

THE OKA LEGACY



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THE OKA LEGACY

Directed by Sonia Bonspille-Boileau

2015 | Canada | 44 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *The Oka Legacy* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussion with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film

The Oka Legacy examines how the 78-day Oka Crisis has transformed Indigenous identity in Canada. Seen partly through Mohawk filmmaker Sonia Bonspille-Boileau's own personal journey, the film also retraces the events that took place in her hometown of Kanehsatake in 1990 by talking with people who lived through the events firsthand, such as Kanehsatake residents Clifton Nicholas and Waneek Horn-Miller, as well as with those who overcame grief, such as Francine Lemay—whose brother Marcel died during the crisis. The film also features Indigenous community activists such as Melissa Mollen-Dupuis, who were inspired to do great things in other parts of the country after the events of 1990. These compelling characters recount their own personal Oka Crisis stories, reflecting on what Oka's legacy is—and what it should be.

The Filmmaker

Sonia Bonspille-Boileau was raised between the communities of Oka, where her French-Canadian father is from, and Kanehsatake, the community of her Mohawk mother. Bonspille-Boileau is an actor, writer and director who has created, directed and produced works in both English and French. Working with the Indigenous production house Nish Media, she created *La Piqûre!*, a series that gave teenagers the opportunity to live out their dream career for a few days, and *Mouki*, a series for toddlers that focuses on respecting Indigenous cultures and traditions. She was also a contributor to the CBC mini-series *8th Fire*.

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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three subsections are intended to provide you with a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Have the students form small groups. Ask each group to examine the famous photograph from the 1990 Oka Crisis, showing Canadian soldier Patrick Cloutier and warrior Brad Laroque (<https://www.google.ca/> Type "Oka warrior and Patrick Cloutier photo" into the search engine). Ask each group to brainstorm an answer to each of the following prompts: What do you think this photo is about? Where do you think this event took place? What do you think happened after this photo was taken? Tell students to write down their answers and keep them on hand so they can use them in a Post-Viewing Activity.

Watch the film's trailer on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/> Type "Oka Legacy film trailer" into the search engine). As they watch, ask students make a list of all the themes or issues they predict may emerge in the film. Use the following prompts to get students started: What is the subject of this film? Whose stories are told in this film? What emotions will this film elicit in viewers? Have students keep their list of predictions so they can use them in a Post-Viewing Activity.

Reproduce some of the Quotations to Explore (found elsewhere in this guide) on large pieces of paper. Distribute them to students. Using these quotations, ask students to predict what they think the film is about.

Have students watch the six-minute *Oka Crisis 101 video* created by the CBC Firsthand documentary unit, which can be found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/> Type "Oka Crisis 101 CBC" into the search engine). Have students compile a timeline of historical events shown the video. (The timeline does not have to have dates.) Have students keep their timeline to use during a Post-Viewing Activity.

As a class, have students brainstorm what they already know about Indigenous land rights and Indigenous resistance/protest movements in Canada. After the brainstorming session, engage students in a large-group discussion guided by the

following prompts: What is the difference between "crisis" and "resistance"? Why would some people see the events at Oka/Kanehsatake as crisis, and others see it as resistance? Why does language and terminology matter when we try to understand these types of issues?

Viewing Activities

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf>). Students will revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

Ask students to jot down any images in the film that they feel are especially interesting or surprising, or that raise questions. After the film, have students share one of the images they documented and why this image stood out for them. Use the following prompt to generate discussion on any of the images: Why do you think the filmmaker used this image?

As they watch, have students create a quick T-chart and jot down any similarities and any differences they see between media coverage of Indigenous issues today and media coverage as included in the film. After the film, students can use the material in the T-chart to inform the Post-Viewing discussion.

Have students jot down three to five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

As they watch, have students paraphrase one quotation from the film that they feel is especially interesting or inspiring. After the film, have each student share the quotation they documented and why this quotation stood out for them.

Post-Viewing Activities

Ask students if the predictions they made using the trailer in the Pre-Viewing Activity were correct. Have them give specific evidence from the film—images, ideas or dialogue—that supports or disproves their prediction.

Using the timeline of historical events they created during the *Oka Crisis 101* video, have students write a two-paragraph response to the film using the following prompts: What connection do these historical events have to the emotions felt by the people in the film? How do their life decisions after the Oka Crisis relate to the events that took place?

The film talks about the police response to the resistance at Oka/Kanehsatake. Ask students to draw a page for a graphic novel that engages with the following prompts: How does the crackdown on the protestors at Oka/Kanehsatake connect to colonization? How does this film show the ways that Indigenous peoples have resisted colonization?

Ask students if the predictions they made when they examined the famous “warrior and soldier” photograph from the 1990 Oka Crisis during the Pre-Viewing Activity were correct. How has the film changed how they see the photo?

Ask students to create a Reflection Report on the film. The Reflection Report should contain art and writing, and should document their first-person, critical reflection on the film and the subject of the film.

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: <http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf>

Have a large-group discussion guided by student questions written during the Viewing Activity.

Ask students to revisit the PBS viewing guide on documentaries that they completed during the Viewing Activity. Do they think the storytelling techniques used in the film are effective? Do they think the information sources contained in the film are reliable and trustworthy? Why do the filmmakers choose certain images, for example, shots of the pines, shots of the roadblocks and media footage?

Have students complete an exit note. The exit note should contain one idea that demonstrates what they learned from the film, as well as one question that they still have about the topic.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

http://rezolutionpictures.com/portfolio_page/the-oka-legacy/

Additional Resources

The Canadian Encyclopedia: The encyclopedia's entry on the Oka Crisis explains the background to the crisis at Oka/Kanehsatake, the events that led to its escalation and the public response to the 78-day standoff.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/> Type "Oka Crisis" into the search engine and click on the first result in the list.

CBC News: This opinion piece by Steve Bonspiel, a Mohawk writer and publisher of the Kahnawake Territory newspaper *The Eastern Door*, provides a behind-the-scenes look into the 1990 standoff and what the writer feels is a lack of action on the part of both Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government to settle the land-rights issue.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/oka-crisis-anniversary-1.4197880>

National Film Board: This two-hour film on the Oka Crisis by esteemed Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin can be viewed for free on the NFB website.

<https://www.nfb.ca/> Type "270 Years of Resistance" into the search function of the website.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

What are the issues and themes explored in this film?

Choose one of the issues or themes explored in this film and discuss what this film made you think/realize about that issue or theme.

Why do you think the filmmaker chose to prioritize the personal experiences of Indigenous people in this film? How would the film change if it did not include these personal experiences and reflections?

In the film, connections are made between the Oka Crisis and the failure of the Canadian government to respond to the Mohawks' longstanding efforts to negotiate a land-rights agreement. In what ways does the Oka Crisis illustrate the importance of respecting Indigenous nationhood? What does the Oka Crisis say about settler-colonialism in Canada?

Is racism and discrimination a factor for Indigenous peoples living in Canada today? How are racism and discrimination shown in this film?

At one point in the film, residents of Quebec are shown throwing rocks at Indigenous people who are trying to leave Kanehsatake. The police at the scene do not respond. How does this make you feel about Canada? How does it make you feel about the systems and institutions that are supposed to protect all Canadians?

What are the issues faced by Indigenous peoples and communities shown in the film? Are these issues the same or different from the issues faced by yourself, your family or your community?

The filmmaker says the Oka Crisis "helped change Canada's narrative." How might the reclamation of an Indigenous narrative in Canadian history and Canadian politics relate to the process of reconciliation in Canada?

Before viewing this film, did the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Canada play a large part in your life? If yes, why? If no, why not? Will this change now that you have seen this film? In what way?

What did the film reveal to you that you did not know before? What did it show you that you had not seen or heard before?

Do you think this film will inspire people to learn more about Indigenous land rights and protest/resistance movements? Why or why not?

In the film, Francine Lemay becomes a peacemaker between the non-Indigenous community and the Mohawk community. How might you become a peacemaker between two warring groups in your own community? What would you do to educate each group and create peace between them? What effect do you think this would have on the wider world?

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"It would take hours to get past police checkpoints if we gave them my mother's Mohawk name, Bonspille. But if we used my father's name, Boileau, we could practically drive right through."*
Sonia Bonspille-Boileau
2. *"A warrior's role is to follow the direction of the people, particularly the women. The women give direction to the men. They decide whether or not there's going to be a war."* Clifton Nicholas
3. *"What kind of people are you? There's children here and you're shooting teargas at us."* Ellen Gabriel
4. *"More personnel were on our territory, surrounding Kahnawake and Kanehsatake, than went to Kuwait."*
Ellen Gabriel
5. *"It was scary and surreal to have so many soldiers around our homes. It felt like we were living in another country."* Sonia Bonspille-Boileau
6. *"You're going to have a really big scar, but you're alive. Remember that: you're alive for a reason."*
Waneek Horn-Miller
7. *"We've been at this fight for 300 years."*
Wanda Gabriel
8. *"After 1990, I remember being scared just to travel. You know, you leave the house, you're going to get picked up, you're going to get beat. I have a lot of anger still."* Clifton Nicholas
9. *"A lot of things were done to us by so-called police forces, there to protect people.... I'll never trust police ever again."* Clifton Nicholas
10. *"You look at the aftermath of the Oka Crisis, and the complete social breakdown of our community: politically, socially, economically, everything went down. Then we started to see the divisions within the community."*
Serge Simon
11. *"Understanding what we had gone through in the past helped me understand the present. And it did the same for many—including non-Indigenous people."* Sonia Bonspille-Boileau
12. *"I began to learn a part of history that had previously been concealed."* Francine Lemay
13. *"The crisis... it gave us pride, to raise our voices. To be heard. And to see a woman leading that, it was incredible. You always see chiefs, and now it was a woman who was talking for a community, who was being empowered by the people behind her."*
Melissa Mollen-Dupuis
14. *"The legal framework for Aboriginal people has never been better. The opportunities have never been brighter. Unfortunately, the social conditions of Aboriginal people have not improved—and that's a big problem."* Michael McDonald
15. *"I think the relationship has changed. I mean, there is a big problem with racism in Canada. That exists, and we're not gonna go, like, 'Oh, no, there's no racism.' There is racism."* Melissa Mollen-Dupuis
16. *"Oka happened for a reason. It needed to shake this country to its core foundations. It needed to shake every single Canadian to understand that Indigenous issues are really important."* Waneek Horn-Miller
17. *"The Oka legacy? [It's about] awakening. Awakening to ourselves, awakening to taking our place in Canada. Awakening to healing—because a lot of people started healing."* Wanda Gabriel

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: NEVER GOING TO QUIT

The Oka Legacy talks about athlete Waneek Horn-Miller's decision to pursue her Olympic dreams after surviving a stab wound from a Canadian soldier's bayonet during the Oka Crisis.

Create a song, rap, dance, piece of art, piece of writing or dramatic script that documents someone's journey from victim to hero. This person can be well-known or unknown. Your creation should include information on the following aspects of their journey: What was the experience that could have made them a victim? How did they respond to that experience? What decisions did they make to change their lives from victim to hero?

Start by viewing the interview with Waneek Horn-Miller on CBC's *The National* (<https://www.youtube.com/> Type "Waneek Horn-Miller Remembers Oka The National" into the search engine). Then do research on the person of your choice using mainstream media and alternative media. Evaluate the credibility of all the sources you use. If the person is a member of a local community, you can also do an in-person or email interview using questions you prepare ahead of time. Your song, dance, piece of art, piece of writing or dramatic script must contain an artistic representation of the person, their life experience and the effect this issue has had on identity, citizenship and heritage in Canada.

ACTIVITY RUBRIC: NEVER GOING TO QUIT

Knowledge/Understanding

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Knowledge of content and understanding of content	Demonstrates a limited understanding of content	Demonstrates a moderate understanding of content	Demonstrates a considerable understanding of content	Demonstrates a high level of understanding of content	/5

Thinking and Inquiry

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Use of processing skills, especially interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information, and formulating conclusions	Uses processing skills with limited effectiveness	Uses processing skills with moderate effectiveness	Uses processing skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses processing skills with a high degree of effectiveness	/5

Application

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Making connections between various contexts, especially between past, present and future contexts; in different cultural or environmental contexts; and in proposing and/or taking action to address related issues	Makes connections within and between various contexts with limited effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness	/5

Communication

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Communication for different audiences and purposes (e.g., to inform, to persuade) in oral, visual and written forms	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with limited effectiveness	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with some effectiveness	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with considerable effectiveness	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with a high degree of effectiveness	/5

Comments:

Total: _____/20

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 & 8 Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gather information to support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and a wide range of print and electronic resources. • make revisions to improve the content, clarity and interest of their written work, using a variety of strategies. • establish a distinctive voice in their writing appropriate to the subject and audience. • communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to both the topic and the intended audience. • identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning.
Grade 7 & 8 Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create art works, using a variety of traditional forms and current media technologies, that express feelings, ideas and issues, including opposing points of view. • use elements of design in art works to communicate ideas, messages and understandings for a specific audience and purpose.
Grade 9 & 10 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate in a clear, coherent manner appropriate to the purpose, subject matter and intended audience. • use several different audio-visual aids to support and enhance oral presentations. • locate and select information to support ideas for writing, using several different strategies and print, electronic and other resources, as appropriate. • establish an identifiable voice in their writing, modifying language and tone to suit the form, audience and purpose for writing. • revise drafts to improve the content, organization, clarity and style of their written work, using a variety of teacher-modelled strategies.
Grade 9 & 10 Integrated Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply current technologies to present integrated art works/productions. • use appropriate practices to prepare their art works for presentation. • demonstrate an understanding of some of the ways in which art works can be presented to reach a variety of audiences.
Grade 11 & 12 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter and intended audience. • identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expressions, gestures and eye contact, and use them effectively to help convey their meaning and with sensitivity to audience needs and cultural differences. • locate and select information to effectively support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and print, electronic and other resources, as appropriate. • determine whether the ideas and information gathered are accurate and complete, interesting and effectively meet the requirements of the writing task. • establish a distinctive voice in their writing, modifying language and tone skilfully and effectively to suit the form, audience and purpose for writing.
Grade 11 & 12 Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore a wide range of traditional and emerging technologies, tools and techniques, and use them to produce effective media art works.

Grade 9 & 10 Canadian and World Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe some significant instances of social conflict and/or inequality in Canada. • describe some significant examples of social and/or political cooperation in Canada, including social movements (e.g., environmental movements, Aboriginal activism). • explain some significant events, developments and/or issues that affected First Nations, Inuit and/or Métis people in Canada and assess the impact of these developments on identity, citizenship and/or heritage in Canada.
Grade 11 & 12 Canadian and World Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze ways in which cooperation among Indigenous peoples and/or between Indigenous peoples and other groups has shaped the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. • analyze the relationship Indigenous peoples have with the environment in Canada and how this relationship contributes to the development of Indigenous identity and culture. • analyze ways in which some social, economic and/or political issues, events and/or developments in Canada have affected Indigenous peoples.
Grade 9 & 10 Native Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify social, economic and political issues within Aboriginal communities in relation to Canadian government policies. • identify issues currently affecting Aboriginal peoples and the responses of local and national leadership to these issues. • describe various ways of exercising autonomy used by Aboriginal peoples.
Grade 11 & 12 Native Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal-Canadian relations. • investigate potential topics by formulating questions, identifying information needs and purposes for writing, and developing research plans to gather information and ideas from primary and secondary sources. • demonstrate an understanding of the historical experience of Aboriginal peoples in asserting their sovereignty through treaties, negotiated agreements and other formalized processes. • identify areas of conflict between Aboriginal peoples and the government of Canada with respect to treaty interpretation.

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the *Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations, can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>