



ATHLII GWAI: THE LINE AT LYELL

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ATHLII GWAII: THE LINE AT LYELL

Directed by Jeff Bear and Marianne Jones

Canada | 2010 | 47 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of documentary film by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their classes, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some web links that provide starting points for further research or discussion. In separate packages, there will also be support materials available with information regarding general viewing and teaching principles for documentary film and the fundamental aspects of making documentary films.

The Film

Athlii Gwaii: The Line at Lyell traces the decision of the Haida Nation to allow elders to occupy the frontline of a logging blockade during the winter of 1985-1986. The blockade at Athlii Gwaii (Lyell Island), which is part of Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands), was started by young men, including artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas and Guujaaw, now president of the Haida Nation. After watching the men and praying about the issue, the elders asked them to step aside. As a result, they were the first ones to be arrested. *Athlii Gwaii: The Line at Lyell* looks at the relationship Haida people have to the land, the respect Aboriginal people have for the wisdom of their elders, the role elders play in Aboriginal society and the reverence the Haida have for the majestic cedars they once used for clothing, medicine and shelter and still use in their art. The film also reveals a tangled web of relationships: not only did the Haida stop loggers from the local area, but two of the arresting RCMP officers were themselves Haida. Pairing archival clips of those involved with interviews conducted almost 20 years later, viewers are given a glimpse into the long-term effects of the blockade on both a personal and political level.

The Filmmakers

Urban Rez Productions was formed by filmmakers Jeff Bear and Marianne Jones in 1999. Bear and Jones co-wrote, co-directed and co-produced *Athlii Gwaii: The Line at Lyell*, which is one of 26 episodes in the *Ravens and Eagles* series for television. Bear, once a producer with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, is Maliseet from New Brunswick. Jones, who is Haida, spent nine seasons as an actor on the CBC television series *The Beachcombers* and also appeared in the series *Street Legal*, *North of 60* and *MacGyver*, as well as television movies such as *Where the Spirit Lives*. The duo also co-directed the documentary film *Burnt Church: Obstruction of Justice*, about Mi'kmaq fishing rights and the documentary series *Storytellers in Motion*, examining indigenous images in film and television.

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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

There are important themes in this film that have broad implications for students and their futures. Take time to activate your students' background understanding of these themes before viewing. This will help them as they come to their own understanding and develop their critical abilities.

The following three subsections, on this page, 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 web links for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Begin with the Examining Images and Making Predictions activity on pages four and five.

Show students the first few minutes of the film, before the directors' names appear. Have students work in small groups to answer the following questions:

- Who is the target audience for this media text? How can you tell?
- How and why does this media text appeal to its target audience?
- How does this media text appeal to you?
- What are the themes of this film?

Print several of the quotations from pages seven and eight on individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or in pairs to discuss the ideas in the quotations. Ask them to share their conclusions with the large group. To get them started, ask them to think about the following:

- What do you think the main conflicts are in this film? How do you know this?
- From whose perspective is this story told? How do you know this?
- What values are being promoted? How do you know this?
- Whose point of view do the values represent?
- Are your values represented? Why or why not?

Set a purpose for viewing by sharing with students the six steps toward making meaning of any text: select, describe, analyze, interpret, evaluate and reflect. Ask students what

they think each of these steps might involve. Then screen the film. The viewing and post-viewing activities will demonstrate what each step actually involves.

Set a purpose for viewing by having a large-group discussion about one or more of the quotations on pages seven and eight, or by reminding students about the four strands present in Ontario Native Studies curriculum: identity, relationships, sovereignty and challenges.

Viewing Activities

Ask students to describe what they see. Ask them to withhold judgment and observe carefully. They can choose to write down or describe their observations orally. Stop the film periodically if students choose to describe their observations orally.

Have students take notes on, or jot down connections to, one of the big ideas on page five of this guide.

Have students use a graphic organizer to summarize the film as they watch it. Have students draw their own organizers using the five-W format (who, what, when, where, why).

Stop the film at various points and have students provide oral summaries at each point. Have them do the summaries using the five-W format.

Set a purpose for viewing. Give students some or all of the following guiding questions:

- Did the predictions you made in your prediction chart come true? Jot down information from the film that supports or disproves your prediction.
- What are the main conflicts we encounter in this film?

Were the conflicts resolved at the end of the film? Why or why not?

- How was this message constructed? How well does it represent reality?
- How might others understand this message differently?
- Who are the key characters? What characteristics do they possess that make them interesting to watch? Are the motivations of the characters clear to the viewer? What other options do the characters have and what are the consequences of their actions?
- Who produced this media text and for what purpose? Who profits if the message is accepted? Who may be disadvantaged?
- How was the text made? What conventions or production techniques are used?
- How would this story be different if told from the perspective of another character in the film (e.g., a logger or an RCMP officer)?

Post-Viewing Activities

Have students revisit three questions from the pre-viewing activities: Who is the target audience for this media text? How can you tell? How and why does this media text appeal to its target audience? Have students' answers changed? Were their initial impressions of the film correct? Were the themes they saw in the first few minutes of the film expanded upon later in the film?

Have students revisit the quotations from the pre-viewing activities. Were their minds changed or opinions altered/enhanced by the film?

Ask students to show how this documentary has one or more of the following purposes: to provide relevant information presented with a particular point of view; to reinforce an existing attitude or subvert an existing attitude; or to have the audience take some action.

Have students build a conceptual map showing the web of ideas, topics and associated sub-topics in the film. Ask students to identify questions they think will represent the important issues.

Using information and the questions students created in the conceptual map activity, ask students to make interconnections among textual elements. This should take the form of an argument, including a thesis statement and evidence from the text.

Have students make a final judgment about the text based on the argument they created in the previous activity. Students will learn that their evaluations and feelings are informed by description, analysis and interpretation.

Ask students to reflect on the processes of description, interpretation and evaluation. Did these steps help inform their ideas? Ask students to write a personal reflection to summarize what they have learned.

For further ideas around how to explore this documentary, use the guiding questions on page six.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY: EXAMINING IMAGES AND MAKING PREDICTIONS

Below you will find images taken from the film. View each one and use the organizer on the following page to record what you think these images are telling us about in the film. Use clues from the image as well as your own experience to support your answer.



IMAGE A.



IMAGE B.



IMAGE C.



IMAGE D.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY: IMAGE AND IDEA ORGANIZER

	My prediction	Clues from the image	From my own experience
<p>Image A Royal Canadian Mounted Police</p>			
<p>Image B Haida Men</p>			
<p>Image C Totem Pole and Log Carrier Ship</p>			
<p>Image D RCMP Officers and Haida Elder</p>			

THE BIG QUESTIONS/IDEAS/THEMES

Multiple Perspectives

What is the subject of this film? Can you determine the filmmakers' perspective on this subject? What evidence can you find in the film to support your view?

How does this film help you analyze and interpret points of view about issues that concern people?

Does the filmmakers' perspective foster respect for diversity and an inclusive society? If so, how?

Identity

Whose story is told in this documentary? Whose story is not told? How does this story, and the way it is told, help you understand your own community/life?

How do the people in this film identify with their community? What are the common bonds among the people in this film? What challenges do they face in expressing their identity?

What film techniques do the filmmakers use to convey the identity of the people in this film?

Citizenship

What insights does this documentary offer about the ideals of good citizenship in the community depicted in this film?

How does the film deal with issues of freedom, equality, human dignity, and individual and collective rights and responsibilities?

Change and Continuity

How does this film help you understand a community's values and its attitudes towards an issue at a particular time?

What changes do the people in the film experience? What causes those changes? What are the consequences of those changes for the people in the documentary?

Culture and Community

Which aspects of a people's culture does this film focus on? Why do you think the filmmakers focused on those aspects?

How do the images, themes and message of this film help you understand the filmmakers' attitude towards the subject? What do you think might have been the intended audience's attitude towards the documentary subject?

Individuals, Societies and Economic Decisions

What economic systems are at work in this film? What are some of the causes and effects of the economic decisions made by the people in the film's community?

Does money play a part in the decisions being made in the film and what does it tell you about their local culture?

Power and Governance

What system of government control do we see in this documentary? How is power distributed within this society? What are the implications of that distribution on issues affecting the people's well-being and freedom?

Global Connections

What global issues are addressed in this film? What is the filmmakers' point of view on the opportunities and challenges of those issues?

Adapted from NFB Documentary Lens: <http://www.nfb.ca>

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Additional Pre- or Post-Viewing Activities

Have students write a letter to the creators of this media text. Is the film an effective tool? How would students produce the text differently?

Using whatever equipment is available to them (e.g., cellphone or digital camera video), have students make a five-minute video on a local environmental issue that would be suitable for a documentary film. This activity can be as formal or informal as you wish. If students have studied film production and technique, they can create storyboards before filming.

Using whatever technology is available to them, have students create a three-minute sound collage reflecting the theme(s) or message in *Athlii Gwaii: The Line at Lyell*.

A fast-paced television commercial or music video may contain more than 40 shots in 30 seconds. Some people think that when we return to the slower editing of other programming, such as documentary film, we find the pace too slow or dull. Have students discuss the effect of speed in commercials and music videos on our perception of other programming and on our lives in general.

Have students conduct a "hot seat" activity where they interview a character in the film (e.g., members of the RCMP, the owner of the logging company, or the elders blocking the road) about the logging at Athlii Gwaii. Students will gather in a circle with a chair in the middle. The student sitting in the chair plays the role of the person being interviewed. The rest of the class interviews him or her. Students may use ideas from any pre-viewing, viewing or post-viewing activity, or questions from the big ideas section on page five to guide their interview questions and make inferences.

Protestor Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas is now a world-renowned artist. His most recent work is the book *Red: A Haida Manga*, which pairs the Japanese graphic art form with a story from Haida oral literature. Have students draw their own graphic texts showing the main theme(s) in *Athlii Gwaii: The Line at Lyell* or tell the story of an environmental issue in their own community.

Additional Questions for Pre- or Post-Viewing Activities

What environmental issues exist in your community? How are these issues related to employment in your community?

In the film, it is revealed that the elders were not arrested but taken home in an RCMP helicopter. What effect does this revelation have on the viewer? Does it change what the viewer might think about the situation and/or about the film itself?

What are your feelings about one or more of the characters you met in the film?

Would you be willing to set up a roadblock or take part in a protest in order to stop clearcut logging in your community?

Do you think government and multinational corporations treat Aboriginal people differently from non-Aboriginal people when it comes to activities such as logging? Does location play a role? Does race? Would this happen if the forest were located nearby a large city?

How does this film encourage you to see the world differently?

Quotations From the Film to Explore

"We want to go to work. You're blocking a highway. You're breaking the law." Consider who the speaker is here, to what law is he referring? Are these laws the same for every person at Athlii Gwaii?

"The elders took over. It wasn't part of the plan." What does this say about the respect people have for elders in the Haida Nation?

"We are, at this moment, protecting our land. At this moment, we want our island back. Why doesn't the government see it?" What does this quotation say about the relationship the Haida Nation has with the Canadian government?

"We wanted to make it real clear that our culture is our relationship to the land. That's where our songs come from, that's where our language comes from and the dances are all about the creatures that we share this land with and so we brought the songs back to the land, to express exactly who we are in relationship to the land." Discuss the individual and collective values contained in this statement.

What do these values say about the identity of the Haida people? The challenges they face? About issues of sovereignty? About the relationships shown in this film?

"We were there to protect young people." What does this statement say about the relationship between Haida elders and younger generations of the Haida Nation?

"Maybe that will open the government's eyes: 'Look at this old lady sitting in jail.'" What does this say about the knowledge contemporary Aboriginal people have concerning the systems and institutions of the dominant society, including the media?

"We're thinking of our new generations to come.... You see all the mountains, all gone. All the trees are stripped clean. And it's not only for us. It's for the white man's new generation to come, too. What are they gonna make money on when they strip the island?... We're thinking of both sides." What does this say about the relationship Haida people have with people in the dominant Canadian society? About the hopes the Haida elders have for the future of Canadian society?

"Since some of the RCMP were Haida, it made it that much harder." What does this quotation say about inclusion? Exclusion? What does it say about Aboriginal people and their relationship with the systems and institutions of the dominant society?

"We slept long enough." The speaker is an elder who lived through the government of Canada's efforts to eradicate and/or assimilate Aboriginal people. What do you think she means?

"We didn't see the police as the bad guys... or even the loggers, for that matter, because they were only working people." What does this say about the perspective of the Haida people? What does it say about the challenges of simultaneously maintaining relationships with people in the dominant society and maintaining sovereignty over Aboriginal land?

"Understanding who we are as a people, who we are as families, who we are in relationship to our land, is given to us by our elders. The elders clearly represent our linkage to all of our history." What does this say about the importance of and respect for wisdom within Haida culture and society?

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
<p>Grade 11 Native Studies: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices, University Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze themes related to sovereignty, as portrayed in media works by Aboriginal creators. • identify and assess solutions to challenges suggested in media works by Aboriginal creators. • use a variety of electronic primary and secondary sources to gather and assess information and develop ideas for writing.
<p>Grade 11 Native Studies: Current Aboriginal Issues in Canada, University/College Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of how Aboriginal identity is linked to the physical environment. • describe Aboriginal perspectives related to issues of identity and sovereignty. • demonstrate an understanding of Aboriginal Peoples' strong relationship to the land. • demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships that characterize an Aboriginal world view. • describe how Aboriginal Peoples adapt to external forces. • identify social, political and economic issues currently being addressed by Aboriginal individuals and communities in Canada.
<p>Grade 11 Native Studies: Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society, College Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain how Aboriginal Peoples' links to the land and to a sustainable environment are part of their cultural identity. • demonstrate an understanding of the varying perspectives on Aboriginal Peoples' right to self-determination. • describe the efforts of Aboriginal Peoples to attain autonomy in their lives.
<p>Grade 11 Native Studies: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices, College Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze images in media works related to Aboriginal identity. • demonstrate an understanding of form, purpose, audience and production techniques by designing or creating media works, independently or collaboratively, based on ideas, themes and issues related to relationships examined in this course. • compare, through analysis, relationships presented in media works by Aboriginal creators. • analyze themes related to sovereignty, as portrayed in media works by Aboriginal creators. • identify and assess solutions to challenges suggested in media works by Aboriginal creators. • Use a variety of electronic primary and secondary sources to gather and assess information and develop ideas for writing.
<p>Grade 11 Native Studies: Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society, Workplace Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify aspects of cultural identity related to specific Aboriginal Peoples. • describe the efforts of Aboriginal Peoples to attain autonomy in their lives. • describe competing values between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies on issues of ecological sustainability.

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
<p>Grade 11 Native Studies: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices, Workplace Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe images in media works related to Aboriginal identity. • demonstrate an understanding of relationships presented in media works by Aboriginal creators. • identify issues of sovereignty, as presented in media works by Aboriginal creators. • identify challenges addressed in media works by Aboriginal creators. • use a variety of electronic sources to gather information and develop ideas for personal, school and workplace-related writing.
<p>Grade 12 Native Studies: Aboriginal Governance: Emerging Directions, University/College Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe social and political conditions that affect the current dialogue between Aboriginal Peoples and other Canadians.
<p>Grade 11 English: Media Studies, University Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. • create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques.
<p>Grade 11 English: Media Studies, College/Workplace Preparation Grade 12 English: Media Studies, University/College/Workplace Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. • create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques. • reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts.
<p>Grade 11 English: Media Studies, Open</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • deconstruct a variety of types of media texts, identifying the codes, conventions and techniques used and explaining how they create meaning.
<p>Grade 11 The Arts: Exploring the Arts, Open</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the concepts (elements, principles, styles, genres and techniques) used in various art forms. • analyze and interpret others' productions, demonstrating an understanding of the process of critical analysis. • analyze aspects of cultural identity found in productions.
<p>Grade 11 The Arts: Media Arts, Open Grade 12 The Arts: Media Arts, Open</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe how various concepts (elements, principles) and techniques and procedures are used in the works of others. • evaluate the aesthetic components of media productions, demonstrating an understanding of the process of critical analysis. • analyze the impact of media productions on themselves and their communities. • analyze the function of media art in society.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

The official website of the Haida Nation.

<http://www.haidanation.ca>

A *Vancouver Sun* article about the 2009 agreement between the Haida Nation and the government of British Columbia.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/entertainment/Haida+Nation+reach+power+sharing+agreement+over+Islands+Haida+Gwaii/2330672/story.html>

The Parks Canada website contains information about the creation of the Gwaii Haanas Park Reserve.

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/natcul/natcul2a.aspx>

This link to the CBC archives contains a selection of original CBC television and radio clips on the 1985-1986 Athlii Gwaii (Lyell Island) protest.

http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/federal_politics/topics/1238-6854/

This link to the Greenpeace archives contains the original Greenpeace media release about their blockade of the log carrier Haida Brave at the 1996 Haida Gwaii protests, plus information on logging in the B.C. rainforests.

<http://archive.greenpeace.org/majordomo/index-press-releases/1996/msg00253.html>

Artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas's website.

<http://mny.ca/index.html>

About the Filmmakers

The directors' website features Jeff Bear's blog.

<http://www.urbanrez.ca/>

There is a profile of director Marianne Jones on the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian "Native Networks" portal.

http://nativenetworks.si.edu/Eng/rose/jones_m.htm

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

The Association for Media Literacy: This Canadian website examines how media impacts and influences culture.

<http://www.aml.ca/home>

Using Documentaries in the Classroom: This teacher librarian's personal website contains excellent resources for teaching with documentary films.

http://www.frankwbaker.com/using_docs_in_the_classroom.htm

Media Awareness: A Canadian non-profit media education and Internet-literacy resource library.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca>

Center for Media Literacy: A U.S. website which provides several resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.

<http://www.medialit.org>

The National Film Board of Canada website: On this site is an area with teaching resources and short documentary films that can be used as teaching aides.

<http://www.nfb.ca>

Hot Docs Looking at Documentaries: A teaching guide that sets out questions designed to help teachers include the study of documentary film in their curriculum.

http://www.hotdocs.ca/youth/docs_for_schools/2010_docs_for_schools_selections/