

Introduction:

Title: (re)Mapping Place

Subject/Course: Visual Arts, Grade 11/12

Developed by: Barry Ace

Curriculum editor: Doug Dumais

Time: 130 Minutes

Description:

In *Anishinabek in the Hood* (2007), Barry Ace, an Anishinaabe (Odawa) artist, visually reclaims North America as Anishinaabe territory on a pull-down classroom map of North America. Ace's work responds to social issues affecting Indigenous people today.

The educator should provide some background information about Ace's exploration of mapping, symbolism and identity. This will help students understand the significance of the social commentary in his work. The goal of this workshop is to highlight contemporary Indigenous voices and enter into critical dialogue with Barry Ace's practice.

Following this, students will respond to the themes in Ace's work in their own way by creatively (re)mapping their neighborhood or city using paper maps and mixed media art materials. The goal is to encourage students to be inspired by Ace's work without appropriating the artist's Indigenous symbolism. This will lead to fruitful class discussions about the meanings of appropriation and cultural protocol.

This workshop will give students the opportunity to reflect on their own cultural symbols, their place in their community, their sense of self and their ability to make a difference by actively challenging the stereotypes they face.

Desired Results:

Fundamental Concepts/Lesson Objectives:

- For students to understand the approach of a contemporary Indigenous artist to mapping.
- For students to respond respectfully and without stereotyping or appropriating the symbols and themes present in Ace's work.

Ontario Curricular Expectations:

Creating and Presenting:

- A1.1: Use strategies such as brainstorming and discussion to explore and elaborate on ideas and create an original mixed-media artwork.
- A1.2: Work with a variety of traditional and contemporary media.
- A2.1: Explore how to convey personal expression and communicate emotions and experiences.
- A2.2: Use elements/principles of design and symbolism to create a work of art that communicates their personal perspective on issues related to mapping and social injustice.
- A3.2: Explore the range of traditional and current materials, techniques, and methods used by Barry Ace in *Anishinabek in the Hood* (2007) and other works in his mapping series.
- A3.3: Describe appropriate standards and conventions for the presentation of their visual art works, and apply these standards when preparing their work for presentation.

Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing:

- B1.2 Deconstruct the visual content and the use of elements and principles of design in their own artwork and Ace's work.
- B1.3 Explain, with reference to Ace's *Anishinabek in the Hood*, how knowledge of an art work's cultural context, achieved through research and class-time, has clarified and enriched their understanding of the work's intent and meaning.
- B2.1 Analyse the function and social function of Barry's work.
- B2.2 Explain, through research, ways in which various art works are a response to the society in which the artists live.
- B2.3 Reflect on and explain how creating and analysing art works has affected their personal identity and values and/or changed their perceptions of society and social issues.

Foundations:

- C1.1: Correctly use terminology related to the elements and principles of design in Ace's work.
- C2.2 Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conventions and themes used in contemporary art such as juxtaposition, identity reclaiming, and decolonization.

Background Knowledge:

- Barry Ace's artistic practice.
- Themes in contemporary Indigenous art.
- Contemporary issues facing Indigenous communities (land claims, decolonization, sense of community and identity).

Planning Learning Experience and Instruction:

Student Groupings:

- Students working individually
- Students working as a whole class

Instructional Strategies:

- Analyzing bias/stereotypes
- Discussions (led by teacher)

Materials:

- Overhead display for a video of Barry Ace describing his practice
- Large sheets of paper
- Maps of your region
- Glue
- Scissors
- Acrylic paint
- Paintbrushes
- Pencils
- Markers

Considerations/Accommodations:

- Arrange the space to best accommodate all students' needs.
- When asking students to consider the symbols, images, and words they choose for their mapping project, consider the following:
 - o Students come from a variety of backgrounds and may not feel comfortable sharing symbols that have a particular cultural, spiritual, or religious weight. It is important to

clarify to the students that the themes of place and belonging are general and they should not feel pressured to share these elements of their culture.

- Alternatively, consider that students may feel compelled to share their cultural or religious symbols, and that this may be a good place to have the conversation about cultural protocol. When sharing a symbol or icon that belongs to a particular group, it is important to be aware that it is not always appropriate to do so. There may be certain protocols of use surrounding that symbol that are dictated from the group that they belong to, even if the student belongs to the group that uses this symbol. A video by the Ontario Arts Council, available on the Ottawa Art Gallery website, is a good resource to explore this further.

Teaching and Learning Process:

Part 1 – Warm up and discussion (30 minutes)

Worksheet

A worksheet is available at the end of this document. It includes quotes from Barry Ace and additional prompts for students to think through their mapping project. You have the option to scan this page as a hand-out to your students. Feel free to encourage them to bring it home as homework after introducing the project.

Introduction

Begin by showing the video of Barry Ace discussing his background and practice. This video is available in the online resource toolkit on the Ottawa Art Gallery's website.

List of works relevant to this lesson plan:

- *Anishinabek in the Hood* (2007) 147.3cm x 127cm, acrylic on a screen.
- *Midewiwin* (2007) 147.3cm x 182.9cm, acrylic on a screen.

Prompt: What is your initial reaction to Barry Ace's work?

Main question: What is a map? Does a map mean the same thing to everyone?

When Europeans colonized North America, they brought their rigorous mapping technologies with them. To justify imposing control over the land that was already occupied by Indigenous peoples, European settlers used the myth of terra nullius, or "land belonging to no one."¹ They created maps of colonized territories employing strategies still familiar to us today, using a bird's eye view perspective to enforce rigid divisions of land that did not correspond to the established Indigenous communities and land use already in place.

Place can be mapped in many ways. The maps we're familiar with aren't the only way to know the places in which we live. For example, thousands of years ago, people used petroglyphs, or rock carvings, to indicate certain hunting trails or regions. In the area around the great lakes in particular, where Anishinaabe people have been for over 10,000 years, there are petroglyphs depicting symbols that were used as early maps. These symbols range from shamanic figures to images of moose, bears and beavers. The images would tell people paddling past that the area might be a good hunting area or a sacred place.

¹ Jonathan Bordo, "The Terra Nullius of Wilderness—Colonialist Landscape Art (Canada & Australia) and the So-called Claim to American Exceptionion," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (1997): 13-36.

Prompt: Think of a situation in which a birds-eye view map is different than your own experience. Are maps an accurate or objective means of understanding the world?

Takeaway: Maps are only one of many ways to understand a place.

Main question: How does Barry Ace's art address the theme of mapping?

Anishinabek in the Hood (2007) is a critical "unmapping" or "remapping" of a colonial map of North America. Ace's message is that maps are not universally true for everyone. *Anishinabek in the Hood*, as well as his other map-based artworks, including *Midewiwin* (2007), are visual representations of how he personally experiences the place where he lives. By leaving his physical presence on a map of North America, Ace is re-mapping it according to his own experience and imprinting it with his own cultural symbols.

Ace intervenes in and resists the colonial representation of North America. The artist not only questions the arbitrary nature of borders and boundaries but also demonstrates how unsatisfactory maps can be as an objective source of knowledge.² Ace's map suggests that an alternative history of North America is possible: a history where Indigenous voices are heard and play a central role in shaping culture.

Prompt: What role do symbols play in your life? What is an important way that you alter and change your environment that you would like to highlight with your artwork?

Takeaway: Barry Ace's work suggests that maps are not true for everyone in the same way.

Main question: What social issue does this work respond to?

Ace's artwork relates to conversations that are important right now. A number of Indigenous groups across Canada today are involved in what is known as 'land claims' with the Canadian and provincial governments. Land claims are legal disputes. Some claims deal with Aboriginal land rights that were not clearly defined under law or dealt with by past treaties. Other claims relate to specific grievances about Canada's obligations to First Nations under historic treaties. Claims are not always necessarily land-related, and can also deal with how the Canadian government managed (or mismanaged) First Nations funds or other assets.³

Prompt: How does Barry's work respond directly to these issues? Is there an issue in your neighborhood, your city or somewhere else that directly affects you that you can base your artwork on?

Main question: What is cultural appropriation?

Definition: A term used to describe the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another. It is in general used to describe Western appropriations of non - Western or non - white forms, and carries connotations of exploitation and dominance.⁴

² Julia Skelly, "Alternative Paths: Mapping Addiction in Contemporary Art by Landon Mackenzie, Rebecca Belmore, Manasie Akpaliapik, and Ron Noganosh," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49, No. 2 (2015): 268-295.

³ "Algonquins of Ontario Land Claim Negotiations," *Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*, accessed August 3, 2017, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1355436558998/1355436749970>.

⁴ *Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Cultural Appropriation," accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095652789>.

Prompt: What is the difference between cultural sharing and appropriation? What are ways that it would be incorrect to use another culture's symbols for your own artwork or message? Is there a certain protocol to follow when using symbols from your own culture or community?

Part 2 – Activity (70 minutes)

The teacher will ask students to create their own maps depicting their neighbourhood, city or a meaningful geographic location using fragments or large sections of the maps they are provided. Students should be encouraged to cut up or tear up their map any way they wish in order to challenge the supposed authority that these maps have over the location they live in or come from. They are also encouraged to heighten their work with acrylic paint, markers, pencils and whatever is available to put themselves and their identity on the map.

The educator should encourage students to be creative and think through their decisions about which section of the city they will use, the shape of the fragment of their map, etc. Encourage the students to think of a clear message to convey with their (re)mapping project.

Here are some issues/themes/key terms to inspire students:

- Belonging
- Environment
- Family history
- Gentrification
- Accessibility
- Multiculturalism
- Safety
- Community
- Immigration

Prompt: How can you use complex elements of design to convey multiple sides of a debate or a conversation surrounding the issue or theme that your artwork addresses?

Part 3 — Debrief (30 minutes)

After sharing their works with the class, encourage students to have a class discussion with the following prompts:

- What message/social issue/concern did your work address? Did the purpose of your work change while you were making it depending on the materials/processes you used?
- What impact do colour, value, shape, proportion and emphasis have on your work? Do they effectively convey your message?
- In what way has creating this artwork enhanced your ability to express your relationship to or feelings towards the place you decided to focus on?
- Has analyzing Ace's art work affected your awareness of Indigenous culture in Canada? How so?
- Has looking at other people's (re)mapping project helped you understand more about how they understand their sense of self and community?

Optional (for the next class):

- Students can work together in groups or as a class to curate their own group exhibition. This would provide the students with the opportunity to position themselves as artists and collectively bring their work together to create an exhibition that could be presented in various ways within the school or larger community.