Sesame Street or in Inuktituk, *Takunnaraksalirijiit*) reach Inuit homes. The IBC productions are in Inuktitut and feature local Inuit people. All matters of concern—such as solvent abuse, childbirth, social and political issues—of the people of the Arctic are touched upon. For the young who have been fascinated with white superhero characters,

there is Super Shamou. He flies through the Arctic sky in response to someone in trouble and a call for help. Through Super Shamou the values of the Inuit culture are conveyed to the children watching him. IBC is like the demonstration given in the film by an Inuk elder on the ways Inuit people made fire before and after European contact. Traditionally, to start a fire, two rocks were struck together over dried grass until sparks from the rocks ignited the grass. After the introduction of gunpowder, this way of making fire was more effective and longer lasting than dried grass, and more accessible given the long winter. In an innovative way, the Inuit learned to light fires to cook their food with gunpowder to enhance their way of life. IBC is another example of the innovation of modern Inuk.

The Learning Path. 1991, 57 min., Order No. 0191 065, \$26.95. Director: Loretta Todd; Producer: North West Centre, NFB.

The last of the series, this film deals with examples of how Native women are changing the Native educational system in Canada. Metis filmmaker Loretta Todd follows the paths of three women educators. Their concerns range from preserving and restoring Native languages and identities, to accurate and scholarly representation of Native history. Eva Cardinal, Olive Dickason, and Ann Anderson work in Saddle Lake reserve, the University of Alberta, and a Metis cultural organization in Edmonton, respectively. Recounting her years in a residential school in St. Albert, Ann Anderson recalls the humiliation she felt when she told one of the nuns her mother had taught her "to speak the language your creator has given you" and the nun responded, "It was the Devil that spoke."

With documentary footage, dramatic reenactments, archival film, and the childhood memories of the three women, the film reproduces the story of residential schools and their impact on the lives of Native Canadians. Now that Native Canadians are supposed to have control over their formal education, and with such committed advocates as Cardinal, Anderson, and Dickason, respected elders, the present young generation should no longer be "taught not to be Indian, not to be Inuit, and not to be Metis." In schools such as Ben Calf Robe in Edmonton, students know it is "safe" to be Native. There, teachers and students begin each day by the ritual of cleansing themselves with the smoke of burning sweetgrass. This is truly an educational film worth showing to all teachers and students who want to follow the path of learning set by Cardinal, Anderson, and Dickason.

Other Films

Hunters and Bombers. 1990, 53 min., Order No. 9190 130. Directors: Hugh Brody & Nigel Markham; Producer: NFB.

Filmed in 1990, *Hunters and Bombers* depicts the conflicts between the Innu people (also called Naskapi-Montagnais) of Sheshatshit, Labrador, and the Canadian Forces Base in Goose Bay, Labrador. The Innu, traditionally hunters, have been trying to revive their nomadic way of life in recent years, a lifestyle that was disrupted in the 1950s by governments and industrialists who had moved the Innu from their homeland and into villages to make way for mining and hydroelectric projects; they found themselves facing a different kind of disruption to their lives and what is left of their homeland: the constant low-level flying NATO jets that zoom at earsplitting speeds 30 metres above the Innu hunting grounds. In the film Innu hunters comment on the changes in the feeding pattern of animals as a

result of the military flights. One hunter has noticed that some of the diurnal animals are starting to come out to feed in the evenings after the noise of the jets has stopped. Innu youths wandering in what were traditional Innu hunting grounds find expended bombs dropped during training flights scattered all over the terrain and the craters they make on impact. Signs on trees warn of the danger to trespassers on military properties and signs on chain link fences give warning to unauthorized personnel on the base. During the interview with an Innu family living in the bush, the conversation is frequently interrupted by jets flying overhead. In anger one of the Innu woman (in her Native language) has this to say to director Hugh Brody: "We can no longer remain silent." Some of the Innu fought back by breaking into the military base and demonstrating on the runways. The RCMP arrived and arrested about 60 Innu who subsequently served time in jail but nevertheless captured public attention. It is evident that the Canadian Forces Base personnel feel that what they are doing, and what the Innu are doing, constitute a unique example of where two diverse activities could be accommodated. As one officer says, "We don't use the land, we fly over it." But the same Innu woman has this to say, "We're not just fighting for ourselves. Our struggle is everyone's struggle. If the earth dies, everyone dies."

They are disillusioned by false government promises over the years: the government encouraged parents to stay in villages and send their children to school with the promise that the children would get good jobs, but "nothing happened." More and more Innu started to "go out on the land," but the land has changed. The anger is very strong in the Innu women and they have real power to resist. In the film the strength of the Innu in their struggle for self-determination and cultural preservation is a lesson global aboriginal groups can learn from.

Between Two Worlds. 1990, 58 min., Order No. 9190 159, \$26.95 (NFB). Director: Garry Greenwald; Producer: Investigative Productions.

This film is the winner of the 1990 Sesterce d'Argent award from the International Documentary Film Festival in Nyon, Switzerland. It is a biography of Joseph Idlout and takes the viewer back to the cold beauty of the Arctic regions, the homeland of the Inuit. A renowned Inuit hunter, Joseph Idlout was one of the hunters whose picture was printed on the back of the Canadian two-dollar bill in 1975. He was also featured in many books and films and could easily be the most photographed man of his people. When the teachers, clergy, traders, and RCMP arrived from the south to Pond Inlet, Idlout's life took a different path. He turned from hunting to fur-trapping and guiding. He was the best guide for the RCMP and the Hudson's Bay Company's best trapper. At the height of his career, Idlout owned a 35-foot motor boat, three kayaks, a sod house, and a Singer sewing machine for his wife. He was a wealthy man to his people, but his ambition had set him apart from them, and in the end it destroyed him. For Idlout was convinced he could bridge the two worlds, the Inuit and the white, and that he could live in both worlds and lead two lives. The film opens with a reenactment of the search for Joseph Idlout by the RCMP after his daughter reported him missing at 4:00 a.m. on June 2, 1968. Eyewitnesses had last seen Idlout on his ski-doo heading home from the bar at 1:00 a.m. Idlout was found late that afternoon at the bottom of a 35-foot cliff, which his ski-doo had gone over. He was buried three days later. The cause of death was declared to be an accident. But was it? In Pond Inlet today, where Idlout's son Peter Pandiloo lives, the traditional way of life in the

North seems only a memory. In Inuktitut, Peter Pandiloo recalls the life history of his father. Pandiloo remembers what was said to him on the day the picture of his father was taken and later appeared on the backs of the two-dollar bills:

We were told that this picture would remind us of how the Inuit used to be, what we used to do. How we used to do our hunting. We were told that the Inuit would forget their culture and we laughed about it because we didn't believe it. They told us we would live in houses, and we didn't believe that either, and that this would ever come about. But it has happened, and they were telling the truth. We are living like the White men now. We have our telephones and we have to pay our monthly bills.

As Pandiloo chronicles his father's life history, we see the man change over the years from a vital, hard-working, skillful, and intelligent figure to a confused man who is not sure in which world he belongs. Old documentary footage shows Idlout receiving the Coronation medal in 1954, an award given to him by the Canadian government for his services to the RCMP. It was at that time that Idlout found himself in debt, and with the responsibility of providing for his family, he decided to move northward to hunt. However, the Hudson's Bay Company and the RCMP did not want to lose him. The medal was supposed to persuade him to stay. Adamant to leave, he was finally permitted to take his family further north. Ending up in Resolute Bay, Idlout soon discovered he was not treated in the same manner by the Canadian Air Force as in Pond Inlet. In Resolute Bay, he and his family lived as marginal people and were constantly monitored by the Air Force. Peter Pandiloo sadly describes his father in 1964 as a man in "great depression." When the Arctic Circle Club extended its services to the Inuit, Idlout was often seen drinking heavily in the Club in his two-piece suit with his medal pinned on the lapel. On the day of Idout's accident, Pandiloo examined the ski-doo tracks himself and concluded that his father had committed suicide. Archival footage shows that it was at the same time as Idlout's arrival in Resolute Bay that government bureaucracy arrived in the North. The Inuit had not used surnames, so all Inuit were given a number and were expected to use this number with their name for all transactions. Formal education became compulsory and the children had to leave their families to attend federal day schools. Parents were threatened with loss of family allowance if the children did not attend school. In Pond Inlet today, the locals await the end of the month for the social assistance or pension cheques to arrive. *Between Two Worlds* explores the age-old clash between two different cultures in the Canadian North and its sometimes tragic results.

The Spirit Within. 1990, 51 min., Order No. 9190 062, \$26.95. Directors: Gil Cardinal & Wil Campbell; Producer: North West Centre, NFB.

This film documents the initiation of a number of innovative Native rehabilitation programs headed by Native elders, such as the dynamic Saskatchewan-based Bobby Woods. Native prisoners in three western federal prisons and one correctional center had fought long and hard to achieve this. (The four prisons offering Native rehabilitation programs are Stoney Mountain in Manitoba, Prince Albert in Saskatchewan, and the Drumheller prison and the Grande Cache Correctional Centre in Alberta.) It has been estimated that one out of four Natives will spend some part of their life in prison and that half the inmates in the federal prisons are Native. These are the kind of statistics the elders who work with the Native inmates are hoping to change through ceremonies and workshops, for they themselves have done time in the pen. The central issue of the film is more than the

ceremonies and the workshops, it is a search for self, culture, and Native values. In Bobby Woods' insightful words to some Native prisoners, "If you have pride in you about you, then you have it made. But if you have shame about yourself, you will fall apart.... To be whole as a being is to know what you are and never forget it." Throughout the film, we hear personal stories of the Native inmates inside and outside the prison walls. They talk of dehumanization, broken spirits, guilt, fear, racism, mistreatment, despair, and family rejection; and they talk about happier times on the reserves with loved ones, and how things have improved since they joined the Native programs and rediscovered the traditional values and spirituality of their heritage. For the Native male prisoners, the healing process has begun. A similar Native-based rehabilitation program has been offered to women in prison (Interview, J. Krepakevish, March 30, 1992). But one inmate touches the core of what the film is trying to convey to the public when he says, "It is sad we have to come in here to learn about our culture."

Kwa'nu'te': Micmac and Miliseet Artists. 1991, 40 min., Order No. 9191 064, \$26.95. Directors: Catherine Martin & Kimberlee McTaggart; Producer: NFB of Canada.

Kwa'nu'te' takes the viewer on a visual tour of the creative art works of a group of recognized Maritime Native artists. The film is composed of interviews with eight of the Micmac and Miliseet artists from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick about their work and the influences behind the pieces. The film provides close-up views of the beautiful creations by each artist. The first to speak of her art is Shirley Bear of the Tobique reserve, New Brunswick, who explains that her paintings are manifestations of the visions that come to her during fasts. In addition to painting, she is much involved with her family and aboriginal politics. Sculptor Peter Clair goes into the woods for the material he uses to weave his exquisite sculptured baskets. His spiritual self leads him to the right tree to cut down; then he planes it into weaving strips in the home workshop. Clair speaks of an affinity with nature, and this is why he uses models from nature for his baskets. The weaving technique comes from his Native roots; the end results are innovative but earthly familiar. Then we see the quillwork of Louise Martin which, she says, comes from studying the patterned quillworks of Native grandmothers. Martin adapts the designs to create new works that blend the old and the new.

Sequences of the carved or fired masks of Ned Bear and Luke Simon fill the screen with their startling expressions. The two men have modeled their striking masks after the ceremonial ones of their ancestors; the spirits of past maskmakers speak through Bear's and Simon's creations. The title of this film about artists means "peace chant that invokes the power of creation, a way of bringing back and honouring those spirits that share their visions of healing in a wounded world" (NFB, 1991, p. 16). It is an inspirational film for audiences young and old who aspire to be artists.

Pelts: Politics and the Fur Trade. 1989, 57 min., Order No. 0189 103, \$26.95. Director: Nigel Markham; Producer: NFB of Canada.

The film opens with a sequence at a fur coat fashion show for buyers. Suddenly blood spurts from the coat worn by one of the fashion models, spraying the audience. This documentary film depicts the political battle between animal rights groups and the Canadian fur industry in Ontario. Many of the scenes center around the moral ramifications of this hotly debated issue, with both sides

giving their views on animal killing and inhumane trapping. Cree trappers in Northern Ontario are caught in the middle. Because their culture has centered around animals for food and livelihood, they are concerned that they will end in an economic and cultural disaster, like that caused by the ban on the Inuit seal hunt. That "conservation" campaign caused the sealhunters to lose their source of income and to abandon their old way of life. The questions raised in the film are too controversial to be answered easily, even after listening to the views presented from all three groups in the film. *Pelts* is excellent for a social studies curriculum, despite the gruesome spurting blood, because it leads to discussions on environmental, ethical, economic, and cultural issues. Some scenes may be too sensitive for younger students. One criticism is the unbalanced treatment of the three groups involved in the film. More attention is given to the manufacturing industry and the animals rights activists than to the Native groups.

Rendezvous Canada, 1606. 1988, 29 min., Order No. 0188 001, \$26.95. Director: Joan Henson; Producer: NFB.

This film is an historical recreation of the culturally different lives of two teenage boys who lived in Canada in the 17th century. Andashee is a Huron at Cahiaque where he lives deep in the interior with his family in a longhouse of the Bear clan. Charles de Biencourt is French and his home is inside the palisades of Port Royal, the first permanent European settlement north of Florida. In the film we learn from Andashee and Charles about the important people in their lives and the things they and their people do each day. Charles' happiness in living in the New World and learning from his Indian friends, the Micmac, is increasingly interrupted by the death of some his father's men from scurvy. Andashee's carefree life changes with a dream his father has one night, foreshadowing great changes to the Huron people. The film leads viewers to the moment in 1609 when each boy in his part of the country participates in a critical point in Canada's history: the formation of the colony of Quebec and the colony of Acadia. Andashee is in the Huron party that meets with Samuel de Champlain to strike an alliance. Charles is there when the Micmac give their support to the French. Historical settings and costumes give a sense of being transported into the early 17th century. However, the portrayal of Micmac Indians in the film is too much like watching live "cigarstore Indians" who have nothing better to do than to watch the French settlers go about their busy activities.

Coppermine (Working Title). 1992 (forthcoming, price not available.) Producer: North West Centre, NFB of Canada.

Although this film has not yet been formally released, with kind permission of producer Jerry Krepakevich of the North West Centre, it is possible to include it here. *Coppermine*, as Krepakevich explains, is a chronicle of "the consequences of contact with the outside" (Interview, J. Krepakevich, March 30, 1992). It features the Coppermine Inuit, a group of Arctic people who numbered around 1,000 at the turn of the century, and who were able to avoid contact with the outside until about 1911, when Arctic explorer Wilhelm Stephanson became the first white man to live with them. Following close behind were missionaries, fur traders, and scientific explorers. Documentary cameras were able to capture some of what happened to this particular group of Inuit after initial contact with the outside world. With the memories of Coppermine Inuit who were in their youth during this period, and the huge collection of archival records and journals on the Cop-

permine Inuit written by missionaries, traders, doctors, scientific explorers, and government agents—some of whom are still alive today—the result is an historically accurate documentary of a group of Canadian Inuit.

The film revisits present-day Coppermine, NWT where approximately 2,000 Coppermine Inuit live. With archival films and actors' recreations, it goes back to when white men first arrived in ships at the village. The consequences of their appearance are shown to have been immediate and devastating. One Coppermine Inuit woman in Inuktitut recalls, "It seemed that whenever the ships would arrive Inuit would start to catch colds" (North West Centre, NFB, 1992). Dubbed *Boat Cold*, this group of Inuit, previously free of diseases, began to suffer the diseases of the white man. The most tragic was the tuberculosis epidemic that spread across the Coppermine community in 1929. In response, the federal government closed down the medical center. With the arrival of European religions, the Coppermine Inuit were divided into Anglicans and Catholics. Before long the missionaries had taken the place of Angakoks, and this cultural tradition appeared to die out. Angakoks were female shamans who acted as prophets, priests, and healers in the Inuit communities. A third consequence of contact was the change in the ritual of burying the dead. Traditionally, the dead were buried on the rocky outcrop of the Coppermine River, to be returned to the earth. Since the arrival of the missionaries, the dead have been placed in wooden coffins and buried in the ground beside the churches. These are only some of the examples of cultural changes extracted from the film. The social problems of contact faced by the Coppermine Inuit in the Northwest Territories are similar to those confronting other aboriginal groups across the nation. Educators should keep this fine documentary film in mind and watch for its release.

Initiations. 1991, 8.5 min, price not available, National Screen Institute/Canada. Writers/Producers/Directors: Kimberlee McTaggart & Catherine Martin, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

It was purely by chance that one of the winners of the Short Subject Drama Competition for Canada's emerging filmmakers, *Initiations*, could be included in this review: I was not looking for it, but when I saw it at the 1992 Local Hero Film Festival presented by the National Screen Institute in Edmonton, I knew it had to be included. *Initiations* preceded the main feature film of that evening. It is a story of a young Micmac boy's dream to be a drummer in a rock band. The opening sequence shows him sitting on the end of his bed in his room with his headphones on, and drumming with the music blaring into his ears. On the walls are posters of "hot" rock groups.

He spends endless hours in the bedroom beating on the drum. In a garage nearby is a group of older Micmac teenagers who have formed a rock band. The young boy yearns to be part of the group. One day this opportunity comes, but it almost ends in tragedy: before being permitted to be a band member the boy must get drugs for the band members. On that same day his grandfather asks him to babysit his younger siblings. Anxious to fulfill the initiation task, the boy leaves his charges alone in the house while he races to take the pills taken from the medicine cabinet to the band. When he returns home, he sees an ambulance rushing off from his house and his mother in tears. His little brother has been into the medicine cabinet. He has to make the hardest decision during the life and death situation in the hospital—whether to reveal the name of the drug taken.

The last sequence shows his grandfather calling him to the storage room and presenting him with a Micmac drum as a gesture that his trust in his grandson has been restored. *Initiations* leaves us with the image of the boy and his younger siblings beating together on the traditional drum among the trees. This film is recommended as a teaching tool to young Native people because of its clear issue of peer pressure and the sometimes unforeseeable effects of traditional values.

Reviewing a large number of these wonderfully candid productions on the many aspects of aboriginal Canadian issues and concerns was a pleasure. The cost of most of the films is remarkably low: the typical cost of purchase of a feature-length film is \$34.95. Schools, universities, and educational programs should access this important source of information: film is a tremendously effective form of communicating the realities and stories of First Nations' peoples.

Selected Films and Videos Produced Between 1988 and 1991

This listing includes the following categories: title, year of production, length in minutes, access or order number, price (if available), director and/or producer, language(s) where applicable, and a short description. Unless otherwise stated, the production is in videocassette and is appropriate for audiences 15 years and older. The prices given are subject to change without notice and do not include shipping and handling. Prices for works available from the National Film Board are applicable only in Canada. Prices for works available from CBC-TV are for 1/2-inch video tape; prices are higher for 3/4-inch tape.

The Arctic Exiles. 1989, 14:20 min., Y8G-89-02 (CBC-TV *The Fifth Estate*), \$69. Producer: CBC.

Members of an Inuit band living in Grise Fjord in the high Arctic return to their ancestral home on Hudson's Bay after an absence of 30 years. They had been promised they would be returned to their homeland but they were taken instead to Grise Fjord as part of a government experiment.

Baffin Island. 1988, 30 min., YUM-88-85 (CBC-TV *Wonderstruck*), \$109. Producer: CBC.

On a visit to Pangnirtung and Iqaluit on Baffin Island to attend a science fair at Attagoyuk School, the program host focuses on the life of the Inuit. It deals with technology: first the technology that allowed survival for thousands of years, then the technology that promises better communication between the North and South.

Bill Reid: Mythical Icons. 1989, 30 min., Y8W-89-01 (CBC-TV *News in Review*), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Bill Reid, Haida artist, was commissioned to create a sculpture for the Canadian embassy in Washington, DC This film explores his multiple talents and the controversies his art raises in the Native community.

Blockade: Algonquins Defend the Forest. 1990, 27 min., 9190 092 (NFB/Canada), \$26.95. Director: Boyce Richardson; Producer: NFB.

The Barriere Lake Algonquins blockaded logging roads in protest to clear-cutting forest in their ancestral homeland.

Breaking Barriers. 1988, 15 min., VCT 45 (Provincial Film Library/Alberta), no price available. Distributor: Native Counselling Services of Alberta; Age: youth.

Musical background supports a tour of Edmonton's inner city schools. The theme is cooperation between the community and the police. Entertainment provided by Winston Wuttunee and Rainbow Bridge. The messages delivered include trust in the police, self-respect, and saying no to drugs and alcohol.

A Circle of Healing. (*Part 1: Breaking the Silence; Part 2: When the Eagle Lands on the Moon*) 1988, 54 min., Y8L-88-11 (CBC-TV *Man Alive*), \$138. Producer: CBC.

A *Man Alive* feature about Alkali Lake, the reserve in BC that took public and private steps to deal with alcoholism. This film explores a legacy of substance abuse: child abuse.

The Company of Strangers. 1990, 101 min., 9190 013 (NFB/Canada), \$34.95. Director: Cynthia Scott.

A feature length drama. An eclectic group of seven touring elderly women must fend for themselves when their bus breaks down out in the country. Alice Diabo engagingly plays the part of an Indian elder.

Crown Prince. 1988, 38 min., 0188 037 (NFB/Canada), \$26.95. Director: Aaron Kim Johnston; Producer: NFB.

Dramatization, using the character of 15-year old Billy, of the effects of spouse abuse on children.

Dene Priests. 1989, 29:20 min., Y9B-89-05 (CBC-TV *Focus North*), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Explores relationships between the Catholic Church and Dogrib Indians in the context of the lack of Dogrib priests.

Drums. 1990, 120 min., Y8R-90-10 (CBC-TV *News in Review*), \$218. Producer: Andy Blicq, CBC, Winnipeg.

Ojibwa Jim Compton hosts a program that features Canadian Native storytellers. The mood is one of "quiet defiance and resolve, fuelled by a renewed interest in Native spiritual values and traditions" (CBC, 1991, p. 64).

Educating the Offender. (Working Title)

Forthcoming in 1992, price not available.

Producer: North West Centre, NFB.

Case presentation of a Native woman's dealing with racial discrimination, by confronting the offender.

Getting Serious. 1988, 21 min., 0188 095 (NFB/Canada), \$26.95. Director: Gil Cardinal; Producer: NFB.

Reenactment of a trial involving teenagers, alcohol, and traffic accidents: it is hard hitting (NFB, 1991). Learning resources available with video.

James Bay—The Wind that Keeps on Blowing. 1990, 96 min., W0F-90-16 (CBC-TV *The Nature of Things*), \$218. Producer: CBC.

An examination of the effects of Phase II of the James Bay Hydroelectric Project in Quebec, a project that caused almost inconceivably massive environmental change; the film reviews the effects of Phase I.

Justice Denied. 1989, 98 min., 0189 100 (NFB/Canada), \$34.95. Director: Paul Cowan; Producer: NFB.

Donald Marshall Jr., a Micmac Indian, was falsely accused of murder and was convicted. His story is followed from the time of the murder, until the day 11 years later that he was exonerated. Film raises issues about Canadian Natives and the law.

Kahnewake. 1991, 110 min., (Order No., price, not available) Director: Alec MacLeod; Producer: NFB.

The Mohawk perspective of the blockade of the Mercier Bridge in Montreal during the summer of 1990.

Kamik. 1989, 14 min., 9189 091 (NFB/Canada), \$21.95. Director: Elise Swerhone; Producer: NFB.

Ulayok Kavlok is an expert at making the sealskin boots called *kamik*; the skill may be lost to the community due to changing values as a result of contact.

Karate Kids. 1990, 21 min., 0190 014 (NFB/Canada), \$26.95. Director: Derek Lamb; Producer: NFB.

Animated film for youth; two street kids, and one contracts AIDS. Language and content suggest this be previewed before use.

The Keewatin Controversy. 1989, 28:50 min., Y9B-89-04 (CBC-TV *Focus North*), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Conflicting opinions over proposed opening of uranium mine in Northern Canada; controversy surrounds environmental and cultural issues vs. jobs.

The Kids They Took Away. 1990, 30 min., Y9C-90-02 (CBC-TV *Focus North*), \$109. Producer: CBC Winnipeg.

The tragedy of removal and adoption of Native children in the 1970s.

Let Only Good Spirits Guide You. 1988, 23 min., VCT 47 (Provincial Film Library / Alberta), price not available. Distributor: Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

For youth. Winston Wuttunee, Rainbow Bridge and Ron Many Heads, in concert, in a documentary aimed at improving community-police relations.

Let Your Voice Be Heard. 1988, 21:30 min., VCT 48 (Provincial Film Library / Alberta), price not available. Distributor: Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

For youth. Six Native youths from different parts of Alberta discuss how having a positive attitude, despite facing hardship, leads to success.

Looking After Our Own. 1990, 15:30 min., VCT 111 (Provincial Film Library / Alberta), price not available. Distributor: Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

This film examines Alberta's Child Welfare Act, including its latest amendments, from a Native perspective.

Lypa. 1988, 30 min., 0188 066 (English) 0588 066 (Inuktitut), (NFB/Canada), \$26.95. Director: Sharon Van Raalte & Shelagh Mackenzie; Producer: NFB.

Lypa Pitsiulak, Inuit hunter and artist, leaves Pangnirtung to go back to the land with his family. This is a remarkable film about a remarkable man.

Native AIDS. 1989, 13:50 min., Y8C-89-03(CBC-TV Man Alive), \$69. Producer: CBC Winnipeg.

Documentary of Native youth street community in Winnipeg and the risk of AIDS in that community.

Native War Veterans. (Working Title). Forthcoming in 1992, Producer: North West Centre, NFB.

"A film detailing the contributions of Canada's Native War Veterans during WWII and the subsequent treatment accorded them by their fellow Canadians and their government when they returned," (NFB, 1991, p. 40).

No Address. 1988, 56 min., 0188 057(NFB/Canada), \$26.95. Director: Alanis Obomsawin; Producer: NFB. Obomsawin films aspects of the Native

street community in Montreal, and in particular looks at the effectiveness of the helping organizations that are supposed to aid them.

The Northern Muse: Program One. 1990, 30 min., N8R-90-01(CBC-TV Focus North), \$109. Producer: CBC.

The Northern Muse: Program Two. 1990, 30 min., N8R-90-01(CBC-TV Focus North), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Short segments detailing great visuals of northern music, poetry, art, northern topography.

Oka. 1990, 29:50 min., V9B-90-01(CBC-TV Focus North), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Summer of 1990 at Oka: includes historical background and political analysis, and comment by Native political leaders.

Oka. (Working Title). Forthcoming in 1992. Producer: North West Centre, NFB.

"A feature-length documentary about the events surrounding the Oka crisis" (NFB, 1992, p. 40).

Oujebougamou. 1989, 28:50 min., Y9B-89-01(CBC-TV Focus North), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Because the Oujebougamou Cree of Northern Quebec have had to move seven times in the past 50 years due to "development," they have lost a sense of community, but are now recovering it, with both political action and religious faith.

Playing Fair Series. 1992, 60 min. (Order No. not available). Producer: NFB. For ages 7-12. Dramas illustrating racism help 7-12-year-olds discuss the topic.

Pulp Mills. 1989, 28:50 min., Y9B-89-03(CBC-TV Focus North), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Examines the large-scale pulp mill developments approved for Northern Alberta, and the ramifications for Northerners who live downstream on the Athabasca River.

Ready For Take Off. 1988, 28 min., VCT 6 (Provincial Film Library / Alberta), price not available. Distributor: Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

For youth. Meant to inspire Native people to become successful entrepreneurs.

Sedna: The Making of a Legend. 1992, 58 min., (Order No. not available), \$26.95. Director: John Paskievich; Producer: NFB. A team of Inuit carvers make the first monumental Inuit sculpture for a private corporation.

September. 1990. (CBC-TV News in Review), price not availab. Producer: CBC. Includes coverage of Oka and Chateauguay, "dramatic" and "historic" coverage; also review of the Donald Marshall case, with serious questions raised about racism in the justice system.

Temagami: The Last Stand. 1989, 47 min., W0F-89-16 (CBC-TV The Nature of Things), \$109. Producer: CBC. The last stand of old pines in Northern Ontario is near Temagami, and this program reviews controversies between the timber industry, Native people, and environmentalists about the exploitation and development.

To Heal the Spirit. 1990, 46:35 min., ZZY-90-04 (CBC-TV The Nature of Things), \$109. Producer: CBC.

Native women in prison learn about or get back to their traditional culture as a way of healing.

Tribal Courts. 1990, 95 min., W0F-90-14 (CBC-TV The Nature of Things), \$69. Producer: CBC.

Red Lake Chippewa Indian Reserve in northern Minnesota has a tribal court, but there has been pressure to return to the non-Native justice system, due to pre-trial gossip and favoritism.

The Warrior from Within. 1989, 30 min., Y8L-89-03 (CBC-TV Man Alive), \$69. Producer: CBC.

A profile of Douglas Cardinal, Metis architect.
10022-103 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 0X2, (403) 421-4084 or fax (403) 425-8098. Government of Alberta. *The Provincial Film Library Resource Catalogue 1990.* Native Counselling Services of Alberta, #800, 10010 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta. (403) 423-2141.

Notes

For more information about Studio 1, contact Carol Geddes, Studio 1, National Film Board, 9700 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 4C3. Telephone (403) 495-5450; fax (403) 495-6412.

Catalogues and contacts for finding recent film on Native topics:

CBC Programs Catalogue: *Native and Northern Studies*, CBC Educational Sales, Box 500, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1E6, (416) 975-6384 or fax (416) 975-3482.

National Film Board of Canada 1991 Film Catalogue: *Our Home and Native Land: A Film and Video Resource Guide for aboriginal Canadians, 3rd Edition, 1991-2.* Our Home and Native Land, National Film Board, Customer Services, PO Box 6100, Station A, Montreal, H3C 3H5.

National Screen Institute 1992 Film Festival Program: *Local Heroes '92*, Edmonton, February 26-March 1. Information from National Screen Institute: Canada, 3rd floor,

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Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (1991). Northern and Native studies. *CBC Programs Catalogue*, pp. 64-70. Toronto: Author.

National Film Board of Canada. (1991-92). *Our home and Native land: A film and video resource guide for aboriginal Canadians* (3rd ed.). Winnipeg: Author.

North West Centre, NFB. (1992). Typewritten English transcription for subtitles for the Coppermine Inuit language film, *Coppermine*; property of North West film and cited here with permission.

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