

Introduction:

Title: (re)Mapping Place

Subject/Course: Visual Arts, Grade 7/8

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 cultural 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:

- D1.1: Create a multimedia mapping artwork that expresses feelings, ideas, and issues of their point of view inspired by the work of a contemporary Indigenous artist. Including personal or cultural symbols that address issues like (for example) place, the environment, safety, and others.
- D1.2: Demonstrate an understanding of composition using principles of design and the "rule of thirds", and compositional triangles to create an artwork on a theme of their choosing in response to Ace's work. For example, showing unity or disharmony within their mapping project depending on how they personally respond to the theme. As well as using techniques to show emphasis and leading the eye around their map.
- D1.3: Use elements of design in art to communicate ideas, messages, and understandings for a specific purpose. Use cut out sections of maps, words, and painted symbols that communicate

their artwork's intention. Particularly focusing on the use of colour, value, and symbols to convey a message about the chosen theme.

- D1.4: Use a variety of materials, tools and techniques to explore design challenges such as using various materials and techniques to represent ideas about their selected theme. The focus is on emphasizing certain elements of their mapping artwork.

Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing:

- D2.1: Interpret Ace's artwork and identify the feelings, issues, themes, and social concerns that he addresses. The students will consider how some might understand this image differently because of various ages, life experiences, cultural backgrounds, and/or beliefs.
- D2.2: Explain the elements and principles of design in their own and Ace's artwork to communicate meaning or understanding.
- D2.3: Demonstrate an understanding of how to read and interpret signs, symbols, and style in Ace's work. Examples include the use of colour, negative space, and symbols in his series of mapping works.
- D2.4: Identify and explain their strengths, their interests, and areas for improvement as creators, interpreters, and viewers of art by critiquing Ace's work and their own. Articulate their message, process, and artistic decisions of their artwork.

Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts:

- D3.1: Identify and describe the function of contemporary art such as Ace's. Examining the influences and intention of Ace's work, focusing on how it challenges, sustains, and reflects his context.
- D3.2: Demonstrate an understanding of the function of this artwork and the influence on the development of Ace's personal and cultural identity. Explore the function of traditional symbols and the media used in Ace's artwork to explore his identity.

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.
 - o 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

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.

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, which are 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.

Prompt: How easily could you get somewhere you know well without a map?

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 remapping of a school map of North America. Ace's message is that maps are not the only way to know where you live. *Anishinabek in the Hood*, as well as his other map artworks, including *Midewiwin* (2007), describe how he personally experiences the place where he lives. Ace does this by adding his symbols, his language (Anishinaabemowin) and his memories to the map.

Ace makes us think about the random borders that between countries and provinces. He also makes us think about how maps don't reflect the different people and different ways that people live within a city.² Ace asks us to think about another history of North America: a history where Indigenous voices are heard and play a central role in shaping culture.

Prompt: What do you think of Barry's use of a school map? Would the use of a different material change the meaning of the work? How so?

Takeaway: Barry Ace's work suggests that the way people experience the world is 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

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>.

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?

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 disrespect, exploitation and dominance of another culture.⁴

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? Are there certain protocols or rules 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. Teachers should encourage their students to cut up or tear up their map any way they want to. This is to go against the authority that these maps have over the location students 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 that they cut out of their map, the colours they use, as well as other elements of design. 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:

- Home
- Travel
- Belonging
- Environment
- Family history
- Accessibility
- Multiculturalism
- Safety
- Community
- Immigration

Prompt: What is the message you are trying to convey with your (re)mapping project? What can you do to make this message stand out?

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

Part 3 — Debrief (30 minutes)

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

- Does your work address a social issue or concern? 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?
- What cultural symbols did you use, if any?

Optional (for the next class):

- Students can work together in groups or as a class to curate their own group exhibition of maps. 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.