

## Introduction:

**Title:** (re)Mapping Place

**Subject/Course:** Visual Arts, Grade 9/10

**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 discussion to generate ideas and to make plans for the creation of an art work.
- A1.2: Use exploration and reflection to create a complex multi-media artwork that uses and explores a variety of materials and techniques such as painting, drawing, and collage. Discussions of the process students went through are included in the final section.
- A.2.1: Explore elements and principles of design, and apply them to create art works that express personal feelings and emotions in response to Ace's work to an audience. Discussions of Ace's use of colour to express emotion will get students thinking about their artworks to convey a message.
- A2.2: Apply elements and principles of design to create an art work that emphasizes and communicates an idea in response to or prompted by the discussions on Ace's work.

- A3.1: Explore and experiment with a variety of materials such as paper, found objects (maps), and apply these explorations to the project.
- A3.3: Consider the ways that their artwork can be displayed to an audience and ensure their message is clearly articulated in their work.

#### Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing:

- B1.1: Identify and describe their initial reaction to Barry's work through a discussion at the beginning of the lesson.
- B1.2: Identify on the basis of examination, elements and principles of design and their effects in Ace's mapping works.
- B1.3: Identify the purpose, interpretation, and subject of a contemporary Indigenous artist.
- B2.1: Identify the function of Ace's artwork in the context of mapping and a sense of identity.
- B2.2: Identify the ways in which Ace's work reflects his culture and the society he lives in.
- B2.3: Identify ways in which creating their own work and analyzing Ace's work has affected them personally in relation to contemporary Indigenous art-making and the message they address in their work.

#### Foundations:

- C1.1: Use appropriate terminology when identifying and describing the use of elements and principles of design in their own art making and in Ace's work through the available glossary of terms and in-class discussions.
- C1.2: Use appropriate vocabulary to describe techniques, materials, and tools when creating and presenting their artwork.

#### 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."<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

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.

Prompt: How and why do people use a map? Does a map represent your everyday life well?

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 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.

By doing so, Ace not only questions the arbitrary nature of borders between countries and provinces, but also demonstrates how unsatisfactory maps can be as a universal source of knowledge that applies to everyone in the same way.<sup>2</sup> 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: Can you think of ways that symbols are used to convey a message? Think about advertising or politics. Are symbols an effective way of communicating a message? How so?

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.<sup>3</sup>

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?

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

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 disrespect, exploitation and dominance of another culture.<sup>4</sup>

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 elements of design such as colour, line and form to powerfully articulate your message?

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<sup>4</sup> *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:

- 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.